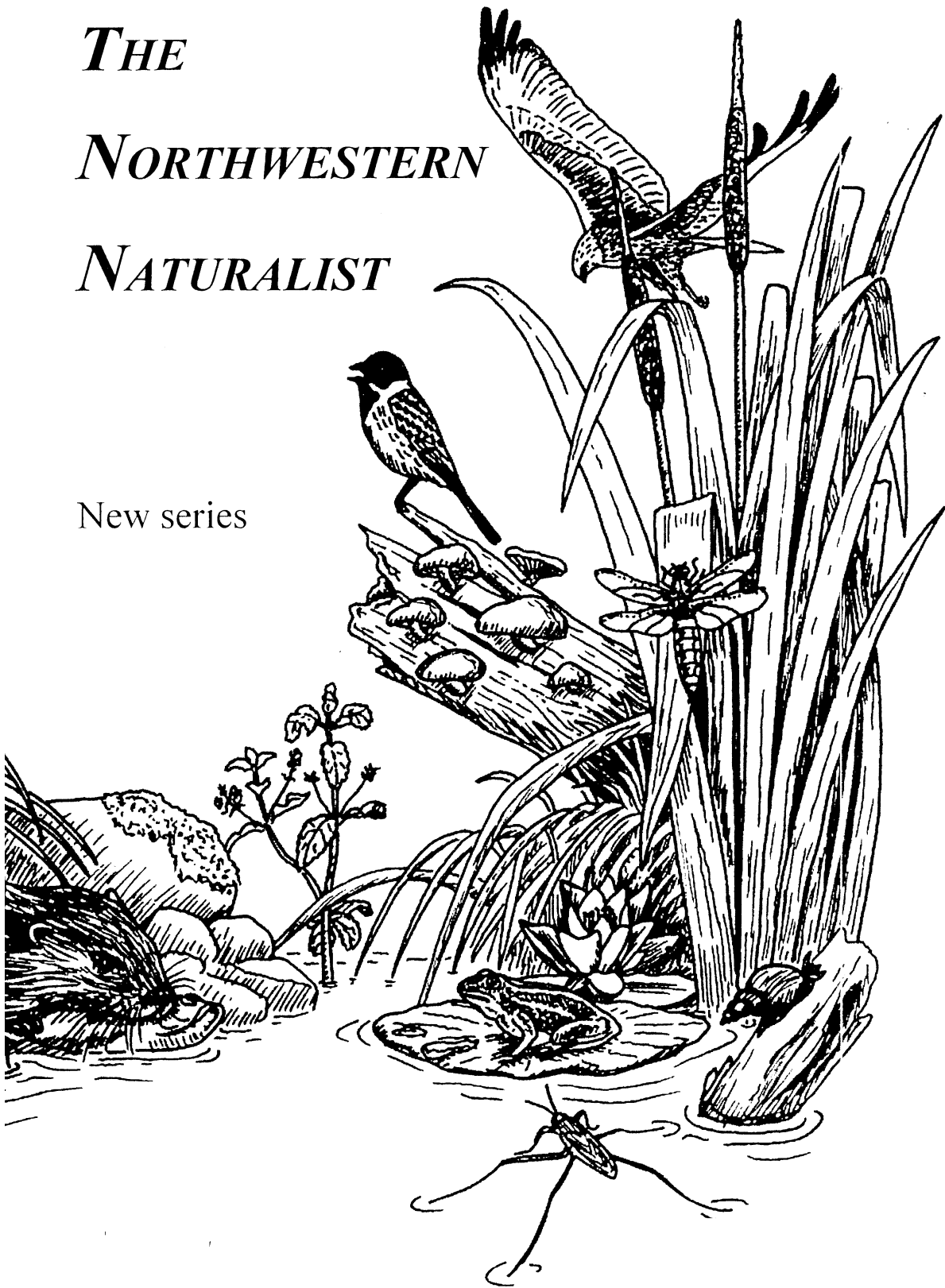


*THE
NORTHWESTERN
NATURALIST*

New series



Volume 23 No. 1 2021

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

Joy of Wildlife

Joy of Wildlife is a group of people interested in wildlife who wish to contribute towards the biological records for Shropshire. We try to meet once a week (yes, even during the winter months) to visit and survey a site primarily for invertebrates but also for anything else that the attendees are interested in. We meet as a group of friends out for the day together doing something we all enjoy.

The group germinated over two or three years as a result of people who had taken part in Field Studies Council's Invertebrate Challenge and Shropshire Wildlife Trust surveys wanting to get out and about more regularly to learn about and enjoy the natural world. Initially we concentrated on gathering records from areas in and around Telford that had no invertebrate records, this was followed by a period where we supported efforts to gather records for three Shropshire Atlases – Shieldbugs, Craneflies and smaller moths. It was only when these activities had been completed that we realised that there was a desire to continue the group and Joy of Wildlife in its present form emerged.

Since then we have arranged a programme of weekly visits each year that runs from the start of April until the end of September. Visits continue through the “off-season”, but sites are chosen from week to week to take account of the weather and any target species or groups that we would like to pursue. For example, over the last few years we have been trying to increase our knowledge of the range of snow fleas *Boreus hyemalis* within the county.



The group has no formal membership but a circulation list is maintained of people who have expressed an interest in attending events or simply knowing what we are up to. Currently among the regular attendees there are several county recorders, other active recorders, some who enjoy the photographic opportunities and others who just enjoy the walk, the company and the ambiance of the site. We do not ask that attendees are experienced or knowledgeable as we are always happy to help any attendee with finding and identifying specimens. New participants are always welcome.

To date we have visited about 200 sites throughout Shropshire plus a few forays into Staffordshire and Wales. These have been selected from Shropshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, areas owned or managed by the various councils within Shropshire and churchyards under the guidance of Caring for God's Arce. We also visit sites in private ownership, and it has been gratifying that the number of invitations has increased recently. Our activities have generated well over 20,000 records and, also very importantly, we have had a lot of fun along the way.

At the end of 2019 we were surprised, flattered and honoured to receive the "2019 NBN Group Award for Wildlife Recording".

Following the loss of the 2020 season and the start of 2021's due to the pandemic we were able to restart our gatherings once the government gave the go ahead to larger numbers of people meeting outdoors in mid-May. I am happy to report that the hiatus has increased enthusiasm for our trips and attendance has been good.

If you are in the area you are welcome to join us on any of our trips.

You can contact me by email: vc40joyofwildlife@gmail.com or view our blog (wrekinforestvolunteers.blogspot.com/) which contains tales of our outings and the latest programme of visits.

Keith Fowler

Naturalised Plants on My Doorstep

We often hear about invasive species and the damage they are believed to cause to our environment; but for every Himalayan Balsam and Harlequin Ladybird there are many, far more innocuous introduced species. These are plants and animals that have established self-sustaining populations in this country (they are naturalised), but are generally not blamed for causing ecological degradation. I will describe three naturalised plant species I see everyday while walking around my neighbourhood in the suburbs of Manchester; their appearance will likely be familiar to everyone, even if their names and origins are not.

Pineappleweed (*Matricaria discoidea*) has been such a successful coloniser of distant lands that its true place of origin is uncertain: various sources list either Central Asia or Western North America. It is well suited to disturbed, marginal ground and grows in abundance along the edges of the poorly maintained roads near my home, alongside the ubiquitous natives, knotgrass and broadleaf plantain. This relative of chamomile has feathery leaves and unusual yellow flowerheads that do resemble pineapples, but its name derives from its sweet, fruity taste. The secret to pineappleweed's success may be its production of huge numbers of seeds (up to 7000 per plant), which easily cling to the mud embedded in shoes or tyres. In fact, it is believed that it was the adoption of the car that allowed it to spread so widely throughout the country.



Canadian Fleabane (*Erigeron canadensis*) is easy to overlook, despite growing up to 1.8 metres in height. Before flowering it somewhat resembles rosebay willowherb, and the flowers and fruits themselves are small, white, and unremarkable. I always associate this plant with abandoned shopfronts and neglected driveways; it seems to spring up wherever people and vehicles are not around to stifle it. A single plant may produce nearly half-a-million seeds in a season, and the plant is thought to have arrived in Europe when some of these seeds were contained in stuffing inside the skin of an imported American bird. It is now so widespread that it may as well have been living here all along.



(Continued over page)

Purple Toadflax (*Linaria purpurea*), like Canadian fleabane, is inconspicuous before flowering, but once it does, the attractive purple inflorescences provide a splash of colour to the kerb side. Each flower resembles a miniature snapdragon, to which it is related, and they are very attractive to bees. A native of Italy, it was introduced (like so many plants) as an ornamental, but quickly established itself



outside of cultivation. There is an alleyway at a local business estate where purple toadflax grows in profusion, densely lining either side. Its graceful, elegant appearance belies its resilience.

Many of the plants, both native and alien, that are so commonly found on our pavements and walls were, in the past, restricted to growing on rock faces and boulder piles. Our settlements, with artificial environments resembling their natural habitats, provided an excellent opportunity, and plants that were likely once quite scarce and scattered have become much more abundant and widespread. Although urbanisation and infrastructure development are rightly regarded as a major cause of decline of the natural world, these examples demonstrate that not all species must suffer as a result.

David Asmat

The North Western Naturalists' Union has a new web site at
<https://northwesternnaturalistsunion.org.uk>

Amongst other material, it includes a listing of links to affiliated societies' sites. If your society has a web site, it would be appreciated if you would check that the link on the site is up to date and also arrange for a link to the NWNNU site to be put on to your society's web site.

If your society does not have a web site, please let Mike Walton (mike.a.walton@googlemail.com 07582 646 080) have details of ways in which the NWNNU website can be used to promote your society

Will affiliated societies please ensure that Alexander Mansfield (alexandermansfield3@gmail.com) is informed about changes in their secretary or treasurer.

A Poem and Plant Specimens

The following is a poem by the Saddleworth poet Ammon Wrigley (1861-1946)

"Flowers in an Oldham Alehouse"

You four flowers, did you grow
Where the winds of Devon blow?
Only Devon's earth and air
Can have fashioned you so fair!
The poet said, and true it be,
"God alone can make a tree";
And I'm sure it's just as true
God alone one morn made you,
And from heaven when you came,
Devon folk gave you a name,
But no mortal e'er can guess
All that makes your loveliness.
Did you come to this drab room
From the fields near Ilfracombe,
Or from some dew shining down
Not a mile from Teignmouth town?
All that's Devon in you lies,
Lovely scenes and sunny skies,
Tors and glens and headlands free
Striding out into the sea;
Lynton's rocks and Tavy's stream,
Cider barns and pots of cream,
Cobbled streets and quaint old inns,
Fisher folk with sea-tanned skins.
Ploughmen from the upland farms,
Freckled maids with sun-browned
arms,
All that is or o'er will be,
From the moorlands to the sea.

Oh, the happy days you had,
When the sunny fields were glad,
And the white winged butterflies
Came to look in your sweet eyes,
And the bees oft kissed your lips
For the joy of honey sips,
And the thrush from blossomed thorn
Woke you in the early morn,
And the lark high in the blue
Often sang all day to you,
And you heard the orchard breeze
Shaking laughter from the trees.
Now you're here in Oldham town,
Houses black and dirty brown,
And you hear the roaring street,
Crash of cars and tramp of feet;
To this room you brought a whiff
Of the heather from the cliff,
Now your beauty's spent and spoiled,
Every leaf and petal soiled,
And you hear from unclean lips
Slang and oath and racing tips.
Mauled by noisy drinking folk,
Poisoned by the "bacco" smoke,
Dying in an Oldham inn
'Mid the rabble and the din.
Better you had lived and died
On a Devon countryside,
For to-morrow you'll be thrown
On a tip with rag and bone.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to find out a date when this poem was written and of course, all this might be written under artistic licence and result from the imagination of Ammon Wrigley and there may be no truths written here at all.

However I think it is interesting that there are some quite specific details given in the verse.



The poem first questions whether the flowers come from Devon, perhaps the poet thought they looked too pretty to have been found around Oldham? Then the poem contains four Devon place-names which extend right across the county, from Ilfracombe and Lynton in the north to Teignmouth in the south and the River Tavy which extends from Dartmoor to the south coast.

He says there are four flowers. He doesn't describe the form of the specimens but gives enough information to describe their faded beauty. It is unlikely that they were on display in water in a container as the travel from Devon to Oldham would have taken many hours even using the train. They could have been collected several days before the collector departed for home so I imagine these were pressed specimens possibly pressed immediately on finding in a

portable field press, so would retain some colour.

We know many Botanical Societies often met in pubs. So, did Ammon witness one of these meetings in Saddleworth or Oldham pub and then recollect it in his poem? If he did no doubt these were not the only flowers were spread around the tables. They were probably with other pressed/fresh specimen treasures being 'mauled' by botanists of the time.

So who was it who might have taken them to that smoky pub? We know that botanists of this era were happy to walk many miles to get to a society meeting or field meeting, there was no other option for most. So the collector could be one of many botanists in a radius of several miles, even someone from another nearby town.

Looking at the specimens in the herbarium at Gallery Oldham there are three Oldhamers who may be possible candidates who all collected in Devon and who were all members of the Oldham Microscopical and Natural History Society.

Squire Ashton (1826-1897) in July 1877 collected specimens at Torquay and Plymouth on the coast and Bickleigh (inland), all in South Devon – there are 11 species from these places in the herbarium – Ammon Wrigley would have been 16 in 1877. Ashton's specimens tell us that he also visited Cornwall on this same trip taking in the popular sites of Loe Pool and the Lizard and collecting 74 specimens.

John Waddington (c.1834 -1913) in January 1904 and March 1908 collected specimens at Newton Abbot, South Devon. His collection in the herbarium is of bryophytes and seaweeds and one fern, so not specimens with flowers – Ammon would have been 43 in 1904.

John R. Byrom (1841-1910) collected at Berry Pomeroy, Torquay and Plymouth, South Devon – two species Bramble and Beech can be found in the herbarium – there are no dates on Byrom’s specimens but again not much in the way of what we consider to be ‘flowers’.

Based on the evidence the most likely candidate would be Squire Ashton. He started working as a flagger and slater alongside his father but eventually he would become the owner of a successful building company in Oldham. As the cotton industry expanded in Oldham hundreds of houses were needed to accommodate a growing work force and their families so building would have been a most profitable enterprise.

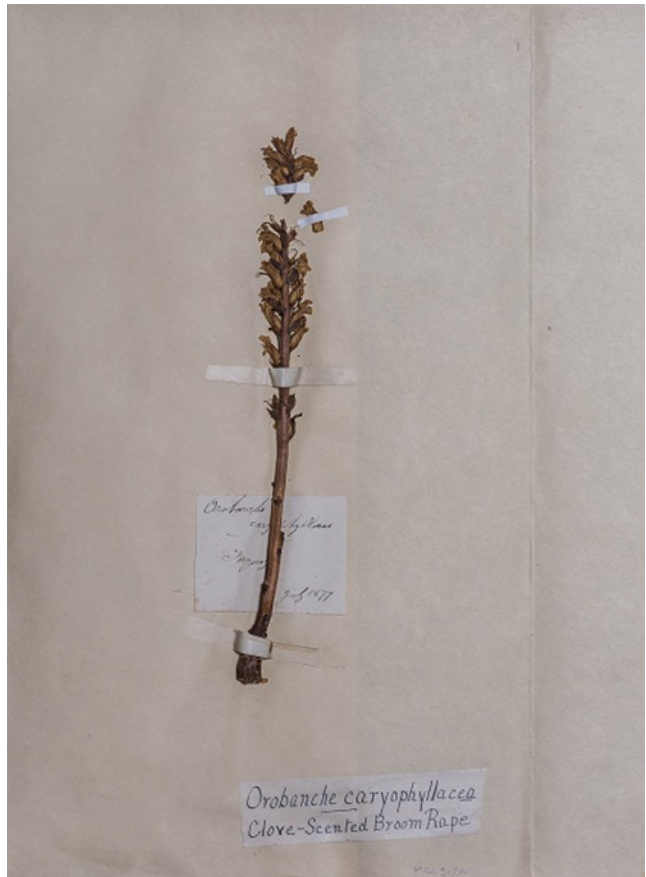
Squire Ashton’s collection in total consists of some 600 specimens from all parts of the UK. The Devon and Cornwall trip resulted in about 85 specimens. Why there were only four species mentioned in the poem?

Hopefully the plants did not end up on the tip as Ammon Wrigley speculated but were mounted on paper and were eventually put into the herbarium of the Oldham Microscopical and Natural History Society which was transferred in 1995 to Oldham Museum now known as Gallery Oldham where the Squire Ashton collection remains today.

Patricia Francis

Portrait of Ammon Wrigley by Harry Rutherford 1938 from the collection at Gallery Oldham

Photo example of herbarium sheet – Broomrape/Orobanche – July 1877 – Torquay, South Devon



Society Diary

Once again only a few societies have been in contact about events, some have planned meetings via Zoom which may be listed on their websites. Please note there have been several contact changes and details on Covid-safe walks added since the last publication of this list.

Members of the Northwestern Naturalists' Union are welcome to attend the meetings of all of 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. Non-members welcome - £2.00 minimum lecture fee.

ALTRINCHAM 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 6.30 pm or meet at the venue itself. Entrance charges: £2.00 members, £3.50 guests. Please contact us at least 3 days in advance if you wish to attend any of the excursions.

<http://www.altnats.org.uk>, info@altnats.org.uk, 0161 865 0118

BLACKBURN & DISTRICT BIRD CLUB

Indoor meetings are usually held on the first Monday of the month at Feniscowles Methodist Church, Preston Old Road, Blackburn, BB2 5ER 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 or email Martyn at Martyn@czd.org.uk

CHORLEY AND DISTRICT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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

See www.chorleynats.org.uk for details or contact Paul Brennan, 14 Merton Grove, Chorley, PR6 8UR

DERYSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL RECORD CENTRE

Queries: Steve Atkins, Local Record Centre Development Officer,
Stephen.atkins@tameside.gov.uk, 07792 041 528

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, Council Offices, Clarence Arcade, Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside, OL6 7PT, 0161 342 4409

LANCASHIRE & CHESHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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

LANCASHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST : CROAL-IRWELL GROUP

Indoor meetings are at the Creative Living Centre, 1A Rectory Lane, Prestwich, M25 1BP (on the opposite side of the car park from Prestwich Library) on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm. Admission and refreshments by £4 donation. Monthly field trips on Sundays start at 10.30 am. Details of these at the indoor meetings or from listed telephone numbers. Programme may be subject to change; please check before setting out. Stephen Harris Mob: 07831 627208, Work: 0845 458 6680

LEIGH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are in the Derby Room at Leigh Library. There is ample free car parking in the car park next to the Library (but please note that you do park at your own risk). Meetings are on Fridays at 7:15pm for a 7:30pm start. Everyone is welcome free of charge but a small donation to our funds from non-members would be gratefully accepted. A varied programme of speakers and slideshows on wildlife subjects is organised, commencing in September running through to May each year.

For up-to-date information visit our website www.leighos.org.uk. A warm welcome is guaranteed at any of our meetings.

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.

Taking part in COVID-safe walks with LBS:

Because of COVID-19 we have to change the way walks are organised.

Members will need to pre-book with leaders and give contact details (phone number) to support NHS contact tracing.

Equipment and books should not be shared or passed around and try to avoid touching gates and stiles where possible. If you do - wash your hands as soon as you can. We recommend carrying alcohol-based hand sanitiser and a face mask.

Members are asked to maintain a two-metre distance between each other where possible. Members should be aware of their own risk level and the suitability of this activity. Please do not come if you are showing any symptoms of Covid 19 or have recently been in contact with anyone who has contracted Covid

Saturday 9 October : Dibbinsdale Fungus Foray

Steve Cross (07807 341220), Meet at visitor centre car park (off B5137, Spital Road (SJ345826) CH62 2BJ. Fungi and any late flowering plants.

MACCLESFIELD & DISTRICT FIELD CLUB

Indoor meetings commence at 7.30pm at the Salvation Army Hall, Roe Street, Macclesfield, SK11 6PH, maccfieldclub.org.uk.

MANCHESTER AND NORTH MIDLANDS FERN GROUP

All meetings at 10.30 unless otherwise stated

Field meetings organiser : Mike Canaway mikecanaway@gmail.com

For field meetings members must abide by the BPS Code of Conduct

<https://ebps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/BPS-Code-of-Conduct-2015.pdf> and

https://ebps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/BPS_Safety_Code_A42015.pdf - the Safety Code which covers responsibilities, clothing and equipment etc.

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
0161 215 0971; mobile 07719 659 689.

website: www.manchesterfieldclub.org.uk

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. - See our Internet site at <http://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:

Jane Michael 07917 434598 or Derek Clifford 427 4611 or Marple Naturalists Community page on www.marple-uk.com or www.facebook.com/marplenaturalists

*Outdoor meetings - arranged separately and announced at meetings.

MERSEYSIDE NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION

Full programme listings are on our website www.mnapage.info and reports of previous trips on our blog at www.NaturalistsNotebook.mnapage.info

NELSON NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

All meetings are held at Christ Church, Carr Road, Nelson BB9 7JX and start at 7.30pm.

Enquiries and requests for copies of East Lancashire Butterfly Report and enquires contact David Nelson 01282 863012 davidnelson@btinternet.com Visitors welcome £2.50

NORTH WEST ENGLAND FERN GROUP

Field meetings organised with an indoor meeting in October at Holehird, Windermere.
Contact: Robert Sykes r.sykes56@gmail.com

NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION - BRYOPHYTE & LICHEN SECTION

All meetings on Saturdays, starting at 10.30 am and will commence whatever the weather. Bring food and clothing adequate for a full day in rough country and bad weather. Please check with section secretary a day or so before the meeting, in case of cancellation or changes.

“Beginners” are welcome any 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.

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

NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION – VASCULAR PLANT SECTION

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

NORTH WEST FUNGUS GROUP

Forays start at 10.30am and are planned so that they can continue into the afternoon. Please bring food and drink. Please contact the foray leader to confirm you attendance and for possible last minute details.

Beginners always welcome at all forays. Forays are not suitable for small children. No dogs.

<http://fungus.org.uk/nwfg.htm>

OLDHAM MICROSCOPICAL & NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Meetings at Werneth Centre, Oldham, at 7.30 pm for more information call Phil Whiteman - 01612900722, philipwhiteman333@hotmail.com or <http://www.oldham-wildlife-link.org.uk/micro/>

PRESTON SOCIETY: BIRD WATCHING AND NATURAL HISTORY

The meetings are at St. Mary's Church, Church Avenue, Penwortham, PR1 0AH. All enquiries should be made to the Secretary, Janet Wall, who can be contacted on prestonwildlife@gmail.com or 07565 497065.

Kayleigh Roebuck, who can be contacted on prestonwildlife@gmail.com or on 07713 975321.

www.prestonsociety.co.uk. There is a charge of £3.00 on the door for visitors.

ROCHDALE FIELD NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Given the difficulties in planning, due to Coronavirus, we are unable to give any details of events as far in advance as we would like. However we intend to run as many of our normal activities as possible under whatever restrictions are in place at the time. These will include local recording walks, car trips and Conservation & Education events.

Details will be posted on our website www.rochdalefieldnaturalists.org.uk and on our Facebook page.

If you would like any information about events or RFNS in general, email us at rfnspublicity@gmail.com or the Secretary (Jean Carter) at rfnsenquiries@talktalk.net.

SADDLEWORTH NATURALISTS

Indoor meetings are held at 7.30 pm at Saddleworth Conservative Club, 75 High Street, Uppermill OL3 6AP.

To assist with venue costs and speakers' expenses a small collection will be made - suggested donations: £2.00 for members, £2.50 for non-members. Guests are welcome - please introduce yourself at the start of the meeting.

More details at <http://www.oldham-wildlife-link.org.uk/saddleworth/>

SOUTH EAST CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Indoor Meetings are held on the second Friday of each month from September to April, starting at 7.30pm. Tea, coffee and biscuits are available at the end of each indoor meeting. We meet at Ettiley Heath Church Community Centre; Elton Road, Ettiley Heath, Sandbach, CW11 3NE. Visitors are charged £3 and are welcome at any indoor meeting.

Field trips are held on one Sunday a month from September through to June and a long weekend meeting in March is very popular. More local field meetings are also held on the first Tuesday of each month and local evening walks in the summer. Travel is usually by car, or sometimes by bus or mini-bus, to sites of particular birding interest and will be led by experienced birdwatchers. Bookings for the trips are made at the indoor meetings. Further information is available at www.secos.org.uk or by telephone: MikeTonks (Chairman) 07484 306147.

WARRINGTON PLANT GROUP

<https://gailqb.wordpress.com/warrington-plant-group/>

WEST LANCASHIRE WILDLIFE

Meetings are held in Room B003 in the Business School Building, Edge Hill University, St Helen's Road, Ormskirk, L39 4QP. Please note that you can park in the car parks A & B in front of the main university buildings, and walk to the Business School Building. Please arrive by 19.15 for a prompt 19.30 start. Admission charge (including refreshments): £1.50 members, £2.50 non-members. More details at www.westlancswildlife.org.uk or contact 01704 83538. Membership Secretary: Hilary Bedford 01772 519090

WILMSLOW GUILD NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held at Wilmslow Guild, 1 Bourne Street, Wilmslow, SK9 5HD Monthly on Thursday evening at 7:30 p.m. from Sept to Apr and field trips Feb to Oct Visitors welcome to indoor meetings (£5) and field trips (free)

Contact Steve Osborne on 01625 879087 steve.osborne42@gmail.com