

## **1.Membership Renewal**

The AGM last March voted to increase the membership fee to £15. This increase will do much to help preserve the standard of evening talks. The admission fee for a single lecture for non-members rises to £4.

There are 3 possible ways of renewing your membership this year:

1. Make a bank transfer to the Society's account (£15 per person) – Account No. 34055789, Sort Code 01-04-69. Enter your Surname as Reference.
2. Fill in the attached (or enclosed) Renewal Slip and send a cheque by post.
3. Come to the first meeting (Oct 5<sup>th</sup>) and pay then, by cash or cheque.

Membership Cards may be collected at indoor meetings.

Alan Thompson (Newsletter Editor). Email [alanlakeport@btinternet.com](mailto:alanlakeport@btinternet.com) Tel 80471

## **2.Lecture Programme for 2017 – 2018**

*Indoor meetings are at 7.30pm in Crosthwaite Parish Rooms*

**Oct 5<sup>th</sup>**      **2017**  
**Spain – Where Griffons Soar**  
Keith Offord

From the orchids and snow-covered spires of the Pyrenees to the rolling plains and woodlands of Extremadura, Spain is arguably one of the finest wildlife destinations in Europe. It is also a major migration route to Africa. We are fortunate to have been able to book Keith Offord once again whilst he is in Cumbria and, like his many other talks to our society over the years, he will undoubtedly captivate with his knowledge, enthusiasm, clarity and wonderful photography.

**Oct 19<sup>th</sup> Ring Ouzels**  
Chris Rollie

Chris is of course another of our favourite speakers. He will be again making the trip from Dumfries and Galloway where he is the RSPB's Area Manager. Longstanding members may recall that Chris talked to us about ring ouzels 20 years ago and this is an opportunity to discover the latest about this fascinating bird. Chris last spoke to us about ospreys and before that golden eagles and we are assured of another excellent talk from him.

**Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> Freshwater Pearl Mussels**  
Roger Sweeting

Although the freshwater pearl mussel's distribution ranges across parts of Britain, the rest of Europe as well as North America, it is very much an endangered species. Roger is an Honorary Research Fellow at the Freshwater Biological Association and is involved in a restoration programme for the pearl mussel. He has in the past worked for Thames Water, the National Rivers Authority and the Environment Agency and is also Chairman of South Cumbria Rivers Trust. In this talk he will share his expert knowledge of the lifestyle and current status of this intriguing species.

**Nov 16<sup>th</sup> The Wonderful World of Ferns**  
Trevor Pearce

Trevor will define what is, and what is not, a fern, and go on to consider the great variety of ferns that we find in this country and overseas, fern natural history and folklore, and the Victorian craze for ferns that has left a legacy that includes many fern books, fernware (pottery, glassware etc. decorated with fern designs) and the British Pteridological Society which began in the Lake District and celebrated its 125th anniversary last year.

**Nov 30<sup>th</sup> Cumbria's Wildlife – Past, Present and Future**  
David Harpley

David is Conservation Manager at Cumbria Wildlife Trust, responsible for a conservation team of about 25 staff. Focussing mainly on Mammals and Birds, his talk will discuss some of the species that no longer live in the county, look at the reasons for their extinction and look at some of the returning species. He will also look at some invasive species and have a peek into some possible future species.

**2018**

**Jan 11<sup>th</sup> Vancouver Island**  
Roy Atkins

Vancouver Island, off Canada's rugged west coast, is extremely rich in wildlife, including bears, whales and a wealth of birds. Roy has visited us twice before, giving us excellent talks on Scottish wildlife and before that Antarctica. He runs many wildlife tours for Speyside Wildlife Holidays, travelling to many far flung places and has visited Vancouver Island several times.

**Jan 25<sup>th</sup> UK Butterflies not (yet!) in Cumbria**  
Steve Doyle

Steve last spoke to us 3 years ago, his subject then being Cumbrian Butterflies; before that he also described the reintroduction of the Marsh Fritillary into Cumbria. The distribution of butterflies in Britain is changing rapidly with climate change and it seems appropriate to hear about the country's butterflies which we do not at present see in Cumbria as in some cases it may only be a matter of time. Either way, Steve has some spectacular shots of species such as Swallowtail, Purple Emperor etc. and he can give information on where to see such species and when.

**Feb 8<sup>th</sup> Recent Studies on Cumbrian Insects**  
Steve Hewitt

Steve was formerly Keeper of Natural Sciences at Tullie House Museum and spoke to us in 2013 about the range of insects (one of his areas of expertise) which can be found in Cumbria. Latterly he has been Research Fellow in Entomology at the National Museums of Scotland. Cumbria has a rich insect fauna with many specialist species occurring in the diverse habitats of the county. Steve will talk about his recent investigations into some of the fascinating insects of Cumbria, from montane species on the summit of Skiddaw to tiger beetles among the sand dunes of Ravenglass. With climate change, the insect world is changing rapidly and Steve will describe some of the changes we are seeing in Cumbria in his talk.

**Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> Bringing Cumbria's Bogs back to Life**  
Keeley Spate

Natural England are running a project (called "BogLIFE") restoring lowland raised bog sites in Cumbria. Lowland raised bog is one of Western Europe's rarest and most threatened habitats with 94% of it having been destroyed or damaged in the UK through commercial peat extraction and drainage. Cumbria has almost half of what remains in England. Cumbria BogLIFE is a five year EU funded project being run by Natural England, which will restore over 500ha of this threatened habitat across the county. Keeley will talk about exactly what lowland raised bogs are and why it is so important to conserve them. We will hear about the techniques Natural England are using to restore the bogs, as well as learn about the unique wildlife that makes its home on the peat bog.

**Mar 8<sup>th</sup> AGM followed by an illustrated talk by Carol Minks**

## **2.Field Outings 2017-2018**

**Tony Marsh is the contact for all outings. Please get in touch by email at [marshlambl@aol.com](mailto:marshlambl@aol.com) (or if you're not on email tel. 07974909522) with him by the day before the outing so that he can ensure enough places are available in cars for members without transport or where car-sharing is needed due to lack of parking space at the venue. Where cars are shared we recommend drivers are reimbursed on the basis of 20p per mile divided between each occupant. Guests are welcome but we regret no dogs.**

### **Thursday 23rd Nov 2017 Caerlaverock WWT reserve**

*(Full day, moderate walking on flat tracks)*

Wonderful spectacle of wild swans being fed within a few feet of hide window plus lots more winter wildfowl.

9.00 am at Filling Station Cafe or 10.30 am at the reserve car park Grid Ref: NY 051 656

**NB. There is an entrance fee for non-members of WWT (presently £5.40)**

### **Thursday 5th April 2018 Leighton Moss RSPB reserve**

*(Full day, moderate walking on flat tracks)*

Flagship RSPB reserve near Arnside, guaranteed Marsh Harriers and always a chance of Otters and Bittern.

9 am at Filling Station Cafe or 10.15 am at the RSPB reserve car park. Grid Ref: SD 476 750

### **Thursday 24th May 2018 Chapel Wood, above Wythop Mill.**

*(Half Day, fairly steep walk to get to the wood then flat tracks)*

To see woodland resident and migrant birds with good chances of hearing, and possibly seeing, Cuckoo and Green Woodpeckers. Can be easily combined with a walk around Dubwath Silver Meadows reserve.

9.00 am at Filling Station Cafe or 9.20 am at parking area at Brumston Bridge below Kelswick Farm.

Grid Ref: NY 292 192 . (Parking is very limited, please car share)

### **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2018 Siddick Pond and Oldside Workington**

*(Half Day, easy walking)*

Reclaimed industrial sites that now hold a large reedbed with a host of water and land birds and an excellent chance of seeing Otters. Oldside has been carefully managed and now has a large colony of breeding Small Blues, UK's smallest butterfly, and one of our rarest.

Meet 9.00 am at Filling Station Cafe or 9.45am at Siddick Ponds. Park in the far right corner of the large car park at Dunmail Park, Workington, CA14 1NQ and climb the few steps onto the cycle path.

### **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018      **High Borrowdale near Tebay.****

*(Full day, about a mile walking on rough track)*

A spectacular upland wildflower meadow with good butterflies (e.g. Small Pearl Bodied Fritillaries) and moths, (e.g. Chimney Sweeper) and birds.

Meet 9.00 am at Filling Station Cafe or 10am at Hucks Brow layby on A6(GR553030)

### **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018      **Eycott Hill Nature Reserve****

*(Half Day. No surfaced paths. Uneven and wet ground. Eycott Hill can be extremely wet so wellington boots are advised.)*

With Kevin Scott or another CWT staff member

Cumbria Wildlife Trust's newest reserve, close to A66 en route to Penrith, with colourful wildflowers, beautiful dragonflies and butterflies.

9.00 am at Filling Station Cafe or 9.30 at reserve entrance, near Berrier, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 0XD.

Grid Reference NY 394 301

### **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2018      **Langholm Moor****

*(Full day. Minimal walking required, watching predominantly from the road)*

To see Hen Harriers/Merlins/Red Grouse/ Whinchats. Should be active with newly fledged young flying around.

9.00 am at Filling Station Cafe or 10.30 am at Langholm Moor. Grid Ref: NY 385 897

## **3. Past Field Trip Reports**

### **CAERLAVEROCK 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016**

A good day with much better weather than had been forecast a few days earlier. After passing large numbers of Whooper Swans & Barnacle Geese in roadside fields, hundreds of the first, many thousands of the second, birding on the reserve started with a couple of Yellowhammers, not unusual compared with previous years but they have been much less prevalent this year for some unknown reason. We then witnessed the feeding of wild Whooper and Mute Swans together with a mixture of ducks just outside the hide window. These included a female Scaup, always difficult to tell from Tufted Ducks I think, but with pale cheeks & definitely larger when seen next to a Tuftie.

We then walked to the tall Tower hide where a WWT volunteer had a 'scope focused on a Peregrine on a post. Lots of Blackbirds feeding on berries as we walked down to the hide overlooking the Merse but strangely no winter thrushes but we did see a Treecreeper and a Goldcrest amongst the tits. Looking over the marshland was rewarded by a prolonged, if distant, view of a hunting male Hen Harrier as well as another sitting Peregrine. Curlews and Little Egrets were wandering around doing their thing.

Returning to the entrance to the reserve the Folly Pond held the strangely loyal Green-winged Teal, (a vagrant from N. America), scores of Wigeon, a few Whoopers, a pair of Snipe and some Shoveller. Perhaps the star bird of the day was below a seed feeding station in a bit of wet woodland that has the Peter Scott path wandering through it. We had been tipped off about a confiding Water Rail & we all had

the privilege of watching one at very close quarters with just a perforated fence between us. We are unlikely ever to get a better view of one.

Throughout the day we would be alerted by loud calling of large flocks of Barnacle Geese flying over us as they move from field to field, always a bit spine tingly.

Tony Marsh

### **LEIGHTON MOSS RSPB RESERVE 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

Dull all day but dry and not too windy. Lots of flying insects which explains the continual presence of hundreds of Sand Martins flying over the water, a number of singing Willow Warblers and lots of Chiffchaffs both seen well, unlike the Cetti's Warblers with their explosive calls from deep in the reeds. Good numbers of Gadwall and Teal as well as a few Shovellers, Pintails, Tufted Duck and a single pair of Wigeon. Marsh and other Tits, including Long-tailed, and Nuthatch well seen and a very vocally talented Song Thrush. Goldcrest very active the other side of a bush.

We had a distant view of Great White Egret, a very fleeting glimpse of a pair of Cattle Egrets flying away from us and a lot of Marsh Harrier activity with the male almost continually in the air often carrying nest material. We watched a Little Egret agitating the muddy bottom before jabbing down at the exposed prey.

A large flock of Redshanks were seen down at the Merse hides together with a couple of Black Tailed Godwits, some Avocets dropping in and a lot of Shelducks.

Wharton Crag brought an occupied Raven's nest but no Peregrine.

A total of well over 60 species were seen.

Tony Marsh

### **LANGHOLM MOOR 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

Things were looking good at the start of our visit with a Merlin in sight sitting on a rock, unfortunately fairly distant but well observable through telescopes. After a fairly long wait for a Hen Harrier to show we were pleased that the Merlin flew towards and almost over us. But no Hen Harrier.

We drove further into the moor and down to the river bisecting it. Wheatear, Dipper, Reed Bunting, Stonechat, Goosander and Red-Legged Partridge were all seen as well as a number of feral goats and finally, whilst viewing from the very far side of the moor, a distant male Hen Harrier which gradually came within a couple of hundred yards hunting low over the ground. We saw it drop down into the heather once but it seemed to have missed its prey and then it carried on its way giving a few short sky dancing moves before disappearing over the skyline. We returned to our original view point and had views of two more male Hen Harriers, one of which did some hunting on the moor below us. Nothing came very close so photos were heavily cropped and fuzzy.

We then decamped to a community bird hide next to a feeding station in a small piece of woodland. Excellent close views were had of Siskins with particularly fine males and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers along with the usual things and numerous ridiculously tame Pheasants. Lifting up large pieces of galvanised metal failed to reveal any adders and we then called it a day.

Tony Marsh

### **ASHNESS WOODS 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

As usual on a woodland outing we heard more birds than we actually saw, although in the end we saw or heard all the ones we hoped for. Meeting up at the car parks at Surprise view, we immediately heard a Blackcap singing at the edge of the car park with wren and willow warbler singing in the background

along with a distant Cuckoo and a nearer Green Woodpecker heard calling. After examining two oak trees for potential nest holes for Pied Flycatcher, we moved on and saw where a pair of Great Tits were feeding nestlings in a hole high up in an oak tree. Walking on south through the wood on the path parallel to the road we could hear but not locate a Tree Pipit, Pied Flycatchers and a Chaffinch. Birds we did see were Robin, Goldcrest, Jay, Blackbird and, for some of us, a Green Woodpecker. A Cuckoo was calling in the distance and of the butterflies flitting about, we were able to identify Green-veined White, Speckled Wood and Small White. Walking over the ridge towards Watendlath Beck where it flows through the wood we were hoping to see Grey Wagtail and Dipper which both use the beck but we were unlucky, although we walked alongside the beck up to Moss-mire footbridge. A brief meal stop here produced an obliging male Pied Flycatcher which perched handily for everyone to get good views of it and there was a second male also singing nearby. A Tree Creeper was working up the trees here, searching for insects and we spotted a Grey Wagtail as it flew to a rock further up the beck and with Woodpigeon, Carrion Crow and a calling Great Spotted Woodpecker our bird tally was slowly growing. Hoping for a sight of a Wood Warbler, we climbed up to the Watendlath road at the south edge of the wood and walked back towards Surprise View. Just before we reached the road summit point a Wood Warbler was heard and quickly located, flitting among the trees on the slope above the trees. This was a bird that some of the group hadn't seen before so was a nice one to find. We walked back to the cars with the sound of a singing Song Thrush adding to the songs of Wrens and Willow Warblers which had been a backdrop of sound throughout our walk. Back at the cars the Blackcap was still singing its heart out by the car park, a nice ending to a nice walk.

David Thomason

### **FINLANDRIGG (and Drumburgh) NNR's 7<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

We were amazingly lucky that our field trip to see the Marsh Fritillary butterflies at the NNR at Finlandrigg turned out to be on the one dry and sunny day of the whole week. We were shown around the butterfly site by Steve Doyle, of Cumbria Butterfly Conservation, who was instrumental in instigating a reintroduction programme of these wonderful small butterflies into a number of sites in Cumbria, with Finlandrigg being one of the main ones. This, together with other introduction schemes around the country inspired by Steve's work, has transformed one of UK's rarest butterflies into one with a number of firm strongholds.

The butterfly has a short flight season, it may be only two to three weeks long, and even if there are large numbers flying, if the males and females flight weeks don't coincide there can be little breeding that year. Fortunately, although with the warm weather the flight season was earlier than usual, we did see a good number of Marsh Fritillaries, both male and female, (the latter is significantly larger), and even found a pair in the act of mating as well a couple of clusters of the tiny eggs that are laid on the undersurface of Devilsbit Scabious leaves, the food plant for the caterpillars. These eggs are yellow for a couple of weeks then become brown after they age and Steve found an example of each. We were pleased to see many dozens of Marsh Fritillaries in total but also saw a number of Small Heath, a few Large Skippers, a couple of Green-veined Whites and a single Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. Birds were in short supply but included a single Reed Bunting singing on the edge of the butterfly field, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Sparrowhawk in the reserve.

We then moved to the Cumbria Wildlife Trust nature reserve at Drumburgh Moss N.R where there were good numbers of Large Red and Azure Dragonflies as well as Four Spotted Chasers, (we had seen these at Finlandrigg as well), on the wing. Birds included Redpoll, a male Stonechat, Reed Bunting and the expected Skylarks and Meadow Pipits. We also managed to find a good number of the tiny, but fascinating, insectivorous Round Leaved Sundews, a handsome Drinker Moth caterpillar and a large number of Common Lizards basking on the boardwalks. As I write this the day after, it is pouring with rain again and most of what we witnessed yesterday would be hidden away.

Tony Marsh

## **WHITBARROW/HOWE RIDING WOOD 11<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

This outing was postponed from its original date due to a poor weather forecast. However it was disappointingly rainy to begin with as we set off with Joe Murphy from the Cumbria Wildlife Trust up a steep path leading through woods up the limestone escarpment above Witherslack Hall, emerging in wonderfully floral grasslands. We had passed some yet-to-flower Broad Leaved Helleborines on the way up but found a number of rare and attractive flowering Dark Red Helleborines in the open on top. Joe pointed out a number of limestone specialists including a special fern as well as more typical woodland flora such as Wood Sorrel, hidden in the dark damp microclimates of the clefts in the limestone rock. The rain stopped and increasingly frequent sunny spells started to bring out the butterflies. Initially Ringlets with the odd Meadow Brown we then saw large Fritillaries which unfortunately failed to expose the under side of their wings which would have helped differentiate between the extremely rare High Brown from the, much more likely, Dark Green Fritillary

A few Fungi, including a yellow waxcap of some sort and a flowering Autumn Gentian seemed to confirm the wetness of the summer so far. Numerous low growing Juniper Bushes, rendered prostrate in habit by a combination of prevailing wind and grazing from deer etc. were scattered amongst domed mounds of Yellow Meadow Ant nests which were mostly covered with flowering Thyme but some had different plant colonies; as Joe said, there is a PhD thesis for somebody who wants to explore the interrelationships between plants and ants.

Birds were not too prominent but we did come across a family of Stonechats, a number of Redpolls, a cracking male Backcap down in the woods below along with a number of calling Marsh Tits and Chiffchaffs. (Why don't we get Marsh Tits up here?)

Joe gave us details of some of the history of the area and the reserve as well as its management, mostly by cattle up top but a much more intensive regime of rotating coppicing in Howe Ridding Wood down below the escarpment which had produced a wonderful haven for butterflies. (We also found an exotic caterpillar which I think was of a Vapourer Moth.

An excellent day that transcended the initially dismal weather forecast with a hugely important contribution from Joe of the CWT. I have underplayed the variety of flora in this report, suffice it to say it is an area that is well worth visiting.

Tony Marsh

## **GREAT WOOD 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

A bright & sunny morning last Thursday saw us meeting up with Mike Porter in Great Wood car park. Mike proceeded to give us a master class in flowering plant identification from Hemlock Water Dropwort, reputed to be Britain's most poisonous plant, to Alpine Enchanter's Nightshade, hidden deep under bracken, one of our rarest. I discovered the names of numerous plants I had always wondered about but unfortunately I found that I had to forget the previous one to remember the next! Particularly productive was the lake shoreline, with multi-coloured mini meadows amongst the rocks; this part of the walk was however challenged by a bitterly cold wind most of us were unprepared for.

Passing an attractive Clouded Magpie Moth on the path we ended up back in the car park where we were treated to fantastic views of an extremely obliging Purple Hairstreak Butterfly, usually seen at the tops of mature Oak Trees, and then only occasionally.

On request I have available a wonderfully informative list of the species seen, written by Joanna Robins, to whom I am very grateful.

Tony Marsh



