



POTTERIC CARR NATURE RESERVE RECORDER

AN ANNUAL REVIEW OF RECORDING ON THE RESERVE
ISSUE 7 : JANUARY 2004

EDITED BY JOHN HANCOX

EXCITING TIMES

As last year's issue was being produced, we were fully expecting our recording activities in 2003 to be affected, at least in part, by the start of the work on Phase II of the Development Plan – the improvement of facilities for visitors and habitats on

the existing Reserve. However, from the submission of the Stage II bid in April, the adjudication by HLF, further work to clarify certain parts of the bid – which was approved – and the obtaining of the planning permission, it became clear that a realistic starting date would be early in 2004. The programmed start date is now February 2004 and much of the work will be carried out during 2004, particularly the new Field Centre, which it is hoped will be opening late in the year or early 2005 with a planned re-launch of the Reserve in spring 2005. It was felt prudent for some of the habitat work to be carried out over a longer period, mainly to limit the "disturbance" in one particular season, and perhaps to assist continuity. Hence, habitat work will continue until 2006.

During this time, there will undoubtedly be some disturbance to habitats and wildlife, though it is hoped that this will be kept to a minimum. Each phase of the work will be fairly localised, giving at least the mobile species some chance to move to a quieter part of the Reserve. One thing that may give some concern to visitors is the felling of trees. This is always a contentious matter – however, due to the

shortage of resources over recent years, many habitats have unacceptable tree cover – mostly birch/willow and, without action, the Reserve would become a woodland within a very short timescale, with a reduction in the diversity of habitats and, consequently, wildlife. It is the range of different habitats, within a relatively small area, which is responsible for the

Black-necked Grebe bred at Willow Marsh (see page 6)
PHOTO: ALLAN PARKER ARPS



wide range of species encountered, making a visit so interesting.

Meanwhile, in parallel, the Trust was awarded a grant from the EU LIFE Nature Programme for habitats for breeding Bitterns. In support of this, funding has been obtained from WWF/HSBC as a part of WWF's "Natural Rivers Programme"

and HSBC's "Investing in Nature" a world-wide programme concentrating on five areas – China, Mexico, Brazil, the United States and – Potteric Carr. As a part of this, Potteric Carr will become a "demonstration site".

During 2005, as a part of this scheme, work will start in earnest on the development of the reed fen habitats on the extension land (Huxter Well Fields) which, by then, will have been purchased by the Trust.

Even during its formative stages, this area will be of particular interest for birds – newly created habitats, as they gradually develop, always attract a wide range of species. In this case, there is the prospect of excellent viewing opportunities if negotiations with Network Rail to use the railway embankment to the west as a vantage point for overlooking the newly developed areas of reed fen and open water are successful. An exciting prospect!

We hope that visitors will bear with us in this period of activity safe in the knowledge that, once the scars have healed, the Reserve will be a better place for wildlife and for visitors.

Happy watching in 2004.

A GOOD YEAR? PERHAPS NOT!

Having had a dry and warm (in some places hot) period in July and August, which achieved a new record temperature for the UK in recent times of just over 100°F, though the temperature in this part of the country wasn't exceptional in my experience, the year will go down in many people's minds as comparable to 1976.

However, for me it was notable mainly for the long dry spell of warm weather in July and August with the lack of rain extending well into November. Whether such conditions are "good" depends on

your point of view. In my estimation, certainly for butterflies, it was very poor, the dry weather in July meant that many of the nectar providing plants had "gone over" early and, as a result, there was little or no food for butterflies in particular. The usual large numbers of Peacocks in early August just didn't occur, at least at Potteric Carr, though they may have done elsewhere, and following the incredible numbers of Gatekeepers in July (see page 10), as well as good numbers of Painted Ladies, until the third brood of Speckled Woods appeared in late August, there

were very few butterflies to be seen. This also seems to have been the case with moths according to Ian Heppenstall.

Another, perhaps more serious, effect of this has been the lowering of the water table, particularly noticeable in Loversall Delph which, by early December, is still very low and many species of aquatic life may be in distress. Since the long-awaited autumn rains never came, we desperately need some very heavy rain over the winter period if the position is not to be much more serious in 2004.

JOHN HANCOX

LOVERSALL DELPH UPDATE

This year, for various reasons, little formal recording has been carried out on this site, in which, as I write, the lowest water levels ever have been reached. Due to the long dry spell, from June onwards, water levels in Division Drain have also been extremely low and precluded any pumping into the Delph to alleviate shortage of water. Indeed, at the western end of the area, Loversall Field Delph has now all but dried out.

Despite this, all of the usual invertebrate species were present and most species of damselfly and dragonfly numbers, apart from Four-Spot Chasers, seemed on a par with previous years. A nocturnal newt survey, carried out by a consultant for English Nature, confirmed good numbers of these amphibians both here and in Square Pond some 75 metres away in Loversall Field. Stickleback numbers seem to be down which is a little disturbing, but this can perhaps be accounted for by early morning sightings of Grey Heron and numerous visits by Kingfishers. Grey Wagtails bred on the Reserve during 2003

and adult birds have been seen at Loversall Delph. A Tawny Owl was noted by the writer, as recently as October, flying out of the copse. Hopefully, during this winter, an owl box and other nest boxes can be refurbished and re-sited on this site.

Over the past two or three years, there have been occasional sightings in the main pool of a whitish/silver fish, with red blotches on the head. In mid-October, this was found dead, probably due to the lack of oxygen in the water, and was thought to be an ornamental *cyprinid*, (Shubunkin, a variegated, large-finned, Goldfish), released by a visitor as an unwanted juvenile. It measured some 250 mm from mouth to tail fin and probably weighed about 350 g.

What had been, up until a year or so ago, a comparative rarity in this area, the Harvestman *Dicranopalpus ramosus* turned up in numbers in 2003 and on one day in August the writer counted twelve specimens whilst "sweeping" bushes in the Delph. However, the star find (by John Hancox of course; I was on holiday!) was a Longhorn Beetle *Agapanthia villosoviridescens* which was duly photographed. This is believed to be only the

fourth record for Yorkshire in VC 63, and the second record for the Reserve.

Lepidoptera turned up all the usual common species during the year with a number of Comma's feeding regularly on ripening blackberries during September and October. Several new micro moths have been recorded and added to the listing by Ian Heppenstall. One such, *Eudemis profundana*, was recorded by Harry Beaumont, the well-known local expert, in August 2002 but has only recently been determined.

Visitors may have noticed a considerable increase in water rooted biomass plants over the past two years, crowding out other species and obstructing views. An opportunity was taken to remove much of the invasive *Typha* and some *Sparganium* at the end of August in order to redress the problem.



Mated pair of *Rhagium mordax*
PHOTO: D. BATESON

In order to avoid loss of invertebrate larval life, the plants were pulled up and left to drain on the bank, with the rhizomes and roots touching the water edge for 48 hours, to allow the denizens to migrate back to the pool. Another plant which has proliferated considerably in recent years, is the Water Soldier *Stratiotes aloides* with several thriving colonies here. (N.B. only the female plant occurs in Britain but in the flowering period, from May onwards, we have seen no flowers to date).

Previous conservation work to introduce "salients" into the ground cover and undergrowth around the Delph, also the new "glade" in Loversall Delph Copse, have proved beneficial to many invertebrate species (also to certain wildlife photographers!). Work is now under way (October) whilst the water is low, to remove

all the invasive willow and birch at the hitherto unmanaged eastern end of the Delph, for some 50 metres, opening up

the tree canopy and allowing light to penetrate. (Ed. Note: This revealed an old grinding wheel and an old metal kettle, largely rusted away, presumably legacies from the railway operations). As this area is part of one of the original "delphs", it is hoped, eventually, to deepen the exposed channel to provide a shallow water area, linked permanently to the main and deeper pool maybe by means of a small trench. Apart from the many benefits to numerous invertebrate species, a "flyway" has thus been created, linking in to another small glade and the Loversall Pool area some 50 metres further east.

Loversall Field Delph is also now very shaded by birch and alder on the southern bank. It is hoped, as a part of the habitat recovery works which is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to selectively thin these trees in order to allow more light to penetrate to the water area, at the same time possibly creating one or two Water Vole "grazing" areas. Herbage on the northern bank will be cut to ground level again in order to promote new growth of plant and grass species.

DEREK BATESON

NB: Copies of the original booklet "Wildlife Communities Inhabiting Loversall Delph" are still available at the Field Centre, price £2.00 (plus 50p postage if obtaining by post).

WEB WATCH

Our web site is still open at www.shu.ac.uk/potteric_carr. It is largely used as a means of our publicising the Reserve rather than being regularly updated with news, etc. The site includes links to other sites including the Trust's own web site www.yorkshire-wildlife-trust.org.uk. This contains information about the Trust and includes a section on the Loversall Delph survey (Check the Wildlife Notes button).

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The Editor would like to thank all those who have submitted articles, photos or sketches for the newsletter and all those who continue the valuable recording activities on the Reserve

Important Note: The views expressed in this publication are those of individuals and are not necessarily those of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust or the Potteric Carr Nature Reserve Management Committee.

VARIED SUCCESS FOR DRAGONFLIES

Dragonflies had varied fortunes in 2003. 17 of the 19 species recorded at the Reserve put in an appearance with rather more sightings of Hairy Dragonfly giving us hope of them breeding. Four-spot Chasers did rather poorly, but the increased numbers of Broad-bodied Chasers made up for it; certainly as a visual spectacle. No Black Darters in 2003, but the sight of up to ten Migrant Hawkers hawking outside the Field Centre meant easy dragonfly watching for many.

As with butterflies, the fact that records are not collected on a daily basis means that, inevitably, some things are missed – this is particularly so with emergent dragonflies as the event can be a “one-day wonder”!

The following is a summary of the records:–

Banded Demoiselle: A better year with a peak of 11 on 30/6. Mother Drain, Cottage Drain and occasionally Loversall Delph are the favoured sites, and there seems to be no expansion to other waters.

Emerald Damselfly: Regularly seen in the grassy areas alongside paths, especially during July, immediately following their emergence. These damselflies are particularly elusive until one “gets one’s eye in” – we still wonder if they get dismissed/mistaken for blue-tails. A peak count of 30 on 11/7.

Large Red Damselfly: The appearance of this damselfly signals the start of the “season” and is eagerly awaited, so much so that everyone tries to be the “first”. The first sighting was a little later

than usual, but this was of a fully mature adult so they had been out a few days at least. There were then plenty to be seen along the paths for the next month after which they became very scarce. Peak count of 95 on 11/5.

Azure Damselfly: Very common in all parts of the Reserve. There was an estimated peak count of 6154 on 7th June (only one day removed from last year’s peak). Numerous sightings of mated and ovipositing pairs.

Common Blue Damselfly: A better year, though slow to start with few numbers early on. They peaked at an estimated 2000 on 26/7, better than recent years, by which time they outnumbered the Azures which are by then declining.

Blue-tailed Damselfly: Similar numbers to 2002 with a peak estimate of 2017 on 1/6. Once again, the favoured areas are the reed bed filtration ponds, but they can be seen almost anywhere. This year, there weren’t so many reported sightings of the colour phases, particularly the “rufescens” which may indicate that there is some factor which affects the percentage present in any one year. This could only be determined, however, by more structured counts.

Hairy Dragonfly: A few more sightings of both males and females is a further encouraging sign; no proof of breeding as yet, however.

Southern Hawker: Appeared early, and peaked at 7 on 20/7. Still commoner than the inappropriately named (for Potteric Carr) Common Hawker.

Common Hawker: Only a couple of

records in early August. Potteric Carr is on the edge of its range, and hence its occurrence is sporadic.

Brown Hawker: Seen regularly throughout the Reserve during July – October. Appears to be becoming more common with a peak count of 19 on 13/7.

Migrant Hawker: Still the most common hawkler with a peak count of 24 on 30/8. Often provides a grandstand view from the Field Centre.

Emperor Dragonfly: A few more records in 2003 with a peak of 5 on 15/6. Observed ovipositing in the reed bed filtration ponds, which they tend to favour.

Black-tailed Skimmer: Large numbers of teneral were observed on the first day they were recorded (58 on 31/5). Very few seen after that date – peculiar!

Broad-bodied Chaser: A very encouraging year with a peak of 20 on 15/6. This spectacular insect now seems well established on the Reserve, particularly on the reed bed filtration ponds.

Four-spotted Chaser: A rather poorer year with a peak of only 17 on 7/6. Have we missed observing them?

Common Darter: A rather poorer year than 2002 which itself wasn’t a particularly good year, but they hung on until 16th November for a record late date. Peak of 145 on 30/8.

Ruddy Darter: An average year with a peak of 12 on 30/8. They still favour Loversall Bank and Willow Bank but can be seen almost anywhere.

Black Darter: No sightings in 2003.

JOHN HANCOX

COMMON BIRDS CENSUS - END OF AN ERA

The Common Birds Census started in the early 1960s in response to the devastating effects that agricultural chemicals had had on birds, particularly birds of prey, during the 1950s. Its purpose was to monitor breeding birds on farmland, but woodland and then special habitats (ones that didn’t fall into farmland or woodland categories) were added shortly after. The scheme has been organised by the British Trust for Ornithology under a contract with the government through English Nature.

For nearly 40 years, the CBC has provided a reliable index of population of the commoner birds, though it was recognised that the scheme had its drawbacks; it was labour intensive, it had a bias towards the south east of England and population centres, sites that were “good for birds” tended to be chosen which was also thought to introduce a bias, etc.

During the 1990s, a number of alterna-

tives were investigated, including point counts which involved the census worker visiting specific points on his chosen site and recording all the birds at each point for a period of 10 minutes before moving to the next point. It was less labour intensive, requiring only two visits per season. However, this particular scheme was dropped for whatever reason.

The chosen replacement for the CBC was the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) in which census workers are required to visit randomly chosen 10 km squares twice during the breeding season for a given period of time on each visit. This has been proven to provide the information required to produce reliable indices of breeding birds and, in 2000, the Common Birds Census was discontinued except for a small number of sites, primarily those on SSSIs. The Potteric Carr CBC was one of these.

However, in 2003, just prior to the start

of the season, the BTO decided to pull the plug on the CBC altogether, due to lack of funds to analyse the data. CBCers could continue their site, but would have to do their own analysis work.

The CBC is a good tool for establishing changes in breeding birds over the years and here at Potteric Carr, a CBC has been carried out on a plot at Black Carr/Piper Marsh since 1974 (30 years). This has provided valuable information about the changes in numbers of breeding birds and population mix, particularly at Piper Marsh, where habitat changes have been brought about by the development of the marsh.

At the start of the census, the breeding population of the plot was around 125 territories and some measure of the changes can be gained from the fact that the average number of territories is now nearly double that at around 220.

JOHN HANCOX

BOOKS...BOOKS...BOOKS

The last year has seen the publication of a number of significant books, either as new publications or as new editions.

Due to the generosity of Dorothy Bramley, donations from the sale of her pictures and cards have been able to fund the purchase of some of these books (marked with *) for the Potteric Carr library. Whilst some will be kept in the Field Centre for reference, the other, more specialised titles, will be stored until the new Field Centre is opened.

British Hoverflies : an Illustrated Identification Guide*

(including the 1996 Second Supplement and an Update to the British List) 540 illustrations plus 12 colour plates featuring 190 species. Text and illustrated keys by Alan E. Stubbs, Colour plates by Steven J. Falk Published by The British Entomological and Natural History Society, 2000 H/B £30



When the first edition was published in 1983, it set a new standard in terms of accuracy in identification and coverage of known British hoverfly species. Now, some seventeen years later it has been published in its third edition, featuring some 256 species (fifteen extra species have been found in Britain since 1983).

Supplemental information has been provided in many of the sections to enhance the readers' knowledge of observing, photographing and collecting hoverflies, also on their habitats and seasonal occurrence. Since the initial publication, much work has been done on updating the keys to incorporate details of wide variations within several of the species. With care, it is possible for the amateur naturalist to navigate successfully to a positive and reliable identification, thanks to the incorporation of sketches within the body of the keys.

The colour illustrations by Steven Falk accurately portray in detail the wide variations that occur across the various tribes within this group of flies. It is interesting to note that he started the first of these plates at the age of sixteen while still at school!

Hoverflies are an attractive and popular group of insects that may easily be observed both by entomologists and natural history photographers. This identification guide on hoverflies fills a major gap in the British literature, hopefully opening up the way to a wider understanding and appreciation of the *Diptera*.

DEREK BATESON

British Soldierflies and their Allies: An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Ecology*

800 illustrations and 20 colour plates featuring some 162 species in 11 families within the "Larger *Brachycera*". Text and illustrated keys by Alan E. Stubbs and Martin Drake, Colour plates by David Wilson Published by the British Entomological and Natural History Society, 2001 H/B £30



Many naturalists will be familiar with British Hoverflies by Alan Stubbs and Steven Falk (see above). As a fitting sequel, British Soldierflies and their Allies is a guide to the identification, natural history and ecology within a group of relatively large, exciting and visually attractive flies. This is a sector of the British fauna that has intrigued and fascinated both amateur and professional entomologists alike for the past two centuries.

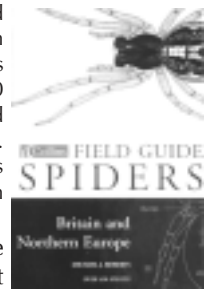
The authors have set out successfully to summarise and collate innumerable sources of information, some previously unpublished, from a wide collection of literature and notes, supplemented by their own original observations over many years of fieldwork. As in British Hoverflies, the illustrated keys to Adults are relatively easy to use and follow, and include the thirteen or more species added to the British list while the book was in preparation. An interesting feature is the large section devoted to keys of the larval and pupation stages as in some species these are more likely to be found than adults. However, many gaps in our knowledge still remain to be filled in this area.

David Wilson's colour plates, whilst technically of a high quality, are all derived from the photography of dead specimens, some of which are not in pristine condition and colour, and are thus not ideal for identification. Fresh or newly killed insects, usually look a brighter colour and, in horseflies, the eyes are very colourful but fade rapidly after death. Nevertheless, these can prove an indispensable adjunct to the information contained within the keys, enabling an accurate identification to be made in most instances. (N.B. Some species still lack a formal name and others are only known in Britain in the larval form). This fact should act as a stimulus and incentive to go out into the field as experts are convinced that many more species are yet to be discovered.

DEREK BATESON

Collins Field Guide : Spiders of Britain & Northern Europe*

1500 line drawings and 288 colour paintings on 32 colour plates featuring over 450 species. Written and illustrated by Michael E. Roberts; HarperCollins Publishers, 2003 Edition H/B £19.99



Although it is some eight years since it was first published, this field guide is still regarded as the ultimate, comprehensive text, providing a general introduction to spiders, their structure, biology and identification features. Omitted from this guide are the small black 'money spiders' which are too numerous to detail, together with harvestmen, mites, ticks and pseudoscorpions.

Comprehensive detail is provided on the biology of spiders together with information and illustrations of genitalia, egg sacs, webs, etc.; this last item is often useful in determining the family, and often the genus. The guide is relatively jargon free, with the specialist terms being adequately explained in the opening chapters, and supplemented by a full glossary.

The guide, and its keys, are packed full of information for the amateur naturalist, complemented by Michael Roberts' painstaking attention to detail in his line drawings of the female epigyne and male palpal organs. His colour illustrations too are superb.

On first publication, Natural World rated the guide 'Book of the Year' and it has been well reviewed in both New Scientist and Nature.

DEREK BATESON

The Migration Atlas, Movements of the Birds of Britain and Ireland

Edited by Chris Wernham, Mike Toms, John Marchant, Jacqui Clark, Gavin Siriwardena and Stephen Baillie. 884 pages containing 188 detailed accounts by 190 acknowledged experts covering 192 species. Published by the British Trust for Ornithology 2002 through T & A D Poyser. H/B £65



This weighty tome is the result of the ringing schemes run in Britain and Ireland since 1909. Ringing is always a contentious subject and, unfortunately, is not always handled as sensitively as it could be by the ringers. However, the

amount of information in this extremely well presented book is astounding. Each of the regular species is allocated up to four pages which, as well as the excellent text, contain maps of movements and graphs and charts. The minor species, some 70 in number, each have a shorter account, usually around half a page.

If you are not technically, statistically or mathematically minded, you can ignore the tables, graphs and charts and just read the text, which is easy to read and very informative in its own right and covers much more than just what the birds' movements are, and includes information on breeding habitats, etc.

This is not a book for carrying around in the field or reading in bed – it is very heavy. Nor is it designed to be read from cover to cover; rather one dips in for information as required. Although its price is rather high, it would be a welcome addition to any keen birdwatcher's library.

JOHN HANCOX

British Plant Galls*

Text by Margaret Redfern and Peter Shirley, illustrated by Michael Bloxham. 1025 line drawings, 8 colour plates and 330 identification keys. Published as part of the AIDGAP Series, Field Studies Council 2003 (Reprinted from Field Studies Vol. 10 No. 2 and 3 (2002)) S/B £18.50



Both Margaret Redfern and Peter Shirley are leading members of The British Plant Gall Society and we are fortunate in that Margaret lives locally in Sheffield and many of the keys in this book have been extensively tested in the Yorkshire area.

This work is an extension to *Provisional Keys to British Plant Galls*, edited by Fred Stubbs in 1986; also previous work by the author published in 1992 and updated in 1998. It provides a comprehensive and mainly non-technical series of keys for the identification of the common and not so common plant galls (excluding algal galls) found in Great Britain.

The keys are arranged, first of all by groups of gall causers (arthropods, nematodes, fungi, bacteria, viruses and plants) and then, within these, mainly by host genera, thus allowing some certainty in accurate determination of galls. The clear line illustrations and colour paintings by Michael Bloxham are generally very helpful in confirming some of the morphological detail.

Galls are ideal subjects for study by amateur naturalists, and both they and professional ecologists will find this guide useful and easy to use.

DEREK BATESON

Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland*

Paul Waring and Martin Townsend, Illustrations by Richard Lewington. 432 pages with 1,600 illustrations covering 880 species. Published by British Wildlife Publishing 2003 S/B £29.95



Over the years there have been a number of field guides to macro moths. Stalwart amongst these was the two volume Guide by Richard South in the Warne, Wayside and Woodland Series, first published in 1906 and last reprinted 1980. More recently, the guide by Bernard Skinner, first published in 1984, became the standard work, though it is a little too large to be rated as a field guide.

This new guide at last gives us a modern field guide, covering all the resident and migrant macro moths in Great Britain and Ireland. As well as the adult insects illustrated by Lewington's excellent paintings, it also covers the caterpillars illustrated by photographs. The text is concise but adequate for field use. This guide is pocketable (just, since it is a little thick and weighty) and, I am sure, will become the standard field guide for some time to come. Highly recommended.

JOHN HANCOX

Pocket Guide to the Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*

Text and illustrations by Richard Lewington 144 pages with many illustrations. Published by British Wildlife Publishing 2003 P/B £9.95



One of the problems with most field guides of butterflies is that they include all those species encountered in Europe (c.440), which greatly outweigh the 59 or so species regularly encountered in Britain and Ireland. This is extremely daunting, particularly to the beginner, who may be faced, for example, with literally scores of "blues" when in these islands there are only 10 and only three of these are anything like common and widespread.

Each regular species is allotted a double page spread with illustrations of all stages of the life cycle, whilst the extinct and rare species are given a single page. The illustrations, as one would expect from Lewington, are excellent. The text is sufficient for a field guide and covers the salient points of identification, distribution and timing. An ideal accompaniment in the field from April to October for anyone

looking at butterflies, especially beginners, it is eminently pocketable and affordable. Highly recommended.

JOHN HANCOX

Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland*

Richard and Alastair Fitter, Illustrations by Marjorie Blamey. 482 pages with 5,000+ illustrations. Published by A & C Black S/B £16.99



This guide follows a recent trend in field guides in restricting the species to those found in Britain and Ireland. Unusually, it also includes a section on the more common grasses, sedges and rushes, albeit with briefer descriptions.

All field guides are a compromise of size, weight and hence, content. Taking these criteria into account, this book is a little too large for the average pocket.

In the main, the species are laid out in scientific order but with certain groups, e.g. aquatics, trees and shrubs plus a few others, brought together for convenience. Each plant has a write-up with text in italics to emphasise important points. The paintings are mainly on the page facing the text, with a distribution map alongside the text. Identification is achieved by use of a combination of these three elements with additional help from the group introductions, but there is no specific starting point for beginners, e.g. number of petals, or colour, habitat, etc.

Marjorie Blamey's illustration skills are well known and here her style in the 5,000 or so illustrations (all new) seems in some cases to be a touch looser and more free form than earlier productions, but excellent nevertheless. The text is by Richard Fitter and is succinct but descriptive with a lack of abbreviations. Alastair Fitter's maps are small but give a reasonable indication of the area where a plant can, and importantly, can't be found.

There are two other guides which should be considered when making a purchase, Marjorie Blamey's earlier book, *Wild Flowers of Britain and Northern Europe* (Collins Pocket Guide), and *The Wild Flower Key – British Isles and NW Europe* by Francis Rose (Warne). Both of these field guides are long established and both are more pocketable than the new one, and are probably more suitable for beginners.

Is the book under review any good? Yes. Would I buy it? I already have!

Would I buy it in preference to the two competitors?

"Don't be daft, I'm a book-aholic, I've got all three!".

KEN WOOLLEY

BLACK-NECKED GREBES BREED AT WILLOW MARSH

On 27th May, whilst scanning the reed beds from Cottage Drain Hide, I noticed a pair of grebes swimming in and out of the stands of reed to the right of the hide. They were obviously larger than Little Grebe and, once a clear view was obtained, it was realised that they were Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* a fact which my colleague, Al Thompson, confirmed. Others on site were alerted and many came to view these birds which are relatively uncommon, certainly at Potteric Carr. Remarkably, they were still there the next day, and over the next few days were observed carrying nesting material giving an indication that they

were settling down to breed – it soon became evident that a nest site had been established. Further sightings of single birds carrying food towards the nest site helped confirm this.

On 24th June, once again from Cottage Drain Hide, both birds were seen, with one of them carrying two very young chicks on its back (see photo page 1), whilst the other bird sought and carried food to the young. Changes to the parental duties took place regularly with the young being transferred from one parent to the other. As the chicks developed, they spent increasingly more time on the water until they were able to swim without any help

from the parents. At this point, the family split up with each parent apparently taking charge of one chick. A few days later, the chicks left the care of the parents to fend for themselves.

One of the parents apparently left the site in early August and a few days later only the young birds remained. Within a week, both had left. Another breeding species had been added to the Reserve's list, bringing the total to 95 (see below).

There is no reason why the birds shouldn't return in 2004, but given the sporadic nature of the breeding of this species, there are no guarantees!

BRIAN BUCKLE

2003 BIRD HIGHLIGHTS

A year with a few, but quite interesting, sightings of unusual birds. Bitterns were probably, once again, the highlight of the year, with up to five showing well in the early part of the year, and giving excellent views for visitors. As winter returned, up to four Bitterns were showing by the middle of December.

Amongst other water birds, there was an unusual sighting of 40 Snipe on the reed bed filtration ponds in January. A Little Gull put in an appearance in March and a Lesser Scaup was seen in April, a first for the Reserve (see opposite). Black-necked Grebe bred for the first time (see left).

A pair of Garganey put in an appearance in May, at the same time as the Black-necked Grebes appeared, but didn't stay



Bittern PHOTO: G. HUDSON

on to breed. Water Rails were recorded regularly with evidence of breeding birds in Willow Marsh.

Of birds of prey, there were many sightings of Buzzard with an unusual 5 (probably a family party) over Huxter Well Fields in September. There were two sightings of Osprey passing over and single Marsh Harriers, Peregrine and Hobbies. In November, a Merlin was seen perched on the depth post at Loversall Pool for at least 45 minutes.

Full details of all sightings will be included in the Annual Bird Report, to be published later.

MARK ROBERTS

TWO MORE BREEDING SPECIES

Last year, I wrote a slightly tongue-in-cheek piece about how the Reserve's breeding bird list might reach the magic 100. At the time, we had notched up 93 breeding species since 1968, which itself is a creditable performance, given the size of the site. Little did we know, however, that 2003 would add two more species to the list.

One of them, Black-necked Grebe, is dealt with above, and that was one of those on my list of "possibles" since it has a propensity to breed on any suitable water area, often for a single year but sometimes for longer. Let's hope that it returns.

The other was Grey Wagtail and that was definitely not one on my list. A pair bred in one of the outlet pipes to the infeed chamber of the Balby Pumping Station and fairly good views were obtained by many visitors.

The birds had obviously read the book which says "... often occupies artefacts such as drainage holes or recesses in culverts..." (Campbell & Ferguson-Lees, 1972).

We now wait to see if 2004 will bring us any further new breeding species!

JOHN HANCOX

REFERENCE:

B. CAMPBELL/J. FERGUSON-LEES, FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS' NESTS, CONSTABLE 1972 (NO LONGER IN PRINT)

Grey Wagtail Photo: J. LINTIN SMITH



2002 BIRD REPORT

The 2002 Annual Bird Report duly appeared in August. The Report details over 130 species recorded during the year, a slight increase on 2001. Around 70 species bred which is a good number for a site the size of Potteric Carr.

Highlights of the year included a wintering Cetti's Warbler singing in Old Eaa Marsh during February and March, good sightings of wintering Bitterns, and an uncommon occurrence of four Bearded Tits at Willow Marsh.

There was an increasing number of sightings of raptors with Red Kite, Buzzard, Osprey and Marsh Harrier being seen. The report also includes a summary of the nest box scheme which has run for 10 years and a report on the Black Carr/Piper Marsh CBC.

The 40 page report is available at the Field Centre and is priced at £2.

MARK ROBERTS

HYMENOPTERANS ~ BEES AND WASPS AND OTHERS

This large group of insects, is normally divided into two sub-orders, the **Symphyla**, in which there is no "waist" and the **Apocrita** in which there is a narrow waist between the thorax and the abdomen. The former sub-group includes the sawflies – the most primitive of the members of the Order – and the latter, the bees, wasps, ants, ichneumon flies and several other groups, many of which are very advanced and specialised insects.

Only in this order (and in the termites) is true social behaviour found. Most of this Group is rarely reported on within the Reserve (except perhaps when one gets stung by one), even though there are



Nest of Common Wasp Photo: D. BATESON

three or four species of wasp present.

The Hornet, *Vespa crabro* has been recorded a number of times, though no colony has been found (see Recorder Issue 4), and numerous bee species have been seen in 2003. Hopefully, in 2004, there will be time to determine some of these.

In the summer, a very active wasps' nest was discovered in the storage garage, fixed to the door jamb. The nest measured some 250 mm tall and 200-225 mm across, with a radius of around 125 mm. Nests such as this contain several layers of comb sus-

ended horizontally across the structure which is enclosed within an outer layer of overlapping plates of paper-like material. The combs are built up from hexagonal shaped cells, fused together, and used for rearing the brood or for food storage.

As the weather was mostly warm, there was always a lot of activity round the nest, making accurate identification of the species hazardous! The nest (see picture, left) was determined to be the Common Wasp, *Vespa vulgaris*, by finding a specimen in the nest when it was removed for examination. However, the nest of this species usually has a yellowish tinge, as much of the nests' construction material

is derived from wood collected from rotten gateposts, etc., and masticated into a paste. This is then regurgitated and dries out as variable coloured ribbon layers on the shell-like outer nest structure. In autumn the colony dies off except for a few mated females which hibernate and re-emerge the next year as founder queens to establish their own new colonies as the weather becomes warmer.

Early in November, Brian Buckle was examining hawthorns between Rossington Bank and Piper Marsh for evidence (which he didn't find) of roosting Long-

eared Owls, when he spotted a pale triangular object hanging beneath one of the branches. Closer inspection showed this to be two, beautifully constructed honeycombs. The writer was told of this some two weeks later and went to look at the site. Unfortunately, in the interim, the Reserve had been blasted with heavy winds and rain and what was left of the comb was found in the grass under the hawthorn. The comb was unusually very white and fragile and it is thought that it had been produced within a day or two in late spring by a transient swarm of Honey Bees, *Apis mellifera*, but could have come from a swarming wild colony. It should be noted that bees, unlike wasps, produce combs suspended in a vertical axis.

DEREK BATESON

RARE BIRDS

With the presence again of an uncommon breeding species (Black-necked Grebe) the question has arisen, once again, of how this should be handled by the Reserve Management Committee. The Committee has a policy of maintaining secrecy, particularly about the presence of breeding birds, mainly to protect them from disturbance if they are in a vulnerable position, or from the activities of ne'er-do-wells, e.g. egg collectors. However, with some birds, such as the Black-Necked Grebes, many people who visited the site saw them for themselves and it was impossible to make their presence a secret.

The RMC has a further obligation, however, that of its agreement with Network Rail on the need to carry a permit to cross live railway lines. The presence of any uncommon or rare bird in the area which requires entry across live railway lines to gain a view, raises problems of policing to ensure that the Reserve's agreement on railway crossing points with Network Rail isn't compromised.

When the new arrangements for access are complete (expected early in 2005) this will be less of a problem since there will only be one legal point of access to the Reserve. In the meantime, please do not cross live railway lines without an official permit. We appreciate that this is difficult for anyone hoping to see a rare bird, but any mass invasion of area within the railway system could raise problems with Network Rail who are constantly monitoring the access situation.

LESSER SCAUP SIGHTED AT LOW ELLERS

On the afternoon of 2nd April, we were watching from Childers Hide when Sue exclaimed "there's a scaup... it looks like a Lesser Scaup". We both examined the bird, with the first noticeable features being its size and the bump on its crown and, together with the rest of the impression we got, we agreed it looked like a male Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*. Observing all the features we needed to make a positive identification was difficult



Lesser Scaup PHOTO: M. RICHARDSON

since we hadn't a telescope and the bird was constantly diving. We continued our observation and were joined by colleagues, with telescope, and, by process

of elimination of various identification features, and the possibility of Greater Scaup or a hybrid such as Tufted x Pochard, it was decided that it was indeed a Lesser Scaup. (A fuller report will appear in the Bird Report.)

The Lesser Scaup is a transatlantic vagrant to Britain, breeding in North America and wintering south to Colombia. It is fairly rare, there having been less than 80 previous sightings in Britain. Needless to say, this is a new species for Potteric Carr, the Doncaster area and South Yorkshire.

SUSAN BIRD/DAVID CARROLL

WHAT'S IN A WORD, OR TWO

As a visitor to Potteric Carr, and possibly other wetland sites, you have no doubt thought about why some areas are called marshes, some fens, etc. The following are some definitions, according to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary.

Bog : A piece of wet, spongy ground consisting of chiefly decayed moss, too soft to bear the weight of any heavy body, a morass or moss. *From 1505 Gaelic & Irish*
Delf or delph : From digging, ditch – relates to the town of Delf or Delph in Hol-

land which was named after its chief canal.

Fen : Low lying land covered wholly or partially with shallow water or frequently inundated; a tract of such land, a marsh. *Old English 1731*. Also means mud, clay, mire in an earlier 1535 meaning.

Ings : A meadow, especially one by the side of a river and low lying. *Basis Old High German/Old Saxon - in 15th Century; enge or inge, Old Norse*.

Marsh : An area of low-lying land usually

flooded in winter and more or less watery at all times. *Old English*

Mire : A stretch of swampy or boggy ground. *Old English*

Reed Bed : An area of water or marshland dominated by reeds, mainly Common Reed *Phragmites australis*.

Swamp : A tract of low-lying ground in which water collects, a marsh or bog. 1624, *Germanic with the meaning "sponge" (Schwamm)*.

JOHN HANCOX

WEATHER WATCH 2003

January was unsettled, though this area missed the snowfalls experienced in other parts of the UK. There was a spell of wet and windy weather mid-month, but towards the end of the month, settled weather had arrived. February was predominantly dry and sunny, but with some low temperatures.

March was mainly dry and sunny and this kind of weather continued through into April though at times this area suffered from cloud extending from the North Sea bringing dry, but cloudy weather. May was unsettled with some heavy rain but the month ended with a short spell of

settled weather. The unsettled weather returned in early June, but southerly winds maintained temperatures relatively high, with the month being the warmest June since 1976.

July started with torrential rain but then settled down to dry weather which continued through August. This spell was essentially very warm and hot at times, though this area missed the really hot weather, peaking around 91°F; elsewhere, the highest temperature exceeded 100°F, a record for the UK.

The settled weather continued in early September but, whilst it stayed warm and

dry, it was often cloudy. The end of September and early October saw a typical Indian summer before very much colder, though still dry weather arrived later in the month with the first frosts occurring in the second half of the month.

November started cooler but still predominantly dry. Severe gales occurred mid-month and the rest of the month was a mixture of wet and windy and drier spells, though with no really cold weather.

December started wet and windy and the month was then a mixture of short wet spells interspersed with cold snaps. So ended the fifth driest year since the 1600s.

RECORDERS CORNER PERMITS

To encourage people to carry out recording work on the Reserve, special permits are available, authorising access to parts of the Reserve not normally accessible to visitors, to carry out this work.

A condition of the issue of these permits is that they are used with sensitivity and care so as not to spoil the enjoyment of the Reserve by others. Also, as a condition of issue of the permits, applicants are required to submit details of their particular project at the time of applying for the permits, and to pass to the Reserve Management Committee the results of their survey work on completion. The permits are normally issued for 1 year or for a specific period within a year.

If wardens observe anyone carrying out recording work, e.g. sweep netting, etc., particularly if they are in what are otherwise restricted areas, please approach them since they should be carrying an appropriate permit. If they cannot show you a permit, then they are not authorised and should be asked to stop the activity. Please note that the verbal permission of the Chairman, Secretary or other Wardens, is not acceptable.

The permits can be obtained from the

Reserve Hon. Secretary. Please enclose a SAE and a statement of the subject of the recording work and which areas the permit is required to cover. This information will also enable the work to be cross referenced with the work of others.

The Management Committee reserves the right to withdraw or suspend the permits at any time.

RECORDING FORMS

There are two recording files in the Field Centre, one for birds and one for all other species. They are based on a loose leaf system with one sheet per day. This system has been in use for a number of years now and has greatly assisted in the gathering of records. The files are also a quick means of visitors checking what's been around in the previous weeks, giving more information than the blackboard on the Field Station.

If you use these books, would you please note the following:–

- There is a list of codes for areas of the Reserve in the front of each book. Please use these codes to avoid confusion. A map showing the areas is dis-

played in the Field Centre.

- With frequent observers, initials are sufficient, but with some casual observers, initials cannot be converted into names. If in doubt, please put in your full name.
- Please report the weather which should contain, ideally, cloud cover (0/8 – 8/8), an estimate of temperature, wind strength (use the terms still, light, moderate, fresh, strong, gale, etc.) and direction, and precipitation (if any).

We trust that you will continue your recording or contribute records in 2004. In fact it is most important that we endeavour to carry on recording during the works on site.

RECORDERS

Birds: Mr. R. J. Scott; Please leave records in the Field Centre, addressed to Richard Scott.

Flowers: Mrs. D. Bramley, Hanbury House, 29 Cantley Lane, Doncaster DN6 6NA

Insects (excl. Odonata and Lepidoptera): Mr. D. Bateson, 14 Silverdale Close, Ecclesall, Sheffield S11 9JN

Others: Mr. J. Hancox, 57 Braithwell Road, Ravenfield, Rotherham, S65 4LH.

COMMA CONFUSION (Part 2)

Following the investigation of literature in **Recorder 6**, it was fortuitous that 2003 was an exceptional year at the Reserve for Commas. Although there were few records of the overwintered butterflies, early June saw the first of the year's brood and many more were seen throughout June and July.

Where possible, these were examined closely, both the appearance of the upper wings and underwings. In all cases, the underwings were very pale, with a marked greeny cast, and with the pattern of the upper wings showing through, par-

ticularly when viewed against the light. The upper wings, however, varied from a few that were dark, giving the impression of the typical form, to ones where the terminal bands on the front wings were very pale, in some cases almost the same colour as the main wing colour. In all these cases, where it was possible to see them, the underwings were pale.

This would appear to support the view that all the early summer brood are of the form *Hutchinsoni*, since none I examined were of the typical form. The bulk of the typical form started to emerge in early

August (my first typical being seen on 3/8) and, by that time, the *Hutchinsoni* form appeared to have died off, since none were seen after late July. A particular feature of most of the typical form butterflies seen, apart from the much darker wings, was the narrowness of the forewings; also, the butterflies appeared to be somewhat smaller than the *Hutchinsoni* form.

Commas continued to be plentiful through August and September with the last being seen on 29/9.

JOHN HANCOX

EXCITING NEW MOTHS DISCOVERED

2003 proved to be another successful year for moth recording on the Reserve with many exciting new records. Some 32 species were observed for the first time and, as a consequence, the Reserve list has now expanded to a very healthy total of 550 species recorded since 1973.

Evening moth trapping took place on one night only but what an excellent night it proved to be. On 15th August eight enthusiasts running a total of four light traps recorded over 100 species, the highlights being a hand-



Bohemannia quadrimaculella
Wingspan 8 mm Photo: D. BATESON

some Old Lady moth *Mormo maura*, a Dark Marbled Carpet *Chloroclysta citrata* and an *Epermenia falciformis*. Seven species were new to the Reserve.

Daytime moth recording continued regularly throughout the spring, summer and autumn months, concentrating especially on the micro-lepidoptera ('micros'). These small moths are best seen under a hand lens. Many are surprisingly beautiful and they often have fascinating life histories. This is certainly true of the four most significant micros recorded in 2003.

Bohemannia quadrimaculella is one of the Nepticulidae or 'Pygmy Moths'. These are the tiniest moths, the larvae of which are mostly leaf miners. The larva of *B.*

quadrimaculella is believed to mine the buds of Common Alder *Alnus glutinosa*. The adult moths have attractive metallic red-purple and gold forewings. They fly in July and August. Three of these moths were swept from alders near the wardens' car park in July. They are quite rare, there being only one other Yorkshire record since the 19th Century.

Another interesting micro was found to be breeding at several sites on the Reserve during the autumn. *Coleophora potentillae* is a member of the Coleo-

phoridae, a large family of mostly very similar looking moths whose larvae live in portable cases constructed of silk and plant fragments. The appearance of these cases is different for each species and so most species can be readily identified at the larval stage from a

combination of case and food plant. During August and September the cases of *Coleophora potentillae* were found to be fairly common in parts of Loversall Delph, Loversall Bank West and Mother Drain near Piper Marsh. The only other York-

shire locality is Rushy Moor, Askern.

Yet another good find was made by Harry Beaumont on 17th June when he swept a *Sopronia semicostella* from Black Carr Field. This species, the larva of which feeds on Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, had not been recorded in Vice-County 63 (S.&W. Yorkshire) since 1837!

Even more exciting was the discovery, in August, of *Acrolepia autumnitella*. The distinctive white mines made by the larvae of this species were discovered on the food plant, Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara* (Woody Nightshade), growing in shaded parts of Loversall Delph, Old Eaa



Acrolepia autumnitella
Wingspan 12 mm Photo: D. BATESON

Marsh, the approach to Beeston Hide and alongside the boardwalk through Corbett Wood. Mines collected in August produced moths in September. These are the first records of this species in Yorkshire, and its discovery was certainly the highlight of the

year.

Thanks are due to Harry Beaumont, Frank Botterill, Derek Bateson and others for their contributions to moth recording on the Reserve during 2003.

IAN HEPPENSTALL

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

Most of you will have taken advantage of the library of field guides which is maintained in the Field Centre for the use of wardens, supporters and visitors alike.

However, this is only part of the whole library which contains well over 100 books. When the new Field Centre is complete, we shall still maintain a selection of field guides available to all and there will also be room to display the other books which will be accessible on request.

Most of the books have been donated, though a few more specialised books have been purchased as special needs arose. Recent additions are two new keys, to hoverflies and to soldierflies, the new Marjorie Blamey wild flowers book and field guides to spiders, macro moths and butterflies – this latter is the only field guide currently available which is restricted just to butterflies found in Britain. These are all reviewed on pages 4 & 5.

In 2003 Dorothy Bramley has made do-

nations to the Reserve for the purchase of new titles for the library. In addition, John Lintin Smith has generously donated a copy of the two volume concise edition of "Birds of the Western Palearctic (BWP)". We are extremely grateful to Dorothy and John and, indeed, to all those who have generously donated books. If you have any suitable books which you no longer require, please consider donating them to this growing library.

JOHN HANCOX

MIXED YEAR FOR BUTTERFLIES

SUMMARY

Another variable year with many species doing very well, particularly prior to mid-summer, but a few not doing well at all. Recording continued though not at the intensity of 2002 mainly due to poorer recording conditions and lack of butterflies. This is particularly ironic as most will remember 2003 as a "good" year for weather, particularly the long dry summer and autumn.

March and April as well were both very dry and largely settled, but often with cloud from the North Sea being reluctant to burn back to the coast. Butterfly records in this period were quite patchy. The long dry spell from early July, however, may be the reason why some species did rather poorly from mid-summer into the autumn mainly due to the food plants "going over" early and removing a source of food for butterflies.

The early season of settled weather may have been the reason for a number of early dates being recorded and a particularly large number of June emergent Commas and Small Tortoiseshells. In fact the appearance of the June brood of Small Tortoiseshell, for the second year running, again gave us hope that we might be seeing a recovery of this species. However, in 2003, to some extent, this was borne out since the main brood later in the summer was somewhat better than in recent years.

For the third year running, there were no records of Clouded Yellow but Painted Lady and Red Admiral did reasonably well, though it wasn't a vintage year.

Whilst it was intended to carry out the coordinated counts of Small Skipper and Gatekeepers, the heavy rain of early July effectively meant that Small Skipper numbers were depressed – their emergence probably coinciding with this short wet spell. The Gatekeeper count did go ahead, however, with a massive count of over 1,000 butterflies.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

The following is a summary of the records. The +, = or – in brackets, is a comparison with 2002.

Small Skipper: A fairly poor year at Potteric Carr, though this butterfly fared better in other areas which is why we consider that the weather conditions at the time of the main emergence were a factor in their relative scarceness. Peak count 141 on 22/6. These butterflies were regularly checked for Essex Skipper, but none were seen. Black Carr Field, the western end of

Loversall Bank and the areas around the reed bed filtration ponds were still the best areas. (2002 peak: 417) (–)

Large Skipper: Not such a good year, max. 22 on 22/6. (2002 peak: 36) (–)

Brimstone: Regularly seen with mostly 1s



and 2s from March onwards; however, the last date 13/8 was very early – perhaps due to lack of food sources later. Max. of 7 on 15/4 (=/-)

Large White: Similar to last year. Mostly 1s or 2s but with a max. of 21 on 13/7 (=)

Small White: Similar to last year. Max. of 13 on 13/8. (2002 peak: 13) (=)

Green-veined White: Regularly seen in small numbers from April to September, mainly flying through between compartments. Max. 1st brood: 39 on 4/5 (=); 2nd brood: 81 on 13/7 (2002 peaks: 42/77)(=)

Clouded Yellow: No records in 2003, for the third year running.

Orange Tip: Not such a good year with a peak of 19 on 4/5 (2002 peak: 19) (=)

Purple Hairstreak: Relatively scarce with a max. count of 5 on 14/7. (2002 peak: 21) (–). Were we too busy watching White-letter Hairstreak?

White-letter Hairstreak: An early record on 10/6; many people took advantage of the good viewing opportunities, particularly of butterflies nectaring on thistles at eye level; peak of 8 between 22/6 and 12/7, with a rare view of a mated pair. The spacing of records between the original colony in the tree half way along Loversall Bank and the western end of the Bank would indicate, perhaps, a second colony.

Small Copper: Once again, a relatively poor year for this species, worse in fact than last year. Max. count 4 on 30/8 (2002 peak: 11) (–)

Brown Argus: A smattering of sightings from May to early September. 1st brood only singles; 2nd brood 3 on 3/8. (2002 peak – 2nd brood: 7) (–)

Common Blue: Another good first brood (peak 169 on 1/6) only singles in sec-

ond brood. (2002 peak 1st brood 141) (+)

Holly Blue: A poor year with only a few records of single butterflies. (–)

Red Admiral: A better year for this species with some good counts around end August. (+)

Painted Lady: A very much better year with more records, but not a vintage year; there was a peak of 64 on 5/8. (+)

Small Tortoiseshell: An encouraging increase, long awaited; the presence again of a recognisable early summer brood in June suggested a better year. The main brood saw a count of 59 on 13/8, unheard of numbers on recent years (+). Are we at last seeing a revival? There was an interesting winter sighting of one on 16/12.

Peacock: In some ways, a repeat of 2002 with many records, mainly of singles, in the early months to end June. However, the main brood was again disappointing – the dry warm spell beginning in July meant that there was little food for them when they emerged in early August – at least at Potteric Carr! Peak count, 2nd brood of 50 on 2/8. (2002 peak: 69) (–)

Comma: Commas seem to be increasing at the Reserve (see note on page 9). Peak of 46 from 31/8 – 7/9 (2002 peak: 34) (+)

Dark Green Fritillary: First sighting on the Reserve – see article on page 12.

Speckled Wood: This butterfly was seen almost continuously from early April to end October. Once again, separation of broods difficult. Apparent peaks:– 1st brood: 18 on 22/4; 2nd brood: 27 on 20/7; and 3rd brood: 102 on 31/8. (2002 peaks: 16/26/183) (–)

Wall: A very poor year with just one record. Other areas also seem to have had a rather poor year, for whatever reason. (–)

Gatekeeper: Very much the most numerous butterfly on the Reserve, though only present for a very short time, this year from mid June to mid August. A coordinated count was made on 20/7 when a total of 1065 were counted, even higher than last year. (2002 peak: 622) (+)

Meadow Brown: Once again a relatively poor year. Peak of 125 on 22/6 and 121 on 13/7. (2002 peak: 177) (–)

Small Heath: Only seen on one day, 1/6 when there were three records.

Ringlet: A much better year than 2002 with a peak of 296 on 22/6, almost identical date as last year. (2002 peak: 168) (–)

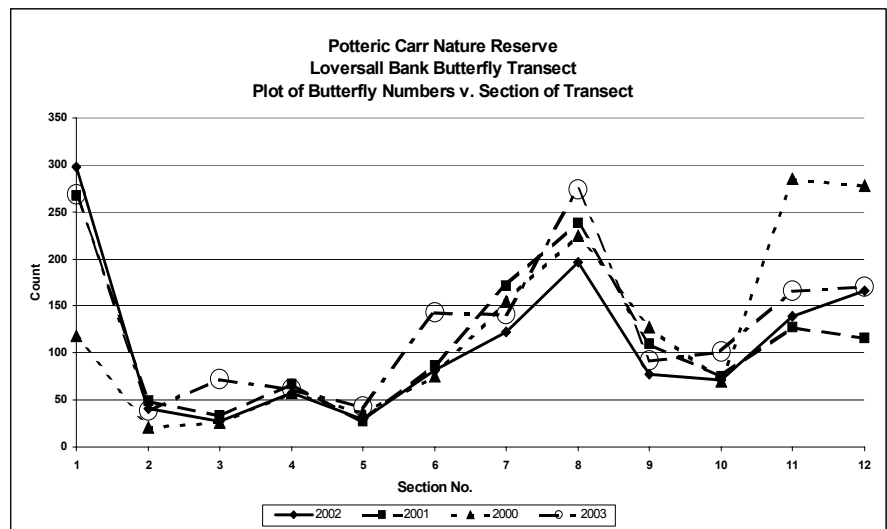
JOHN HANCOX

LOVERSALL BANK BUTTERFLY TRANSECT

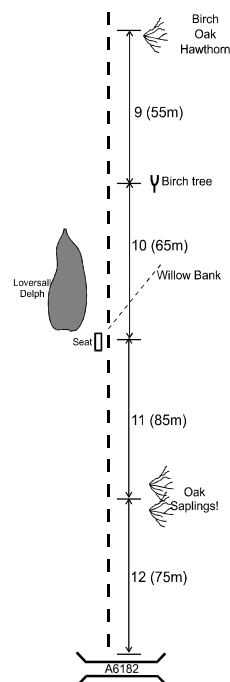
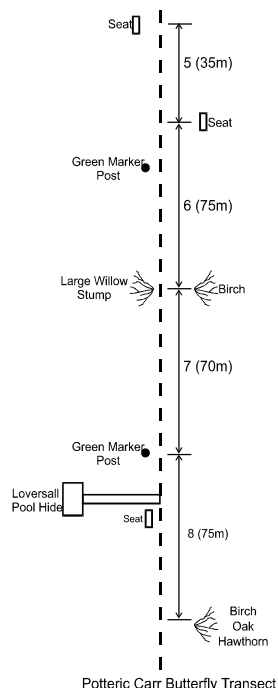
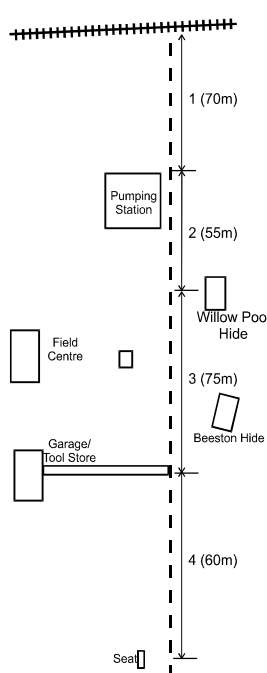
The butterfly transect was carried out again during 2003, the fourth year using the revised route which embraces the whole of Loversall Bank from St. Catherine's Curve to the A6182. As before, this is divided into 12 arbitrary sections for consistency of recording (see plan below).

The transect should normally be carried out from 1st April but, due to the paucity of records during the early weeks of the walk as experienced in the early years, and due to other pressures of recording on the participants, it was decided to start the 2002/3 walks to coincide with the emergence of the "browns" and Small Skippers, when the numbers at least have some statistical significance. Week 12 (17th – 23rd June) has been chosen as the first week, since this is slightly before the first "brown", which is normally Ringlet, appears. Walks were completed every week from then on, the main recorder being the writer. However, during the peak counts, it is certainly helpful to have the assistance of others – the week with the large count of Gatekeepers was especially difficult – they were everywhere, and keeping track of them was not easy if one was not to end up with a false count. On this occasions, I had assistance from Dave Walters, Glyn Hudson and Ken Woolley, who also helped with some of the other walks.

The bank continues to be highly attrac-



	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Ringlet	18	60	106	100	118	160
Gatekeeper	42	67	99	73	122	245
Meadow Brown	28	49	83	53	28	41
Speckled Wood	12	13	64	61	33	36
Small Skipper	2	23	37	46	45	40
Small Skipper - whole site	71	124	190	224	417	141



tive to five species, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood and Small Skipper. These extensively use the Bank for feeding/breeding, whereas the other species recorded tend to be largely "passage" butterflies, moving around the Reserve and using the Bank as a natural flight line. However, as indicated elsewhere, Small Skippers were much lower in numbers in 2003, the assumed reason being their emergence coinciding with the heavy rain of early July.

2003 was a better year for the Vanessids and these made up for some of the losses from one or two of the other species.

Once again, it is remarkable how consistent the counts have been in relation to the sector of the Bank on which they occur. This is despite the varying numbers, e.g. the lower numbers of Small Skippers and the very much larger numbers of Gatekeepers.

We shall endeavour to continue the transect in 2004, hopefully not too affected by the works which will be going on during the summer.

JOHN HANCOX

EARLY AND LATE DATES 1998 – 2003

The early and late dates for butterflies and dragonflies from 1998 to 2003 are presented below. Once again they show some remarkable consistencies from year to year, particularly on first emergence dates. Some of the early dates in 2003 were a little advanced on the average, maybe in response to the settled weather in March and April.

The "last" dates are more variable, partly

because the weather is probably more of a factor in how long species hang on, but also because the last date is probably more difficult to record (you suddenly realise that you haven't seen a species for a while!). 2003, in particular only produced a scattering of latest late dates with the Common Darter (16/11) probably responding to the "Indian summer" effect in October and early November.

The very earliest/latest dates highlighted in Bold	Early Dates						Late Dates					
	03	02	01	00	99	98	03	02	01	00	99	98
BUTTERFLIES												
Small Skipper	15/6	15/6	24/6	18/6	22/6	27/6	3/8	27/8	21/8	29/8	17/8	18/8
Large Skipper	1/6	30/5	17/6	7/6	1/6	14/6	27/7	16/7	5/8	6/8	25/7	2/8
Large White	17/4	19/4	10/5	6/5	3/5	15/5	14/9	29/9	10/9	12/9	5/9	12/10
Small White	3/4	26/3	6/5	23/4	4/4	14/3	25/9	10/9	9/10	17/9	22/9	31/8
Green-veined White	8/4	2/4	1/5	19/4	4/4	8/4	14/9	29/9	7/10	8/10	22/9	20/9
Orange Tip	12/4	7/4	29/4	19/4	8/4	27/4	8/6	18/6	19/6	26/6	13/6	23/6
White-letter Hairstreak ..	15/6	25/6	-	-	-	-	15/7	23/7	-	-	-	-
Purple Hairstreak	29/6	8/7	16/7	4/7	5/7	28/6	22/7	25/8	5/8	20/8	3/8	18/8
Small Copper	4/5	7/4	14/5	14/5	18/5	18/5	5/10	6/10	17/10	17/9	12/10	18/10
Brown Argus	25/5	19/5	14/8*	4/6	-	-	16/8	1/9	11/9	4/9	-	-
Common Blue	25/5	16/5	30/5	20/5	23/5	17/5	17/8	11/9	8/9	21/9	5/9	8/9
Holly Blue	3/5	23/4	6/5	20/5	11/4	15/5	9/8	11/8	19/8	5/8	27/7	30/8
Speckled Wood	8/4	24/3	5/5	6/4	11/4	14/4	21/10	9/10	22/10	8/10	15/8	12/10
Wall Brown	16/8**	28/4	7/5	7/5	9/4	15/5	**	13/8	28/8	1/9	26/9	31/8
Gatekeeper	22/6	30/6	2/7	8/7	11/7	12/7	16/8	3/9	1/9	29/8	29/8	30/8
Meadow Brown	7/6	16/6	24/6	18/6	16/5	24/6	30/8	8/9	2/9	4/9	4/9	8/9
Small Heath	1/6	2/6	20/6	11/6	6/6	22/5	**	14/7	1/9	4/9	15/8	9/8
Ringlet	10/6	16/6	21/6	18/6	13/6	23/6	2/8	6/8	5/8	8/8	4/9	8/9
DAMSELFLIES												
Banded Demoiselle	10/6	21/6	12/6	30/5	13/6	7/6	20/7	4/8	24/7	13/8	29/8	21/6
Emerald	22/6	27/6	26/6	27/6	27/6	28/6	7/9	10/9	16/9	24/9	4/9	23/8
Large Red	26/4	23/4	9/5	23/4	27/4	28/4	28/6	21/7	3/7	18/6	29/5	21/6
Azure Blue	6/5	4/5	12/5	14/5	3/5	15/5	27/7	13/7	7/7	30/7	27/7	21/7
Common Blue	11/5	11/5	19/5	7/5	3/5	17/5	17/9	17/9	9/9	20/8	22/8	31/8
Blue-tailed	4/5	5/5	10/5	9/5	3/5	15/5	30/8	10/9	18/8	15/8	22/8	9/8
DRAGONFLIES												
Hairy Dragonfly	7/6	-	-	-	-	-	24/6	-	-	-	-	-
Southern Hawker	21/6	16/7	21/7	30/7	29/6	9/8	15/9	1/10	7/10	1/10	12/9	20/9
Common Hawker	2/8	8/9	8/7	9/7	18/7	18/8	16/8	6/10	16/9	1/10	5/9	25/10
Brown Hawker	1/7	7/7	2/7	30/7	5/7	21/7	8/9	6/10	23/9	1/10	7/9	13/9
Migrant Hawker	19/7	4/8	5/8	6/8	8/8	9/8	12/10	3/11	11/11	22/10	26/9	11/10
Emperor	7/6	18/6	4/7	18/6	5/7	21/6	26/7	4/8	21/8	8/8	12/8	18/8
Black-tailed Skimmer	31/5	2/6	24/6	18/6	23/5	24/5	26/7	28/7	5/8	30/7	3/8	25/8
Broad-bodied Chaser	25/5	21/5	2/6	-	-	-	26/8	23/7	4/7	-	-	-
Four-spot Chaser	4/5	4/5	2/5	14/5	9/5	17/5	13/7	4/8	24/7	10/7	3/8	21/7
Common Darter	22/6	28/5	22/6	18/6	7/7	28/6	16/11	3/11	13/11	29/10	7/11	1/11
Ruddy Darter	9/7	11/7	4/7	16/7	11/7	21/6	7/9	6/10	1/10	8/10	21/9	18/10

* 2nd brood, no 1st brood recorded; ** only 1 record

RESERVE PUBLICATIONS

The Reserve Management Committee is keen to ensure that the results of recording and special surveys are published. This Newsletter is a vehicle for publishing such information, especially short notes which would otherwise not get an airing. Bird reports in one form or another have been produced for many years, and there has been a series of individual reports on species groups or special projects.

Publications currently available (or can

be ordered) from the Field Centre:-

BUTTERFLIES OF POTTERIC CARR (2002) (J. HANCOX)

DRAGONFLIES OF POTTERIC CARR (2001) (INCLUDING AN IDENTIFICATION KEY) (J. HANCOX)

FLORA OF POTTERIC CARR (1992-95) (D. BRAMLEY)

WILDLIFE COMMUNITIES INHABITING LOVERSALL DELPH (2002) (D. BATESON)

SURVEY OF FRESHWATER MACRO AND MICRO SPECIES DEVELOPING IN A WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM (2000) (D. BATESON)

ANNUAL BIRD REPORT 2002 (M. ROBERTS)

(SOME COPIES OF EARLIER REPORTS STILL AVAILABLE)

NEW SPECIES OF BUTTERFLY FOR THE RESERVE

On 1st August, Peter Greaves was observing numerous Painted Ladies nectaring on the flowers along the bank of the Mother Drain where the path leads to Cottage Drain hide. His attention was immediately drawn to another species, which was obviously a fritillary. He was able to watch it closely (2 m) using binoculars for around 30 minutes, and he eventually determined it to be a Dark Green Fritillary, *Arygynnis aglaja*. A description was submitted to Roy Bedford



Dark Green Fritillary PHOTO: J. LINTIN SMITH

the recorder for Butterfly Conservation and was accepted.

This species is the most widespread of the fritillaries and occurs widely in Britain, though never in large numbers. It generally has a coastal distribution throughout much of its range and, in common with other fritillaries, has declined in the last 100 years, most significantly in the 1960s. A look at the distribution map in Asher et al (2001) clearly shows the only regular sightings in Yorkshire are on the North York Moors, near the coast, where there is a small cluster of dots. It isn't unusual for individuals to stray, however, and each year there is a smattering of records of singletons in parts of Yorkshire, though with no recent records in VC63.

Since the decline of the 1960s, there is no evidence yet of any sustained recovery and this sighting, welcome though it is, certainly for anyone lucky enough to see it, is probably just a one-off. However, it just shows that one must be vigilant because one never knows just what might turn up.

JOHN HANCOX

REFERENCE:

ASHER ET AL, 2001, THE MILLENNIUM ATLAS OF BUTTERFLIES OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND, OUP