



Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
Natural Sciences Committee
Charity 224018

The twenty fourth meeting of the Natural Sciences Committee was held at St Chad's Parish Hall, Headingley, Leeds 10.00 am Saturday, 9th February 2013.

Present: Peter Flint (Chairman), Paula Lightfoot (Minutes), Colin Howes, Michael Archer, Cliff Evans, Gladys Evans, Anita Glover, Terry Crawford, John Bowers, Sarah West, John Wint, Bill Ely, Andy Millard, Phyl Abbott, Mark Seaward, Albert Henderson, Sharon Flint, Andy Godfrey, Alan Braddock, Bob Marsh

Apologies: Jill Warwick, Roger Key, Andrew Grayson, Jean Kendrew, Mick Carroll, Bill Curtis, Paul Simmons, Joyce Simmons, Richard Wilson, Mike Denton, Adrian Norris, Geoffrey Wilmore, Terry Whitaker, Chris Young, Dave Chesmore, Don Grant.

MINUTES

1. Welcome to new Chairman

The committee welcomed Peter Flint in the role of Chairman and thanked him for taking on this responsibility.

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Minutes and actions of the meetings held at RHS Harlow Carr on the 24th November had been distributed via e-mail and can be downloaded from the YNU website. They were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

The YNU library and archives will be discussed at the Education Committee meeting on the 8th March.

The fungi and lichen checklists have been added to the YNU website. If any other Sections have documents they would like to make downloadable from the website, or events, news or other content they would like to add, please send to Claire Neill on webmaster@ynu.org.uk

3. Yorkshire Dales Environment Network

Anita Glover works at the University of Leeds, where she did a PhD on cave roosting bats. She is the coordinator for the Yorkshire Dales Environment Network, a knowledge exchange network funded by a NERC knowledge exchange grant. YDEN is a network of researchers, stakeholders and practitioners with a responsibility for care and management of the Yorkshire Dales environment. The aim of YDEN is to improve and increase communication and collaboration between organisations. YNU wrote a letter of support for the funding bid. Members of YDEN include research groups at the University of Leeds, Natural England, Environment Agency, National Trust, Field Studies Council, Forestry Commission, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Nidderdale AONB and representatives of stakeholder interests such as farming and quarrying. Over the next two years, YDEN will look at ways of

working together on projects with YNU and other members of the network. The NERC grant does not include direct funding for projects, it just covers the costs of the coordinator post. The aim of YDEN is not to create more work, but to facilitate better use of resources and better collaboration between organisations. There could be opportunities to facilitate joint funding bids. One project does have funding and is underway – this is a feasibility study based on research into habitat suitability modelling and predictive maps of species distribution carried out by Leeds University. The research to date focussed on wading birds and bats, and used data collected specifically for the purpose. The aim now is to see if this methodology can be expanded to other taxonomic groups using existing biological records. The project is funded by a Higher Education Innovation fund grant to increase the impact of research. The funding will pay for a postdoctoral researcher GIS specialist. The habitat suitability and species distribution maps produced for bats and wading birds are already being used by the National Park to inform agri-environment applications, planning decisions and mitigation. YDEN aims to organise a workshop around the 17th-18th April to discuss potential sources of data for this research. NB the NFBR Conference takes place on the 18th and 19th April, further information can be found [here](#). YDEN will have a display at the YNU conference.

4. Online recording on the YNU website

4.1 Data entry forms and requirements of each Section

The YNU needs to give the developer our requirements for integrating Indicia online recording into the YNU website so this can be set up in time for the recording season. One possibility would be to have three forms:

- Simple 'submit a sighting' form for one-off records
- Intertidal recording form for multiple records at one site
- Terrestrial recording form for multiple records at one site

However, if any Sections have very specific requirements, it might be necessary to create special forms for certain taxonomic groups.

Action – the following people will send Paula Lightfoot a list of fields they need to be included in a recording form for their group:

Fungi – Alan Braddock

Plants (including bryophytes?) – Phyl Abbott

Mammals (and herptiles?) – Colin Howes. NB The Mammal Society already has an Indicia [online recording form](#), would this be a good template?

Birds – use BTO recommended fields

Insects – Dave Chesmore (not present at meeting, Paula to contact)

Freshwater – Sharon Flint

Molluscs – Terry Crawford

It will also be possible to upload species records from a spreadsheet.

To see a standard generic form for multiple records [click here](#).

To see a standard generic form for a single sighting [click here](#).

4.2 Q&A about verification and data flow

It is very important to record common species – the online forms need to make it easy to do this. It is not always possible to verify a record from a photograph and a verifier may not be confident in verifying a record if he doesn't know the recorder. Inevitably it will not be possible to verify every record, but it should be possible to verify a greater proportion than when records are received on paper. Online recording enables verifiers to contact recorders about their records, which should help them to develop their skills and make better records in future.

4.3 Yorkshire Flat Hedgehog Survey

In 1990-91 a small number of YNU members and affiliated societies collaborated on a project set up by the Mammal Society to record road kill hedgehogs according to a standardised methodology that produces data on hedgehog population density. Participants record car journeys of 20 miles or more, record their start and end mileage and start recording from the beginning of their journey, not from when they encounter their first hedgehog. The project will run from July to September. A recording form will be added to the YNU website – this will be a paper form to download and print rather than an online recording form. The data produced by this survey can be compared to the data from the previous survey to find out whether there is evidence to support the anecdotal claims that hedgehog populations have crashed. Live hedgehogs are not recorded as part of this survey.

Action – Colin Howes to send recording form and accompanying text (a photo of a live hedgehog would be nice!) to Claire on webmaster@ynu.org.uk

Action – Colin Howes to write a notice for April's Naturalist announcing the project.

Action – Colin Howes to send information to Jill Warwick so we can send out a press release and encourage wider participation, once the form is on the website so we can provide a link to it.

5. Digitisation of recording cards by the Biological Records Centre

Roy Crossley contacted the Natural Sciences Committee Chairman to seek permission to send Empidoidea record cards to the Biological Records Centre (Wallingford) to be digitised for inclusion in a forthcoming National Atlas. Roy previously sent the entire set of YNU Tipulidae records to BRC some 5 years ago, and late last year sent his own record cards which have now been input and returned by tracked next day delivery.

The record cards were originated by Chris Cheetham in 1919 and have been kept up to date by a number of recorders who have been their serial custodians ever since and as with other groups records are submitted to the recorders by other collectors.

The YNU Executive has granted permission to Roy to send the YNU Empidoidea cards to BRC on the understanding that the cards will be returned to the YNU once they have been digitised. This decision is in line with the YNU's published Data Policy:

Records submitted to the YNU and YNU recorders will therefore be passed on to local and national recording schemes or local records centres, where they may then be entered on the NBN Gateway. [...] It is impracticable to obtain permission from every individual for their records to be used in this way. Anyone who submits records to the YNU is therefore considered to have given permission for their records to be made available as outlined above.

There may be opportunities to have record cards from other YNU Sections digitised by the Biological Records Centre. They are happy to help with any high quality paper records that are seen as a priority by the schemes or that would make a significant contribution to a poorly recorded group.

The YNU Executive encourages the digitisation of paper records but their permission should be sought before sending YNU archives away for digitisation. Paper records are only loaned for digitisation and must be returned to the YNU. The YNU should be acknowledged in metadata accompanying the digitised version of the records.

6. Yorkshire Hawkweeds

Don Grant has passed on a message from Vince Jones BSBI recorder. Vince Jones has written a first draft account of the Yorkshire hawkweeds including keys. The book will be illustrated with colour photographs of field and herbarium specimen, showing variation within species and close-ups of useful characters. Dot maps will be included for most species. Vince Jones proposes a publication of 150 A4 pages with colour throughout. He suggests publishing 100 copies with costs of £20 each. Don Grant has suggested that greater use of black and white line drawings would be beneficial. This will be discussed at the next Executive meeting. It might be possible to seek charitable funding to support this – Jill Warwick is currently researching charitable trusts. The YNU's publishing reserves have been absorbed by the South Yorkshire Plant Atlas, but the publication of books about natural history in Yorkshire falls within the YNU's charitable objectives. We do not need to make a profit but need to ensure we don't make a loss. Options such as the production of an e-book or a print on demand book should be considered. We also need to know if there is likely to be a market for this book outside the county. There are over 400 species of hawkweed in the UK but it is uncertain how many are found in Yorkshire – new species keep being found in the county. Consideration also needs to be given to the optimum size of the book, as A4 might not be a good format if the book is to be used for field work.

Action – to be discussed at the Executive

Albert Henderson to reply to Don Grant that this will be discussed at the Exec.

7. YNU Conference 23rd March 2013

The programme and booking form has now been e-mailed to members and is available to download from the YNU website and has been promoted via the YNU Facebook group. It will be sent out by post next week.

The conference will follow the same format as last year as this proved successful, i.e. short talks followed by discussions in breakout groups with a chair and rapporteur. Two groups will use the conference hall and the third will use the exhibition area.

Action: JB and PL to formulate questions for discussion for each session

The following agreed to be chairs and rapporteurs:

Rapporteur - Sarah West, Anita Glover, Andy Millard

Chair – Terry Crawford, Mark Seaward

Speakers have been asked to provide a 100 word synopsis for the website and invited to write up their talk for the *Naturalist*. It is important that the speakers keep to time, as delegates value the networking opportunities provided by the conference.

The conference programme was circulated. The question was raised as to whether data should be a plural noun. It was agreed that if the conference proceedings are published the noun 'data' should be treated in a consistent way.

Note from the Secretary: there is an argument that data should be treated as a singular noun: <http://nxq.me.uk/note/2005/singular-data/>

8. Correspondence / Announcements

8.1 Date error in membership card:

VC63 Botanical meeting should be 25th May not 27th May. A communication is being sent to members by e-mail and post.

8.2 New YNU equipment – Malaise trap and pull-up banners

A Malaise trap has been purchased and is being stored by Sharon Flint. It was suggested that this could be used at the Insect Festival in York Museum Gardens on the 7th July, however since the meeting we have realised that this will not be possible as the Malaise trap has been promised for use at the VC65 Excursion at Nosterfield on the 6th July.

Three pull-up banners are being printed in time for the conference. These will be Insects, Freshwater and a generic YNU banner.

There are various pieces of YNU equipment stored at members' houses. It would be ideal to have a list of equipment showing what is stored where and outlining the procedure for borrowing it, i.e. who to contact. If no one volunteers to do this, it can be added to the list of things for Claire to do but she has many other tasks to do first.

Action – Paula to discuss with Claire when this could be done (certainly not until after the conference, probably not until summer).

8.3 Field Skills training day for Leeds University 1st May

The group of students will be smaller this year – between 30 and 40. Terry Crawford proposes to keep the same number of tutors and increase the tutor:student ratio. The event will be one day only, as opposed to two days in previous years. Ideally someone will go and meet students a couple of weeks beforehand, give them a presentation and get them to choose what group they want to join on the day.

Duties of a tutor: to take a small group of around 4 students and spend the day with them, tell them about your taxonomic group, give them fieldwork experience, identification experience, microscope work – whatever is relevant to your taxonomic group and appropriate to the weather and the time of year. Talk about the types of habitat to look at and sampling methods to use. Aim to boost their knowledge and experience of taxonomy, identification, field skills and give them a chance to engage with an experienced field recorder. Roger Key has already volunteered to lead a group. The following people also volunteered:

Michael Archer - bumblebees.
Sharon Flint – freshwater
Alan Braddock – fungi

Equipment is provided by University of Leeds and to some extent by the tutors themselves. University of Leeds will pay travel expenses at 40p per mile.

8.4 Possibility of running a hoverfly identification workshop

Roger Morris and Stuart Ball have a travelling workshop to train people in Hoverfly identification, but they find that only a minority of participants carry on recording after the event. They have found that if a local group keeps working together - collecting then identifying in a group confidence increases and the skills are retained. They charge around £30 per head for a weekend.

Action – to discuss at Education Committee if interested

9. Any other business

OPAL Tree Health Survey

An OPAL Tree Health Survey is currently being developed by OPAL in partnership with the Forestry Commission and FERA for release in May. Sarah West proposes to run a training session with the YNU to explain the standardised methodology for recording tree health. This could be in April with further dates later in the year.

Website

Alan Braddock and Terry Crawford asked if it would be possible to organise training on how to add and edit content to the website. This can be arranged and Sarah West can organise use of a computer room at the University of York, but it will have to be later in the year when Claire/Paula can fit this in. It certainly won't be before the conference. In the meantime please send content for the website to Claire or Paula and we will add it immediately.

Note from Secretary: the new website currently receives on average 500 visits per month and has been visited by 1,870 different people.

Freshwater section

Two field meetings have been organised, one in conjunction with the Conchological Section. Content has been provided for the YNU website and pull-up banners.

New publication

Michael Archer's book *Vespine wasps of the world: behaviour, ecology and taxonomy of the Vespinae* is available for sale at £95.

<http://www.whsmith.co.uk/Products/Vespine-Wasps-of-the-World-Behaviour-Ecology--Taxonomy-of-the-Vespinae-Monograph-Series-4+Hardback+9780956779571>

Bioblitzes

The YNU has been invited to participate in the following Bioblitzes. Please attend if you can, even if only for a short while, to help record and identify species. This can be a good way of attracting new members to the YNU.

- St Nicholas Fields Local Nature Reserve, York 17th and 18th May.
<http://www.stnicksfields.org.uk/index.php>
- Whitby, 21st and 22nd June. <http://whitbynaturalists.co.uk/WNBioblitz/index.htm>
- Brimham Rocks, Nidderdale 6th July. It was noted that this coincides with the VC65 excursion, but YNU members based near Nidderdale might like to attend the bioblitz.

NatSCA Conference

The NatSCA (Natural Sciences Collections Association) Conference and AGM takes place at York Museum on the 28th February to 1st March. Bookings closed on the 8th February, but it might be worth enquiring to see if they will accept late bookings. The abstracts are circulated with these minutes and further information can be found here: <http://natsca.info/content/natsca-conference-agm-2013-natural-science-collections-policy-and-practice>

It was suggested that Natural History Collections would be a good topic for the YNU conference in 2014.

Action – to discuss this conference theme at the Executive

10. Date of next meeting – Saturday 12th October at St Chad's, Headingley

This clashes with Insect Section AGM. Try to avoid clashes next year, e.g. use the YNU's Google calendar.