

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

No.25

Issued for Members and Friends of the

LONG EATON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

SPRING 1992

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



CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

The recent winter period has seen a change of venue for LENS but I am sure we feel happy with our new premises (even if we do have to pay for it!)

What a superb winter programme we have had, and, at the time of writing, there is still more to come. The indoor meetings have been so good it would be unfair to single out any for special mention. The quality of talks and the variety of subjects offered must surely have inspired us all.

As you know, I represent LENS on the Forbes Hole Management Committee along with representatives from Erewash Borough Council, Erewash Groundwork Trust and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. The committee has been asked to take the Fox Covert at Long Eaton Park and also Stoney Clouds at Sandiacre under its wing. The management plans for all three sites are complete and I have copies of these. It was at one of these meetings recently that Pat Brassley made the comment that LENS is the second best recorder of wildlife in the county (second only to Matlock). The source of her information of course comes from our Bulletins so please keep the records rolling in.

Recently I visited the Ash Tip at Lock Lane with Peter Longbottom of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to try to ascertain a circular route through the nature reserve which would have minimal disturbance. Peter wanted some background information on the site and I was able to send him photocopies of the relevant pages from our Bulletins. You see now how valuable our records are and will be in the future.

Finally, I would like to quote from a 'Foreword' in Bulletin No.8 by George Smith which is as appropriate today as it was in the spring of '84.

"Another summer programme is being arranged and it is hoped that as many as possible will accompany us on our summer field trips locally. Explore your own area with 'new eyes' looking for birds, perhaps, or just taking a fresh look at familiar scenery with a visiting leader, looking for something special. Or have a walk in the pleasant company of friends. That is what LENS is for."

Alan Heath

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The following articles are a resume of our winter programmes:

FLOWERS OF CRETE - Dr Alan Wilmott 18th November 1991

Dr Wilmott explained that the island has many gorges and limestone rocks with mountains as high as 8000ft. Approximately 10% of the flowers to be found there are endemic to the island and there are some 1,400-1,500 recorded plants, a similar number being found in the British Isles but in Crete they are concentrated into a smaller area. Reference was made to the 'chasmophytes', literally plants which live in chasms. Easter is the best time to visit Crete and many slides were shown which included the Dragon Arum, Mandrake, olive groves and especially orchids. Of these, the bee orchids were

particularly impressive and it has been recently discovered that not only does the orchid mimic the bee in appearance but also produces a pheromone which produces a smell like a bee. Man has inhabited Crete for some 7000 years which marked the beginning of civilised society in Europe, the Minoans first being recorded there some 5000 years before Christ. Dr Wilmott is currently chairman of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

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WHALES - David Higgs

9th December 1991

The speaker is a biological science graduate and freelance professional photographer who has made films on mountaineering and other subjects for Radio Times, TV Times, London Illustrated News and other periodicals.

A five week visit to the Azores was described which was an expedition to study Sperm Whales in association with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). The Azores are volcanic and only a few miles off shore the depth can reach some 2000 metres. David explained that Sperm Whales are the only large whales with teeth and they feed on squid and sharks. The prey is located by a form of echo location similar to that used by bats and a tape-recording of this was played. The 'tick tock' sound of the whales becomes more frequent as it approaches its prey. Also recorded was a squealing sound emanating from dolphins. Whales stick their tail up before diving and the shape of each tail is characteristic to a particular whale. No two are alike, as in the case of finger-prints. Females can weigh up to 13 tons and are 11 metres long but the males can weigh 40 tons and are from 18-20 metres in length. Sperm whales are very sensitive to sound and avoid boats with engines and it was for this reason that the crew on this expedition used a yacht. Slides were shown of the whales in the 'Margarite' formation in which they form a circle with the young inside. It is apparently a defence ring. Underwater photographs of whales with their young were most impressive and David stated that the use of Schnorkels rather than air tanks was necessary as the air bubbles cause whales to swim away.

Sperm Whales can dive down to a depth of a mile. The expedition also collected skin samples for 'genetic finger-printing'. The whales have a gestation period of 18 months but their numbers have fallen dratically from 1½ million to about 4000. Blue whales are down from about 11,000 to a mere 500.

Whaling was a traditional activity in the Azores but alternative measures are now being encouraged to develop whale tourism which both protects the whales and still brings in a substantial income.

In addition to the whale study, records were kept of birds and turtles including tagging. The speaker described his photographic techniques and said that whales are very 'cow' like. Most whale products are now unnecessary as synthetic products do the job just as well, except perhaps for certain whale oils which are stable at extreme range of temperature.

An account of an expedition to Iceland by Nigel Bidgood and other members of the team from Trent College proved to be a real spectacle. The four week trip last summer, which took two years in the planning, was beautifully illustrated with slides and background music with commentary by the boys themselves. Although essentially a mountaineering expedition, reference was made to birds and wild flowers which included the Artic Fireweed, Angelica and Purple Mountain Saxifrage which is the most northerly flowering plant. Hazards were described which included a 'white out' during a snow storm and a boy who became ill following inhalation of sulphur dioxide from volcanic rock. The expedition consisted of 14 boys and 4 staff of which Nigel was one. They took with them a mechanical bird to be used for animal behaviour studies. This caused considerable problems at the Customs at Heathrow Airport. Unfortunately the bird crashed on its maiden flight! Colour of rhyolite mountains, snowscapes, vivid sunsets supported by music (Carmina Burana) all added to the spectacle. Nigel and his team were thanked for sharing their experiences with us and many questions followed

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The speaker is a member of the Derbyshire Entomological Society and he described various species and their habitats, including some exotic foreign species. Methods of collecting specimens were described including the use of two bucketfulls of food plant and placing these in a pillow case to locate caterpillars. Ian explained that some caterpillars can cause skin irritation. Moths released from breeding can cause recording problems and it was suggested that a small spot of Tippex placed on one wing would allow anyone catching such a specimen to know it was a release. Populations can vary. The Comma was unknown in Derbyshire 15 years ago but is now seen during most years! The Orange Tip may be found on Garlic Mustard but if caught they should be placed in separate jars as they are cannibalistic.

Two light traps were shown, one professionally made and the other constructed from scrap materials. The essential points of the trap were described and the use of a circuit breaker strongly recommended. Special bulbs are used which include mercury vapour lamps but they are expensive. Egg boxes are placed inside the light trap to increase the surface area for the moths. A warm muggy night before a thunderstorm is often the best time for a successful moth watch. Various books on butterfly and moth identification were on display.

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EARLY SIGHTINGS AT DALE ABBEY

Now, beat this.....

The sharp eyes of George Smith spotted Coltsfoot growing at Dale Abbey on 5th February 1992. Whilst the recognised flowering period for this hardy perennial is February - April it is an extremely early sighting and it would be interesting to know whether any members have an earlier recording.

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Alan Heath has yet again furnished us with a comprehensive record of the local weather over the past year, the following are a few of details for 1991.

JANUARY Gales on 5th and 8th. Fairly wet in second week but second half of month dry. Quite a lot of frost.

FEBRUARY Snow in first half of month, especially 7th and 10th. Very cold at beginning of second week.

MARCH Fair number of wet days, but drier in last week. Very warm on 13th. Dominance of Southerly winds.

APRIL Rather cool with dominance of North wind especially in the third week. Wet in first and last week and some snow on 18th and 19th which did not settle.

MAY Driest month of the year. Dominance of North or North East winds with half of the months winds from this direction.

JUNE Wettest month of the year. Temperature of 70° was not reached until the 28th. The maximum temperature was below 60°F on 9 days making it a cool month.

JULY Generally a warm month with the warmest day of the year on 29th. Six days had a maximum temperature of 80°F or more. There were three thunderstorms and three days had over a quarter of an inch of rain.

AUGUST With the exception of two days with over a quarter of an inch of rain on each day, rainfall was low and the month was mainly dry and warm, especially the last week.

SEPTEMBER Mainly dry until mid-month and last week. An inch of rain in 24 hours fell on 28-29th. Warm the first three weeks, especially the first week.

OCTOBER Another mainly dry month until the last few days. Quite a chilly beginning of third week. Deposits of sand from North Africa appeared on the 12th. Strong winds in second week and the last day.

NOVEMBER Fair amount of rain and, along with June was the wettest month of the year. Quite windy at times and some sharp frosts.

DECEMBER Fair amount of freezing fog in second week and very cold with lowest temperature of the year on the 12th. Third week was milder and wet but had some sleet and hail. Final week mild and dry. Very windy at end of third week.

Although the average maximum temperature was nearly 5 degrees down on the previous year and the average minimum was about 3 degrees lower, there were some good warm days. The temperature did not reach the 90s this year. Rainfall was about 5 inches down on the previous year and this is about 7 inches down compared with the average.

AURORA BOREALIS (Northern Lights) seen on November 9th.

WARMEST DAY	85°	- 29th July,	COLDEST DAY	18°F	- 12th December
WETTEST DAY		? 29th Sept,	WETTEST MONTH		- June & Nov
DRIEST MONTH		May			

Peter, of the Derby Fungal Study Group, explained that fungal spores are in the air all around us and what we see as a 'fungus' is the fruiting body. Spores are so numerous in order to ensure success and some 80,000 can be found in a square millimetre on Orange-peel fungus.

Many rust fungi are 'plant specific' so you only need to identify the plant and you have your fungus too. He explained various methods of growing fungi and stated that deer dung placed under a bell jar produces very good results.

Many actual specimens were on display and we were able to see these under a low power microscope and so appreciate the beauty of their forms. A high power binocular microscope was available to examine spores.

The projected slides were excellent and most were in extreme close-up. Peter explained that it was necessary to 'stop down' to get everything in focus, but this necessitates long exposures. However, as fungi are 'still' subjects, this is not a problem if using a tripod. The method of determining exposure with a 'through the lens' meter is to select the widest aperture, say f/1.8 and calculate back remembering to double the time for each stop. If the reading is say 1 second at f/1.8 then at f/22 it would require a few minutes of exposure. The success of this was clearly demonstrated in the photograph shown.

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On a number of occasions whilst I have been on playground duty at Risley School, I have seen Alan Heath passing by taking his dog for a walk, it must be on these walks that he has noted the following fungi.

Petersham Road - Grass Verge, November and December 1991
Glistening Ink Cap - Coprinus Micaceus, Honey Fungus - Armillaria Mellea

Risley Glebe 9.12.91 Jews Ear - Avicularia Avricula
" " Nov '91 Glistening Ink Cap

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Microscopes : Alan Heath has the latest catalogue for new and second-hand microscopes from Brunel. Anyone thinking of buying a microscope should see Alan.

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Burned out Cars: A WARNING from the Police via Brian Phillips, warns of the danger of touching burned out cars. Such vandalised vehicles are often to be found dumped on wildlife sites etc., but there is a serious danger as the burning causes chemical changes which can cause gangrene and cancer. DO NOT TOUCH but inform the police of the locality and let them deal with it.

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Although the speaker Margaret Williams now lives in the Midlands, she was born and lived for the early part of her life in North Yorkshire. She now returns to North Yorkshire 2/3 and sometimes 4 times per year. Slides were shown of all aspects of North Yorkshire from the Dales, through the Moors to the coast at Whitby.

Views were shown of some areas used in the T.V. series 'All Creatures Great and Small'. The speaker said that she had actually met James Herriott (real name Alf White?) the vet, at one of his surgeries for visitors.

The evening talk whetted the appetite of members, some who were interested in doing the walks that the speaker had undertaken. She was thanked by Alan Heath.

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LENS Members walk, Sawley Marina to Shardlow and return
Saturday 7th March 1992 Leaders: Judy & John Langford

On a dull morning, with a hint of rain and a South Westerly Breeze 15 LENS members set off on the outward leg along the River Trent to Shardlow. After a leisurely stroll the party arrived at approximately 12.15. A very enjoyable lunch was partaken at one of the hostelryes! We were then fortified ready for the return journey along the canal, across the horse bridge over the Trent at the Derwent Mouth. We even had one or two bright intervals, with the sun shining through for a while.

There were 36 different species of bird seen during the walk, the most noteworthy are listed below:

CORMORANT, GREAT CRESTED GREBE, PIED WAGTAILS - 2/3 dozen on most easterly of 2 roundels at Shardlow Sewage Works, feeding on flies and insects, SKYLARK - nice to see and hear this sign of spring. Ascending song flight over gravel pit and rough grazings upstream of the Leicestershire Pipe Bridge over the R. Trent, TEAL - 4 on pool at workings, FEMALE TUFTED DUCK above Pipe Bridge, GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER - in willow near to Derwent Mouth, most of the party saw this bird before it flew off
LITTLE GREBE - pair near Derwent Mouth on the River Derwent itself.
REEDBUNTING - pair at Shardlow Sewage Works.
GREY WAGTAIL - Shardlow Sewage Treatment Works.
MISTLE THRUSH - near Potters Bridge over canal, near sewage works.
TREE SPARROW - 2 in tree near house in Shardlow.
KINGFISHER - near Pipe Bridge, seen by Mr Seamark on his early return walk at lunch-time.

Due to recent mild weather, rather than the more seasonal wet of February, or cold and frost, the birds seen were possibly not so exciting as the winter duck and waders we hoped to see. It was not early enough for the first spring migrants, late March will bring the earliest warblers and the sand martins.

As we did not have the Trees, plants and flowers experts with us few varieties were noted, but of special interest was a WALNUT TREE in a field beside Derwent Farm and Tudor Cottage, Wilne. Also a good specimen of a HORSE CHESTNUT TREE stands in a commanding position at the downstream gate of Derwent Mouth Lock, this was in bud. There were signs of last years hop plant vines over willows and hedgrows along tow path. The PUSSY WILLOW was well out, showing spring to be well under way. LESSER CELANDINE was flowering as was WHITE DEADNETTLE and PINK DEADNETTLE, CHICKWEED was also noted.

HAPPENINGS AT BARKER'S POND

Members may recall that we had a 'tame' mallard type female duck on Barker's Pond, which sadly died winter before last after being frozen in the ice. Well this winter has seen us with another 'pet'. As some of you will know, our daughter works at a local vet's and a week or two before Christmas an injured tufted duck was brought into the surgery, it had an injury to one of its wings. It duly appeared to recover and as we have had a small flock of tufted duck on the pond for the past three years, Adele brought it home on Christmas Eve and let it out onto the water. It went with a flourish and much wing dipping, obviously relishing the water. Next day we went out as usual to feed the many variety of bird life on the pond, moorhen, coot, mallard, swan and tufted duck (sometimes nearly sixty birds!) anyone own a bakery? It was easy to spot Terry (the name our daughter gave to the tufted duck) he was an immature male so still a bit muddy white on the side, but easy to know him anyway, he had no qualms about coming into the side to be fed. In fact the other tufted duck started to come a bit closer after seeing that Terry had come to no harm.

When winter really came and the pond started to freeze over Terry did not fly away with the other tufties, but stayed with four mallards the two swans and the moorhens and coots. We are not sure if in fact he can't fly or if he looks upon the pond as his home. Anyway we felt responsible for him, so John was out every night breaking the hole up in the ice, we were pleased that the swans had stayed as these acted liked ice breakers, so during the two weeks freeze we were able to keep a part from freezing over completely. Happily the duck is still with us and he can certainly dive even if he may not be able to fly.

We also had a visitor to the pond that we have never seen before, a shoveller duck! It stayed for about two weeks, sometimes going away for a while then returning, needless to say we felt very pleased about this first for Barker's.

We think we may be having another first!! The pair of swans are still with us and appear to be nest building in the reeds, so we may be in for a treat in months to come. We hope it is not so heart breaking as last summer when out of about 36 baby mallards, some bred on the pond, some brought there from the canal, only one survived to maturity.

Fay Blackburn

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Alan Heath has forwarded his yearly report on freshwater microcoscopy 1991.

Pond samples have been taken from the following sites:-

Forbes Hole	50	species
Ticknall	39	"
Elvaston Castle Lake	9	"
Fields Farm Pond	39	"
Dockholme Pond	31	"
Sawley Marina Pond	23	"
Stanton by Dale Pond	16	"

Anyone wishing to have a full copy of the report please contact me on Long Eaton 732710.

BIRD SIGHTINGS WINTER 1991/92

GREAT CRESTED GREBE	2pr	23.2	Church Wilne
" " "	4	7.3	Sawley Bridges
LITTLE GREBE	1	23.2/7.3	R.Derwent/Derwent Mouth Area
WIGEON	50	4.1	Attenborough
TEAL	30	4.1	"
"	4	7.3	Sawley Bridges
SHELDUCK	2	27.12	Thrumpton/Meadow Lane
PINTAIL	2	27.12	" " "
SHOVELER	8	4.1	Attenborough
"	1(M)	30.12/12.1	Barkers Pond
"	3	27.12	Thrumpton
TUFTED DUCK	6/12	Season	Barkers Pond
" "	many	23.2	Church Wilne
" "	7	27.12	Thrumpton
" "	1 F	7.3	Sawley Bridges
POCHARD	30	4.1	Attenborough
"	4	27.12	Thrumpton Ferry/Meadow Lane
"	1pr	23.2	Church Wilne
GOLDENEYE	1F	27.12	Thrumpton/Meadow Lane
"	4	4.1.	Attenborough
RUDDY DUCK	6	27.12	Thrumpton/Meadow Lane
SPARROWHAWK	1	23.2	R.Derwent/Derwent Mouth
KESTREL	1	23.2	Church Wilne
PHEASANT	1	22.1.	Risley
LESSER BLACK?BACK GULL	1	27.12	Thrumpton
COMMON GULL	2	27.12	"
" "	1	25.1	Barkers Pond
KINGFISHER	1	23.2	R Derwent
"	1	7.3.92	Sawley Bridges
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER	1	29.11/18.12	Risley
" " "	1	7.3	R.Derwent
SKYLARK	2	7.3	Sawley Bridges
PIED WAGTAIL	15	23.2	R. Derwent
" "	30	7.3	Shardlow Sewage Works
GREY WAGTAIL	1	7.3.	" " "
BLACKCAP	1	22.1	Risley
FIELDFARE	6	20.12	Barkers Pond
"	12	27.12	Thrumpton
"	20	23.2	R.Derwent/Derwent Mouth
REDWING	8	27.12	Thrumpton
SONGTHRUSH	1/2	22 & 29.1	Risley
MISTLE THRUSH	1	7.3	Shardlow
LONG TAILED TIT	8	27.12	Barkers Pond
" " "	5	5.2-16.3	Risley
COAL TIT	1	Dec-Mch	"
NUTHATCH	1	" "	"
CORN BUNTING	1	23.2	R.Derwent
YELLOWHAMMER	20	23.2	"
GREENFINCH	2	Dec-Mch	Barkers pond
REED BUNTING	1	27.12	Thrumpton
* "	2	7.3	Shardlow Sewage Works
SISKIN	50	23.2	R.Derwent
TREE SPARROW	2	7.3	Shardlow

Judy and John Langford spend many hours walking the local riverside paths and their reported bird sightings make facinating entries for the records. One of their more outstanding excursions on 18th May 1991 commenced at Lock Lane and followed a route that went via Trent Lock and Cranfleet Cut to Barton Island in the course of which they observed 38 different bird species notable amongst which were Yellowhammer, Lesser Whitethroat, Goldfinch, Yellow Wagtail, Little Ringed Plover, Corn Bunting, Sedge Warbler and Ruddy Duck.

More recently on 23rd February 1992 they changed direction to follow the Trent and Derwent and traverse an area between Wilne, Shardlow and Draycott. They were rewarded by sight of a Sparrowhawk, a Kingfisher, a Greater Spotted Woodpecker, a Corn Bunting, 15 Pied Wagtails, 20 Fieldfares, 20 Yellow Hammers and a flock of approximately 50 Siskins feeding on alder seeds from 4 or 5 trees on each bank of the River Derwent just south of the footbridge over the river near Wilne Gunpowder Mills.

Judy and John spent some time watching these charming birds since they had never before seen Siskins flocking in such large numbers. Their previous highest number in a flock had been 6!

We look forward to further reports from these intrepid walkers.

John Blackburn
Recorder

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Bird sightings have been forwarded by the following:-
Judy and John Langford, Alan Heath and Fay and John Blackburn

The following list notes some of the more rare or not so common birds seen, but all sightings are recorded in our on-going records. Please let us have your sightings so that a more overall picture is shown.



BRITISH NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

PHENOLOGICAL REPORT

YEAR _____

LOCALITY _____ COUNTY _____

Observer's Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Notes: BNA members have been sending in records from its formation in 1905. From 1989, after a break, the survey has been recommenced and the results are being published from time-to-time in the "British Naturalist".

As a basis for any study of the subject we need first as clear and accurate as possible a picture of the situation for many events, many localities and many years. Please keep noting events throughout the year, for as well as helping long term phenological perspective, locations of individual sightings will be forwarded to the Biological Records Centre.

Please enter the dates of your observations in the column provided. If a single observer restrict your entries to observations made within a 10 mile radius of the location at the top of the form. If you regularly watch outside this area, please use a separate form. It is not expected that you will have observations for all the species listed.

Attach any other observations of interest (local increases or decreases, exceptional numbers, unusual species, abnormal weather, etc.) on a separate sheet of paper, together with the year, locality and your name.

Please complete and forward this form, together with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

Austen Dobbs,
Cloverleigh, Old Main Road,
Bulcote, NOTTINGHAM, NG14 5GU

to arrive not later than 15 December.

A	FLOWERING PLANTS	First Flowering	Main Flowering From	Main Flowering To	Last Flowering
1	Coltsfoot				
2	Lesser Celandine				
3	Wild Primrose				
4	Dandelion				
5	Lady's Smock				
6	Garlic Mustard				
7	Birdsfoot Trefoil				
8	Meadowsweet				

B	BIRDS	Nest Building	Clutches	Food for Young	Fledged Young	Eggs	Food For Young
	Breeding Blackbird						
	Breeding Song Thrush						
		First Records		Young/Larvac		Last Records	
		First	In number	1st Brood	2nd Brood	In Number	Last
1	Goldeneye						
2	Cuckoo						
3	Swift						
4	Swallow						
5	House Martin						
6	Blackcap						
7	Chiffchaff						
8	Spotted Flycatcher						
9	Fieldfare						
10	Redwing						
C	ANIMALS						
1	Hedgehog						
2	Pipistrelle						
D	REPTILES etc						
1	Common Lizzard						
2	Grass Snake						
3	Common Frog						
4	Common Toad						
E	INSECTS						
1	Bumble Bee (Bombus sp.)						
2	Wasp						
F	BUTTERFLIES						
1	Brimstone						
2	Orange Tip						
3	Red Admiral						
4	Painted lady						
5	Small Tortoiseshell						
6	Peacock						
7	Wall Brown						
8	Meadow Brown						
G	MOTHS						
1	Poplar Hawk Moth						
2	Large Yellow Underwing						
3	Vapourer						
4	Oak Eggar						
5	White Ermine						
6	Cinnabar						
7	March						
8	Common Carpet						
9	Magpie						