

Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
Natural Sciences Committee
Charity 224018

Minutes of the eighteenth meeting of the Natural Sciences Committee held at St Chad's Parish Hall, Leeds 10.15am – 12.30pm Saturday, May 7th 2011

Present: Adrian Norris (Chairman), Paula Lightfoot (Minutes), Geoffrey Wilmore, John Wint, Christopher Young, Michael Archer, Terry Crawford, Albert Henderson, Mick Carroll, Phyl Abbot, Andrew Grayson

MINUTES

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from John Newbould and David Lindley.

2. Minutes of previous meeting 20th November 2010

Minutes of the meeting held at the Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Bingley, Saturday November 20th 2010 had been circulated and were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters arising

Minutes of all meetings from 1-4-2011 will be retained by Paula in paper form in the accountant's file. Older copies will be held in West Yorkshire Archives.

4. E-mail addresses of members of the Union

PLEASE NOTE that due to increased postal costs, future agendas and minutes will be sent by e-mail and made available via the YNU Website. All members have been informed of this by post. Membership Secretary Hannah Droop currently has e-mail addresses for only 20-30% of members.

If you have not already done so, please send your e-mail address to:

membership@ynu.org.uk

This means that Natural Sciences Committee agendas and minutes will be available to the general public via the website. This was deemed not to be a problem as this is not a voting section, however the website working group is exploring the option of creating a password-controlled members area on the new website.

5. Post vacancies:

The post of YNU General Secretary needs to be filled as a matter of urgency.

The Executive have broken the post down into its component duties, some of which have already been adopted (Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Conference Organiser).

It is a statutory requirement to have a General Secretary, even if they don't take on all (or indeed any) of the remaining duties.

The Executive have discussed outsourcing this as a paid role, but no further steps have been taken as it was hoped that someone would volunteer. If no one volunteers, action will need to be taken at the next Executive meeting, but paying a General Secretary will detract from the resources available to finance other YNU business.

A volunteer is needed to take on the role of Programme Secretary. This is an important role, but not time-consuming. It involves asking the Section Chairmen for their programme for the following year, then compiling this for the membership card and the Naturalist in the templates provided. This role does not involve updating the people and contact details in the membership card, which

is handled by the Membership Secretary. This task used to take John Newbould just over half a day.

6. YNU Annual Conference 2011 – Report:

A summary illustrated proceedings will be on the YNU website soon. Printed copies will not be distributed, although could be made available on request.

The Holiday Inn Garforth was an acceptable venue with regard to access, but the Executive room was small compared to Executive rooms we have had elsewhere. There were too many corridors with steps, the pillars in the conference room complicated seating arrangements, and the exhibition area was not big enough. There were problems with the projection.

Hannah Droop coordinated bookings, which worked well.

Annual Conference in 2012

This will be held at York University on the theme of Brownfield Sites.

Sarah West will organise the venue and the programme of speakers, possibly in collaboration with Peter Mayhew of York University. Offers of support from YNU members will be very welcome.

A Conference Manager is needed to take responsibility for coordinating the conference logistics, such as putting together delegate packs and arranging the layout of exhibition space. John Newbould spent around 4-5 days on this in the run-up to the conference. The Conference Manager needs to be on site until at least 7.00pm Friday to make sure everything is set up and from 8.00am on Saturday until the room is empty around 6.00pm. Students might volunteer to assist the Conference Manager with administrative tasks in return for free places at the conference.

If no one volunteers for the role of Conference Manager, the University of York Conference Office could help but this would incur a cost. The proposed venue is the National Science Centre which could host around 150 delegates, has a very convenient exhibition area outside and plenty of free parking at the weekend. Catering facilities are excellent. AV facilities are included and York University could provide an AV technician if required, although this would incur a cost. PowerPoint presentations should be received a week before the conference to check compatibility of formats.

7. The Changing face of the YNU

- Publications and Reports.

The new *Naturalist* has been received by members. There are a few typing errors, as there have been in previous editions, but members agreed that the new format works well. Uniting the Bulletin and *Naturalist* is still a work in progress, and comments to the editorial board are welcome.

A draft style guide was tabled for field meeting reports in the *Naturalist* and on the YNU website. The aim is not to stifle contributors' individual style or to produce uniform reports, merely to provide guidance to help people structure their reports. The style guide will be handed out at the first field meeting on the 21st May.

Feedback on the style guide should be given to Adrian Norris or Albert Henderson.

- John Newbould suggests that the Freshwater Biology Section of the YNU ask Stephanie Peay to train members in Crayfish Recording. There is a big project, which may well encourage new people to join.
- The YNU has joined the NBN as Bronze members. YNU members who submit their records to NEYEDC or to a national recording scheme such as Butterfly Conservation or BSBI are contributing data to the NBN Gateway. If members do not share their data through one of these channels they cannot be used for research, education or conservation.
- The 2011-2015 strategy adopted by the NFBR at their annual conference in April was tabled and a copy circulated with these minutes.

8. YNU Website

The Executive agreed that it would be beneficial to re-design the website as part of the promotional activities for the YNU's 150th anniversary, and a budget has been allocated to this with match funding from the Ornithological Section.

A working group consisting of John Wint, Jill Warwick, Paula Lightfoot, Hannah Droop, Craig Thomas and Paul Simmonds has been set up to take this project forward. The group initially shared ideas via e-mail on:

- What should the website aim to achieve?
- What content is essential?
- Which other websites could serve as good models?
- How should content be updated?

The group then met on the 7th March at York University to discuss these ideas and agree on the key points for inclusion in a design brief being drafted by Craig Thomas.

Adrian Norris stressed the importance of having an informal report with photos on the website immediately after each field meeting.

It was suggested that species' names in reports on the website could incorporate a hyperlink to a photo and more information about that species (e.g. on ARKive) or that NBN web services could be used to import current distribution maps for each species.

9. 150th anniversary celebrations 2011

Scarborough BioBlitz

Publicity leaflets have been printed. Many offers have come in from naturalists to help identify species and lead public groups during the event. Scarborough Sub Aqua Club will be diving to record marine wildlife, if conditions allow.

Malham Weekend

There are now only a few places left, so members should book now if they wish to take part in the anniversary dinner.

10. Education programme and training.

The training for Leeds University students was successful, but it was a very intensive week. Steve Compton at Leeds University is keen for this to continue. Terry Crawford might be able to liaise with Steve Compton informally over the next few weeks to ensure the University takes responsibility for coordination next year, so that the YNU need only to supply experts. It is challenging to take students out for just a day or two in the field as their level of taxonomic knowledge is low – these are really just taster sessions and the main aim is to generate enthusiasm. These courses have attracted new younger members to the Union. Education is part of the YNU's charitable remit.

In addition to the existing programme, John Newbould will organise an Excel training day on Saturday 24th September. This will cover the basics of Excel in the context of using the software for biological recording.

On Sunday 25th September, John's son will deliver an advanced Excel course covering more advanced formulae, sorting and filtering data and using pivot tables. Participants will need an understanding of basic Excel, and a laptop with Office 2007 and a mouse. Datasets can be provided if participants do not have their own data.

11. Checklist of the Yorkshire Fauna

A working group was set up to get checklists for as much of the Yorkshire flora and fauna as possible onto the YNU website by 2011. There are currently 16 checklists on the website and other checklists are nearing completion. The main gaps are algae and marine fauna, but the BioBlitz will be a good starting point to fill these gaps.

Colin Howes has produced an extensive bibliography of the YNU's publications on marine matters, this will be added to the website.

This working group can be wound up now, with thanks to all who participated, as it has achieved its aim. Many outstanding checklists are at present outside the knowledge and capability of our present membership. A useful next step would be to add hyperlinks from species names to photographs and distribution maps.

The group discussed whether future atlases should be web-based or paper based. The advantage of web-based atlases is that they are interactive and can be updated regularly.

The following websites were cited as good examples:

Staffordshire Ecological Record's online atlases:

<http://www.staffs-ecology.org.uk/atlas/atlas.php>

Essex Field Club's species information portal:

<http://www.essexfieldclub.org.uk/portal>

12. Any other business

YNU badge on iSpot

The YNU now has a 'badge' on iSpot, the species identification website run by the Open University and OPAL. This 'badge' appears next to the user's name every time they add an observation, make an identification or agree with someone else's identification – and each time it acts as a link back to our website.

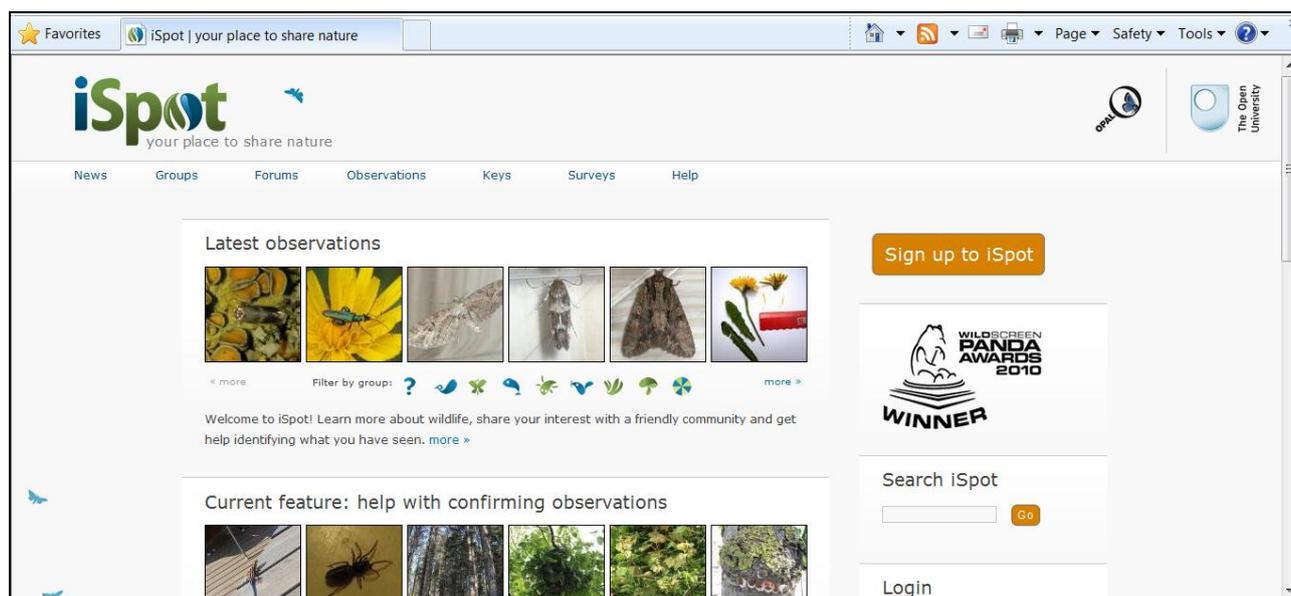
This has significant potential for promoting the YNU as there are over 8,000 registered users on iSpot and over 300,000 unique visitors to the site since its launch in June 2009.

Over 35,000 species observations have been made. These are validated and verified by the relevant recording schemes and made publicly available via the NBN Gateway.

There are over 40 organisations represented on iSpot including BTO, British Lichen Society, British Plant Gall Society, the Dipterists Forum and BSBI.

Please help promote the YNU by following these simple steps:

- 1) Go to www.ispot.org.uk
- 2) Click on 'Sign up to iSpot' on the top right of the screen to set up a user name and password.



- 3) Fill in the registration form and click 'create new account' – there are 7 fields but only 2 are compulsory, you can leave the rest blank if you wish:

User name	Compulsory - but does not need to be your real name. Many people use a species name!
E-mail address	Compulsory - but is not visible to anyone else and you do not receive any SPAM.
First name	Not compulsory – you can leave these fields blank if you wish.
Last name	
Location/hometown	
Field of interest	
How did you hear about iSpot?	

- 4) Log in to iSpot when you have a few minutes spare, look at the observations and suggest or agree with identifications.

NVC survey of Nethergill Farm

Wharfedale Naturalists would like Haycock and Jay Associates to carry out an NVC habitat survey of Nethergill Farm and have asked the YNU if they will contribute £500 towards the total cost of £1,232. The owners are conservation-minded and would like to use the data to inform environmentally sensitive management of the farm. This will be put to the Executive committee.

Thorne Moor Survey Day

10th – 11th June a Thorne Moor survey day celebrating the work of Peter Skidmore.

Foxglove Covert LNR 10th Anniversary

Foxglove Covert at Catterick is 10 years old and is celebrating with an open day on Saturday 23rd July. Proceedings will be officially opened by David Bellamy.

<http://www.foxglovecovert.org.uk/events/>

Yorkshire Dales Habitat Management Group

This NERC-funded group within Leeds University have asked the YNU to write material for their website. Some members have already agreed to write articles.

If anyone would like to write a short article or paper on habitats they are surveying in the Dales, please pass this to Adrian to pass to Tom Walker at the University.

Bird Report 2009

This is now with the printers, and is due to be distributed to members by the printers from w/c 16th May. The YNU library does not have a full set of Bird Reports, efforts are being made to source back copies to fill gaps.

Library at NEYEDC

NEYEDC might have to move out of their current office at St William's College, but if they do they will take the YNU library with them. All members may use the library. There is a charge of £1 per year to borrow items, to comply with to Charities Commission regulations.

YNU equipment register

Funding received for the BioBlitz enabled the YNU to buy ID guides and equipment, including a bird mike, projecting microscope with minicam and laptop, sweep nets and rockpool nets. An inventory has been compiled to keep track of equipment and enable people to book it out.

13. Date of next meeting:

17th September 2011