

*THE  
NORTHWESTERN  
NATURALIST*

New series



Volume 16 No. 2 2015

# **The North Western Naturalists' Union**

Registered Charity No. 1108797

*President*

Patricia Francis

*Secretary*

Dr Martha Newton, c/o School of Biological Sciences,  
3.614 Stopford Building, University of Manchester,  
Manchester, M13 9PL

*Treasurer*

Alexander Mansfield  
alexandermansfield3@gmail.com

*Editor*

Mrs Patricia Francis,  
Gallery Oldham, Greaves Street, Oldham, OL1 1AL  
patricia.francis@oldham.gov.uk  
Tel: 0161 770 4863

*Typesetting*

Mr. Mike Walton

*Copy dates*

1 May for August publication  
1 November for February publicatiuon

ISSN 0303-7888

Cover illustration by Andrew Cowdell

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

## CONTENTS

<b>NWNU Vascular Plant Section Report - 2014</b> .....	4
<b>NWNU Bryophyte and Lichen Section - 2014</b> .....	5
<b>Society Diary</b>	
Calendars of Meetings of Affiliated Societies.....	7
<b>This is one Bird we <i>can</i> Help - the Swift</b>	
Edward Mayer.....	10
<b>The Green Hairstreak - <i>Callophrys rubi</i> in 2014</b>	
Steve Smith.....	13
<b>Affiliated Societies</b> .....	see inside rear cover

**Contributions for the next issue by 1 May please!**

## Preserving the Archives of Nature

The Linnean Society of London has issued a booklet containing useful advice for Societies and individuals on the preservation and conservation of paper records, with particular emphasis on those which might be of future use in guiding nature conservation efforts.

Titled “Preserving the archives of nature”, it was originally launched in 1990 but has recently been updated. Practical hints and tips are given that will help those responsible for these records to ensure their preservation.

To obtain a free copy of the booklet, write to The Executive Secretary, Linnean Society of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BF, or email [info@linnean.org](mailto:info@linnean.org)

# NWNU Vascular Plant Section Annual Report 2014

2014 was very busy year for botany in Lancashire. A great deal of time has been devoted to Lancashire north of the Ribble carrying out general recording for The Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) Atlas 2020. Visits to key sites include those to Lytham Dunes to tag a solitary bush of *Salix x friesiana* with Mike Wilcox and Kim Wisdom and to Gaitbarrows with Eric Greenwood and Rob Petley-Jones where we found two plants of Northern Bedstraw.

Other excursions included:

Lancashire Botany Group visits to the salt marshes at Warton, near Lytham where *Carex divisa* occurs; an exploration of the Glasson branch of the Lancaster Canal, Thurnham with locally abundant *Potamogeton alpinus* and *Catabrosa aquatica* and Bottom Laithe, Gisburn Forest to monitor Bird's-eye Primrose populations. The RSPB Bioblitz at Leighton Moss; Bioblitz explorations of Worsley Woods and the Haigh Hall estate as part of the Grey to Green project ran by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit; Liverpool Botanical Society excursions to Allerton Cemetery and the Eric Hardy Nature Reserve where *Adoxa* was discovered in a wooded clough and to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal about Maghull where two exotics Water Lettuce and Water Hyacinth were found; the Manchester Field Club excursion to Warton Crag.

This autumn saw the launch of the Heritage Lottery funded Biodiverse Society project led by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust for a period of three years. As with the Greater Manchester Grey to Green project the Biodiverse Society project will focus on re-

ording at key wildlife sites in Lancashire and north Merseyside by local community and local natural history groups especially where social needs have been identified. This project will generate a good deal of flora and fauna records and will no doubt generate some local naturalists too.

Efforts made during the year have also lead to the donation of botanical records in particular around 17,500 recent records from the Arnside Naturalists via Ann Kitchen. The combined total number of vascular plant records obtained for 2014 from North West England and North Wales is estimated to have exceeded 50,000.

Following on from the scanning of the North Lancashire BSBI recording cards by Lancashire Wildlife Trust volunteers for the Talking Records project the winter months have been devoted to the editing of vc60 date class data. Vc60 vascular plant records were originally entered to a database for a date range 1964-2002 but from the scanned cards is it possible to establish or estimate the year in which a species was recorded. This editing is essential for Atlas 2020, the Biodiverse Society sites and for the analysis of key species data for LERN-Natural England. The initial editing should be completed before our March 2015 AGM. There will still be work to do in particular the adding or editing of key species records held on index cards for vc60 and part of vc64 in Lancashire.

Finally great progress was also been made with the study of *Rubus* species in Lancashire. During 2014 I was contacted by Michal Sochar, a researcher at Palacky University in the Czech Republic where Gregor Mendel studied theology. Michal is particularly interested in chromosome counts for *Rubus* species and micro-species. I have been busy doing the leg work collecting

samples mainly from Lancashire whilst Michal has determined chromosome numbers. Thus far determinations have been made for over 100 taxa and some results have been outstanding indicating that new taxa with ploidy levels up to that of seven are evolving from the hybridisation of locally abundant named micro-species. Colleagues of Michal have also carried out some DNA research for samples gathered in Cheshire, Lancashire and Flintshire. The results are likely to be published shortly in academic journals and the associated vouchers should be donated to Manchester Museum.

## **North Western Naturalists' Union: Bryophyte & Lichen Section Annual Report 2014**

### **Saturday 15 February : Lindow Common**

Rain most of the day and following days of heavy rain much of the site was under a few inches of water, some Juncus areas so flooded that they could not be safely accessed. Only 33 species were recorded; nevertheless, several were new records for the tetrad. - JL.

### **Saturday 15 March : Darcy Lever Borrow Pits**

The Darcy Lever Borrow Pits is an large area reclaimed from old clay workings and is now being worked to create habitats for dragonflies. About 15 ponds have been created and over the last thirty years a good woodland has been developed. In all about 60 species were identified. Perhaps the most interesting area was a small damp area which produced *Aulacomnium palus-*

*tre*, *Fossombronina sp.*, *Jungermannia sp.* and *Philonotis fontana*. There were a number of *Sphagnum*s around the ponds but unfortunately we did not have any experts out that day. - NB.

### **Saturday 26 April : Northern end of Monksdale**

Our day on the Derbyshire limestone coincided with perfect weather for exploring the upper end of this deep dale, enabling all seven of us to concentrate on the diagnostic features of superficially similar species that some of us see only infrequently. Over 50 species were studied and discussed in considerable detail, of particular interest being the liverworts *Scapania aspera*, *Frullania tamarisci* and *Porella* spp., as well as species of the mosses *Plagiomnium*, *Neckera* and *Orthotrichum*. As is often the case, only time curtailed proceedings. - MEN

### **Saturday 7 June : Mow Cop near Biddulph**

Des. was not available to take this meeting so John and Norman substituted at short notice. Neither had been to the area before and we struggled to find any bryophytes as the rain came down heavier and heavier as the day progressed. A final list of about 30 was good for the site. - NB

### **Saturday 16 August : Rivington**

I substituted for John Lowell on this meeting, which was to the north near the Belmont road. There was a very brisk wind which caused me difficulties with runny eyes. The route took us from woodland into a boggy area and finally by hill streams. Interesting bryophytes included *Straminergon stramineum* and *Hyocomium armoricum* by the streams with masses of *Gymnocolea inflata* and *Diplophyllum albicans* on the damp cliffs above. There were half a dozen *Sphagnum*s in the

marshy area along with *Philonotus fontana*, and *Palustriella commutata*. - NB

### **Saturday 27 September : Black Clough, Woodhead**

Nine of us met to explore part of the River Etherow and streams of the Southern Pennines in woodland as well as open moorland, moors that were significantly affected by the industrial revolution. Although midges did their best to divert our attention, we were pleased to see a good range of bryophytes. *Atrichum crispum*, now a characteristic moss of north-western rivers and streams, was there in plenty, not far from its original sighting in Britain by J. Nowell in 1848. Other highlights included the moss, *Oligotrichum hercynicum*; as well as three species each of the liverwort genera *Barbilophozia* (*floerkei*, *atlantica* and *attenuata*) and *Scapania* (*undulata*, *nemorea* and *umbrosa*). We were also pleased to record seven taxa of *Sphagnum* (*palustre*, *papillosum*, *subnitens*, *fimbriatum*, *fallax* and *capillifolium* (vars *capillifolium* & *rubellum*); all of which are subtly involved in the current recovery of blanket mires. - MEN

### **Saturday 15 November : Ilkley Moor**

Bryologising Ba'tat - on the trail of Wharfedale's bygone bryologists.

Using a 1962 report compiled by Mary Dalby, erstwhile bryophyte Recorder at Wharfedale Naturalists Society, we set off in search of records of rarities on Ilkley Moor. Hampered only slightly by continual dense fog, we successfully located target habitats including base rich flushes and an area of calcareous moraine and flushing high on the moor. The diversity of bryophytes was something quite special! We had some really great records for Wharfedale including first records in the dale for *Sphagnum flexuosum*, *Scapania scandica*

and *Calliergon giganteum*, and second record for *Sphagnum teres* (other is Grassington Mire). Seven participants attended in total and special thanks are due to Tom Blockeel for his analysis of vouchers after the event. - GH

### **Saturday 6 December : Coombs Dale**

On a clear frosty morning, we started our bryologising in the upper part of Calver Quarry, which is on limestone. Though more overgrown than it used to be, the upper part still contains some areas of semi-bare ground. Notable on bare south-facing soil-banks were *Microbryum curvicolium* (at its only known Derbyshire site), along with *M. davallianum* and a little *Tortula lanceola*. Fruiting *Encalypta vulgaris* was very fine. Thin soil over the limestone produced *Didymodon acutus*, *Entodon concinnus* and a little *Thuidium assimile*. We moved on to Coombs Dale Wood nearby, which partly occupies the site of a former rubbish tip. There were some nice epiphytes, including *Pylaisia polyantha*, and the woodland flora included *Taxiphyllum wissgrillii* on a stone on the ground and some handsome *Plagiochila asplenioides*. On a short December day there only time to visit one area of limestone rocks in Coombs Dale itself, a known site for *Targionia hypophylla*. This was seen and admired in good quantity on one outcrop, along with more common calcicoles such as *Anomodon viticulosus* and *Porella platyphylla*. There was a little *Tortula modica* on soil on one rock ledge. - TB

## **NWNU - A.G.M.**

**Saturday 7 March 2015**

**2.00 pm in the Green Room, Bolton Library, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton**

# 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 07954 500642. Non-members welcome - £2.00 minimum lecture fee.

**Sunday 8 February : Limestone Flora of the Alps & Mediterranean Basin**

Mike Gosling

**Sunday 22 February : Clock Making in the Yorkshire Dales**

Derek Clabum

**Sunday 8 March : Anglesey to Walney: Habitats & Wildlife**

Charles Owen

**Sunday 22 March : AGM Member's Slides, exhibits etc refreshments**

## **ALTRINGHAM AND DISTRICT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

The indoor meetings are held at Jubilee Community Centre, The Firs, Bowdon, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA14 2TQ at 7.30pm. Excursions leave from the Jubilee Centre car park at 6.30pm, or meet at the venue itself. Entrance charges: £1.50 members, £3.00 guests. Please contact us at least 3 days in advance if you wish to attend any of the excursions.

[www.altnats.org.uk](http://www.altnats.org.uk), [info@altnats.org.uk](mailto:info@altnats.org.uk) , 0161 865 0118

**Tuesday 20 January : New Year Dinner**

**Tuesday 10 February : Pure Nature**

Margaret and John Sixsmith

**Saturday 14 February : Day Excursion**

**Tuesday 24 February : Social Event and Supper**

**Tuesday 10 March : AGM followed by In Search of Snow**

Mike Pettipher

**Tuesday 14 April : Lemurs of Madagascar**

Marion Bray

## **BLACKBURN & DISTRICT BIRD CLUB**

Indoor meetings are usually held on the first Monday of the month at St. Silas's Church Hall, Preston New Road, Blackburn at 7.30 pm. Outdoor meetings are held to observe and study birds in the field, and are usually led by a member of the committee.

## **CHESHIRE ACTIVE NATURALISTS**

To find out more information about how to join Cheshire Active Naturalists visit [www.cheshireactivenaturalists.org.uk](http://www.cheshireactivenaturalists.org.uk) or email Martyn at [Martyn@czd.org.uk](mailto:Martyn@czd.org.uk)

## **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 19 February : Merely Lakes**

Hugh Beggs

**Thursday 19 March : The Bird Lady**

Joan Potts

**Thursday 16 April : Excavations at Mellor**

Donald Reid

## **CHORLEY AND DISTRICT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

Meetings September - April St Mary's Parish Centre Chorley.

See [www.chorleynats.org.uk](http://www.chorleynats.org.uk) for details or telephone Phil Kirk 01257 266783

## **GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL RECORD CENTRE**

Any queries contact: Steve Atkins, Local Record Centre Development Officer, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, Council Offices, Wellington Road, Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 6DL 0161 342 4121, Mobile 07792 041 528 [Stephen.atkins@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.atkins@tameside.gov.uk)

## **LANCASHIRE & CHESHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

Indoor meetings are at 7.30pm, unless indicated and are at Frodsham Community Centre, Fluin Lane, Frodsham

## **LIVERPOOL BOTANICAL SOCIETY**

Indoor meetings are held in the Clore Natural History Centre, World Museum, Liverpool, starting at 11.00am. Unless otherwise stated field meetings begin at 10.30am.

**Saturday 7 February : AGM**

Members' field meeting photos

**Saturday 7 March : Special Trees of Ness Botanic Gardens**

Tim Baxter

## **MACCLESFIELD & DISTRICT FIELD CLUB**

Indoor meetings commence at 7.30pm at the Salvation Army Hall, Roe Street, Macclesfield. [www.maccfieldclub.co.uk](http://www.maccfieldclub.co.uk)

Starting points for walks are obtainable from the walk leader. Adequate footwear should be worn, no dogs please.

**Monday 23 February : Wild about Weeds**

David Warner

**Monday 23 March : Pieces from the Past**

Cath Walton



**Monday 27 April : Kinder Mountain Rescue**

John Mottram

**MANCHESTER FIELD CLUB**

Indoor Meetings are held at Sale United Reformed Church Hall, Montague Road, Sale, M33 3BU, near Sale Metro station, commencing 7.00pm. Members £1.00, visitors £2.00.

Chair: Alan Hill, 24 Kingsfield Drive, Didsbury, M20 6JA; awhill@globalnet.co.uk  
Tel: 0161 215 0971; mobile 07719 659 689. www.manchesterfieldclub.org.uk

**Saturday 14 February : Programme meeting 6.30 followed by Wildlife of Madagascar**

Mike Pettipher

**Saturday 28 February : Burton Mere Reserve (RSPB)**

Meet 11.00am. Take M56 to end (A494), then turn right onto A540 and follow brown signs for centre (SJ 319 739). Leader Ann Ramsay (tel: 980 4459).

**Saturday 14 March : Birds, Butterflies and Dragonflies of East Cheshire**

Jack Swan

**Saturday 28 March : Hollingworth Lake**

Meet 11.00am at main car park/VC at Hollingworth Lake, map ref SD 933 149.  
Leaders Christine and Roger (tel: 740 7670).

**MANCHESTER MICROSCOPICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

All meetings are held in the Stopford Building (Medical School) University of Manchester M13 9PT, corner of Oxford Road and Aker Street (next to the Holy Name Church), Manchester, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. **All are welcome** – feel free to bring a friend or two. Non-members and members of other Societies are welcome. The Society's library will be available at all Stopford meetings and includes copies of our Newsletters and literature on microscopic history, as well as many books on microscopy and Natural History.

www.manchestermicroscopical.org.uk

**MARPLE NATURALISTS**

Meetings commence at 8.00 pm at United Reform Church, Hibbert Lane, Marple, SK6 7NN. *Visitors welcome: £4 for individual meetings, Children free.* For further information: Lynne Shuttleworth – 0161 427 2346 or Derek Clifford 427 4611 or Marple Naturalists Community page on [www.marple-uk.com](http://www.marple-uk.com)

Outdoor meetings - arranged separately and announced at meetings.

**Wednesday 4 February : Chimpanzees in Kenya**

Dr Kath Edwards

**Wednesday 4 March : AGM and Members Talks**

(Cont. on page 16)

# This is one Bird we *can* Help – the Swift!

Edward Mayer

[www.swift-conservation.org](http://www.swift-conservation.org)

There's nothing like Swifts for brightening up our lives. Only Swifts can add such dash, excitement and drama to any town or city sky. Nothing else can even get near to flying like that, and bring that something extra special to the skies above even the grimmiest townscape. A summer migrant, Swifts are the sole representative of their group, the Apodidae, to reach us, and even then they may spend only 12 weeks here in the UK, just enough to raise one brood of chicks, and get back to Africa before it becomes too cold.

The UK's fastest bird in level flight, Swifts are an aerodynamic marvel. Recent research by aerodynamic engineers has found that Swifts use very advanced technologies; leading edge vortex creation, and high aspect ratio wings, as well as swing-wing ability give them their amazing agility in the air while retaining an ability to stop dead from high speed flight when landing in a confined space.

Swifts are so adapted for a life on the wing that they cannot perch, and can only shuffle when on a flat surface. They never land on the ground unless in serious trouble; they spend all their life on the wing apart from when in the nest. It makes sense. Very few predators can catch them up there, (I've seen Swifts migrating North at 8,000 feet up, heading straight into a blizzard) and until aircraft came along and sucked snoozing Swifts into their jet engines, the skies were by far the safest place to be for a bird as aerial and as fast as the Swift. But we take Swifts for granted. Screaming as they

dash amongst the roofs, we think they'll always be there to brighten up our summers.

The British Trust for Ornithology's Breeding Bird Survey tells another story. Because of their decline, Swifts are now "Amber Listed". Between 1995 and 2011, the Common Swift declined by 39% throughout the UK, by 42% in the North West, by 57% in Scotland, by 44% in Wales, and by 49% in the South East.

Why has this happened? Two reasons, both rather obvious, but still much debated. The first, developments in the UK's building stock; the second, agricultural insecticides affecting the availability of Swift's aerial insect food.

95% of the UK's Swifts nest in open eaves, under loose roof tiles or in holes in walls (Homes for Wildlife, RSPB, 2008). But those holes and crevices are lacking in new, insulated and renovated properties, because of recent more stringent building regulations, new materials and techniques, the pressing need to insulate old properties, and because nest places are usually inadvertently removed or obstructed during repairs. Apertures in buildings now have to be sealed or fitted with grilles, roof tiles are fitted without gaps, and we no longer tolerate leaving old holes in walls.

With massive activity in recent years in property redevelopment, refurbishment and more recently, insulation, across the UK and Europe, Swifts are being deprived of their old nest places at frightening speed. Where post-war or post-communism large scale building reconstruction and renovation took place, such as in the former East Germany, declines of up to 70% in the Swift populations were reported soon after, and there has been near-total elimination of Swifts in the UK's rebuilt town centres

such as Peterborough, and for that matter, London too, while large populations still remain in the centre of better preserved cities such as Rome, Barcelona and Madrid.

In the UK, the Swift is now mostly a bird of Victorian and Edwardian streets, buildings with open eaves or gables that can host their nests, and as these are refurbished, sealed and insulated, the species' likely future will be confined to those historic buildings still rich in holes, cracks and crevices where its occupation is tolerated. Indeed, in just a few years time one can envisage going on an RSPB Members Group Coach trip to see the "*Famous Swift Colony at the Old Medieval Chantry House at Henley-on Thames*", as by then all other less illustrious nest sites may well have been eliminated.

The other issue is insecticides, where in particular the new neonicotinoids appear to be another cause for decline. There has been much discussion of their effect on bees, but as they kill with no differentiation between species, they pose a threat to all insects and so to all insectivores. The appalling sudden collapse of UK populations of such pure insectivores as Cuckoos and Spotted Flycatchers may very well turn out to be linked to insecticide use. Swifts are pure insectivores too, and while they possess supreme mobility and can fly many miles in search of food, a general dearth will inevitably have a big effect on them too.

### **The Future**

Even if we take action now, it's going to be very hard to bring Swifts back to their former numbers. They are slow breeders, and are sometimes very slow indeed to find new places to breed. There is some evidence that their post-breeding aerobic

group activity is key to encouraging young Swifts to seek out nest places, so population declines could lead also to a decline in attempts to find a nest.

But we must try to help them, and there are certainly proven ways we can do it. Our three-point plan, if widely adopted, could stem the decline. It encourages developers, planners, local authorities as well as householders to:

- *Preserve Swift nest places in existing buildings*
- *Replace nest places that are lost through building work and demolition*
- *Build internal nest places into as many new buildings as possible*

Nest place preservation is the best option and it is easy, as long as it is planned into the building project. People often tell me "If only we had known the roofer was going to block up the Swifts' access to their nests". So whatever the size of the project, plan the job so the Swifts are safe and their nests are saved. There are many ways of doing this and Swift Conservation can advise on a suitable strategy for a very wide range of building types.

Replacing lost nests is easy too. One way is to substitute a commercially available "Swift Brick" for every old nest place, another is to make a "Swift Eaves Nest Box" to replace en bloc lost nests in the old eaves.

Getting Swift Bricks into new buildings is very much a matter of persuading local authorities and developers to require their inclusion via the Planning process. A lot has been achieved this way, especially in London, Cambridge and Exeter, but a very recent and most encouraging example is Liverpool's new Everyman Theatre, which



has just opened with 10 Swift bricks in its walls, a great step in the right direction!

There are more and more UK companies making Swift Bricks, and as a result there is a good choice of different types at varying prices, and the same is also true of Swift nest boxes; the choice available is far better than ever before.

Further action that would help Swifts could be as follows. Swifts' nests are protected by the Wildlife Act when in use, but outside the breeding season they can be destroyed legally. As they are very faithful to their old nests, and move with great reluctance, year-round protection of their breeding sites, as provided by our laws for bats, would ensure they have somewhere to nest in, in an increasingly inhospitable environment. Likewise, stringent controls on insecticides, including a total ban on their use in urban areas, where Swifts nest, could only help them.

In conclusion, unless we provide for Swifts now, within a few years there will be very few places left for them. This would be a terrible failure. If we cannot support one of

the most dramatic and exciting birds we have, a bird that above all others, can lift our spirits to the skies, can we save anything, or are we headed for a world where everything that doesn't make money is to be eliminated?

Let's be positive! You can help Swifts yourself, it's easy and fun. You can make your home a Swifts' home. Put up some Swift nest boxes. Many ornithological supply companies now sell them. If you work in building, or have responsibilities that involve buildings, for example, you are a Trustee of any organisation with buildings, you can get some Swifts nests into them, or you can preserve their existing Swifts' nests.

Do Swifts a good turn! You won't be on your own; there are now bands of Swift enthusiasts in many parts of the UK all trying to help this wonderful bird. Join them!

For lots of practical advice on how to help them, plus contacts and nest box sales links see our web site at [www.swiftconservation.org](http://www.swiftconservation.org)

# BUTTERFLIES of OLDHAM: GREEN HAIRSTREAK *Callophrys rubi* in 2014

Steve Smith – s.b.smith@hotmail.co.uk

*Darting by  
Catching the eye  
Rubi?*

*A different shade of green  
An iridescent sheen  
On bilberry seen*



## Background

In 2011 after discovering the ringlet (*A. hyperantus*) butterfly on the Oldham/Ashton boundary near Park Bridge, I decided to carry out a survey of butterflies solely within the Oldham Borough. In 2011 and 2012 time was limited mainly due to work. At the end of May 2013 I retired and during the remainder of

the butterfly season spent a considerable time in the field recording sightings.

At the commencement of the field work and within just a few days, of immediate interest was the sighting on 4th June of green hairstreak (*C. rubi*) in a sheltered location off Ship Lane/Hill Top Lane south east of Grains Bar. The butterfly usually is on the wing from late April until mid/late June depending on the weather conditions so this was a relatively late sighting. This was the only sighting of the year.

Data on butterflies in Oldham is limited. I researched old records of this species and others by particularly referring to the area Butterfly Conservation reports and the splendid, informative book by Peter B Hardy, 'Butterflies of Greater Manchester' published in 1998. Also Patricia Francis, of the Natural History Department based at Gallery Oldham, kindly allowed me access to the archive information. Thanks to them both. Peter Hardy subsequently provided me with site grid references of Green Hairstreak (*C. rubi*) from the Tunstead area dating from 1994.

From the Butterfly Conservation reports, the latest records are from 2009 of a site in the Uppermill area and a former site near Dove Stone which had a last confirmed record in the period 2000/2005. The lack of previous records is most likely due to under-recording in the mainly inaccessible places preferred by this butterfly.

In Oldham the butterfly is an upland species which uses bilberry as its main host-plant.

So armed with this limited but important information, I was ready for my forays into the field. The only requirements now were for fine weather during the flight period and that I would stay fit and healthy!

## 2014

Before embarking on forays looking for *rubi*, I decided that some sort of plan was needed to maximise my efforts. As previously mentioned, in 2013, towards the end of the flight period, I discovered a site near Grains Bar - the only site that I knew the butterfly existed. So I decided to target this site so as to ascertain when the adult butterfly was on the wing before exploring further areas in Oldham. I visited the area a couple of times towards the end of a generally cloudy and cool April without any sightings. On Monday morning 28th April the sun was shining and a warm day was forecast so I again made my way to the site. After traversing a short section of tussocky grassland and making my way down towards a clump of conifer trees I reached the bilberry area and was immediately rewarded with the appearance of a single adult butterfly. Rather than linger to see if there were more on the wing, I quickly relocated to Moorgate Quarry (disused) where bilberry is quite extensive.

I was greeted at the quarry entrance by a male *A. cardamines* but I didn't venture into the quarry but instead walked up Dry Clough Lane, a footpath on the northern boundary. After a short distance walking along the uphill track, a *P. brassicae* and *P. napi* were seen and then my eyes were drawn to a small butterfly flitting amongst the bilberry. It settled on the leaf of a shrub at the side of the footpath - it was *rubi*. I didn't see any more at Moorgate that morning so I can only assume that the butterfly was one of the first to emerge at this site.

The next day I visited the bilberry adjacent to the disused quarries at Crompton Fold. Seven butterfly species were seen but not *rubi*. I had previously looked in 2012 and 2013 at this site without success.

Into May and on the 3rd I visited Tunstead the area where 20 years ago *rubi* had been recorded. Parking up, I wandered around the footpath network looking for bilberry. I noticed gorse bushes - another foodplant but not, apparently, in this area of the UK - but didn't see any target butterflies. Still no sign of any bilberry, I then ventured onto Old Thorn Lane and reached a point where I could go uphill or downhill. I was undecided whether to carry on searching as I needed to be elsewhere. As the sun was blazing down I decided to not pass up the chance of seeing *rubi* so I decided to carry on for a little while longer. Downhill didn't look promising so I set off uphill on the rocky lane. With still no bilberry in sight and on the point of calling it a day, I then crested a rise in the lane and could see bilberry at the laneside not too far ahead. On reaching the bilberry, a *rubi* was immediately seen, then another. A little further up the lane and another was seen. I had run out of time, so I departed rather quickly but my persistence had been rewarded.

During 2013, I had noticed bilberry in a favourable location for *rubi* alongside Dean Head - a quite sheltered, sunny location with shubs nearby. Perching locations are important for the male adult butterflies so they can look out for females and also chase off intruding males. So I was there on the 6th May walking down Dean Head in sunshine, confident of success - only to be disappointed! I then walked the short distance to Tetly Bye Road to inspect the bilberry in a more open location. Before I reached the bilberry, I could see with my naked eye a single butterfly resting on the bilberry - its green colouration slightly different to the bilberry leaves. In all, four butterflies were seen at this location.

I was back in the field on 14th May scouting the Denshaw area. On my way home, I noticed a large tract of bilberry on the hillside at Old Tame. Luckily a footpath leading up the hillside was close by so it wasn't long before I was treading what was actually a farm track, heading up a fairly steep slope. As it turned out, the track took me away from the patch of bilberry spotted from the road below but I carried on walking regardless. At the top of the slope, the track levelled out slightly and became indistinct. I could see a large area of bilberry ahead so I made my way over a partially hidden stile and headed towards the bilberry. An indistinct footpath in the grass was reached which was close to the bilberry and it wasn't long before a single *rubi* was seen. I walked about 100m along the path and noted (without venturing into the bilberry) 11 butterflies.

Later that day, I was east of Uppermill village in the area of Running Hill Head and Pobgreen where I saw single *rubi* at two locations close to the 'ring road' which wends its way through the area. It was now becoming apparent to me that *rubi* was far more 'common' than I could have expected. It had gone undetected previously most likely due to lack of observers. Or was this a particularly good year for *rubi*? At this point, I was confident that I would discover more sites. And so it proved.

On the 16th May I was in a small disused quarry off Lark Hill Lane and thought I saw a *rubi* in flight. I couldn't be certain. So, undeterred, the next day, in brighter weather conditions, I was again in the quarry and pleased to see a single butterfly flying and resting on bilberry. Perseverance paying off once again. Moving on, I parked my car in the lay by on Standedge Road and walked the short distance down the road

towards Diggle to the track entrance which would take me up the bilberry clad hillside towards Hunters Hill Lane. Immediately on arriving at the track entrance at the roadside, a *rubi* was flying around the bilberry. I ascended the wide, very rocky track towards the junction, some 100m ahead, where the track diverged - a footpath going south and Hunters Hill Lane track going northwards. At the junction a further two butterflies were seen and altogether, after walking up Hunters Hill Lane and then a short section of the footpath leading southwards, 13 in total had been seen. On my way home via Huddersfield Road, I drove past a patch of bilberry at the roadside part of which looked good for *rubi*. I quickly pulled over, walked back up the road and scrambled into the tussocky grass leading to a partially sheltered area of bilberry where shrubs would provide perching facilities. I immediately saw a butterfly resting on bilberry - it flew off and I lost sight of it. I then searched the area of bilberry in what was not ideal habitat (rather exposed to the elements) and unsurprisingly, no further butterflies were seen. Before leaving, I went back to where I saw the butterfly and, yes, it was there. Just one but looking splendid on the bilberry in warm sunshine.

I referred to previous distribution maps in the introduction, a tetrad south east of Dove Stone Reservoir where *rubi* had been recorded - an old record from the first years of this century. So on the 19th May I made my way up Chew Road - fairly steep to start with as the reservoir was left behind. Plenty of bracken but no sign of bilberry. Then as the road levelled out, I saw bilberry the other side of the valley in which Chew Brook flows. I carefully made my way down the steepish grassland, found a convenient crossing point in

the narrow stream to reach the bilberry. I went to a sheltered area of bilberry firstly and immediately a *rubi* gave flight. Further searching of the area and a further two butterflies were seen. The bilberry extended up the valley so I scrambled upwards to the footpath above that went further up the valley. Just before the path met a timber bridge that crosses the stream, I saw another *rubi* resting on bilberry below. I searched this area but that was the only butterfly seen.

Next day I decided to search around the Grains Bar area. Making my way from Grains Bar to Crompton Fold along Buckstones Road I noticed a patch of bilberry roadside. I pulled in, crossed the road carefully (sharp bend in the road) and gazing at the bilberry spotted a single butterfly. Not for the first time but only a single butterfly seen in this area and the adjacent extensive bilberry. Was it amazing luck to see it? Or was it a case of the more I look, the luckier I get?

I had visited the disused quarries above Uppermill, west of the railway line, a few times in this and previous years and knew that bilberry was present. I was soon in the quarries after leaving Buckstones Road, searching without success. Then just when it seemed to be devoid of *rubi*, a single butterfly was seen close to the vertical rock face.

On the 1st June, I was driving down Grains Road towards Delph. The hillside to the south is one mass of bilberry - exposed and open. I suddenly noticed mixed in with the bilberry some shrubbery close to the roadside next to a convenient stile to gain access. I felt *rubi* in the air! I suddenly stopped the car, grabbed my binoculars and was quickly legging it up the road towards the stile. Amazingly, as I stood on

the stile, a single *rubi* was quickly seen resting in the bilberry. I didn't bother to cross the stile as I was on a social outing - and running late. Three butterflies were seen later that day at the previous site on Hunters Hill Lane and these proved to be the last of the season. A rather surprising early finish as the butterfly is usually on the wing until mid-June and sometimes into July.

Later, in the summer, I did notice further unexplored areas of bilberry that could hold *rubi*. Two of particular interest are at Lane End, close to the Tameside boundary, and near Slackcote. Areas to be searched in 2015.

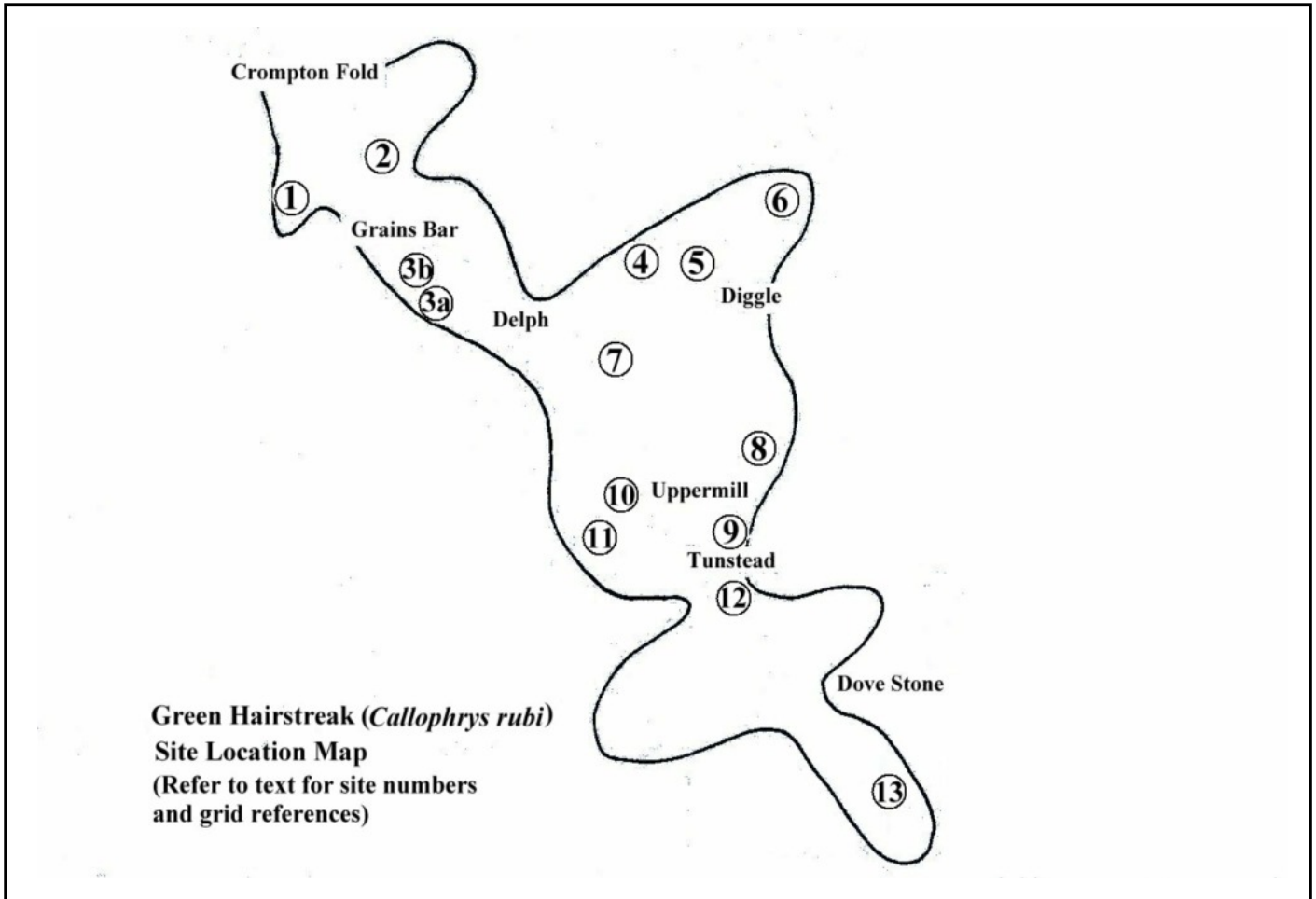
In conclusion, I have prepared a location map (opposite) which is part of this report, and also list the grid references of the sites referred to. It would appear that this butterfly will most likely be encountered in any suitable patch of bilberry within the boundary shown on the map. This elusive butterfly is far more widespread than records suggest and as noted earlier, this is most probably due to under-recording.

## Affiliated Societies

A list of affiliated societies is shown on the inside of the back cover.

Annual Subscriptions (£7.50) are now due





**Site Listing (refer to location map)**

1	Dog Hill, Buckstones Road.....	SD952090
2	Old Tame.....	SD966095
3(a)	Hill Top Lane.....	SD970080
3(b)	Grains Road.....	SD969083
4	Huddersfield Road.....	SD997088
5	Hunters Hill Lane.....	SE001087
6	Tetley Bye Road.....	SE010093
7	Lark Hill Lane.....	SD992074
8	Running Hill Gate.....	SE012067
9	Pobgreen.....	SE008061
10	Disused Quarry, Uppermill.....	SD995060
11	Dry Clough Lane, Moorgate Quarry.....	SD993055
12	Old Thorn Lane.....	SE006048
13	Chew Brook.....	SE020027 & SE024024

(Cont. From page 5)

**Wednesday 1 April : The Life of Bees**

John Charlton

**Wednesday 6 May : Farming and Natural Life in the Marple area**

Bill Mellor

**Wednesday 3 June : Pennine Edge Barn Owl project**

Project Member

**MERSEYSIDE NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION**

Full programme listings are on our website [www.mnapage.info](http://www.mnapage.info) and reports of previous trips on our blog at [www.NaturalistsNotebook.mnapage.info](http://www.NaturalistsNotebook.mnapage.info)

**Saturday 7 February : Manor Road to West Kirby,**

part of Wirral Circular Walk. Meet 10.30 Manor Road Station. Leader: John Clegg

**Wednesday 11 February : Festival Gardens**

Meet 11am main gate on Riverside Drive Leader : John Clegg

**Saturday 21 February : Swift Conservation 2.00 p.m**

Edward Mayer. Followed by AGM. Liverpool Central Library.

**Saturday 14 March : Coach trip to Marton Mere and Fairhaven Lakes**

Meet 8.30 Conway Park Station, 8.45 William Brown St. and 9.00 Rocket (start of M62) £20 Leader : John Clegg

**Saturday 28 March : Moore Nature Reserve**

Meet Lapwing Lane at 11.00. Leader : John Clegg

**Monday 30 March : Childwall Woods**

Meet 10.45 at the corner of Aldbourne Avenue and Woolton Road.  
Leader: Howard Mills 07710 217663

**Sunday 5 April : Hilbre**

Meet 9.15 prompt at the Dee Lane Slipway. Leader : David Bryant.

**Saturday 11 April : World's End**

Meet 7am at the Five Crosses pub, Minera (LL11 3UT) (SJ276523) Car share, offers and requests to Leader : Alexander Mansfield

**Saturday 25 April : Marshside**

Meet Marshside car park at 11.00. Leader : John Clegg

**Saturday 9 May : Carr Mill Circular**

Meet 10.45 Garswood Station. Leader : Howard Mills 07710 217663

**Sat 16 May : Coach trip to Manifold Valley, Derbyshire**

Meet 8.45 Conway Park Station, 9.00 William Brown Street, 9.15 Rocket (start of M62) £20. Leader : David Bryant.

**Wednesday 27 May : Dovestones Reservoir, Saddleworth**

Meet Lime Street Station for the 10.12 train to Manchester Victoria. Day return ticket to Greenfield approx £17. Leader : David Bryant.

**Sunday 14 June :** Coach trip to Aber Falls **OR** Bodnant Gardens  
Meet 8.00 Rocket (Crimpers), 8.15 William Brown Street, 8.30 Conway Park Station  
£20. Leaders : David Bryant at Aber Falls and Barbara Lee at Bodnant.

**Wednesday 24 June : Minera**

Meet Central Station for the 8.45 Chester train, then two buses. Buy Arriva Day Ticket at Chester. Total cost around £15. Leader : David Bryant.

**NELSON NATURALISTS SOCIETY**

All meetings are held at Christ Church, Carr Road, Nelson and start at 7.30pm  
Enquiries: David Nelson 01282 863012 davidnelson@btinternet.com

**NORTH WEST FUNGUS GROUP**

**Saturday 21 February : AGM 10am (Coffee) for 10.30 at Risley Moss, north Warrington.**

**Sunday 12 April : Freshfield and Ainsdale NNR, Merseyside.** Ken Jordan Memorial Foray.

Meet 10.30 at Freshfield Station car park SD291084 (Sheet 108) (L37 7DD). Leave A565 Formby-by-Pass onto B5424 at roundabout signposted for Formby Point BUT at mini roundabout keep straight on until Freshfield Road then turn right. (OR go by train).  
Leader - Tony Carter (0151-724-4600)

**Sunday 17 May : Beacon Hill Country Park, Upholland, West Lancashire.**

Meet at 10.30 in Rangers' car park, Elmers Green Lane, off Beacon Lane SD505067 (Sheet 108) (WN8 7RU). From M58 Junction 5 exit for A577 Skelmersdale East, passing south under the Mway but then turning back north until to you reach a roundabout signposted to Beacon Park. Take right up A577 Windmill Road and continue, turning right then left into Upholland. At wrought iron clock in town centre, turn sharp left onto Mill Lane /Beacon Lane. Continue 2 miles to Beacon Park Golf Centre on left, turning down to car park continuing left to the far end of this car park and the Rangers' cabins.  
Leader - John Watt (07768 043 461/01695 578843).

**Sunday 28 June : Spring Wood, nr Whalley.**

Meet 10.30 at Spring Wood Car Park, adjacent to Visitor Centre / Picnic Area on A671. SD741361 (Sheet 103) (BB7 9TD). Leader – Mike Valentine (07541 240874)

**NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION - BRYOPHYTE & LICHEN SECTION**

Section Secretary: Norman Bamforth 1 Corporation Road, Audenshaw, Manchester. M34 5LY (0161 336 3914)

All meetings are on Saturdays starting at 10:30 and will commence whatever the weather.

Please bring food and clothing adequate for a full day in the field and check with the leader or Section Secretary a day or so before the meeting in case of venue changes. Beginners are welcome at ANY meeting and there will always be a more experienced field bryologist present who will be more than happy to name and talk through the identification features of species encountered. There will not always be a Lichenologist present.

**Saturday 28 February : Etherow Country Park, Compstall, Stockport.**

John Lowell.

Meet at Country Park Visitor Centre off B6104 (SJ 965908)

**Saturday 21 March : Greta Wood, Burton-in-Lonsdale.** Mike Canaway.

Meet at small car park at Burton-in-Lonsdale recreation ground next to the River Greta at SD654720. Directions from Lancaster or M6 Junction 34, take the A683 NE then the A687 to Burton-in-Lonsdale. Near the centre of the village there is a large church on the right, shortly after this take a right at the road junction and go down hill to cross over the River Greta. Immediately after the river bridge turn left and the recreation ground car park is about 150 yards on the left.

**Saturday 18 April : Astley Moss, near Leigh.** Martha Newton.

Meeting Place within SJ7097 To be finalised later.

**Saturday 16 May : Watergrove Reservoir, Wardle, Rochdale.** Norman Bamforth.

Meet at Car Park below dam. (SD912176). This meeting is to look for lichens as well as bryophytes.

**Saturday 13 June : Warton Crag.** Paul Patchett.

From Junction 35 M6, right onto A6 and first left. Meeting up near the village church; SD 498 723

**NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION - MANCHESTER & NORTH  
MIDLANDS FERN GROUP**

Contact: Secretary@eBPS.org.uk

**NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION – VASCULAR PLANT SECTION**

Contact: David Earl - david.earl@talktalk.net

**OLDHAM MICROSCOPICAL & NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

Meetings at Werneth Centre, Oldham, at 7.30 pm for more information call Jack Slater 0161 626 9311

**Monday 26 January : Basement collections**

**Monday 2 February : Snowy Owl – King of the Arctic**

Gordon Yates

**Monday 9 February : Equipment Practicals (hands-on)**

**Monday 23 February : Finds, photographs & microscopes**

**Monday 2 March : Audio-visual night**

**Monday 9 March : Finds, photographs & microscopes**

**Monday 16 March : Finds, photographs & microscopes**

**Monday 23 March : Planning summer programme**

**Monday 30 March : Equipment Practicals (hands-on)**

**Monday 20th April : Finds, photographs & microscopes**

## **PRESTON BIRD WATCHING AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

Meetings at St. Mary's Church Hall, Cop Lane, Penwortham.

Further details from Steve Halliwell 01772 705468, [www.prestonsociety.co.uk](http://www.prestonsociety.co.uk)

## **ROCHDALE FIELD NATURALISTS' SOCIETY**

[www.rochdalefieldnaturalistsociety.co.uk](http://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.

Enquiries: 01706 630707 and 814884. Charges: Members £2.00, Non-members £3.00.

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 – Secretary 01706 843685 /

[secretary@rochdalefieldnaturalists.co.uk](mailto:secretary@rochdalefieldnaturalists.co.uk)

Coach bookings – contact Fred Royle on 01706 644394 Coach Price: £14.

### **Saturday 24 January : Wince Brook, Middleton – Car Trip**

Sheila Carr and Bob Newing

### **Thursday 12 February : Extramadura**

William Howarth

### **Saturday 14 February : Burton Mere Wetlands, Wirral – Coach Trip**

Rick and Karen Cowley

### **Saturday 28 February : Dovestones, Oldham (RSPB\*) – Car Trip**

Rick & Karen Cowley

### **Thursday 12 March : The Wigan Wetlands**

Mark Champion

### **Saturday 14 March : Tittesworth Reservoir, Staffs – Coach Trip**

Peter and Dinah Francis

### **Saturday 28 March : Roddlesworth, West Pennine Moors – Car Trip**

Fred Royle

### **Thursday 9 April : Members night (A selection of members' slides)**

All welcome.

### **Saturday 11 April : Kirkby Lonsdale, near Lancaster – Coach Trip**

Pamela Jackson

### **Saturday 25 April : Swillington Ings, Leeds – Car Trip**

Alan Nuttall

### **Saturday 16 May : Coombes Valley, near Leek (RSPB\*) – Coach Trip**

Sonia Allen

### **Saturday 30 May : Woolston Eyes, near Warrington – Car Trip**

Peter and Dinah Francis

**Saturday 13 June : Bempton Cliffs, Yorkshire (RSPB\*) – Coach Trip**

Sonia Allen

**Saturday 27 June : Tandle Hill, Royton – Car Trip**

Ron and Lynne Powell

\* Please note there may be an entrance fee or parking charge at these venues

**SADDLEWORTH NATURALISTS**

All events listed are indoor meetings held at 7.30pm at the Methodist Centre, The Square, Uppermill, Oldham,

Visitors welcome. Members £2.00, non-members £2.50.

**Wednesday 11 February : Saddleworth Wildlife**

Ken Gartside

**Wednesday 11 March : Wildlife Photography Around the UK**

David Winnard

**Wednesday 9 April : Annual General Meeting**

Member's 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  
rybeacham@aol.com

**Saturday 14 February : Rode Hall, Alsager Field Trip**

David Warner

**Thursday 19 February : Winter & Spring at Pikelow Farm**

David Taylor

**Thursday 19 March : Working on Derbyshire's Nature Reserves**

Julia Gow

**Saturday 25 April : Warburton's Wood Field Trip**

Roy Beacham

**Thursday 30 April : Newts in your Pond**

James Grundy

**Saturday 16 May : Lathkill Dale Field Trip**

Steve Osborne

**Wednesday 3 June : Hare Hill Field Trip**

National Trust Gardener

**Saturday 13 June : Loggerheads, Mold Field Trip**

Roy Beacham

**NWNU Web Site**  
**[www.northwesternnaturalistsunion.org.uk](http://www.northwesternnaturalistsunion.org.uk)**

**North Western Naturalist Union – Affiliated Societies 2015**  
The current affiliate annual subscription is £7.50 and

Accrington Naturalists' & Antiquarian Society	Leigh Ornithological Society
Altrincham & District Natural History Society	Liverpool Botanical Society Lymm Ornithology Group
Blackburn & District Bird Club	Macclesfield & District Field Club
Bolton Field Naturalists	Manchester Field Club
British Arachnological Society	Manchester Microscopical & Natural History Society
British Bryological Society	Marple Naturalists
British Pteridological Society	Merseyside Naturalists' Association
Buxton Field Club	Mid Cheshire Ornithological Society
Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society	Nantwich Natural History Society
Cheadle Hulme & Bramhall Natural History Society	Nelson Naturalists' Society
Cheshire Active Naturalists	New Mills Natural History Society
Chorley & District Natural History Society	North West Fungus Group
Clitheroe Naturalists Society	Oxfordshire Mammal Group Record
Edinburgh Natural History Society	Rochdale Field Naturalists Society
Essex Field Club	South East Cheshire Ornithological Society
Friends Of Cuerden Valley Park	Saddleworth Naturalists
Fylde Naturalists' Society	Somerset Invertebrates Group
Grampian Fungus Group	The Preston Society
Knutsford Ornithological Society	Warrington Field Club
Lancashire & Cheshire Fauna Society	West Lancashire Wildlife
Lancashire Mammal Group	Wilmslow Guild Naturalists' Society
Lancashire & Cheshire Entomological Society	