



Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
Natural Sciences Forum
Charity 224018

The thirty-first meeting of the Natural Sciences Forum was held at the 'Lakehouse', Ron Cooke Hub, University of York, from 11.00am to 12.30pm on Saturday 14th November 2015.

MINUTES

Present:

Peter Flint (Chair), Paula Lightfoot (minutes), Michael Archer, Margaret Atherden, John Bowers, Terry Crawford, Charles Critchley, Roy Crossley, Bill Ely, Sharon Flint, Ann Hanson, Margaret Hartley, Anne Heathcote, Vicky Kindemba, Robert Masheder, Andy Millard, Susie Millard, Adrian Norris, Roma Oxford, Geoff Oxford, Penny Relf, Sara Robin, Richard Shillaker, Sarah Spooner, Jill Warwick, Simon Warwick, Terry Whitaker, Harry Woolner, Chris Young.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from David Chesmore, Albert Henderson, Gavin Boyd, Barry Warrington, Sarah White, Ken White, Joyce Payne and Charlie Fletcher.

2. Minutes and actions of the meeting held at St Chads 14/03/15

These are available on the YNU website and were circulated by e-mail prior to this meeting. The minutes were approved with the following correction:

Item 12: Tom Hubbard should be Tom Hubball.

TW emphasised the importance of the action attached to item 12: Ellen Tidy to send the membership card to all section heads to check for mistakes and to Jane Pottas for final proof reading. David Chesmore had also raised this matter by e-mail prior to the meeting.

3. Matters arising

TW and PR provided an update on the Butterfly Conservation Yorkshire/YNU MapMate users' group. There has been a good uptake and over 50 members have signed up already. The license is due to be renewed on the 1st April 2016 and monies will be collected during March. Licenses currently cost £4 each and the cost might reduce further if more members join. There is further information about this on the BC Yorkshire website.

There were no other matters arising that are not on the agenda.

4. YNU Library – move and future development

The YNU library has moved from the NEYEDC offices in St William's College to the new NEYEDC offices at 10a Minster Gates, York, YO1 7HL. The library contents were moved

on the 12th November and will be unpacked and sorted over the coming weeks. NEYEDC are still working from St William's College but are also in the process of moving. The library will be on the 2nd floor and the data centre on the 1st floor. It is not much bigger than the previous library but is an easier environment to work in. CY will discuss access arrangements with NEYEDC and communicate this to the YNU soon. NEYEDC's lease is for 3 years.

CY suggested that the library should include more contemporary works and offered to email section heads for suggestions.

AN suggested using YNU funds to purchase a property for the library and the data centre, this was discussed further during the AGM.

SF suggested giving the library a higher profile on the YNU website.

JB suggested making the library the central repository for the journals of the YNU's affiliated societies. It was noted that since the death of David Lindley, the YNU does not currently have an Affiliated Societies Liaison Officer nor a description of what this role involves.

It was agreed that the YNU needs to formulate a documented strategy with clear aims and objectives for the development of the library. The YNU's Historical Section should be involved in this.

Action: CY to draft a strategy for the development of the library for discussion during the next Natural Sciences Forum meeting in February.

5. The Naturalist and Bird Reports on the YNU website

Issues of the *Naturalist* from 2011-2013 are available to download from the YNU website. 2014 issues will be added shortly. PL is investigating opportunities for making the complete set of back issues of the *Naturalist* available online, perhaps via the Biodiversity Heritage Library.

Scanned documents are searchable for key words or species names, but articles are not indexed.

A selection of over 30 pre-2007 Bird Reports have already been scanned and will be made available to download from the YNU website. Ian Court and PL are organising this.

PR suggested that the Butterfly and Moth Report could also be made available online. It was agreed that making our publications available to a wider audience for posterity is in line with the YNU's charitable remit.

Action: PR to send PL back issues of the Butterfly and Moth Report as PDF files.

Action: PL to report to the next Natural Sciences Forum meeting in February on progress regarding the *Naturalist*, Bird Reports and Butterfly and Moth reports.

6. Section reports for the YNU Annual Report

JB had circulated a request to all section heads to ask for a brief summary of their activities to be included to the YNU's Annual Report. Most sent reports of their activities during the April 2015-March 2016 financial year, so these will be included in the Annual Report to be produced next year.

The Annual Report for April 2014-March 2015 has already been completed and uploaded to the Charity Commission website.

7. Urban Buzz in York

Harry Woolner from Buglife introduced the Urban Buzz project.

Urban Buzz is a new national project run by Buglife and funded primarily by Biffa Award (£1m) with the aim of increasing pollinator habitat in cities. It is just getting started and has two key aims:

Firstly, to engage and train volunteers in habitat creation and enhancement, site assessment and monitoring. Existing recording methodologies such as those developed by Butterfly Conservation or Bumblebee Conservation Trust could be adopted where appropriate.

Secondly, to improve sites for the benefit of pollinators, aiming for 100 sites, large and small, across York.

The project will work closely with York Council to improve management of their sites, and has already met with the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre to obtain their input on suitable sites.

The project will run for 18 months in York but the aim is to set up a legacy of ongoing monitoring.

The funding available is mainly earmarked for tools and resources (e.g. seeds, scythes) for use by volunteer groups, with the possibility of setting up a central hub providing shared access to tools.

There might be funding available to pay skilled entomologists to train volunteers in identification skills if this is required by the monitoring methodology.

The aims of conservation and education/outreach are of equal importance to the project. There are specific targets for habitat creation and enhancement.

The project aims to enhance or create habitat for specialists as well as generalists, e.g. solitary bees. HW has already had a detailed discussion about this with MA, who is going to the project launch. Baseline data is needed to ensure that management measures do not improve a site for generalists to the detriment of specialists.

HW would like input from the YNU on:

- Suggestions for potential sites, i.e. areas where habitat enhancement could be particularly beneficial and/or there is already an active group of volunteers.
- Offers to support the project in any way, e.g. habitat creation, site assessment or monitoring, training and mentoring volunteers.

For more information see the Buglife website: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/urban-buzz>

Action: contact HW on harry.woolner@buglife.org.uk or 07464 828626 if you would like to support the project.

8. Hull Valley Wildlife Group grant

Hull Valley Wildlife Group was an affiliated society of the YNU, but they closed down six months ago. They have donated £5,000 of their funds to the YNU, and would like this

money to be used to deliver a project in their area that retains their identity, as a legacy to them. There will be an article in the *Naturalist* about this.

Suggestions received so far are:

Publishing a book for children about the wildlife of the area (Sarah White).

Running a ladybird survey with primary schools (Bill Ely).

Paying naturalists to visit schools to talk to children about local wildlife (Barry Warrington)

During the meeting it was suggested that the money could be used support a lecture series, 'Hull Valley Wildlife Group memorial lectures'.

SR stated that YWT have done some work with schools in Hull and found that some children had never been outside the Hull urban area.

Barry Warrington, YNU Treasurer and former HVWG member, will have the final decision on how the YNU should spend the legacy.

Action: please send any suggestions for suitable projects to Barry Warrington

9. YNU membership research

As discussed at the previous two Natural Sciences Forum meetings, the YNU has poor knowledge of its membership and is not currently making good use of its membership database.

The YNU has appointed a consultant, Matt Davies, to undertake the following work:

- Assess the structure and content of the current membership database.
- Design and implement a survey of existing and former members, including affiliated societies, to find out how the YNU can provide a better service to members.
- Suggest improvements to the structure of the membership database to improve the YNU's understanding of their membership and their ability to serve their members. Outline the costs, risks and benefits of adapting the existing database vs. creating a new database using desktop software or a cloud-based system.
- Depending on the decision of the YNU Executive, create a new database/adapt the existing database to meet their requirements. The functionality of the current database, particularly the ability to manage the distribution of publications and collection of subscriptions, must not be compromised.

PL, BW and AM have formed a working group to oversee this project, which is aimed to be completed by July 2016.

Matt Davies worked for Greenspace Information for Greater London for ten years before setting up his own consultancy, and has extensive knowledge both of databases and of the volunteer recording community. He also recently carried out consultancy work for NEYEDC.

It was agreed that this work should feed into the development of the strategy for the library.

TW stressed the importance of improving communication with affiliated societies. The YNU depend on them for many of the people who attend our field meetings. The survey will aim to find out what affiliated societies would like from the YNU, but some simple improvements could include sending publications in digital format to make them easier to circulate amongst members, and being more proactive in offering to give talks and arrange joint field meetings.

It is also hoped that this project might lead to more members taking the opportunity to help with the running of the YNU. JB pointed out that the YNU has made several efforts to find volunteers to take on roles such as membership administration, website administration, publication sales and event organisation, with no success. PL suggested that rather than defining a role and asking someone to take it on, the YNU could ask members how they would like to contribute to the running of the YNU.

Action: PL, BW and AM: provide update at the next Natural Sciences Forum meeting in February.

10. Correspondence / Announcements

10.1 YNU Conference 2016

The YNU conference will be held on Saturday the 19th March 2016 at the National Science Learning Centre, University of York on the topic of '*Names, knowledge and natural history – the importance of modern taxonomy to the amateur naturalist*'.

GO and TC have offered to chair the conference. The format will be a mixture of presentations and plenary discussion which has proved very successful at previous YNU conferences.

Conference tickets will be £25 for YNU members and £30 for non-members. This includes the conference lunch.

Action: please could anyone interested in giving a talk or poster on any aspect of this theme contact Paula Lightfoot on p.lightfoot@btinternet.com

Post-meeting note: confirmed speakers to date are: Susan Chambers (National Museums Scotland), Roy Crossley (YNU), Bill Ely (YNU), Lori Lawson Handley (University of Hull) and Tim Rich (formerly National Museum Wales).

10.2 NFBR Conference 2016 – subsidies for members representing YNU

The National Forum for Biological Recording conference will take place on the 12th and 13th May 2016 at the University of Lancaster on the topic of "National Recording Schemes and Societies – celebrating the past, looking to the future." It was agreed at the last YNU Executive meeting that the YNU will cover the cost of attending the conference for any YNU members who participate as a representative of the YNU, as we did for the 2015 NFBR conference. There will also be a field trip to the Forest of Bowland on the 14th May, although it was noted that this clashes with the VC Excursion to Swaledale.

10.3 Bempton Cliffs Bioblitz

The RSPB are running a bioblitz at Bempton Cliffs on Sunday 8th May 2016 and have approached the YNU to ask if we could help with recording and identifying species across

a wide range of taxonomic groups. It is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the YNU and is a stunning location for a bioblitz.

Action: please could anyone interested in taking part in the bioblitz contact Paula Lightfoot on p.lightfoot@btinternet.com

10.4 Education Committee Report

TC reported on behalf of the YNU Education Committee, having agreed to take on the role of acting Chair of this committee. Attendance at recent meetings has been low, and the committee would welcome new members.

The Education Committee has discussed two potential future conference topics:

- Is the YNU recording effort properly focussed towards issues like climate change and habitat suitability modelling?
- Yorkshire's marine, estuarine and coastal systems.

It was agreed that both topics were relevant and interesting. It was stated that the marine and coastal topic would provide good opportunities to engage with the Universities of Hull and York, who are carrying out research in these areas.

The following additional topic was suggested:

- Geology and geomorphology.

JB circulated a paper about employing someone to organise future conferences; this will be on the agenda for the meeting in February.

11. Any other business

SF suggested having profiles and photos of YNU Officers (section heads etc) on the YNU website.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Natural Sciences Forum will be Saturday 27th February at St Chads Parish Centre, Headingley.