

# The CARLISLE NATURALIST

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*Bee Orchid*

(David Clarke)

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### From the Editor

As the contents of this issue reveal, 2005 has proved an interesting season despite very mixed and generally unsettled weather conditions. Surprisingly little has been noted as a consequence (positive or negative) of the January floods on the Eden at Carlisle, but it may be that time will yet reveal more.

For good reasons, the present issue is a particularly full one and some contributions have had to be held over. Despite this, the Editor would like to re-iterate the ever-present need for line illustrations to accompany articles. Only a few are required at any one time. A usual difficulty is that it is not often possible to specify ideal subjects until the content of an issue is known. Volunteers willing to tackle a fairly last-minute 'brief' would be very welcome, even if they wish to specialise in just one group – e.g. birds, insects, plants, fungi, etc. Alternatively, if someone could supply a small selection which can be 'reserve stock', I am happy to suggest subjects.

Records accumulated on the Tullie House Biological Records database include much material deriving from Society members over many years. It is good to be able to provide web-based access to many of these records via the new site [www.lakelandwildlife.co.uk](http://www.lakelandwildlife.co.uk) which was launched this summer. Working with a multi-media designer, Stephen Hewitt has been responsible for its creation. This is just the beginning and the site will be progressively expanded and updated from now on. A CNHS page is soon to be added. For those without Internet access, this *Virtual Fauna of Lakeland* is available on a computer in the Tullie House entrance hall.

**Society Matters:** 2005 brought the unexpected death of our distinguished Life member Derek Ratcliffe, not long after one of his annual visits to friends in the area. This is a great loss to the world of natural history and conservation and there is a full tribute to him in this issue. John Parker is now our only 'contact' with the early days of the Society and he continues to contribute to this journal.

David Clarke

**Publications by Tullie House and/or CNHS members**, available from the Tullie House shop or direct from Stephen Hewitt (please add 50p per item if ordering by post). Cheques payable to 'Carlisle City Council'.

*A Checklist of the Butterflies and larger Moths of Cumbria* (2000). A 44-page checklist and guide to current status nationally and in Cumbria and Vice-counties 65, 69 & 70; indexed to common and scientific names; useful literature guide. Price £1.

*Cumbrian Ladybirds* (2004). A 30-page guide to their identification and distribution, includes useful key, distribution maps and notes on habits. Price: £1.

*Colour Guide to Cumbrian Ladybirds* (2004). A double-sided, non-folding laminated A4 sheet with photographs and identification notes for all Cumbrian species. Price: 50p.

*Cumbrian Dragonflies: a distribution atlas* (2005). A 30-page guide to their distribution: contains maps and notes on the identification and occurrence of all currently recorded species. Price: £1.

*Colour guide to Cumbrian Shieldbugs*. (2005) A double-sided, non-folding laminated A4 sheet with photographs and identification notes for all the Cumbrian species. Price 50p.

*A Guide to Cumbrian Ferns & Fern-allies* (Jeremy Roberts, 2005) Price £1.

*A Guide to Cumbrian Grasses* (Jeremy Roberts, 2005) Price £1.

Summer-visiting birds seem to have arrived more or less as normal but two of the less common ones merit a special mention. **Little Terns** were reported from Grune Point by several people, including myself, and there were probably a few along other parts of the coast. A **Lesser Whitethroat** sang enthusiastically at Mawbray during the first half of June at least and at that locality on 5<sup>th</sup> June there were large (over 200 of each) flocks of **Knot** and **Sanderling**, presumably just prior to their return to Arctic breeding sites. Returning from such areas on 20<sup>th</sup> July was a large flock of **Bar-tailed Godwit**, mostly still in summer plumage, at Bowness Viaduct. A few **Crossbills** appeared from late July onwards and in various places. At Talkin Tarn, a **Gadwall** on 26<sup>th</sup> August was unusually early before another took up residence from 14<sup>th</sup> September. On the previous day at Talkin I had seen a **Black Tern** pass through - a rare visitor to the tarn these days. In late September, there were reports of 2 **Red-crested Pochard** at Tindale Tarn (JM) and a **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Port Carlisle. **Ospreys** were present in the Eden valley again during the summer and this may presage a renewed attempt at breeding – with all its contingent protection difficulties – in 2006.

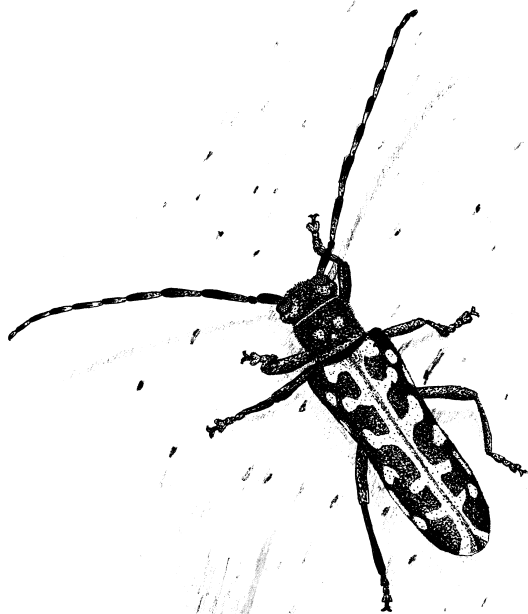
In my experience, it was a poor summer for butterflies, with low numbers of most species. Last year was notable for **Holly Blues** in the north of the county (see *Carlisle Naturalist* 12, No.2, 2004) and in 2005 there were reports from Wetheral in both spring and autumn (RHJ) and from Rockcliffe (AC) in August. The **Small Skipper** was seen again at Smardale (NF), which may now be the best place to see this relative newcomer to the county fauna. The **Small Blue** colonies at Maryport and Workington seem to be thriving. **Purple Hairstreaks** showed up in several places, two of which (Wetheral (RHJ) and Lower Gelt Woods (NF)) may be new sites, at least in recent times. There have been five reports of **Clouded Yellow** so far (AC; CA; IB; IA; RHJ), in the period 8<sup>th</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> August: perhaps surprisingly all but one were from north Cumbria (Greystoke, and Solway sites). The season has been notably lacking in the commoner migrant butterflies, though there were a couple of early **Painted Ladies** in May (IB; IA) and **Red Admiral** numbers picked up in the latter part of September into October. Finally, **Commas** continue to provide interest – with a few spring and autumn records.

It seems to have been a good year for **Hummingbird Hawk-moths**, with more than a dozen records, from late June onwards (latest on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct, Wreay, JR). **Convolvulus Hawks** also appeared: one trapper (TF) near Kendal found no fewer than 3 in his trap at one time on 5<sup>th</sup> September - quite a handful! My own moth trap has produced just two notable species so far - a **Poplar Grey** on 24<sup>th</sup> June and an **Angle-striped Sallow** on 5<sup>th</sup> September. However, an apparent **Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing** (*Noctua janthe*) on the unusually early date of 5<sup>th</sup> July (at least two weeks earlier than it should have been) may have been

worthy of closer examination in view of the recent discovery of **Langmaid's Yellow Underwing** (*Noctua janthina*) in Hampshire on a similar early date in 2001, since when there have been quite a few more records, but not by any means as far north as Cumbria. However, moth-trappers, be aware! A **Tawny Pinion** (*Lithophane semibrunnea*) appeared in my moth trap on 4<sup>th</sup> October. This is well north of its normal British range and the only recent Cumbria record since one at Arnside in November 1986.

Dragonflies produced some notable records despite the poor weather in the earlier part of the flight season. The presence of the rare **Variable Damselfly** was re-confirmed at its two Cumbria sites after a break in recording there of many years (DC; RWJR). **Emperor Dragonflies** produced a showing in diverse parts of the county at various dates, but especially in the short-lived hot spell of early July. Sites included Sunbiggin Tarn (DC), Gosforth (LR), Barrow (PW) and Whitehaven (RWJR). Three were present at the last-mentioned. The year brought the first county record of **Black-tailed Skimmers** and the related **Keeled Skimmer** was found in an entirely new area in north Cumbria (see **Notes** on pp. ## and ## respectively).

**Migrant Hawkers** have been rather scarce in north Cumbria compared to the two previous years: NH and DO'H saw one at North Plain Reserve on 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> September – which could even be the same one that TR saw at Bowness Gravel Pits on 11<sup>th</sup>. DC noted several at Thurstonfield Lough on 12<sup>th</sup> September and feels this might now be a regular breeding site; 4 seen near Barrow-in-Furness on 12<sup>th</sup> August (PW) are suggestive of local breeding in the south. **Ruddy Darters** seem to have been very scarce at Bowness this



*Saperda scalaris*

(Stephen Hewitt)

season (MC), perhaps due to low water levels.

Amongst other insects, the largest of our horseflies, *Tabanus sudeticus*, has apparently had a good summer, with several concerned members of the public submitting photographs or specimens to the Museum for identification. The larvae of this fly develop in *Sphagnum* bogs and are generally commoner in the more sheltered south of Cumbria; but adults have been turning up in houses, gardens and cars in scattered north Cumbria locations from Penrith, Brampton and Caldbeck this summer. The large and attractively patterned longhorn beetle *Saperda scalaris* was spotted on a fallen birch trunk at Scalehow Wood (NY4119) on 17<sup>th</sup> July (SMH). This nationally scarce dead-wood species has apparently not been seen in Cumbria since 1958, when Bill Davison reported an adult from a timber yard at Edenhall, Langwathby.

There has been a small spate of **Pine Marten** sightings reported to the Museum, from locations in the north and south of the county – but no road kills as yet. The plight of the **Red Squirrel** is increasingly bad as **Grey Squirrels** continue to spread into the north of the county despite organised resistance. The population of Red Squirrels at Whinfall holiday village near Penrith has been badly affected by Squirrel Pox contracted from the Greys.

The autumn flush of mushrooms and toadstools is well underway and amongst other things this season has produced a new site for the nationally scarce **Pink Waxcap** (*Hygrocybe calyptraeformis*). This UK Biodiversity Action Plan fungus was found at Lanthwaite Green (NY1620) on 8<sup>th</sup> October (SMH). This species grows in short turf on unimproved pasture and old, nutrient-poor lawns and churchyards. Like many species of waxcap it is more common in the north and west of Britain and there are about 10 other locations known in Cumbria for this species. It is threatened nationally due to habitat loss.

Two last-minute reports (both from MS) are very exceptional late dates: a **Swift** was noted at Appleby on 7<sup>th</sup> October, and a **Large Red Damselfly** was at his ponds near Bewcastle on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

Geoff Naylor (CNHS Recorder)

Recorders:

Ian Armstrong (IA); Colin Auld (CA); Ian Brodie (IB); Allan Cremin (AC); Mike Critchley (MC); David Clarke (DC); T. Ford (TF); Nick Franklin (NF); Stephen Hewitt (SMH); Norman Holton (NH); Bob Jones (RHJ); John Miles (JM); Dave O'Hara (D O'H); John Read (RWJR); Tristan Reid (TR); J. Revell (JR); Jeremy Roberts (FJR); Les Robertson (LR); Malcolm Stott (MS); Peter Wilde (PW).

## Field Meetings & Workshops

### 4<sup>th</sup> June: Colvend

Leader: David Clarke

Despite very unpromisingly damp and cloudy weather, quite a large group had assembled and seemed intent on having a meeting. The leader thought discretion the better part of valour and agreed to go at least as far as Dumfries to re-assess the prospects for the day!

We arranged to call in at the RSPB's attractive Reserve at Mersehead with hopes that conditions might by then be showing signs of improvement. Sadly they were not, but we did at least manage to walk around the Reserve and visited the hide overlooking the large shallow wetland, with its impressive developing reed-beds. There were various water birds about, including Gadwall. The sight of a long aerial chase of a female of the latter by a Shelduck was presumed to have been the result of some sort of territorial dispute.

Although the weather was clearly not going to get much better, we decided that Colvend was now close enough to merit a brief visit, and we called in at the White Loch and spent some time in the wooded shallows looking for signs of emergence of the Hairy Dragonfly, which is well known from this site. However, no exuviae could be found, neither were there any resting dragonflies. Fortunately it proved fairly easy to find resting damselflies, and we were able to see several examples of the Variable Damselfly, which is quite abundant here (though unaccountably rare in Cumbria). We were able to examine the distinctive identification marks at close hand in specimens almost too cool to fly! One dragonfly was discovered just before we left: a fine immature Golden-ringed Dragonfly, which again we were able to examine at very close quarters.

As the group evidently felt their journey not entirely wasted, the Leader was content with the day's outcome.

D.C.

### 18<sup>th</sup> June, Maryport

Leader: Geoff Naylor

On a rather oppressively humid day, alleviated to some extent by a light sea breeze, a surprisingly large party of 20 members, guests and one dog assembled just south of Maryport harbour. The objective was to see some of the unusual plants and, hopefully, butterflies to be found at the site. Despite the apparent lateness of the date, not only were Small Blues still on the wing but were in good numbers, allowing everyone fine views of this rarity which is often erroneously reported from other areas. Also visible were Common Blue, Small Heath, Large,

Small and Green-veined Whites and a fairly early Ringlet. Another special insect of this site, the Grass Rivulet moth, was also noted.

The plants also performed well, with Purple Broomrape the speciality, but there was also plenty of Lesser Broomrape, both Pyramidal and Northern Marsh Orchids, Sainfoin and single examples of Pear and Medlar, the last at its only wild station in the county. Also of note were several unexpected examples of Horseshoe Vetch. This is normally found around the Carboniferous Limestone in the south of the county with its northern limit in the Upper Eden Valley and Shap areas. Ornithological interest was provided by Skylarks and Linnets, probably feeding young, and a family group of Stonechats.

After lunch, some members departed on other business and the remainder moved northwards along the coast to Mawbray in the hope of finding more seashore plants. Sea Holly and Isle of Man Cabbage were the best of those found, but better still were three Bee Orchids close to the path with three more found later in a different area. This would appear to be a new site for Bee Orchid and, as such, is the most northerly in the county and one of the most northerly in Britain. Also of interest here were two singing Lesser Whitethroats and a Cinnabar moth.

To complete an already good day, we finally arrived at Silloth where, in an area centred around the Convalescent Home, south of the harbour, plant highlights were Tassel Hyacinth, Bloody Crane's-bill, Sickle Medick, Dusty Miller (originally a garden escape, but apparently self-colonised from sites across the Solway Firth) and the unusual and probably imported Lesser Swinecress. Also of interest was the moth, Yellow Shell.

Thanks for the interest shown by those attending, especially those who stayed all day!

G.N.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> July: Grasses Workshop

Leader: Jeremy Roberts

The workshop followed the well-established format of an indoor session in the Museum, followed by an afternoon in the field. Jeremy had, as usual, taken great



Bee Orchid (David Clarke)

pains with his preparatory work to ensure that those participating gained the maximum value from the day. He had produced a new improved version of his booklet, *A guide to Cumbrian grasses* (to the astonishment of some of us, who had not considered the previous version capable of improvement). Using the booklet to provide structure and reference for the workshop, Jeremy led us through the pages, first explaining how to differentiate the grass look-alikes (i.e. rushes, sedges and woodrushes) before moving on to the features and identification characters of grasses proper. Having got a grasp of the terminology such as ligule, node, sheath, panicle, spikelets and awns, it was time to start learning how to identify some of the different species of grass found in the county.

There are 67 common species of grass in Cumbria and Jeremy has included to all of these in the identification keys in his booklet. A further 22 rare or very local species are not included. In truth these species are so very unlikely to be encountered without making a specific search, that to include them in a booklet aimed at beginners would have been unhelpful. The key begins by splitting the grasses into six different groups, based on the shape of the flower spike; each group is then keyed separately. Such is the quality of Jeremy's guide and his skill as a tutor that, as one species after another fell into place, we soon began to feel confident of our new-found skills as graminologists. However, after a break for lunch and a short journey to the banks of the River Eden at Wetheral Viaduct, one of us at least felt slightly panicked as we stood on the roadside verge surveying a sea of swaying grasses, all appearing equally devoid of distinguishing features! However, with some gentle coaxing from Jeremy and Mike Porter, another expert botanist who joined us at this point, we were able to begin using the key to put names to some of the species present. As ever the knack was to spot the ones that were different among the almost overwhelming mass of vegetation. After an hour or two on the roadside verge, among the trees and along the river-bank, we had identified a dozen or more different species.

Although we were by no means proficient at grass identification by the end of the day, Jeremy had certainly given us the basis on which to build our skills with a little application on our own account.

## Reference

Roberts, F.J. (2005) *A guide to Cumbrian grasses*. Version 2. 24 pp.

Stephen Hewitt

## 27<sup>th</sup> August: Shieldbugs Workshop

Leader: Stephen Hewitt

The morning session at Tullie House took the form of an introduction to the shieldbugs of Cumbria, illustrated with mounted examples from the museum collection and a selection of live specimens. Stephen provided each of us with a specially-produced identification sheet bearing colour photographs and notes on the Cumbrian species. We also received a prototype Cumbrian Shieldbug Key that he is in the process of developing and which we were able to test out. The key also contained useful species distribution maps for the county.

It was a pleasant, sunny day and after lunch we regrouped at Wan Fell, near Plumpton, to hunt out shieldbugs in their natural habitats. Armed with nets and beating sticks the first species to be found was the nymphal form of the Birch Shieldbug (*Elasmotethus interstinctus*). These nymphs were bright green with striking red markings on the centre back of their abdomens, showing that they were late stage instars. As in the adults, the first antennal segment could be seen extending beyond the front of the head – an identification point. Not surprisingly they were discovered amongst the leaves and twigs of birch. The next shieldbug we came across was *Troilus luridus*, again a nymph and on birch. Hawthorn Shieldbugs (*Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*) of three different instars were found in Hawthorn bushes, including one with unusual red coloration.

As we walked across an open area of grassland we noticed lots of dead heads of Field Gentian (*Gentianella campestris*) and Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*). The yellow wax-cap fungus *Hygrocybe persitans* was seen, and Field Grasshoppers (*Chorthippus brunneus*) identified.

Hunting amongst the Gorse we soon found both adults and large and small instars of the Gorse Shieldbug (*Piezodorus lituratus*). The adults have a yellow edge to the pronotum. An adult Birch Shieldbug and a Parent Bug (*Elasmucha grisea*) were found on birch nearby. In a damper area sweep-netting produced the large shieldbug *Picromerus bidens*, with its sharp thorn-like pointed shoulders. Amongst heather, the bronze-coloured *Rhacognathus punctatus* was discovered. This species has dark legs with pale bands.

Along with shieldbugs we also came across various other insects including caterpillars of Fox Moth, Grey Dagger moth and the Vapourer moth, and an adult Purple Bar moth, a Small Heath butterfly and at least six Small Copper butterflies. Some of us saw a Devil's Coach-horse rove beetle crossing a path. During our searching we came across various species of ladybird, including the Hieroglyphic, the 10-Spot, the Eyed and the Striped – giving us a chance to recap identification skills learnt at last year's Ladybird Workshop.

The day gave an informative introduction to shieldbug identification and we all

went off keen to add more dots to those distribution maps. The twelve enthusiasts who attended were grateful to Stephen for the preparation and hard work he put in to make the day such a success.

Marie Saag

**15<sup>th</sup> October: Martindale, Red Deer rut**

**Leader: Geoff Horne**

A very successful meeting, with 27 attending! Over a hundred deer were seen, one stag having a ‘hareem’ of 29 hinds. The ‘roaring’ of stags echoed through the valley and the usual upland birds of prey, Raven, Buzzard and Peregrine, were also around.

G.H.

**Notes and Records**

**Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* (Linn.): a first record for Cumbria**

Whilst on one of my regular monitoring visits to a pond in the Gosforth area (NY00), I soon became aware of some unusual dragonfly visitors. This was on 10<sup>th</sup> July, at which time the weather was especially fine and hot. Most conspicuous was a male Emperor Dragonfly, circling the water in powerful flight, rarely landing anywhere. I soon also noticed a smaller, paler, blue-bodied species, regularly perching on waterside boulders. A close approach revealed these – there were four of them – to be Black-tailed Skimmers. Fortunately, I had my camera with me and it was possible to obtain one or two digital photographs. I sent some pictures to Stephen Hewitt at the Biological Records Centre at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle. He and David Clarke were quickly able to confirm the identification and told me the exciting news that this was apparently the first ever sighting of Black-tailed Skimmers in Cumbria.

On a further visit on 17<sup>th</sup> July, the Emperor was no longer present and I saw only one Black-tailed Skimmer. No Black-tailed Skimmers were seen after this date (though an Emperor was seen again on 12<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> August). The pond is in a sheltered farmland location and quite large. It was only created in 2000, and still has relatively bare margins. It is within 3km of the Cumbria coast.

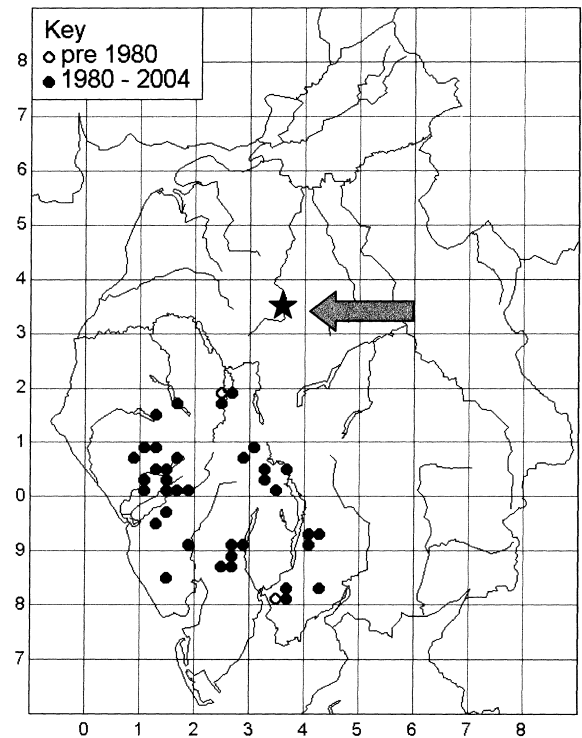
Les Robertson, Deepdale, Wilton, Egremont, Cumbria CA22 2PJ

[Black-tailed Skimmers have been moving north for many years now, and have become regular in north Lancashire. It is most likely that this record, coinciding as it does with very favourable conditions, simply represents a ‘fair weather movement’. However, eggs may have been laid and possibly other, unrecorded, sites were also visited. Pools in sheltered locations near the south and south-west coasts of Cumbria will be well worth checking from now on. Les’ picture will be used on the species-page in the website [www.lakelandwildlife.co.uk](http://www.lakelandwildlife.co.uk) when next updated. David Clarke]

**New north Cumbria sites for the Keeled Skimmer *Orthetrum coerulescens* (Fabricius)**

Whilst recording this species, the similarity of some of its sites to those for the Bog Orchid (*Hammarbya paludosa*) had struck me as a way of predicting where to look for one of these two species when the other was already known to occur. Bog Orchids are known at higher altitudes than the dragonfly, so the choice was limited to sites below 250 metres a.s.l.

With this proviso in mind, I checked some boggy runnels on the common just below and to the north-east of Carrock Fell (NY3534, etc). The altitude here is some 230 m, and possibly marginal for the dragonfly. Despite this, almost the first dragonfly I saw, and photographed, during a brief visit in fine weather on 8<sup>th</sup> August was a female Keeled Skimmer! Another runnel nearby revealed at least two mature males. Though not proven, breeding here seems a strong possibility. A further visit to the general area on 17<sup>th</sup> August revealed the species, in rather more abundance, at



Keeled Skimmer: arrow shows 2005 ‘range extension’

a wet flush on Black Moss (NY3533): several males were seen, as well as mating and egg-laying.

The general area immediately below Carrock Fell appears to have a wide scatter of potentially suitable breeding sites for this species – which may be very localised and could be well concealed by the undulating terrain and the general sward of rushes and sedges, as were the two above. There are some good areas of suitable-looking habitat further up the Caldew valley in Mosedale, just west of Roundhouse, especially on the south side of the river. The altitude is just that bit higher – 250 m, and the location more exposed and ‘upland’ in character. Though the species was not seen here in good weather on 17<sup>th</sup> August, such sites might repay further checking and/or come into occupation by this species if a warming climate pushes up altitudinal limits.

As the map shows, this is an entirely new 10 km square for *O. coerulescens*, and its most northerly sites in Cumbria to date (the next site southwards being some 20 km away, in Borrowdale). As ever, the question remains as to how long the species may have been present, undetected. One Society member who often visited the area was the sharp-eyed Barry Marrs. He was looking at the same habitat and it is unlikely that he would not have noticed Keeled Skimmers, had they been there at all regularly – in the mid-1980s especially. It is therefore tempting to regard this as a relatively recent development.

*David Clarke, Burnfoot, Cumwhitton, Brampton, Cumbria CA8 9EX*

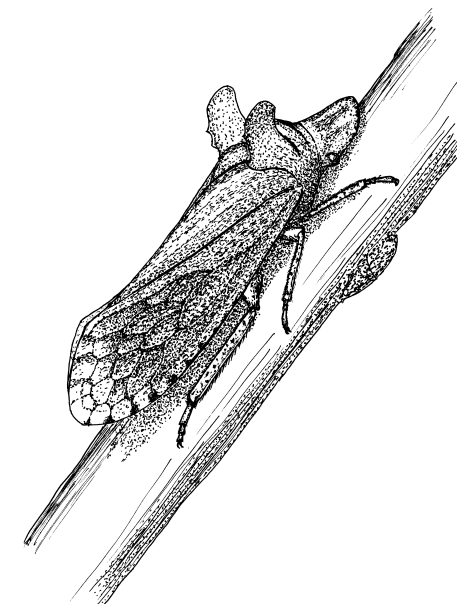
### The leafhopper *Ledra aurita* (L.) (Homoptera: Cicadellidae) new to Cumbria

During a collecting trip to the Witherslack area at some time in the 1970s, members of the Raven Natural History Society, whilst beating trees on Nichols Moss SSSI, reportedly collected an adult of the cicadellid bug *Ledra aurita* (L.). This is a very distinctive leafhopper as can be seen from the photograph in Chinery (2005), and it is extremely unlikely that those concerned misidentified the insect. It has proved impossible to track down the specimen or to establish the precise date and location of this capture. I have spent some time over the last two years attempting to recapture it, but until June this year without success.

On 7<sup>th</sup> June 2005, however, whilst beating birch, I succeeded in taking an unusual-looking nymph that proved to be that of *Ledra*. The specimen was 11 mm in length and of the cryptic coloration and structure that makes it so difficult to see against lichen-encrusted branches. It matched exactly in size and appearance that shown in the illustration in Ossianniilsson (1981). I did attempt to rear it but was unsuccessful and it died several days later. On 17<sup>th</sup> July 2005 I revisited the area and obtained an adult, also by beating birch, very near to the previous capture. A

third visit on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2005 resulted in the capture nearby of a larger nymph and a second adult.

The recorded distribution of the species as shown by Stewart & Wilson (1998), suggests that it is predominantly southern and eastern in the British Isles. There is, however, a single record of another nymph being beaten from oak at Gait Barrows NNR in Lancashire, a location that is over 200 km from the next nearest record in central England. This was on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1993, a time of year very similar to that of my first record. Stewart & Wilson queried whether the insect captured by Stewart on that occasion represented a northerly



*Ledra aurita* (actual size 15 mm) (David Clarke)

outlier or was simply another record in what may be a more extensive distribution. Nichols Moss is approximately 8 km northwest of Gait Barrows and finding *Ledra* there suggests that their second hypothesis may be the more correct. The insects from Nichols Moss would appear to be the first authenticated records for Cumbria and will ultimately be placed in the collections at Tullie House Museum in Carlisle.

It may be that the insect is more widely distributed in this area than the records show and escapes detection by inhabiting the tops of trees, inaccessible to most collectors. Comments in the literature are rather ambivalent as to the species' ability to colonise new areas. According to Ossianniilsson ‘both adults and larvae are very sluggish but they can leap vigorously’, although the adult insects can fly and Stewart & Wilson state that ‘many records refer to adults attracted to light’.

This leafhopper is normally associated with mature oak trees and may be a possible indicator of old woodland. I did search one or two oak trees in the proximity of my captures but to no avail. The fact that all my specimens were obtained from birch is interesting since this is not one of those listed by Stewart and Wilson as a host tree.

The birches in question are growing in fairly dry conditions near the margin of the moss. They are tall, thin trees, fairly close together with several dead and lichen-encrusted branches. The majority of their leafy branches are high up and out of the reach of normal collecting methods. It is not a habitat likely to be worked by entomologists who are more likely to beat just the lower, leafy branches.

Over the years there have been several comments regarding the fact that numerous elements of the fauna found around Morecambe Bay are frequently more common further south and may reach the northern limit of their distribution in this area. The records from Gait Barrows and Nichols Moss suggest that *Ledra* should be added to this list.

The fact that such a large and distinctive insect should have existed undetected in this area that has been visited by many entomologists over the years is in itself rather extraordinary. My records are as follows: 7<sup>th</sup> June 2005, 1 nymph, SD43011/83052; 17<sup>th</sup> July 2005, 1 adult, SD43021/83056; 21<sup>st</sup> July 2005, 1 nymph, SD43023/83068; 21<sup>st</sup> July 2005, 1 adult, SD43023/83044.

Thanks are due to Steven Judd of Liverpool Museum for his assistance in establishing the identity of the insect and to Alan Stewart who has confirmed that there have been no further records of the species in the north-west of England since the publication of his paper.

There is a photograph of the nymph of *Ledra* in Sterry (1997) and a very good photograph of the adult of the species on the internet at:

[www.hlasek.com/ledra\\_aurita\\_372.html](http://www.hlasek.com/ledra_aurita_372.html).

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*James R.A. Thomas, Bridge House, Borwick, Carnforth*

[As the illustration here shows, there are two prominent rounded 'horns' on the thorax, superficially resembling ears – hence aurita. Ed.]

## The Surinam Cockroach *Pycnoscelus surinamensis* (L): an introduced species new to Cumbria

A specimen of this alien species was brought to the January meeting of the Arnside Natural History Society. It had been found in the bedroom of a block of apartments converted from a previous convalescent home in the village of Arnside (GR: SD45007788) on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2005 by the occupants. It was apparently walking across the floor when captured and they wondered if it had been brought into the building in the packaging of a new pair of trainers. Subsequent investigation revealed that they had also recently purchased a large houseplant from a local nursery and it seems more likely that the insect had been introduced into their home with that.

Soraya Ashton of Liverpool Museum kindly identified the specimen for me and sent details of its habits and distribution. It was first recorded in this country at the beginning of the last century. Ragge (1965) produced a distribution map of the species that showed records from only nine vice counties. He stated that the insect caused problems by burrowing into the compost of glasshouse plants. Marshall & Haes (1988) reported that it was most frequently recorded from horticultural nurseries, eating roots and plant shoots, but by then it had been recorded from twelve vice-counties. Most English records are from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew.

This would appear to be the first recorded incidence of the species in Cumbria. The specimen is to be placed in the collection at Tullie House Museum.

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*James R. A. Thomas, Bridge House, Borwick, Carnforth, Lancs LA6 1JU*

## Relict occurrences of 'old forest' lichens at Swinburn's Park, Ullswater, including an unusual example of Rowan as a host tree

Whilst investigating deciduous woodland at Little Meldrum above Swinburn's Park, Ullswater (NY42) this year, I found a large multi-stemmed and clearly ancient Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) bearing modest-sized but healthy patches of three lichen species associated with old woodland – all members of what lichenologists refer to as the 'Lobarion community'. These were *Lobaria*



*pulmonaria* – the largest of the so-called Lungworts, together with *Nephroma laevigatum* and *Nephroma parile*.

In Cumbria, these lichens are most often found on Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), the bark of which is of relatively low acidity: Rowan is known for rather acidic bark and is not associated with any of these species. The possibility that the tree in question was actually an old Ash invaded by epiphytic growths of Rowan proves not to be the case in this instance. It has a basal girth of 5 metres and some six major limbs arising from the huge bulbous base; many minor sprouts arise on this too. The tree is situated near the bottom of a steep rocky scree, at approximately 325 metres a.s.l. There are coppiced Hazels (*Corylus avellana*) on this slope and it is possible the Rowan too was once cut to the ground – perhaps just to control it. The ‘rule of thumb’ for calculating tree age based on an inch of circumference per year, if applicable here, would place this one at some 200 years or more – though the trauma of whatever made it multi-stemmed may have affected the growth rate considerably.

All the lichens are very low down (less than a metre above ground) on the south side of the tree. Here they are more or less ‘cradled’ at the junction of the larger limbs. The bases of some limbs show considerable decay and have moss cover, and the situation may also tend to trap falling leaves. Hence the lichens may benefit from a certain amount of ‘composting’, which could counteract the bark acidity – a prediction of Ivan Day (pers. comm.) which may well be the case in this instance. The lichens are mainly growing directly on the knobbly bark, though some of the *N. parile* is amongst the common moss *Hypnum cupressiforme*. Some of the *Lobaria* is still growing well on twig debris at the foot of the tree. *Peltigera horizontalis*, another ‘old woodland’ species, is on rocks near the tree base.

Up-slope of this tree, another Rowan, less massive and more shaded, has considerably more *N. parile*, and some *Peltigera horizontalis*, but not the other two species. In this case there is less obvious potential for nutrient flushing.

Ivan Day has commented that it is now ‘very unusual to see this community on Rowan outside eu-oceanic areas of north-west Scotland, though even there it is a rare occurrence’. He also mentioned that in some other parts of the world, *Lobaria*, *Sticta* and *Nephroma* species do thrive on acid-barked trees: for example ‘in montane *Abies* forest in the Pyrenees, and on chestnut in the Apennines in Tuscany ... In temperate rain forests and boreal conifer forests in British Columbia, there is a luxuriant Lobarion community consisting of *L. hallii*, *L. pseudopulmonaria*, *L. scrobiculata* and *L. retigera* on Douglas Fir, Hemlock and even Sitka Spruce’.

Coniferisation may well have swept away other such trees in this area. Ironically,

the plantation now on the slopes of Swinburn’s Park provides some shelter, and perhaps helps to maintain the humidity the lichens need. Two massive ancient Alders (*Alnus glutinosus*) still remain near the Rowan site and are an indication of the wetness of this slope, and the long continuity of woodland hereabouts. Below the hillside path, almost enclosed by the plantation, is another fragment of old deciduous woodland, associated with the steep ravine of the Kirkstyle Gill. *P. horizontalis* is abundant on the shaded tangle of trees in the Gill. On the gill-side near the foot of the steep slope two large Elms (*Ulmus glabra*) have relict Lobarion. One dead but vertical trunk has patches of *L. pulmonaria* for several metres, though these now look distinctly unhealthy. The other tree, though with advancing fungal attack, still has live limbs and, in addition to small amounts of the last-mentioned species, some healthy fruiting patches of another species of this community, *Lobaria virens*. Elm is less unusual as a host for such species, though not as frequent as Ash in the Lake District. Oak (*Quercus* sp.) is also a frequent host tree: one very large old tree in another gill, just below the plantation, has small amounts of *L. pulmonaria*.

I am grateful to Rod Corner for pointing out the interest of Rowan in this context, to Ivan Day for his pertinent and interesting comments, and to Peter Harris for help with the moss identification.

David Clarke, Burnfoot, Cumwhitton, Carlisle CA8 9EX

#### Water Sedge *Carex aquatilis* Wahlenb. in a montane mire site

The Water Sedge (*Carex aquatilis*) is a northern species occurring very locally in Cumbria in the fringing vegetation of a few rivers and in lake-side swamps in Lakeland, by a moorland stream near Killington, and at 270m by the River Irthing on the Northumberland border (Halliday, 1997). It is unknown elsewhere in England besides a single site in Teesdale, although a site in upper Teesdale was flooded under Cow Green reservoir. It occurs scattered across Ireland, and – rather surprisingly, for an essentially northern species – in quite a number of sites in north, west and south Wales.

North of the Scottish border, the plant becomes quite frequent in similar situations. Its headquarters are the Spey marshes near Insh, where the plant dominates large areas of swamp in a huge form often over a metre tall.

Besides these sites, the species also crops up again in a quite distinct habitat in the eastern Scottish Highlands: exposed montane mires on deep peat irrigated by base-poor water, mostly at least 760m a.s.l., where it is represented by a small form,



Water Sedge (Jeremy Roberts)

often only half the size of lowland plants. As John Raven wrote: ‘... it takes on a very dwarf and condensed form, and is often not only bent over to one side but also spirally twisted’ (Raven & Walters, 1956). The vegetation of these mires is sufficiently distinct to have been classified as a special subunit ‘b’ (the so-called ‘*Carex aquatilis-Sphagnum recurvum* sub-community’) of community ‘M7’, the ‘*Carex rostrata-Sphagnum russowii* mire’, of the National Vegetation Classification (Rodwell, 1991). In such mires I have seen *Carex aquatilis* on many occasions, for instance on Lochnagar, above Coire Fee and Glen Doll, and on Glas Maol. Often it grows with other montane rarities such as Alpine Cat’s-tail (*Phleum alpinum*), Alpine Foxtail (*Alopecurus borealis*) and Mountain Bog-sedge (*Carex rariflora*).

Aware of its Scottish high-moorland sites, and the fact that the species grows (albeit in its lowland form) not far away down the River Tees, I had been pondering – since the ‘reinvigoration’ of the vegetation of the Cross Fell range, post-FMD – whether the plant might be there to be found, up on the high moors, overlooked in the past due to the heavy sheep grazing. Alternatively, I wondered if perhaps there might be signs of its past existence in forms of the related Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*) introgressed

towards *C. aquatilis* – i.e. showing characters indicative of past hybridisation, with ‘backcrossing’ having occurred between the hybrid and the commoner parent, *C. nigra*.

Nonetheless, it came as a great surprise on 28th June 2005 when walking through some mire vegetation on the northern flanks of Great Dun Fell, not far below the summit, to find myself in the middle of a large swathe of waving sedge shoots, many over 50 cm tall, with numerous flowering stems, not of any introgressed

variants of Common Sedge, but superb Water Sedge, at once identifiable by its long, wide bracts far overtopping the inflorescences.

What was particularly startling to me, after the initial surprise of discovery, were two facts: i) this large patch was, at its closest, only 30 metres from the Pennine Way, along which I – and other botanists – had walked on very many previous occasions, and ii) embarrassing as it is to report, I had spent several hours in this exact set of mires the previous year, diligently counting the heads of Alpine Foxtail, oblivious to the sheets of Water Sedge, on which I must have been trampling!

It is an astonishing fact that the plant, which has in all likelihood sat in this exact spot for millennia, and certainly all through the history of botanical exploration, has only now emerged from obscurity. The likely explanation is that this is yet another demonstration that intense long-term sheep-grazing had reduced the plant to non-flowering leafy shoots, superficially similar to other sedge and cottongrass leaves. The Alpine Foxtail – which is abundant all through this particular series of springs and the mires developed below them, with over 900 heads in 2004 – has only come to notice here (at least to my notice) since 2003 when Linda Robinson found it.

After several hours spent searching the hillsides down to the col before Little Dun Fell, I had found four discrete patches of the plant, between 800 and 825 metres a.s.l.: three (with areas of 340 m<sup>2</sup>, 260 m<sup>2</sup>, and 60 m<sup>2</sup>) down one long mire close to, and parallel to, the Pennine Way, and one (200 m<sup>2</sup>) around the top of the next spring to the west, about 60m from the uppermost of the three other patches. The total area of the four patches found so far is therefore about 860 m<sup>2</sup>. The plant is dense and dominant over about half of this total area, with scattered shoots over the remainder. In 2005 there were very many flowering shoots. Specimens have been lodged with LANC.

If only one could ‘revisit’ the past, to know just what this vegetation looked like in the years before FMD, and whether 2005 was in fact the first that the sedge came into prominence vegetatively, or flowered in profusion! Although, with experience, its leaves are actually very distinctive (being strongly U-shaped in section, the upper surface matt in appearance – stomata being strictly limited to that surface – and the lower surface shiny and deep green), superficially they look somewhat like those of Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), which grows nearby, and which has perhaps masked it in the past.

Close associates are Alpine Foxtail (*Alopecurus borealis*), Velvet Bent (*Agrostis canina*), Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*), White Sedge (*Carex curta*), Common Sedge (*C. nigra*), Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Marsh Violet (*Viola*

*palustris*), and Starry Saxifrage (*Saxifraga stellaris*). Stiff Sedge (*Carex bigelowii*) occurs nearby on drier peat hummocks.

No hybrids have yet been detected here between Water Sedge and either Common Sedge or the Stiff Sedge (hybrids which are both known locally in Scotland): the form of Water Sedge seems to be 'pure'. It is not yet resolved whether this form is an equivalent of the montane ecotype of Scotland, or more closely related to the Cumbrian lowland forms. Certainly it grows in vegetation related to the Scottish 'M7b' communities. Indeed, Rodwell says: 'Essentially similar vegetation, with a poorer representation of the montane elements, occurs at Moorhouse in Cumbria...' (*ibid.* p. 80). It is very pleasing to know that one of the characteristic species of the community does in fact occur in the assemblage as it occurs in Cumbria.

Further searches along the flanks of the Dun Fells, Cross Fell, Knock Fell and Dufton Fell have not yet revealed any other colonies. As previously implied, it seems very likely that the plant colonised this spot along with the other montane elements at some stage in the Late-glacial period, when it may have been a very widespread plant on lower ground. It may be that this exposed north-facing slope is the only area in England where suitable conditions for its survival have persisted throughout the intervening millennia to the present time.

I am very grateful to Rod Corner and Geoffrey Halliday for comments.

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*Jeremy Roberts*

### **New sites for the Bog Orchid *Hammarbya paludosa* (L.) Kuntze in the Easedale fells, Grasmere**

Brief mention was made of a find of this rather elusive and inconspicuous orchid in a previous issue (*Carlisle Naturalist* **12**: 2, p. 33). A second visit to the general area in July 2005 re-confirmed the small colony (some 12 spikes were seen) and, more significantly, added a new and larger population. The 'original' site is on rather open peaty ground near runnels, with *Potamogeton* species as the main associated plant species. The spikes here do not exceed 30 mm in height. The newer find, by contrast, is mainly in a deep 'lawn' of very wet *Sphagnum* in a more sheltered runnel system, amongst Juniper. Here there was a good scattering

of groups of up to 6 plants, the best reaching some 85 mm tall, the yellow-green spikes being – unusually – visible from many yards away. At least 30 spikes in all were present, making this one of the more productive sites for this species in Cumbria. The two groups are about 0.25 km apart, and at c. 220-230 m altitude. (The reference cited above wrongly quotes the Cumbria altitude limit for *Hammarbya* as 230m: it is currently c. 365m).

Bog orchids are rare, but easily overlooked. Both these Easedale colonies are in 2 km × 2 km 'DINTY' tetrad NY30D. This tetrad is additional to those in NY30 known for this species at the time of *A Flora of Cumbria* (1997). Full details have been passed on to the county recorder. The continued presence of the species was also confirmed at a bog in the adjacent tetrad, NY30E. Even before the new records, the 'Ambleside square' NY30 had seemed to be among the richest for this species in the county.

(The above records were a 'by-product' of dragonfly recording: the Keeled Skimmer (*Orthetrum coerulescens*) has some overlaps in habitat requirements with the Bog Orchid!)

*David Clarke, Burnfoot, Cumwhitton, Carlisle CA8 9EX*

## Further notes on the flora of the Cross Fell range

Jeremy Roberts, Eden Croft, 2 Wetheral Pasture, Carlisle CA4 8HU

The following list is a selection of new records (mainly) from the 2005 season, with conventions following those in Roberts (2002; 2003; 2004), detailing:

- i) *New tetrad records* ('NTR'), and *new hectad* (i.e. 10-km square) *records* ('NHR'), additional to Halliday (1997), references to which are abbreviated to 'FoC' in the list, or additional to Roberts (2002; 2003; 2004), where these supercede FoC.
- ii) *New upper altitude records* for Cumbria ('NAR'), where these exceed those given in Halliday (1997), or Roberts (2002; 2003; 2004) by 10 metres or more. Altitudes are given as a.s.l.
- iii) An asterisk, i.e. 'NAR\*', signifies a record which exceeds that given as an upper altitudinal limit for Britain and Ireland in the *New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora* (Preston *et al.*, 2002) ('NA'), or Pearman & Corner (2004) ('P&C'), where higher, and which therefore represents a new altitude record for the British Isles as a whole.

Species appear in alphabetical order of scientific name. Records other than the author's are indicated by the following abbreviations: RC = Roderick Corner; RG = Ron Groom; GH = Geoffrey Halliday; MP = Mike Porter; LR = Linda Robinson. Dates refer to 2005 unless otherwise stated. Full details, including further grid-references, and specimens for the Lancaster University Herbarium (LANC) have been forwarded to the B.S.B.I. Recorder for VC 69 and VC 70, Dr Geoffrey Halliday.

### *Alopecurus borealis* (Alpine Foxtail)

A rather confused picture for this species in 2005, with some colonies (e.g. Great Dun Fell) having an abundance of heads, yet others having a moderate season. As in the rainy season of 2002 fresh stems were appearing as late as September.

Further exploration by RC, RG, GH and LR in 2004 and 2005 has extended the known range to at least three sites on Little Fell (NY7720; NY7722).

On a visit to the Tees basin below the Dun Fells on 15<sup>th</sup> July Simon Stainer of EN pointed out to us colonies at four sites in patches of flushed grassland well below those already known high up on the north-east flanks of Little Dun Fell at 800m. The lowest found was at 668m, at NY71293350. All sites here are within tetrad NY7032. Further exploration of this huge and inaccessible drainage might

reveal more and even lower sites. (The lowest site confirmed in recent years was that found in 2004 by GH at 660m, perversely – for this high-arctic plant – at its southernmost known site, on the southern flank of Little Fell. A 1945 record, said to be from the Durham bank of the Tees, the site now under Cow Green Reservoir, would have been at about 475m, but the location has more recently been doubted (Ratcliffe and Eddy, 1960).)

The plants in and close to the existing enclosure at Knock Ore Gill, and those at Green Fell, and the lowest site below Little Dun Fell are strongly glaucous, whereas some other colonies are a more normal 'grass-green'. It would be useful to plot the distribution of plants showing this character more fully, and see whether other characters differ between these two forms. LR mentions that Green Fell plants have pink anthers, whilst others are a rusty colour.

### *Catabrosa aquatica* (Whorl-grass)

This grass, strictly limited in its 'alpine' range in the north Pennines to floating spongy vegetation-mats in spring-zones and in the rivulets running from them, continues to be found in new sites. RC has extended its range into VC 65 (North-west York) at two sites on the northern flank of Mickel Fell: at NY80912503 (1<sup>st</sup> July) and NY81722510 (7<sup>th</sup> August). The altitude here equals the previous highest-known in the UK (Knock Ore Gill, 735m).

### *Carex aquatilis* (Water Sedge)

A significant find of four large patches at over 800m on the northern flank of Great Dun Fell on 28<sup>th</sup> June is detailed in a separate note (see page 15).

### *Carex vaginata* (Sheathed Sedge)

**NTR** (for NY7032): Between the known sites of Green Fell to the north and Knock Ore Gill to the south, the flanks of Cross Fell itself and the Dun Fells constituted a huge area without records of this plant, but with some apparently suitable ground. They had been searched on a good number of occasions since 2002 without success, until 28<sup>th</sup> June this year, when the writer found two small patches at between 790m and 800m on the northwestern flank of Little Dun Fell, NY70103321. The site is also a **NAR** for English localities. The lower patch was remarkable for occupying the lip of a steeply sloping peat-hag, eroding at its lower end, the plant growing with mainly acid-indicating associates such as both Common and Hare's-tail Cottongrasses (*Eriophorum angustifolium* and *E. vaginatum*). The only close associate suggestive of some mineral influence was Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). There were many closely-packed flowering heads.

**NTR** (for NY7230): a patch about 15m across at 700m on the north side of Knock Fell's eastern ridge, at NY73643103, was found by the writer on 15<sup>th</sup> August. This was in sloping flushed grassland, again with generally acidophile associates; indeed at one end of the patch, some shoots were emerging from *Sphagnum* – an associate which was noted by RC at sites in the Etrick Hills in Selkirkshire (Corner, 1978). There was a single fruiting stem.

As predicted in last year's report (Roberts 2004), the plant has continued to turn up in new sites to the south which considerably extend its known range. RC and GH explored the 'Cumbrian west end' of Mickle Fell on 1<sup>st</sup> July, and RC located a patch on the north-western flank, close to the boundary with Durham and vice-county 65 (North-West Yorkshire), a **NTR** for NY7824.

On 7<sup>th</sup> August, the writer joined RC and LR for an exploration of the main bulk of Mickle Fell which lies in VC 65. A large patch was found on the southern flank at NY81012449 etc., and three further sites on the northern flanks between NY81532515 and NY82022500. The sites are within a new hectad, NY82. All sites lie within the altitude range of 720-735m, and all are in areas of flushed grassland below limestone outcrops, although on the north side these are some way below the outcrops, and the communities are perhaps more acidic. No fruiting stems were found. One site is within a large enclosure, and near a small colony of Marsh Saxifrage (*Saxifraga hirculus*). See also Corner & Roberts (2006).

It has been debated as to what extent the Pennine colonies set seed: ripe seed has not yet been confirmed in the field. However, LR has found that seeds from a Green Fell plant grown on in the garden germinate freely.

#### *Ceterach officinarum* (Rustyback)

**NHR** (for NY72 – and hence **NTR** for NY7424); **NAR\***, 580m (*P&C* give c. 550m, 'Wales'; *FoC* gives 400m, North Stainmore): Stephen Hewitt made a most remarkable find of a single well-grown plant at the back of a deep cleft, and in deep shade, in the limestone outcrops above the whinstone cliffs on the south side of High Cup valley (13<sup>th</sup> July): a wonderful demonstration of how ferns can establish themselves by means of spores, far from the parent plant!

Rustyback is rare in the east of the county as a whole, and the nearest known colonies are some kilometres away in North Stainmore. Furthermore, plants of this species 'usually occur in completely exposed or only extremely lightly shaded situations' (Page, 1982), and yet here it has found a suitable site in a damp, dark and sheltered north-facing cleft. An open site at this altitude would perhaps be too exposed for its survival. One wonders if this establishment has been made possible by a more mild local climate in recent years.

#### *Conopodium majus* (Pignut)

**NAR\***, 750m (the highest UK record outside the enclosure at the summit of Great Dun Fell, 845m, where the provenance of a number of species is dubious, seed having been sown; see Roberts (2002) for discussion): a single plant on the roadside verge at the col above Knock Ore Gill (15<sup>th</sup> July).

#### *Dactylorhiza maculata* (Heath Spotted-orchid)

**NTR** (for NY7032); **NAR**, 685m (*FoC* gives 'at least 610m', Knock Fell; *P&C* give 915m, Ben Lawers): eastern slopes of Little Dun Fell – RC (15<sup>th</sup> July).

#### *Erophila verna* (Early Whitlow-grass)

**NAR\***, 810m (the highest UK record outside the enclosure at the summit of Great Dun Fell, 845m, where the provenance of a number of species is dubious, seed having been sown; see Roberts (2002) for discussion; *FoC* gives 770m, Great Dun Fell): several plants on a concrete slab by the access road below Great Dun Fell (24<sup>th</sup> July).

#### *Fragaria vesca* (Wild Strawberry)

**NAR\***, 755m (*P&C* give 640m, 'Atholl District'): a patch on roadside gravel by the Great Dun Fell access road – RG (15<sup>th</sup> July).

#### *Lolium perenne* (Perennial Rye-grass)

**NTR** (for NY7030); **NAR\***, 755m (*P&C* (after Roberts (2002)) give 700m for Knock Fell, NY71.29): on loose gravel between access road and moor-peat (15<sup>th</sup> July).

#### *Polystichum lonchitis* (Holly Fern)

**NHR** (for NY72): a single plant on a limestone ledge above Hilton – RG and LR (3<sup>rd</sup> June).

#### *Saxifraga nivalis* (Alpine Saxifrage)

Stephen Hewitt and the writer made a careful search of the deep 'chockstone' gully on the south side of the High Cup Whin Sill cliffs, where the writer had last seen two small rosettes on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1992, found on that visit by Jon Atkins. RC reports (pers. comm.) that this same gully was where the late Dr Derek Ratcliffe knew four plants in 1995 (Ratcliffe, 2002).

Sad to report, no plants were seen on this occasion (13<sup>th</sup> July).

It seems possible that after a long period of decline the species is now lost from this site, its only English site beyond Helvellyn, where a few plants remain. I would be delighted to hear of its continued survival at High Cup.

***Trifolium pratense*** (Red Clover)

**NTR** (for NY7030); **NAR**, 750m (*FoC* gives 550m for Moorhouse; *P&C* give 850m, 'Scottish highlands'): plant by access road, Great Dun Fell (15th July).

***Veronica officinalis*** (Common Speedwell)

**NAR**, 750m: (*FoC* gives 720m, Dufton Fell; *P&C* give 880m on Cader Idris): patches by access road, Great Dun Fell (15<sup>th</sup> July).

**Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to Rod Corner, Linda Robinson and Geoffrey Halliday for their comments on a draft of this note.

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**Memoirs of a Carlisle Naturalist: Part 2**

*John Roland Parker, 'Stone Raise', 42 Lakeland Park, Keswick CA12 4AT*

*Following on from the previous issue, John Parker concludes his account of a lifelong interest in spiders .....*

After six years of war service, I returned in 1946 to a catering and hotel-keeping occupation, with my late wife, mostly in large hotels in Derbyshire, Warwickshire and what is now Cumbria. With my war gratuity I had bought a superb Greenough binocular microscope and intensity lamp, which enabled me thereafter to concentrate on the identification of very minute spiders. This was at a time without any handbooks enabling identification to species level and I was greatly helped by the late Dr. A. A. D. La Touche, a cancer consultant at Leeds. He agreed to identify any specimens sent to him, subject to being allowed to keep what he needed. He had the advantage of all the papers he had collected from scientific publications that dealt with identification of species. I started a card index with diagnostic drawings on one side of each card with distribution data on the other. Fortunately, by 1951, a Harrow schoolmaster the late G.H. Locket and an industrial chemist, Dr. A. F. Millidge, had produced the first of their three volumes for the identification of British spiders, published by the Ray Society. All three men and books have since become perpetual aids and friends.

Having been interested in the work of the Nature Conservancy Council ever since it was founded, my wife and I volunteered to join the team under the direction of Dr Eric Duffey, briefed to collect and identify spiders on NCC reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. This was most especially in East Anglia; south-west and mid Wales and central Scotland. The work was very thoroughly done – and on an 'expenses only' basis. For example, in East Anglia no less than 51 sites were investigated and species lists provided. All the results were finalised within reasonable time. Notable discoveries included *Baryphyma maritima* (Crocker & Parker 1970) – then new to science – from Winterton Sand Dunes, Norfolk, and *Maro lepidus* Casimir 1961, which I found new to Britain at Rusland Moss National Nature Reserve in south Cumbria.

The only exception, differently organised, in which I became involved over a long period, concerned spiders from the Moorhouse NNR, in the high Pennines. Throughout 1961 Dr Michael Nelson of NCC was surveying Diptera (Two-winged Flies) on the Reserve. One of his methods for the collection of specimens at ground level was the use of pitfall traps – open-top cans sunk in the substrate to the level of the brim, and containing liquid preservative. The traps were sited in three different habitats: Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Matgrass

grassland (*Nardus stricta*) and *Sphagnum* mire, and were in use from February to December and emptied weekly. He found he was getting large numbers of tiny black ground-living linyphiid spiders, which were about 3 mm in length when adult. Not being interested in these he offered them to me. I accepted, and they came to me every week, preserved in alcohol.

At that time I had just commenced what was to be my final period of hotel management. I was appointed to the Crown & Mitre Hotel at Carlisle for the time until my retirement. Hotel-keeping is a seven-day-week occupation and I did not have very much free time. Being residential, I found a small room for my natural history interests. Each week, as the collections came to me, my first task was to remove all immature specimens – because there is no way of identifying them. I then went on to identify the adults, and kept careful written records. As the year advanced into spring and summer I was getting large numbers of spiders and it was a losing battle trying to keep up with the identifications. I kept them intact in their weekly containers. The total catch for the whole year, including all the immature specimens, was in excess of 14,000! Eventually I was compelled to give up the work and sent all my records to the Biological Records Centre based at Monks Wood.

By the time retirement approached, I had also been deeply involved in the foundation of the British Arachnological Society – the first specialist society in the UK devoted to the study of spiders. I served as its Secretary for sixteen years, and as Editor of its *Newsletter* for a similar period. Meanwhile, the Society rapidly became international and represented in every major country of the world.

Sadly, the Moorhouse spiders were neglected until quite recently. When I told my friend David Nellist about them he kindly offered to complete the identifications, aided by David Marriot – both with sufficient expert knowledge to undertake the work. Their final results reveal 12,606 spiders identified, of which 9616 are males and 2990 are females, representing 104 different species, mostly of the large family Linyphiidae. Some of these, such as *Hilaira nubigena* Hull, *H. fridgida* Hull, *Agyneta ramosa* Jackson, *Walckenaera clavicornis* (Emerton) and *Meioneta mossica* Schikora, are very rare in high altitude or arctic habitats, and there are only one or two specimens. The last two were new to the British fauna at the time. This is probably the largest continual catch of spiders ever made in Britain and is revealing a great deal of previously unknown life-history information. In due course the results will be published in a scientific journal under the joint authorship of the three of us: it is nice to think that, even at my advanced age, there are still interesting projects to complete.

[John Parker's long career as an expert amateur arachnologist has included an important local contribution to the development of the study of spiders nationally. In 1992, for Harley Books, he edited the first English translation from the Latin of Lister's *English Spiders (1678)* – the earliest known scientific work on spiders. His articles in this journal (*Carlisle Naturalist* 4.2 pp. 45-52) and in the Appendix to Derek Ratcliffe's *Lakeland (2002)* are useful guides to the more notable elements of the Cumbria spider fauna. His wider interests in conservation led him to become an honorary warden of the Glasson Moss NNR for ten years; he is also a founder member of Cumbria Wildlife Trust, and sometime warden of their Reserves at Biglands Bog, and Bowness-on-Solway Gravel Pits. Ed.]

## **Derek Almey Ratcliffe (1929-2005)**

Internationally acclaimed naturalist, ecologist and conservationist

The death of our most distinguished Life Member came as surprise and shock to us all. His passing and career were extensively covered in the national Press at the time. He will be remembered here with great pride in his considerable achievements over a long and active life. Derek died suddenly at Newcastle-on-Tyne on 23rd May. Although London-born, Carlisle was his family home from the age of eight. Few would have guessed that the clever but shy and quiet pupil at Carlisle Grammar School in the 1940s was to become one of the leading scientists of his day. The Times had cited him as one of the most influential voices of the twentieth century in Britain, referring especially to his work on nature conservation. He had lived at Cambridge for many years, close to his former work-base at Peterborough. He married Jeanette Chan-Mo in 1978. A public celebration of his life and work was held in London on 23rd September 2005.

Joining Carlisle Natural History Society as a schoolboy, Derek's interest was kindled and he developed a deep love of the hills and wild places of Cumbria and the Borders. He was much influenced by visits to Tullie House Museum and the encouragement of Ernest Blezard, its Curator, who became his mentor in many ways: Derek was always the first to acknowledge a debt of gratitude for this experience, which he regarded as key to his later career.

After a scholarship to Sheffield University (which he left with a First Class degree after switching from the study of Zoology to Botany) Derek Ratcliffe went on to PhD studies on the ecology of mountain plants at Bangor University. This together with his already extensive field knowledge, placed him well to join the recently formed Nature Conservancy Council. His breadth of knowledge, combined with research interests, enabled him to make many important contributions to the national literature. These included significant accounts of the mountain plants of Lakeland and of the Moffat Hills, and a noted paper on the Atlantic Bryophytes of the British Isles (1968) – reflecting his equally expert knowledge of mosses and liverworts.

His early work with NCC involved him in a major study and publication, *Plant Communities of the Scottish Highlands* (1962) which he undertook jointly with Donald McVean. He rose rapidly through the organisation, finally becoming their Chief Scientist from 1973 until retirement in 1989. His long-held interest in the Peregrine Falcon alerted him to the possible effects on its breeding success of organo-chlorine pesticides – then in widespread use in agriculture. Using museum egg collections, including those at Tullie House, he was able to gather

the crucial evidence that demonstrated the damaging effects of pesticides – which became one of the turning points in attitudes to environmental pollution. Throughout his career, Derek devoted his considerable energies to the conservation of wildlife and habitats nationally, and was instrumental in developing policies that were seen as radical at the time. He was responsible for the first large-scale assessment of the UK's most important wildlife sites – *A Nature Conservation Review* (1977). The NNC review documents *Nature Conservation in Great Britain* (1984) and *Nature Conservation and Afforestation* (1986) were also largely his work. Dispassionate analyses of sensitive areas of national policy, they were driven by a deep personal and professional concern for the future of Britain's natural heritage. They produced some uncomfortable truths for those in the 'corridors of power'.

Never a public or media 'personality', Derek Ratcliffe nonetheless became well known to the natural history community through his written work, especially his definitive monographs on the Peregrine Falcon, and the Raven, the latter completed during his retirement. Hill birds were always one of his great loves – which led to his book *Bird life of mountain and upland* (1990). His great affection for Cumbria, and unrivalled knowledge of its natural history ideally placed him to write 'Lakeland', vol. 92 in the Collins 'New Naturalist' titles (of which he was a series Editor). Such was his productivity that at the time of his death he had just completed two more books, one on the natural history of Lapland, and the other on the Southern Uplands of Scotland. The first of these is being published this autumn, and the other is to appear in 2006. In his book 'In Search of Nature' (2000), he recounted his early life and experiences, devoting several chapters to Carlisle and the wild places of Cumbria and the Borders. His association with Cumbria and local naturalists in the area never faltered – his annual visits and days out with friends to see special plants or his favourite upland birds were always a delight, and he last visited friends in Cumbria only a month before his death.

Geoff Horne and Rod Corner were his two main contacts in north Cumbria. As both have confirmed, he had an amazing knowledge of the area and commitment to its conservation:

GH: 'I first became aware of Derek Ratcliffe in September 1947 when I attended my first speech day at Carlisle Grammar School when it was announced that he had been awarded the annual essay prize for a paper on 'Personal Observations on some Local Birds': this essay was in effect a detailed paper on the Peregrine Falcon, the Raven and the Buzzard in the Lake District and the Border country. It was later published in the Grammar School magazine, *The Carloliol*, and clearly illustrated the depth of knowledge



and interest Derek had in these birds even as a boy.

We got to know each other better in 1967 when he became aware, through Ernest Blezard, of my interest in birds of prey and the work I was doing with Robbie Brown ringing Ravens, Buzzards and the occasional Peregrine. At that time he was Deputy Director of the Nature Conservancy Council and undertaking studies on toxic chemicals and the affect they were having on the environment in general and birds of prey in particular. The Peregrine in the Cumbria was then on the verge of extinction and he asked me to check out a number of sites for signs of occupation, look for signs of broken eggshells in the nest and remove any addled eggs for analysis to check for toxic chemical levels in them.

That first contact developed into a long and lasting friendship and we kept in touch with each other on a regular basis from then until his death. Our mutual interest in birds of prey and the Peregrine in particular developed and eventually, in 1983, he started coming to Dalston to stay with me and my family, for three or four days in March or April every year. There was nothing Derek enjoyed more than tramping the Cumbrian hills and the Border country visiting old haunts that he had not explored in many years, and seeing Ravens and Peregrines occupying exactly the same nest sites he had known in his youth. I marvelled at his retentive memory and his breadth of knowledge about the history of these sites and what had been there in the past. He was particularly interested in how well the Cumbrian Peregrine population had recovered and very keen to see the new sites that had no previous history of occupation. His last visit to Cumbria was in April this year when we visited three Peregrine sites, all with eggs, on what was to be our last day out together.

I have very fond memories of Derek and he will be held in great affection by all who met him. He will be sorely missed.'

RC: 'Derek stayed with us in Penrith for a few days each spring and autumn over the past decade, botanising in Cumbria and occasionally Dumfriesshire. We visited areas he had known intimately for many years and he was able to describe the changes, so often for the worst, which had occurred in his lifetime. He always had his camera with him and used a tripod without fail, which ensured excellent results. Several trips were made specifically to obtain photographs for the books he was writing. One walk meant going beside the railway track at Baron Wood where he remembered the excellent view he had as a young man from the train of the sandstone crags above the River Eden. One of his favourite Lakeland views was that of the Borrowdale woods where the broad-leaved trees ascend to the skyline giving the appearance of an ancient forest landscape. He loved the remote country above Gilsland and

Bewcastle and reminisced of the days before coniferisation. Thanks to him however, Butterburn Flow and other areas of mire there remain inviolate. He was delighted to hear that Dwarf Birch (*Betula nana*) had been discovered in that area and had escaped the foresters' plough. On his last visit to the north east of Bewcastle in April he remarked sadly how we hadn't heard or seen a single Curlew or Lapwing. Surprisingly Derek had never seen the dramatic cloud effects the Helm Wind produces over the Cross Fell range so he was duly impressed when we witnessed a perfect example on one spring day.

He had great stamina and his pace appeared steady and relentless – though at the same time he was a considerate and thoughtful companion, with lunch breaks enlivened by humorous tales from his Nature Conservancy days. Although less agile with the passage of years he was still able to scramble in quite tricky places. His recent re-finding of the Atlantic liverwort *Jubula hutchinsiae* on the Rydal Beck, involving an awkward scramble down slippery rocks by a waterfall, after his first discovery of it there in 1959 gave him great pleasure – especially as it had been 'missed' by a recent British Bryological Society Meeting to that area. Similarly, in 1995, he had re-found the few rosettes of Alpine Saxifrage (*Saxifraga nivalis*) at its only Pennine site at High Cup above Dufton. A Pennine colony of the rare fern Holly Fern (*Polystichum lonchitis*) owes its survival to Derek's judicious placing of limestone rocks around it as protection against sheep grazing. He always regretted not being able to save Johnby Moor near Greystoke with its rich flora from being planted up by commercial forestry.

His eye for plants and their habitats was legendary and although latterly he had only partial vision in one eye, it was a handicap he appeared to overcome. He was still able to detect the 'difficult' moss *Hamatocaulis vernicosus* a month before his death in a site near Patterdale where he had last seen it in 1960 and which I had failed to re-find the previous year. It had been a species in which he had taken a special interest. We were unable to re-find it above the Carrock Beck below Carrock Fell. This habitat had become rank and devoid of any but the commonest mosses and he was convinced that it had been sprayed by fertilizer from the air. I felt at the time this was an exaggeration but thinking back, this may well have occurred.

He had detailed knowledge of the plants of the Moffat Hills in Dumfriesshire and made the first record outside the Scottish Highlands of the grass Alpine Foxtail (*Alopecurus borealis*) there in 1956. His 1959 paper Mountain Plants of the Moffat Hills cannot be bettered. Within the last few years, during a flying visit, he re-found Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) on the dry acid crags above the Grey Mare's Tail waterfall – which he had first found there almost 45 years before. An unfulfilled mission was to re-find Alpine Saxifrage on Hartfell, which

he had last seen in 1973. After two failed attempts with long days in the field, one of which was just a few weeks before his death, he had plans for a third after his return from Lapland this autumn – which, alas, is not to be.

Derek's love was that of the wild untamed places so beautifully described in his writings and which he had done so much to protect. I feel very privileged to have accompanied him to some of his favourite haunts.'

*David Clarke & Stephen Hewitt*

*(with personal contributions by Geoff Horne and Roderick Corner)*

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## **The Carlisle Naturalist**

Editor: David Clarke

Editorial Panel: Roy Atkins, David Clarke, Stephen Hewitt, Geoff Naylor,  
Jeremy Roberts

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Artwork: David Clarke, Stephen Hewitt, Jeremy Roberts

All material for publication should be sent to David Clarke, Tullie House Museum, Castle St., Carlisle CA3 8TP. Copy deadline for the next issue is:

**mid-March**

### **Information for Authors**

The *Carlisle Naturalist* publishes material on all aspects of the natural history of Cumbria. General articles, results of personal research, news items, records and letters of relevance to Cumbrian naturalists are welcomed. Material accepted for publication must not be submitted in a similar form to any other journal.

Material should be clearly legible – ideally type-written double-spaced on one side of white A4 paper, or submitted on DOS-formatted 3.5 inch computer disc in ASCII or RTF format and accompanied by a paper copy. Only species and genera should be underlined. Authority names should be given in full. Illustrations should be in black ink; they must be originals and not photocopies. Whilst every care will be taken of original artwork, the editor can not be held responsible for any loss or damage. References should be given in full at the end of the article or note.

Authors of papers two or more pages in length will be provided with 10 reprints. Papers may be submitted to a referee.

Opinions expressed in the *Carlisle Naturalist* are not necessarily shared by the Council of Carlisle Natural History Society nor the Editorial Panel.

Standard abbreviations used in this issue:

a.s.l.: above sea level

B.S.B.I.: Botanical Society of the British Isles

VC: Vice-county

### **Carlisle Natural History Society Council and Officers**

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Membership application forms are available from the Secretary. Tullie House contacts (Steve Hewitt or David Clarke): tel. 01228-543781, or email to: nature@tulliehouse.co.uk

#### **Winter Programme 2005/6**

At Tullie House Museum, starting 7.15 p.m. prompt (doors open at 6.50 pm)

**October 12th ‘Highland Birds’** - an illustrated talk by Dave O’Hara

**October 15th Field Meeting: Red Deer Rut, Martindale** Leader: Geoff Horne

**October 26th ‘Spiders’** - an illustrated talk by Jennifer Newton

**November 9th Members’ Night – 1:** contributions from the membership

**November 23rd ‘Admirals & Skippers: butterfly recording in Dumfries & Galloway’** - an illustrated talk by Mark Pollitt

**December 7th ‘Project Gambia’** - an illustrated talk by Roy Armstrong

**January 4th ‘A naturalist’s New Zealand’** - an illustrated talk by Roy Atkins (a joint meeting with Cumbria Bird Club)

**January 18th ‘Two updates on Cumbrian botany’** - illustrated talks by Jeremy Roberts & Mike Porter

**February 1st ‘The Red Squirrel: a continuing story’** - an illustrated talk by Peter Lurz

**February 4th Field Meeting: north Solway shore and Loch Ken**

Leader(s): Geoff Horne/Brian Spencer. Depart 9:00 am.

**February 15th ‘A natural history of the Trout in Britain’** - an illustrated talk by Brian Shield

**March 1st AGM & Members’ Night – 2:** AGM followed by contributions from the membership