

*THE
NORTHWESTERN
NATURALIST*

New series



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



Manchester University Botanical Garden – Moss House

On the 20 April the Bryophyte and Lichen section of the NWNLU visited the Moss House at Manchester University Botanic Garden ('The Firs'), Fallowfield at the invitation of Oliver Hughes (left).

The facility is maintained at a suitably high humidity and has a variety of mosses and liverworts and a considerable amount of Killarney Fern on the benches and damp sandstone walls. Oliver plans (subject to the approval of her family), to dedicate the Moss House to Martha Newton, who contributed so much to bryology through her teaching and research and regularly led the Bryophyte and Lichen section field meetings.

Conservation Work on a Local Pond

Phil Whiteman Oldham Microscopical and Natural History Society

The pond in question is situated at Tandle Hill Country Park, Oldham. It had been developed as a wildlife pond by the council as a commitment to nature education. At the start of 2023 it was overgrown with sedge and, as the water was reduced to an area of 500mm by 300mm, I took a half litre sample of pond water and put it in a tank at my home. Initially I took the sample of water in order to survey and preserve what life remained and then to return it to the pond, I felt it important to preserve the pond as part of its ecological importance to the area. The reason for action was that, even though it is in the middle of the countryside, any ponds in the surrounding fields have all been polluted by what farmers put on the land, or they have been filled in, and of course we have all noticed the subsequent reduction in invertebrates and amphibians.



Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) 23/02/2023

A fence had been put in place to keep dogs out and a sign put up saying “No Dogs Wildlife Pond”. I repaired the fence, re-fixed the wire and made a new notice. The pond had been planted with water lilies (*Nymphaea alba*), water-forget-me-nots (*Myosotis scorpioides*), water-violets (*Hottonia palustris*) and sedge. Of course, the sedge had more or less choked the pond.



Water-violet (*Hottonia palustris*)

Water-forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*)

I visited again during the winter of the Pandemic 2021. By this time the pond was completely choked. I spoke to an officer at the council with responsibility for Parks and Open Spaces and I told him about the state of the pond and that I would like to dig it out and restore it. He seemed happy enough with my suggestion and so I carried on.

A platform had been made so children once upon a time could safely pond dip, but over the years it had rotted, so for that reason, to keep the public safe, I attached plastic fencing over the ranch fencing to stop dogs slipping through and I also screwed the gate firmly shut.

The pond had been lined with butyl so I had to be careful when digging and pushing the adze in before carefully inspecting what I had removed. Any digging attracts the attention of a robin, but even that little chap found nothing, which in one way I was happy with, but worried that too much had already been lost.

Once fully dug out, and with the help of the rain and the spring that runs into it, by the time I next visited, it had burst into life, mainly Backswimmers (*Notonecta glauca*), Common Pond Skaters (*Gerris lacustris*) and Whirligig beetles (*Gyrinus* sp.). It was also being visited by butterflies and dragonflies.

Then in the summer the drought hit and the water levels dropped, and the pond was (still) attracting vandals who tried to kill what little frogspawn had been produced. So I began a new mission to keep the pond topped up. I had to use tap water, so that had to be treated and allowed to gas off. I poured hundreds of gallons of water into the pond, but when I tested the water for microscopic life there was very little. I felt I had made some mistake in my water treatment, so I left it to Mother Nature. I did not visit again until we had had plenty of rain and found the pond was full. Then I spotted a young newt and water beetles. The open water had been taken over by the water violet (*Hottonia palustris*).

Recently I noticed some people had started throwing branches into the pond again. There used to be educational centres placed at nature sites, but the two local sites that I know have been turned into cafes. Whilst it appears that councils might be going in a pro nature direction, much of the evidence seems to the contrary. There is a current trend for

planting trees and the surrounding publicity suggests this is the great panacea to the world's problems. However, it is important to employ the broader advice of ecologists because, unless such schemes are developed in the round, such schemes will fail to support biodiversity. For example, approximately 179 species of insects have their larval stages in water and without these insects the web of life is broken. It is important to encourage in both children and adults a greater interest, awareness and understanding of nature and our dependence upon the natural world for our own survival.



Addendum 21 May 2023

The pond is now recovering with a good water level. Two types of damselfly have been seen: Common Blue (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) and a Large Red (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*) and also a Broad-bodied Chaser Dragonfly (*Libellula depressa*). An Orange tip butterfly (*Anthocharis cardamines*) has been seen visiting the Water Violets (*Hotronia palustris*). We also found what we believed to be an ostracod. The protozoa are making a comeback. Watersnails are also present as well as a small water beetle, species not confirmed. Another plant that has become evident is the Spearwort, not yet fully developed but we think is the Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*).

The big question is are we in for another drought? Once again ponds are in peril.



Pond and Habitat Survey- Tandle Hill Park (SD903087) Date:21/05/2023

Pond margins:

Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*)

Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)

Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)

Willow sp. (*Salix sp.*)

Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Fern sp.

Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*)

Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*)

Red Campion (*Silene dioica*)

Cleavers (*Galium aparine*)

Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)

Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*)

Pink Purslane (*Claytonia sibirica*)

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)

Prickly Sow-thistle (*Sonchus asper*)

Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*)

Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica* syn. *Fallopia japonica*)

Small White Butterfly (*Pieris tapae*)

Orange-tip Butterfly (*Anthocharis cardamines*)

Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*)

Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*)

Spider sp. (*Arichnid sp.*)

Within pond:

Common Duckweed (*Lemna minor*)

Water Violet (*Hottonia palustris*) A plant very susceptible to water pollution but very abundant here.

Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) Species to be confirmed

Sedge sp. (*Carex sp.*) tbc

Water-lily sp. (*Nymphaea sp.*) tbc

Daphnia sp.

Seed Shrimp sp. (*Ostracod sp.*)

Springtail (*Collembala*)

Snail sp. (*Lymnaea sp.*)

Smooth Newt tadpole (*Triturus vulgaris*) A species which prefers ponds with no fish.

NORTH WESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION

SAFETY CODE

The N.W.N.U. holds third party public liability insurance, which covers members and visitors attending official meetings of the N.W.N.U. However, Personal Accident and Personal Liability insurance remain the responsibility and personal choice of the participant. Each person attending a field meeting does so on the understanding that he/she attends at his/her own risk. The purpose of this code is to assist everyone in ensuring their own safety as well as that of others during meetings. In addition, leaders will draw the attention of members to known hazards of a site, and to this safety code.

Pandemics and Epidemics

Outbreaks of coronaviruses, foot and mouth disease, plant pathogens or other disease may lead to restrictions on movement and controls on assembly. The N.W.N.U. takes all such threats seriously and prioritises the health and well-being of its members and any of the general public with whom it interacts. Threats might affect the possibility of holding field meetings safely. If this is the case, the N.W.N.U. will comply with all national and local restrictions on assembly and will, if necessary, suspend meetings until their resumption is permitted by Government.

Participation in meetings

1. Ensure that you are adequately clothed and equipped.
2. Never leave the main party without telling the leader of your plans.
3. Be alert to the hazards of the site and their potential danger, both to yourself and to others. For example, take care not to dislodge loose stones or boulders. Avoid plants such as Hogweed and Giant Hogweed. Do not eat any plant material unless known to be safe.
4. Do not rock-climb without experience and proper equipment.
5. Do not damage walls, fences, hedges, gates, *etc.*
6. Leave gates open/shut as the party finds them.
7. Take care not to start a fire.
8. Familiarize yourself with the procedure to follow in the event of an accident in the field.

Clothing and Equipment

Always carry wind and water-proof outer clothing, and wear suitable footwear, *e.g.* walking boots or, in certain circumstances, wellingtons. All clothing should be suitable for the terrain and the worst potential weather. Carry sufficient food and drink for the excursion, with some extra in case of emergency. A first aid kit is also recommended. In exposed and/or high altitude areas, the following are necessary.

1. Spare layers in the form of warm sweaters.

2. Properly fitting walking or climbing boots with stout soles and with good grip, worn over comfortable, warm socks. Footwear should be waterproof, but wellingtons should not be worn in rocky terrain.
3. A small rucksack to carry spare clothing, including waterproofs.
4. A whistle, compass, maps, torch, first-aid kit. A hand-held GPS (global positioning system receiver) can be helpful, but is not a complete substitute for a compass in many types of terrain.
5. A survival bag or emergency blanket.

Procedure in the Event of an Accident in the Field

First aid must be rendered at once, and medical and relief help should be sought if necessary. Prevention of exposure is almost always possible, through adequate clothing, equipment and procedure, but if a case is suspected, the initial treatment is additional warm clothing and a wind-proof and water-proof outer garment, plus ingestion of a source of rapidly absorbed food, such as sugar or glucose in solid or liquid form, but preferably hot liquid.

Ticks and Lyme Disease

Please be aware that ticks in **any** area may be vectors for Lyme disease. Help and information is available from the National Health Service - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/>

International Distress Code in Mountains.

SIX long light-flashes/blasts/shouts/waves in succession, repeated at one minute intervals

Hoverflies of Saddleworth

Ken Gartside



Second edition - Fully revised

The Hoverflies of Saddleworth 2nd Edition

Ken Gartside has produced an updated and revised edition of his *Hoverflies of Saddleworth*.

Paper costs have increased dramatically since the first edition so this publication costs £12.

If you would like a copy please contact Ken at ken.gartside@btinternet.com.

Hemiptera of the Isle of Man

I am organiser of the National Recording Scheme for terrestrial bugs (Heteroptera), specifically plantbugs and allied families. I work with my colleague Tristan Bantock, who covers shieldbugs and allied families on verifying records on iRecord and iNaturalist and other related work such as running identification workshops.

I am currently working to produce a couple of papers on the Hemiptera of the Isle of Man, as a result of some entomological fieldwork I undertook on the island between 2017-2019, one of which I hope to co-author with Keith Alexander and Steve Crellin.

To help with this study I have been using papers scanned from The North Western Naturalist in 1954. Specifically, it is a paper by D. E. Allen and W. S. Cowin and titled The Fauna and Flora of the Isle of Man and their Geographical Relationships, in North Western Naturalist 29: pp18-30. My forthcoming articles are likely to be published in the Entomologists Monthly Magazine as this has been the usual vehicle for publication of the Manx invertebrate fauna for some time now, although I will likely be guided by advice from Steve Crellin as to where the co-authored paper eventually ends up.

There has not been a published list of the Manx Hemiptera since Larch Garrad, formerly of the Manx Museum, published a preliminary one in the Peregrine which is the journal of the Manx Ornithological Society, in the late 1960s. Since then there has been a great deal of new information collected on the Hemiptera of the island.

James Flanagan

SOCIETY DIARY

Once again there have been many changes to the Society Diary in this issue so please carefully check the details and visit websites and Facebook pages where they are given.

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

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 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.

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

CROAL-IRWELL LOCAL GROUP

The Croal-Irwell Group was set up by local volunteers who wanted to protect nature and encourage people to value native plants and creatures under the guidance of the L.W.T. We have field trips to nature reserves and do practical conservation work in Summerseat.

Please note indoor meetings are on Tuesdays and start at 7.30pm at Our Lady of Grace, The Cottage, Highfield Road, Prestwich M25 1AS. Admission and refreshments by £4 donation. Please bring your own cup. Please note field trips are on Wednesdays and start at 10.30am. Further details are available at the indoor meetings or by phoning 07377 539882.

GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL RECORD CENTRE

Any queries contact: Steve Atkins, Local Record Centre Development Officer

E-Mail: Stephen.atkins@tameside.gov.uk, Mobile 07792 041 528

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

LANCASHIRE & CHESHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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

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 all 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. Please check the website for details.

Saturday 9 September : Brockholes

Merseyside Naturalists coach trip, Cost £25. Please book with MNA coach secretary Seema Aggarwal (07984 231059).

Saturday 16 September : Ormskirk

Meet at Town Green station L39 6RG, (SD401055). Arable and suburban weeds and ancient churchyard. Leader: Peter Gateley (07518 685807)

Saturday 21 October : Eastham Country Park Fungus Foray

Meet at Eastham Country Park Visitor Centre, Ferry Road, Eastham Village, CH62 0BH. (SJ 36338 81821). (*what3words:- arts.slide.dent*). Fungi and any late flowering plants. Leader: Steve Cross (07807 341220).

Saturday 11 November : Glen Clova Flora Peter Gateley

Saturday 9 December : Recording workshop + Christmas Social Steve Cross

Saturday 13 January 2024 : Honduran Fern Flora Wendy Atkinson

Saturday 10 February : AGM + members' field meeting photos

Saturday 9 March : Urban lower plants Steve Cross

MACCLESFIELD COUNTRYSIDE AND HERITAGE 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 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. <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 redgate104@gmail.com 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

Indoor meetings are held at Higherford Methodist Church Hall BB9 6JZ and start at 7.30pm. Autumn meeting dates: 26 Oct. 9, 23 Nov. 7 Dec.

Enquiries and requests for copies of East Lancashire Butterfly Report contact David Nelson 01282 863012 davidnelson@btinternet.com Visitors welcome £4.

NORTH WEST ENGLAND FERN GROUP

This group covers only Cumbria and Lancashire. Field meetings organised with an indoor meeting in October at Holehird, Windermere.

Contact: Roger Golding, Fell View, Bowness on Solway, Cumbria, CA7 5AF

tel: 07718 290241. NorthWest@eBPS.org.uk

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@lancashire.gov.uk

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 your 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 are 2nd and 4th Monday of each month in Meeting Room 2, Lifelong Learning 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>

Monday 11 and 25 September :

Initially we shall be adjusting to our new venue and planning a programme to suit our new circumstances. We envisage that we will have a limited number of microscopes available. Together with a small but reasonably comprehensive library of modern natural history field guides.

Monday 9 and 23 October : tbc

Monday 11 November : Annual General Meeting

Monday 27 November : tbc

Monday 11 December 11 : Plan a programme for 2024

PRESTON SOCIETY: BIRD WATCHING AND NATURAL HISTORY

The meetings are at St. Mary's Church, Church Avenue, Penwortham, PR1 0AH. Enquiries should be made by e-mail to prestonwildlife@gmail.com, through our website www.prestonsociety.co.uk, or by phone on 07565 497065.

There is a charge of £3.00 on the door for any visitors.

ROCHDALE FIELD NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

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/>

SHROPSHIRE MOTH GROUP

The Group organises a programme of moth trapping field trips on Friday nights from March to October. Observers, beginners and experienced trappers welcome, so why not join them? For further details please contact **Tony Jacques** (Shropshire County Butterfly and Macro-moth Recorder) at vc40tj@gmail.com

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/>

WILMSLOW 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 (£5)

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

Thursday 21 September : Lindow Moss Project Cheshire Ranger

October TBC : Seasonal Sortie, Rixton field trip

Thursday 19 October : Wild Orchids of Britain Byron Machin

Thursday 23 November : Jungle Encounters Michael Turner

Thursday 14 December : Christmas Social & Quiz

Thursday 25 January 2024 : Wildlife in Frozen Britain Mike Roberts

Thursday 22 February : Patagonia Judith Lovelady

February tbc : Arley Hall, field trip

Thursday 21 March : The Roaches Stafford Wildlife Trust TBC

Thursday 18 April : Hedgehogs Irene Thompson

March/April tbc : Restoring Moorland near Cat & Fiddle, field trip

WORLD MUSEUM LIVERPOOL

Part of the Tanyptera Project/North-West Invertebrates. This is a regional project aimed at promoting the study and conservation of insects and other invertebrates. Contact www.northwestinvertebrates.org.uk/events for booking instructions.

Friday 8 September : Freshwater Snails

World Museum, Ben Rowson

Thursday 21 September : Woodlice

Leighton Moss, Paul Richards

Friday 22 September : Harvestmen

Leighton Moss, Paul Richards

The Croal-Irwell Group of Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Sheila Fish



Primrose



Wild Garlic

It was banker and naturalist Nathaniel Charles Rothschild, known as Charles, who had the original idea which led to the modern Wildlife Trusts. Rothschild recognized the need for the conservation of whole habitats to protect wildlife. In 1912 he founded the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves.

The first National Parks and Sites of Special Scientific Interest were created after the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. So, Charles Rothschild's vision for nature conservation now had some Government backing some 26 years after his death.

Founded in 1962 the Lancashire Naturalist Trust eventually evolved into the present-day Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside. This full title reflects the political changes that have been made to the traditional Lancashire county boundaries.

Our local Croal-Irwell group of the L.W.T. grew to a point where its membership could support a calendar of monthly talks in Prestwich by experts and enthusiastic conservationists and also monthly field trips usually to nature reserves.

In 1992 the group was asked to manage a 17 acre site in Summerseat, Bury as a closed to the public nature reserve. This land belongs to United Utilities and was a disused sewage works, unsuitable for house building, but it now provides varied habitats for wildlife. Lying on Summerseat Island, nestled in a bend of the River Irwell, Summerseat Nature Reserve is a mosaic of rich woodland, sun-dappled glades and biodiverse wetland.

Bullfinches flit between oak, willow and poplar trees that stand proudly alongside towering Scots pine and flourishing ash and birch plantations. Woodcock lie expertly camouflaged on the ground, and you never know when you might accidentally startle one of these unusual yet completely wonderful birds into the air.

Summerseat Nature Reserve's two ponds are the perfect place for insect-spotting. Broad-bodied chaser, southern hawker and common hawker dragonflies jostle for position on the lush vegetation with large red and emerald damselflies. Amphibians swim beneath the surface; smooth newts and palmate newts searching for tasty insects and crustaceans.

Though secretive, there is always a chance you could spot roe deer and foxes nipping through patches of wildflowers into the woods; rainbow-bright knapweed, musk mallow, tansy and yellow rattle waving in their wake. Wood mice and shrews scuttle through the undergrowth, and when night falls, rustling leaves herald the arrival of hedgehogs, while pipistrelle bats chatter overhead.

Many of the volunteers enjoy the physical work, but those who sit and observe the wildlife are also valued. Several of our volunteers have gone on to build careers in nature conservation. Our next programme of indoor meetings starts with John Lamb presenting 'Great Crested Newts' on the evening of 5 September

For the latest news about the group, email croal-irwell@hotmail.co.uk