



L E N S B U L L E T I N

No.24

Issued for Members and Friends of the

LONG EATON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

AUTUMN/WINTER 1991

- CHAIRMAN : ALAN HEATH
- SECRETARY : MARION SMITH
- MEETINGS : JUDY & JOHN
- SECRETARY : LANGFORD
- TREASURER : NORAH KNIGHT



It is again my pleasure to report another good year for the society. The winter programme was well attended and the summer programme was as popular as ever and our thanks are extended to the leaders and all who attended.

The society continued to collaborate with the Erewash Groundwork Trust and we provided a naturalist to accompany three boat trips to Shardlow, all of which were well attended and successful. LENS was also represented at an event at the Erewash Museum for local societies. The event proved to be interesting to the public and afforded an opportunity to meet with other societies, i.e. Shipley Birdwatchers and also the Badger Group as well as making ourselves known to the general public.

A 'clean up' evening was organised at Forbe's Hole and LENS is directly involved with the management of this site which will shortly receive nature reserve status. Thanks are extended to all who gave freely of their time to assist in the work at the site.

Due to re-organisation of Community Education, it has been necessary to change our meetings venue. The officers and committee were caused considerable anxiety after having arranged the winter programme for 1991-92 as it was only a week before the first meeting that we knew a room was available to us! Fortunately, the venue is close to the original so any inconvenience is minimal but we do now have to pay for the room by the hour. Briefly, under the new Local Management of Schools, all schools have to charge a realistic fee for the letting of rooms and we do face the possibility of further increases in the future. Despite our initial concern, the year ended on a happy note and we are pleased to say that our forthcoming programme is secure at the new venue, at least for the time being.

Finally my special thanks are extended to all the committee who have worked so hard on your behalf.

Alan Heath

You will notice that as usual the Bulletin spans quite a period of time but I'm sure you will find the articles of interest. Anyone who thinks they may have something of interest to put in the Bulletin please don't hesitate to let me know. Any unusual sightings of species on holiday, or unusual holidays from a natural history point of view?

Fay Blackburn

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METHOD OF AGEING A HEDGE - The number of species (shrub and trees of mature age) are counted over a distance of 30yards i.e. Hawthorn Maple, Ash and Hazel. $4 \times 99 = 396 - 16 = 380$ years.
 Ref: R. Freethy, Journal British Naturalist Association - Vol 27
 No.7 (Spring 1991) p.33.

John Stirland from East Leake described conditions necessary for wildlife gardens. He emphasised the need to provide food, shelter and nesting sites. It is possible to increase the number of visiting species and still retain an ornamental framework. Local climate is important too, particularly exposure to wind. Micro-climates were discussed such as may be found on a rockery or small pockets which are shaded from the sun. If the habitat is right then everything else will be right.

Trees to encouraged are oak which can host some 300 species, willows 260 species and hawthorn some 150 species. Beech is good for fungi but is best as a hedge in a garden as it retains its leaves. Hedges form wildlife corridors as few creatures like to be in open spaces. Mention was also made of ponds which should not be shaded by trees since a better alternative is the introduction of water lilies. Ponds should have a minimum depth of 60cm with a marginal shelf, a deep area and a marsh area. Millfoil and Elodea are good oxygenating plants submerged, you should be able to see the bottom oxygenating plants when totally submerged. You should be able to see the bottom of a good pond.

The importance of pH was emphasised and it is easier to make soil more alkaline than more acid.

Nesting boxes should not be placed in the water channel of a tree, they also should be placed out of the sun. Numerous nest boxes were shown with hints given on their construction. If conditions are right for birds, then they are right for everything else.

Non-persistent sprays such as Pyrethrum were recommended. Fairy liquid is good for white fly and sulphur is a good fungicide.

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On Monday 29th April, Clive Haley led a party of LENS members around Bestwood Country Park. The weather was terrible, with heavy rain falling most of the time. Very few birds were seen but quite a number were heard including, Robin, Pheasant, Song Thrush, Long tailed Tit, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Great Tit, Goldcrest, Chaffinch, Cuckoo, Wren and Dunnock. It may have been a miserable evening with regards to the weather but it certainly wasn't from the quality of the walk. The Woods are superb and Clive's knowledge and enthusiasm together with his entertaining anecdotes made for a very enjoyable evening.

Fay Blackburn

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Ten LENS members undertook an interesting walk on Saturday 11th May from Middleton Top near Wirksworth, to Cromford Canal Basin.

Following a short walk along the trackbed of the Cromford and High Peak Railway, we reached and passed through Hopton Tunnel (113 yards long) beyond which we could see the Hopton Incline. In its operational days it had the steepest adhesion-worked section anywhere on British Railways, a short stretch of 1 in 14. Returning to Middleton Top,

we were shown over the well known Engine House built in 1829, where the two beam engines were put into operation for us. These stationary engines hauled wagons up the Middleton Inclin until closure in 1963.

The engineman explained that the Cromford and High Peak Railway was built in the 1820's, linking the canal and river system of the East Midlands with that of the North West and Manchester. The civil engineering of the line owed much to canal practice, horses hauling the 'trains' on the long (nearly) level sections, with winding engines (Middleton the only one remaining) hauling wagons up the inclines.

After a breezy lunchtime, we walked down the incline (708 yards long, gradient 1 in 8½), along the level stretch over the Wirksworth Road, past Black Rocks picnic area to the Sheep Pasture Incline (1320 yards, gradient 1 in 8/1 in 9), at the foot of which the railway connected with the Cromford Canal. There is a small interpretative centre and museum here, enjoyed by some of our group, while others walked along the canal towpath over the River Derwent Aquaduct and a short distance along the 'Lea Wood' branch of the canal. This proved the best area for birds, and a pair of dippers delighted us by feeding their five young, who were perched on a piece of timber just over the water. Grey Wagtail, nuthatch, blackcap and pied flycatcher were also seen.

The walk concluded at Cromford Wharf, terminus of the canal, where the cars had been left. Thanks are due to Brian Phillips who arranged for the winding engines to be operated specially for us.

John Langford

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There was a good turn out of LENS members on Monday 13th May for Clear-up of litter at Forbes Hole. A skip full of rubbish was collected

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The trip to Snettisham was only reasonably well patronised, but those who made the 'trek' thought it well worthwhile (if rather cold) and the following birds were seen:- great-crested grebe, fulmar, cormorant, grey heron, canada goose, barnacle goose, greylag goose, pink footed goose, mute swan, shelduck, mallard, pochard, tufted duck, shoveler, kestrel, reg-legged partridge, pheasant, moorhen, coot, oystercatcher, ringed plover, grey plover, lapwing, trunstone, dunlin, sanderling, redshank, greenshank, black-tailed godwit, bar-tailed godwit, snipe, avocet, black-headed gull, herring gull, black tern, sandwich tern, common tern, wood pigeon, feral pigeon, swift, skylark, swallow, house martin, meadow pipit, dunnock, sedge warbler, reed warbler, whitethroat, wheatear, blackbird, reed bunting, chaffinch, linnet, house sparrow, magpie.

Flowers seen:- birdsfoot trefoil, buttercup - field, corn, creeping, buckthorn, vipers bugloss, campion - red, white, sea, mouse-eared chickweed, cleavers, red clover, cranesbill - dovesfoot, bloody, wild chervil, hoary cress, water crowfoot, wild cabbage, wallflower cabbage, daisy, curled dock, elder flower, eyebright, garlic mustard, goatesbeard, sticky groundsel, gorse, houndstongue, hemlock, hawthorn Hawkweed - mouse-eared, beaked, hedge mustard, spring beauty, yellow stonecrop, horned poppy, weld, hop-foot trefoil, prickly sowthistle, oxford ragwort, thrift, mayweed, hoary mullen, poppy, shepherd purse germander speedwell, selfheal, dogrose, hairytare, field forgetme not, white vetch, stinging nettle, sheeps sorrel, silver week, seabest plantain.

BUNNY OLD WOOD - Leaders, Nellie and Russell Leaton, 8th July 1991

This was a very enjoyable and interesting evening walk, although besides our very able leaders, we would have welcomed an expert on fungi as there were so many different species noted. Fortunately Judy and John Langford were among the members present and they listed the following birds - blackbird, wren, willow warbler, spotted flycatcher, chiffchaff (H), blackcap (H), blue tit, willow tit, greenfinch, song thrush, wood pigeon, kestrel, skylark (H) and magpie. Numerous ringlet butterflies were seen and one small copper.

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Dale Abbey Area - 22nd July 1991

Joyce and George Smith again led an evening walk around the Dale Abbey area. This event was well attended with 18 members and 5 visitors present. The following birds were seen - yellow hammer, swift, blackbird, mistle thrush (23), swallow (50), magpie, wood pigeon, jay, kestrel, moorhen, green woodpecker, bullfinch, collared dove.

Butterflies and moths - meadow brown, small white, small skipper (3), 6 spot burnette.

There was a great variety of plant life - agrimony, meadow buttercup, briar rose, mature elm tree, sorrel, tufted vetch, soft rush, birds foot trefoil, common mouseear, lesser stitchwort, hedge woundwort, cow parsley, wood avens, sheep sorrel, greater burnette, scentless mayweed, white bryony, honeysuckle, black bryony, cut leaved willowherb, tormentil, self heal, herb robert, meadow sweet, convulvus, wild hops, marestail, columbine, rhue, white deadnettle, pineapple weed, persicaria, forget me not, field pansy, common daisy, nettlewort, dog's mercury, garlic mustard, water plantain, bracket fungi, common ragwort, foxglove, dwarf mallow, rosebay willowherb, spear thistle, field thistle, meadow vetch, common vetch, burdock, woody nightshade, goose grass, weld, greater willowherb, cinquefoil, yarrow, chervil, red campion, dog rose, common sow thistle, white clover, knapweed - hazel nuts.

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Barbecue and Batwatch - Saturday 24th August - Fay & John Blackburn's

Thankfully it was a lovely summer's evening and John and I were pleased to welcome LENS members to our garden and Barker's Pond. We were keeping our fingers crossed that the bats would appear, the conditions seemed right, but we hadn't seen the bats for several nights. Dusk was descending as we finished eating, Martin Harvey had brought along a 'batometer' that his father had made, he wasn't sure if it worked as he had never found any bats that he could test it on! Suddenly everyone became excited when faint clicking noises were emitted from the 'batometer' and sure enough 3 or 4 bats were flying over our heads! They flew around for quite awhile but then seemed to disappear, but Martin took his box to Barker's Pond and found that the bats were flying over the water.

Martin also found that a number of moths were attracted to our garden, obviously due to the number of trees and proximity of water. As Martin is something of a moth expert he arranged to come round the following weekend and set up his equipment to attract the moths so that he could catch and identify them. A few interesting species were found.

Beverley Rhodes led a fungal foray at Elvaston Castle Country Park, on Sunday 22nd September, members enjoyed the event and another was arranged to take place around the Dale Abbey area on 20th October. The Dale Abbey foray was in conjunction with Erewash Groundwork Trust. The following species were seen - wood blewit, wood puffball, honey fungus, pluteus cervinus, clitocybe sp, clouded agaric, dung roundhead, antler fungi, horse mushroom, shaggy parasol, stinkhorn, wood woolly foot, red cracked boletus, brown rollrim, small parasol, false chanterelle, ugly milkcap, cramp ball, calocera cornea.

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That was the last of our 'Summer' outings, meanwhile our winter programme had commenced with a talk by John Holmes on the WILDLIFE OF SPAIN. John, who works for Erewash Groundwork Trust stated that Spain has the greatest diversity of wildlife in Europe. There are some 4000 wolves and a hundred or so brown bears still to be found as well as the lynx and wild boar.

Some 35% of the terrain is mountainous, with a great variety of climate and soil types. Half the country is not cultivated as it is impossible to do so. The oldest rocks are to be found in the north-west and the youngest in the south-east. Slides of dinosaur footprints were shown. During the years that John lived in Spain and also subsequent holidays, he has visited every type of habitat, including the area where 'Lawrence of Arabia' was filmed. Inland Spain contrasts greatly with the beaches known to tourists and suffers very little from pollution. One field alone was found to contain 256 species of flowers and 46 butterflies. The scarce swallowtail is actually more frequent than the common swallowtail. Other rarities seen were a black stork. Vultures and eagles were common and flowers were in profusion. Some fields where pesticides and herbicides are not used looked like the English meadows of long ago. Also some regions including primary forest have remained untouched since the last ice-age.

Answering questions from members, he explained that permits are required in advance to visit some of the areas. These are obtainable from the equivalent of the Nature Conservancy, but it is necessary to apply to each region separately. Intending visitors can obtain addresses and details from John.

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NATURES PANTRY

ISOBEL GIBSON

7th October 1991

The 'food for free' concept was introduced by the speaker who is Head Ranger at Shipley Country Park. Members were invited to sample Rosehip Soup and Acorn Coffee. Many edible plants were on display together with recipes to delight the palate. Isobel explained that there were more than blackberries and mushrooms available but warned of the danger that some may have been sprayed and also that there may be lead contamination of road side specimens.

We are by nature 'gatherers' and natural food has been collected since Neolithic times and was especially popular in Tudor times. There was a revival during the second world war.

The gathering of plants can be a family involvement and increases the awareness of the countryside. The book 'Edible and Medicinal Plants' published by Hamlyn was recommended for anyone wishing to learn more.

For years the warden's board listing bird sightings at Attenborough invariably included reference to a Water Rail and for years, in our case, it had remained undetected to the point where we had become convinced that the recording was some elaborate hoax.

On Sunday 24th November we made a late afternoon visit to the reserve. Not unexpectedly the day's sightings, which included a Smew, were headed by the mythical Water Rail which we dismissed as the customary figment of someone's fanciful imagination.

We located the female Smew at the western end of the reserve feeding amongst a scattering of Tufted Duck and Goldeneye. Then two departing fellow bird watchers casually asked if we had seen the Water Rail during our walk, explaining where they had observed it. Filled with our usual scepticism we retraced our steps and caught up with two other bird watchers signalling excitedly to us. We set up the telescope and there on the fringe of a reed bed, beyond a small flock of Teal was.....the Water Rail! What a sighting! Full details of location on request!

Fay & John Blackburn

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Little Grebe	1	9.5.91	Forbes Hole
Grey Heron	1	30.6/22.11	Sawley Bridges/Barkers Pond
Mute Swan	1	9.5/Oct-Nov	Sawley Marina " "
Shelduck	3	14.4.91	Thrumpton Ferry Area
"	7	Oct	Attenborough
Gadwell	1	9.5.91	Sawley Marina/Trent Floods
Wigeon	70	20.10.91	Attenborough
Teal	Many	all year	"
Shoveler	12/1	Oct/9.5.91	" / Trent Floods
Tufted Duck	Many/1	" /12.11	" / Barkers Pond
Smew	1	24.11.91	"
Sparrowhawk	1	1.4.91	Elvaston Quarry/Church Wilne
Kestrel	1	9.5/30.6/22.7	Trent Floods/Sawley Bridges/Dale Abbey
Pheasant	1	9.5.91	Trent Floods
Water Rail	1	24.11.91	Attenborough
Little Ringed Plover	1	6.4.91	Attenborough
"	"	" 2	14.4.91 Thrumpton Ferry Area
"	"	" 2A 3Y	30.6.91 Sawley Bridges
Lapwing	1	30.6.91	" "
Dunlin	7	24.11.91	Attenborough
Redshank	1	24.11.91	"
"	3	9.5.91	Sawley Marina/Trent Floods
"	2A 1Y	30.6.91	Sawley Bridges
Snipe	16	20.10.91	Attenborough
Common Tern	2/Many	30.6/Summer	Sawley Bridges/Attenborough
Swift	1/4	22.7/ "	Dale Abbey/Barkers Pond
Kingfisher	1	2.11.91	Barkers pond
Green Woodpecker	1	22.7.91	Dale Abbey
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	28.6.91	River Trent/River Soar
Skylark	1	9.5.91	Sawley Marina/Trent Floods
Swallow	50	22.7.91	Dale Abbey
Sand Martin	Small colony	30.6.91	Sawley Bridges
House Martin	8	Summer	Barkers Pond
Meadow Pipit	1	30.6.91	Sawley Bridges
Pied Wagtail	Several/2	30.6/all Yr.	" " /Risley
Yellow Wagtail	1	30.6.91	" "
Grasshopper Warbler	1	9.5.91	Attenborough
Sedge Warbler	1	"	"
Lesser Whitethroat	2	"	Forbes Hole
Blackcap	1	9.5/28.6/30.6	Forbes Hole/West Park/Sawley Bridges
Willow Warbler	Sev	9.5	Attenborough
Chiffchaff	2	14.4.91	Forbes Hole
Fieldfare	24	6.4.91	Attenborough
Song Thrush	1 pr	14.4.91	Forbes Hole
Mistle Thrush	23	22.7.91	Dale Abbey
Long Tailed Tit	1/1/7	14.4/9.5/10.11	Forbes Hole/Forbes Hole/Barkers Pond
Willow Tit	1	14.4.91	Forbes Hole
Tree Creeper	2/1	9.5/28.6	Attenborough/West Park/Forbes Hole
Bullfinch	2/1	28.6/22.7	West Park/Dale Abbey
Linnet	6	9.5.91	Attenborough
Goldfinch	1	28.6.91	West Park

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

It was agreed that in order to meet the cost of our meetings room and to have a surplus of cash to assist in paying speakers' expenses, there was a need to raise a further £100. The alternatives were to raise the basic subscription or to raise the meetings fees. The latter was approved by the meeting and it was agreed to raise the meetings fees to 50p and £1.00 for non-members/vistors. Based on the average attendances this raise would cover our increased expenditure.

OFFICERS ELECTED:-

CHAIRMAN	Alan Heath
SECRETARY	Marion Smith
TREASURER	Norah Knight
MEETINGS SECRETARY	Judy & John Langford
RECORDER	John Blackburn
AUDITOR/EDITOR	Fay Blackburn
WEA LIAISON	Hilary Forber

COMMITTEE	Fay Draper, Brian Phillips, Dennis Truman Carole Willan, John Blackburn
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Birds of Derbyshire - Roy Frost 4th November 1991

The speaker is the author of the book 'Birds of Derbyshire' and he spoke on the status and distribution of the 280 or so species to be found in the county. Slides were shown of more than half of these species. Roger stated that starlings are on the decline, a big roost now would consist of 10-20,000 compared with a flock of 1½ million a few years ago. The black redstart is now scarce but can often be found near power stations, it can be seen at Stanton Ironworks. There are no great numbers of birds at the Derwent Dams as the water tends to be rather acidic.

The redshank suffered in the cold winter of 1962/63 but the expansion of gravel pits has helped to increase its numbers. Rooks are declining but the reason for this is not certain. Hawfinches are to be found in Clumber Park near two hornbeam trees and also on the Cromford Canal. The speaker considered that the Sparrowhawk is more common than the Kestrel in Derbyshire, due to the fact that the kestrel is easier to see and therefore tends to be recorded more than the sparrowhawk. Research on the Woodcock is going on at Whitwell Wood and there are only two pairs of Nightjars known in Derbyshire. The golden plover can be found around the pools in the cotton grass in the higher regions of the Peak District above 2000 feet. Apparently if you wish to attract Siskins into the garden it is recommended that red mesh peanut bags are used.

Alan Heath

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A negative report from John Langford which could show cause for concern, he says that he has not seen or heard a Turtle Dove in the Long Eaton area this summer and that a small number are usually around from mid-May to August/September. Also he has not seen a Little Grebe in the Long Eaton area for many months. They used to be common on the River Soar between Kegworth and Redhill, less so on the Trent. The level of the Soar has been lowered and there are now many more boats. The nearest Little Grebe he has seen this summer was on the Cromford Canal near High Peak Junction, when we went on the LENS outing.

