

*THE  
NORTHWESTERN  
NATURALIST*

New series



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## North Western Naturalists' Union AGM

2.00 pm on Saturday 9 March 2024

**This will take place in Office 6 at the Lifelong Learning Centre at Gallery Oldham, Greaves Street, Oldham, OL1 1AL and on Zoom**

**All Affiliated Societies Members and Individual Members are very warmly invited to attend this meeting. To attend on Zoom please send your email address as soon as possible to Phil James - [epiphyte17@gmail.com](mailto:epiphyte17@gmail.com)**

**After the AGM there will be a talk on Local Nature Recovery, written by Ollie Mackrill and presented by David Earl**

Before and after the meeting there will be opportunities to see the exhibitions at Gallery Oldham including **Oldham's Wildlife and Wild Colour** a photography exhibition celebrating colourful wildlife.

# North Western Naturalists' Union

## Bryophyte & Lichen Section Report 2023

### Saturday 3 June: Hutton Roof

Hutton Roof contains some excellent areas of limestone pavement, occurring in a mosaic of woodland, scrub, grassland and heath.

On a hot and sunny day, this meeting, which included two members of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union, was led by Clare Shaw. Clare's local knowledge enabled the group to observe some interesting species. A list of thirty-nine species was compiled. The highlights were *Entosthodon muhlenbergii*, *Tortella squarrosa* (previously *Pleurochaete squarrosa*) and *Metzgeria pubescens*. After a period of hot, dry weather, this list was a very good return and testament to Clare's prior research. Thanks to everyone who attended for making this meeting so interesting and enjoyable.

### Saturday 21 October: Moss House, Manchester University Botanical Gardens

This meeting was held to coincide with the British Bryological Society's National Moss Day.

The Moss House is small, with a rear wall of red sandstone and staging containing numerous species hydrated by a sprinkler system. Several species were identified in the Moss House, including *Conocephalum conicum*, *Fissidens dubius*, *F. taxifolius*, *Metzgeria furcata*, *Oxyrrhynchium hians*, *Plagiomnium affine* and *Thamnobryum alopecurum*. *Bryum archangelicum* was found in one of the greenhouses and *Drepanocladus aduncus* was recovered from a drained pond. However, other species which were not identified on the day, may be foreign and would merit further study.

The meeting followed two earlier meetings held to discuss the possibility of naming the Moss House after our late colleague Dr. Martha Newton. It is hoped to name the moss house in memory of Martha in 2024, as part of the bicentennial celebrations of Manchester University. We are grateful to Dr. Oliver Hughes, manager of the The Firs Botanical Gardens at Fallowfield, for hosting this meeting and for all his help throughout the year.

### Saturday 18 November: Smithills Country Park, Bolton

The aim of this meeting, led by Gail Quartly-Bishop, was to find the liverwort *Bazzania trilobata*, a classic plant of oak woods in western Britain but not recorded in South Lancashire since 1989.

Gail, accompanied by Dave Shaw and Phil James, did not locate the target species but the day was, nevertheless, quite successful with a return of sixteen liverworts and thirty-nine mosses. One interesting find was *Lophocolea semiteres*, a non-native liverwort which is spreading but had not been found during a previous visit to this site in 2017.

### Phil James

## Norman

All of our members will be sorry to learn that our good friend and colleague, Norman Bamforth, Individual Members' Representative on the Executive Committee of the NWNLU and Secretary of the Bryophyte and Lichen Section, has been ill in hospital in Manchester since early December 2023.

At this difficult time, we extend our very best wishes to Norman, a popular and highly respected naturalist, who is receiving support from his many loyal friends.

## North Western Naturalists' Union Manchester and North Midlands Fern Group Section Report 2023

### Meetings

The Manchester and North Midlands group of the British Pteridological Society is presently not meeting, principally due to lack of interest in field meetings by an increasingly elderly membership. Also I was for a long period "sick leave" organiser for the late John Grue which was, in hindsight, an unsatisfactory arrangement that should have been brought to an end much sooner. However Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) and Saddleworth Naturalists meetings that I attended provided some interesting field visits locally as well as some further afield including the Northwest Fern Group AGM near Kendal.

### Dobcross

On 27 May, in preparation for a BSBI visit in June I visited an area to relocate an old record for *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (Adder's-tongue). I managed to find a single plant but nonetheless a good record.

### Readycon Dean Reservoir

This site above Denshaw was the venue for a meeting of Saddleworth Naturalists that I led in June. It is part of the South Pennine Moors SSSI and SAC, managed by United Utilities. There were at least 10 fern species split between the moorland and man-made structures such as the dam wall and channel walls. The moorland ones included the common species in Saddleworth such as *Athyrium filix-femina* (Lady-fern), *Dryopteris filix-mas* (Male-fern) and less common ones; *D. borrieri* (Borrer's Male-fern), possible, but not confirmed, *D. cambrensis* (Narrow Male-fern), *D. carthusiana* (Narrow Buckler-fern - right) and *Oreopteris limbosperma* (Lemon-scented Fern).



On man-made structures *Asplenium* was well represented with *A. adiantum-nigrum* (Black Spleenwort), *A. ruta-muraria* (Wall-rue) and *A. trichomanes* subsp. *quadrivalens* (Maidenhair Spleenwort) whilst there were small plants of *A. ceterach* (Rustyback) which is uncommon in gritstone areas and putative *Polypodium interjectum* (Intermediate Polypody) on the dam wall. The latter had only a small quantity of sporangia for microscopic determination. We did not have time to explore the leat alongside the reservoir which merits further investigation.

### Eastwood Nature Reserve, Stalybridge

Described by Cheshire Wildlife Trust as “a hidden gem of a woodland, nestling in a stunning clough valley just a stone's throw from Stalybridge town. The reserve was gifted to the RSPB by a private family (the Cheethams) in 1931 and was one of their first reserves, with the charity then leasing it on to Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Highlights include a blanket of bluebells in the spring as well as wood sorrel and wild angelica. Woodland birds are here in good numbers, especially those who thrive on the deadwood habitats here like treecreeper, nuthatch and woodpeckers. Warblers arrive in spring, along with summer butterflies and dragonflies, whilst the tumbling brook and pool at the heart of the reserve welcome dippers and occasional kingfishers in winter.” Clearly a nice natural history visit that I led for Saddleworth Naturalists in July and the ferns were well-represented but almost all being the common ones seen in the Northwest such as *Athyrium filix-femina* (Lady-fern), *D. dilatata* (Broad Buckler-fern) and *D. filix-mas* (Male-fern) however of note were stands of exceptional plants of *Struthiopteris* (formerly *Blechnum*) *spicant* (Hard-fern) bearing many tall, upright reproductive fronds and also fine plants of *D. affinis* subsp. *affinis* (Golden-scaled Male-fern).

### A635, near Featherbed Moss

In last year's fern section report I referred to a population of *Osmunda regalis* (Royal Fern) on Featherbed Moss and *Huperzia selago* (Fir Clubmoss) on the moss and also beside the A635 which is the arterial road from Greater Manchester over to Holmfirth and beyond. Local botanist, Peter Burton, had reported seeing further plants of *Huperzia* and a plant of *Osmunda* on the verge of the A635 itself. Therefore following a BSBI visit on the Yorkshire side we returned to the Saddleworth side to investigate further. These observations were confirmed with the *Osmunda* plant being fertile, as were those reported last year, giving the option for further spread. Also just on the Yorkshire side, Louise Hill, the BSBI recorder, happened to spot *Lycopodium clavatum* (Stag's-horn Clubmoss - right) whilst walking up to monitor the *Dryopteris aemula* (Hay-scented Buckler-fern) near Wessenden Head. It just happened to be producing very visible cones at the time where she, and several of us including me, must have walked fairly close to it on numerous occasions previously. A good record for a plant that is very rare in the Dark Peak.



## Northwest Fern Group AGM

In October I attended the AGM of the Northwest Fern Group that was held at Crosthwaite near Kendal, Cumbria. Beside the usual business there were three talks given. (1) The Fauna and Flora of the Lakeland Wildlife Oasis by Jo Marsden who seemed to be the co-owner of the wildlife centre and therefore a bit of soft PR as well as describing the ferns that she had established there. (2) Towards a Honduran Fern Flora by David Hill. This most interesting talk described a project being run out of Liverpool Museum in conjunction with Edge Hill University with the aim of developing a fern flora for Honduras. In his talk David described the travails of collecting and preserving herbarium specimens to go back to the museum in a hot and humid jungle climate where things could go mouldy very quickly, not to mention areas they had to avoid due to drug cartels. (3) Unusual ferns and related oddities by Matthew Reeve. The title pretty much described this one, covering a variety of strange and unusual ferns. There were also sales of surplus plants grown by members for others to purchase.

**Mike Canaway**

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## North Western Naturalists' Union Vascular Plant Section Report 2023

During 2023 over 40,000 vascular plant records were added to Mapmate with the bulk of the recording having been carried out in Greater Manchester with the targeting of widespread species not previously recorded from tetrads within the conurbation.

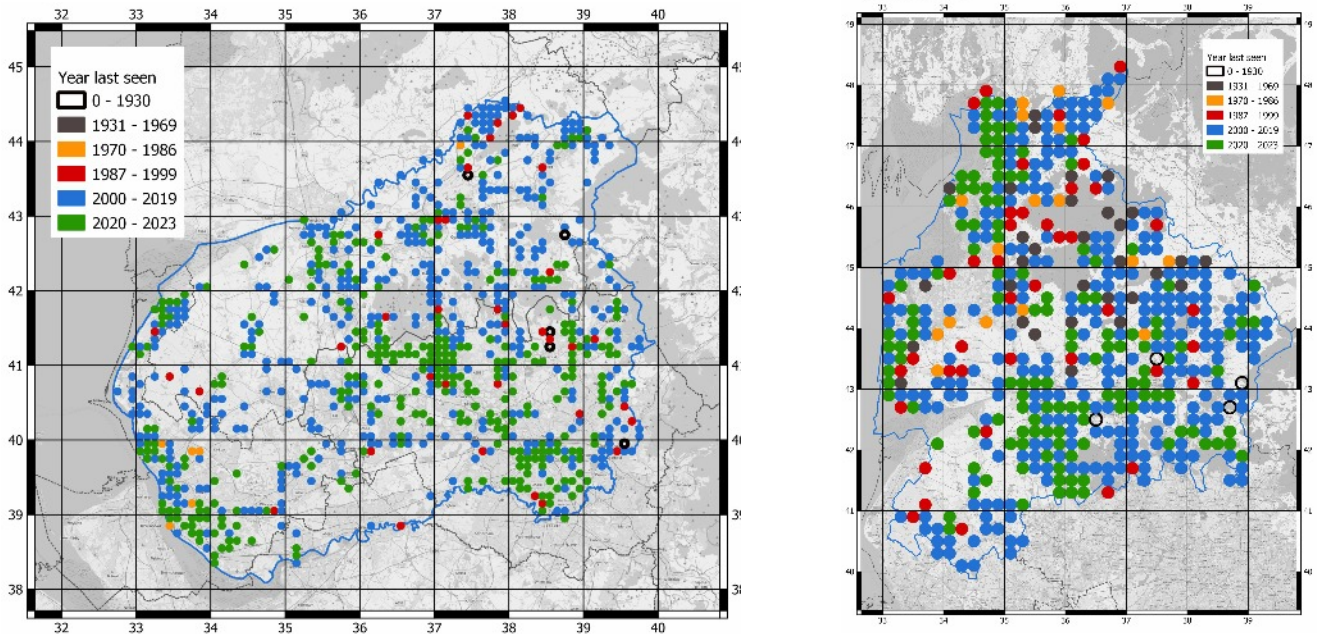
In addition, there are a significantly number of records held in iNaturalist, iRecord and the Local Record Centres that are yet to be processed and imported to Mapmate. The iNaturalist community have been especially active in North Merseyside, the modern-day West Lancashire district, around Preston, the western section of the Fylde peninsula, Morecambe, Lancaster and Silverdale. The iNaturalist City Nature Challenge took place from 28<sup>th</sup> of April to 1<sup>st</sup> of May and produced over 7000 records for Greater Manchester and 3000 for North Merseyside.

There is still a lot of verification to do with just under 39,000 vascular plant records within Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester yet to reach research grade which can be accessed via this link: [Observations · iNaturalist](#)

During 2023 the student ran Manchester University Botany Group ventured out in the Fallowfield area gathering over 550 plant records. Recording was also stepped up in the rural areas with the resumption of Lancashire County Council Ecologists monitor over 100 Biological Heritage Sites.

Significant progress was made with the Flora of South Lancashire with several sections having been uploaded to the Northwestern Naturalists Union (NWNNU) website [VC59 Flora \(northwesternnaturalistsunion.org.uk\)](http://VC59Flora.northwesternnaturalistsunion.org.uk). Additional herbarium records traced at

Manchester Museum have been added to the associated distribution maps and in some case to the species accounts. Ben Deed has also begun of the production of species maps in QGIS which will assist local recording (see the 1km and tetrad *Asplenium* maps below).



Working with Barbara Greenwood, Steve Garland and Chris Preston the obituary for our late Emeritus Recorder Eric Greenwood has been compiled and submitted to the BSBI for publication. Sadly, another local botanist John Somerville passed away during 2023 after a long illness. John will be remembered for developing the British wildflowers website a site which is a great aid to many of us.

### Interesting Finds:

*Rubus rossensis* was discovered by a Pack-horse track at Rough Bank, Milnrow (SD9412) by DP & J Earl, new to vice-county 59.

*Rubus rubritinctus* was found to be locally common along Pole Lane, Unsworth (SD8206).

*Perovskia atriplicifolia* (Russian Sage) survives in an amenity area in Stretford (SJ7894).

*Aesculus parviflora* (Bottlebrush Buckeye) is suckering extensively within shrubberies at The Chancellor's Garden, Manchester University (SJ8594) Manchester University Botany Group.

An additional inland record of *Carex distans* has been found along the Lune Valley by R. Stevens.

*Passiflora caerulea* (Blue Passionflower) was discovered in a hedgerow by Savick Brook, Fulwood (SD5432) by DP & J Earl - a new record for vice-county 60.

**David Earl**

# SOCIETY DIARY

**Very few Societies have been in contact so please check the details and visit websites and Facebook pages where they are given for further information.**

**Please note that members of the Northwestern Naturalists' Union are welcome to attend the meetings of all 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](mailto: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](http://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: [info@gmwildlife.org.uk](mailto:info@gmwildlife.org.uk)

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, Dukinfield Town Hall, King Street, Dukinfield, SK16 4LA 0161 342 3123



## **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](http://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 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](http://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](mailto: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](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. See also 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 redgate104@gmail.com or Marple Naturalists Community page on [www.marple-uk.com](http://www.marple-uk.com) or [www.facebook.com/marplenaturalists](http://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](http://www.mnapage.info) and reports of previous trips on our blog at [www.NaturalistsNotebook.mnapage.info](http://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 and enquires contact David Nelson 01282 863012 [davidnelson@btinternet.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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**

Lifelong Learning Centre, Oldham, at 7.30 pm for more information call Phil Whiteman 01612900722, [philipwhiteman333@hotmail.com](mailto: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. Enquiries should be made by e-mail to [prestonwildlife@gmail.com](mailto:prestonwildlife@gmail.com), through our website [www.prestonsociety.co.uk](http://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](http://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](mailto:rfnspublicity@gmail.com) or the Secretary (Jean Carter) at [rfnsenquiries@talktalk.net](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:steve.osborne42@gmail.com)

**Saturday 17 February : Arley Hall field trip**

**Thursday 29 February : Patagonia**

Judith Lovelady

**Thursday 21 March : Otters of the World**

Carol Bennetto

**Thursday 18 April : Hedgehog Rescue**

Irene Thompson

**Saturday 27 April : Friden and Long Dale field trip**

**Thursday 23 May : Whitely Green evening field trip**

**Saturday 22 June : Moore Reserve nr Warrington field trip**

**June/July : joint field trip with Grange-over-Sands Nats group (date TBC)**

**July : Hoe Grange field trip (date TBC)**

**July/August : Moth Morning in Knutsford (date TBC)**

**Saturday 17 August : Lindow Common field trip**

**October : Alderley Edge seasonal sortie field trip (date TBC)**

### **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](http://www.northwestinvertebrates.org.uk/events) for booking instructions.

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