

# Yorkshire Naturalists' Union

Charity No 224018

Minutes of the sixteenth meeting of the Natural Sciences Committee held at St Chad's Parish Hall Leeds 10.15am – 12.30pm. Saturday, September 26th 2010

Chairman: Adrian Norris

Secretary: Paula Lightfoot

Present: Roger Key, Terry Crawford, Sharon Flint, Peter Flint, Geoffrey Wilmore, Chris Young, David Lindley, Colin Howes, Geoffrey Fryer, Phyl Abbot, Bill Ely, Leslie Magee, Graham Banwell and Mark Seaward

## 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from John Newbould, Sarah West, Joyce Simmons, Paul Simmons, John Bowers, Margaret Atherdon, Jean Kendrew, Johnny Mather, Michael Archer, David Chesmore, Andy Godfrey and Albert Henderson.

## 2. Minutes of previous meeting 8th May 2010

Minutes of the meeting held at St Chad's on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010 had been circulated and were accepted as a true record.

To improve clarity and reduce printing, items sent for the consideration of the NSC should be emailed as separate attachments or hyperlinks rather than incorporated into the agenda.

Minutes are currently stored only in digital format. In future, one hard copy of the minutes from each meeting should be stored in the library.

## 3. Matters arising

Conference 19<sup>th</sup> March 2011: The keynote speaker will be Professor Alistair Fitter from the University of York and former President of the British Ecological Society. He will be followed by Professor John Rodwell, who will talk about the Yorkshire involvement in the development of plant communities. Stephanie Peay will talk about the changes to the Yorkshire crayfish population. In the afternoon, Dr Margaret Redfern and Tom Higgingbottom will discuss developments in recording plant galls and the Union's role in forming the British Plant Gall Society. Phyl Abbott has been asked to give a talk on Lady's Slipper Orchid in Yorkshire. A speaker from Natural England will speculate on what the future holds, and John Newbould will close with a short valedictory talk on this series of conferences.

Key Union Roles: Please see *Bulletin* 54. The post of General Secretary is still vacant.

For family reasons JAN is unable to continue after 31 March 2011.

## 4. President Elect

The committee welcomed Roger Key as the new President Elect. His nomination received enthusiastic support.

## 5. NBN Trust

Paula Lightfoot is now the NBN Data Access Officer based at the Natural England offices in York and Leeds.

*What are your views on supplying data to the Gateway?*

The committee agreed that the NBN Gateway is a beneficial tool - Terry Crawford commented that collaboration between the NBN and Butterfly Conservation made a large set

of contemporary Lepidoptera data available very quickly. The YNU already provides data to the Gateway via NEYEDC wherever possible. The committee agreed that this is the best route of data supply to avoid duplication and to ensure the datasets are administrated. Some YNU records are submitted to the NBN via the relevant national recording schemes.

It is acknowledged that some recorders are reluctant to share data with anyone, but the YNU is working to overcome this.

*Should the YNU join the NBN Trust?*

This is a decision for the Executive, who will need information on the costs and benefits. Adrian Norris commented that it is positive that the NBN is opening doors and inviting input.

## **6. Field Meetings in 2011**

VC63	Went Ings, Sykehouse	21 <sup>st</sup> May 2011
VC61	Spurn	18 <sup>th</sup> June 2011
VC62	Newtondale	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2011
VC64	Malham Tarn Weekend	29 <sup>th</sup> to 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2011.
VC65	Scammonden Valley	13 <sup>th</sup> August 2011

The field meetings usually run in chronological order. This has been changed for 2011 to accommodate the weekend field meeting in Malham Tarn.

John Newbould suggests asking Melanie Stephenson from the Freshwater Biological Association to provide training in freshwater biology. Sharon and Peter Flint teach a freshwater biology course at Malham and know the site well, they offered to provide training for free. The intention is for the weekend to be a sociable event – there will be a formal meeting on Saturday, but Sunday will be a free day. This event has not yet been widely advertised because Malham Tarn FSC haven't fixed a price, but Terry Whitaker will send out booking forms in due course. The FSC can accommodate about 50 people, and there have already been 15 expressions of interest. The YNU has a block booking for the whole weekend. Some members might stay longer subject to availability of accommodation.

Adrian Norris gave the following report on 2010 field meetings:

	VC61	VC62	VC63	VC64	VC65
Number of members attending	34	31	30	22	20
Number of affiliated societies	21	15	12	13	16

Seven sections were represented at all five meetings, but many have not yet produced reports. Only one bird report has been received (VC64). No botanical report has been received for VC63. No Lepidoptera reports have been received for VC62 or 63. Terry Crawford will produce a report for VC62.

There has been at least one member of the Yorkshire Mammal Group at every meeting, but no mammal reports have been received. Roger Key suggested that the mammal recorder might have sent a report to the mammal section not the VC group. Sending one report to two sections could run the risk of duplicated data being sent to NEYEDC. Graham Banwell asked if small mammal trapping is carried out at field meetings – it is not, which could explain the lack of mammal records, especially if people think it is not worth recording common species.

Colin Howes said that he will send mammal reports for VC63 and 65, and commented that records of common species can provide very useful illustrative information, e.g. the swing of frequency from stoat to weasel after myxomatosis or the demise of the red squirrel. Other sections have been good at supplying mammal records, particularly the molluscan and entomology sections. It might be beneficial to make VC meetings into weekend events to incorporate the use of mammal traps and moth traps. Adrian Norris commented this has been suggested before but the response has been that it is too much work.

Mark Seaward commented that mammal reports have included many negative records, and bird reports have been rather weak. The strongest reports have been the entomological ones, although there are no records of dragonflies in any of this year's entomological reports.

Bill Ely stated that different sections have different methodologies, e.g. entomologists ignore common species and focus on new records – is it worth recording species that you would expect to be present?

Terry Crawford stated that there isn't always a proper procedure in place for collating records at the end of a field meeting and some records are being lost as a result. David Lindley said this used to be better organised; responsibility for data collation was agreed at the start of the meeting so everyone knew who was responsible for writing the report. There is a need for a more formally recognised secretarial/data division.

## **7. Woodland Survey at Castle Howard**

The YNU has been asked to survey the woodland at Castle Howard by Nick Cooke, a member of staff at Castle Howard and former student of Mark Seaward.

This is a very large estate with excellent woodlands. Mollusca have already been well recorded there. It was agreed that a survey would be beneficial if it is aimed at positively influencing the management of the estate. Colin Howes commented that a veteran tree survey would be especially interesting.

It was agreed that this should not be undertaken lightly – it would be a major project involving several sections, with targeted surveys conducted at different times of year. It would require project management from the outset and there would be cost implications. Bill Ely commented that the entomology section had stopped doing things like this because of the administrative burden, e.g. the need to produce risk assessments. David Lindley commented that similar projects, such as the Ripley survey, had failed in the past because the data were not collated and nothing was published.

The project might work if Castle Howard support the work by:

- Providing project management, including carrying out a risk assessment
- Collating data from the different sections and publishing a report
- Joining the YNU
- Covering logistic costs, e.g. surveyors' travel expenses

**Mark Seaward to contact Nick for further information on what Castle Howard would like to gain from the survey and what they are prepared to contribute.**

## **8. BioBlitzes**

The BioBlitz of York Museum Gardens proposed for August 2011 has been postponed until the following year in order to make it into a bigger event.

A BioBlitz is being organised for the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> June 2011 in Scarborough.

This is a joint project between the YNU and OPAL/iSpot, with input from Natural England and NEYEDC. Adrian Norris and Graham Banwell will lead on coordinating fieldwork and liaising with experts, while Sarah West and Caroline Bailes (Natural England National Events Coordinator) will lead on organising public engagement activities. This is the last weekend of half term, so the event could attract large numbers of families. OPAL will handle public liability insurance and deliver/coordinate activities for children. The YNU will not deliver any activities for children.

The YNU will run the overall exhibition on Saturday. It was agreed that this would provide excellent publicity and could increase membership. YNU members will need to be signed in.

The aim is to survey marine and terrestrial habitats in both North Bay and South Bay, therefore experts from a wide range of taxonomic groups are required on all three days. Most expertise should come from within Yorkshire, but some specialist knowledge will be provided by the Natural History Museum. The proposed schedule is:

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|-------------------------------|---|
| Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> June | Survey of North Bay - this will <u>not</u> be advertised to the public because North Bay is a dangerous environment where it is easy to get caught out by the tide.   |
| Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> June   | Survey of South Bay – there will be no organised family activities or displays, but this will be promoted as a public event and anyone can join in the survey. Simon Pickles will provide two RVs equipped with computers and microscopes to process and display data as they are received.   |
| Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup> June | Survey of South Bay and Exhibition – the survey will continue from the previous day, there will be organised family activities such as rockpool rambles, minibeast hunts, botany walks and fossil walks. There will also be an exhibition and ‘wet lab’ at the BioBlitz base, which might be the Spa or possibly a marquee. Members of the public will be encouraged to bring specimens or photos back to the base for expert identification. Knowledgeable people are also required to lead the field work to ensure that common species are identified <i>in situ</i> and not brought back to the base. |

It was agreed that a projecting microscope would be useful at this event, and that the YNU should seek external funding to purchase one. Roger Key stated that microscopes which project a video image in real time are better and less jerky. If funding cannot be sourced, it might be possible to borrow a microscope for the event from Natural England (via Roger Key) or from Sorby Natural History Society or NEYEDC.

Next steps:

- Adrian Norris and Graham Banwell are meeting Scarborough Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> September to discuss a venue for the event and other support.
- Simon Pickles and Graham Banwell will carry out a Phase I survey and decide which experts they need and where they should go. This will enable data to be linked to microhabitats, and will ensure that surveyors are directed to areas where their expertise is most useful.
- Adrian Norris and Graham Banwell are seeking funding to cover costs including a venue, refreshments, publicity and possibly travel and accommodation expenses for experts willing to lead part of the survey.

Adrian Norris stressed the need to have as many experts on hand on all three days as possible, to maximise data collection and ensure that survey efforts are not spread too thinly. Roger Key agreed that a lot of time is spent at BioBlitzes interpreting for the public, and having more experts available should minimise this. Scarborough, Filey, Ryedale and Whitby Naturalists have all agreed to take part.

Bill Ely commented that a Natural History of Scarborough was published in 1956. Could this be made available as a web resource? The University is interested in comparing current data with historical data to evaluate how marine habitats are recovering from the cliff fall.

NEYEDC will handle data collection and mobilisation. It would be ideal to produce a (probably web-based) publication based on the results. Scarborough Museum might put on an exhibition about the BioBlitz afterwards. They have a geologist but no natural historian on their staff at present, so their input will focus on geology. The Sea Life Centre has also agreed to be involved and will help to publicise the event.

The event should attract media coverage, as the OU has very strong ties with the BBC.

The organisers are investigating the possibility of boat trips for diving surveys, bird and cetacean watching. Adrian Norris has contacted Scarborough diving club. Graham Banwell to contact WDCS regarding hydrophones to listen for cetaceans. The possibility of conducting a strandline litter survey using the Marine Conservation Society's methodology was discussed.

It was discussed whether the BioBlitz could be linked with the proposed 'East Coast Survey', however this event is planned for August due to the availability of the experts taking part. It would probably be most beneficial if the East Coast Survey targets other Yorkshire sites than Scarborough, as Scarborough should be quite thoroughly surveyed during the BioBlitz.

Further details will be published in the Bulletin shortly, and any queries should be directed to Adrian Norris. Visit this link for information on BioBlitz resources available:

<http://www.nbn.org.uk/News-and-Events/Biodiversity-news/BioBlitz-resources.aspx>

## **9. YNU Sections**

Adrian Norris reminded everyone that all official meetings are insured by the YNU. If you wish other activities to be insured, please contact the Treasurer. Officers and recorders taking part in recording activities on behalf of the YNU are only insured if the Treasurer or Adrian Norris have been advised of the activity in advance. If an activity has not been publicised on the YNU website (at least 1 month beforehand) or in a YNU publication, it is NOT considered a Union activity for insurance purposes.

To ensure that a recording activity is covered by YNU insurance, e-mail the details to the YNU webmaster at least 5 weeks before the event.

*Should we make some changes to the structure of some sections?*

A – Join the Lichen – Mycological Sections together.

Mark Seaward agreed that there is no need for a separate Lichens section, and that the Mycology and Lichens sections could be joined. There was discussion about the best name for the group: Mycology and Lichenology section, Fungi and Lichens section or Mycological section (including Lichenologists). It was agreed that the section members need to agree on their preferred name and propose to the Executive that this new section be created.

B – Duplication of effort

Several sections are currently covering the same areas under different names, e.g. dragonflies – freshwater – Mollusca etc. It was agreed that some level of duplication is inevitable.

C – Should we have a Marine and Coastal Section?

It was agreed that if there is sufficient interest, a proposal should be put forward to the Executive to start a Marine and Coastal Section.

**Adrian Norris and Paula Lightfoot to put forward this proposal to the Executive and set a date for the first indoor meeting in March 2011.**

#### **10. Any other business**

A request to submit information on areas of heathland or remnant heathland to Simon Pickles at NEYEDC to facilitate the update of Natural England's Heathland Inventory was circulated prior to the meeting.

A list of BAP species and habitats for the proposed 'West Yorkshire/South Pennine Moors' Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Area (IBDA) was circulated before the meeting. Comments or suggestions regarding this species list, particularly regarding the addition of characteristic/indicator species, should be sent to Dr Giselle Murison, West Yorkshire Biodiversity Coordinator, [gmurison@wyjs.org.uk](mailto:gmurison@wyjs.org.uk)

Information on the following projects and funding was circulated before the meeting:

The Environment Agency's use of species data to assist with screening permit applications <http://www.nbn.org.uk/Guidebooks/Business/Business-case-studies/Environment-Agency-Easimaps.aspx>

Recording Invasive Species Counts (RISC) project

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/index.cfm?sectionid=81>

Community Wildlife grants from the Big Lottery Fund

[http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_community\\_wildlife](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_community_wildlife)

Colin Howes advised the committee that 2011 will be the 10 year anniversary of Peter Skidmore's survey of Hatfield Moors. The Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum are considering having a commemorative BioBlitz next summer, date tbc. They would welcome YNU support and are likely to get in touch about this. This would probably be an event in the entomology section's calendar, but input from other sections would be welcome.

Leslie Magee advised the committee about a major conservation project he is involved in at May Moss near Fylingdales on the North York Moors. The Forestry Commission are felling conifers to increase the area of boggy moorland, creating valuable habitat and also reducing flood risk due to run-off. Leslie Magee is conducting ecological surveys of the site, although this is not being done in the name of the YNU. Further information about the project can be found on the Forestry Commission's website:

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/WebNewsReleases/1561C3504381B93F8025762C0032CF02>

Mark Seaward requested the committee's continued support for the publication of Graham Coles' *Botanical History of South Yorkshire* to coincide with the *South Yorkshire Plant Atlas*. Geoffrey Wilmore commented that the *Plant Atlas* will only contain a skeletal history and that simultaneous publication should enhance sales of both books. The *Plant Atlas* is due for publication early in 2011. The committee agreed to support the publication of the *Botanical History of South Yorkshire* as this is an important piece of work and the investment will be recouped through proceeds from sales of the book.

#### **11. Date of Next Meeting**

YNU AGM 20th November 2010, Bingley