

CONTENTS

Looking Back

Patricia Francis.....2

Society Diary

Calendars of Meetings of Affiliated Societies.....3

White Satin Moths - *Leucoma salicis*

Sabena J Blackbird.....6

A Closer Look at a Smaller Patch

Steve Priestley.....7

Contributions for the next issue by the end of December please!

Contributions are welcomed as e-mail attachments to patricia.francis@oldham.gov.uk or on disk, in most PC word processing formats (with a second file in rich text format *.rtf) or in typescript from contributors who do not have a PC. Illustrations should, ideally, be produced on A4 paper with a margin of at least 2.5cm all round with 'over-sized' lettering (14pt normal/body text, if typed) to allow for it to be photographically reduced to A5 (approx 70% reduction) and still be readable.

LOOKING BACK

Patricia Francis, Gallery Oldham, Greaves Street, Oldham, OL1 1AL.

I found this interesting article, written as a letter, when I was browsing some early editions of the Oldham Microscopical Society & Field Club Journal:

The Park Flora – A Series of Familiar Letters on the Wild and Cultivated Plants to be found in Alexandra Park, Oldham.

Letter 1. To the Secretary of the O.M.S. & F.C.

(Oldham Microscopical Society & Field Club)

Sir

...All plants do not leave their hiding places in a livery of green as these do [*Hemerocalis*, *Dielytra*, *Aconitum*]; for close at hand were two notable examples to the contrary: - the dark red peony that has lately burst through the soil and the foreign-looking plant, which I take to be *Polygonum cuspidatum* [*Fallopia japonica* (Houtt.) Ronse Decr.] now beginning its riotous career. This later plant is one of the most distinguished looking weeds we have, for weed it must be called, notwithstanding its beauty, It is only a late arrival in this country from distant Japan, but it has made such good use of its opportunities, that it turns up unexpectedly in nearly every place of cultivated ground, where it thrives, I expect, because it finds just what it wants – plenty of good food, air and sunshine. A few weeks time it will assume a most elegant appearance, with stalwart mottled stem and shapely leaves. It will be impossible to pass it by without noticing it.

From the *Journal of the Oldham Microscopical Society and Field Club*, No.3, p. 5, May 1887

Is this account the first or perhaps the first in the northwest of England to describe Japanese Knotweed as a ‘weed’ and to complain about its vigorous habit? Japanese Knotweed was introduced to the UK in 1825 and widely planted as an exotic garden ornamental before the invasive nature of the plant became clear. Japanese Knotweed is probably the most invasive plant in Britain and is scheduled under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act so that it is now an offence to plant or cause it to grow in the wild.

SOCIETY DIARY

Please note that members of the Northwestern Naturalists' Union are welcome to attend the meetings of all the affiliated societies

ACCRINGTON NATURALISTS' AND ANTIQUARIANS' SOCIETY

Meetings start at 2.30 pm at Antley Methodists' Church Hall, Blackburn Road, Accrington. Enquiries 01254 381236 or 236076. Non-members welcome.

Sunday 2 October : A Trip Around Morecambe Bay

Margaret Curry (Afternoon Tea)

Sunday 16 October : Bird Migration – The Great Eastern Flyway

Mike McKavett

Sunday 30 October : Derbyshire Well-dressing

Peter Dransfield

Sunday 13 November : Exploring the Volcanic Landscapes of Europe and the Americas

Mike Gosling

Sunday 27 November : Handloom Weavers' Cottages in Central Lancashire

Geoff Timmins

Friday 9 December : Christmas Luncheon at the Auberge Restaurant

Sunday 11 December : Red Squirrel Conservation in the Yorkshire Dales

Ian Court (Refreshments)

2012

Sunday 8 January : Members' Presentation – slides, exhibits, readings

Followed by afternoon tea

Sunday 22 January : The Methods of Archaeology

Dave Simmonds

Sunday 5 February : Costa Rica – Nature's Paradise

Stuart & Anita Kellington

Sunday 19 February : Don't Fall into the Trap – The Confusing Story of Chinese & Japanese Pitcher Plants

Martin Ashworth

Sunday 4 March : Ingleborough – Insight into an Iconic Mountain

David Johnson

Sunday 18 March : The Peregrines of Malham

Trevor Wood

Sunday 1 April : Annual General Meeting

refreshments

ALTRINCHAM AND DISTRICT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Except where otherwise stated, all meetings will be held at Bowdon Parish Centre, Stamford Road, Bowdon and will be timed approximately as follows : 7.30 pm informal gathering, 7.45pm lecture, 9.15 tea and chat.

All excursions leave from the public car-park, Cecil Road, Hale (behind supermarket) at the times indicated. If you intend to join the excursion please give three days notice to the leader. Food and drink for the day and suitable footwear are advisable.

Tuesday 11 October : Illustrated lecture: 'Using Herbs and Flowers in Medicine',
by Brian Barnes

Tuesday 25 October : Illustrated lecture: 'Nature in Focus',
by Jim Almond

Saturday 5 November : Full Day Excursion: Fungi Foray at Tatton Park.
with Dave Higginson Tranter. (Numbers limited.) Contact us for details

Tuesday 8 November : Illustrated lecture: 'Bhutan',
by Margaret Ledger

Tuesday 22 November : Illustrated lecture: 'Up the Inside Passage' (Vancouver to Glacier Bay),
by Jeff Clarke

Tuesday 6 December : Illustrated lecture: 'A taste of Islay',
a film with Gordon Yates

Saturday 10 December : Full Day Excursion: Annual Christmas Walk and pub lunch at The Kilton. Contact us for details

Saturday 10 January 2012 : 'Recent Travels';
an illustrated talk by Mike Pettipher

Tuesday 24 January : 'Welsh Cottage Days';
an illustrated talk by Margaret McCormick

Tuesday 14 February : 'Lost among the Alpines';
an illustrated talk by Marion Bray

Tuesday 28 February : 'Close Encounters - the Next Generation';
an illustrated talk by John & Margaret Sixsmith

Tuesday 13 March : 'Seashore to Mountain Top';
an illustrated talk by Peter Smith

Tuesday 27 March : Annual General Meeting - With a short slide show to conclude the meeting. Natural History exhibits are welcome. The supplementary spring/summer programme will be available at the meeting.

Tuesday 24 April : Nature Rambles round the N.W. Pacific;
an illustrated talk by Mike Ashworth.

Tuesday 25 September : First indoor meeting.

CHEADLE HULME & BRAMHALL NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Indoor meeting venue: St. Michael's Church Hall, St. Michael's Avenue, Bramhall, Stockport, SK7 2PG at 7.30pm

Thursday 20 October : AGM (7.15pm) + Bumblebees & Their Nests
George Pilkington

Thursday 17 November : Winter Wildlife in Florida
Heather James

Thursday 8 December : Flowers of Old Meadows
John Sears

LIVERPOOL BOTANICAL SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held in the Clore Natural History Centre, World Museum, Liverpool, starting at 11.00am.

Saturday 12 November : Fungus identification
Practical session by Steve Cross

Saturday 10 December : Atlantic Cloud Forest of Brazil
Lecture by Sheila Grey

2012

Saturday 14 January : Plants of the Himalayas and Beyond
Lecture by Joan Vincent

Saturday 11 February : Annual General Meeting
Followed by a resume of the 2011 field meetings, slides, photos, exhibits etc.

Saturday 10 March : Plants of North Lancashire
Lecture by Eric Greenwood

MACCLESFIELD & DISTRICT FIELD CLUB

Meetings commence 7.30 pm at the Salvation Army Hall, Roe Street, Macclesfield.

Wednesday 25 October : Heath House
Leader: Sue Titford (01625 429573) 9.00 am

Wednesday 22 October : Afternoon Walk
Leader: Ray Gambell (01625 43217) 1.30 pm

MERSEYSIDE NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

Indoor meetings are held at Wadham Road, Bootle, Liverpool, Merseyside, L20 2DD. Start 2.00 pm. Visitors are welcome at all meetings. Admission free to all indoor meetings. Coach trips: Book seats with coach secretary : John Clegg 0151 523 7353

Saturday 15 October : Carr Mill Dam
Meet at 11.00 am at the Waterside pub. [* Lime Street Station for the Wigan train at 10.01, connecting to St Helens Bus Station for the 352 bus at 10.40.] (Joint with Liverpool RSPB) (Howard Mills 0151 226 3285)

Continued on p 8

WHITE SATIN MOTHS

Leucoma salicis

Sabena J Blackbird

During a visit to Ainsdale in late June [2010] I found several dozen White Satin Moths *Leucoma salicis* in the large dune slack south of the Ainsdale Discovery Centre.

These dainty moths belong to the same family as Tussock moths (Lymantriidae) and have glossy satin-like wings, hence the name. The females are slightly larger than the males. Although their bodies are black they are covered in fine white scales and hairs. All aspects of their life cycle were on show that day. Adult moths emerge from pupae from late June to mid-August. Many males and females were already mating.

The females were busy laying the slightly flattened round green-coloured eggs on twigs. These egg masses are covered in a white froth.

When they hatch the tiny caterpillars start feeding, principally on willow and poplar leaves, then in September they crawl into a crack or crevice and spin a silken hibernating web. Unusually, the Satin Moth overwinters in the caterpillar stage and re-emerges early the following spring to continue feeding, growing to around two inches (5cm). The caterpillars are quite distinctive with rows of white blotches along their backs and tufts of red and black irritant hairs on their sides.

In June the caterpillars spin cocoon tents made of silk and the hairy pupae can be seen inside.

First printed in **Merseyside Naturalists' Association Newsletter**
January 2011.



Newly emerged White Satin Moth



Mating pair



Female laying green eggs in white froth.



Caterpillar - watch out for those hairs!



Silken tent with hairy black pupae inside

A CLOSER LOOK AT A SMALLER PATCH

Steve Priestley

At Christmas I was fortunate enough to be given a copy of *Wildlife of a Garden* by Jennifer Owen (published by Royal Horticultural Society, 2010). The book is an account of her trapping and record keeping in a thirty year study of her garden. The study is systematic, detailed and comprehensive. In it she records the plants and fungi and the animals from woodlice to mammals (in all 34 taxonomic groups). She did not do it alone; she had assistance from a number of individuals with expertise in different groups. However she carried out the trapping and compiled the data.

At the North Western Naturalists' Union AGM Patricia Francis gave a talk entitled "My Local Patch" about Seven Acres Country Park in Bolton and it seemed here was a theme that needed to be explored.

There are many national recording schemes for particular taxonomic groups usually recording at tetrad level. There is in depth recording of species at particular sites. But there seems to be an absence of detailed, comprehensive and longitudinal studies such as that carried out by Jennifer Owen.

Why is this important? Conservation work appears to revolve around conservation of particular habitats or conserving for particular species e.g. Biodiversity Action Plan species. But there may be conflicting objectives. Without the detailed and comprehensive recording of those sites how do we know what is missed, what is affected, damaged or destroyed? One example is the removal of beech trees from woodland. Whilst there may be good arguments to be made for their removal what effect does it have on the flora and fauna? Is there any monitoring?

It seems to me that the NWNNU is in a good position to try and address this. It brings together specialist recorders from many different areas of expertise. Could Seven Acres be recorded like Jennifer Owen's garden? According to the Friends of Seven Acres website the Lancashire Wildlife Trust carries out various ecological surveys and mentions 6 groups. Is it possible to go further and to carry out studies that are:

- Systematic (having a consistent recording regime)
- Detailed (smaller than tetrad level)
- Comprehensive (34+ taxonomic groups)
- Longitudinal (more than 10 years)

Sunday 23 October : Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve - Coach Trip

9.00 Bromborough, 9.15 Woodside, 9.30 William Brown Street and 9.45 Rocket (start of M62). £20. (Dave Hardy)

Saturday 12 November : Rimrose Valley

Meet 10.45 at Seaforth and Litherland station. (Joint with Liverpool RSPB) (John Clegg)

Saturday 10 December : Parkgate

Meet 12.00 noon at the Boat House for Christmas meal. Names to leader by 2nd December. (David Bryant)

ROCHDALE FIELD NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

www.rochdalefieldnaturalistsociety.co.uk Indoor meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month, September to April, at Cutgate Baptist Church, Edenfield Road, Rochdale. Charges: Members £2.00, Non-members £3.00. Enquiries: 01706 630707 and 814884 All Excursions depart from the cul-de-sac at Manchester Road, Rochdale. Time: Coaches 0900hrs, Cars 1000hrs Coaches return at 1700hrs except during the months of November, December, January and February when return is at 1600hrs. Queries: Field excursions – contact Rick Cowley on 01706 853791 / Coach bookings – contact Fred Royle on 01706 644394 Coach Price: Members £13, Non-members £15.

Thursday 13 October: Dragonflies

Rick Parker

Saturday 15 October : Hathersage, Derbyshire - Coach Trip

A. Cross

Saturday 29 October : Daisy Nook, Failsworth - Car Trip

S. Carr and R. Newing

Thursday 10 November: Coal Balls - geological feature of Pennine moors

Alison Tymon

Saturday 12 November : Marbury, Cheshire – Coach Trip

E. & D. Clutterbuck

Saturday 26 November : Carr Mill Dam, St. Helens – Car Trip

E. Clutterbuck and S. Allen

Thursday 8 December: A Ribble Estuary Year

Peter Guy

Saturday 10 December : Conway RSPB Reserve, N. Wales* – Coach Trip

R. & K. Cowley

2012

Thursday, 12 January: Wildlife of the Pennines

(Film) (Peter Hill Memorial Lecture) Gordon Yates

Saturday 7 January : Mytholmroyd, W. Yorks – Car Trip

M. Colley

Saturday 14 January : YWT Potteric Carr, S. Yorks* – Coach Trip

P. & D. Francis

Saturday 28 January : Lead Mine Clough, Anglezarke – Car Trip

A. Cross

Thursday 9 February: Life and Colour in our Northern Coastal Waters

Ron Crosby

Saturday 11 February : Fairburn Ings, W. Yorks – Coach Trip

R. & K. Cowley

Saturday 25 February : Dovestones, Saddleworth – Car Trip

G. Ashworth

Thursday 8 March: Brockholes Reserve

Sophie Leadsom (Reserve Manager)

Saturday 10 March : Grasmere/Rydal Water, Cumbria – Coach Trip

S. Allen

Saturday 24 March : Hardcastle Crag, Hebden Bridge – Car Trip

P. & D. Francis

Thursday 12 April : Members Night

(A selection of members' slides) All welcome.

Saturday 14 April : Wirrall/Dee estuary, Cheshire* – Coach Trip

M. Dean & P. Maddock

Saturday 28th April : LWT Brockholes, Lancs* – Car Trip

A. Cross & R. Cowley

Saturday 12 May : Cressbrook Dale, Derbyshire – Coach Trip

S. Carr & R. Newing

Saturday 26 May : Broadhead Clough, Cragg Vale – Car Trip

C. Flynn

Saturday 16 June : Bempton Cliffs/Flamborough Head* – Coach Trip

R. & K. Cowley

Saturday 30 June : LWT Meresands Wood, Lancs – Car Trip

P. Jackson

Saturday 14 July : Harfield Moor, S. Yorks – Coach Trip

P. & M. Culkin

Saturday 28 July : Barley, Pendle, Lancs – Car Trip

S. Pinnington & Y. Mynett

Saturday 11 August : Smardale, Cumbria – Coach Trip

E. & D. Clutterbuck

Saturday 25 August : Swindon Water, Burnley – Car Trip

F. Royle

Saturday 15 September : Upper Wharfedale, N. Yorks – Coach Trip

A. Cross

Saturday 29 September : Alderley Edge, Cheshire – Car Trip

M. Heywood

Saturday 13 October : Goyt Valley, Derbyshire – Coach Trip

S. Allen

Saturday 27 October : Pennington Flash – Car Trip

P. & M. Culkin

*NB There may be extra costs of entrance fees for non-members of RSPB, WWT and local Wildlife Trusts when visiting their reserves.

SADDLEWORTH NATURALISTS

All events listed are indoor meetings held at 7.30pm at the Brownhill Visitors' Centre at Dobcross.

Wednesday 12 October : Greater Manchester's Hidden Wildlife

Dave Winnard (Wildlife Photographer)

Wednesday 9 November : Butterflies

Dr. Tim Melling (RSPB)

December : no meeting

2012

Wednesday 11 January : Studying Small Mammals

Nick Martin

Wednesday 8 February : The Red Grouse

Derek Yalden

Wednesday 14 March : Your Wildlife Records are Important!

Speaker to be confirmed (Greater Manchester Ecology Unit)

Wednesday 11 April : Annual General Meeting

Plus members' digital pictures & light refreshments

WILMSLOW GUILD NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Indoor meetings held at Wilmslow Guild, 1 Brown Street at 7.45 pm. Visitors welcome to indoor meetings (£3.00) & field-trips (free). Contact Roy Beacham (secretary) for further information on 01606 891957

Thursday 6 October : Tatton Park Fungus Foray

Meet Knutsford entrance (SJ751791) to Tatton Park at 10.00 am

Thursday 27 October : How the Estuary Works

Graham Clarkson & Alan Bedford

Thursday 5 November : Martin Mere, Ormskirk
Meet outside the visitor centre (SJ429144) at 10.30 am

Thursday 24 November : The Natural History of Christmas
Mike Leach

Thursday 15 December : Annual General Meeting & Members' Evening
including quiz, members' presentations & seasonal fare

Thursday 19 January : The Art of Misidentification
Tim Melling

Thursday 16 February : The Woodland Trust
Andrew Bonehill

Thursday 15 March : Wildlife of the Pennines
Gordon Yates

Thursday 26 April : Wild Scotland
Judith Lovelady

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