



## Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Natural Sciences Committee

Charity 224018

**The twenty third meeting of the Natural Sciences Committee was held at RHS Harlow Carr, from 11.30am to 12.45pm on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2012.**

Present: Andy Godfrey (Chair), Paula Lightfoot (Secretary), Chris Young, Colin Howes, Dave Chesmore, Gordon Bristowe, John Bowers, John Wint, Mark Seaward, Michael Archer, Joyce Simmons, Paul Simmons, Peter Flint, Sharon Flint, Margaret Atherden, Terry Crawford, Terry Whitaker, Craig Thomas, John Wood, Geoffrey Fryer, Colin Howes, David Lindley, Andy Millard, Jim Pewtress, Anita Glover, Mike Denton, Roger Key, Mick Carroll, Bill Ely, Albert Henderson, John Mather, Ian Instone, Georgina Instone, Vicky Kindemba, Anne Heathcote.

*Apologies for any omissions or errors, this is based on the signing in sheet that was circulated during the meeting and may not be complete.*

Apologies: Bill Curtis, Andrew Grayson, Janetta Lambert, Adrian Norris, Jill Warwick, Simon Warwick, Sarah West, Steve Worwood.

### **Minutes**

#### 1. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes and actions of the meetings held at St Chad's on the 15<sup>th</sup> September have been distributed via e-mail and can also be downloaded from the [YNU website](#). These were agreed as a true record of the meeting and all actions were completed except for:

**RK – investigate opportunities for YNU to be involved in Natural England funded Field Studies Council Project to develop skills and capacity in the volunteer recording community. Carried over, PL to provide contact details.**

#### Matters arising:

Terry Whitaker offered to help add grid references to the VC Excursions Index after Christmas. Some excursions will need several grid references for the same year, as the surveys took place on different sites as part of the same excursion.

**TW – contact Simon Pickles about this**

#### 2. Replacement of Chair and review of Natural Sciences Committee remit

Adrian Norris has stepped down as Chair of the NSC and we need to appoint a new Chair, ideally before we print next year's Membership Card.

At the previous two NSC meetings in April and September there were discussions about the remit of the NSC, which resulted in the following recommendations being made to the Executive in October:

- To make it a totally open forum rather than a committee with appointed members.
- To change the name to the Natural Sciences Forum. This will entail changing the YNU's constitution, which can be done at the Conference in March.
- To welcome to meetings any YNU members wishing to contribute ideas for the development of the YNU.

- The focus and aim of the Natural Sciences Forum will remain the same – to ensure the YNU achieves its charitable objectives of studying and recording the natural history of Yorkshire and disseminating its knowledge to others.
- Not to duplicate work of other groups, such as the Education Committee or the Editorial Board of the Naturalist.
- Discussions must result in actions, which will be minuted and followed up at the next meeting. It will not be a ‘talking shop’. Time limits may be set for agenda items in advance.
- Anyone can propose items for the agenda, but some key developments the NSC could take forward in 2013 include:
  - Online recording
  - Structure of Sections and appointment of Recorders
  - Digitisation of historical data and Excursions Index
  - Targeted surveys to fill gaps
  - Structured surveillance and monitoring
  - Supporting and steering work of new Biological Records Officer (with YHEDN)
  - Setting up and developing other habitat-based Sections
  - Organising a YNU ‘taster day’ to demonstrate what we do to a wider audience
  - Publication of county atlases

The Executive has discussed this recommendation. Their view is that if this is what the NSC wants, they agree with it and will co-opt the new Chair as a member of the Executive.

The rights of attendance must be made clear – it was proposed that meetings should be open to all members, including members of affiliated societies, non members can attend but have no voting rights. Regardless of whether the NSC changes its format, it needs a strong Chair. The option of appointing a different Chair at each meeting was discussed but this would be a last resort – the Chair should drive the agenda and represent participants’ views and wishes to the Executive. Peter Flint agreed to take on the role of Chair for one year – this was greeted with thanks and agreed *nem. con.*

The proposal to change the Natural Sciences Committee to an open forum while retaining the same focus and aims was put to the vote – there were 15 in favour, 7 against and 13 abstentions. It was agreed to take forward the recommendations.

**Executive – circulate proposal to change the constitution before the Conference**

**PL – ask Claire to add this information to the Membership Card**

### 3. YNU Sections and Recorders

While setting up the new website, the issue was raised that the pages are not organised taxonomically, i.e. some groups are presented on the same page simply because they have the same recorder. Other arthropods appear on the insect page.

The YNU’s distinguishing feature is its taxonomic expertise and its biological recording activity. The website is the first impression that many people get of the YNU, so it should:

- be organised according to taxonomic divisions at an appropriate level
- each page should contain information about the species group
- each page should tell recorders where to send records of this species group
- take account of public interest in certain groups such as butterflies, bumblebees or dragonflies, perhaps by providing more information, links and photos.

In many cases (e.g. molluscs, mammals) no changes are needed. However it would make sense to review the Entomological Section for gaps and to add information to fill

those gaps, appointing recorders where possible. It could be renamed the Arthropod section but this is not very catchy! It could be renamed the Invertebrate section, but molluscs have their own section. It was agreed that where the same recorder covers two orders that are not closely related, they could appear on two separate pages.

Plant galls appear under insects but are not always caused by insects – should they appear on the plant page or they could even have their own page? .

**PL - ask Claire to take forward this review of the website in consultation with relevant section heads**

Some gaps were identified during the meeting, e.g. Hirudinea, Collembola.

It was reported that the Butterfly and Moths page has mysteriously disappeared from the YNU website recently (this has now been reinstated 24/11/2012 - PL).

The Lichen checklist has not been transferred from the old website to the new website.

**PL – ask Claire to look into this urgently and to check that all other downloadable documents have been transferred.**

#### 4. Online recording for the YNU

The Executive agreed to apply for funding under the third and final round of the OPAL Grants Scheme to add online recording to the YNU's website. The theme of this round of funding was 'looking to the future', helping societies to improve the way they work in the long term. They felt our proposal was a good fit to this theme and have awarded us £1,590 which will cover the cost of developing online recording to our specification. This will enable YNU members and other naturalists in Yorkshire to enter wildlife records directly into the YNU website, with photographs if they wish.

The online recording forms will be developed using Indicia software and will be linked to the Biological Records Centre's iRecord site ([www.brc.ac.uk/iRecord](http://www.brc.ac.uk/iRecord)). Other organisations which use Indicia-based online recording systems linked to iRecord include the Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Scheme, the Orthoptera Recording Scheme, the Mammal Society, North East Cetaceans Project, the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat and British Dragonfly Society.

We would aim to set this up next spring, and to consult with Section Heads over the winter to ensure that the data entry forms meet their requirements.

The benefits will be:

- Flexibility – different sections can have different forms, for example invertebrate forms might include a field for life stage but not abundance, while plant forms might include abundance. You can also have a generic form for entering lots of different taxa recorded at the same site.
- Photographs can be kept as part of the records – and can be searched by taxonomy, date and location.
- Accuracy – can pinpoint location on an interactive map down to 10m squares.
- This could bring more visitors to the website more regularly, raising the profile of the YNU and possibly even increasing membership.
- It will be a good way to ensure people carry on recording after attending training courses.
- A good way for recorders to manage their own records – they can produce reports of their own data, and see their records in the context of other records.
- Can link species records to habitats
- Data security – records are stored at the Biological Records Centre and backed up daily.

- Data sharing, in accordance with the YNU's published data policy. Records are shared with national recording schemes and local records centres.
- Verification – records can be verified by YNU experts where available, and will also be made available to experts outside the YNU.

Automated verification rules developed by organisations including the British Arachnological Society, Butterfly Conservation, Hoverfly Recording Scheme, BTO, BSBI and the Mammal Society have been incorporated into iRecord to help experts highlight records of species that are outside their known geographic range or flight period or which are inherently difficult to identify.

- YNU recorders will get access to records captured through other online recording systems, not just our own.

Key things to note:

- It won't be suitable for all taxa. British Lichen Society already have a system of recording on spreadsheets which works very well for them, and identifying lichens from a photograph is often impossible.
- Many species cannot be identified from photographs. However it might be possible to identify them to genus level if not species level, and to accept records without a photo if the recorder is known to the verifier.
- Online recording does not bypass county recorders or local records centres, it's just another way of getting records to them. It will work alongside sending paper records, using email, MapMate or other systems.

The issue was raised that online recording apps for smartphones often generate records with incorrect grid references due to the phone's GPS. The YNU's online recording system will be via the website only, it will not include a smartphone app. It was suggested that a review of smartphone apps for online recording or species ID would make an interesting article for the *Naturalist*.

**Editorial Board – seek potential contributors for an article on this topic**

## 5. Correspondence / Announcements

- 5.1 Proposal for survey week in Swaledale (based Reeth/Grinton), focussing on under-recorded areas including Gilling West, Scotch Corner SW, Marrick Moor, Reeth High Moor and Muker Moor. Monday 1st July to Saturday 6th July, to coincide with the VC65 meeting in Nosterfield. Terry Whitaker, Terry Crawford and Adrian Norris will all liaise with John about this, and the event will be publicised in the Membership Card and on the website.

**All – anyone wishing to take part in the survey, please contact John Newbould on [johna72newbould@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:johna72newbould@yahoo.co.uk)**

- 5.2 **YNU Conference 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2013** at the National Science Learning Centre, University of York on the subject of Using Yorkshire's Biological Data. John Bowers and the rest of the Education Committee are coordinating this, still waiting for confirmation from a couple of speakers. Although we don't have a full programme, this should be publicised in the next *Naturalist* to maximise opportunities for people to book.

**JB - Write a brief announcement for the next *Naturalist* to include the date, venue, theme, cost for members and non-members, information on the speakers who have confirmed, and Claire's contact details for taking bookings.**

**PL – pass this to Claire to add it to the website and set up online booking**

- 5.3 **Whitby Bioblitz 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> June 2013.** The Whitby Naturalists are celebrating their Centenary next year, and one of the main events will be a Bioblitz. They would welcome participation from YNU, either leading activities, taking part in surveys or helping with identification 'behind the scenes'. This will appear in the Membership Card and the next *Naturalist*.
- 5.4 **Royal Entomological Society Insect Festival, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2013,** York Museum Gardens. This is a major biennial public event, attracting 3-4000 visitors last year and is a significant opportunity to promote the work of the YNU. Only moths and Hymenoptera were represented last year. Dave Chesmore will attend again and will try to get other YNU entomologists to take part. Paula Lightfoot will help man the stand and show visitors how to put their insect records into the YNU's website.

6. Any other business

The question was raised about whether the library can accept back issues of the *Naturalist*. Chris Young stated that the library does not currently have a complete set of *Naturalists* and he will circulate a list of those which are missing. Regrettably, there is no space in the library for any more copies of issues that are already held. Copies could be made available free of charge to any members who want them.

The Bird Section has just had all the Bird Reports from 1970 to 2005 scanned, these will be available to download from the website. This cost just over £200. The *Naturalist* is already on microfilm and microfiche. The Executive has looked into the possibility of selling the rights to digitise and disseminate back issues of the *Naturalist* to a publisher of research databases, such as Ebsco (<http://www.ebscohost.com/about-us>) but has not so far had any success. Some articles are available to download from the Smithsonian.

7. Date of next meeting – Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February at St Chad's, Headingley

***The draft 2013 Membership Card was circulated during the Natural Sciences Committee meeting and the AGM. Corrections and additions have been passed on to Claire Neill and a final version will be circulated to everyone whose contact details are included in the Membership Card.***