



Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
Natural Sciences Forum
Charity 224018

The thirty-third meeting of the Natural Sciences Forum was held in the Aislabie Suite, Fountains Abbey, Ripon from 11.00am to 12.30pm on Saturday 5th November 2016.

MINUTES

Present: Peter Flint (Chair), Paula Lightfoot (minutes), Phyl Abbott, Rob Adams, Judith Allinson, Michael Archer, Jane Baddeley, John Bowers, Richard Brown, Terry Crawford, Roy Crossley, Elizabeth Elliot, Cliff Evans, Gladys Evans, Elizabeth Fell, Charlie Fletcher, Sharon Flint, Andy Godfrey, Andrew Grayson, Kelly Harmar, Margaret Hartley, Colin Howes, Kay McDowell, Andy Millard, Susanna Millard, Geoffrey Morries, Geoff Oxford, Roma Oxford, Jim Pewtress, Mark Seaward, Paul Simmons, Joyce Simmons, Carole Sobkowiak, Sarah Spooner, Simon Warwick, Jill Warwick, Jack Weston, Sarah White, Ken White, Kate Wright.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Margaret Atherden, Mike Denton, Albert Henderson, Roger Key, John Newbould, Adrian Norris, Barry Warrington, Terry Whitaker, Derek Whiteley and Stephen Worwood.

2. Minutes, actions and matters arising from the meeting held at St Chad's Parish Centre 27/02/2016

The minutes had been circulated prior to this meeting and are available to download from the [YNU website](#). They were accepted as a true record of the meeting. There were three matters arising that are not on the agenda:

- Louise Hill has agreed to take on part of the role of VC63 Botany Recorder. The Botanical Section has not appointed a Chair so this role has been removed and all future communication with this section will be via the five County Recorders.
- Back issues of *The Naturalist* are now available on the Biodiversity Heritage Library website, and the Bird Reports should soon be available also.
- PL has extracted the library catalogue from the library computer as a .TXT file but it will need manual editing before it can be uploaded to our website, and it is important that corrections are made to the database rather than just to the exported data. PL will liaise with YNU Librarian Chris Young to take this forward.

3. Proposal for YNU residential field meeting at Spurn

SF has suggested holding a residential field meeting at Spurn as the VC61 excursion in 2018. SWh has agreed to organise this. The YNU used to hold residential field meetings many years ago, and it was agreed this is an excellent proposal. Accommodation would be at the new [Spurn Bird Observatory building](#) which is self-catering and sleeps 13

people. YNU made a grant of £10,000 to Spurn Bird Observatory Trust, an affiliated society of the YNU, to assist their work and YNU members benefit from the same discounted rates as SBOT members when booking this accommodation. The aim of the meeting would be to include a social event e.g. a barbecue. JBo suggested the meeting should be held in late June or early July. The Forum thanked SF for the proposal.

JBo reported on the proposal by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, an affiliated society of the YNU, to build a visitor centre on Spurn. JBo had objected to the application on the grounds of disturbance to wader roosts. The application was rejected and a new application has been submitted which relies on voluntary wardens to keep visitors away from the wader roosts. JBo proposes to object again.

4. YNU Conference 2017

The YNU conference will be held in Hendrix Hall at York University on Saturday 8th April 2017. Members have been notified by e-mail and an announcement will appear in the next issue of *The Naturalist*. The Executive and Education Committee have agreed that the next conference will be a special event with a different format to previous conferences, consisting of short talks, displays, plenary and breakout discussions and plenty of time for networking.

Sections and Affiliated Societies have been invited to give talks and displays about their current activities in areas such as outreach and engagement, education and training, collaborative projects, using technology and social media, carrying out structured recording and using biological records to inform decision making. The aim is to identify opportunities for collaboration and for implementing suggestions that arose from the membership survey.

We will also try to secure one or two external speakers to talk about wider issues in UK biological recording as context and inspiration for our discussions.

The proposed title, reflecting the potentially wide-ranging subject matter, is: *Life, the YNUniverse and Everything!*

PL said that volunteers will be needed to act as scribes to note down key points and, most importantly, actions arising from the discussions. It would also be ideal if the event could be written up for *The Naturalist*. SF suggested the write-up could be shared between two or more people to provide different viewpoints, e.g. a new member and a long-standing member.

JA commented that it would be beneficial to encourage members of affiliated societies to attend, rather than simply the officers of the societies, but was not sure how this could be achieved.

SS suggested promoting the conference to Yorkshire Universities. JBo endorsed this and mentioned that no Yorkshire University biology/ecology/environment departments are currently affiliated to the YNU.

All – if you are willing to act as a scribe at the conference, or to contribute to an article for *The Naturalist*, please contact PL

All – if you would like to volunteer to promote the conference to Universities or other audiences, please contact PL

5. Bioblitzes

The YNU does not normally organise public bioblitzes or run its field meetings as bioblitzes though we often provide expert support for bioblitzes by other organisations. We have not organised our own large-scale public event since the Festival of Ecology in 2013. Last year the YNU supported four such bioblitzes.

PF said that the FSC Malham Tarn Field Studies Centre is celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2017 and the head of centre is considering running a bioblitz as a commemorative event. He asked if the YNU would be interested in supporting this bioblitz if it took place and there was support for this. JBo stated that bioblitzes can be excellent tools for public engagement, particularly for families, and that the YNU's participation would help us to fulfil our charitable objectives.

RB asked how the event would be managed to avoid impact on sensitive habitats and species, PF replied that FSC would take responsibility for this.

The date has not yet been decided. PL offered to send PF a list of YNU dates for 2017 to help to avoid clashes and maximise participation.

PL - Send list of YNU 2017 dates to PF

PF – follow up with Malham Tarn FSC Head of Centre regarding YNU participation

6. Outreach and encouragement of new members

AM said that it could be beneficial to promote the YNU to organisations whose members or participants may have an incipient interest in natural history, e.g. through practical conservation or other outdoor activities.

GM and JBa reported on successful outreach activities carried out by Friends of Bowland, e.g. participating in bioblitzes and running a nature tray competition for Brownies and Rainbows. GM reported that there was colossal enthusiasm for natural history amongst the children and their parents, including great interest in less 'charismatic' taxa such as earthworms and spiders. He also reported that the teenagers they had met did not want the subject of natural history to be 'dumbed down' for them, GM was greatly impressed by their approach and enthusiasm. Friends of Bowland will also support nature walks during the summer months.

YNU does not sponsor or pay for CRB checks which are not necessary provided that children are accompanied by their teachers, parents or guardians.

TC reported that he and Adrian Norris ran a Family Mollusc Day at Howsham Mill during the October half term which was very successful.

KH said she would like to attend field meetings and other natural history events with her children, i.e. events aimed at adults who have an interest in natural history but where children are also welcome.

Children can attend YNU field meetings provided that they are accompanied. However, not all YNU field meetings will be 'family friendly' or suitable for beginners, for example the organiser and participants might be looking for a specific species or square bashing.

PL said anyone can organise a 'family friendly' field meeting and advertise it as such.

SWh said she would like to invite local residents to participate in the VC61 excursion e.g. through the village noticeboard. It was confirmed that this would be covered by the YNU's public liability insurance, provided attendees sign an attendance sheet on arrival.

To give some insight into how and why new members join, JW introduced himself as a new member of the YNU. He joined after meeting members on the YNU stall at the Bird Fair in Rodley NNR. He is a member of Leeds Microscopical Society and has an interest in nature dating back to his teenage years and is particularly interested in wildlife in his local woodland, which is believed to be Ancient Woodland. He said that the Royal Microscopical Society have outreach officers who loan microscopes to primary schools around the UK. More information on the RMS outreach programme can be found [here](#).

MS stated that both the YNU and Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union used to cater for junior naturalists and stated that in addition to engaging with young people, it would be beneficial to attract teachers to attend field meetings.

SS asked if this subject would be discussed at the conference to enable interested individuals to get together and agree on actions, PL confirmed that it would because it was one of the issues arising from the membership survey.

7. YNU Education Committee

PF said that the YNU has for many years had an Education Committee. However, the Committee currently has no Chair, some members have stepped down and meetings have been very poorly attended. The main function of the committee has been to organise the Leeds University MSc field skills training which didn't really require a committee. In light of this decreased activity, the question was raised at the last YNU Executive meeting as to whether the YNU needs an Education Committee.

JBo offered to produce a discussion paper on this topic for the next meeting of the Natural Sciences Forum, this offer was accepted.

JBo – produce discussion paper on YNU outreach and education for the next NSF meeting

8. YNU merchandise

SF suggested producing a YNU calendar using photographs of Yorkshire wildlife and habitats provided by members, perhaps including dates of our meetings. It was agreed this would be worth investigating, and that it should be possible to take pre-orders and print on demand so there would be no financial risk.

KW suggested holding a photo competition, perhaps linked to the conference, to provide photographs for the calendar.

SF – investigate potential printers and get information on cost, lead time and minimum print runs or printing on demand.

All – if anyone would like to volunteer to organise a photo competition, please contact the Executive

9. Nidderdale AONB Wild Watch Project (Kelly Harmar, AONB Biodiversity Project Officer)

KH introduced the Nidderdale AONB Wild Watch project which is funded by HLF for three years starting in 2017. The project aims to collect data on 50 species of national

conservation concern which are known to be in the AONB. The data will be used to create habitat suitability maps and species recovery action plans for 10 species. The 10 species selected will be determined by the data collected. The other aims of the project are to engage local communities with wildlife in the AONB and to recruit a new generation of naturalists, boosting the membership of local conservation organisations.

There will be 24 x 1km² survey sites within the AONB, selected using a grid based sampling strategy to provide good coverage and reduce bias. The exact site locations are not fixed yet as landowner permission is still being negotiated. One survey for each species will take place in each survey site. The 50 species fall into 13 categories: farmland birds, nocturnal birds, river birds, wading birds, woodland birds, reptiles, amphibians, aquatic mammals, bumblebee, dragonfly, butterflies/day-flying moths, nocturnal moths, flowering plants and mountain grassland plants.

KH requested the YNU's help in three areas:

- Carrying out surveys
- Helping to train new volunteers
- Verifying records

Training and equipment will be provided, survey expenses will be covered and access permission will be organised. It is not expected that all surveys will be conducted by existing naturalists. Different surveys require different levels of expertise, and some would be carried out by farmers and landowners, the general public (with training, professional consultants or MSc students. For example, woodland bird surveys would be consultant-led, riverbird surveys would be citizen science-led.

CH congratulated KH on the project and said he has mammal data that he would be happy to share.

SF asked if aquatic invertebrates had been considered for inclusion, KH replied that they had not as they are not suitable for habitat suitability modelling. SF said that she would be interested in helping with eDNA surveys for great crested newts.

GM offered his congratulations and enquired about the amount of funding, which KH stated was just under £300,000.

RB enquired about the scale of the habitat suitability maps and the type of actions that might be included in species recovery action plans. KH replied that habitat suitability maps would cover the whole of the AONB and the resolution of the model is dependent on the resolution of environmental parameters used, e.g. soil and altitude. Stepping stone habitats could be created between isolated populations, and species translocations could be considered from one part of the AONB to another if suitable recipient habitat is identified.

PL asked how data would be managed, KH replied this would be handled by NEYEDC.

JBo asked how species had been selected. KH replied this had been a long process and had involved consultation with local naturalists, e.g. Harrogate Naturalists, Wharfedale Naturalists, as well as with habitat suitability modelling experts. The list of 50 species is now finalised.

MA stated he would be willing to help in any way he can with bumblebees, and that *Bombus hortorum* is a good choice because it is easily recognisable.

KH told GM and JBa (representatives of Friends of Bowland) that HFL funded this project as a pilot that will develop methods that can be used in other areas. One the model has been created for a particular species in one area, this can be easily adapted to create habitat suitability maps and species recovery plans for other areas, so this could inform management in the Forest of Bowland in future.

10. Feedback from NFBR conference

SF gave a feedback report on the NFBR conference at Lancaster University for which the YNU provided bursaries for members to represent the work of the YNU. The theme this year was "National Recording Schemes and Societies - celebrating the past, looking to the future". She and PF attended the conference and presented a poster 'Moth Trapping for Riverflies' about recording Mayflies, Stoneflies and Caddisflies from moth traps in Yorkshire. SF said that an extensive report on the conference, which includes a photo of the poster, can be found in the [NFBR Newsletter](#) and presentations are available to download from the [NFBR website](#). She said that the main discussions centred on the need for high quality data input and what that data, mainly provided by volunteers, could be used for. SF said that only once was the fact that volunteering costs money touched upon and this was by the keynote speaker, the chairman of BWARS.

11. Correspondence / Announcements

11.1 BTO Yorkshire Conference

The BTO Yorkshire Conference will take place on Saturday 18th March 2017 at the Ron Cooke Hub, University of York. The programme of talks is:

- Phil Warren (GWCT), "Black Grouse".
- Jude Lane (PhD Student) "Gannets".
- Craig Ralson (NE) "Lower Derwent Valley NNR".
- Dawn Balmer (BTO Staff) "Recording Rare Birds".
- Andy Musgrove (BTO Staff) "BirdTrack".
- Rich Burkmar (FSC) "A QGIS plugin for biological recorders".
- Greg Conway (BTO Staff) "Breeding waders of English upland farmland (in-bye) Survey".

The fee is £22 and includes buffet lunch and refreshments. Exhibitors will be present. Booking is likely to open in December – we will promote this on the YNU website and social media channels. The Ron Cooke Hub has disabled access and parking will be free at the weekend.

11.2 NEYEDC Data Donors Meeting

NEYEDC are planning to organise a meeting in January-February 2017 to give recorders who share their records with the data centre a chance to discuss how they would like data to be used, talk about any issues and areas for improvement and discuss emerging issues/opportunities such as the Open Data movement. This follows from NEYEDC's work earlier this year contacting biological recording groups about the use of data to inform local decision making, and the article by Simon Pickles and Matt Millington in *The Naturalist* (140:1090 pp.187-189). NEYEDC will shortly contact YNU recorders and affiliated societies regarding potential dates and venues for the meeting.

12. Any other business

PF announced that honorary membership of the YNU has been awarded to Terry Crawford, Colin Howes and Ellen Tidy for services rendered to the YNU.

PF announced that Adrian Norris has stepped down from the role of Excursion Secretary, having performed this role for many years. The Forum expressed appreciation of Adrian Norris's significant contribution to the YNU. The role of Excursion Secretary will now be performed by Terry Whitaker, who is currently divisional secretary for VC64 and 65. TW will continue to be secretary for VC65 but would like to step down as secretary for VC64 from the next AGM. The excursions for 2017 are already organised.

[Post meeting note – Ken White will take on the role of VC64 excursion secretary from November 2017.]

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Natural Sciences Forum will take place on Saturday 11th February 2017 in the Function Hall at St Chad's Parish Centre.