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Lakeland Naturalist publishes material on all aspects of the natural history of the Lake District, the wider county of Cumbria and its immediate environs

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1st March 2016 & 1st September 2016

Wildlife Reports – March to August 2015

The following is a selective extract from Members' records, which also form part of the data held at Tullie House Museum by the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre. Uncredited records are usually my own.

Weather – Tony Matthews' Drumburgh records show a variable season, often challenging for wildlife. March had temperatures slightly below average, rainfall above average, unsettled and cool by the end of the month; April: a few nice days and just a hint of spring but turned cool at the end of the month with average rainfall at 58 mm; May: unsettled, cool and wet, the coolest since 1996 and the wettest he has on record; June he describes as settled but temperatures and rainfall below average. The last day promised summer (26.5°C); July began hot but the 'heatwave' only lasted until the 5th, with severe thunderstorms on 4th. Thereafter it was cool and wet; August continued changeable but with average temperature and rainfall.

The most consistent observation from many observers, of all species from birds to butterflies, was that the weather conditions set the season back at least two to three weeks. The moth recorders especially were reporting very low numbers coming to light. Dragonflies and damselflies were scarce until well into June. There was a short surge of butterfly activity during the few nice days of April, though these early species were in low numbers. Some of the later species fared a little better. The weather affected breeding birds, with Blue and Great Tit holding off laying and then, presumably because of the shortage of insects, laying fewer eggs. Generally most broods fledged, although quite a few nests held an addled egg or two. Long-tailed Tits however were within a day or two of their normal dates. From my own observations, I felt that Lapwing and Curlew fared better and Starlings exceptionally well, but that Blackbirds and Song Thrushes were more heavily predated than usual. The Swallows I follow did very well but House Martin second broods did badly (which made me wonder whether their diet differs from Swallows).

Birds

Of seasonal reports, a large **Starling** roost (JM 'thousands' on 3 March) attracted a lot of attention in Portland Square, Carlisle offering a fine nightly display.

Pink-footed Geese were present in their usual numbers in March with a count of 9,000 flighting off Wedholme Flow at dawn on Sunday 8 March WEBS count. Most had gone by 19 April. On the March count, 10,100 **Barnacle Geese** were on the Moricambe Bay marshes, with 2,300 in April. (Numbers using the Moricambe Bay marshes have risen steadily in recent years.) On 7 April RH reported 'thousands' on Rockcliffe Marsh. **Whooper Swans** settled into some regular locations and a flock of varying numbers was seen daily on fields between Oulton and Colmire Sough in March and early April, with last records on 7 April of 80

near Kirkbride and 77 at Rockcliffe (RH).

Eggs in a **Raven** nest near Ullswater were just hatching on 16 March and SH calculated the first egg was laid on 23 Feb. A **Collared Dove** was incubating eggs in the centre of Carlisle on 2 March with snow showers swirling round it (RH).

Ring Ouzel were at Loo Gill 9 April and Raven Beck on 21 April (DC), whilst NF noted one at Forest Head on 13 April. **Sand Martin** was seen at Bowness on Solway on 12 March (DJ) but **Wheatears**, which usually arrive in March, were not recorded until 7 April (RH) at Rockcliffe and 9 April at Loo Gill (DC). The Greenland race were coming through in good numbers around 17 May. An early **Swallow** was at Port Carlisle on 11 March (RA) but it was around mid-April when the sightings began to roll in. The other March arrival, **Chiffchaff**, did not disappoint and I had one calling in Watchtree on 18 March with further records on 22 March from Carlisle (DS) and Cummersdale (RH). **Willow Warblers** were at Watchtree on 9 April and thereafter reports came in daily. Early **Blackcaps** were in Portland Square on 13 April (RH) and Watchtree (LS) on 16 April. **Pied Flycatchers** were seen at Jockey Shield on 15 April (JM) and 16 April at Brathay Bridge (MR). The first **Cuckoo** was heard at Loughrigg Tarn on 20 April by DC and LS heard one near Bowness Gravel Pits on 24 April, thereafter they were widely reported in May. An early **Sedge Warbler** was singing on Wedholme Flow on 18 April (CA) and another on 21 April at Watchtree (LS). A reeling **Grasshopper Warbler** was at Watchtree on 21 April (LS). **Common Sandpipers** were seen on the Esk at Longtown on 21 April (DJ). A **Water Rail** was calling on Wedholme Flow on 18 April (CA) and I later saw it during the breeding season. Migrants continued to pour in during the last week of April with **Garden Warbler** on 24 April in Carlisle (DC) and **Whitethroat** on 4 May (LS) at Watchtree. My thoughts were that both species were less abundant than in previous seasons. **Redstarts** were seen in Finglandrigg Wood (WO) where a pair fledged 7 chicks from one of my nest boxes, and Miltonrigg Wood on 21 April (NF). Our **House Martins** at Kirkbride were checking out the nests on 17 April. The weather delayed most nest starts.

Wood Warbler was at Fletcher Wood, Elterwater on 8 May (SH) and two at Rowbank Woods on 9 May (RH). Four **Yellow Wagtails** were seen in one of their few remaining breeding areas near Longtown by DJ on 9 May and he also saw an **Osprey** fishing the Esk on the same visit. An early **Swift** was seen by DH over Bowness Common on 30 April. One was back at the nest site in RH's Carlisle house on 4 May, joined by its mate a few days later. The pair went on to fledge 3 chicks on 17 July. The main arrival was around 8/9 May (DS Carlisle; SH Penrith). Always last are **Spotted Flycatcher**: DJ noted two pairs in Finglandrigg Wood on 17 May; other records a few days later were from LS at Watchtree and RH at Cummersdale. A singing **Reed Warbler** was heard at Watchtree on 16 May.

Little Ringed Plover bred at two sites in the north of the county, and was successful at one. Five **Gadwall** were recorded from Wilkin's Pools (RH) on 21 April and 3 were at Watchtree on 25 March. A solitary **Common Crane** was seen by DH over Dalston Hall on 2 May. A **Long-eared Owl** was present at its regular site near Jockey Shield on 3 June (JM and GH). A **Red Kite** was seen near Port Carlisle by DJ on 2 March whilst I saw one being harried by corvids flying east over Thornhill Moss NNR on 27 March. On June 27 P & SW saw one over Helbeck Wood. **Ruff** were seen on passage at Wedholme Flow on 19 April, and the Esk near Longtown on 14 May (DJ). A calling **Quail** was heard at Tarns by SG on 24 July and is the only record to date. A notable record is of a large flock of **Common Scoter** seen off Silloth by RH on 23 June. **Hobby** records are on the increase and MG sent in a record of one at Lanercost on 11 August. Members also observed one around the Gelt **Bee-eater** nest area in August – the latter species was the sensation of the season and is discussed on page 53. A **Wood Sandpiper** was on Wedholme Flow on 7 July (RH). Remarkably few **Whimbrel** records were received although I saw 13 at Watchtree on 28 April and presumably a returning bird on Wedholme on 7 August.

Other Vertebrates

An abandoned **Otter** cub was found in a ditch by LS near Bowness Gravel Pits on 21 March, two adults were on Hammonds Pond on 17 and 21 March and 1 April (reported to DH), two at Cardewmires on 3 June, one at Stainton 10 June (DS), one at Greenholme on 14 March (GH). 23 **Hedgehog** records from around the county were mostly from GH also RH, LS and myself. **Red Squirrel** produced only three records: from RE at Southwaite on 13 March, GH at Newbiggin on 1 May and 21 April at Croglin (DC). A **Polecat** corpse was retrieved by RA on 17 June and GH picked up another road casualty at Low Moorside, Holmrook on 17 July. A **Mink** was seen on the Caldew near Low Mill by RH on 15 June; he also noted a **Weasel** on Dent Fell on 6 March. **Adders** were recorded at Hangingshaw Moss (LS) on 5 April, Finglandrigg (DJ) on 21 April, Seascale on 22 April (SG) and Wedholme Flow on 7 July (RH) and 24 July (JM). DH recorded his first **Slow-worm** in Dalston Churchyard on 6 May. **Great Crested Newts** were found at three locations at RSPB North Plain by SC on 30 May.

Butterflies & Moths

Butterflies are a well-recorded group, and the impact of the weather can perhaps be deduced from dates and numbers. The short spell of nice weather in April brought out good numbers of **Peacocks** (as early as 22 March at Watchtree) and **Small Tortoiseshell**. The cold wet May was rather sparse for records. **Orange-tip** showed well in April with several records between 16 and 24 April from LS at Watchtree, Loughrigg Tarn (DC), Etterby (DI), Millom Ironworks (LG) and RH

who had one in his garden. They were seen well into June with records on 10th from Cargo and Stainton (DS) and even later on 30th from PW at How Gill in Geltsdale. Thereafter most species were seen at more or less their usual times although abundance of some of the commoner species was patchy. A number of observers remarked on the low numbers of **Large** and **Small White** butterflies although **Green-veined Whites** were seen in good numbers. Early reports from SD suggest that **Marsh Fritillary** colonies have had variable success (some up, some down) and the flight season was longer than normal. With talk of a **Painted Lady** invasion we were anticipating lots of records but sightings were perhaps little more than average, though widespread. (A large 'fall' at Rockcliffe Marsh was not seen by any CNHS member.)

Notable records include a very unexpected **Brimstone** at Etterby on 21 June (DS), with another at Watchtree 30 June (photographed by RS). **Small Skippers** seem to be on many areas of suitable habitat and records came from Low Holme on 12 July (DC), Asby Scar on 4 August (FJR), Coombs Wood 13 August (RH), Tow Top 17 August (DI) and Millom Ironworks 20 May (LG). Watchtree also produced several sightings. Apart from Watchtree the only other record of **Dingy Skipper** was from Millom Ironworks on 20 May (LG). **Comma** is now well recorded in the north of the county, the earliest being 10 April in Fishgarth Wood (DC) and the latest for this period from Kirksanton on 25 August (NG). **Speckled Wood** is regularly reported and now seems quite widespread across the north of the County. The **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** numbers were good at both Finglandrigg Wood and Thornhill Moss NNR's and DC had sightings at Eycott Hill on 27 June and Swindale Beck on 13 July; FJR recorded them at Dina Gill on 11 July. There was only one record for **Holly Blue**, at Roudsea NNR (DC). **Large Heath** is well established on Bowness Common (DC & DH), Wedholme Flow (RH), Glasson Moss and Scaleby Moss (DC); sightings were from 1 July until 13 August. **Purple Hairstreak** numbers seemed normal at Finglandrigg Wood and the only other record was from Barkbooth Lot on 12 August (DC). Another notable record for the year was a **White-letter Hairstreak** at Gelt Woods on 25 August (see plate 2 and p. 55). At Helbeck Wood I was delighted to see **Northern Brown Argus** on the recording day visit 27 June. The first **Small Blues** on 20 May (SG) were 3 days later than usual at Workington. The first **Red Admiral** record is from Watchtree on 21 April but it was not until early June that they really began to show. **Ringlet** and **Meadow Brown** were abundant but **Large Skipper** and **Small Copper** records are quite sparse. **Wall Brown** records are patchy but seemed to pick up later in the season. **Green Hairstreak** records came from only two sites, Foulshaw Moss 23 May and Roudsea Moss on 20 May (DC). **Dark Green Fritillary** was also only recorded at two sites, Helbeck Wood on 8 July (LR) and Dina Gill on 13 July (FJR).

The moth recorders reported a very mixed year with traps often empty or with

very few species in April and May. Perhaps the most notable was a **Barred Carpet** near Wigton on 19 August (GH). As usual DC had **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** in his Cumwhitton garden, this time on three occasions – 8 July, 25 July and 4 August. The most unusual record was a very fresh **Deaths-head Hawk-moth** found in Wigton near the church and reported to me on 26 May, it is possible that it came in via a consignment of vegetables as a pupa.

Recorders

M & AA Mike & Anne Abbs; RA Roy Armstrong; CA Colin Auld; DC David Clarke; SC Stuart Colgate; SD, Steve Doyle; NF Nick Franklin; MG Mike Gardner; LG Lynette Gilligan; NG Nigel Gilligan; SG Sam Griffin; GH Gary Hedges; SH Steve Hewitt; DH David Hickson; RH Robin Hodgson; DI Dorothy Iveson; DJ David Johnston; TM Trevor Merrington; JM John Miles; WO William O'Brien; MP Mike Porter; MR Mo Richards; FJR Jeremy Roberts; LR Linda Robinson; DS Donna Salter; LS Liz Still; RS Richard Speirs; PW Peter Wilson; P & SW Peter & Sylvia Woodhead.

Frank Mawby

Field Meetings 2015

Reports from three of the 2015 meetings appear below. Seven meetings were held and two were cancelled because of weather conditions. An archive of Field meetings reports, including species lists from meetings is to be added to the website as soon as possible. Ed.

23 May 2015: Dubwath, Silver Meadows

Leader: Dorothy Iveson

Thirteen members of the Society met at Dubwath Silver Meadows on a lovely sunny morning. At the gate we were met by Sue and Mike Turner, from the volunteer group 'Friends of Dubwath Silver Meadows', who gave us an introduction to the site. The reserve is part of the Inglewood Estate leased to a tenant farmer and is one of several 'Bassenthwaite Reflections' projects funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund. The site is currently managed by the Environment Agency and since January 2011 has been looked after by the 'Friends'.

The site was formerly part of Bassenthwaite Lake and now acts as a natural flood water storage slowly releasing the water via Dubwath Beck, into the lake. An area of seven hectares, the reserve includes meadowland, wet heath, willow carr and bog. It is lightly grazed to keep down the rank grasses and scrub to allow rarer and more interesting plants to survive which in turn improves the site for insects and birds. The paths are well made and there is a long stretch of boardwalk over the parts that would otherwise be impassable in wet conditions.

Good views were had of Sedge Warbler, Reed Bunting and Willow Warbler. Garden Warbler was heard and seen as was a Grasshopper Warbler. Orange-tip, Green-veined White, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell were the butterflies seen in flight, and a larva of the Garden Tiger Moth was also noted. A patch of the rare Water Sedge (*Carex aquatilis*) was growing near the boardwalk along with other plants of damp places such as Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Marsh Willowherb (*Epilobium palustre*) and Hemlock Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*).

After a picnic lunch, we drove to Powter How Wood where we walked around this small woodland adding a few more plants to our lists for the day. It was quiet for birds but David Hickson had noted a Wood Warbler. We carried on down the track to the bird hide at Bassenthwaite Lake where Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Heron and Canada Goose were the only birds seen. A Small Copper butterfly was seen on the flowery grassy area on the shore.

Hoverflies noted were *Dasyrphus tricintus*, *Merodon equestris*, *Chrysotaxum arcuatum* along with *Syrphus* and *Cheilosia* species.

Dorothy Iveson

20 June 2015: Gowk Bank & Butterburn Flow Leader: Jeremy Roberts

After a misty (and midge-y) start, a fresh breeze and finally blue skies allowed a very pleasant day in this far corner of northeast Cumbria. The fact that there were no ‘manoeuvres’ on the nearby Spadeadam firing range also helped towards a peaceful and satisfying visit.

Gowk Bank NNR was the first stop. The spectacular display of *Dactylorhiza* orchids included Heath Spotted-orchids (*D. maculata*) in a variety of colours and forms, and Northern and Early Marsh-orchids (*D. purpurella*; *D. incarnata*), the latter in a lovely rose-red form. John O'Reilly found us a colony of Frog Orchids (*Dactylorhiza (Coeloglossum) viridis*) near the river.

This is unusual habitat, and John referred to it as National Vegetation Classification ‘M26b’ – a sub-community of *Molinia–Crepis paludosa* (Purple Moorgrass/Marsh Hawk’s-beard) mire vegetation, on a peaty substrate, and yet with enough minerals to provide for a large variety of herbs and small sedges.

Besides the orchids the plant attracting most attention was the lovely large-flowered eyebright *Euphrasia montana* (*E. officinalis* subspecies *monticola*), a declining and rare species of hay meadows, and just starting into conspicuous flower (plate 5).

Birds were in short supply, although Lesser Redpolls were in the willow patches, and Siskins moving overhead. Common Sandpipers were noisy along the River Irving below. Cuckoos were calling from the birch patches at the edges of the spruce plantations. A number of damp-grassland loving Cinerous Pearl (*Anania fuscalis*) moths were spotted, despite being perfectly camouflaged when they

settled on the lighter coloured orchids.

Butterburn Flow, further along on the same road, was in striking contrast, but nonetheless fascinating in every respect. A very large area, typically described as a 'blanket bog', the Flow has in many areas very deep deposits of peat, and parts of the site could well be described as raised mire. The depth of the peat was amply demonstrated in September 2014, when two JCBs foundered in the mire, one disappearing up to its roof. The vehicles were allegedly involved in replacing wooden power-line poles, even though there are none on the mire.

The mire community provides several plants of great interest, and Tall Bog-sedge (*Carex magellanica*), Long-leaved Sundew (*Drosera anglica*), and Few-flowered Sedge (*Carex pauciflora*) were seen, the last of these eventually located, to the relief of the leader, by Phill Brown.

A particular interest at this site is the very large population of Northern Deergrass (*Trichophorum cespitosum sensu stricto*). Found here – new to Cumbria – as recently as 2010, this population is certainly the largest yet known in the UK. Smaller, slighter, and a darker and duller green, this plant is inconspicuous beside either Common Deergrass (*T. germanicum*), or their hybrid, *T. x foersteri* (the last far more abundant here than either parent).

It was a great pleasure, and relief, having John O'Reilly, a well-known sphagnologist, to show us two of the special sphagnums here, *Sphagnum austinii* and *S. fuscum*. These two look superficially similar in the field, although distinctly different under the microscope, but John was able to demonstrate their subtly-different colours enabling location in the field. Both make swelling hummocks above the mire surface. John also pointed out several of the other *Sphagnum* species, and explained something of their ecological characteristics.

Large hoverflies with bright comma-shaped spots which repeatedly came to 'buzz' the group were *Scaeva selentica*. Moths included typical species of the habitat – Common Heath (*Ematurga atomaria*), True Lover's Knot *Lycophotia porphyrea*, and the larva of Fox Moth (*Macrothylacia rubi*).

Finally we moved a little further along the road, to its end at Churnsike Bridge over the River Irthing. We walked some distance down the river, actually on the Northumberland side, which is much easier walking than the Cumbrian side opposite. The particular plant of interest here is the Water Sedge (*Carex aquatilis*) of which there were many patches on both sides of the river. This is a characteristic habitat of this northern species.

Upstream from Churnsike Bridge runs ungrazed herb-rich vegetation, currently making sheets of colour. The patches of the striking white-spotted leaves of the Zigzag Clover (*Trifolium medium*) were particularly appealing. Here we also found the handsome broad-bodied cream-striped hoverfly *Sericomyia lappona*, which typically visits flowers near bogs.

Jeremy Roberts

12 July 2015: Clints Quarry

Leader: Stephen Hewitt

Fifteen members visited Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Clints Quarry Reserve, a mile north of Egremont. This disused limestone quarry was worked from the 17th century until 1930. It is now of interest for its wildlife, geology and industrial archaeology. Spoil heaps radiate from the entrance to a terrace, above which the quarry face rises up to 20 metres in places. This sheltered quarry is a well-known site for its grassland flora, especially its population of Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*). Damp conditions between the spoil heaps contrast with drier slopes. There are four ponds on the site with areas of scrub and woodland.

Ravens nest in the quarry and the birds were seen about the cliff, as were Kestrels. The sunny conditions were ideal for butterflies and Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Common Blue and Large Skipper were all seen. There were also large numbers of 6-spot Burnet moths as well as some Narrow-bordered 5-spot Burnets nectaring on Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*). Common Green and Field grasshoppers were both present in the grassland as well as the Spiked Shieldbug (*Picromerus bidens*) and Hairy Shieldbug (*Dolycoris baccarum*) and a number of hoverflies and bumblebees. A single, jewel-like Ruby-tailed Wasp (*Chrysis ignita* agg.) was admired. About the ponds we recorded Blue-tailed and Common Blue damselflies, together with Four-spotted Chaser and Common Darter dragonflies. A cast larval skin of a Southern Hawker dragonfly was found at the edge of the largest pool. Common Frog and Great Crested Newt were also seen.

Botanically-minded members recorded 113 plant species on the day. 25 flowering spikes of Bee Orchid were counted and other orchids were Common-spotted (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Northern Marsh (*D. purpurella*), and Pyramidal (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), together with countless Common Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*). The flower-rich grassland areas also included Wild Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*), Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Common Centaury (*Centaurea erythraea*), Hairy Tare (*Vicia hirsuta*), Burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), and Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*) amongst many others. A rich fern flora included Hart's-tongue (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*), Wall-rue (*Asplenium ruta-muraria*), Black and Maidenhair Spleenworts (*A. adiantum-nigrum*; *A. trichomanes*) on the limestone, and Lady-fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), Male-fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and Broad Buckler-fern (*D. dilatata*) and Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*) among the trees.

Stephen Hewitt

European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) breeding in north Cumbria

In summer 2015, Bee-eaters successfully bred at Low Gelt sand quarry (NY5258) near Brampton. This is only the fourth successful nesting attempt in Britain, and is also the most northerly.

History: There have been six documented breeding attempts by Bee-eaters in Britain, the first being at Musselburgh, Lothian in 1920. The three most recent successful attempts were in East Sussex in 1955 (in a sand quarry), County Durham in 2002 (in a limestone quarry) and on the Isle of Wight in 2014 (in a sandy scarp on pasture land). In Cumbria, there had been just 13 Bee-eater records up to 2013 (*Birds & Wildlife in Cumbria* 2013). The largest group was four in the Rusland Valley for three days in 2002.

Arrival: 2015 witnessed a major influx of Bee-eaters into Britain. These ‘spring overshoots’ were logged across the length and breadth of the country, with the first bird noted on 11 April in Cleveland and late birds still in Shetland, Suffolk and Dorset at the end of August (per *Birdguides* website). Groups of up to 12 birds were noted not just in the south of the country, but also from as far afield as Northumberland, Caithness, the Northern and Western Isles, Northern Ireland, Ayrshire, North Wales, Lancashire and the Midlands. In view of this, it is perhaps surprising that the only other breeding behaviour we are aware of was at Minsmere in Suffolk, where courtship feeding and copulation was observed. On 12 June quarrymen working for Hanson UK at Low Gelt sand quarry, Brampton noticed up to six Bee-eaters on site. These birds were later found to comprise two pairs plus two associated young ‘helper’ males. The RSPB was informed, and a round-the-clock watch was set up to safeguard the birds and their eggs from human disturbance and the threat of predation (especially from foxes). Two full-time wardens and a dedicated team of local volunteers monitored the site for as long as the birds were present.

Breeding: Two pairs of Bee-eaters excavated nest holes in the quarry sand face, some 250m apart. The two helper males were observed to courtship-feed both females, and the females also visited each other’s nest holes (suggestive of the group being a ‘clan’). Unfortunately the nest in the lower quarry failed at the incubation stage. At the top nest, the first indication of hatching was on 31 July, when a Painted Lady butterfly was taken into the nest hole. On 4 September a single male chick successfully fledged, and was observed in the company of its parents for a further five days. The final sighting of Bee-eaters in the vicinity was on 9 September.

Weather: According to C.H. Fry (*The Bee-eaters*, Poyser, 1984), northern breeding limits closely coincide with the 21 °C July isotherm. In July 2015 the average daily temperature for Brampton was 12.6 °C. In addition, the local area experienced 290% of the average July rainfall.

Food: Of observable prey items, Hymenoptera (especially *Bombus* spp.) appeared to form a substantial part of the Bee-eater's diet. Three honey bee hives were kindly donated as a supplementary food source by local bee-keepers. Odonata and Lepidoptera were also observed to be regular food items, especially when feeding the young. Pellet samples were collected and are awaiting analysis.

Public viewing: In co-operation with the land owner and Hansons, the site was opened up to the public for managed viewing of the birds as soon as hatching had begun (and hence the threat from egg collectors had passed). During a period of five weeks at least 5,200 people came to witness and enjoy the Cumbrian Bee-eaters. The adults, and eventually the youngster, afforded often spectacular views (plate 1).

*Pete Howard, RSPB (contract officer)
Woodcock Cottage, New Mills, Brampton, Cumbria CA8 2QS*



Adam Moan

Post-script

Gelt Quarry 2015: insects on the move

The Bee-eater nesting brought a concentration of experienced observers to this single locality over many weeks, producing some unusual records unrelated to the activities of the birds. A male Broad-bodied Chaser was briefly seen at the upper viewpoint on 12 July by Adam Moan and Joan Thirlaway, a female having been seen on 9th at the flooded area beside the path. Keeled Skimmer was reported by Jason Moule, who had good views of a female on 6 August in the same place. This species is unknown in this part of the county. On 12 August, watchers at the quarry edge (including Adam Moan), had close views of a male Beautiful Demoiselle which briefly appeared at the

quarry edge viewpoint. There are no known populations of this species in the north of the county, or for that matter in adjoining vice-counties to the north or east. (*Banded Demoiselles* were identified amongst the Bee-eaters' prey at considerably greater range; they could have been caught beside the Eden or other local rivers.) JM also had sightings of Migrant Hawker males here on 21 July and 23 August. There are no photographs to support any of these records, which mainly relate to insects in flight, and sometimes seen quite briefly. Pete Howard, Adam Moan and Jason Moule of the Bee-eater protection team variously provided the details. The White-letter Hairstreak on 25 August, though less certainly 'dispersing', was a further example of phenomena that might not otherwise have been detected. Painted Lady butterflies were a less unusual species in this 'invasion year', but the records were clearly boosted by the number of observers.

Editor

White-letter Hairstreak (*Satyrion w-album*) at Low Gelt Quarry, 2015

On 25 August 2015, visitors to the area, Paul and Reva Archer photographed (plate 2) an adult female White-letter Hairstreak on a visit to view the Bee-eater breeding site at Low Gelt Quarry (NY5258), a sand quarry operated by Hanson UK. The butterfly was found nectaring on bramble (*Rubus* spp.) beside the public footpath abutting the quarry and the wood. This followed an unsubstantiated report from another visitor of a single adult nectaring on *Buddleja globosa* at a nearby spot on the footpath two days earlier. These sightings are notable in Cumbria because they are by far the most northerly and also the latest in date (by 9 and 11 days respectively). Additionally, it is also unusual to see White-letter Hairstreak at ground level (Thomas & Lewington, 1991).

The first accepted record of the species in Cumbria was as recent as 2007 when three adults were found at Arnside Knott (SD4577) by Ian Brodie, Jim Cresswell and John Barrett. As well as this latest occurrence at Gelt Woods, colonies are now known from a small but increasing number of sites in south-east Cumbria, and at Culgaith, in the Eden valley. This is mainly the result of targeted searches for eggs by *Butterfly Conservation*, Cumbria branch.

This butterfly is relatively sedentary and usually restricted to the vicinity of mature, flowering English, Small-leaved and Wych Elms (*Ulmus procera*, *minor* and *glabra* respectively), preferring the last-mentioned (Thomas & Lewington, 1991). The Dutch Elm Disease episode on the 1970s had a significant impact on its populations. Being a tree-top flier like the Purple Hairstreak, the species is quite easy to miss. Newman (1977) says that its colonies have even been found on an isolated Wych Elm in the middle of a field. There are probably far fewer such trees today. Whether the Geltsdale occurrence reflects established breeding presence still remains to be revealed. Searching elms for eggs in winter after the leaves have fallen may be the way forward for recording purposes. White-letter

Hairstreak has been much more widely recorded, and further north, in Northumberland but has apparently not been recorded in Scotland for over a century.

Sources: databases searched for this note were: Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre, Tullie House Museum and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway.

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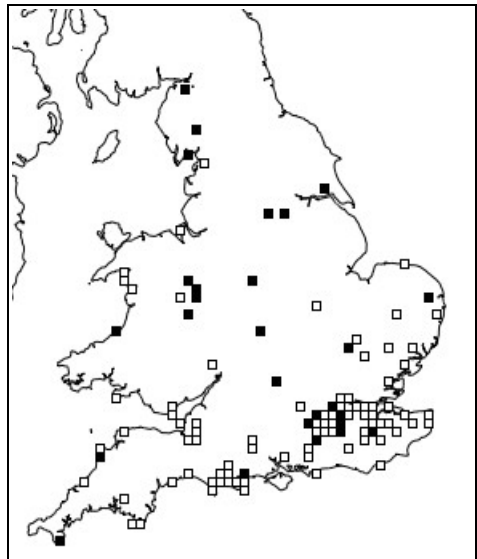
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The rare bee *Stelis punctulatissima* (Kirby, 1802) from Carlisle

A quick lunchtime visit to the gardens of Tullie House Museum on 15 August 2015 yielded discovery of the rare bee *Stelis punctulatissima* (plate 3). It is cleptoparasitic – living in the nests of other solitary bees. One of its host species is the bee *Anthidium manicatum*, which was also present.

As far as I can see this bee has only been recorded twice before in Cumbria and this is the most northerly UK record to date. The NBN map for this species (right) shows just how unusual it is. The species is listed as rare by the Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Scheme and is Nationally Notable (Nb). It is one of four species of this genus, all of them apparently very scarce.

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10km squares: **solid**: 2000-2015; **open**: pre-2000
Map courtesy of NBN (2015 Carlisle record inserted).

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Hazel Bolete *Leccinum pseudoscabrum* (Kallenb.) Šutara at Argill Nature Reserve

Also known as Hornbeam Bolete, *L. pseudoscabrum* has been recorded from Cumbria on only a few occasions and from only three areas (our late Recorder and fungus enthusiast Geoff Naylor only ever noted one – from Great Wood, Borrowdale). Nationally, it seems uncommon and very patchy in occurrence, having been recorded in fewer than twenty 10 km squares in the last quarter of a century in the northern half of the UK. It is an early-fruiting species, with August being the most frequent month for records generally. It can occur even earlier, and may therefore often be absent in the main ‘foray season’.

Although curiously not mentioned in the guidebook (Cumbria Wildlife Trust, 2013), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) is the predominant tree at Argill, with many old, unmanaged examples on the heavy clay soils. Speculating that the fungus could well occur at the site, I looked for it on 25 August 2015. Although few fungi, mainly *Lactarius* spp., were showing, in the course of a fairly extensive search I did find just one, obviously fresh, bolete under Hazels close to the Argill Beck at about NY841138. Encouragingly, it had a rather ‘lumpy’ cap surface, one of the features referred to in Kibby (2013) as being characteristic of young caps of Hazel Bolete. A second feature relates to the speed and nature of flesh colour change on bruising: in my specimen, very slight and temporary reddening, followed by some darkening of the cut stipe and pores to a blackish cast occurred quite quickly, within less than half an hour. The least accessible but equally distinctive character is the nature of the cell structure in the cap surface: Kibby describes this as ‘*a palisade with broad clavate-globose terminal elements*’. Sectioning revealed this indeed to be the case and, as the feature is not often illustrated, it appears here, along with the specimen (plate 6). The characters mentioned above, as well as the specific association with Hazel (and Hornbeam, *Carpinus betulus*), separate this species from the much more widespread and similarly coloured Birch Bolete, *L. scabrum*. The identification was kindly confirmed by Martyn Ainsworth (RBG Kew) from the photographs.

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Notes on new finds of two lichens uncommon in Cumbria

Peltigera neckeri Hepp ex Müll. Arg.

When fruiting, this one of the more distinctive of the often confusingly similar 'brown' species of this genus. Its finger-shaped spore-bearing apothecia are almost black (plate 4) and surface cracks (looking like knife attacks!) are also a frequent feature. Though widely recorded, it is apparently quite uncommon, with habitats ranging from sand dunes to metal-polluted soils and even tennis courts. The mining areas of the North Pennines probably have a higher concentration of its recorded occurrences than any other part of the UK.

On 18 March 2015 I found a couple of small fragments of this species, bearing apothecia, on a hillside in Loo Gill. However, these were loose material – presumably wind-transported, and at the time I could not find a source colony at the location. In mid-April, I found several fertile patches of this species over about 1 m² on a steep soil terraces on a southwest-facing hillside about 250 m to the west of this point (NY636427)*. This area could easily have been a source of the first find. With the 'jizz' of this species beginning to register, I felt that some comparatively lush growths of a *Peltigera* on a damp, mossy, E-facing slope in Grenfell quarry (NY6341), though infertile, showed promise of being this species. Brian Coppins confirmed this identification. On the basis of newly acquired confidence, I was later able to find small amounts of infertile *P. neckeri* in a second place in Loo Gill, as well as in the upper Raven Beck valley, and at a disused limestone quarry above Scarrowmanwick. Searches of the mine spoil higher up in Loo Gill (Grainsgill Beck – a former barytes mining area) failed to reveal any of the species.

The above are new tetrad records for the species for NY64F, G and H and for NY54Y (which is also a new hectad). These are the most westerly records for the North Pennines. The site altitudes range from 370 to 450 metres. Specimens have been retained.

Parmotrema crinitum (Ach.) M. Choisy

Parmotrema crinitum (formerly *Parmelia crinita*) is an apparently scarce species in the county, with records mainly in v.c. 70. It is particularly associated with areas of long-continuity native woodlands, primarily occurring on acid-barked trees, usually oaks. One of the more distinctive 'Parmelias', it has abundant isidia and black cilia on the mature thalli. Its occurrence on rocks and walls has been noted in areas of the UK where it is more frequent, such as north-west Scotland (B. Coppins, pers. comm.). However, Cumbria records to date seem have always been on trees. Three instances on mossy dry-stone walls came to my attention in 2015. The walls in question were clearly long-established, probably at least 19th century

in origin and with no evidence of recent disturbance.

Elterwater (NY337045): several good-sized patches close together, mainly at mid height on a north-facing roadside wall, in fine condition, and with total coverage of approximately 200 cm² (plate 4). A new hectad record for v.c. 69, and the largest colonies I have personally seen in the county.

Aira Force (NY399207): a small patch with an east-facing aspect, on the west side of the valley.

Great Wood area, Borrowdale (NY270212): long known for this species on oaks, but there are two patches, close together, facing E, on the wall west of the road, opposite the wood. They are near the wall base and at about half height, about 20 cm² and 15 cm² in extent respectively. Their presence despite air pollution close to the busy B5289 road is perhaps surprising.

I am grateful to Janet Simkin for providing distribution data held by the British Lichen Society and to Brian Coppins for his comments.

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* Location image illustrated, along with a short account, in *Bulletin of the British Lichen Society*, **116** (Summer 2015), p.15.

The status of Mezereon (*Daphne mezereum* L.) on the Morecambe Bay Limestone – an update

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In 2010 we reported (Brodie & Brodie, 2010) on the distribution and status of Mezereon on the Morecambe Bay Carboniferous Limestone of south Cumbria. Monitoring has continued of the known sites since that time. Our conclusion in 2010 was that the overall population was threatened with extinction and, despite several conservation efforts, we see no reason for immediate optimism as to the continuance of the population. A population of native (*i.e.* non-garden) plants estimated in 2010 to be around 60 now totals under 40.

In 2010 we mentioned several reported but unconfirmed sites. These remain unconfirmed. Of the remaining 11 known sites, seven have shown a decrease in population since 2010 and one of those sites, known to have 34 plants in 1990 (Mike Porter, pers. comm.) is down to a single plant. Two sites remain static, with one plant each. At two other sites additional plants have been found near to the known site, in one case this was the other side of a boundary wall. The second site, not fully reported on in 2010 because of indications that it may not be native (Halliday, 1997) and did not lie on the Morecambe Bay Limestone, has proved to be more intriguing. Although on Windermere Super Group strata and the plants being surrounded by Gorse, there is an adjacent calcareous flush. The site is now known to hold at least four plants of Mezereon and its categorisation as a garden escapee may need revisiting.

Two sites have been the subject of re-introductions of local provenance plants. Eaves Wood (v.c. 60) had 7 young plants planted in known past site areas and in other potential areas. Initial visits suggested most had survived the planting but, during the 2015 survey, none were found. Brigsteer Park Wood was the second re-introduction site but of more mature plants. Again, initial signs were promising, but none survived to the 2015 survey. A further re-introduction site is to be tried this year and where samples of soil from the planting site have been introduced to the plants prior to trans-planting. In a further attempt seeds from one site have been entrusted to a commercial grower with a deal that half the raised plants are donated back to the wild! The grower, like several of the volunteers involved, has had no success at germination yet.

It is likely that disease is a potential cause of decline of the ageing plants. Deer damage is rarely seen. Indeed the authors' recent visit to the Suffolk site of Military Orchid (*Orchis militaris*) noted that all the plants in the enclosure appeared to have been decimated by Muntjac, whilst the Mezereon in the same area was flourishing!

Survey results 2015

Brigsteer Park Wood (NT) SD4888

In 2009 some five plants were found, of which one died that year. Two further plants were found in 2012, one of which appears to be the only self-seeded offspring in our populations. This year, four plants were found alive and in bud, leaf or flower, and one on its last legs. Of those in flower one plant held 6 flowers and one 100+. The four re-introduced plants of local provenance were no longer present. These were planted in 2013 and all appeared in bud in 2014. It appears that this species was once more widespread in this wood but that the population was probably never greater than 10- 20. Seed from this source is with the grower.

Durham Bridge Wood (private) SD4589

In the years leading up to 2008 there were some twenty plants known from this site. Previous records indicate 34 in 1990 (M. Porter). In 2015 there was only one, with some 60+ flowers and this showed signs of severe bark damage. The plant is to have a camera trap sited next to it and some small-gauge wire netting will surround it. Given the early sap rise in *Daphne*, it may be that, despite the poisonous nature of this species, it can prove attractive to small mammals.

Eaves Wood (NT, Lancashire) SD4776

Historical records show that this area may (in 1960s, 1970s) have held up to 10 plants but only one plant, with 9 flowers, remained in 2015, though it died after flowering. The 7 plants of local provenance re-introduced in 2013 and 2014 have all failed and no signs of the plants remained. (Some of the 2013 plantings were noted to be present in 2014.)

Hampsfield Fell (private) SD4080

This site is only known by a single plant which, up to 2009, was looking very straggly. However, a significant growth in foliage, in 2009, has now produced a plant with over 600 flowers in 2015.

Holme Park, Clawthorpe (quarry site with LNR status) SD5378

This is thought to be a garden escapee but the plant was healthy with over 300 flowers and flower buds in 2015.

Juniper Scar, Staveley (CWT) NY4701

This rather inaccessible site, on very steep, broken Silurian rocks but with a calcareous water-flow, was visited early this year and three of the four plants were readily seen and in bud. The fourth plant was not visited. Whilst this site was originally thought to be non-native due to its location and altitude, it is now

thought it may be of native status.

Middlebarrow Wood (private – FC leased) SD4676

This site is believed to be extinct of *Daphne mezereum*, with its population of between 6-10 plants at a maximum into the 1980s. Contact has been made with the FC to consider if a re-introduction programme could be started.

Park Wood and Hutton Roof (CWT and PC site on access land) SD5677

The four Park Wood sites were found to be healthy, with 20+; 30+; 5+ and 15+ flowers. CWT have previously collected seed from this site and it is hoped to re-plant any successfully raised plants. Of the four plants on the common, two were found dead in 2015. The other two plants contained 200+ and 300+ flowers. Negotiations have started to try and have berries from these two plants collected for growing on later this year.

Sandside (private) SD4880 & 4881

This is the site with white flowered plants. The two to the south of the road were both found and contained 8 flower buds and 60+ flowers and buds respectively. Of the plants in the wood, only three were found, of which two appeared healthy with 8 flower buds and 60+ flowers and buds respectively. Margaret Baker's records (Ann Kitchen pers. comm.) suggest that the population on this site may have contained nearly 30 plants in the 1980s.

Witherslack High Low Wood (Pepper Beck) (private) SD4287

This site is still suffering significantly from the creation of a clearing for butterflies and a large part of the site is rank with blackberry. Over 20 plants have been known from this site but now only 7 healthy plants could be found. Two of these plants held 100+ flowers and buds, one 50+, one 20+, one 10+ and two with 5 and 8 flowers respectively. One plant shown to be healthy in 2014 was found dead.

Witherslack High Park Wood (Bell Rake) (private but lease possibly with LDNP) SD4384

This site had a recorded maximum of 11 plants some 4/5 years ago. There are some seven plants still present. Of these, six held 15+; 5+; 20+; 5+; 20+; and 10+ flowers and buds, whilst one held only leaf buds.

Witherslack, Howe Ridding (CWT) SD4387

The two known plants held 30+ and 20+ flowers and buds this year. Seeds have previously been collected from this site. Other plants are suspected from scent but, as yet, none of these has been located.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to the increasing and numerous list of people, including landowners, who have facilitated searches and counts over the last five years.

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Memories of Dotterel: Part 2

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Following on from my success on the Buttermere Fells, I managed, in the same year (1978) to find the time in early July to spend a couple of days on the Skiddaw Group (Skiddaw, Blencathra, Jenkin Hill, Lonscale Fell and Knott). Here, I came across a family party of three near-fledged chicks and the accompanying adult male; these were not on the summit, but in the eastern lee in full sun. I watched them for some time – they were highly mobile, feeding independently, but as one, on a broad front of about 25 metres, and soon disappeared from view. The speed in which they covered the ground left me wondering where might the nest have been? The summit itself is too narrow (and busy) – perhaps one of the shoulders or even an adjoining plateau?

The relative success I had from so few visits made me a little blasé; I was soon to learn my lesson in the years that followed. In 1979 in late May, I had breakfast on Skiddaw, lunch on Grasmooor and tea on Robinson! – without so much as a sniff of Dotterel. In June of 1980, I got dropped off on Kirkstone Pass, climbed Red Screes, over to Fairfield via Dove Crag, onto Dollywaggon, Nethermost Pike, Helvellyn, Whiteside, Raise and Stybarrow Dodd. Exhausted and deflated I trudged down Sticks Pass, spirits raised briefly with a pint at Thirlspot!

Despite the earlier failure, I re-visited the Buttermere and Skiddaw Fells in July of 1979 and found another brood of well-grown chicks, again not on a summit, but on a flat grassy expanse which, from what I'd read and seen was atypical of Dotterel nesting ground, and only at 700 m a.s.l. In all probability they'd moved some distance in the three weeks or so from hatching. Having seen three broods of chicks by now, I was amazed at how quickly they moved and how much distance they could cover in a short space of time; specialists in their environment, no doubt.

In 1980, as well as the fells I'd visited in earlier years, I managed to venture onto the Ennerdale fells, visiting Red Pike, High Stile, Scoat Fell, Haycock and Caw Fell. I remember thinking that some of this ground was the best I'd ever seen, and fitted perfectly some of the photos from Nethersole-Thompson's *The Dotterel*. Sure enough, it yielded a brood of two ten day-old chicks at 800 m a.s.l., but again I couldn't be certain of the nest site. That year I found no evidence of breeding on the Skiddaw or Buttermere Fells, nor had I found a nest with eggs since my first in 1978.

I spoke with Ralph Stokoe and he told me that as far as he knew, the birds I had found in 'The Lakes' were the first found there since a pair nested near Helvellyn in 1943. Subsequently, Geoff Horne advised me of a successful nesting on the

Ennerdale fells in 1974. Ralph also told me that he (and others) used to drag ropes over the potential nesting grounds to try and flush tight-sitting birds! Barbaric, I thought – but quite common I believe in the Highlands, where the message of conservation wasn't fully appreciated. By coincidence, it was Ralph who first showed me how to use OS maps, when he persuaded me both to join the BTO and to take part in the first national Breeding Atlas of 1968–72. Through him I also learned what a 10 km square and a tetrad were! Of course now having my first OS maps, I was able to put names to the western fells that previously (apart from Skiddaw that everyone knew), I knew only from their shape, silhouette and colour; also, all the other ones on the Helvellyn and Pennine ranges and beyond – that were then completely unknown to me. I remember wondering, as I put the names to the shapes, and placed each next to the other on the map, how did the 'naming of fells' evolve? Some such as Red Pike or Grasmoor were obvious, but others, such as Robinson or Brandreth, were a mystery to me, and still are!

Having a full-time job and family responsibilities, I had limited opportunities to escape to the high tops. Nevertheless, somehow I managed to visit most of the suitable ground in the early 1980s, and by this time had found my first nest on the Pennines on my first visit there in 1979; I seemed to be so lucky, but was to discover much later that I was visiting these ancient nesting grounds at a 'golden' time for Dotterel, and that not long after I had ceased my activities and moved on to other things, the decline in nesting Dotterel was imminent. After my last 'Lakes' nest in 1989 on the Buttermere Fells, no positive nesting was recorded there, either in the last decade of the 20th Century or in the first fifteen years of this one.

Many Dotterel visiting Britain in May are *en route* to more northerly breeding haunts; most are seen on the high fells and confusingly, they stop over on what have intermittently been 'traditional' nesting sites. This behaviour has often raised expectations: many times I've encountered birds on the tops in mid- to late May, only to find no nesting on further visits. But with searching for Dotterel, as with life in general, anticipation of the next excitement is the drive that has kept me going.

On one memorable May day on the Pennines in the 1980s, with little wind and warmth in the air, there were lots of birds on the ground, spread all over the summit plateau in 'trips' of displaying birds; others were pitching in, and there was calling all around. There may have been over a hundred birds that magical unforgettable day. Resplendent females were displaying, running at males, trying to isolate them from the rest of the group. Was there a benefit for such a northern/boreal species, having only short summers in which to breed, to have the pairings sorted out before arriving on the breeding grounds?

In contrast to days like that, sometimes the weather could be freezing, and often in my impetuosity I got caught out and made my way home full of anger and

disappointment. Most of my efforts to find Dotterel were either full or part days out, depending on circumstances. If the weather was looking good and I could manage my time, I would (with 'Blackie', always with 'Blackie') take my one-man tent and sleep out. Sometimes these events would be rewarding, not only in my search for Dotterel, but also for my own sense of well-being. However, on one particular time on the Pennines, the Helm Wind came, together with a severe drop in temperature. I had never been so cold, even in the tent in the sleeping bag, man and dog! I was convinced that our lives were saved by our Primus stove and by a relatively new food source, Batchelor's 'Cup a Soup'!

Each journey looking for Dotterel was an adventure, and each brought something different, either positive or negative. One particular day in mid-June, my wife and I tracked up Gasgale Gill along the Liza beck, over Coledale Hause up to Eel Crag, Wandope and finally Grasmoor, I unpacked the rucksack for lunch, only to find I had left Kath's Mars Bar on the kitchen table! Nor did we find Dotterel.

The last time I saw breeding Dotterel was on the 7th July 1989; between then and the heady May day in 1978 when I had found them for the first time on the Buttermere Fells, I had encountered eight successful breeding attempts in the Lake District, on seven different fells, encompassing Skiddaw, Helvellyn, and the Ennerdale and Buttermere groups. On the Pennines, I had known double that number, with as many as five nests in the magical year of 1979. Finding the nests was exciting enough, but equally unforgettable later on was seeing, and hearing, the young – miracles of natural camouflage – so soon on their feet and off (plates 7 & 8).

Apart from twenty-five nestings in the county, I had seen birds scores of times, sometimes an individual, sometimes multiples, and occasionally large groups: because I went to look for them at the 'right' time of the year I was often successful at locating them. However, despite all my successes, the most frequent result of looking for Dotterel was trudging home in disappointment.

In retrospect, at the time I always felt privileged to be doing what I did, so close to home, on my own ground. Of course I didn't know then how doubly fortunate I really was: only now can I fully appreciate those glorious, unforgettable days and moments. How symbolically fitting it was that in the winter following that final season, Blackie died, peacefully and painlessly, marking in her own way the end of the 'Dotterel years'.

[‘Memories of Dotterel: Part 1’, was published in *Lakeland Naturalist*, 3.1 (2015), pp. 33-35. One of the two associated images appears on the cover of that issue. *Editor*]

Place-name evidence for the historical distribution of Black Grouse in Cumbria

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Ornithology in Britain can trace its origins back to the 17th century and in particular to the publication of *The Ornithology of Francis Willughby*, which first appeared in Latin in 1676 and two years later in English (Walters, 2003). Information on birds in Britain before this is scant indeed. Recent decades have seen more systematic attempts to bring together such information as is available from earlier periods, and this has resulted in a much improved understanding of the past status and distribution of birds in this country than has hitherto been available – see, for instance, the reviews by Lovegrove (2007), Yalden & Albarella (2009) and Shrubbs (2013). They draw on sources as varied as bestiaries, churchwarden's accounts and payments for vermin killed, inventories of fowl

provided at mediaeval banquets, bones found in middens and other archaeological evidence and so on. One of the most productive has proved to be place-names, and Yalden and others have been able to create maps showing the historical distribution of a number of bird species including the Crane *Grus grus* (Boisseau & Yalden, 1996), White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (Yalden, 2007; Evans *et al.*, 2012), Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* (Evans *et al.*, 2012) and Raven *Corvus corax* (Moore, 2002). These publications are primarily concerned with distributions in either England or Britain as a whole. Here I show how place-names can be used to determine the historical distribution of a species at the county level taking the Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* in Cumbria as an example.

For the purposes of this investigation the volumes on place-names in

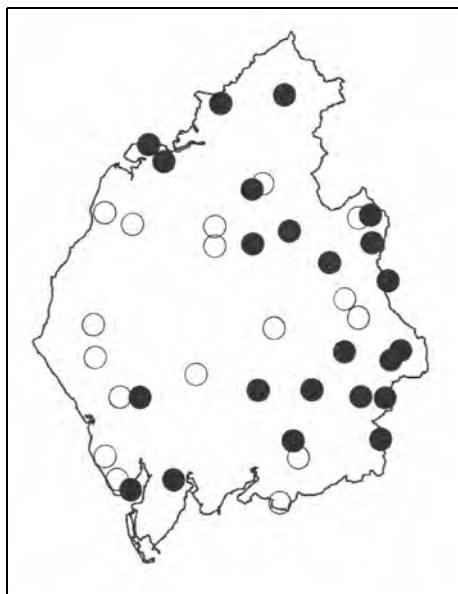


Figure 1. Cumbrian distribution of place-names derived from Black Grouse lekking sites (solid symbols: place-names derived from 'cocc-leikr'; open symbols: from 'cocc-leah')

Cumberland by Armstrong *et al.* (1971) and in Westmorland by Smith (1967) have been used as the primary sources of information. These provide basic details about the origin and meaning of place-names so essential to any investigation of this nature. The book on Lake District place-names by Whaley (2006) has also proved useful. Unfortunately Lancashire has yet to be dealt with in the English Place-name Society's series and the volume by Ekwall (1922) has no information relevant to this investigation. However, a few place-names of potential relevance taken from the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey maps of Lancashire North of the Sands and the area around Sedbergh in what was formerly Yorkshire are also included.

Place-names that refer to Black Grouse

The place-name elements of primary interest as regards Black Grouse (or Blackcocks) are *cocc* (from old English, meaning *cock*) and *leikr* (from Old Norse, meaning *to play*) (Whaley, 2006). Armstrong *et al.* (1971) render *cocc-leikr* as 'a place frequented by grouse' and which Whaley identifies with Black Grouse 'leks'. Certainly Blackcock leks are very distinctive and individual sites tend to be used year after year, and it is easy to see how early settlers came to identify specific places with the presence of lekking Blackcocks. The field-name 'Cockplaie' in the parish of Kirkandrews Nether has a similar origin. The *cocc* element is not uncommon in place-names, and occurs, for instance, in 'Cockshot' and variants thereof (as in Cockshott Point near Bowness-on-Windermere), a reference to woodland glades where Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* were netted, 'Cockpit', a place where cock fights took place, and in those such as 'Cock How' (in Ennerdale) and 'Cockrigg Craggs' (to the west of Thirlmere) which might refer to Woodcock, Black Grouse, Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* (which are sometimes specifically identified as 'Moorcock') or perhaps be used as a more general way of referring to gamebirds, or even any species with distinctive males. Whichever of these is the case, all are readily distinguished from place-names derived from *cocc-leikr*.

There is one other group of names containing the *cocc* element that are somewhat more problematic. They include such modern day forms as 'Cockley', 'Cockle' and 'Cocklaw'. In some cases there are early records indicating that the name comes from *cocc-leikr*. There is a 13th century reference to 'Cocklaw' (in Longsleddale), for example, in which the name is written 'Cokelaike', but in other cases no such link exists. The latter could be derived from *cocc-leah* (*cocc* as above, with Old English *leah*, a woodland clearing) and interpreted either as 'a clearing where Blackcock play', or 'a clearing where Woodcock are found'. Whaley (2006, p.77) notes in discussing 'Cockley Beck' (in Dunnerdale) that '*a name from the [earlier] Anglian period would be exceptional hereabouts*' and goes on to note that a Mediaeval English or hybrid compound is more likely. Certainly places such as Cockley Beck in Dunnerdale and Cockleythwaite near

Sebergham are much more likely to refer to Black Grouse than Woodcock on habitat grounds, although this is less clear cut in the case of names such as Cocklee Wood near Aspatria or Cockley Moss near Allonby. All these 'Cockley'-type names are considered here but those with an uncertain origin, that is those for which early forms are lacking, are listed separately, and it needs to be borne in mind that these are somewhat less clearly indicative of the presence of Black Grouse than those traceable back to *cocc-leikr*, and it is possible that some may refer to Woodcock.

It is difficult to date precisely when these place-names were first used, but most if not all belong to the period between the end of the Roman occupation in the 5th century AD and the Norman conquest in the 11th century. Old English (*i.e.* Anglo-Saxon) names mostly date from the earlier part of this period, probably around the 7th century. Names containing elements such as *leikr* will have been established following the arrival of Norse-speaking settlers (themselves probably the descendants of an earlier wave of colonists who had settled in Ireland and the Isle of Man), either towards the end of the 10th century or in the first half of the 11th century (Rollinson, 1978).

Distribution of Black Grouse in Cumbria in the 5th to 11th centuries AD

Some 23 place-names containing or clearly derived from *cocc-leikr* have been identified together with 17 that may alternatively be from *cocc-leah* (a complete list of these sites is available on request). Their distribution in the county is shown in Figure 1. They extend through much of Cumbria, with a tendency to concentrate in the eastern half of the county. There is, however, a noticeable absence of place-names referring to Blackcock in the northern fells. This can hardly be because there were no Norse-speaking settlers here – there are plenty of Norse place-names hereabouts – and the only reasonable conclusion is that Black Grouse were absent from this area at the time the Norse settlers arrived. There are several place-names well within the coastal plain of West Cumbria referable to Black Grouse, although most (but not all) of them are derived from *cocc-leah* rather than *cock-leikr*. It should be emphasised, however, that this is the pattern to be expected from the sequence of colonisation – Anglo-Saxons initially on lower ground, and later Norse-speaking settlers mainly on higher ground. Note also that even if all place-names derived from *cocc-leah* refer to species other than Black Grouse, it is still clear that Black Grouse were widely distributed in Cumbria in the period before the Norman conquest, apparently being absent only from the northern fells and the west coast, an area approximately equivalent to modern day Allerdale and the northern part of Copeland.

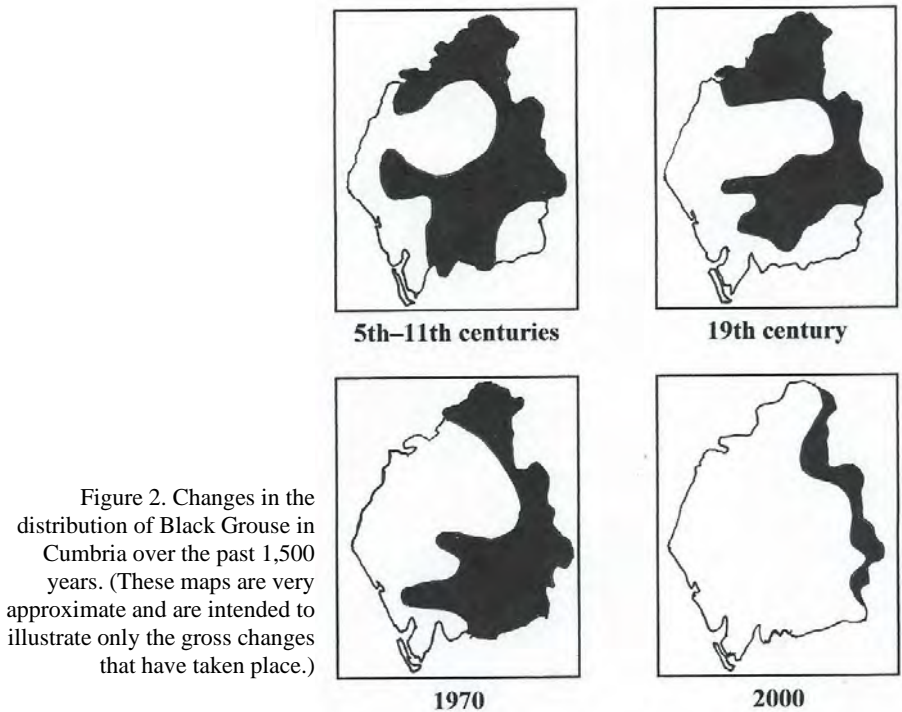


Figure 2. Changes in the distribution of Black Grouse in Cumbria over the past 1,500 years. (These maps are very approximate and are intended to illustrate only the gross changes that have taken place.)

Comparison with Black Grouse distribution in Cumbria in the 19th and 20th centuries

Based primarily on material in Macpherson's *A Vertebrate Fauna of Lakeland* (1892), the distribution in the second half of the 19th century was not markedly different from that a thousand years before (Figure 2). Again there was an apparent absence of birds in the northern fells with the only appreciable change being a withdrawal from the western part of the south Solway plain. By this period, however, concern was being expressed about the dwindling numbers of Black Grouse, victims of excessive shooting and habitat loss (and despite several attempts at reintroducing the species), though the Black Grouse was classified as 'numerous locally' in both Cumberland and Westmorland at the time of a general survey of the species status in Britain in the 1920's (Gladstone, 1924). The broad distribution in Cumbria showed only minor further contraction in range during the first seventy years of the 20th century, mainly on the south Solway plain (based on the distribution determined in the national breeding census of 1968-72, Sharrock, 1976). By the end of the millennium, however, the species was restricted to the

eastern margin of Cumbria and numbers had dwindled to a few hundred displaying males, according to the results of the Cumbria Tetrad Atlas Survey of 1997-2001 (Stott *et al.*, 2002). Conservation measures have subsequently had some beneficial effects and the species has recently re-established itself in the south-east of the county (Dunn, 2012).

Conclusions

Despite their limitations place-names can provide a useful insight into the occurrence and distribution of species in the past, and the example of the Black Grouse considered here is a good illustration of what can be achieved, even at the county level. It appears that between the end of the Roman occupation and the Norman conquest the species was quite widely distributed in Cumbria. The broad agreement between this place-name distribution on the one hand and that based on the 19th century records collected by Macpherson on the other, is gratifying and lends some credence to the fact that the place-name distribution is essentially sound.

Appendix

Place-names in Cumbria that refer to Black Grouse

For each entry the following are given: **place-name** (marked with an asterisk if taken from the 1:25,000 OS maps; all others are from Armstrong *et al.* (1971) in the case of Cumberland, and Smith (1967) for Westmorland); **type of place-name** (*fn* field-name, *lf* landscape feature, *sn* settlement name, *pn* place name not otherwise identified); **parish** in which the place-name is to be found; **1 km map reference** of the place-name's location (or the approximate centre of the parish if the precise location of the place-name is unknown – such map references are in square brackets).

Place-names definitely derived from cocc-leikr

Cumberland

Cocklet Rigg (*lf*, Askerton NY5573); Cockplaie (*fn*, Kirkandrews Nether [NY3871]); Cocklicks (*fn*, Bowness-on-Solway [NY2262]); Cocklakes (*sn*, Wetheral NY4651); Cocklake *sn*, Alston NY7546/7547); Cocklake * (*lf*, *sn*, Alston NY7537); Cocklakes Hill (*pn*, Hutton Soil [NY4637]); Cocklock Limekiln (*pn*, Kirkoswald [NY5541]); Cocklock Scar (*lf*, Skirwith NY6533); Cocklayc (*pn*, Holme East Waver [NY2557]); Cockley Beck and Cockley Beck Fell (*lf*, *sn*, Eskdale and Wasdale NY2401); Cokelayk (*fn*, Millom and Millom Rural [SD1780]); Cocklate (*fn*, New Hutton [SD5691]); Cocklaw Fell (*lf*, Longsleddale NY4804); Cocklake Rigg (*pn*, Kaber [NY7911]); Cocklake (*sn*, Mallerstang NY7702); Cocklake (*lf*, Ravenstonedale NY7102); Cocklake (*sn*, Tebay, Orton NY6204); Cocklake Dale (*fn*, Asby [NY6813]); Cocklake Hills (*lf*, Stainmore

NY8214); Great & Little Cocklake, and Cocklake Sike (*lf*, Dufton NY7928).

Lancashire North-of-the-Sands

Cocklakes * (*lf*, Angerton SD2683).

Yorkshire (Sedbergh area)

Cock Lakes * (*lf*, Garsdale SD7992).

Place-names potentially derived from cocc-leah

Cumberland

Cokeley-fell (*fn*, Alston [NY7146]); Cockleybank (*pn*, Wetheral NY4953); Cockley Gill (*lf*, Castle Sowerby NY3840); Cockleythwaite (*sn*, Castle Sowerby NY3841); Cocklee Wood (*lf*, Aspatria NY1742); Cockley Moss (*lf*, Holme St. Cuthbert NY1245); Cockley Field (*fn*, Bootle [SD1088]); Cokey Gill (*fn*, Ennerdale and Kinniside [NY0912]); Cockly Pike (*pn*, Eskdale and Wasdale [NY1502]); Cockley Gill (*sn*, Lamplugh NY0819); Cockle Moss (*fn*, Whicham [SD1382]).

Westmorland

Cocklet Wood (*pn*, Burton [SD5376]); Cocklea Wood (*pn*, Old Hutton [SD5688]); Cockley Crag & Moss (*pn*, Grasmere [NY3307]); Cockley Gill (*pn*, Murton, Appleby St. Michael [NY7221]); Cockle Sike (*pn*, Dufton [NY6825]); Cockle Hill (*pn*, Bampton [NY5218]).

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Mr Hutton's eagles

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Thomas Hutton (ca. 1746-1831) was a guide and boatman in Keswick, noted for his interest in botany and geology. In 1785 he established in his house the museum that bore his name. It was best known for its collection of minerals and plants, then both topics of great novelty and curiosity to the growing number of visitors to the Lakes. Then as now there was also much interest in birds and Hutton's Museum contained one whole room given over to stuffed birds, both British and foreign. Furthermore, one of the Museum's key attractions was a live Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, said by some to have been the last eagle to have bred in Lakeland. What is not generally appreciated is that the one seen by early visitors was not the same as that which entertained later ones. I summarise here the evidence for this and for the origins of these two birds.

The first published reference to the presence of a live eagle at Hutton's Museum is contained in Hutchinson's *A History of the County of Cumberland* (1797) in the following words (written by Hutchinson but based on information supplied by an unnamed correspondent, identified by Macpherson (1892) as Rev William Richardson): *'We suspect, however, that most, if not all the eagles amongst these hills, [i.e. in the Lake District] are of the Falco Chrysaetos, or Golden Eagle species. Mr Gray says the Borrowdale Eagles are the Erne (Falco Albiulla). One has this year (1793) been caught alive, and is now in the possession of Mr. Thomas Hutton, of Keswick, which is unquestionably the Falco Chrysaetos, or Golden Eagle.'*

The juxtaposition of 'Borrowdale Eagles' and one 'caught alive' is unfortunate, as it seems to imply that the captured bird was obtained in Borrowdale. However, it is unlikely that this is what Hutchinson intended, rather the sentence beginning 'Mr Gray' is an aside, and that beginning 'One has this year' follows in meaning directly from the one ending 'Golden Eagle species'. Possibly as a result of these words, the idea that this captive eagle originated from Borrowdale took root.

We next hear about Hutton's eagle in a slim volume by an anonymous writer who recounts visiting Hutton's Museum in 1803 and seeing his collection of stuffed birds (Anon., 1804). He lists 25 of the British species present and adds after the list: *'This Falco Chrysaetos was a very young eagle, which Hutton had bred, he said he used to feed it with rats, cats, &c. the bird killed them immediately, and then sucked their blood, this was the only drink he ever would take.'*

Hutton was something of a raconteur (see Brears, 1992) and these brief

comments seem to be typical of his output. There is no evidence that he actually bred the eagle (Hutton was never one to let the facts get in the way of a good story) and the final part of the sentence dealing with the eagle's food should probably be seen as a tongue-in-cheek attempt to impress or amuse his (dare one say, slightly gullible) visitors. Working on the assumption that this was indeed the bird that had been caught alive (Macpherson (1892) reached the same conclusion), then it seems it died not long after being taken into captivity and was stuffed.

Eagles do not get mentioned again until July 1813, when an advertisement appeared in *The Cumberland Pacquet* (a local weekly newspaper) announcing that the Museum was '*more than doubled within the last two years*' (Anon., 1813) and drawing attention to: '*The largest Golden Eagle EVER SEEN. He is now living, and measures between the Tips of his Wings when extended 8 Feet 10 Inches*'.

Some years later the Rev Benjamin Newton of Wath visited Hutton's Museum and wrote the following entry in his diary for 17th July 1818 (Ferndale & Crutchley (1933) quoted in Brears (1992)): '*this fine live eagle, five years old, taken on the Isle of Mull, his keeper was afraid to approach him without a stick, though he has had him so long and his wings are not cut, it seemed to require some strength to hold him by the chain that was round one of his legs when he attempted to fly ...*'

This confirms that 1813 was indeed the year this second eagle first appeared in Keswick, and more importantly that it had been obtained from Scotland. It was alive the following year and is referred to by Green (quoted in Brears, 1992) as '*a remarkably large, living eagle*'.

Thomas Hutton died in 1831 and the running of the museum was taken over by his daughters, Hannah Hutton and Mary Shelton. To mark this change in ownership they had a handbill printed. It is dated 1st June 1831 and begins (text from Brears, 1992): '*The MUSEUM contains many of the scarcest CURIOSITIES ever known in the World, viz. A grand collection of preserved Foreign and British Birds, among the latter two Eagles, one a native of Borrowdale, also Fishes, Lizards and Serpents.*'

It seems the second eagle had by now died and that it too had been stuffed and put on display. This was the first specific association in print of one of the eagles with Borrowdale and seems to have been repeated by later writers without further comment. The following from Ladyman (1885) in some recollections of life in Keswick in the 19th century is typical: '*Thomas Hutton, Museum and boatman. Mr. Hutton kept a live eagle, to show to tourists and friends who visited his Museum, and it was the last eagle seen in this neighbourhood, and was captured, I believe, in Borrowdale.*'

In summary, Thomas Hutton had at one time or another two live, captive Golden Eagles; the first *may* have been obtained locally, though the reputed association with Borrowdale is not well established and *may* be a misreading of the

information in Hutchinson's book. The date of capture (1793) is, however, consistent with it being *one of the last* Lakeland eagles. The other was procured from Scotland in 1813.

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1. (p. 53) Bee-eaters at Low Gelt Quarry, 2015: adult, 23 June; *Inset*: the single fledgling on 4 September

© Nick Franklin; Adam Moan (*inset*)



2. (p. 55)

White-letter
Hairstreak

Gelt Quarry
25 August 2015

© Paul Archer



3. (p. 56) The cleptoparasitic bee *Stelis punctulatissima*. Tullie House garden, Carlisle, 15 August 2015. (Scale bar: 5 mm) © Nick Franklin



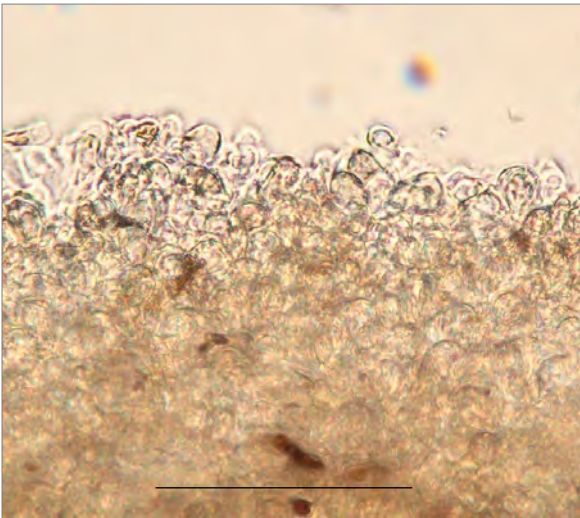
4. (p. 58) *left*: the lichen *Peltigera neckeri* at Loo Gill, Hartside, April 2015, showing apothecia; *right*: the lichen *Parmotrema crinitum*, on wall near Elterwater, April 2015 © David Clarke

5. (p. 50)

Euphrasia montana

Gowk Bank NNR

© *Jeremy Roberts*



6. (p. 57) Hazel Bolete. *left*: cap surface section, $\times 400$, image-stacked;
right: fruit body. Argill Nature Reserve, 25 August 2015.

(Scale bars: 100 μm and 5 cm respectively)

© *Jeremy Roberts; David Clarke*



7. (p. 64) *left*: Two day-old Dotterel chicks on a North Pennine summit, 4 July 1983; *right*: one of two semi-independent chicks. Ennerdale Fells, 10 June 1988. (from 35mm transparencies) © John Strowger; John Callion



8. (p. 64) Male Dotterel guarding hatching eggs, North Pennines, 30 June 1983 - young calling within eggs. (from 35mm transparency)

© John Callion

Carlisle Natural History Society – Winter Programme 2015/16

check website www.carlisle.nats.org.uk for updates

7th October: ‘Memories of Dotterel’

An illustrated talk by John Callion

21st October: ‘Reviving the wild heart of the Southern Uplands of Scotland’

An illustrated talk by Dr Philip Ashmole, Carrifran Wildwood project of Borders Forest Trust

4th November: ‘Conserving Reds in Northern England’

An illustrated talk by Simon O’Hare, Red Squirrel Officer, RSNE

18th November: Members’ Night

Contributions from the membership

2nd December: ‘The good, the bad and the very wet – lowland raised bogs in Cumbria’

An illustrated talk by Alasdair Brock, Natural England

16th December: ‘The Golden Eagle in northern Britain’

An illustrated talk by Geoff Horne

6th January: ‘Ethiopia – Disappearing paradise’

An illustrated talk by Angus Hogg (jointly with the Cumbria Bird Club)

20th January: ‘The Lake District’s tuff hailstones’

An illustrated talk by Dr Clive Boulter (jointly with Cumberland Geological Society) **NB** starts at 7.30pm

3rd February: ‘Lichens in and around Cumbria’

An illustrated talk by Dr Allan Pentecost

17th February: ‘Conservation of the Merseyside Sand Lizards’

An illustrated talk by Paul Hudson

27th February (Saturday): Field Meeting – South Solway Birds

Leader Frank Mawby (016973 51301). Meet Wedholme Flow car park NY238539 at 10am

2nd March: AGM & Members’ Night

Contributions from the membership

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