

YOREDALE BULLETIN

2026



Yoredale Natural History Society



"Yoredale Natural History Society, Beetles Section"

Photo; Ken Readshaw. First prize at the 2025 Wensleydale Show.

(Category: photo with a Co-op Bag)

From right to left YNHS Members: Mike Swan, Andy Baxter, Steve Wilkinson, Mike Grace. Producer and Director Gaby Baxter.



YNHS meeting to Coverhead Farm 5 April 2025. Ken Readshaw

YOREDALE BULLETIN

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Recording the Activities during 2025 of The Yoredale Natural History Society

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www.yoredalenaturalhistory.com

The Yoredale Natural History Society constitution was first written in 1979 with the aim of “*promoting an interest in, and an appreciation of, natural history with particular reference to Wensleydale*”.

Cover: Mullein moth caterpillar (*Cucullia verbasci*) photographed by the River Ure on the Bolton Estate (DW). It feeds mainly on Great Mullein but occasionally on other plants.

Committee 2025/26

Chairman	Anne Readshaw
Vice Chairman	Gaby Baxter
Hon. Secretary	Liz Barron
Winter Programme	Gaby Baxter
Hon. Treasurer	Paul Hardill
Membership Secretary	Christine Meek
Field Secretary	Caroline Stott
Bulletin Editor	Derek Whiteley
Webmaster	Jane Graham
Committee members	Jennie White, Len Shepherd, Deborah Millward, Sheila Simms

Recorders 2025/26

Birds	Mary Atkins
Butterflies & some other insects	Jennie White
Hoverflies	Derek Whiteley
Spiders	Andy Baxter
Flowering Plants	Sue Peckitt
Fungi	Christine Whitehead
Mammals	John Drewett
Reptiles & Amphibians	Rose Connor

The 2026 annual subscription is £15 (£5 students, 50p children under 16), due on 2nd January, or on joining. During spring and summer we run field trips, and during the winter a programme of evening lectures in Leyburn Methodist Church Hall, usually on the last Friday of the month. The annual ***Bulletin*** is published in the first quarter, reporting our activities of the previous year.

Children under 16 are welcome at all of our meetings, but to help comply with our child protection policy they must be accompanied by a parent or authorised adult.

New members and visitors are very welcome: visitors' fee usually £5

CHANGE OF CONTACT DETAILS: If you've changed your email, telephone or address please keep the Membership Secretary informed.

Field Meetings in 2025

Aysgarth and Bishopdale Beck 19 January 2025

The temperature never rose above freezing when seventeen members, appropriately enough, looked at glacial features in the landscape around Aysgarth. There were more recent climatic effects too with much evidence of flooding and a gale had brought down a large limb of an ancient Small-leaved Lime tree, blocking the path. Along the Bishopdale Beck members looked for Salmon redds and admired the fine Kingfisher habitat, but it was the singing Dipper that stole the day. Flowers were understandably scarce; however the usual winter regulars, Snowdrop and Gorse were out, Winter Aconites were in abundance, and a single, very early, Lesser Celandine in the churchyard was a surprise. **Deborah Millward.**

Coverhead Farm 5 April 2025

A good turn-out of around 25 members and non-members assembled near the bridge at Coverhead on a bright day in April, during the first of 2025's dry spells. There was not a cloud in the sky, but it was perishingly cold, with a bitter easterly wind that nipped our fingers and toes and froze our faces. Undeterred, Andy Baxter set about exploring a stack of rotting logs; finding egg sacs belonging to some of his favourite eight-legged creatures.

We were there to meet James Mawle, owner of Coverhead Farm, who had kindly offered to show us round part of his estate and talk to us about his farming and conservation practices. We started not far from the car park, with an introduction to James' Highland Cows. These Christmas-card favourites are hardy enough to stay out all winter, finding sufficient forage even in this unforgiving terrain. James is using them for conservation grazing and is experimenting with 'no-fence' collars. After decades of intensive sheep grazing, cattle are helping to improve the structure and biodiversity of the grassland.

James then led us to the River Cover and showed us how its course has been straightened over the years, in attempts to drain the flood plain and prevent erosion of the adjacent land. This has resulted in a loss of river habitat diversity, which (as a keen fisherman) James is keen to reverse. He has created some artificial beaver dams, which have been partially successful in slowing the flow of water to create deep pools. Derek investigated under some nearby stones and found a large and gruesome stonefly larva later identified as *Perla carlukiana (bipunctata)* a northern and western species, of upland clean stony rivers; here on the very edge of its British range.

We were then taken up onto the moor, which James manages according to the principles described in a book by John Phillips called ***Moorland Management for Agriculture, Conservation and Field Sports***. We asked if there were plenty of ground-nesting waders on the moorland, but James did not have any data on these, as his main focus is on grouse numbers - reminding us that this is first and foremost a commercial shooting estate.

James explained to us why he feels the need to drain, burn and sometimes spray the moor, for agricultural and game-rearing purposes. Despite this, we found some areas of good quality blanket bog, where Sphagnum mosses and Cranberry were growing in abundance. We also saw the first shoots of Hare's-tail Cotton-grass coming up, a growth stage we don't normally see. Incidentally, 2025 turned out to be a spectacular year for this plant, with many hillsides turning noticeably white with 'hare's tails' in the summer, perhaps because of the long drought and the dryness of the peaty soil.

Anne Readshaw



Stonefly larva and Hare's-tail Cotton Grass at Coverhead Farm. Ken Readshaw

Other invertebrates included the hoverfly *Platycheirus albimanus* on daffodils and the tiny Foxglove Bug, *Dicyphus pallicornis* nestled in the inner leaves of Foxgloves. Adults can be found all year round including the winter months. Clumps of frogspawn were found in wet flushes on the moorland. (DW)

Mill Farm Redmire 10 May 2025

Several of us have happy memories of escaping to Mill Farm (in socially-distanced survey groups) every month during the various Covid lockdowns of 2020/2021. During those visits, we helped the new owner (Martyn Strong) to compile a baseline of the flora and fauna of his land at the start of his ambitious rewilding project. Five years on, and we were invited back again to observe how things are progressing.

Mill Farm has not been a commercial farm for several decades. The previous owners managed most of the 4 hectares of land as an informal garden, planting a woodland and mowing the grassland to maintain a vast lawn. Martyn's land management is centred much more around re-naturalisation. He has removed all non-native trees, re-wiggled the old mill race, created a large pond and allowed most of the lawn to revert to rough grass. A small area of grassland in front of the house is being managed as a hay meadow and has had Yellow-rattle seed introduced. This is still a project in progress, but the Yellow-rattle appears to be thriving in patches, and Ox-Eye Daisies and Wild Carrot were found. Over the fence, the small patch of Moschatel and the lovely Wych Elms were still where we left them, five years ago.

Much of the rest of the grassland is now quite coarse and there are many Creeping Thistles, filling the air with their perfume and creating a good food source and habitat for invertebrates. Derek helped us to identify Cock's-foot Moth and Malachite Beetle, and of course Andy found spiders aplenty.

Martyn and his pair of delightfully exuberant young sons are particularly interested in re-introducing native creatures. They have had some success with Smooth Newts (we saw one in the stream) and mixed results with Water Voles and Harvest Mice. Plans are afoot for European Tree Frogs and even Great White Storks, so we'll watch this space with much interest in the years to come.

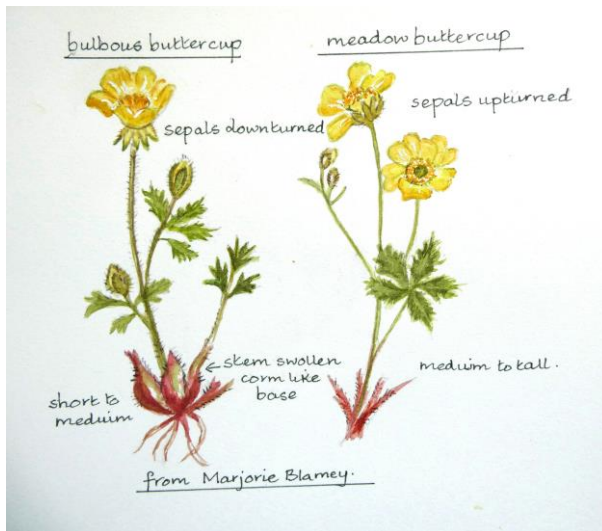
Anne Readshaw



Cocksfoot Moths by Ken Readshaw.

Masham along the Ure and Marfield Wetlands 17 May 2025

Members had an enjoyable spring walk along the banks of the Ure at Masham. With the weather having been very dry in April and May the river was very low and we were able to enjoy sightings of Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, Common Sandpiper, Oystercatcher, Heron, Greylag Geese and Mallard with ducklings. Swallows, Swifts and Sand Martins dipped over the water. Trees were in flower, the hawthorn putting on a magnificent display and many spring flowers were identified. There was discussion about how to tell the difference between a bulbous buttercup and a meadow buttercup (see sketch below). We also stopped to investigate a rather dried-up stand of Lords and Ladies. It is known by various names; "Jack in the pulpit, cows and bulls, naked boys, cuckoo pint" The plant resembles male and female genitalia i.e. pint; pintle meaning penis. The red berries in autumn are poisonous, but are eaten and dispersed by birds. Another interesting fact is that the roots of this plant were collected in Elizabethan times for their high starch content, which was used to stiffen the fashionable linen ruffs. Along the boundary of Marfield wetlands the bird song caught our attention - Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Blackbird, Chaffinch and many others. Great Crested Grebe and Cormorant were spotted through the hide and Banded Demoiselle and various other damselflies were also in evidence. **Paul and Pauline Hardill**



Swaledale Festival Walks 2025

Chris Meek led two walks in May and June for the Swaledale Festival on behalf of the YNHS. She was helped by six other YNHS members, who attended a recce to familiarise themselves with the routes and the flowers, birds and butterflies to be seen on these walks. Many thanks to Caroline Stott, Jennie White, Ann Luxmoore, Pauline Hardill, Jenny Walker and Naomi Meredith for making these walks such a success. The walks were fully booked and several Swaledale festival volunteers also attended.

Monday, 26 May 2025

We set out from Wensley along Low Lane, marvelling at the diversity of flowers on the roadside verges. Cow Parsley, Creeping Buttercups, Herb Robert, Shining Cranesbill, Welsh Poppies, Green Alkanet and Greater Celandine all vied for our attention. Following a footpath near the Old Rectory we came across the beautiful lemon flowers of the Mouse-ear Hawkweed with their lower hidden petals striped in red.

We progressed to the Old Glebe Field which is a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest.) It is managed by YWT (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust) and is an amazing example of the traditional hay meadows of the Dales. They are not fertilised with any chemical fertilisers and are managed to prevent encroaching scrub taking over the hay meadow habitat. The cutting of the meadow is timed to take place after the flowers have had a chance to drop their seed. Due to the hot weather the Green-winged and Early Purple Orchids had finished flowering, but there were still plenty of species to see. Salad Burnet, Meadow and Bulbous Buttercup, Yellow Rattle, Rock Rose, Red Clover and Common Milkwort were all plentiful.

Dropping down to Low Lane once more, we took the footpath along the River Ure, admiring the Dame's Violets and the beautiful hawthorn blossom. The Ospreys were searched for; Sedge Warblers and Oystercatchers were calling and Sand Martins darted just above the water.

After lunch at the riverside, we noted the Dove's-foot and Cut-leaved Cranesbill before climbing up through fields and returning via Low Lane to Wensley. We discovered more flowers and had time to appreciate the wonderful scenic views towards Pen Hill as we headed back to Wensley churchyard and village. We had seen over 60 species of flowers in bloom on this walk.

Tuesday, 3 June 2025

This time we set off from Round Howe near Richmond, taking a track to Low Leases and Whitcliffe Farm. By the side of the track species spotted included Bush Vetch, Cow Parsley, Common Hogweed, Wood Cranesbill, Meadow Vetchling, Ox-eye Daisy, Germander Speedwell, Crosswort and Silverweed. We walked through Whitcliffe Woods; an area of 'Ancient semi-natural woodland' and then progressed through the species -rich fields to our lunch stop. The Marjoram was just beginning to flower and Mouse-ear Hawkweed, Yellow Pimpernel, Rock Rose and Wild Thyme were all in evidence.

We dropped down to the River Swale and re-entered the lower section of Whitcliffe Wood. Emerging from the woodland, we joined a concrete track which led us back to Round Howe. On this section we were pleased to note Upright Hedge Parsley and Hedge Woundwort in flower.

We had recorded nearly 80 flower species on this walk and were lucky enough to see

at least three species of butterfly: Small Skipper, Speckled Wood and Wall butterfly. After expressing their appreciation for the walk, everyone dispersed, with some going straight on to another Swaledale Festival Event in St Mary's Church in Richmond.
Chris Meek

Kiplin Hall 13 June 2025.

Seventeen members of Yoredale Natural History Society visited Kiplin Hall to see and study the birds, flowers and other wildlife around the lake. The day was very warm but blustery so was not ideal for birds but we saw and heard 20 different species. Highlights included hearing both Blackcap and Garden Warbler in the bushes around the lake. Identification was only possible using the **Merlin** birdsong app as the song is very similar and as both birds hide in the vegetation making a visual identification impossible. Reed Warblers were also seen and heard. These are common summer visitors to the reed margins around the lake.

The island in the middle of the lake also provided a perfect spot for nesting Oystercatchers, geese and ducks. Large flotillas of Canada and Greylag Geese were also present on the lake with numerous young in large crèches. Towards the end of the visit a Buzzard appeared over the lake which again is a common sight at Kiplin. The highlight of the flower group was finding Bee Orchids which have been present for most years around the edge of Kiplin Lake. Northern Marsh and Spotted Orchids were also identified. In total sixty seven species of flowers in bloom were identified on the visit. **Martin Bottrill**

Gunnerside Bottoms and Len Pastures 20 June 2025

On a very hot sunny afternoon in June, Bulletin Editor Derek's birthday, twenty of us walked gently through the meadows of Gunnerside Bottoms enjoying a profusion of flowers. Dependent on traditional management involving a single hay cut after 15th July, aftermath grazing and no chemical fertiliser use, a rich diversity of meadow plants thrive and grow together. It was particularly lovely to see both Wood and Meadow Cranesbill blooming.

Our return route took us alongside the River Swale, a mere trickle in places following the prolonged spell of dry weather. A Kingfisher was spotted as were Common Sandpiper and Mallard. Other birds seen during the trip included Pied Wagtail, Pied Flycatcher, Song Thrush, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Grey Wagtail, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Swallow, Swift and Sand Martin. Few butterflies were noted though Red Admiral, Ringlet, Small Tortoiseshell and Common Blue were all seen, so too Chimney Sweeper Moth.

Following this lovely stroll, we drove to a second site, parking near picturesque Isles Bridge. From here we walked to Len Pastures, situated by Haverdale Beck, a Natural England SSSI with herb-rich traditionally managed pasture. A further number of plants were seen on the roadside verge as we approached and a wonderful rich array was found on the hillside, including good numbers of Betony and Greater Butterfly

Orchid, both just starting to open fully. Very long spurs and diverging, as opposed to parallel, pollen masses were clearly visible on one specimen. After much trawling, two of our members, Anne and Ken Readshaw identified two Small White Orchids, as indeed they had last year. The rest of the party had by now wilted in the heat and returned to their transport after a most rewarding visit. **Caroline Stott**



Small White Orchid and Greater Butterfly Orchid at Len Pastures
photos by Ken Readshaw

Some interesting insects were swept from sand and shingle and sparse vegetation along the River Swale. Best of all was the Dark River Crane-fly *Hexatoma fuscipennis*. The Moorland Snipe-fly *Symphoromyia crassicornis* was a nice find swept from the sparse vegetation of a sand and shingle riverbank. The pretty lacebug *Cixius cunicularius* was also a nice find. The nearest known records are Colsterdale in 1984 and Ingleborough in 2022, so a new species for Swaledale. Nationally it is a rather localised western species of rivers and streams. A record of Blackneck moth was interesting as it extended the known Yorkshire distribution. (DW)

South Gare 29 June 2025

In the middle of summer, around ten of us ventured far beyond our usual haunts, to the seaside at South Gare, near Redcar. We were shown around by Dave Barlow, the Vice-County Recorder for VC62. South Gare is a fascinating place; a man-made promontory of former industrial land that has been left to its own devices and

reclaimed by nature. It's a wonderful resource for local people, with a long stretch of sandy beach for dog walking, huts and a boatyard for fishermen, space for campervans and far-reaching views out over the North Sea – excellent for picnickers and bird watchers.

During the industrial revolution, vast quantities of alkaline slag were dumped here from the nearby iron works. This, combined with the sandy soil, has led to a variety of different habitats, which over the years have become extremely rich with plant species, including some very unusual ones. It is now protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

We arrived on a bright, hot day after a long period of very dry weather. A stiff easterly breeze was turning the off-shore wind turbines merrily. A Humpback Whale had been spotted in the Tees estuary earlier that day, causing much excitement among folk at the viewing point (though none of us managed to see it).



Grayling and Lesser Centaury at South Gare. Photos by Ken Readshaw

From the moment we got out of our cars, we were confronted with plants that we couldn't name, so we were reliant on Dave to enlighten us. He led us across the dunes, pointing out rarity after rarity. Together, we compiled a list of over 70 plant species, including some spectacularly huge Northern Marsh-orchids. (The following page has a

South Gare Plant List

<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Allium vineale</i>	Crow Garlic
<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	Pyramidal Orchid
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Scarlet Pimpernel
<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>	Kidney Vetch
<i>Armeria maritima ssp maritima</i>	Thrift
<i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i>	Black Spleenwort
<i>Aster novi-belgii</i>	Michaelmas-daisy
<i>Atriplex laciniata</i>	Frosted Orache
<i>Beta vulgaris ssp maritima</i>	Sea Beet
<i>Blackstonia perfoliata</i>	Yellow-wort
<i>Bolboschoenus maritimus</i>	Sea Club-rush
<i>Cakile maritima</i>	Sea Rocket
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Harebell
<i>Carduus nutans</i>	Musk Thistle
<i>Carex arenaria</i>	Sand Sedge
<i>Carex distans</i>	Distant Sedge
<i>Carex nigra</i>	Common Sedge
<i>Carlina vulgaris</i>	Carline Thistle
<i>Centaureum erythraea</i>	Common Centaury
<i>Centaureum pulchellum</i>	Lesser Centaury
<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	Red Valerian
<i>Clematis sp.</i>	Clematis
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed
<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	Wall Cotoneaster
<i>Dactylorhiza purpurella</i>	Northern Marsh-orchid
<i>Daucus carota ssp carota</i>	Wild Carrot
<i>Diplotaxis tenuifolia</i>	Perennial Wall-rocket
<i>Eleocharis uniglumis</i>	Slender Spike-rush
<i>Elymus junceiformis</i>	Sand Couch
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Common Stork's-bill
<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>	Sea-holly
<i>Euphrasia sp.</i>	Eyebright
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Wild Strawberry
<i>Galium verum var maritimum</i>	Lady's Bedstraw
<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>	Bloody Crane's-bill

Glaux maritima
Hieracium triviale
Hieracium uiginskyense
Hippophae rhamnoides
Hirschfeldia incana
Honckenya peploides
Hypochaeris radicata
Inula conyzae
Juncus ranarius
Lactuca virosa
Leymus arenarius
Linaria vulgaris
Linum catharticum
Lotus corniculatus
Melilotus officinalis
Oenothera glazioviana
Ononis repens
Petrorhagia prolifera
Plantago major
Polypodium vulgare
Potentilla anserina
Pulicaria dysenterica
Reseda lutea
Rhinanthus minor
Rosa canina
Rosa rugosa
Salsola kali
Senecio erucifolius
Senecio inaequidens
Senecio jacobaea
Smyrniolum olusatrum
Suaeda maritima
Suaeda vera
Syringa vulgaris
Teucrium scorodonia
Thalictrum minus
Tragopogon pratensis
Triglochin maritima

Sea-milkwort
 Grey-headed Hawkweed
 Uig Hawkweed
 Sea-buckthorn
 Hoary Mustard
 Sea Sandwort
 Cat's-ear
 Ploughman's-spikenard
 Frog Rush
 Great Lettuce
 Lyme-grass
 Common Toadflax
 Fairy Flax
 Common Bird's-foot-trefoil
 Ribbed Melilot
 Large-flowered Evening-primrose
 Common Restharrow
 Proliferous Pink
 Greater Plantain
 Common Polypody
 Silverweed
 Common Fleabane
 Wild Mignonette
 Yellow-rattle
 Dog Rose
 Japanese Rose
 Prickly Saltwort
 Hoary Ragwort
 Narrow-leaved Ragwort
 Common Ragwort
 Alexanders
 Annual Sea-blite
 Shrubby Sea-blite
 Common Lilac
 Wood Sage
 Lesser Meadow-rue
 Goat's-beard
 Sea Arrowgrass

full plant list for the day). We saw countless invertebrates, including Six-spot Burnet moths, Dark Green Fritillaries and Graylings, which the site is famous for.

Dave was slightly apologetic that the show of plants was not as magnificent as usual, because of the prolonged drought. We, however, were all thoroughly impressed and have planned a return visit in 2026.

Anne Readshaw

Thornborough Henges 4 July 2025

There was a good turn-out for a trip that made us all feel young – a walk to one of the 4,500-year-old Thornborough Henges, near Nosterfield. Three of these huge, circular earthworks were built here in Neolithic times, probably for ceremonial purposes. All three have recently been acquired by English Heritage and are now accessible to the public.

Guided by Rita and Pan (volunteers at the Lower Ure Conservation Trust), we walked from Nosterfield Nature Reserve car park to the central henge, to look at some of the work the LUCT are doing to restore the diversity of the local flora. It was an overcast, windy day, threatening rain - which would (almost) have been welcomed, as the ground was parched and the hedgerows dusty after a very long dry spell. A Yellowhammer serenaded our walk along the lane and a Violet Ground Beetle crossed our path. Flying things included a Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet moth, lots of Ringlets and Meadow Browns and a Seven-spot ladybird.



We found Greater Burnet-saxifrage, Common Centaury and Red Bartsia in the roadside verges, and saw other 'down Dale' species like Black Horehound, Chamomile and Great Lettuce (one plant of which was taller than me!).

The flora on the central henge itself is starting to recover under the guidance of the LUCT team. Previous attempts to repair rabbit damage by tipping imported topsoil onto plastic sheeting had brought nettles and thistles and left pieces of black polythene protruding from the soil surface. Wherever possible, these were now being removed, and seeds and plug plants of more desirable plant species put in. Most of these have been grown at the nearby LUCT plant nursery, which we had the good fortune to visit

on a previous occasion. We found Small and Field Scabious, Salad Burnet, Common Rock-rose, Lady's Bedstraw and Smooth Hawk's-beard, all indicators of good quality limestone grassland habitat; though everything was rather brown and dry, due to the drought.

We also found a lone plant of Dyer's Greenweed, (photo previous page by Ken Readshaw) that had been recorded in a BSBI survey a couple of years before. This was still bright green – perhaps hence its name – and had plenty of ripe seed pods, offering much hope for the future. With thanks to Rita Mercer and Pan Thoresby from Lower Ure Conservation Trust (LUCT). **Anne Readshaw**

Weybeck Pasture 11 July 2025

On a warm and sunny day in July after the drought and before the rains came 11 members visited a reserve near Kettlewell. On arrival, male Dark Green Fritillary butterflies (photo below by Ken Readshaw) were flying high above the wild flower meadow looking for females. The females hunker down in the grass near violet plants on which they lay their eggs. Derek Whiteley and Anne Readshaw each soon had a specimen netted and we were able to closely examine the beautifully marked underside of the wings before safe release.



35 flowering plants were identified, though after the drought finding the insect-eating Butterwort actually in flower was challenging even in a damp location close to a stream running through the site. A highlight of the visit included several hundred Marsh Helleborine, Orchid and Fragrant Orchid in good condition along with a few Northern Marsh Orchid and Common Spotted Orchid. Grass-of-Parnassus due to come into flower in August was located but not the rare and elusive Grass-of-Parnassus fly that are initially attracted to the sterile stamens of the flower, with the nectar at the base.



A final bonus at a nearby wildlife site was the rare Purple Hairstreak butterfly in the canopy of oak trees, just before the sun went down at the end of a good day for wildlife in the Dales. **Leonard Shepherd**

I counted 30 Dark Green Fritillaries. It was a wonderful display .Other Lepidoptera included Large Skippers, Small Skippers, Meadow Browns, Common Blues, Large Whites, Ringlets, Barred Straw and Large Yellow Underwing. It was also a good day for Diptera. The Scribbled Wingwaver, *Herina frondescentiae* was abundant in damper areas. A charming little fly that sits on vegetation waving its picture wings. The Striped Slender Robberfly, *Leptogaster cylindrica* was notably common on the upper dry slopes. It has the appearance of a small damselfly and is associated with good quality grasslands and hay meadows. The Sieve-winged Snailkiller *Coremacera marginata* was an excellent find. We have only a few records of this beautiful fly and

this record is likely to be a first for the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It is a parasitoid on land snails. The Notch-horned Cleg, *Haematopota pluvialis* has blood-sucking females and breeds in damper soils.

Other insects included Willughby's Leaf-cutter Bee, *Megachile willughbiella*. It was an exciting find that appears to be a first record for the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Common Soldier Beetles, *Rhagonycha fulva* were at their peak, present in the hundreds nectaring and mating on white flowers. The dominant grasshopper on site was the Common Green Grasshopper *Omocestus viridulus*, a species that likes lush green grassland and moist situations.

Finally, it was good to find Lapidary Snails (*Helicigona lapicida*) in the bottom limestone wall, under the shade of Ash trees. (DW)



The Sieve-winged Snailkiller *Coremacera marginata* at Weybeck Pasture
Ken Readshaw

Ballowfields LNR 16 August 2025

Ballowfields Local Nature Reserve is a small but fascinating area of land teeming with wildlife, owned by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. The Eller Beck runs through an area of grassland that has built up on lead mining spoil.

A group of 25 members met on a somewhat overcast but warm summer afternoon to enjoy a gentle stroll through a glorious tapestry of flowers including beautiful Grass-

of-Parnassus. This is the county flower of both Cumbria in England and of Sutherland in Scotland. There were numerous pincushion-like flower heads of Devils-bit Scabious and a profusion of Common Knapweed. Thrift was scattered between as was the distinctive Purple Moor-grass with narrow, purple sprays of tiny flowers on long stems. There was a good patch of Autumn Gentian which, I understand, is known as Felwort and always found on limestone. The flowers tend to close up their petals to safeguard nectar and pollen until it is brighter and insects are out foraging. Other flowers seen included Spring Sandwort, Fairy (or Purging) Flax, Meadowsweet and Harebell. A full list will be sent to our flower recorder. Few butterflies were seen other than Red Admiral and Common Blue.

At the west car park some of us crossed the Eller Beck and checked the spoil finding Carline Thistle, Rockrose, Yarrow and Thyme amongst other flowers. Continuing through a small patch of woodland a few reached the waterfall, adjacent to which was a derelict turbine. This had provided the first electricity supply for Wensleydale. In the sky above five Red Kites wheeled around.

Thank you to Len Shepherd for suggesting the addition of this field trip to our programme. **Caroline Stott**



Ballowfields. Hoverfly *Eristalis horticola* and Autumn Gentian. Ken Readshaw

Indoor Meetings in 2025

Barn Owls Colin Gibson 31 January 2025

An audience of around 60 were given an entertaining and informative lecture by three members of the Barn Owl Trust (Colin, Chris & Chris.) The talk covered all aspects of the Barn Owl's life from its original names Screech Owl and White Owl to its now accepted name. The owl's reputed wisdom being traced back to Athena (Goddess of Wisdom) it was also seen as an ill omen especially by the Romans and a general public fear of it being an omen of death if sighted or heard. They nest naturally in Elm and Ash trees but due to disease of these trees and loss of of nesting sites due to change of usage ie barns being upgraded there has been a 60% reduction in nesting sites so nest boxes are needed to replace them. The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust (01287 636382) make bespoke owl boxes for Barn, Tawny and Little Owls.

The male in springtime feeds the female until she reaches optimum weight to lay the clutch of up to seven eggs which are laid on alternate days resulting in a significant difference in chick sizes. The male is much smaller than the female and has a virtually white breast and lighter covered tail feathers. The eggs are laid on a bed of regurgitated pellets and are fed on a diet of mainly field voles and mice for up to nine weeks when they fledge. On dissection of a thousand pellets there was no evidence of any game birds' skeletons. The male has been known to cache up to 37 rodents whilst feeding the female and chicks. There were exhibits of all the five native owls, pellets and feathers to observe along with a variety of nest boxes and superb photographs. The Great Grey Shrike which was found in Leyburn following the high winds and a Barn Owl which had been found that day were on view to observe and discuss.

John H. Nuttall

Moths Charlie Fletcher 28 February 2025

Charlie is a retired GP from Ripon, who got into moth trapping about 25 years ago and swiftly became the county moth recorder for Yorkshire; an onerous role, which now sees him dealing with over 200,000 moth records per year.

He gave us a very engaging and entertaining talk, starting with an explanation of why moths are important in the ecosystem and outlining some of the hazards facing them. He described how moth-traps work and illustrated some of the different designs. Different species of moth fly at different times of the year, so Charlie showed us lots of wonderful pictures, which basically represented a calendar of moths – from the Winter Moth in January, through to the spectacular Emperor Moth of spring, the hawkmoths of summer, the Thorns of autumn, the December Moth (in November!) and many others in between. The diversity of form and function is really something to marvel at, as are their esoteric names and Charlie's encyclopaedic knowledge of them.

He picked out a few highlights from 2024, of species newly-recorded in Yorkshire – for example Radford's Flame Shoulder, which is a very rare migrant. A micro-moth

called Marbled Fern seems to be expanding into Yorkshire for the first time since its introduction to the UK (in Norfolk) in 2009. This species eats Bracken, so it will not be short of food here, and could perform a useful role in controlling this rather invasive plant. Another rare migrant, the Small Mottled Willow, sometimes occurs in Yorkshire in relatively large numbers, usually near the coast. In September 2024, 228 were found in one moth trap in Scarborough. The striking *Convolvulus* Hawkmoth is another occasional visitor to Yorkshire, again mainly on the coast. 39 were counted in 2024.

Those of us who run our own moth traps send our records to Charlie. He always replies immediately, expertly answering our questions and gently correcting any mistakes. The data he collates so diligently helps to create a picture of how Yorkshire's moths and their habitats are faring, and shows how their distributions are altering in response to climate change. More details can be found at the following website: <https://yorkshiremoths.co.uk/flyingtonight.php> **Anne Readshaw**

Lichens 28 March 2025

Chris gave a talk on lichens to 40 members. Lichens can be found on stone walls and gravestones, fences, trees and twigs. Even metal signs can sometimes become covered in lichens. Lichens are a good indicator of air quality as they do not grow in highly polluted habitats.



A fruticose lichen *Ramalina fastigiata*

Jo Scott

A lichen is a symbiotic relationship between an alga or a cyanobacterium and a fungus. Most of the fungi that pair up with algae could not live independently. However, the algae can live independently. Both alga and fungus benefit from their

association. The fungus can protect the alga from drying out and can provide structure, water and mineral nutrients. The alga contains chlorophyll, so it can photosynthesize and provide sugars and carbohydrates for the fungus. They do not injure each other when they combine. Almost all fungal partners in lichens belong to the ascomycetes. These are fungi that shoot out their spores from sacs when they are ripe. The fruiting bodies are called apothecia: some can look like tiny jam tarts.

Two examples of algae that commonly combine with lichens are *Trebouxia* and *Trentepohlia*. *Trebouxia* is a unicellular green alga. *Trentepohlia* is also a green alga that lives on tree trunks and rocks. However, it has an orange colour because of the carotenoid pigments which hide the chlorophyll. *Nostoc* is one example of a cyanobacterium that combines with a fungus to form a lichen.

Lichens can reproduce vegetatively and sexually. Structures called isidia and soralia can break off the lichen thallus and form a new lichen. This is known as asexual or vegetative reproduction. In sexual reproduction the fruiting body of the lichen produces only fungal spores which hopefully will meet up with a suitable algal partner as they are dispersed in the air.



A crustose lichen *Ophioparma ventosa* Jo Scott

Lichens can be foliose, fruticose or crustose and so can look very different in form or shape. Lichenologists sometimes use a small amount of chemicals to help them identify the genus of a lichen. A lichen book will usually state which chemicals will cause a colour change. Bleach, potassium hydroxide, iodine and paraphenylenediamine can all be used. However the latter is known to be carcinogenic so is not readily available for sale. In the past many lichens were used to produce dyes

and were used as medicines as anti-inflammatories or to treat certain cancers. They are still sometimes used in this way. Lichens are mainly eaten by slugs, snails and moth larvae in this country. Birds sometimes use lichens in their nest building. Some lichens grow very slowly, often only adding a few millimetres annually. They can be very long-lived. Some Antarctic lichens have been estimated to be up to 5,000 years old.

After the talk people could take a look with a lens at some of the many lichen samples provided by Jo Scott, as well as browsing the FSC laminated sheets and Frank Dobson's Lichen book. Many thanks to Jo for her massive efforts to ensure this event went ahead. **Chris Meek**

Mountain Hares Derek Whiteley 25 April 2025.

Mountain Hares were re-introduced into the Yorkshire part of the Peak District in the 1870s from Scottish stock. Sub-fossil bone evidence shows that they were present in the last Ice Age and survived as late as the early Bronze Age in Derbyshire.

Following re-introduction they thrived in the late 19th century and spread across the Dark Peak moorlands. Game bags in the early 20th century indicated very high numbers. The current Peak District population is unique within England.



Derek Whiteley shared his experiences over 50 years, recalling the Sorby Natural History Society's "Colin Marsden Mountain Hare Walks" an annual transect walk of 15 to 18 miles held every year between 1973 and 2023. He attended the first, the last

and many in between. On several occasions the transect count exceeded 200 hares in a day.

Current threats are mainly from systematic shooting on the private grouse moors, where the hares are considered to be a threat to Red Grouse as an alleged carrier of louping-ill virus. Grouse managers have also claimed that the hares compete for young heather shoots, even though dung analysis shows that hares prefer cotton grasses.

Hares turn white in winter, during late November and December then shed their white fur in late winter, so by late March it is possible to see white, piebald and almost brown individuals. There is no hard evidence that the pelage changes have altered in response to climate change. More frequent summer rainfall deluges will certainly lead to more infant mortality. Leverets have little shelter as hares do not dig burrows, but create a “form” in vegetation, usually heather. Shooting remains the biggest threat, with some moorland in the Yorkshire Peak now almost devoid of hares. The large National Trust estates are the best remaining hope for future survival, but managing the vegetation in a hare-friendly way is essential.(DW).

Odonata Keith Gittens. 26 September 2025
BDS County Dragonfly Recorder NW & NE Yorkshire.
Chairman, Yorkshire Dragonfly Group.

Dragonflies have existed for about 250 million years, with even older ancestors dating back to 350 million years ago. Ancient dragonflies were larger due to higher oxygen levels, with some fossils showing a 70-centimetre wingspan. Today, they are small, apex predators.

Both dragonflies and damselflies are in the same order but differ in features: dragonflies rest with wings at a right angle to their bodies, have thicker bodies, unequal wings, and large eyes that cover most of the head, giving them advanced vision. Damselflies are smaller, more delicate, fly slower, hold their wings parallel at rest, and have well-separated eyes.

Both are active in warm, sunny weather from April to November and rely on water for their life cycle. They live one to two years, though adults survive only a few weeks to mate. Dragonflies fly at speeds up to 25 mph, using independently moving wings for agile flight including hovering, backward, and sideways movement with their heads staying level and can migrate long distances. They are highly effective predators, boasting a 96% success rate while feeding mainly on insects.

There are roughly 6,400 known species with diverse colours. Red being common due to heat reflection. New species are still being discovered. Dragonflies prefer habitats with clean water and varied vegetation, making them indicators of water quality.



**A tandem pair of Willow Emerald Damselflies (*Chalcolestes viridis*) egg-laying at Marfield Wetlands on 6th Oct 2025. A new breeding species for the reserve.
Keith Gittens**

Mating is unique: the male uses two sets of genitalia to grab and fertilize the female, forming a heart shape and remaining connected for up to an hour. The male after mating will remain close to the female to make sure that no other male takes over the female. The males will remove any previous sperm from the female and will make sure to replace it with their own. The female lays eggs which develop to larvae underwater, the larvae climbing out of the water for metamorphosis, where the adult emerges from.

A pair of binoculars or a camera is essential for recording. Keith Gittens offered to guide a walk for YNHS in summer 2026 to give members the confidence to record dragonflies and damselflies.

We were encouraged to send more records as a Society from VC65. **iRecord** is the best way to record, or BTO app, or **iNaturalist**, as well as Yorkshire Dragonfly Group on Facebook. **Gaby Baxter**

North West Yorkshire, Historical Botanical Records and Recordors - Linda Robinson. 31 October 2025

North West Yorkshire is known by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) as Vice County 65 and Linda is the plant Recorder for the BSBI in VC65. Her

well-researched presentation looked at the people who made the earliest known records of plants in VC65 and crucially, wrote them down for posterity. The presentation was divided into centuries starting with the 17th and finishing with the 20th. The botanists were discussed in the order of their date of birth, and each had a brief profile accompanied by illustrations of the plants they had noted and their whereabouts. The excellent photographs frequently prompted a personal recollection from Linda, often humorous.

In the earlier centuries only the “rare” plants were recorded, often with only the vaguest indication of their exact location. Linda urged us all to keep a sharp eye out for these rarities whenever we were in the right locality. Of course several species were now known to be extinct, but Linda’s optimism, and enthusiasm for finding species recorded in the past, was infectious. Her description of re-finding the Flowering Rush in the exact same spot it was recorded centuries earlier was heart-warming. In these earlier centuries the countryside would have been resplendent in wildflowers so it is understandable that only rare plants were recorded and that Teesdale featured so frequently.

As the centuries passed more inclusive records were made and later botanists noted down lists of over a hundred species. Our own, home grown botanist, John Percival, of Carperby, added many grasses to the flora. It was interesting to note how many of the earlier botanists were men of the church, and how few women were featured. It was only in the most recent century that two eminent female botanists contributed to the VC65 flora, notably Catherine (Kit) Muriel Rob, a former BSBI Recorder, and the indomitable Dr Margaret Bradshaw whose passion for Teesdale has spawned a major research project. The recent loss of so many special species is clearly of concern and Linda expressed her caution about re-wilding. Several examples of loss through lack of grazing were given, and conversely, through over-grazing. It is important that her knowledge is heeded, and that great care is taken to preserve rare plants when dealing with new conservation projects. **Deborah Millward**

Hosting the Yorkshire Naturalists’ Union AGM 8 November 2025

Yoredale Natural History Society was proud to host the YNU 2025 AGM in Leyburn. The meeting attracted over 60 people, one of the best attended AGMs in recent years. Our members welcomed visitors with a hot drink before the morning session began.

The Society organised speakers for the morning session, providing an opportunity to showcase our area to the rest of Yorkshire with three contrasting presentations.

Anne Readshaw, as Chair, welcomed everyone and gave a brief account of the work of the Society, before delivering her main talk on the history and ecology of Semerwater with particular emphasis on the freshwater invertebrate surveys of the site.

Derek Whiteley looked at some of the special invertebrates discovered in Wensleydale and Swaledale in recent years.

Ken Readshaw presented a selection of his best photographs of birds, plants, fungi, insects and habitats in VC65, and also highlighted some of the main attractions of the region, which was much appreciated by the audience.

After lunch and the traditional group photograph, the business part of the AGM took place. Retiring YNU President Derek Whiteley handed over to Sir John Lawton, other officers were elected and the financial report was approved. The Presidential Address is traditionally provided by the retiring president. Derek Whiteley delivered his address on *“The Peak DistrictYorkshire’s Other National Park”* looking at the scenery, geography, geology and wildlife of the Peak, with special emphasis on his research over 50 years. This will be published in a future issue of *The Naturalist*. The presentation also included photos of Peak District scenery set to music.

The day ended with delicious tea, cakes and special Wensleydale cheese provided by our Yoredale members. Officers of the YNU thanked the Society for our hospitality and for organising a successful and entertaining day. Many people commented on the buzz of excitement, enthusiasm and discussion throughout the day. (Ed.)

Salmon. Eddie Wyvill and David Bamford 28 November 2025

The November meeting was well attended with approximately 60 people present. It was given jointly by Eddie Wyvill, Chairman of the Yorkshire Dales Salmon Group and David Bamford previously of the Environment Agency. The aim of the group is to bring back Salmon to the Yorkshire Dales.

Eddie gave a brief overview of the life cycle of the Atlantic Salmon starting with the return of adults from the sea to the river where they had been born. Following hatching the alevins feed as fry developing to parr after a year. At 2-5 years as smolts they stop feeding and head out to sea towards Greenland where they stay for 2-3 years. The fish return to the river where they were born, as 4-40lb fish in order to breed and the cycle starts again.

David discussed the history of the migration when Doggerland existed and the smolt followed the ancient river systems to the Norwegian trench, routes still followed today. In the early 1900s it was common to see 50lb fish at the Naburn fish pass. Numbers declined markedly with the collapse of the Ouse net fishery during the Second World War but a survey in 1995 at Naburn indicated many large fish were coming back; thought to be due to improving oxygen levels in the river due to better water quality.

Subsequently numbers have again fallen dramatically with less than ten salmon seen in the River Ure in 2025. To try to reverse this, a number of mitigation measures have been introduced including a hatchery and fish passes used at weirs such as Breary Banks on the River Burn. Hatchery raised fish have a 95% chance of survival

compared to the very small percentage spawned in the wild. Unfortunately the hatchery both speakers were involved in has now been closed.

Both speakers went on to discuss the issues contributing to the marked decline in Salmon populations such as sewage, pollution, long dry summers, and slurry spreading especially close to the banks. Increased nitrification leads to a reduction in invertebrate life and a lack of food for the young fish. Heavier downpours of rain are also damaging the spawning sites. At sea, reduced plankton and increased predation is leading to reduced smolt survivability. Forty years ago 20% of fish returned as adults to the rivers to breed whereas nowadays less than 1% return. Currently there are only five hatcheries in the UK even though Salmon populations are down by 95% and Atlantic Salmon has become 'Red Listed'. **Julie Wessels**

Celebrating Passion and Adventure with Richard Greenwood

"If you go down to the woods today..." 12 December 2025

December's Members' Meeting is a cherished tradition, where the spotlight shines exclusively on a member of our Society. It's a time to come together, celebrate our shared interests, and appreciate the unique passions within our community.

Thank you, Richard Greenwood, for captivating us with his remarkable stories and enthusiasm. Richard, an avid bird lover with a particular fondness for birds of prey, through the lens of his camera he took us on a journey through his experiences and adventures, inspiring us all with his dedication and love for wildlife. During his talk, Richard recounted his travels during the summer months across Northern Europe in pursuit of the elusive Eurasian Brown Bear. His tales were filled with vivid descriptions of landscapes, encounters with nature, and the thrill of observing wild bears and Wolverines in their natural habitats.

Richard travelled to Lentiira, Finland on the borders with Russia. Visitors stay in private cabins, where they must remain indoors from 17:00 to 07:00hrs the next day, as the bears are nocturnal and come to the grounds foraging. This restriction ensured both the safety of guests and the minimal disturbance of the bears' natural behaviours, allowing for truly authentic wildlife observation experiences. Richard shared on the night his own photos of the different bears in the reserve, pointing out the distinctive features to identify one male from another.

The Brown Bears weight varies depending on habitat and the time of the year. A full-grown male weighs on average between 350 kg and 500 kg and reaches a maximum weight of 650 kg and length of nearly 2.5m. Females typically range between 150 kg and 300 kg and reach a maximum weight of 450 kg. They have a lifespan of 20 to 30 years in the wild. Amongst the dense woodland, Fieldfares and Redwing build their nests to grow their chicks. These same chicks will, in later months, journey to British territories, marking the seasonal rhythms that connect distant landscapes through the movements of these remarkable birds.

Richard's presentation ignited curiosity, reminding us of the wonders that await those willing to explore the northern hemisphere. December's meeting reaffirms the Society's mission: to foster a community where members can share their passions and inspire others. Richard's talk was proof of the spirit of adventure, curiosity, and lifelong learning that defines our Society.

Many thanks to everyone who brought delicious food to share at our December Members' Meeting; your contributions made the buffet truly memorable and added to the enjoyment of the evening. Thank you again to Richard Greenwood, and to all our members who continue to make these gatherings meaningful and memorable. We look forward to many more inspiring stories from members of the Society in the years ahead. If you would like to give a presentation, this can be from 15 minutes to 30 minutes. Get in touch! Please contact a committee member or email us to express your interest in speaking at a future meeting.

Gaby Baxter – gabybird01@gmail.com WhatsApp 07496 606737

Yoredale Natural History Society's Talks

I would like to extend my thanks to all members for your continued support and enthusiastic attendance at the Yoredale Natural History Society's Talks. Your presence and engagement are what make our gatherings so rewarding, and I am truly grateful for your commitment to fostering an appreciation for the natural world within our community.

As the organiser, I am always on the lookout for speakers whose expertise and passion align with the Society's focus on nature and the environment. I strive to ensure that each talk is relevant and current, reflecting topics that matter most to us as naturalists. I aim to bring together naturalists from different paths, so we can hear a variety of perspectives and form our own informed opinions. While we occasionally wish we could invite speakers from further afield, our budget does place some limitations on what we can achieve.

If there is a particular speaker you would like to hear from, or if there's a subject you are eager to explore in more depth, please don't hesitate to let me know. I am keen to hear your suggestions and will do my very best to extend an invitation on your behalf. Together, we can continue to make the Yoredale Natural History Society's talks both enlightening and enjoyable for everyone.

Also, if you'd like to join our WhatsApp group 'Nature Alert', just let me know! You'll have the chance to read fascinating posts about nature discoveries from other members, ask questions, and share your own knowledge. It's a welcoming and interesting chat group where everyone can learn from one another, so do consider joining us.

Gaby Baxter – gabybird01@gmail.com WhatsApp 07496 606737

Recorders' Reports

Flowers Seen 2025

Sue Peckitt

10th May – Mill Farm Redmire – Anne Readshaw
Great Tussock Sedge, Yellow Rattle, Moschatel.

17th May – Masham -Paul & Pauline Hardhill

Bird's Foot Trefoil, Bistort, Bluebells, Bramble, Buttercup {Meadow & Bulbous}
Celandine, Cowparsley, Cowslip, Crosswort, Cuckoo Flower, Daisy, Dame's Violet,
Dandelion, Dog's Mercury, Dog Rose, Dove'sfoot Cranesbill, Forget-me-not, Garlic
Mustard, Germander Speedwell, Greater Buttercup, Ground Ivy, Herb Bennet,
Horsetail, Lesser Trefoil, Lords and Ladies, Marsh Marigold, Mouse Ear, Chickweed,
Mouse Ear Hawkweed, Ox-Eye Daisy, Plantain, Pignut, Ramsons {Wild Garlic}
Raspberry, Red Campion, Red Clover, Salad Burnet, Sorrel, Stonecrop, Vetch
{Bush}, Water Avens, White Dead Nettle, Wild Strawberry.

13th June, Kiplin – Ann Luxmore

Bartsia Red, Bedstraw Hedge, Bedstraw Ladies, Bramble, Buttercup Creeping,
Buttercup Meadow, Campion Red, Centuary Common, Cinquefoil Creeping, Clover
Red, Clover White, Cranesbill Cut Leaved, Cranesbill Doves Foot, Crosswort, Cuckoo
Flower, Daisy, Daisy Ox Eye, Dandelion, Field Woodrush, Figwort Water, Flag
Yellow, Flax Fairy, Forgetmenot Changing, Forget-me-not Water, Fox And Cubs,
Goose Grass, Ground Elder, Ground Ivy, Groundsel, Hawkweed Family, Hawkbit
Autumn, Hawkbit Rough, Herb Bennett, Herb Robert, Hogweed, Jack-by-the-Hedge,
Knapweed Common, Lady's Mantle, Loosestrife Purple, Meadow Sweet, Mint Water,
Mouse Ear Common, Mouse Ear Hawkweed, Nightshade Woody, Nipplewort, Orchid
Bee, Orchid Spotted, Orchid Northern Marsh, Parsley Cow, Pignut, Plantain Ribwort,
Ragged Robin, Ragwort, Rose, Scabious Field, Selfheal, Silverweed, Sorrel Common,
Sow Thistle Smooth, Speedwell Germander, Speedwell Slender, Speedwell Thyme
Leaved, Trefoil Bird'sfoot, Trefoil Lesser, Water Lily White, Willow Herb Broad
Leaved, Willow Herb Short Fruited, Wintercress Medium Flowered, Woundwort
Hedge, Yellow Rattle.

20th June Gunnerside Bottoms and Len Pastures – Caroline Stott

Bramble, Creeping Buttercup, Meadow Buttercup, Red Campion, Chickweed, Red
Clover, White Clover, Meadow Cranesbill, Wood Cranesbill, Crosswort, Ox Eye
Daisy, Elder, Eyebright, Harts Tongue Fern, Foxglove, Rough Hawkbit, Herb Robert,
Hogweed, Field Horsetail, Knapweed, Lady's Mantle, Meadowsweet, Milkmaid,
Mimulus, Mouse Ear, Nettle, Common Spotted Orchid, Pineapple Weed, Ribwort
Plantain, Welsh Poppy, Quaking Grass, Ragwort, Yellow Rattle, Dog Rose, Wall Rue,
Wood Sage, Silverweed, Common Sorrel, Germander Speedwell, Thyme Leaved
Speedwell, Lesser Stitchwort, Creeping Thistle, Marsh Thistle, Melancholy Thistle,
Bird'sfoot Trefoil, Lesser Trefoil, Bush Vetch, Tufted Vetch, Meadow Vetchling,
Yarrow. Further flowers seen on the roadside included some repeated but also Giant

Bellflower, Lesser Burdock, Sweet Cicely, Cleavers, Dogs Mercury, Herb Bennet, Upright Hedge Parsley Martagon Lily, Pignut, Raspberry, Selfheal, Greater Stitchwort, Woundwort. At Len Pastures, Betony, Greater Butterfly Orchid, Small White Orchid, Tormentil were added to our list.

11th July – Weybeck Pasture, Arnecliffe – Len Shepherd

Lady's Bedstraw, Black Bog Rush, Greater Burnet, Meadow Buttercup, Butterwort, Red Clover, White Clover, Zigzag Clover, Meadow Cranesbill, Eyebright, Fairy Flax, Harebell, Rough Hawkbit, Mouse Ear Hawkbit, Marsh Helleborine, Meadowsweet, Mouse Ear, Common Spotted Orchid, Fragrant Orchid, Northern Marsh Orchid, Upright Hedge Parsley, Hoary Plantain, Quaking Grass, Ragwort, Yellow Rattle, Rockrose, Devil's Bit Scabious, Small Scabious, Selfheal, Silverweed, Common Sorrel, Creeping Thistle, Thyme, Tormentil, Bird'sfoot Trefoil, Bush Vetch, Meadow Vetchling, Creeping Willow.

16th August 2025 – Ballowfields LNR – Caroline Stott

Red Clover, Eyebright, Fairy Flax, Autumn Gentian, Grass of Parnassus, Harebell, Autumn Hawkbit, Rough Hawkbit, Mouse Ear Hawkweed, Common Knapweed, Meadowsweet, Purple Moor Grass, Common Nettle, Enchanter's Nightshade, Greater Plantain, Ribwort Plantain, Ragwort, Rock Rose, Spring Sandwort, Burnet Saxifrage, Devil's Bit Scabious, Selfheal, Carline Thistle, Creeping Thistle, Thrift, Thyme, Tormentil, Bird'sfoot Trefoil, Rosebay Willowherb, Yarrow.

Butterfly Report 2025

Jennie White

The sunniest spring and hottest summer ever recorded in the UK gave a boost to butterfly numbers after the lows of 2024.

However the numbers were only average and we still have a long term decline.

Figures recorded by the Big Butterfly Count showed good numbers of Large and Small White but Holly and Common Blue and Meadow Brown were well down. Again it's not just climate that affects our butterflies but environment.

Locally, Brimstones were spotted in Bedale in early March and in Thornton Rust in May.

Early April saw 1 Peacock in Wensley and a Large White, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma in Leyburn.

Early May and Liz Barron recorded 5 Peacocks, 1 Brimstone, 6 Small Whites, 3 Orange Tips and 1 Red Admiral in the Leyburn area.

Derek Whiteley found 4 Northern Brown Argus on Haw Bank on May 2nd, no doubt lured out early, by unprecedented warmth and sunshine in April.

14th May saw 1 Red Admiral and two Painted Ladies on the Shawl; the latter gained a first report for V. C. 65.

Paul Millward found 2 Painted Ladies and 4 Northern Brown Argus on Morpeth Scar on the 16th, Derek spotted a Wall

Sheila Simms had the good fortune of seeing a White-letter Hairstreak on the garden she tends by the AA box on the A684.

June saw 1 Painted Lady, 4 Small Tortoiseshells, 1 skipper and a Humming Bird Hawk Moth in Leyburn

Mid July, 10 pristine Peacocks on buddleia in Leyburn.

Early September, Len Shepherd had a second brood Comma in Leyburn

Late September, after first frost Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Large White in Leyburn. Deborah had a Painted Lady in Thornton Rust.

25th October a Red Admiral and Wall in Leyburn. Paul Millward had hoped the latter would make the records as last sighting in VC65 but one was seen at Easby Abbey on 28th October 1999, can't win them all. #

Wall butterflies were a highlight this year for me as they are relatively rare in this area.

Deborah Millward saw a male Wall at Ballowfield on 18th May. I saw a female near the Glebe Field on 24th July and one in Leyburn on 31st July. Early August 1 in Carperby and 3 in Apedale seen by Derek, a good year.



Large Skippers at Glebe Field. Jennie White

Glebe Field

I love the rhythm of recording in the Glebe. Stella Swan and I started recording on 6th April, 3 Orange Tips and Peacocks. By the end of April the whites were flying to add to a total of 26 butterflies. By mid-June, Meadow Browns and Ringlets join so 88 in total. Best record 173 in mid-July but by mid-August down to 36, largely due to the hot, dry weather having shrivelled all the vegetation. A bonus for me was finding 10 Large Skippers on the control transect by the river. I usually have a good scattering of Small Skippers but these looked a bit different so I asked Paul Millward for help and he confirmed Large Skippers, not previously recorded by me in ten years-ish.

Thank you for all the reports sent in, much appreciated.

late records, Peacock and Red Admiral on Ivy at Capple Bank 6 November 2025 (DW)

Purple Hairstreaks in 2025

Derek Whiteley

Following observations in Wensleydale in 2022, 2023 and 2024 (see previous **Bulletin**) I spread the search a bit wider in 2025 with some success. Things got off to a good start at **Wanlass Park**. The first sighting was on the outstanding early date of 20 June 2025, about three weeks earlier than normal. Additional records as follows.

Flats Lane West Witton 10 July 2025 four including two “twirling” in large oak.

Kagram Wood 12 July 2025 two “twirling” in the evening sunshine in one of the very few oaks in this Sycamore/Beech woodland behind West Witton village.

West Witton 12 July 2025 in a stand-alone oak just behind the village green Over the pass into Wharfedale, several in **Lower Grass Wood** (Woodland Trust reserve) 11 July 2025 in evening sunshine in the tops of oaks.

Jervaulx Park 13 July 2025 – several including two “twirling” in the top of a parkland oak in the evening sunshine

Wensley churchyard 13 July 2025 in a beautiful mature oak in the graveyard

Thowker Corner SSSI near Preston, 24 July 2025 in a roadside mature oak

North side of Bolton Estate bordering the Redmire Road – 10 in two large oaks 24 July 2025

Leyburn Shawl 25 July 2025 in several different oaks in evening sunshine.

Wanlass Park 31 July 2025 in four different oaks

Wensley Park, Bolton Estate 2 August 2025 two in tops of oaks at sunset

West Burton 12 August 2025 – one in large oak on the edge of woodland in the evening sunshine.

Swinithwaite 12 August 2025 – in large oak in evening sunshine

Diptera Report for 2025

Derek Whiteley

The exceptional weather between March and October produced an outstanding year for recording flies. This year over 1,500 records were added to the local database. Despite the very low rainfall during the summer months I noticed that many spring-fed flushes and waterfalls did not dry up, providing breeding continuity for those species that rely on these important microhabitats. Trees blown over in the previous winter gales provided new dead-wood habitats for saproxylic species, which are also exploiting Ash trees succumbing to die-back disease. If left alone to rot naturally, such trees will provide important microhabitats for the next 20 to 30 years. The sandy and shingle banks of the River Ure and River Swale are proving to be excellent sites for unusual species with some additional interesting finds in 2025, from sediments deposited in times of high water. These riverine habitats deserve a special mention.

Hoverflies

Melangyna quadrimaculata is a very early spring hoverfly that flies in March and early April. On 19 March 2025 I found a female by a larch plantation on the Bolton Estate near Lords Bridge. It is known to be associated with conifers. This is a first record for Wensleydale and for VC65.

Pocota personata **The Bumblefly** was present at its usual sites in Wensley Park and Swinithwaite Park investigating Sycamore rotholes. Additional sites were recorded at Redmire Force and Wanlass Park.

Brachypalpus laphriformis is a scarce hoverfly showing Batesian mimicry of hive bees. It breeds in fungus-infested heart rot in standing dead and dying trees. Wensley Park on the Bolton Estate investigating Sycamore rot holes 6 May 2025, and Jervaulx Park investigating rotholes in a veteran Ash tree on 18 May 2025. These appear to be new for VC65.

Pipiza lutetarsis is one of the “little black jobs”. On 6 May 2025 a female was observed laying eggs on elm leaves at Wensley Park on the Bolton Estate. Appears to be new for VC65. Larvae are known to feed on *Schizoneura* aphids which curl the leaves of elms.

Orthonevra nobilis is a metallic coloured hoverfly. A specimen was swept from the banks of the River Ure at the stepping stones at Adam Bottoms on 25 June 2025. Two previous records for VC65 in 1923 (Hauxwell) and 1981 (Middleton-in-Teesdale). It breeds in wet habitats including wet woodland.

Cheilosia vernalis A black hoverfly, swept from vegetation on a shingle island on the River Ure near Wensley on 3 August 2025. Second record for VC65. Previously recorded at Freeholders Wood in 1997. Larvae are known to be associated with Yarrow.

Cheilosia pubera A black hoverfly with a bronze sheen. A voucher specimen from the YNHS visit to Marsett, swept from Marsh Marigold on 20 May 2023 has recently been attributed to this species. Previously recorded from sites in Swaledale in 1981 and 2021, so probably a new record for the Ure catchment. A northern species usually associated closely with Marsh Marigold, probably its larval foodplant.

Craneflies

I made a special effort to record local craneflies this year. The following selections are highlights from the year with a few earlier records identified from voucher specimens.

Tipula cheethami **Cheetham's Cranefly (Mottled Peg)**. My investigation of mossy waterfalls continued in May and June. Additional records obtained from Arkleside Gill on 15 May 2025, following a recce with Ken Readshaw. Also found at West Burton waterfall, Thwaite Beck waterfall on the River Swale, Park Gill nature reserve,

Sykes Beck at Kilnsey Park, and Fears Gill Beck waterfall, bringing my total to 23 sites in three years. The Yorkshire Dales region is an important stronghold for this species.

***Tipula gimmerthali* Gimmerthal's Cranefly.** The find of the year. NEW TO YORKSHIRE. While investigating upland tufa flushes on 12 October 2025, I noticed a group of male craneflies displaying in the afternoon sunshine on Thornton Rust Moor. A voucher specimen confirmed the identification, and a return visit the next day discovered a number of females, which have small stubby wings, unsuitable for flight. These were photographed and released. All specimens were found in a very small area adjacent to tufa deposits in running water. This species is mainly Scottish. It is rare in England, with a smattering of records from the Lake District and North Pennines.



Flightless female Gimmerthal's Cranefly at Thornton Rust Moors

***Tipula pruinosa* Dark-spot Long-palp Cranefly.** I swept a specimen of this nationally rather local cranefly from an upland stream just over the county border in the Westmorland Dales at Molds Hill (near Tan Hill) on 24 June 2024. On the very same day it was found at Smardale Gill by the Dipterists Forum field meeting. There are few local records. Cheetham found it in Coverdale *one hundred years ago!*.

***Nephrotoma cornicina* Sharp-tipped Tiger Cranefly** is quite rare in Yorkshire and appears to be another specialist of riverine sediments. I swept one from shingle on the banks of the River Ure at Wanlass Park on 15 July 2024, then several more from sandy banks of the River Swale near Reeth footbridge on 26 June 2025. There are previous records for High Batts and Nosterfield Gravel Pits

***Pedicia occulta* Barred Hairy-eyed Crane**fly is a rather local northern and western species. Gillfield Wood 10 June 2024 swept from damp areas by a woodland stream. Previous records for Wensleydale are pre-1957. Quite a good discovery.

***Dicranomyia aperta* Grass of Parnassus Crane**fly. A special trip with Steve Garland to the tufa flushes below Addleborough on 14 August 2025 confirmed my previous record from 2022. We went on to find good numbers on Thornton Rust Moor. Locker Tarn tufa seepages proved to be an exceptional site for this species on 15 August 2025 with several typically displaying on Parnassus flowers. I was unable to find any at Ballowfields despite several searches of hundreds of Parnassus flower heads on different days. However following Thackwaite Beck high up near its source I recorded this cranefly in a small calcareous seepage below Blue Scar on 2 September 2025. There must be dozens of similar habitats waiting to be discovered in Wensleydale. Further afield Andrew Dixon and I found several on flower heads at Tarn Moss and Potts Beck in the Westmorland part of the National Park and at Warcop Fell on one of its open days. Again tufa seepages were the key to finding them as Parnassus flowers were not always present. It is likely that calcareous seepages provide breeding habitat and Parnassus flowers provide a suitable platform for displaying or even lekking.



***Dicranomyia nigristigma* Scarce Black-spot Bigtail** is a rare cranefly of calcareous seepages, first found in Britain in the North York moors in 1989. Steve Garland swept one on the above visit to Thornton Rust Moor. A new record for VC65. One of the best finds of the year!

***Hexatoma fuscipennis* Black River Longtail** is a black cranefly that breeds in fine sandy river sediments. Swept from sand and shingle on the banks of the Swale at Gunnerside 20 June 2025, and from a similar habitat on the banks of the Ure at Wensley 24 June 2025 then at several sites along the Swale at Reeth and Grinton on 25 June 2025. Previously recorded from the banks of the Swale at Low Row by Roy Crossley in 2004, and Chris Cheetham found it at Grinton in 1953. New to Wensleydale and confirmed for Swaledale.



A pair of Black River Longtails mating at Grinton 25 June 2025

***Euphylidorea dispar* Smart Longtail Cranefly**

A specimen swept from a wet wooded gorge at Risedale Beck in the Foxglove Covert Reserve on 18 May 2023 was identified to this species. It is rather localised in England. Previous record from Freeholders Wood in 1985. It likes wet clay patches in woodland rides and glades.

Other Interesting Flies

***Machimus atricapilla* Kite-tailed Robberfly** seems to have a good colony at Ballowfields. Recorded every year. In 2025 also found at Wanlass Park and Swinithwaite conservation meadows in good numbers

Tachina ursina is an early spring parasitic fly that flies in March and April. Bolton Estate 19 March 2025. I have found this previously at Freeholders Wood and Foxglove Covert. New to VC65

Yellow-clubbed Phasia *Phasia barbifrons* is a small but attractive parasitic fly that was added to the British list in 2001. It has spread northwards from southern England during the intervening years. I swept several specimens at flowers on the lead rake at

Cobscar Rake on 21 July 2025 and they appear to be the most northerly records in England as things stand. It is a parasite of Hemiptera. New to VC65 and the Yorkshire Dales. It is likely to become more frequent.

Norrellisoma spinimanum is a plant-eating dung fly (Scathophagidae). The larvae mine the stems of docks. A female was found on Back Lane, West Witton 22 April 2025 and appears to be new to VC65.

Daffodil Fly *Norrellia spinipes* is another plant-eating dung fly that forms mines in the leaves of daffodils and narcissi. First recorded in Britain in 1965 and thought to be accidentally introduced from Europe. Adult flies are active in April and have front legs rather like a praying mantis. Following my initial discovery at Haw Bank in 2022 I found it by the River Ure on the Bolton Estate in 2023. This year it was photographed on a clump of white narcissus by the River Ure near Lord's Bridge on 22 April 2025 and swept from woodland daffodil colonies in Bolton Hall woods the following day. It is quite rare in VC65, but likely to become more common



A mating pair of *Norrellia spinipes* at Haw Bank

***Thereva nobilitata* Common Stiletto Fly.** Good numbers swept from sandy riverside grassland and a shingle river island along the Ure at Wensley on 24 June 2025 and on the Bolton Estate by the River Ure on 26 June 2025. Despite its vernacular name it is not common, and seems to prefer riverside sand as a breeding habitat. Previously found on the banks of the Ure at Adam Bottoms in 2023 and Gillfield Wood in 2022.

Sieve-winged Snailkiller *Coremacera marginata* is one of the Sciomyzidae (Snail-killing Flies). It was discovered at Marfield wetlands on 21 September 2022 by Ken Limb, which seems to be a first record for VC65.(Source NBN Atlas). In 2023 I found

it at Foxglove Covert Nature Reserve. In 2024 Ken Limb recorded it at Nosterfield Nature Reserve. This year, 2025, it turned up at Weybeck Pasture 11 July 2025 (new to the Yorkshire Dales) then at Redmire Scar on 22 July 2025, which is a first for Wensleydale, and finally near the plant nursery at Nosterfield on 5 September 2025. It is a parasitoid of land snails. There are few records to the north of our area.

Four-spot Wingwaver *Herina lugubris* is a pretty little picture-wing fly that likes calcareous grassland with sparse or short vegetation. I found it to be common at Foxglove Covert on 30 June 2023 (new to VC65) then at Preston Quarry in 2024. In 2025 it was found at Redmire Quarry, Cobscar Rake on lead rakes and Thornton Rust Moor. Here, it is on the northern fringe of its known national distribution. (NBN).

Tufa Springs and Seepages



Tufa springs and seepages such as those at Locker Tarn, Thornton Rust Moor, Addlebrough and elsewhere provide a very important habitat with a unique fauna and flora. Flagship plants include Butterwort, Birdseye Primrose and Grass-of-Parnassus. Recent work shows that they are also of great importance to an assemblage of rare insects with limited dispersal. The combination of water chemistry, clumps of wet moss, granular substrates and constant running water are key elements. Often there is an interesting juxtaposition with more acidic habitats. It is likely that some of these insects have survived; generation after generation for a very long time in these rather isolated micro- habitats. The importance of tufa and other calcareous springs in the Yorkshire Dales cannot be overstated.

Spider Report 2025

Andy Baxter

There were some excellent field trips during the year with YNHS with the usual common finds of *Amaurobius* (Laceweb) *Tetrax denticulata* (Colourful Funnelweb) *Eritagena* (House Spider) *Zygiella x-notata* (Missing Sector Orb web) *Araneus diadematus* (Garden Spider) Walnut Orb Web (*Nuctenia umbratica*) etc.

However the most interesting finds occurred on two separate field trips, the first a personal one to Nosterfield to follow Keith Gittens (Yorkshire Dragonfly Recorder) to see some amazing dragonfly finds but after this event, wandering around I found, amongst some of the common finds above, I was able to locate *Trochosa* sp. hiding under a damp log on some damp lakeside grass (most likely *ruricola*) given the habitat and abdomen markings, common name Large or Rustic Wolf Spider, with BAS classing it as less common in the North.



The most exciting find however is the one photographed left on a moth trapping day by YNU at Redmire Quarry. After helping with some of the collection I decided to wander whilst all the moth'rs were busy classifying samples and ID'ing with the expert help of Charlie, I wandered off in search of more interesting (to me) specimens. And Lo'n'Behold I found one!

Micaria sp. Ant Mimicking Spider. Given markings most likely *subopaca* (microscopy required to be certain) amongst a lot of red and black ants, which at first, I thought it was! BAS confirmed genus. If it was a *subopaca* BAS class them as Nationally Scarce.

I was intrigued as to why ants and to a degree other larger predators such as birds, and larger invertebrates including other spiders, do not attack and eat these spiders, at first thinking it might be the use of pheromones or hydrocarbons to create “chemical repellent” “chemical copying” or even “chemical neutrality”, however, further research has determined they use “Batesian mimicry” combined with “Active Avoidance”.

Batesian mimicry is simply where a harmless species mimics a dangerous one. This means that the *Micaria* have evolved to discourage visual predators, such as birds, and some other spiders, who avoid the *Micaria* spider because they perceive it to be an aggressive or distasteful ant. And by mimicking ant behaviour, i.e. they enhance the

effect of their appearance, by moving like ants, including holding their front legs up to imitate antennae further enhances their appearance as ants. They also practice “active avoidance”. Ants generally have poorer vision than spiders and rely on chemical cues using their antennae, *Micaria* having better vision and will look to keep at least 20mm or 2 cm from an approaching ant just to be on the safe side. As Spock would say.....”Fascinating”

I’ve managed to collect a few more spider books; some donated by Terry Whittaker (YNU) and will be adding to my collection some others. Overall, a great year for invertebrates, *ergo* their predators - spiders. Please, please do not fear these awesome creatures.

Reptile and Amphibian Report 2025

Rose Connor

A disappointing year in terms of members’ sightings being sent to me. My thanks to those of you that did.

2025 sightings of frogs and toads started on March 11th (later than the two previous years) with squashed amphibians on Quarry Lane, Harmby.

31st March. Gaynor James and I went to the Brick Pond, Spennithorne to watch the masses of toads mating especially in the area under the trees and amongst the tall clumps of pond grasses which they seemed to defend from other coupled toads.

Clumps of frog spawn were also seen in the shallows.

Late April onwards. Frogs were seen in my small pond and garden, the best count of eight individuals all grouped together was on August 24th

10th May. Two toads found under wooden planks in Redmire.

29th June. Toadlet on shingle by Hullo Bridge, River Cover.

16th July. Toadlet photographed by Len Shepherd in Ribbleshead Quarry.

24th August Mary Atkins saw an Adder and photographed it up on Starbotton Moor SD9713675596.

Mammal Report 2025

John Drewett

Once again I would like to thank all of those members who submitted records for 2025 – in total 219 were received. Although the focus of members is generally the Dales west of the A1 a number of records in the surrounding area have been included for completeness. Many were submitted via ynhsmammals@btinternet.com which is very helpful to me in ensuring they are not lost among other emails. However, do please note that whilst these are checked occasionally through the year, they only receive my full attention around the year end so my apologies to those who may have asked questions in their emails, but did not receive a reply.

Among the rodents there were four records of Bank Vole, all from Derek Whiteley checking owl pellets and discarded bottles. Derek also provided an excellent set of 14 records of Field Vole reflecting evidence from owl pellet remains, field signs and live sightings: these represent land from the Ure floodplain to Buckden Pike, a range of around 650m in altitude. Derek produced five Wood Mouse records from the Preston, Bolton and West Witton area. There was a single record of a Water Vole on the River

Ure at Redmire in July: if correct, this is a very exciting development, but at this stage further investigations are required.

Twelve Grey Squirrel records were received, mostly from the lowlands, the highest being from Millstone Bank Plantation, Ellingsstring (264m). Twice during the autumn/winter months I watched Grey Squirrel methodically feeding on haws in the tops of Hawthorn trees. No Red Squirrel records were received. Dead Brown Rats were seen on the road at Coverbridge, Gammersgill and Kirkbridge (Crakehall).

Far more records of Rabbit were received in 2025 than in recent years, but it was not clear if this reflected a change of fortune for the species as many of these were sightings of individual animals. Three of the records from Derek refer to black rabbits, one in Wensleydale and two in Swaledale. Records described Rabbits as abundant at Haw Bank, Woodall (but including one with myxomatosis) and very common at Redmire Quarry. Sheila Simms reported finding seven dumped dead near the AA box by Hestholme Bridge; I had a similar experience in 2024 when a large bag of dead Rabbits was discovered hidden in a hedge bottom above Hauxwell.

Brown Hares certainly seem to be doing well in our area with 51 records over the year. Courting, chasing, boxing and mating were all reported as were leverets on several occasions. The largest numbers seen at one time were fifteen near Hackforth and seven at Bulla Moor, Northallerton and at Wensley Park. A number of animals were present in woodland. Interestingly, one Brown Hare was watched accessing the Skeeby solar farm via a 'badger gate' in the security fence. It is not known if the gate was provided for badgers or hares.

Derek found evidence of Common Shrew in owl pellets and discarded bottles in Wensleydale and a long dead specimen in Upper Wharfedale (sniffed out by his dog). The ten records of Hedgehog submitted were all of dead animals on roads in Wensleydale. In addition, I can report at least one live Hedgehog using my garden in Arrathorne. Thirty-one records were made of Moles (actually mole hills), but no live animal sightings appear to have been made during the year. A number of the mole hill reports were from moorland or upland pasture.

Signs of Badger were found at two sites in Wensleydale and one animal was spotted in May crossing the road at night in a residential location in the Richmond area. Unusually, there were no reports of Otter from members in 2025, though I was lucky enough to obtain good views of an Otter feeding on fish in the River Ure near North Stanley on two occasions. There were four reports of Polecat (three of dead individuals at the roadside) in the Hunton / Patrick Brompton / Arrathorne area during the year, strongly suggesting an established population in the area. I spotted the live animal running along the road only 300 m from home on one night! Ferrets are effectively domesticated Polecats and the two species hybridise. This makes it impossible, without genetic testing, to confirm whether those seen are hybrids or pure-bred individuals, but the ecology of both is very similar. The area is certainly typical

Polecat territory; lowland, low to only moderate intensity farmland with good numbers of Rabbits. There were single records of Stoat (Applegarth, Swaledale) and Weasel (Capple Bank). In January and February Derek reported scats from two sites in Wensleydale, but otherwise there were no records of Red Fox during the year.

There were more records of Roe Deer in 2025, mainly in ones or twos, but sometimes in family groups (Roe Deer are NOT herd animals). Records came from the length of Wensleydale with individual records also from Widdale, Coverdale and Swaledale. In May and June males barking loudly were noted on three occasions, two of these being at Stoney Kirks, Whashton when they spotted me carrying out a Woodcock survey! Sightings of an individual Roe Deer were made on several occasions in various parts of the Scorton Wetlands site (which is threatened by a proposed holiday lodge development) and a group of four were seen at the large Skeeby solar farm. No other species of deer were reported during the year. Thanks to Liz Barron, Anne Broadley, Mike Gibson, Sheila Simms, Martyn Wells and Derek Whiteley for their records.

Birding Year 2025

Mary Atkins

An increasing number of members have been posting their bird sightings on the WhatsApp group this year which is good to see. Thanks to you all and, in particular, to those members who also send me their detailed annual spreadsheets (we birders do like our lists!)



Cuckoos over Grinton

Andrew Atkins

Owls have featured highly this year with one member sharing video clips of their box being inhabited by Tawny Owl, other members regularly having Little Owl in their garden and multiple reports of Barn Owl and Short-eared Owl being seen out hunting. Red Kite is now a relatively common sight, along with Buzzard, Kestrel and

Sparrowhawk; and Osprey bred successfully again at Wensley. A couple of members were lucky enough to see Hen Harrier and Merlin.

A good range of waders have been recorded on their upland breeding territories and at lower wetland sites. These include Avocet, Common Sandpiper, Curlew, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Snipe and a passing Whimbrel on the Coverhead Farm visit. Other wetland birds seen were Reed Bunting, Coot, Moorhen, Cormorant, Mute Swan, Grey Heron, Great Crested and Little Grebe, Little and Great White Egret, Canada and Greylag Goose and a selection of ducks – Mallard, Teal, Wigeon, Gadwall, Shelduck, Shoveler, Tufted and Mandarin Duck. Dipper and Goosander were recorded on both the River Ure and Swale, as were Grey and Pied Wagtails, but only one record for Kingfisher this year.



Red Grouse Andrew Atkins

Upland areas were also good for seeing Black Grouse (lekking in the spring), Red Grouse, Red-legged Partridge and Woodcock along with passerines such as Skylark, Stonechat and Meadow Pipit. Farm and woodland birds recorded included Mistle Thrush, Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Woodpigeon, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Siskin and Goldcrest. Garden birds were well represented with Long-tailed

Tit being a highlight for many as they have become much more common over the years and are always a joy to see. Corvids and gulls are often overlooked, the latter in particular as they can be difficult to distinguish when immature, but Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Rook and Raven along with Black-headed, Common, Lesser Black-backed and Great Black-backed Gull were recorded across the area.

The first of the summer warblers was Chiffchaff (17 March) followed by Willow Warbler (31 March), Blackcap (2 April) with Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Garden and Sedge Warbler arriving late April/early May. Sand Martin was the first of the hirundines (26 March) closely followed by Swallow (3 April) and House Martin (6 April) and then the Swifts arrived by the end of April. Nightjar, Wheatear, Redstart and Spotted Flycatcher were all recorded in various locations and Grinton Moor proved to be a good spot for Cuckoos and Ring Ouzels this year.

Perhaps the most notable but, sadly, deceased bird was a Great Grey Shrike, a scarce winter visitor to the UK, found by a member on the Shawl in Leyburn in January. It was still in very good condition so it was brought in for members to see at one of our evening meetings. Other winter visitors included Barnacle Goose, Whooper Swan, Smew, Fieldfare and Redwing.

Barn Owl Diet in Wensleydale

Derek Whiteley

I have been analysing batches of Barn Owl pellets from locations in Wensleydale and Upper Nidderdale

Swinithwaite pellets collected from the floor of a barn in a valley bottom field

Field Vole <i>Microtus agrestis</i>	17
Bank Vole <i>Myodes glareolus</i>	2
Wood Mouse <i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	0
Common Shrew <i>Sorex araneus</i>	1
Pygmy Shrew <i>Sorex minutus</i>	0

A typical small sample in a lowland area with some woodland, but mainly grassland.

Preston-under-Scar pellets collected from the floor of a field barn

Field Vole <i>Microtus agrestis</i>	76
Bank Vole <i>Myodes glareolus</i>	10
Wood Mouse <i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	2
Common Shrew <i>Sorex araneus</i>	43
Pygmy Shrew <i>Sorex minutus</i>	16

This batch collected in early spring represents feeding through the winter. The relatively high proportion of Pygmy Shrews is significant but not unusual for a semi-upland location. I suspect that the owl has been feeding over local moorland. The high proportion of shrews (both species) suggests that times were hard for a while. A Common Shrew provides only about a third of the nutrition provided by an average

Field Vole. Pygmy Shrews provide even less. The low number of Wood Mouse remains is typical for a Barn Owl feeding mainly during daylight hours. Wood Mice are mainly nocturnal and crepuscular.

Angram Reservoir, Upper Nidderdale pellets collected from the floor of a waterworks building

Field Vole <i>Microtus agrestis</i>	51
Common Shrew <i>Sorex araneus</i>	8

This sample is interesting. The predominance of Field Voles is to be expected in upland grassy moorland, but the lack of Pygmy Shrews is surprising. No other species were found. The lack of Bank Voles reflects the lack of woodland, dense scrub and habitats with thick ground cover.



The Field Vole or Short-tailed Vole *Microtus agrestis* is the major diet item of Barn Owls in Wensleydale.

River Ure near The Wisings. Pellets from base of large isolated tree.

Field Vole <i>Microtus agrestis</i>	13
Bank Vole <i>Myodes glareolus</i>	7
Wood Mouse <i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	2
Common Shrew <i>Sorex araneus</i>	4

Another typical lowland diet, but with a relatively high number of Bank Voles for an open landscape.

Little Owls of Wensley Village *Gaby Baxter and Andy Baxter*

Over the past five years, the presence of Little Owls (*Athene noctua*) in our garden has brought delight and fascination. Their regular visits and evolving behaviours have given us a unique opportunity to observe these charming birds up close.



Our observations confirm that the Little Owls roost predominantly in the ruined down barn located across the field in Wensley Village. This longstanding site was their primary refuge, with the structure providing both safety and shelter across the changing seasons. So, years ago we set up a Little Owl box, where they used to roost, but they did not use it for breeding.

In our garden, the old Ash tree stands as a particular favourite. Especially during the autumn and winter months of 2024, the Little Owls explored this tree with interest, frequently seen roosting on its lower branches both during the day and at night. Their presence has become familiar.

The drystone walls that surround the fields are an ideal environment for the owls. It is common to witness their agile flights from branch to wall and back again, as they move about their territory with characteristic grace. The walls not only provide perching spots but also serve as vantage points for hunting and observing their

surroundings. They are so well camouflaged that they are difficult to spot, but once we followed their behaviour, we got to learn their favourite spots.

Early spring 2025 offered an especially memorable sight: the pair of Little Owls engaging in affectionate courtship behaviours. We observed them hugging and kissing, a touching display that we understood as the strength of their bond. These moments have been a privilege to witness.

As the days grew longer, the calls of the owls became a prominent feature of the sunset. Their vocalisations during dusk and dawn were noticeably louder, echoing across the garden and beyond.

We stopped seeing the two Little Owls at the same time, but we saw the Little Owl going in and out of the hollowed Ash tree. The calls were not as loud, but we could see the Little Owl on those lower branches, every single day. It was evident that they had a nest in the tree. The calls with the passing of the days were becoming louder, and the Little Owl had busy days hunting in the meadows, but equally on the short grass competing with the Blackbird. The pellets that we found were mainly of insects. But the most fascinating one was the shiniest pellet as their main consumption was clearly greenbottle flies.

It was fascinating to see three little faces popping from the hollowed tree. We only managed to see them twice. The next view we had were the owlets on those lower branches. We saw the owls for the rest of the year, but only one at the time. Their activities, from courtship to fledging have given us countless moments of joy and connection to the nature. We look forward to observing their behaviours in the years to come, hopeful that the garden will remain a haven for these captivating birds.

The Dilated Woodlouse *Porcellio dilatatus* in Wensleydale **Derek Whiteley**

Porcellio dilatatus is nationally an uncommon synanthropic species associated with manure heaps, farmyards and well-established compost heaps. It is rare in Yorkshire, with only a handful of known records. The nearest record is from Skipton, found by Douglas Richardson in 1984.

An exploration of the old walled gardens at Bolton Hall, Wensleydale for invertebrates on 23 April 2025, revealed a colony under an old tarpaulin in one corner of the lower garden, possibly covering a very old overgrown compost heap. A couple of specimens were collected alive for careful examination and later released.

It can be identified by its large size (for a *Porcellio*) rounded telson (tail) and somewhat flattened appearance. The very pale legs attracted my attention in the field, standing out amongst the other more common species of woodlice.



This is a significant new record for Wensleydale and VC65. It is so rare in Yorkshire that I did not even list it as a local possibility (*Yoredale Bulletin* 2025 page 23)

My thanks go to Tom Orde-Powlett, Lord Bolton, for allowing me access to the private garden.

The Centipede *Cryptops hortensis* in Wensleydale **Derek Whiteley**

Cryptops hortensis is a relatively easy centipede to identify. It has 21 pairs of legs and is a rich chestnut red colour. There are two other species of *Cryptops* that share these characteristics but they are larger and much more scarce. I found some in the walled gardens at Bolton Hall on 23 April 2025 by turning over pieces of discarded wood. The site produced a good list of centipedes, millipedes and woodlice, demonstrating the benefits of leaving some areas of garden unkempt or neglected. These synanthropic habitats would not be normally considered for conservation, yet they can have rich and interesting invertebrate assemblages.

This appears to be a new record for Wensleydale and VC65.

The great Yorkshire myriapodologist Douglas Richardson summarised the status of *Cryptops hortensis* in Yorkshire. “So far it has turned up in woodland and synanthropic sites in the south and south-west. Perhaps a limited distribution in the county –not that common” (Richardson 1993, YORKSHIRE CENTIPEDES. *Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group* Vol.9 p5-19).

A search of more recent records on the NBN Atlas and *iRecord* indicates little change, with no records for Wensleydale or VC65. Nationally its main distribution is southerly. There are only a handful of records further north from here.

Yoredale Natural History Society					
Provisional Accounts End of 2025, 2024					
INCOME (£s)			2025	2024	
Subscriptions			1910.00	1295.00	
Donations			- 20.00	60.00	
Swaledale Festival & gifts			80.00	100.00	
Total Income for the year			2010.00	1455.00	
EXPENDITURE (£s)			2025	2024	
Bank Charges	inc act charges		48.00	68.00	
Rent Methodist Hall			200.00	200.00	
Speakers fees(inc. charity don.) + summer visits don.			350.00	325.00	
Bulletin Printing			273.00	435.00	
Website	3yr		518.40	47.40	
Committee Members' Expenses			81.56	100.11	
Yorkshire Nats Union sub			30.00	30.00	
British Wildlife subscription			44.00	44.00	
Winter Prog. Card Printing			57.00	61.00	
Insurance			291.63	287.00	
Total Spent This Year			1893.59	1597.51	
Surplus for Year			116.41	142.51	
Bank Balance at Year Start			2557.94	2700.45	
Plus Year,s Surplus			116.41	142.51	
Bank Balance at Year End			2674.35	2557.94	
Petty cash at year start			24.70	34.50	
Petty cash at year end			107.50	24.70	

Yoredale Natural History Society 46th Annual General Meeting.

Held in Leyburn Methodist Church Hall Friday 25th April 2025 at 7 30pm.

Apologies; Robert and Margie Hall, Jo Scorrer, Jennie White, Caroline Stott, Jane and Paul Graham, David Meek and Sue Peckitt.

Present; 42 members.

The minutes from the last AGM were accepted as a true record.

Chair's Report; Anne as usual would like to thank everyone for all their hard work and it is very much appreciated. Derek for the Bulletin, Andy for being Vice Chair, Paul for his meticulous accounts and Ken for auditing them. Chris for keeping us all up to date with the changes within our membership. Jane for making the necessary changes for our website. Caroline and Gaby for planning and arranging a good variety of events throughout the year. Liz for providing the minutes to our meetings. Len and

Ken for their stunning photography. Another thank you goes to all our Recorders and compiling the necessary information to the various national data bases. All committee members and volunteers for their articles for the Bulletin and its distribution. Also for those who set up the hall and help with refreshments. A massive thank you to Paul and Chris for the extra work involved with the increase in subscriptions but it still remains good value for money.

We have had a busy and successful year for the Society. Interesting field events including a plant nursery at Nosterfield, two farm trips to Long Preston and Coverhead estate and trapped moth surveys to mention a few. Also supporting the Swaledale Festival with two guided walks. The winter programme has also produced a good variety of interesting people and their passions, owls, creepy crawlies and subjects regarding our changing countryside for whatever reason. In summary it can be seen we can produce a year of many topics and interests. We have an exciting summer of events to look forward to. Anne was aware maybe her December quiz didn't suit everybody so for December 2025 Derek will be the quizmaster.

We are being hosts for the AGM of the YNU on Saturday 8th November it is an exciting and honourable opportunity to show other like-minded people what we have to offer and how well our Society is doing.

Secretary's Report; I think we are all pleased with how well our Society is doing. We have had some exceptional attendances on both our winter talks and field events. The help and support with setting up and arrangements for the hall and helping with refreshments is much appreciated when we have some good attendances. On the whole the group emails seems to be working well and members like the reminders. I just experience the odd glitch now and again and it seems to be when I include attachments, it's as though the recipients can't/ won't accept the size of data.

Treasurer's Report; Paul thanked Ken for auditing the accounts. It was evident we needed some changes as we need approximately £1500 to cover fixed costs. After much discussion with various suggestions the committee agreed to increase the subscriptions for 2025 to £15 and hopefully this will remain for the foreseeable future. With a lot of hard work Chris and I have managed to get all present members paying the new subscription.

Membership Secretary's Report; at the time of Chris's report we have 115 members and 2 preparing to join. Well done everyone for changing your standing order. Some members who didn't want to increase the amount or couldn't get to meetings were either offered a refund and some gave their last payment as a donation. Chris hopes we all continue to enjoy the activities provided.

Election of Officers; Andy is stepping down as Vice Chair. The rest of the Officers are willing to continue. Anne Readshaw proposed Gaby Baxter as Vice Chair

seconded by Liz Barron. All other Officers were proposed and seconded by those present. They are as follows;

Chair Anne Readshaw

Secretary Liz Barron

Treasurer Paul Hardill

Membership Secretary Chris Meek

Field Secretary Caroline Stott

Winter programme Gaby Baxter

Editor of Bulletin Derek Whiteley

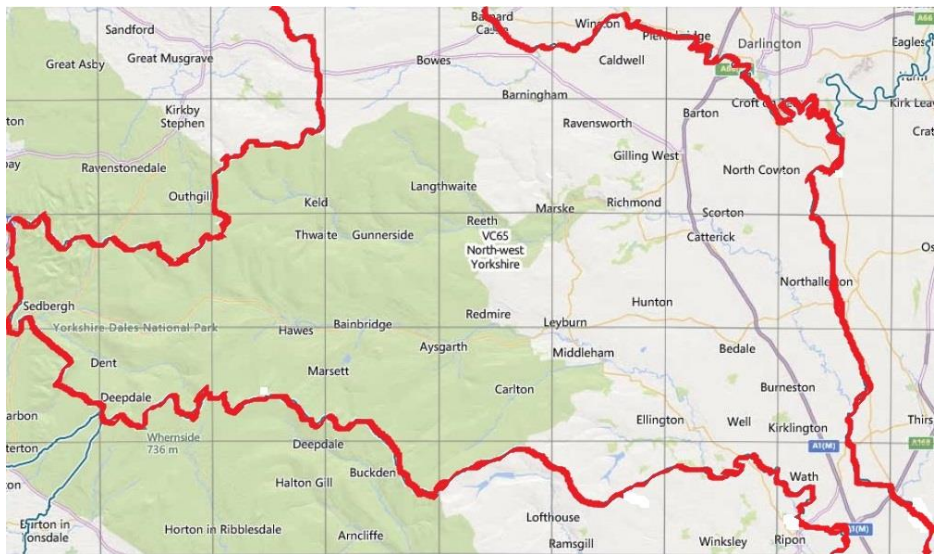
Web master Jane Graham.

Committee members; Jennie White, Len Shepherd, Deborah Millward and Sheila Simms. Members present were asked if anyone was interested in any roles or like to join the committee. If they prefer they can approach any committee member at any time. **Recorders.** Do not need to be elected but even so Anne wished to thank them for all that they do.

A.O.B. Following on from a committee meeting we would now like everyone to sign in for all events. This not only helps for H & S and insurance purposes but also one way of getting to know our ever growing member numbers. No further business so meeting closed.

A presentation on *Mountain Hares* followed, by Derek Whiteley.

Liz Barron (Secretary)

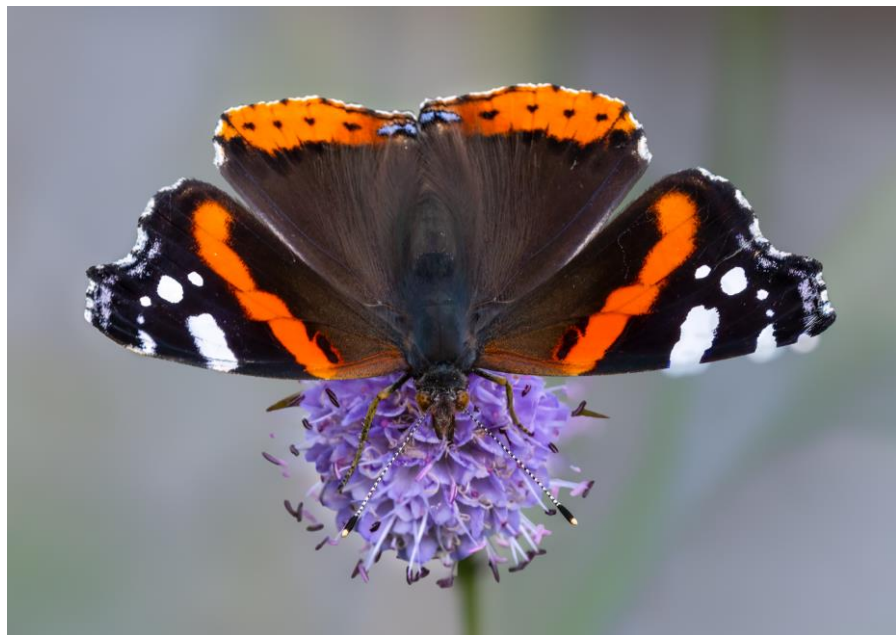


Yoredale Natural History Society records species in VC65 North-west Yorkshire, with a special focus on Wensleydale (Yoredale), Swaledale and their catchment areas. Members are encouraged to send records to the Society's Recorders.



Ring Ouzel

Andrew Atkins



Red Admiral at Ballowfields

Ken Readshaw