

# The CARLISLE NATURALIST

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Nightjar (Stephen Hewitt)

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**Society Announcements** – see end covers

### From the Editor

This issue comes soon after a rare summer with high temperatures, little rain and much sunshine. The impact of warmer weather on wildlife and the environment is documented in many ways amongst the notes and articles included here. Some will see it as a foretaste of things to come, which may be so, but it is easy to forget the fickleness of our climate, and in another twelve months time we may have a nostalgic yearning for 2003!

The coming season's programme of field meetings will proceed whatever the weather and details will be in next issue. We will be including the very successful Workshop format once again, this time with sessions on Ferns (revisiting a popular topic), and Ladybirds (a new one).

The current volume has 'suffered' from the welcome problem of having more material to publish than space has permitted. The Editor extends his grateful thanks, and apologies, to those whose work has had to be held over until the next issue. Their contributions *will* appear!

David Clarke

### Additions to the Society Library

Dr Neville Birkett has kindly given two publications to the Society's library:

Carter, H.H. (1978) A list of the Diptera of the Reading area. *The Reading Naturalist* (supplement to No. 30) [The Reading & District Natural History Society.]

Fracker, S.B. (1915), The Classification of Lepidopterous larvae. *Illinois Biological Monographs* Vol. II No.1 [University of Illinois.]

### 'Birds & Wildlife in Cumbria' 2002

The latest edition of the annual county natural history report is now available. This one is larger than ever, and with more illustrations of notable species. Members are reminded that they are entitled to purchase at the substantially discounted price of £5.00. An order slip is enclosed with this issue of the *Carlisle Naturalist*.

### Nature Navigator – a new online guide to British wildlife and biodiversity from the Natural History Museum

We have just received notice that The Natural History Museum is to launch a new online guide to British wildlife and biodiversity on November 16th 2003. It is likely to be of great interest to our membership. The web-site address will be:

[www.nhm.ac.uk/naturenavigator](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/naturenavigator)

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## Field Meeting reports

### 9th May: Geltsdale

Leader: Steve Garnett

Despite the heavy rain in the late afternoon seven members arrived at Geltsdale at 6 pm to be met by our leader – Steve Garnett of the RSPB. Having parked the cars at Jockey Shield we walked along the road towards Geltsdale Cottages. Soon Steve was pointing out a grazed area on the opposite side of the valley where we trained our binoculars and telescopes on four male Black Grouse. They were not displaying in any way and it is likely that the females were already on the nest in the areas of dense rushes and so not to be seen. Steve told us that there are currently at least 6 male and five female Black Grouse on the reserve. Moving further along the road we saw an area that had been planted with oats to provide a food source for the birds later in the year. Dorothy Iveson pointed out an Orange-tip butterfly on the Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). Both Red Grouse and Cuckoo were heard calling and a Kestrel flew over the rushy area. In the roadside flushes Marsh-marigolds (*Caltha palustris*) gave a splash of bright yellow, while the Marsh Valerian (*Valeriana dioica*) was just coming into flower. The Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) seemed to be particularly numerous and robust this year. In the rain on the other side of the valley we saw large arching double rainbow and a single Buzzard, soaring on the skyline.

We crossed the River Gelt at the stone bridge and in vain looked for signs of Otter under the bridge. The high water in the last few days had probably washed away any spraints. We walked back downstream taking the path on the opposite side of the river. As we crossed the fields Steve found a bird pellet – most likely Kestrel. A Short-eared Owl was spotted by some of the group. A Bird Cherry was seen to have the first few dense webs of the caterpillars of the Bird-cherry Ermine moth (*Yponomeuta evonymella*). A large area of the valley has been recently planted with Rowan, Alder and Hawthorn – a 'Black Grouse mix'. In the winter the Black Grouse enjoy the Hawthorn and Rowan berries, and can be seen feeding up the older trees. We passed some steep banks dotted with the flowers of primrose, violets and strawberry, and then saw some interesting very old Alder trees, one at least of which had several Rowans growing out of them. It is thought that some of the trees could be at least four hundred years old! We had a clear view of the Badger sett on the opposite bank of the river but it must have been a little too early for the Badgers to be abroad. We were all pleased to see three Woodcock fly over at High Hynam. As we approached the cars at the end of the walk a Barn Owl flew low over the road. Although the weather had been threatening at times we had luckily escaped getting wet. Our special thanks go to Steve Garnett who stepped in at the last minute to replace Malcolm Stott and led a most pleasant evening walk.

Marie Saag

**May 31st: Fishgarth Wood****Leader: David Clarke**

A very hot afternoon began with a viewing of rather local Prickly Sedge (*Carex muricata* ssp. *lamprocarpa*), in the lane-side herbage. Then followed a few Lepidoptera in the shape of Chimney Sweeper (*Odezia atrata*) and Silver Ground Carpet (*Xanthrhoe montanata*) moths and Small Tortoiseshell. Peacock and Orange-tip butterflies and Speckled Yellow moth (*Pseudopanthera maculata*) were seen later.

The steep descent towards the river was punctuated with a look at an extremely large Badger sett. Surely they must have hired a JCB to achieve that much earth movement! Woodland birds included Great Spotted Woodpeckers and singing Blackcap. Marsh Tits with young were seen, but sadly there were no sounds of Wood Warbler, which had been present in recent years.

Botanical interest within the wood was provided by Meadow Saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*), the lichen *Peltigera praetexta* and various sedges, including Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), the often-associated Remote Sedge (*C. remota*) and a sole survivor of Smooth-stalked Sedge (*Carex laevigata*). The recent warm wet weather had stimulated several fungi into early appearance: including Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*), Charcoal Burner (*Russula cyanoxantha*) and Larch Bolete (*Suillus grevillei*). The scarce Hoof Fungus (*Fomes fomentarius*) was seen in several places.

One of our main objectives was a single tree of Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*). This was on rather inaccessible ground just above river level: the leader collected a sample shoot in the early stages of flowering. Beating foliage of trees overhanging the river within the wood duly produced another speciality of this area, the Giant Lacewing (*Osmylus fulvicephalus*) – though this was not revealed until one obligingly dropped off the leader's hat once we were in the open pasture! The walk ended at the very isolated small colony of Banded Demoiselles (*Calopteryx splendens*). Several recently emerged individuals were present and provided some close views. The site is easily 10km from the nearest location on the Eden further downstream. Across the river, the 2000/2001 Osprey nest – unoccupied and never productive – was a gaunt reminder of shameful attitudes to the return of this bird to local waters.

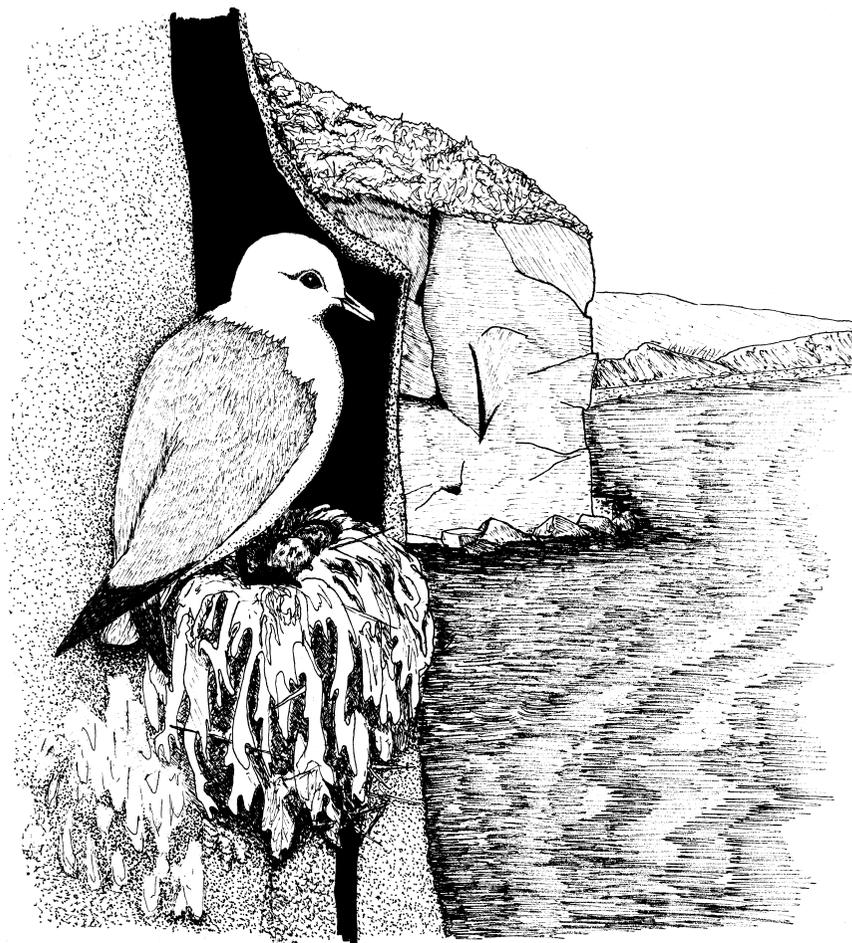
We returned by the same route to end a very pleasant and sociable three-hour visit, but some of the group continued back along the riverside as far as Fishgarth Cottage. Here, Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) was added to the list, Otter signs were in the sandy mud beside the river, and there were yet more Giant Lacewings. The fine stand of the scarce Sharp Sedge (*Carex acuta*) near the Cottage already had swelling fruits.

Geoff Naylor & David Clarke

[On later checking, we had noted new (ie post-*Flora of Cumbria*) tetrads for the rather local sedges *Scirpus sylvaticus* and *Carex muricata* ssp. *lamprocarpa* from NY45V. Editor.]

**14th June: St Bees****Leader: John Hamer**

Six members met at Sandwith village on a bright sunny morning. It was decided to leave one vehicle at St Bees and the other at the farm on the road to the lighthouse, thus enabling a walk to be completed along the cliff tops without retracing our steps.



Kittiwake at nest

(Stephen Hewitt)

The first bird of interest seen was a Raven, as we left the beach area at St Bees. As we climbed up onto the cliff tops, views of auks on the sea became more frequent and before reaching the bay, we picked out two pairs of Black Guillemots. The sea was flat calm and this allowed uninterrupted views of the birds, which apparently are the only two pairs present (at the only breeding site in England).

We descended to the bay, where the very scarce Sea Spleenwort (*Asplenium marinum*) was locally abundant in sheltered rock crevices. Climbing up the other side, we had excellent views of the other cliff nesting birds – Common Guillemots, Razorbills, Fulmars, Kittiwakes and Cormorants. We searched for Puffins at the site near the lighthouse where they had been seen earlier in the year, but without success, other birds seen along the cliff tops and the road leading to the farm were Stonechat and Common Whitethroat.

Butterflies and moths en route were Meadow Brown, Green-veined White, Wall, Painted Lady and Chimney Sweeper moth and more unusual plants had included Sand Spurrey (*Spergularia rubra*), Dyer's Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*) and Sea Beet (*Beta vulgaris* ssp. *maritima*) – the last being seen on the shore near the car park.

Some members called at the Osprey site at Bassenthwaite on the return journey, but the birds were not in view at the time.

John Hamer

### 28th June: Gowk Bank

Leader: Frank Mawby

Ten members attended the field meeting at Gowk Bank National Nature Reserve, near Gilsland, on the Cumbria-Northumberland border. Frank Mawby started the tour of the reserve by describing the management regime at the site. The meadow areas on the flood plain and the upper plateau areas are cut for hay and during the winter months are grazed by sheep, while the steeper slopes are winter grazed only.

The meadow area to the right of the entrance gate was first to be explored. Dominated by Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), the sward contained a rich diversity of plants including Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*), and the Heath Spotted-, Northern Marsh- and Fragrant Orchids (*Dactylorhiza maculata*, *D. purplella*, and *Gymnadenia conopsea*). The yellow-flowered Marsh Hawk's-beard (*Crepis paludosa*) is a feature of this community. The grasses were dominated by Sweet Vernal (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), but also present were *Festuca rubra*, *Holcus mollis*, *Nardus stricta* and the attractive Quaking-grass (*Briza media*) to name but

a few. The Globe-flowers (*Trollius europaeus*) had already dropped their yellow petals, leaving only the fruiting heads standing above their typical 'Ranunculus' leaves. Jeremy Roberts identified the large eyebright which was seen all over the meadow in full flower as *Euphrasia officinalis*, although which of the two subspecies was not clear (*The Flora of Cumbria* maps both species from this tetrad!). A good variety of sedges were present including Pale Sedge, Star Sedge, Carnation Sedge, and Tawny Sedge. As we reached the bottom of the slope, near the river, the midges started to bite. Here, masses of Melancholy Thistle (*Cirsium heterophyllum*) were majestic with their purple flowerheads. Dorothy Iveson caught some hoverflies and identified them as *Sericomyia silentis*, *Volucella bombylans*, *Xylota segnis*, *Pyrophaena granditarsa* and *Syrphus torvus*. Frank pointed out how the yellow Marsh Hawk's-beard was growing in swathes up the hill in the next field. He told us that this had resulted from the fact the cuttings had been left to lie on the meadow last year. Somehow the Hawk's-beard had been favoured and as a consequence the hillside was now striped with yellow flowers! Purple Bar and Large Yellow Underwing moths were seen as well as Small Heath butterflies. On the way back up to the road we saw the carnivorous plant, Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), the Water Avens (*Geum rivale*) and more Marsh Lousewort, all in flower.

Following a break for lunch we went to the area of the reserve where the main rarities grow. First, four Small White Orchids (*Pseudorchis albida*) were seen, then down the steep bank to the site where Frog Orchids (*Coeloglossum viride*) are to be found. On the way Jeremy pointed out Northern Bedstraw (*Galium boreale*), with its whorls of four leaves, each with three prominent veins on its underside. Also the clubmoss *Selaginella selaginoides* occurred in this area. The butterflies seemed to like this area of the reserve and we were able to add Meadow Brown, Common Blue, Ringlet and Green-veined White to our list, together with Chimney-sweeper moths.

Once in the valley bottom the terrain became more boggy, and the Lesser Pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*) was locally abundant. *Carex rostrata* fringed the edge of the Butterburn at the point where we crossed into the meadows beyond. Lying on the flood plain between the Butterburn and the River Irthing these meadows are again species rich having a good selection of grasses, along with Greater Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinilis*), Wood Crane's-bill (*Geranium sylvaticum*), Meadow-sweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Yellow-rattle and Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*). Some Broad-leaved Docks (*Rumex obtusifolius*) were seen, the leaves of which had been eaten down so that just the leaf veins were remaining – the work of the black larvae of the Dock Beetle. The bird records for the day included Curlew, Pied Wagtail, Common Sandpiper, Linnet and Reed Bunting.

As we walked back up the road to the cars we all thanked Frank Mawby for leading us on a particularly good day over one of the most attractive reserves in Cumbria.

Marie Saag

### 5th July: Crosby Gill

Leader: Jeremy Roberts

Although the weather forecasts suggested a brightening day, early drizzle was succeeded by late drizzle, but luckily it remained dry for our excursion across the moor into Crosby Gill, south of Crosby Ravensworth. The following account cannot do justice to the profusion of plant species we encountered, but only mentions some of the more significant finds.

Runnels by the coast-to-coast footpath gave us the first of a great many species of sedges, with abundant Tawny Sedge (*Carex hostiana*) and Flea Sedge (*C. pulicaris*). A few rather depauperate plants of Yellow Saxifrage (*Saxifraga aizoides*) and Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) were in the barer patches.

Some limestone pavement just beyond showed unmistakable signs of having been quarried in the past for its water-worn blocks. However, the remaining 'clitter' areas suited a few species, such as stunted but frequent plants of Bird's-foot Sedge (*Carex ornithopoda*) and Limestone Bedstraw (*Galium sternerii*). Nearby undamaged pavement had some patches of Limestone Fern (*Gymnocarpium robertianum*), and other ferns including Green Spleenwort (*Asplenium viride*). As is usual, the shady and humid climate within the grykes allowed 'woodland' species such as Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), and Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*) to thrive.

A few rather poor, late-season, plants of Rare Spring-sedge (*Carex ericetorum*) were pointed out on exposed limestone turf on the moorland ridge, as usual with Spring Sedge (*C. caryophyllea*) nearby providing a useful comparison. *C. ericetorum* appears to be widely – if thinly – scattered in this area, but the necessity of finding the very inconspicuous fruiting stems to confirm identification means it can be readily overlooked.

The vegetation within the Crosby Gill enclosed farmland was in excellent condition – the best known to this writer in twenty years of experience – apparently following reduction of sheep-grazing. Some wooded gills have been fenced to control grazing further, and encourage regrowth of the tree cover. Rampant growth of plants such as Alpine Bistort (*Persicaria vivipara*) and Bird's-eye Primrose (*Primula farinosa*) was one result, although resurgence of Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) needs careful management.

We passed a small area of calcareous drift by a stream to see Cumbria's only

known patch of the lady's-mantle *Alchemilla glaucescens*, a species with its headquarters in the Yorkshire Dales, growing with three other species (*A. glabra*, *xanthochlora*, and *filicaulis* ssp. *vestita*). Closer to the streamside was a good sward of the increasingly local Flat Sedge (*Blysmus compressus*). Crossing over a ridge brought us to that most alluring plant Alpine Bartsia (*Bartsia alpina*) at one of its very few English stations. The plant seems to be recovering well from past over-grazing, and we saw it in three spots – two parallel runnels in one area, and a system of flushes some little distance away. In all three sites it was growing (as it typically does in its English localities – in Scotland it is a plant of cliff-ledges and steep slopes) as patches of small shoots over low hummocks in wettish ground, with abundant Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*). A few plants of Hair Sedge (*Carex capillaris*) were nearby, but we did not locate the elusive and declining Dwarf Milkwort (*Polygala amarella*) which has been seen here in recent years.

Across Crosby Gill itself a large area of south-facing limestone turf was in superb condition, with a profusion of flowers, dominated by yellow Common Rockroses (*Helianthemum chamaecistus*) and various composites, pink Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*), purple Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), and white bedstraws and eyebrights. Frog Orchids (*Coeloglossum viride*) were remarkably frequent in several patches here, and a few patches of Spring Cinquefoil (*Potentilla neumanniana*) and Northern Bedstraw (*Galium boreale*) were located – the former non-flowering, and the latter still to flower. Three large, and probably very old, bushes of Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) were along some low cliffs, and plants of both the Autumn and the much scarcer Field Gentian (*Gentianella amarella* and *G. campestris*) were budding. Large fungi in the open pasture were identified as *Boletus luridus*. A last rarity on the tour was the Northern Hawk's-beard (*Crepis mollis*) with about 30 plants in flower on thinner soil over a limestone outcrop above a cut hay-field.

Botany certainly predominated today. Amongst butterflies, Common Blue and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries seen by the writer on a reconnaissance a few days earlier were not seen (though admittedly not actively searched for, in the dull conditions). Meadow Brown and Small Heath were seen, and a particularly beautiful moth, the Large Emerald, was resting below its larval food-plant, birches. A single dragonfly was found: a superb Golden-ringed, approachable, or rather immobile, in the cool of the Crosby Gill valley. The remains of its last meal, a bumblebee (a frequent prey of this species), were attached to the same grass stem.

Birds were not conspicuous, with most passerines having ceased singing, although a 'drumming' Snipe and a few Curlews were still over the moor, with Red Grouse calling from the deeper heather, and Buzzards were evidently nesting in the area.

A Grey Wagtail was by Crosby Gill, and a post-breeding flock of about 20 Mistle Thrushes was roaming the wooded gill-sides.

With thanks to the landowner for access permission to areas not on public footpaths.

Jeremy Roberts

[Jeremy Roberts modestly does not mention that both *Alchemilla glaucescens* and *Crepis mollis* had been his past discoveries, adding significantly to the already high botanical credentials of this site. Ed.]

### 26th July: Whitbarrow

Leader: Stephen Hewitt

Black clouds and heavy rain seemed ominous as we drove through the Howgills but proved to be a short sharp shower coming off the estuary and channelling up the Lune Valley. As we greeted the Penrith contingent by Witherslack Hall School the sun appeared and a nice day seemed a good prospect.

Whitbarrow is an impressive, huge barrow-shaped limestone outcrop rising off the hinterland of Morecambe Bay. Beneath it lie the peat bogs of Foulshaw, Meathop and the Witherslack Mosses, and rich estuarine and river alluvium that form very productive farmland. The area is well wooded with significant areas of semi-natural deciduous woodland. Much of Whitbarrow is SSSI and the Limestone hill is also National Nature Reserve, managed by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust. The SSSI citation includes a wide range of scarce plants, trees and invertebrates, an assemblage that is rare and very important in both Cumbria and the British Isles. The wealth of invertebrate specialists on the field trip suggested this could be a special day.

A well-weathered Meadow Brown was the first butterfly of the day followed by a Comma nectaring on thistle flowers, not an unusual sighting in this part of the county. Whilst half the group admired the Comma the other half of the party was already over the stile and onto the school football pitch, which was surrounded on three sides by woodland and a large area of bracken. They knew exactly what they were looking for. The first attraction was a small area of thistles and hogweed amongst piles of rotting grass clippings. The combination of purple thistle flowers and the large, off-white plate-like heads of the hogweed were attracting several species of nectaring flies and in particular hoverflies. Close examination yielded six or seven species, most being wasp- and bee-mimics, including a black and white banded *Leucozona laternaria*, the drone-flies *Eristalis tenax* and *E. pertinax* (the latter distinguished by its yellow front feet), the more furry hoverfly *Myiothropa florea* whose larvae develop in water-filled rot-holes in trees, the bumblebee mimic

*Volucella bombylans* and a plantbug-mimicking fly, *Alophora hemiptera*, which is said to parasitise planthoppers. A large, iridescent green Rose Chafer beetle (*Cetonia aurata*) was found, and another very fresh Comma joined us.

The area was sheltered and warm and as the sun broke through a large, fast flying Silver-washed Fritillary appeared. It settled for a while on knapweed flowers and was soon joined by a second, or was it? A closer inspection revealed the second insect to be the much rarer High Brown Fritillary a rich golden-brown butterfly with the underwings silver spangled with a distinguishing marginal band of rich chestnut crescents. As the sun warmed the clearing more fritillaries appeared and along a grassy ride through bracken fringed with knapweed at least eight fritillaries were nectaring. They were settled enough to allow close up views and the 'jizz' of at least two suggested we had a third species. Perhaps the slightly darker less tawny appearance with white spotted fringes was the feature, but the acid test was the under-wing, which from the green, olive and gold tints told our experts that this was the Dark Green Fritillary. All three species need dog-violets for the larval food plant and these were plentiful in the woodland under a light canopy or in glades and rides. The High Brown is the least common of the three and it seems the larvae have a liking for basking on dead bracken in early spring. All three species are attracted to the mauve nectar rich flowers of thistles and knapweed. This one small area had occupied our attention for nearly an hour and had set us up for a great day. A Green Woodpecker briefly called in the distance; this might have been a worry had it called persistently since folklore has it that it is a harbinger of rain.

The planned route was a lengthy walk through the wood, rising steadily onto Whitbarrow, so we were chivvied out of the clearing and into the richly diverse woodland. The next butterfly seen was a Speckled Wood. This species, Steve informed us, disappeared from Cumbria in the early 20th century and although there were sporadic reports from scattered localities during the last decades of that century, the strong and expanding population in the Witherslack area today is believed to originate from a reintroduction nearby at Latterbarrow in 1981. Further along the path Jeremy pointed out Lemon-scented Fern (*Oreopteris limbospermum*) and then Beech Fern (*Phegopteris connectilis*).

The next stop was a small seepage stream that proved to be another entomologist's heaven. Here Steve produced a live specimen of a dragonfly larva that he had collected at this spot earlier in the year. Too small to identify at the time, he had nurtured it to a size of some 30 mm long, now recognisable as a Golden-ringed Dragonfly (*Cordulegaster boltonii*). He had barely finished telling us when a Golden-ringed flew up to inspect us. Perhaps it was a close relative?

The larva was duly released back to its natural home. For good measure, an egg-laying female appeared, flying along the stream with body held vertically, stabbing into the gravelly bed at frequent intervals. Other insects here included a hoverfly *Xylota segnis*, ‘hoovering’ pollen off the leaves of the low vegetation. John Parker caught two different species of soldierfly here whose predatory larvae live in calcareous flushes – the nationally scarce *Oxycera pardelina* and the Red Data Book *O. dives*, neither of which have previously been recorded at this site. The vegetation here was a sedge-rich flush and flower buds of Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) were just beginning to open.

The morning had flown by and there was full support for the decision to take a shorter more direct route onto Whitbarrow and find a spot for lunch. This was a steep rock track up the face of the scar and we quickly passed from the big trees into the wind-pruned hazel, birch and rowan on the south-west facing scar and limestone scree. On the way up Jeremy pointed out a single plant of Lesser Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum minus*). However, his attention was soon drawn to a wind-pruned whitebeam. On close examination he pronounced it to be *Sorbus lancastriensis*, a micro-species related to the Common Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*), and restricted to the Morecambe Bay area. The key features are the eight to nine prominent veins and the position and degree of toothing around the leaf. He also pointed out Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*). A number of Broad-leaved Helleborines (*Epipactis helleborine*) were found in or close to flowering; they were to attract more attention on the way down.

At the top of the scar in a sunny clearing we stopped for lunch. Here we were joined by Grayling and Common Blue butterflies, the former sunning on the limestone and cleverly aligning itself to the sun so as not to create a shadow. The blue butterfly was attracted to Wild Thyme growing on an anthill, home to the yellow meadow ant. Anthills are very rare in lowland fields and attract Green Woodpeckers – one of the few birds we heard calling earlier in the day. Steve was first back on his feet with his sweep net swishing through the coarse *Sesleria* grass and after a few minutes calmly informed those lounging on the comfortable grass mattress that he had netted several ticks. The words “Lyme Disease” soon stirred us to our feet: a thorough tick inspection would be essential in the evening. Distracting us, he produced a yellow and black longhorn beetle – *Leptura quadrifasciata*, a local deadwood beetle more common in the woods of south Cumbria than elsewhere in the county.

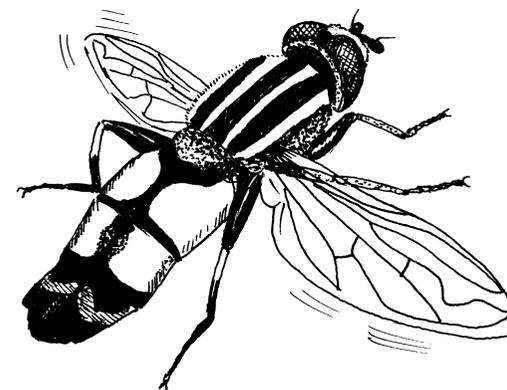
Emerging through the stunted tree line a splendid view lay before us. To the south-west Morecambe Bay glistened in the sun, whilst to the west and north the Lakeland hills were shrouded in cloud. A strong south-westerly wind greeted us,

wind-pruning the yews, birch, hazel, *Sorbus* and other trees and shrubs clinging steadfastly to the limestone escarpment. Juniper bushes grew beneath the now sparse trees and were scattered around the open areas of *Sesleria*-dominated vegetation. There was evidence of grazing on the hazel and juniper but whatever animal it was it clearly did not like the wiry *Sesleria*. The limestone rock is a tough and harsh terrain, its shattered appearance begging the question was this once a Limestone Pavement similar to Ingleborough and Gait Barrows? The soil is sparse, but under Jeremy’s expert eye we begin to search for Hoary Rock-rose (*Helianthemum canum*) and the diminutive Squinancywort (*Asperula cynanchia*). Common Rock-rose (*H. nummularia*) was still in flower but its hairy cousin was over. It was soon discovered on the very thin soils and short turf along the top of the scarp, forming part of the patchwork conspicuous by its blue-green hue. The eagle eyes of Dorothy and Marie soon picked out Squinancywort – a member of the bedstraw family, with tiny white four-petalled flowers less than 2 mm across and presenting just a tinge of pink as they open. The leaves are in whorls, as all bedstraws, and are of irregular length. It was growing with another bedstraw, *Galium sternerii*, and Jeremy pointed out the difference in the leaves. As this plant was inspected a tiny butterfly was spotted: a Northern Brown Argus, another speciality of the site. Sheltering from the wind it allowed very close views. On Whitbarrow it is at the southernmost edge of its range.

Satisfied with these finds we were urged to look for Black Ant colonies and another interesting creature that lives in close association with the ant, the larval stage of the

hoverfly *Microdon mutabilis*.

This search involved carefully turning over rocks but under the first one there were only ants. However, the very next ant colony yielded not only the empty hoverfly larval case but also a live larva and, to our great delight, a small Slow-worm. The Slow-worm took some time to adjust to being exposed to the light, allowing everyone to inspect it before it departed. The ants meanwhile frantically moved their eggs underground. The hoverfly larva is built like a tank to resist

*Helophilus trivittatus*

(Stephen Hewitt)

attacks from ants – it feeds on the ant grubs by rearing up over and engulfing them.

On the way to the top of the hill the handsome migrant hoverfly *Helophilus trivittatus* was produced from Steve's net. We rested at the cairn to take in the complete panorama with the Levens Valley to the East and Hutton Roof on the other side of the M6. In the foreground Whitbarrow's sister limestone outcrop Underbarrow obscured the view of Kendal. A few plants of Yellow Stonecrop (*Sedum acre*) grew at the base of the cairn and a Field Gentian (*Gentianella campestris*) lay safe from being trampled, nestling by a small protective rock.

The next feature visited was a small pond and wet flush, an interesting feature in this otherwise dry site. There was evidence that cattle have grazed here earlier in the spring. The water supply to this area is an up-welling in the muddy bottom and the outlet, we later discovered, is a small hole in the limestone. In the water a small tadpole was possibly a Palmate Newt. A Black Darter quartered the pool and a Common Darter appeared too. This area prompted much frantic swishing of entomological nets, and some keen plant-listing. Turning for home we remembered that the day-flying moth the Least Minor had not been seen. This species is a site speciality, but it remained elusive.

On the way down the steep track there is a debate over helleborines: one plant is definitely a Broad-leaved but the other does not look quite right for Dark-red, nor does it entirely fit the description of the former! Undecided, its identity remains a mystery. Before we reached the bottom an odd bird-call stumped John Miles; perhaps it was the Nuthatch clearing its throat before it distinctly announced its presence a few minutes later. The bird-list for the day was rather short but included Marsh Tit, Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker.

Stopping briefly at the football pitch a Silver-washed Fritillary was still flying around, although the day had clouded over and it was cooler. Back at the cars we congratulated Steve on an excellent day (and he in turn was very grateful for the able support of the various experts who had turned out).

Frank Mawby

## 8th August: Moth evening, Cliburn Moss

Leaders: Mike Clementson & Richard Little

Cliburn Moss, five miles south east of Penrith, is a basin mire which is notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its unusual mix of fen, bog and heathland plant communities, resulting from past peat-cutting activities. Much of the site is now covered in self-sown Scots Pine and birch woodland.

We met at the entrance to the site at 9 p.m. when Mike and Richard were already

reconnoitring the ground for suitable sites to situate the light traps. One was set up among willow scrub at the edge of the wood and near one of the main ditches. The other trap was run across the other side of the access track among birch trees adjacent to an area of more open heath.

The evening was mild and overcast and the abundance of midges effectively demonstrated that conditions were optimal for crepuscular entomological activity. Numbers of moths coming to the lights built up slowly at first and then came in episodic waves at various stages of the evening. A total of 47 species, most of them common and widespread, were eventually identified. Among the more interesting moths which turned up the Orange Swift was one of the first to come to light: it is considered local in Cumbria. The Pebble Hook-tip is a characteristic species of moss/heathland habitats, as is True Lover's Knot. The commonest moths on the evening were Large Yellow Underwings and it was nice to be able to compare related species such as the less frequently seen Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing.

<i>Hepialus sylvina</i>	Orange Swift	<i>Eligmodonta ziczac</i>	Pebble Prominent
<i>Agriphila tristella</i>	a pyralid moth	<i>Pheosia gnoma</i>	Lesser Swallow
<i>Pleuroptya ruralis</i>	Mother of Pearl		Prominent
<i>Drepana falcataria</i>	Pebble Hook-tip	<i>Ptilodon capucina</i>	Coxcomb Prominent
<i>Cilix glaucata</i>	Chinese Character	<i>Ochropleura plecta</i>	Flame Shoulder
<i>Geometra papilionaria</i>	Large Emerald	<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow
<i>Idaea aversata</i>	Riband Wave		Underwing
<i>Xanthorhoe designata</i>	Flame Carpet	<i>Noctua comes</i>	Lesser Yellow
<i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i>	Garden Carpet		Underwing
<i>Scotopteryx chenopodiata</i>	Shaded Broad-bar	<i>Noctua fimbriata</i>	Broad-bordered
<i>Epirrhoe alternata</i>	Common Carpet		Yellow Underwing
<i>Cosmorhoe ocellata</i>	Purple Bar	<i>Noctua janthe</i>	Lesser Broad Bordered
<i>Eulithis mellinata</i>	Spinach		Yellow Underwing
<i>Ecliptopera silaceata</i>	Small Phoenix	<i>Lycophotia porphyrea</i>	True Lover's Knot
<i>Chloroclysta truncata</i>	Common Marbled Carpet	<i>Diarsia rubi</i>	Small Square-spot
		<i>Xestia baja</i>	Dotted Clay
<i>Colostygia pectinataria</i>	Green Carpet	<i>Xestia sexstrigata</i>	Six-striped Rustic
<i>Hydriomena furcata</i>	July Highflyer	<i>Cerapteryx graminis</i>	Antler
<i>Perizoma alchemillata</i>	Small Rivulet	<i>Mythimna impura</i>	Smoky Wainscot
<i>Perizoma didymata</i>	Twin-spot Carpet	<i>Antitype chi</i>	Grey Chi
<i>Eupithecia vulgata</i>	Common Pug	<i>Atethmia centrigo</i>	Centre-barred Sallow
<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	Brimstone Moth	<i>Cosmia trapezina</i>	Dun-bar
<i>Ennomos alniaria</i>	Canary-shouldered Thorn	<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches
		<i>Mesapamea secalis</i> agg.	Common Rustic
<i>Cabera exanthemata</i>	Common Wave	<i>Luperina testacea</i>	Flounced Rustic
<i>Campaea margaritata</i>	Light Emerald	<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	Rosy Rustic
<i>Hylaea fasciaria</i>	Barred Red	<i>Hypena proboscidalis</i>	Snout

Stephen Hewitt

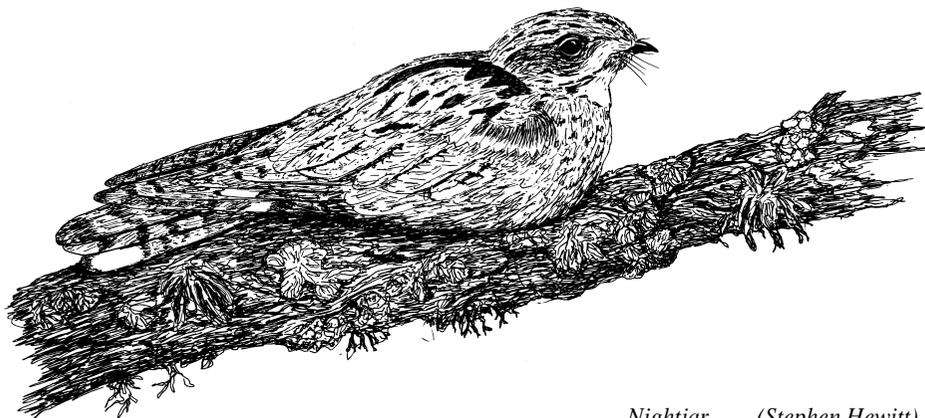
## Notes and Records

### Recent Reports

These notes are based on a records received at Tullie House during the past summer, plus some of my own observations and comments from other members. Late additions come from record cards received at the first indoor meeting in October 2003.

Dragonflies made big news during the season but these are the subject of a separate note. So far, I have not heard of any unusual butterflies, although the abundance of **Painted Ladies** was notable. There were also many reports of **Commas** in the Carlisle area, though these now seem almost to be expected.

There have been many sightings of the southern/European moths, especially known migrants such as the **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** (*Macroglossum stellatarum*). There were at least 16 reports of the latter, at sites around the county ranging from Grange-over-Sands to the Solway, including several from gardens in Carlisle, mainly in September/October. An exceptionally late sighting in Carlisle was on 26th October (D. Iveson). A **Death's-head Hawk-moth** (*Acherontia atropos*) was noted at Gosforth (Sheila Cartwright), and at least two more were seen elsewhere in Cumbria. Larvae of yet another large migrant moth, the **Convolvulus Hawk-moth**, were found in October at Millom (*per* Judy Palmer) and Maryport. Two locally scarce moths new to the writer appeared in the garden trap recently, in the shape of **Angle-striped Sallow** (*Enargia paleacea*) and **Small Dusty Wave** (*Idaea seriata*). Two other moth-trappers also mentioned having caught the latter species and Richard Little had another 'new' species, **Dwarf**



Nightjar (Stephen Hewitt)

**Cream Wave** (*Idaea fuscovenosa*), from his trap at High Stand on 30th July. Most spectacular of all perhaps, was a **Red Underwing** (*Catocala nupta*) found by Stephen Hewitt in Rickerby Park, Carlisle on 22nd September.

Turning now to birds. The **Common Crane** at the RSPB North Plain Farm Reserve on the Solway was reported on and off throughout the period. An early flock of 10 **Crossbills** was at Talkin Tarn (GN) on 16th May.

One (two) of the more unusual bird records during summer were **Nightjars** at Glasson Moss and Greystoke Forest on 2nd and 15th June respectively (Colin Auld *et al.*).

Again at Talkin Tarn, there was the first definite proof of **Coot** breeding when very small chicks were seen in early July, with another brood in August. Two **Yellow Wagtails** there on 27th August were the first I know of for several years and, finally, a flock of at least 120 **Barnacle Geese** flew over the tarn on the early date of 23rd September (GN).

There were no reports of **Fieldfares** or **Redwings** at the first winter meeting on 8th October but they arrived in large numbers shortly afterwards. Late additions to bird news include a series of unusual visitors to Hawksdale Pasture in spring, namely, **Water Rail**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Ring Ouzel** and, later, a **Quail** (Ian Armstrong). 3 **Little Egrets** were at Rockcliffe (Ian Watson) in early June. More recent reports include 180 **Pink-footed Geese** at Border Marsh in late September and a **Jack Snipe** at Wedholme Flow on 4th October (Frank Mawby); a very early 'red-head' **Smew** and a record flock of 9 **Gadwall** were at Talkin Tarn in mid October (Jeremy Roberts & GN respectively).

Geoff Naylor, Recorder

### The Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense* (Müller)) – an Odonata species new to Cumbria

On the 7th June 2003 I visited the Meathop Moss Cumbria Wildlife Trust reserve (SD4481), primarily to search for the BAP-listed and Nationally Scarce geometrid moth, the **Argent and Sable** (*Rheumaptera h. hastata*). I duly recorded and watched one for some time along the western edge of the Moss, but my day also proved productive in an unexpected way.

Whilst at the western edge of the Moss I came across an aeshnid dragonfly hawking an area of Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*). I was at first somewhat surprised to find a hawker on such an early date, but presumed that it was probably an early **Common Hawker** (*Aeshna juncea*), a species that I have found to be common at Meathop Moss in late summer. Eventually, the dragonfly rested in an area of

*Calluna* and allowed close approach. The hairy thorax, blue pear-shaped oval abdominal markings, a long thin pterostigma, long anal appendages, and the absence of a noticeable waist identified the species as Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*).

Initially, I was unaware that this constituted the first record for Cumbria, but with my experience of this species in Cheshire, North Wales and Southern England was confident of my record. It was only after I passed all my records for the day onto the voluntary warden for the site, Sarah Bradley, was I contacted by David Clarke who informed me that this was in fact the first record for Cumbria.

Graham Jones, 127 Highfield Road, Birkenhead, CH42 2BX

[The nearest known breeding areas for Hairy Dragonfly are about 100km to the north and south of this area – and the species is not normally known for long-distance movements. Ed.]

### 'Southern' dragonflies in north Cumbria, 2003

The unusually long spells of warm and sunny weather made for an exceptional year for dragonflies, and not least in the Carlisle area. Two species were 'first time' occurrences. Doubtless the virtually continuous fair to fine weather from summer through to autumn provided ideal conditions for these species to disperse. In the case of Migrant Hawker in particular, it is probably still the case that relatively few naturalists in the area have enough experience of this species to be able to detect it readily – and hence it may have been more widespread than records suggest.

#### *Emperor (Anax imperator)*

Although intermittently recorded in the county since 1995, only two instances pre-2003 refer to the Carlisle area. In the current year, Emperors were seen at several locations in north Cumbria, and over a particularly wide date range. The earliest – 26th June – was an egg-laying female at Scaleby Moss\* (NY46). Here the female showed male-like blue colouration (which can be a hot-weather effect) and was seen for only a short period at Pools 26 and 27 on a particularly fine day (DC; H&TM). A month later on 26th July a male was present at the North Plain Farm RSPB Reserve near Bowness-on-Solway (NY16), where sightings continued for the following three weeks (NH; DB). Not far from this site, up to three individuals were at Drumburgh Moss CWT Reserve (NY25) in late August/early September (AW): two were seen as late as 2nd September (RL). (Even later records exist from other sites in the county.)

#### *Broad-bodied Chaser (Libellula depressa)*

A female was present briefly at a garden pond at Lanercost (NY56) on 15th June and was seen to lay eggs (M&MG). This is the first north Cumbria record for this species, for which there is still only a handful of county records.

#### *Migrant Hawker (Aeshna mixta)*

At least two were present at North Plain Farm from 3rd September (NH & DB). As is often the case with this species, most sightings were not at a waterside, but mainly along a sheltered hedgerow. Fortunately, these dragonflies have a habit of 'hanging up' to bask at intervals, giving useful opportunities for identification checks. Basking individuals of both sexes were variously observed and photographed over the following fortnight (TR; NH, etc). No more than two males and one female seemed present throughout. A second site was confirmed on 17th September, when a male was finally caught and photographed by IA at the lake at Hawksdale Pasture\*, Dalston (NY34). He had suspected presence of this species over the previous week. As with North Plain, it seemed that only a few individuals, though of both sexes, were present. These records prompted a check at another Solway plain site, Thurstonfield Lough\* (NY35). Here, on 18th September, Migrant Hawkers were feeding actively over the sheltered fen at the south-west corner (DC). The numbers involved were hard to assess, and possibly into double figures.

A change to more unsettled weather from 19th September may have hastened a gradual decline in numbers – or perhaps encouraged some immigrants to move on. Three males and a female were seen at Hawksdale on 1st October (IA) – though none were noted at Thurstonfield on that date, despite fine weather. Sightings at North Plain and Hawksdale continued until at least 15th October, these insects presumably having 'sat out' the cool, windy week of 6th. The overall impression is of a limited 'movement' into the north of the county round about the first week of September – as suggested by lack of evidence of any build-up of numbers after first records at any site. The records also imply that some individuals had lived for five or more weeks after arrival. Hopefully, breeding will have occurred, which could result in development of a local population, at least in the short term.

These are some 100km north of previous records for the county, and currently the most north-westerly occurrence of this species in mainland Britain. (All Cumbria records are post-1998.)

*Observers' initials:* AW Andrew Walter; DB Dave Blackledge; DC David Clarke; H&TM Heather and Tony Marshall; IA Ian Armstrong; M&MG Melanie and Mike Gardner; NH Norman Holton; RL Richard Little; TR Tristan Reid.

David Clarke, Burnfoot, Cumwhitton, Brampton CA8 9EX

\* Sites asterisked are on private land: access permissions were much appreciated.

### Some unusual dates for moths in 2003

In the last issue (Spring 2003) in 'Recent Reports', I mentioned a very early Lesser Swallow Prominent (*Pheosia gnoma*) on 21st April, as being about a month before its usual season. In fact it was 29 days earlier than my previous earliest record. At about the same time, I heard of a Pale-shouldered Brocade (*Lacanobia thalassina*) on 18th April in Richard Little's garden at Cumwhinton. This was also about a month early.

As the mothing season progressed, many more species appeared on dates equal to or earlier than any previously recorded. Earliest of all was a Pebble Hook-tip (*Drepana falcataria*) on 5th May – 44 days earlier than any previous and, coincidentally, a new species for the garden trap (more followed in early August).

By the beginning of September I had a list of no fewer than 57 species qualifying for the '=/earliest ever' status. Most were common species and I don't propose to name them all, but some of the more unusual (as far as my garden trap is concerned) were: The Fan Foot (*Herminia tarsipennalis*), Welsh Wave (*Venusia cambrica*), Great Brocade (*Eurois occulta*) and Frosted Orange (*Gortyna flavago*). The mathematical average number of days earlier worked out at 10.3, which may or may not be of any significance, but that is what it was!

As the season moved into early autumn, I then began to find a few species turning up on unusually late dates. Most, but not all of these could be explained as second broods, which do not occur every year. Fewer species were involved, but usually higher figures – eg. a Small Angles Shades (*Euplexia lucipara*) on 13th September was 57 days later than ever recorded before. To date (mid-September) there have been eight such late records with an average of 28.1 days later than previously.

Richard Little has noted the late appearance of some of the same species I have encountered, mentioning in particular Poplar Hawk (*Laothoe populi*), The Flame (*Axylia putris*) and Brimstone (*Opisthograptis luteolata*).

This may just have been a one-off season due to warm summer conditions. We will have to see what happens next year.

Geoff Naylor, Recorder

### New moth records from the lower Eden valley, 2003

2003 has been a productive year for anyone interested in moths. Several species flew much earlier than usual, possibly due to the early spring, and continued flying later, possibly due to a second generation – unusual for some species this far north. The notes below refer to moths caught this year for the first time in my garden at Haresfield, Cumwhinton, as well as in High Stand, where I do regular

'mothing'. The status categories I have used and references to previous county records are from Kydd & Hewitt (2000).

### Cumwhinton (NY45)

On 29th May, I captured at light a small pug. Normally I feel a sense of despair at the sight of what usually is 'a small brown job', which could be one of about thirty different species, all looking much the same in the books. It was however sufficiently distinctive in its colour and wing shape to identify it as the Ochreous Pug (*Eupithecia indigata*). The last record of this moth for VC 70 (Cumberland) was before 1923. On the same night a Seraphim (*Lobophora halterata*) was captured. Both are 'firsts' for Haresfield and 'Scarce' in Cumbria.

A Green Silver-lines (*Pseudoips fagana*) was captured on 7th June, again a 'first' for me, and 'Local' in Cumbria. This was followed on the 16th by a Beautiful Carpet (*Mesoleuca albicillata*), also 'Local'. Two more moths new for me on the 26th June were a Sallow Kitten (*Furcula furcula*), and a Small Dusty Wave (*Idaea seriata*). Both are defined as 'Scarce' in Cumbria. I know of at least two fellow moth-trappers who have captured Small Dusty Waves this summer.

On 7th July a Short-cloaked Moth (*Nola cucullatella*) was a good find. Though only 'Local' in Cumbria, the last record for VC 70 was before 1912! The distribution map in Heath & Emmet (1979) shows it to be well-distributed in the extreme south of the county. On 13th came another 'first' for my garden – a Dog's Tooth (*Lacanobia suasa*). This is 'Regionally Scarce', and 'Local' in Cumbria.

August produced yet two more new records. A Copper Underwing (*Amphipyra pyramidea*) appeared on 20th. This large moth and its close relative Svensson's Copper Underwing are both defined as 'Local' both nationally and in Cumbria. No records of either species are shown in 'H&E' in VC 70 yet a number have been sighted in our area. Both species are almost identical in resting pose, but they can be distinguished by examining the undersides of their wings. On 23rd a specimen of a 'difficult' genus was captured. This was a Large Ear (*Amphipoea lucens*) a 'first' for Haresfield – and 'Local' in Cumbria. Though the Ear moths can be an identification head-ache, this was *lucens* from its size, the pattern on the underside of its hind-wings and its location.

On 1st September I caught a Brown-spot Pinion (*Agrochola litura*), which is 'Local' in Cumbria though common in the north of the county. I have taken several since then, up to four in one night, as well as one at another location in Cumwhinton. At the latter site I also noted a specimen of the Streak (*Chesias legatella*), which is 'Local' both nationally and in Cumbria.

**High Stand Plantation** (NY44)

In the course of regular overnight mothing, several captures there this summer were of some interest.

On 18th June I caught a Four-dotted Footman (*Cybosia mesomella*) which is 'Local' in Cumbria. However, more exciting were two examples of the Red-necked Footman (*Atolmis rubricollis*). This moth is both nationally and locally 'Scarce', and only recorded in VC 70 before 1912\*. On the same night I captured what I initially identified as a Pale Tussock (*Calliteara pudibunda*). It had the characteristic markings of the dark form of this moth, the capture date was early and the site has no heather in the immediate vicinity, though there is a remnant nearby. However, as result of discussion with colleagues (I did not retain this specimen), there is now some thought that it may have been a Dark Tussock (*Dicallomera fascelina*). I must therefore catch another to be sure – a lesson in the importance of voucher specimens! Finally, on 30th July I caught two small 'Waves'. After much deliberation, I identified them as the Dwarf Cream Wave (*Idaea fuscovenosa*). This species is 'Scarce' both nationally and in Cumbria, and last recorded in VC 70 in 1972.

Richard Little, 'Haresfield', Cumwhinton, Carlisle CA4 8ER

**References**

- Heath, J & Emmet, A. M. (1979) *The Moths & Butterflies of Great Britain & Ireland*, vol. 9. Colchester: Harley Books.  
 Kydd, W. & Hewitt, S. (Eds). (2000) *A Checklist of the Butterflies and Larger Moths of Cumbria*. Carlisle: Tullie House Museum.

[\* Another very recent find is from Ennerdale (NY11), where S. Hewitt saw several in summer 2002. Ed]

**The sap beetle *Soronia punctatissima* (Illiger) new to Cumberland (VC 70)**

I have visited Gowbarrow Park two or three times in 2003 as part of a general, and very superficial, initial look at insects in a number Cumbrian woodlands. This area of ancient woodland is a Site of Special Scientific Interest owned by the National Trust. It is listed as one of only a handful of important relict pasture woodlands recognised in Cumbria, based on its lichen interest (Harding & Rose 1986). Pasture woodlands – open woodland grazed by large herbivores enabling large well-spaced, branching trees to develop and live on into maturity – are recognised as being of high conservation value for their lichen and saproxylic beetle

communities in particular. The site contains some very large old oak and ash trees on and about Yew Crag (NY4120). On 6th July my attention was attracted by a swarm of fruit-flies (*Drosophila* sp.) congregating around a flow of sap exuding from the base of one of the ash trees growing on the crag. Whilst collecting a sample of the flies I noticed a beetle crawling up the sap flow, which I collected and later identified as *Soronia punctatissima* – a local species in Britain, considered indicative of ancient woodland sites. So far as I am aware, *S. punctatissima* has been recorded only once before in Cumbria, from Lakeside (SD3787) in Westmorland (VC 69) by R.B. Angus in 1962 (David Atty, pers. comm). Other dead-wood species noted at the site include the nationally scarce crane fly *Ctenophora atrata* – reared from a larva found in a fallen ash branch. Also the crane fly *Lipsothrix remota* and the hoverfly *Sphegina clunipes*, both collected as larvae in wet wood lying in a stream.

**Acknowledgements**

Thanks to David Atty for information on the previous record of this species in Cumbria. Thanks also to the National Trust for permission to collect on the site and to the Lake District National Park Authority for help with the wider study.

**Reference**

- Harding, P.T. & Rose, F. (1986) *Pasture Woodlands in Lowland Britain – a review of their importance for wildlife conservation*. ITE.

Stephen Hewitt, Tullie House Museum

**The bark beetle *Scolytus ratzeburgi* Janson alive and well in Cumbria**

In the last issue of the *Carlisle Naturalist* I reported on the occurrence of the distinctive bore-holes of the bark beetle *Scolytus ratzeburgi* at a number of woodland sites in north Cumbria (Hewitt 2003). At the time there was no evidence of the continued presence of the beetle in the county, merely evidence of its occurrence in the relatively recent past.

As part of a wider study of woodland insects, I visited Glenamara Park, Patterdale (NY3815) on 6th June 2003. Here I observed several adult beetles excavating holes in the bark of a dead limb of a large old birch tree, thus confirming that *S. ratzeburgi* continues to survive in Cumbria.

**Acknowledgement**

Glenamara Park is owned by the National Trust and I am grateful to them for assistance with this study.

## Reference

Hewitt, S.M. (2003) The bark beetle *Scolytus ratzeburgi* Janson new to Cumberland (VC 70), with additional records from Westmorland (VC 69). *Carlisle Naturalist* 11(1) 12-13.

Stephen Hewitt, Tullie House Museum

## The soldierfly *Stratiomyis potamida* (Meigen) new to Cumberland

In July, after a hard day's fieldwork with Stephen Hewitt, I was sitting by what passes for a pond in his garden, waiting to be served a cup of tea when a large wasp-like fly 'dropped in', landing on the foliage of Marsh Cinquefoil at the edge of the pond. Hardly able to believe my eyes and not being properly equipped for the situation I caught the fly in my hands and darted into the kitchen with it. With the door and windows securely closed I carefully opened my hands to reveal a beautiful large black and yellow soldierfly later confirmed as *Stratiomyis potamida* no less.

The larvae of this fly live a predatory existence in seepages and heavily vegetated ponds. *S. potamida* has been increasing its range in recent years and I have searched for this fly across the wetlands of Cumbria for several years since Alan Stubbs found a single specimen at Sunbiggin Tarn, the only other record for the county.

A free and frank exchange of views on the rightful ownership of the fly ensued with warm words given and received. It was suggested that as I did not have the explicit permission of the landowner to collect on the site I had no legitimate claim to the specimen. The matter was eventually settled with the proposal that the specimen properly belongs in the collection of Tullie House Museum, and there it now resides.

John B. Parker, 16 Brunswick Road, Penrith, Cumbria

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## Cross Fell Update, 2003

Jeremy Roberts

Eden Croft, 2 Wetheral Pasture, Carlisle CA4 8HU

After the remarkable season of 2002, when many interesting records were made on the Cross Fell range (Roberts, 2002), work has continued on the range through the summer season of 2003. Some of the more noteworthy records are listed below, including two significant finds, of *Alchemilla glomerulans* and *Catabrosa aquatica*. There are a few comments also on some of the important species.

There were many sheep back on the fell throughout the summer, and in places the flushed grasslands were already closely grazed, whilst the ranker acid vegetation showed some signs that the sheep were making a start on grazing it.

Conventions follow those in Roberts (2002), and are repeated below for convenience.

- i) *New tetrad records* ('NTR'), and *new hectad* (i.e. 10-km-square) *records* ('NHR') i.e. additional to Halliday (1997), references to which are abbreviated to 'FoC' in the list.
- ii) *New upper altitude records* for Cumbria ('NAR'), where these exceed those given in Halliday (1997) by 20 metres or more.
- iii) An asterisk, i.e. 'NAR\*', signifies records which exceed those given as upper altitudinal limits for Britain and Ireland in the recently-published *New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora* ('NA'), and which therefore represent *new upper altitude records for the British Isles* as a whole.

(RC: Dr R. Corner; RG: R. Groom; GH: Dr G. Halliday; MP: M. Porter; LR: L. Robinson)

## Corrigenda

I am grateful to Dr G. Halliday for pointing out the following errors in Roberts (2002):

Page 36, line 13 up: Ardale Head is in NY6635, not NY7635.

Page 42, line 11: for [*Stellaria*] 'gramineum' read 'graminea'.

*Alchemilla filicaulis* subspecies *filicaulis*

NTRs (for NY6636): flushed grassland on west side of Green Fell, NY6636, 690m

(RC, 15/06/03); (for NY6832): cliff-ledges in Crowdundle Beck head, NY6933, at 690m (various dates, 2002); (for NY7030): several sites, Green Castle/Knock Ore Gill/Knock Fell, updates of record by A.J. Richards from Knock Fell, '1970s', in *FoC* (various dates, 2003).

This mountain lady's-mantle is closely related to the much more frequent *A. f. ssp. vestita*. It differs in being less hairy on the leaves than the very hairy *vestita*, but flowering stems are also needed to confirm it – and these are rather rarely produced in the close-grazed turf which is a typical habitat. Thus the subspecies may well be much more widespread than so far known. The flowering stems have abundant spreading hairs only on the lowest internode, but are almost hairless on upper internodes, except for a variable quantity of hairs on the calyx (hairy on all internodes in *A. f. vestita*).

#### *Alchemilla glomerulans*

**NHR** (for NY73), and thus **NTR** (for NY7030); second site for Cumbria: Knock Ore Gill, NY7130, 690m. It was a great surprise to find a large plant of this rare lady's-mantle within an enclosure at Knock Ore Gill on 09/07/03.

Halliday (1997) mentions the species in the county only in 'a single small population' at 460m in upper Teesdale (NY82), just inside the county boundary. Although often a true high mountain plant in the Scottish Highlands, in most of its previously-known English sites – in five 10-km-squares in Teesdale and three in the Yorkshire Dales (Preston, *et al.* (2002)) – it occurs in anthropogenic habitats such as roadsides and hay-meadows, in all cases at lower altitudes than this. There is also a single site known in Northumberland, on stream-side rocks at 400m on the north side of Cheviot (Swan, 1993). This record is thus the first 'high mountain' record for the species in England. Close associates include Marsh Willowherb (*Epilobium palustre*), Marsh Saxifrage (*Saxifraga hirculus*), Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), and three sedges: Common (*Carex nigra*), Flea (*C. pulicaris*), and Star (*C. echinata*).

It is initially tempting to suspect that the plant was somehow artificially introduced into the enclosure (which was erected as recently as 1999). However, it is the case that the plant, now with about five large shoots, grows as part of a large population of other *Alchemilla* plants, consisting of *A. glabra*, *A. filicaulis* ssp. *vestita*, and *A. xanthochlora*. In marked contrast to the stunted *Alchemilla* plants scattered in the turf beyond the enclosure, all these plants are large and vigorous, having grown free from sheep-grazing for five seasons. The size of the *A. glomerulans* plant is very much on a par with the plants of the other species, and it seems logical to assume that it has grown alongside them for the same length of time. On this argument, it is purely fortuitous that an existing root was enclosed by a fence in 1999, enabling it to grow to a size where its characters could be readily observed.

If it is true that *A. glomerulans* has awaited discovery here all along, one is led to suppose that the species should be present in other similar sites – perhaps as a low percentage of the *Alchemilla* flora of the flushed turf which occurs so widely along the flanks of the Cross Fell range at around the 700m contour. It was with satisfaction therefore that on 22/08/03 the author (with MP) found a second plant at 720m (**NAR**) on the open (grazed) west flanks of Knock Fell (NY7130) about 750m SSE from the first site. Again, the plant grew in damp turf, this time below a limestone slope, and with, or near, plants of *A. filicaulis* ssp. *vestita*, *A. glabra*, and *A. wichurae*.

(For confident naming of the very abundant immature or stunted plants of *Alchemilla* which grow in the flushed mountain turf, a leaf or two from each plant has generally to be inspected at close quarters, often under a lens, necessitating either endless plucking of leaves from huge numbers of plants, or prostrating oneself in soggy grass to try to see the leaves in situ, risking corneal damage from the needle-sharp spikes of Matgrass (*Nardus stricta*)! It is worth noting that although *A. glabra* is by far the most frequent and expected species at higher levels in the north Pennines it is a frequent observation that where one species of *Alchemilla* grows, other species are often to be found nearby. *A. glomerulans* differs from all other species especially in being covered throughout by hairs, which are very fine, silky, and strongly appressed to the surface and hence often inconspicuous. Note that the hairs on *A. filicaulis* and *A. xanthochlora* stand out from the surface.)

#### *Alchemilla wichurae*

**NTR** (for NY7030): west flank of Knock Fell, NY7130, at 720m (22/08/03). Two plants in short turf on a steep slope over consolidated limestone scree. This is the first time the author has seen this species in the county in open grazed grasslands (although they are a normal habitat in other parts of the species' range). In Cumbria it tends to grow on limestone ledges in the Pennines, and on damp cliffs and in ravines in the Lake District.

#### *Alopecurus borealis* (Alpine Foxtail)

After the amazing, prolific flowering of this species in 2002, when stems arose in mid-May, with continuing emergence throughout the season, even into September (Roberts, 2002), a particular effort was made to assess the 2003 season for this plant.

In every case, the abundance of flowering, the size and luxuriance of stems, and the length of the emergence period were reduced. Flowering seemed to be largely restricted to a flush of stems in June to mid-July, and in the seven sites visited (out of nine known in 2002) there were in many cases only about a fifth to a tenth of the number of stems counted last year. Possible explanations of this apparent reduction in vigour might be: i) many colonies which flowered profusely last year might be

‘recovering strength’ this year; ii) sheep, present in many areas this year but not last, might have grazed off many stems; iii) the very dry season might have inhibited further flowering. It has not been possible to assess these various possibilities. Longer-term monitoring might throw more light on the question.

A site additional to those given in Roberts (2002), with about 22 flowering heads, was located in NY7032 just south of the Silverband Mine workings on west Great Dun Fell, about 400m north-west from the nearest previously-known site (‘Site 5’ in that paper) (19/08/03 – with RC).

Remarkably, the species was located by GH at three sites in a completely new area, Little Fell, about 8.5km south-southeast from the nearest previously known site on Dufton Fell. Two sites lie on the northeast and east flanks of Little Fell, in springs below the limestone escarpment (NTRs: NY7822, altitude 718m, 6 flowering heads; & NY7820, altitude 709m, 3 flowering heads). The third site, also in NY7820, was a further 1km south, on a southwest-facing slope, and at a new lower limit of 659m; 23 flowering heads, some shoots to 85cm.

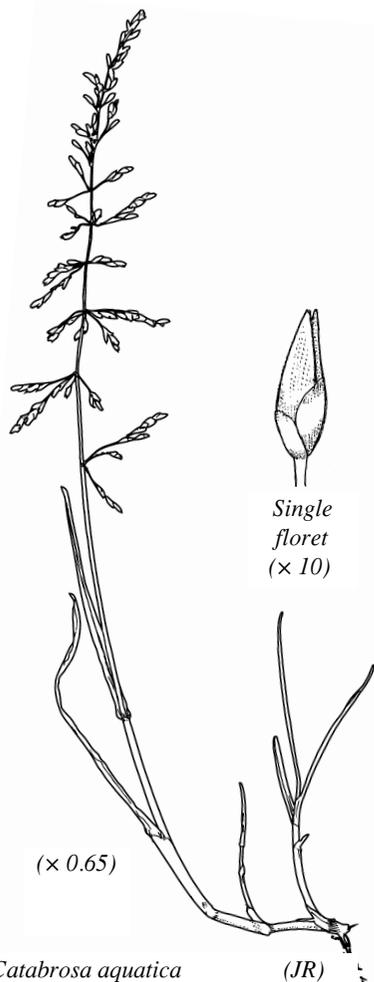
**Carex vaginata** (Sheathed Sedge)

Two additional patches can be reported for Green Fell: one found in 2002 by RG and others on the western flanks, in NY6636, proved to be a different site from RC’s original ‘Site C’ find of that year, and RC and LR located a third patch, about 300m further south, in both NY6636 and (just) in NY6635, the latter a NTR for NY6634.

Further work (with RC and MP) in the original (eastern) site on Dufton Fell revealed two further patches within its previously-known area in ‘Site A’ (Roberts, 2002).

**Catabrosa aquatica** (Whorl-grass)

NHR (for NY73), thus NTRs (for NY7028 & NY7030); NAR\*, 735m (NA gives 710m, Little Fell): growing in ten springs: a single site within the Knock Ore Gill valley at



*Catabrosa aquatica*

730m, and the rest along the west flanks of Knock Fell at 715m-735m (22/08/03 – with MP).

The species was found to occur in many of the springs along a stretch of about 850m on the west-facing slopes, and in almost every case, growing in the centre of the actual spring-head, with a few plants spreading down the flushed bryophyte-dominated rivulets. This restriction may be more apparent than real, in that the vegetation here makes a floating mat over sometimes quite deep water, and hence an unstable substrate which appears to discourage sheep. It may well be that where the plant can be reached by sheep, few or no flowering shoots survive to be discovered. (We found the leaves too similar to those of other ubiquitous grasses of the springs, particularly *Poa annua* (Annual Meadow-grass) to attempt an identification without an inflorescence. Indeed, in these cold-water and high-altitude springs the shoots themselves are very stunted, often less than 10cm, and are then sufficiently similar to *P. annua*, in particular, to be readily overlooked. In fact the writer is embarrassed to admit that he had been over this exact ground in 2002 without finding the *Catabrosa* – and in that year there were no sheep to blame for grazing it off!)

The inflorescence is rather distinctive when known, being long in proportion to the total height of a shoot, and with several of the lower whorls of branches being short, and more-or-less of equal length; the florets are diagnostic when examined closely, with very short rounded glumes enclosing a few-flowered spikelet.

The only previously-known mountain site in the UK for this normally lowland grass is at 710m on Little Fell (Roberts & Halliday, 1979), about 10km southeast from these new sites. GH revisited this area in 2003, and found the species still abundant in two sites: spring on northeast flank of Little Fell, with *Alopecurus borealis*, NTR for NY7822, 718m; shallow pool on Burton Fell, NY7820, 640m.

Besides the two mountain localities described above, the plant is known in a further 22 tetrads in Cumbria, mainly around the coastal plain (Halliday 1997). RC comments that the plant exhibits a boreal range, occurring north to the arctic coast of northern Scandinavia, and up to 800m in southern Norway (Hultén, 1950). It is therefore noteworthy that this part of the North Pennines is the only area of the UK where it demonstrates its boreal tendency.

**Equisetum fluviatile** (Water Horsetail)

NAR, 797m (FoC gives 750m, Little Dun Fell): west flanks of Great Dun Fell, NY7032 (19/08/03 – RC).

**Equisetum sylvaticum** (Wood Horsetail)

NAR, 728m (FoC gives 530m, Force Burn, upper Teesdale); NTR (for NY7030): west flanks of Great Dun Fell, NY7031 (19/08/03 – RC).

***Galium verum*** (Lady's Bedstraw)

NAR, 735 (FoC gives 610m, Melmerby High Scar): in grassland, west flanks of Great Dun Fell, NY7130 (19/08/03 – RC).

***Glyceria declinata*** (Small Sweet-grass)

NHR (for NY73), thus NTR (for NY7030): in several springs on west flanks of Great Dun Fell, NY7130 (19/08/03 – with RC).

***Lysimachia nemorum*** (Yellow Pimpernel)

NAR, 735m (FoC gives 'at least' 690m, Ousby Fell): in grassland, west flanks of Great Dun Fell, NY7130 (19/08/03 – with RC).

***Saxifraga hirculus*** (Marsh Saxifrage)

Whilst, last season, buds were beginning to show colour by the early date of 08/07/02 at Knock Ore Gill, this season was earlier still, with many flowers fully open in the same locality on 09/07/03. The abundance of flowers in an enclosure at Knock Ore Gill made a yellow carpet for a week in mid/late July. Remarkably, perhaps due to this exceptionally dry and warm season, the plant had largely finished flowering by 04/08/03. (In past years, early August was the accepted time to find the plant at its best.)

***Vicia sepium*** (Bush Vetch)

NAR, 755m (FoC gives 650m; Roberts (2002) gives 695m): single patch by access road to Great Dun Fell radar station, NY7131 (24/07/03).

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*Abbreviations in this issue:*

BAP: Biodiversity Action Plan; CWT: Cumbria Wildlife Trust; ITE: Institute of Terrestrial Ecology; RSPB: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest; VC: Vice-county.

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**October 8th ‘The Hen Harrier recovery project’** – An illustrated talk by Richard Saunders, Project Officer, English Nature

**October 22nd ‘Birds on the Box’** – An illustrated talk by Adrian Pitches

**November 5th ‘Pole Position: Wildlife and its protection in North-east Poland’** – An illustrated talk by Marek Borkowski

**November 19th Members’ Night – 1:** Contributions from the membership

**December 3rd ‘Cumbria Wildlife Trust Reserves in Cumbria’** – An illustrated talk by Kerry Milligan

**January 7th ‘Gone Fishing: Life and Times of British Cormorants’** (joint with Cumbria Bird Club) – An illustrated talk by Robin Sellars

**January 21st ‘A taste of America’** – An illustrated talk by Geoff Horne

**February 4th ‘Wild deer of the Lakes and North Lancashire’** – An illustrated talk by John Cubby

**February 7th (Saturday) – Field Meeting:** Loch Ken, Galloway (‘Wild Goose Chase’) Leader: Geoff Horne. Depart 9am from Carlisle College, Victoria Place.

**February 18th ‘Managing habitats for Invertebrates’** – An illustrated talk by Dave Blackledge

**March 3rd AGM and Members’ Night – 2:** AGM followed by contributions from our members