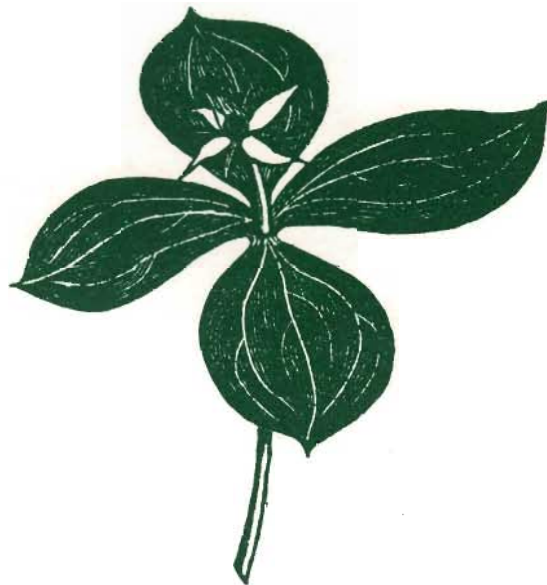


The Reading Naturalist

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THE READING NATURALIST

No 45 for the year 1992

The Journal of the Reading and District Natural History Society

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EDITORIAL

After my second year as Editor I have begun to realise what hard work it is! As my stamina begins to wane, I look with amazement at the dedication of some of the contributors and their reliability over many years. I ought to give names but am fearful that I may overlook some valuable input. To all those who have helped this year a big thankyou. I do, however, feel that if we could get help from some other members, we could spread the load more evenly. Tasks for which help would be valued for next year's production include: records and articles, word processing, artwork, collation, distribution, and last but not least, ideas. (If you are interested please see page 12 for more details).

My advert thus ended, I must say that 1992 does seem to have been a good year, natural history-wise. The activities of the Society have gone on as usual, although it has been questioned whether participation at meetings and outings has declined recently. This is likely to be a discussion point within the Society over the next year. However, judging from the wealth of records which have been received by the Recorders this year, there certainly seems to be a lot of active field work being carried out in the Reading area. Of particular interest are the many comments, which came out in several of the reports, regarding changes in distribution patterns over the years, these do help illustrate the value of keeping a permanent published record of observations - so hopefully everybody's hard work is justified!

EXCURSIONS

Alan Brickstock

Winter 1991-1992

These commenced on November 9th 1991, when 7 members enjoyed a fine day in the Mortimer area. The weather was not so kind on December 14th: Eileen Holly's walk in the Henley area was cancelled due to freezing fog. The annual coastal outing, led as usual by Martin Sell, was to Slimbridge on a cold, rather misty day. An excellent variety of geese and ducks were enjoyed by a party of 15. Neville Diserens led 12 people on a morning walk around the Fox and Hounds gravel pit at Theale on February 15th. Although there was a cold wind, it was a fine, sunny day, with excellent viewing light and many species of birds were seen, including Shovelers, Goldeneye and Gadwall. The final winter walk was Dr Watson's annual Mosses and Liverworts excursion, this time to Silchester Common. Only seven people turned out for what was, as always, a most enjoyable and informative outing.

Summer 1992

Summer walks started at Padworth on a superb, warm, cloudless day. A party of 13 enjoyed an excellent outing, seeing among other things a large Grass Snake, some fascinating bright blue beetles, a large number of Mute Swans and 10 Greylag Geese. Only five people, two of them guests, went on Eileen Holly's walk at Satwell to see Wild Daffodils, on April 18th.

Very heavy rain beforehand no doubt put off some members for the dawn chorus walk round Theale gravel pits on May 9th. However, the rain virtually stopped at about 4.15 am, and 4.30 am saw Martin Sell and me the sole members of the party. Although rather cold, we two had a very good outing, with lots of warblers, including Sedge, Reed, Garden and one Grasshopper Warbler. Nightingales and Cuckoos were both heard and seen, and there was a possible sighting of a Hobby. Martin then enjoyed a solitary outing to the coast.

May 16th at Cane End was a hot, sunny day, and 16 of us enjoyed an excellent walk, notable for the great number of specimens of Sanicle and also some *Callitriche hamulata* found in a pond by Sean O'Leary. Martin Sell led a party of 20 to Bernwood on May 23rd. A fine day, with lots of Green-winged Orchids in flower and tea taken in a hay meadow. What better for a summer day? In contrast, June 7th was a very misty day, more reminiscent of November, but eventually becoming quite warm. Only seven members went on this marvellous outing, led by Ken Grinstead. There were large numbers of Lesser Butterfly Orchids at Morgans Hill. It was then decided to go to Pusey Down NNR, rather than to the advertised Savernake Forest. Here there were thousands of Fragrant Orchids, in a wide variety of colours and about 60 Burnt-tip Orchids, among many other good things.

The annual coach outing, on June 20th, was to the Seven Sisters Country Park on the South Downs, with a short call to Kithurst Hill on the way. There were large numbers of Common Spotted Orchids at Kithurst, but the hoped for Round-headed Rampion were not to be found. However, we did see the very uncommon Fly Honeysuckle here. Although very windy on the coast, it was a wonderful, hot, sunny day and the party of 40 enjoyed an excellent variety of shingle-growing flowers, including Houndstongue, Sea Wormwood, Sea Radish, Fennel and Yellow-horned Poppy. There were also lots of the very uncommon Star Thistle, which were still superb despite being only in bud.

Brian Baker wrote the following report on the 26th annual mothing night which took place on July 3rd at Moor Copse Nature Reserve by kind permission of BBONT: Conditions for the barbecue, which precedes this event, were unusual to say the least, but Alan Brickstock came to our rescue by suggesting a tent be pitched in the partially flooded lay-by to shelter the spread which Jocelin Whitfield had so carefully prepared. For the 20 who braved the atrocious conditions, an hilarious evening ensued followed by a successful mothing session on the banks of the River Pang. The moths were undeterred by the rain and swarmed to the mercury vapour lamp below its sheltering fisherman's umbrella. Alan Brickstock kindly helped me to log 51 species of Macro-Lepidoptera - those of particular interest are mentioned in the entomology report.

Michael Keith-Lucas led a party of 10 round the superb Runnymede Meadows on July 5th, on a dull but quite warm afternoon. An excellent variety of water and waterside plants were seen, including Great Water Parsnip, Narrow-leaved Water Plantain, Frogbit, Water Milfoil, Water Soldier, Jointed Rush and Orange Foxtail. We also watched a dragonfly catch and then eat a Meadow Brown butterfly. On July 25th, 14 people led by Ken Grinstead enjoyed a lovely day at Inkpen where there was good downland flora, a number of butterflies and some early fungi. Afterwards the party visited Ham Hill, where there was a good variety of butterflies including Green-veined White and Chalk Hill Blue. Graham Vick at last had a dry day for his dragonfly outing on August 8th. Fourteen species were found, as well a lot of larvae. A pity there were only six people present.

The second mothing 'evening', at Bowdown on August 21st, was dry with a clear sky. It became quite cool and the mothing went 'dead' soon after 1 am. However, 15 people enjoyed a reasonable variety of species, with pride of place belonging to a rare Peacock moth.

Michael Fletcher identified about 130 species of plants on Reading 'Rubbish Dumps' on September 21st. Sadly only five members were present. September 27th was a warm, sunny day for the outing to Westonbirt. There were some good patches of autumn colour and a few fungi. Jocelin Whitfield imparted a great deal of interesting information about the many species of trees. Once more attendance, at eight, was very disappointing. Finally, on October 4th, we had our first Fungus Foray of the season, at Sulham, with 21 present. This was a most superb foray with an amazing 154 species identified.

Wednesday Afternoon Walks

The number of people on the six Wednesday walks varied from three to eight. Apart from a few showers during the April walk, the weather was marvellously kind to us. The walks were all much enjoyed, marred only by an unfortunate accident at Nettlebed on June 17th.

On August 19th at Arborfield Cross, the 103 species of plants recorded included two uncommon ones, found on the roadside verge at the very beginning of the walk, and growing about a foot apart: one specimen of Stinkweed or Annual Wall Rocket and two specimens of Lesser Snapdragon or Weasel's Snout. 120 species of plants were recorded on September 16th at Hambleden, as well as a number of fungi and butterflies. This was a glorious, sunny afternoon.

Many thanks to Ken Thomas for working out and leading all these walks. They deserve many more people, as do all our outings - see separate article!

MEETINGS

Meryl Beek

Once again a series of winter lectures have been held on Thursday evenings between October 1991 and March 1992. The Annual General Meeting on October 10th was followed by Jocelin Whitfield's Presidential Address 'Just Back from China', which she had visited only a few weeks before with her husband and staying on a University campus in the middle of Zhengzhou city. There were 40 members present. This was followed on October 24th by an excellent talk on 'Land Snails' by Dr June Chatfield (36 present), and another good evening, with 44 present, on November 7th, to hear Dr Anne Watson speak on the quite complicated subject of 'The Greenhouse Effect'. On November 21st 'The Reawakening of the Kennet and Avon Canal' was the subject addressed to 45 members, who were pleased to see slides of all the recent work.

After Christmas, on January 9th, David Coles transported 44 members to his 'Travels in New Guinea'. At very short notice, on 23rd January, due to the illness of Bill Baker, Dr Michael Keith-Lucas gave 49 members a real insight into the 'Natural History of the Shetland Islands.' Very local sights were looked at when Adrian Lawson spoke on the 'Conservation of Urban Woodland' to 28 members. There was a good turnout of 46 for Gordon Wilson's 'Magic of Iceland' on February 20th, and finally on March 5th there were 40 present to hear Rev. Stephen Pittis introduce 'The World of Butterflies and Moths', where many got involved in answering questions that the speaker put to the meeting.

OBITUARY

A.M. Sandels (née Simmonds) 1901-1992

Nan Sandels had been a member of the Reading and District Natural History Society since 1945 and she attended meetings and excursions regularly except for the few years when she lived away from Reading. Though widely interested in all aspects of wildlife and conservation, she became particularly interested in botany. Her expertise on local flora made her an ideal member of the Reading Museum staff for many years. While there, she was responsible for the comprehensive display of clearly named wild flowers throughout the seasons and for the identification of specimens brought in by the public.

She was President of the Society for the years 1948-51. It was during this period that she was instrumental in founding the 'Reading Naturalist'. Volume One appeared in 1949 with her contribution being a paper on the 'Plants of Pamber and Silchester'.

Together with two other former members, Kath Butler and Leonie Cobb, Nan Sandels (as a member of the Berkshire Flora Committee) did much preparatory work for Humphrey Bowen's (1968) 'Flora of Berkshire'. An energetic field botanist she would cycle many miles in search of particular species in order to map their distribution.

She last attended a meeting of the Society in November 1989. To this day the 'Reading Naturalist' remains a fitting reminder of her dedication to the work of the Society. What better memorial to her can there be.

Shirley Townend

ON SUNSHINE

Presidential Address, October 15th 1992

Jocelin Whitfield

I hope you think that sunshine is natural history. It drives the circulation of air and water. Plants depend on its energy and other living things feed on plants or plant eaters. Sunshine is the very source of life.

I always feel our shadows should widen behind us as in a torch beam, but they don't. In fact they taper because the Sun is so big, it is looking at us, ever so slightly, from both sides. And yet it is so small that I can cover it with my little finger nail.

I have trouble with the concept of size; my intellect understands but my imagination can't cope. Ten kilometres is a view; 100 km, you'd need a very clear day to see that; 1000 km is a satellite picture (we are now divorced from real experience); 10,000 km - well, the diameter of the Earth is 12,742 km - so its that sort of size; but the Sun is 109 Earth diameters. A model of the Earth a foot across, like my globe, would be in proportion to a Sun whose diameter was the height of a very tall tree, a *Wellingtonia* perhaps. Think of a tall tree. But now it has to be so far away that you can cover it from top to base with your little finger nail, half a degree. The distance of the sun is two more orders of magnitude, 149,500,000 km. If I dashed off in a car at 70 m.p.h. I'd be nearing Bristol in one hour; it would take 1,327,960 hours to get to the Sun, and no comfort stops either. Any idea how long that is? It is about 152 years, and you'd pass the moon in the first half year at 142 days. All our light and almost all our heat comes all that way. It takes 8 minutes.

This week NASA's SETI programme (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) is starting. It bothers me a bit, I haven't the patience. The nearest star is 4 light years away, and the sources being examined by the project are up to 80 light years away. Sending a question and waiting for an answer is going to be a slow business, a minimum of 8 years or up to 160 years. Are you still watching out there?

The Sun which is at 6,000°C, emits radiation right across the spectrum from high energy X-rays and ultra-violet, through the visible light to infra-red and radio frequencies. At the distance of the Earth the total energy is about 1.5 kW/m² and that is what a satellite would receive in orbit, provided it was not in the Earth's shadow of course.

At ground level we receive about 1 kW/m² or much less on a gloomy day. Some is scattered into space. The high energy radiations are absorbed in the atmosphere. The photons at these short wavelengths will knock electrons off atoms and can damage living cells. The ozone layer is particularly efficient at absorbing most of the ultra-violet radiation. Watch out, you Antarctic scientists, that you don't get badly sunburnt. I suppose sun cream absorbs ultra-violet too?

Visible light is in the 400-700 nm range of wavelengths, with sufficient energy for the photon to change the energy levels of electrons in atoms, thereby activating chemical changes, such as those used in photosynthesis or, in the eye, in vision. Isn't it fun being able to see? We have these special pigments, the one in the rods sensitive to blue light, and two in the cones sensitive to red and green light, and if there's lots of light they are bleached and we are dazzled until they regenerate. This was my father's, William Rushton, research field. All those light rays bouncing off things and into the

eye, to tell you what colour, shape, and distance they are. I'm always surprised there's room for them all. It is difficult to find out what other animals can see. Nocturnal animals have more rods in their eyes so they are specially adapted to blue light. People with one pigment missing sometimes do not realise that they are "colour-blind"; it feels normal to them. Bees can see into the ultra-violet and flowers often have special bee-guide patterns which we can't see. The rattlesnake has a sensor for infra-red radiation and can find a rat in the dark by the heat it emits. Infra-red radiation has enough energy to vibrate molecules, i.e. to heat them up. On a clear day about half the ground-level energy we are receiving is in the infra-red, but water absorbs it quite well, and not much gets through the myriad droplets of a cloud. Chilly, isn't it, on a sunless day?

The Sun warming the air is a most potent factor in our lives, producing our day to day weather and overall climate. I spend a great deal of time looking at the sky and the clouds, admiring the rushing vertical currents and guessing at their vast size. My daughter Robin, who is a capable glider pilot, was circling high above the countryside 50 miles from base and thinking "... but I'm heavier than air." Once I was following George, my husband, when he flew into a thundercloud, a cumulo-nimbus. Down at ground level the largest hailstones I've ever seen were threatening to break the windscreen. Try throwing one of those into the air, and keeping it up by blowing, and you get some idea of the power that held those droplets in the air whilst ice built up around them. It tossed George up to 10,000 ft at 30 ft/sec, layers of ice forming on the glider, and he dived out of the cloud going **up** another 2,000 ft as he dived. The great masses of cold and warm air spin and thrust forming the global weather patterns so familiar from weather charts, sometimes developing into the stagnant areas of an anticyclone or conversely the violent vortex of a cyclone. The equatorial heat sends tropical storms bubbling up to enormous heights, the condensed water falls, and the dry warm air spreads to North and South before dropping, helping to create the world's desert zones. Greening the desert is an exciting concept, but it is really very difficult to do. I am waiting anxiously for some rich nation like the U.S.A., Saudi Arabia or Australia to make a success of it.

The temperature and light levels at sub-tropical latitudes are excellent for growth, but photosynthesis can work well at quite low light levels and plants are well designed to catch sufficient for their needs. In this country light and heat are limiting factors to the growth of plants. The modern high-yielding wheat varieties have upright leaves that intercept possibly 8 times as much light as older varieties. In hot climates plants may need shade, and some, like maize and sugar cane, have special adaptations to their photosynthetic pathways, so that they can grow in high light and heat which would cause wilting in other plants. Chlorophyll collects light at visible wavelengths; it takes two photons to get enough energy to chop a water molecule, and surprisingly red and blue light are best value, 90% to 95% being absorbed, whereas only about 80% of the green is absorbed, leaving the other 20% to bounce back into our eyes; look, chlorophyll is green! If all the light were absorbed I suppose leaves would be black.

Water absorbs red light so seaweeds have extra pigments that work in the blue, but they don't have much energy to work with as sunlight penetration through water is poor. In Windermere light levels are reduced to 1% at 7 metres depth, and even in very clear water, to 1% at 20 metres. Also it can be very cold in deep water.

Water is very strange stuff, and has two most unusual physical properties which have fundamental effects on the Earth and its climate. Firstly it is a liquid at average world temperatures. How many other simple substances can you think of which are liquids at 20°C? (Organic compounds don't count as simple in this context). Mercury? Any more? Then of course we are familiar with it as a solid and as a vapour, and here is the second strange thing, very important too. Water contracts as it cools, like

almost everything else, down to 4°C, but below that and as it sets solid it becomes larger again, less dense, and the ice floats. In winter, on radiation frost nights, the surface water of a lake will cool, and fall to the bottom, cool and fall until the whole lake is at 4°C before it has a chance to freeze over. Incidentally this mixes and oxygenates the whole body of water. If ice was denser than water and sank to the bottom of the lake, it would be really slow to thaw, like permafrost, and act as a huge refrigeration unit, instead of which the oceans act as storage heaters, and keep us from having a continental winter, or summer come to that, temperature stabilisers. Sunlight on water drives the whole hydrological cycle, from sea to cloud, to rain, to river and back to sea, ice splitting the rocks, and water grinding and eroding them, forming soil and spreading it, watering it, to make growth possible.

I don't want to leave the subject without mentioning animals. Because they can only operate within a restricted temperature range, animals have evolved myriads of behaviour patterns which include basking, both warm and cold blooded animals - also keeping out of the midday sun. Elephants are so large that dissipating heat is a problem, they have a large volume to surface ratio. Conversely shrews are so small that in order to maintain their warm-blooded status they must eat very frequently, and will starve in 3 hours. (Take care if you are setting Longworth traps). Large or small, virtually all animals live off the products of photosynthesis, so just keep right on shining, Sun.

BRAINS TRUST

Michael V. Fletcher

The first Brains Trust for many years, was held by the Society on November 26th 1992. On the panel were: Hugh Carter, who in general took questions about invertebrates, Michael Keith-Lucas, botanist, and Martin Sell, who handled questions on birds. The range of questions matched their own wide interests.

BEECH TREES

Why do Beech leaves remain on lower branches (up to about 15 feet) during winter? Is the Beech the only tree to exhibit this phenomenon? Also, are Beech mast years constant throughout the British Isles, or do they vary with locations? What factors do they depend on? Meryl Beek

Michael pointed out that young trees often behaved differently to older and wiser ones. Oak seedlings, for instance, are evergreen in mild winters, and young beeches often fail to shed their leaves. Pruned beeches also keep this juvenile habit. To set fruit, beech needs a warm summer followed by a warm frost-free spring. Temperatures of -1°C kill male flowers. Good crops of mast only develop in wet summers. Frequently these conditions are not satisfied in Britain, but further south, beeches produce fruit more reliably. Several members contributed to a discussion, pointing out that leaf-drop was an active process, prompted by frost or shorter days and leaves killed by salt spray do not fall, and those near street lights often persist longest. Several noted the fine autumn colours this year, and were puzzled by them. Conditions had been wet and cloudy, the opposite of those believed to give a good autumn display.

MAGPIES

The number of magpies seems to be increasing. Has any survey been carried out to ascertain whether this is a national trend? If it is confirmed can any reason be given for the increase? Ken Grinstead

It was thought that they are increasing. Possible reasons included: fewer gamekeepers to kill them; their craftiness on motorway verges, where they scavenge dead animals without being hit by traffic themselves; the way they prey on eggs and young of garden birds, whose numbers grow as more people fed them in winter (few small birds nest successfully near magpies) and cats catch a lot of garden birds, but not magpies. It was also thought magpies are becoming less timid. A member added that there have been more jays in recent years, often among oak trees, where they fed on acorns.

MIST-NETTING

Why is so little action taking place to stop mist-netting migrating wild birds, now that EEC rules forbid trapping? Frank Butler

Up to 10 million migratory birds are still being killed in Europe each year. The position remains especially bad in Italy. There is still a disagreeable trade in small wild birds which are served as expensive delicacies in restaurants. This would be best stopped by prosecuting offending restaurants. In parts of Italy there are few wild birds, and the killing of birds is considered something to brag about. Birds know where people can not be trusted, and their behaviour in such places is very different to that seen at places like Pagham Harbour. However the position seems hopeful. The Italian bird protection society is going from strength to strength. The British RSPB is helping, but needs funds for binoculars, education, and so on.

EARWIGS

During the summer I have experienced what I can only describe as a 'plague' of earwigs. They have been appearing nightly in the kitchen, generally on the worktop behind the window. Exceptionally, I found 17 in a cookie jar which must have acted like a pitfall trap. Most recently there has been one wrapped in the dishcloth, and one on the gas stove. Do they wait until it is dark and fly in the window? Otherwise where are they likely to be breeding and hiding all day? They all appear to be adult. Shirley Townend

Shirley strongly denied the suggestion that her kitchen was full of decaying vegetable matter, so it was suggested that they came in to shelter from rain. They like hiding in cracks, and they forage at night. They are, for instance, fond of hiding in caravans. Earwigs rarely fly. Only one member had ever seen it. To see them flying, a special look out near manure heaps in summer was recommended.

PLANT DISTRIBUTIONS

Some species of fern are found in both the Northern and Southern hemisphere. Apart from human introductions in recent times, do any species of flowering plant show a similar distribution? If not, why not? Ken Grinstead.

It was pointed out that there are groups of such plants. Firstly, seaside and water plants, which are easily spread on the feet of migrating birds. Experiments where the muddy feet of Greylag geese had been washed, had shown that seeds from the mud are carried by them. Secondly were alpiners, some of which, like birds-eye primrose, extended along the Andean mountain chain. Some mosses show similar distributions, though with these the position regarding human introduction is often more confused. Spores can be carried great distances more easily, and spore-bearing plants are often more ancient. Some of the most ancient, such as *Osmunda* and *Borotrichum*, and some mosses, have a world-wide distribution. Additionally, some striking North-South disjunct distributions exist, and even if they are the result of human introductions, they do reflect climatic similarities, such as those between New Zealand and Britain. The presence of *Senecio greyii* in the Shetlands, which resembles its homeland in the Falklands, was also remarked upon.

INSECT HUNTING BEHAVIOUR

Two odd bits of insect behaviour I have seen. Firstly, a stubble field was burning in Kent several years ago, and a dozen or more swallows, sparrows, and perhaps other small birds were hawking up and down in the thick smoke, catching confused insects. Among them was a dragonfly, doing exactly the same thing. Secondly, an ants' nest swarming on a pile of rubble in my garden two years ago. To keep cats and birds off, I had covered the ground with fine plastic netting. The flying ants, if they were lucky, could fly through the holes. Three wasps could not get through the netting, being larger, so they hovered above it, waiting to catch the winged ants. One managed to grab a (small) male ant as it flew up. In both cases the predatory insects had probably never seen a similar situation before. Was it perhaps chance, or imitation? Has anyone other similar puzzling anecdotes about insects? Michael Fletcher

The behaviour and tactics of parasitic wasps were mentioned. Shrikes and cuckoos are said to bash furry caterpillars, to get rid of the poisonous parts, before eating them. In Gambia where grass fires occur, birds have learnt that they give an opportunity to catch insects.

SET-ASIDE

What effect is farming set-aside having on wildlife? Alan Brickstock

The team agreed that it is too early to say what effect set-aside might have on wildlife. It seems to encourage birds, eg. stubble fields, when left, encourage finches. There have been records of interesting plants, but some set-aside fields are merely overrun with common weeds like ragwort. Many agricultural weeds, like poppies and rarities like corn cockles, need regularly disturbed ground anyway. Substantial wildlife benefits only seem likely if set-aside is planned on a long-term basis.

FINALLY

If you had a choice of living anywhere in the country, which part would you choose for its natural history interest, or would you stay in Reading?

Hugh Carter opted for the South East of the country, which has so many insect species (or possibly the South West). Martin Sell considered several options: East Anglia is good for birds; the Welsh borders are more scenic, but lack sea birds; East Scotland is bracing, but too remote; Shetland, despite its ornithological attractions, is treeless, with dismal grey houses; South Devon has a better climate; Reading has good communications, but is too large, too noisy, and a dormitory town. Michael Keith-Lucas is fond of Southern England, again because it has so many species (of plants), but he didn't mind where, so long as it was easy to get to other places. Somewhere not too far from the Channel ports, perhaps. He might even choose to stay in Reading!

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED!

or

Outings, talks and membership

Alan Brickstock

Many of our outdoor meetings over the last few years have been very poorly attended, and this persuaded me to survey the numbers on our outings over the last 20 years. Obviously many factors such as weather, day of week, holidays etc, affect the numbers, so I averaged these over each year. Even these averages fluctuate considerably, so I further averaged over two year periods. This gives a much smoother picture (Figure 1). Coach outings and the recent Wednesday afternoon walks have been excluded from the averages.

One message is clear: over the last ten years attendances have fallen by a third. Over the last five years, there have been on average, five walks with less than ten people. Such low attendances were rare before 1987. How far can numbers decline before the effort expended is deemed not worth while? Much effort goes into organising a programme of walks and walk leaders often spend a lot of time in preparation including going over the route.

Having done outings, I thought that I had better look at the figures for indoor meetings. These show a different pattern. Average numbers present were around 40 in the early 1970's, and rose to around 50 in the early 1980's. Since then they have steadily declined to around 40 once more (Figure 2). The only strikingly anomalous average was for the 1978/9 season. This was obviously due to severe weather. According to Mr Parry's weather notes, January 1979 was the coldest since 1963 and the third coldest since 1921, when University records began. February also was the coldest since 1963. On January 4th only 22 members were present, the lowest total in my 20 year survey. January 18th was rather better, with a total of 34. On February 15th, Miss C. Olver deputised for a snow-bound speaker, with an audience of 25 intrepid souls, the second lowest in the 20 year period. I caught a bus to Reading because the road conditions were so bad but had to walk home, as all the buses had stopped by then.

Only having got this far in my investigations did I look at membership figures, which is where I should have started! These have been counted from membership lists which, until 1985, were published biennially in the Naturalist. Subsequent to that, I have only the latest loose list. Families have, rather arbitrarily, been counted as two for this purpose. Membership was low, at about 170, in the early 1970's, reached a peak of 275 in 1978, stayed at about 250 until 1985 and has now declined to 190.

Looked at in terms of membership, attendance at indoor meetings has stayed around 20%, with a high of 24% in 1971/2 and a very anomalous high of 28% in 1975/6. That for outings, averaged nearly 12% over the early 1970's, but since then has averaged only 8%, falling as low as 6.5% in 1980. In 1991 it was 7.5%. One odd fact is that, when membership was highest, the percentages on both indoor and outdoor meetings was lowest. This would seem to imply that a lot of the extra members took no part in the Society! Why the rapid rise in members after 1975, and the decline since 1985? Comments or suggestions would be welcome.

Fig. 1. Attendance on Natural History Society Outings (biennial averages)

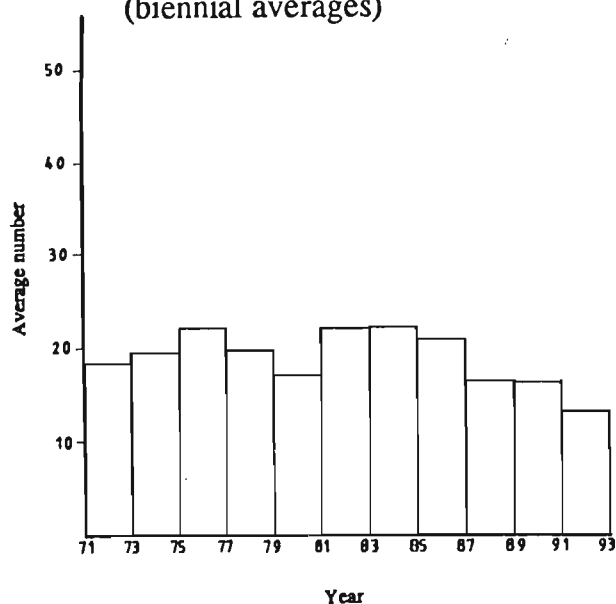
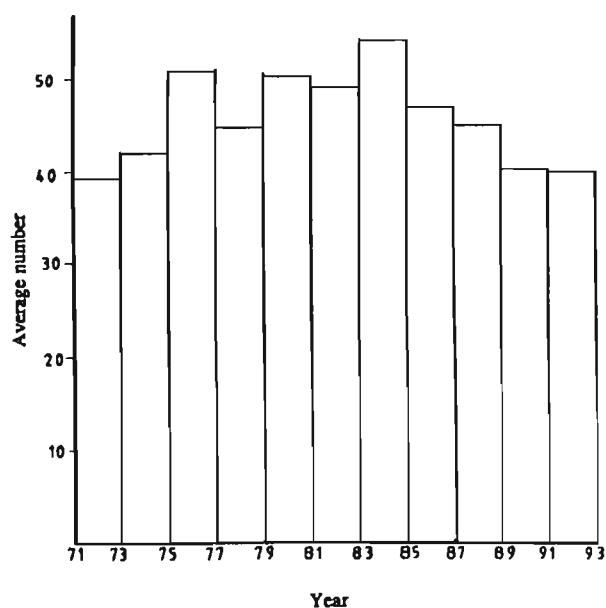


Fig. 2. Attendance at Indoor Meetings (biennial averages)



NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

Reading Urban Wildlife Group - Survey of Foxes

Members who attended Paula Cox's colourful and informative lecture on Foxes on December 10th will already know that during the whole of 1993 RUWG would like to receive records of any sightings of Foxes in Reading. The group needs as many detailed observations as possible. These should include the date, time, location and details of what the fox was doing (crossing a road, sleeping, eating, etc). This survey is particularly valuable as it compliments one carried out 8 years ago and may help identify any changes in Reading's Fox population during this time. Observations should be sent to RUWG, PO Box 267, Reading, RG4 7QZ from whom survey forms may also be obtained.

Calling all Fungus Addicts

A number of R&DNHS members are thinking of forming a Reading Mycological Society. The idea is still in its infancy and suggestions regarding activities of the group are very welcome. Anyone interested please contact Alan Brickstock on Reading 425073. This suggestion comes at a timely moment, since the British Mycological Society has also recently proposed the setting up of local groups to promote the study of fungi.

Spider Recording Scheme

If you are considering getting involved in another 'group', have you considered Spiders? The time is right for such an activity as a Spider Recording Scheme, organised by the British Arachnological Society and the Biological Records Centre, was launched in 1987. It aims to publish a provisional atlas, in 1997, showing the distribution of spiders in the British Isles. Involvement in such a scheme can provide the necessary stimulus for discovering this interesting group. Quite a lot of help is obtainable, via the organisation, in the serious study of spiders. Much can be achieved with the aid of a stereo-microscope, and several excellent identification manuals are available. For more details write to The Spider Recording Scheme, The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, PE17 2LS. Membership enquiries to the British Arachnological Society should be addressed to S.H. Hexter, BAS Membership Treasurer, 71 Havant Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 3JE.

Plants to Spare?

Good quality, labelled plants (or cuttings, seeds, plant pots etc.) for sale in aid of BBONT are welcome at any time of year. (Plant pots can be provided if required). Please contact Ivy Brickstock on Reading 425073.

Plants & Books Sale

BBONT are holding two Plant & Book Sales at the Woodley Pagoda on Fridays May 7th and 21st. A few volunteer helpers would be welcome, but please contact Ivy Brickstock on Reading 425073, before the beginning of May. Shop in Woodley Precinct and look over our wares.

Reading Naturalist - Can you help!

Can you help with any of the following tasks for next year's production of the Reading Naturalist? If you can, please contact Frances Cook on Reading 476619.

Records and articles. Short articles on species to look out for, or sites of particular local interest would be very useful, as would items for this 'News!' section, which may become a regular feature. For instance, many members belong to other organisations orientated to natural history. This News Section could help publicise activities within these groups that may be of interest to R&DNHS members. The editorial subcommittee also thinks that this section could be used to draw attention to new books on natural history, and even reviews of the most useful books for a particular taxonomic group. Contributions on all these aspects are very welcome.

Word Processing. I would be very grateful if members with access to computers would volunteer to type up one (or more) of the articles (the more volunteers, the fewer articles each!). Many word processing documents can be converted to the package that this text is printed from and, to get help with the first draft, before editing and formatting, would be very useful.

Artwork. Names of willing members who could help with illustrations and graphs etc, when and if needed, would be valuable.

Collation. This year, as for many years previously Hugh Carter has kindly photocopied the text. We hope our good fortune in this continues, but it would be nice if a few members could volunteer to be responsible for the collation (this takes just a few hours a year).

Distribution. All help to cut down postage costs are useful!

Ideas. Of course any ideas regarding the improvement of the Reading Naturalist are most welcome. After all it is **our** journal representing **our** Society!

THE RECORDER'S REPORT FOR BOTANY 1992

Betty M. Newman

This Society has published records from members for many years and the favourite localities around Reading have been well covered. Many records received now confirm that plants recorded years ago are still occurring in the same places. One example is *Astragalus glycyphyllos* first recorded in Sulham by the Society in 1953 on the site mentioned by Druce (1897). Most of our records are from areas to the west of Reading. This year, for the first time Alan Brickstock has sent in some interesting records from the Society's walk at Runnymede Meadows just within our twenty mile radius to the east of Reading. In contrast, Michael Fletcher has made some observations practically on his own doorstep.

A selection from member's records is printed below. The nomenclature and order for the flowering plants and ferns follow those of Clapham, Tutin & Moore (1987) whilst that for the mosses follows Smith (1980). The English names are mainly from Dony, Jury & Perring (1986). An alien taxon is denoted by an asterisk (*).

HEPATICAЕ : LIVERWORTS

Conocephalum conicum (L.) Lindb.

Fruiting by water level, Holy Brook, March 1992 (MVF).

MUSCI : MOSSES

Tortula latifolia Bruch ex Hartm.

On a sunny, asbestos, vertical shed roof at Reading School, June 1989; on dead *Buddleja* stick in thicket at the Oracle site, September 1992; on a walltop, Western Avenue, December 1992 (MVF). This species is rare but probably widespread away from water.

Tortula muralis Hedw. var. *aestiva* Hedw.

Recently confirmed plants with a distinctly shorter yellowish hairpoint, growing alongside the typical form at Sutton Junior School, and in South Street. Probably frequent on damp, deeply shaded brickwork (MVF).

Tortula ruralis (Hedw.) Gaertn., Meyer & Scherb.

One small tuft (possibly of ssp. *ruraliformis* (Besch.) Dix.) on sunny tarmac, Church Close, St Giles. First record in Reading. Distinct from *Tortula intermedia* (Brid.) De Not., which is now very common, in its more tapering and recurved leaves (MVF).

Barbula nicholsonii Culm.

One small tuft confirmed on muddy tarmac, Kennetside. Described as frequent in the Thames Valley, and calcareous parts of Berkshire and neighbouring counties, but very rare elsewhere in the world (MVF).

Barbula trifaria (Hedw.) Mitt.

Scarce on limestone debris, Reading Abbey; large amounts on wet brickwork by Holy Brook (MVF).

Orthotrichum anomalum Hedw.

Now frequent and often fertile on undisturbed tarmac in central Reading; occasional and rarely fertile on walls here (MVF).

Cratoneuron filicinum (Hedw.) Spruce

Occasional on tarmac in central Reading, eg. in the Technical College Car Park, Orts Road (MVF).

Ophioglossum vulgatum L. **Adder's-tongue**

Warburg Reserve, Bix 3.5.92 (AB).

Athyrium filix-femina (L.) Roth **Lady-fern**

The Holies 29.4.92 (AB).

SPERMATOPHYTA : FLOWERING PLANTS & CONIFERS

RANUNCULACEAE

Ranunculus sceleratus L. **Celery-leaved Buttercup**

By the Kennet & Avon Canal near Thatcham 2.5.92 (J&SW); Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

NYMPHAEACEAE

Nymphaea alba L. **White Water-lily**

Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

PAPAVERACEAE

Chelidonium majus L. **Greater Celandine**

One plant was seen in a neglected garden in South Street in 1990 and it is now abundant in a small area (MVF); by the inner distribution road near Coley (MVF); Cane End 16.5.92 (AB).

CRUCIFERAE

Diplotaxis muralis* (L.) DC. **Annual Wall-rocket

Arborfield Cross 19.8.92 (AB).

Cardamine amara L. **Large Bitter-cress**

Sulham 10.5.92 (AB).

VIOLACEAE

Viola hirta L. **Hairy Violet**

Hartslock 12.6.92 (AB).

HYPERICACEAE

Hypericum androsaemum L. **Tutsan**

Heron Island 9.5.92 (AB).

CARYOPHYLLACEAE

**Lychnis coronaria* (L.) Desr.
Swyncombe Downs 9.7.92 (C&RG).

Myosoton aquaticum (L.) Moench **Water Chickweed**
Arborfield Cross 19.8.92, between Sulhamstead Lock and Ufton Bridge 26.9.92 (AB).

Stellaria palustris Retz. **Marsh Stitchwort**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

GERANIACEAE

Geranium pratense L. **Meadow Crane's-bill**
Playhatch 8.6.92 (C&RG); Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB); roadside near Swyncombe church 9.7.92 (C&RG).

Geranium pyrenaicum Burm. fil. **Hedgerow Crane's-bill**
Hurley 23.6.92 (C&RG).

Geranium columbinum L. **Long-stalked Crane's-bill**
Swyncombe Downs 9.7.92 (C&RG).

Geranium robertianum L. **Herb-Robert**
A white-flowered variety, St Andrews Road, Henley 2.10.92 (KMH).

BALSAMINACEAE

Impatiens parviflora* DC. **Small Balsam
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

ACERACEAE

Acer platanoides* L. **Norway Maple
Wargrave 20.5.92 (AB).

LEGUMINOSAE

Astragalus glycyphyllos L. **Wild Liquorice**
Sulham - a single large plant (AB).

Vicia tenuissima (Bieb.) Schinz & Thell. **Slender Tare**
Woolhampton Quarry 28.6.92 (AB).

Melilotus officinalis* (L.) Pallas **Ribbed Melilot
Holy Brook and dismantled railway line, Reading 9.7.92 (AB).

ROSACEAE

Filipendula vulgaris Moench **Dropwort**
Swyncombe Downs 19.7.92 (C&RG).

Rosa rubiginosa L. **Sweet-briar**
The Holies 24.5.92 (AB).

CALLITRICHACEAE

Callitriche hamulata Katz. ex Koch **Intermediate Water-starwort**
Cane End 16.5.92 (AB).

UMBELLIFERAE

Hydrocotyle vulgaris L. **Marsh Pennywort**
Chobham Common 23.8.92 (C&RG).

Smyrniium olusatrum* L. **Alexanders
By the Kennet & Avon Canal near Thatcham 2.5.92 (J&SW); abundant around
miniature railway line in Prospect Park (AB).

Sium latifolium L. **Greater Water-parsnip**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

Berula erecta (Hudson)Coville **Lesser Water-parsnip**
Heron Island, Reading 9.5.92, between Sulhampstead Lock and Ufton Bridge 26.9.92
(AB).

Oenanthe fistulosa L. **Tubular Water-dropwort**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

Oenanthe aquatica (L.)Poiret **Fine-leaved Water-dropwort**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

EUPHORBIACEAE

Euphorbia lathyris L. **Caper Spurge**
Hambleton 16.9.92 (AB).

FAGACEAE

Quercus cerris* L. **Turkey Oak
Arborfield Cross 19.8.92 (AB).

SALICACEAE

Populus deltoides* Marshall **American Poplar, Eastern Cottonwood
By the Kennet & Avon Canal near Thatcham 2.5.92 (J&SW).

PRIMULACEAE

Primula veris L. x *vulgaris* Hudson **False Oxlip**
Warburg Reserve, Bix 3.5.92 (AB).

Anagallis tenella (L.)L. **Bog Pimpernel**
Wellington College 20.6.92 (John Robbins, BRB)

APOCYNACEAE

Vinca minor L. **Lesser Periwinkle**
In flower near the Kennet & Avon Canal, Aldermaston 21.3.92 (J&SW)

Vinca major* L. **Greater Periwinkle
Wargrave 20.5.92 (AB).

GENTIANACEAE

Gentianella amarella (L.) Börner **Autumn Gentian**
The Holies 24.5.92 (AB).

BORAGINAGEAE

Anchusa arvensis (L.) Bieb. **Bugloss**
Swyncombe Downs 9.7.92 (C&RG).

Pentaglottis sempervirens* (L.) Tausch **Green Alkanet
Cane End 16.5.92 (AB).

SCROPHULARIACEAE

Verbascum thapsus L. **Great Mullein**
Harpsden Wood, Oxon 14.6.92 (KMH); Holy Brook and dismantled railway line,
Reading 16.8.92 (AB).

Misopates orontium (L.) Rafin. **Lesser Snapdragon**
Arborfield Cross 19.8.92 (AB).

OROBANCHACEAE

Orobanche minor Sm. **Common Broomrape**
Hartslock 12.6.92, Woolhampton Quarry 22.6.92, BBONT allotment, Woodley
24.6.92 (AB); Whiteknights 15.6.92 (C&RG).

VERBENACEAE

Verbena officinalis L. **Vervain**
Hambleton 16.9.92 (AB).

LABIATAE

Acinos arvensis (Lam.) Dandy **Basil Thyme**
Swyncombe Downs 9.7.92 (C&RG).

CAMPANULACEAE

Capanula trachelium L. **Nettle-leaved Bellflower**
Heron Island, Reading 9.5.92, Hambleton 16.9.92 (AB).

Legousia hybrida (L.) Delarbre **Venus's-looking-glass**
Swyncombe Downs 2.6.92 (C&RG).

DIPSACACEAE

Dipsacus pilosus L. **Small Teasel**
Cliveden 19.9.92 (C&RG).

COMPOSITAE

Bidens cernua L. **Nodding Bur-marigold**
Arborfield Cross 19.8.92 (AB).

Bidens tripartita L. **Trifid Bur-marigold**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

Galinsoga ciliata* (Rafin.)S.F. Blake **Shaggy Soldier
Abundant in allotments, Shepherds Hill, Reading, and very scarce in Queens Road, Reading (MVF).

Senecio jacobaea L. **Common Ragwort**
Increasing in central Reading. First town centre plant seen in 1989 in a cement crack by the Kennet and several by the Queen's Road multistorey car park in 1991. Since seen in pavement cracks in South Street and Orts Road. Abundant in a lawn in Erleigh Road in 1992 and occasional in rough grass and public garden beds (MVF).

Senecio jacobaea L. x *cineraria* DC.
One seedling in front garden, the Grove, Reading, 1990 was moved to garden in South Street for investigation. The leaves had dense grey felt on both sides and deeply bipinnate lobes like those of some forms of both presumed parents. It produced sterile flowering stems of up to one metre, and is now dead. A small herbarium specimen was retained (MVF).

Senecio viscosus L. **Sticky Groundsel**
Abundant in garden in South Street 1990. Seed was probably brought in when another plant was introduced from a shingle beach in Deal, Kent. In 1991 seen along many pavements nearby, and as far away as Wokingham Road. Still growing by the railway just E. of Reading station where it was recorded before 1980 (MVF); Woolhampton Quarry 28.6.92, Arborfield Cross 19.8.92 (AB).

Senecio viscosus L. x *squalidus* L.
One sterile plant in garden in South Street 1991-2, det. H.Bowen (MVF). This hybrid was recorded near Reading station by H.Bowen in 1969.

Senecio vulgaris L. var. *radiatus* Koch.
Long grown in my garden in South Street from a plant found at Burford in 1963. Since 1990 occasional by pavements in South Street and other streets nearby (MVF).

Inula conyza DC. **Ploughman's-spikenard**
Hambleden 16.9.92 (AB); Cliveden 19.9.92 (C&RG).

Filago vulgaris Lam. **Common Cudweed**
Holy Brook and dismantled railway line, Reading 9.7.92 (AB).

Erigeron acer L. **Blue Fleabane**
Watlington Hill 16.8.92 (C&RG).

Anthemis cotula L. **Stinking Chamomile**
Burghfield area 15.4.92 (AB).

Cirsium dissectum (L.)Hill **Meadow Thistle**
Chobham Common 23.8.92 (C&RG).

Lactuca serriola L. **Prickly Lettuce**
Gardens, Reading Road, Henley, spreading widely (KMH)

Hieracium aurantiacum* L. **Fox-and-cubs
Harpsden Road, Henley 16.8.92. The single plant seen in 1991 has increased to more than a dozen (KMH).

ALISMATACEAE

Alisma lanceolatum With. **Narrow-leaved Water-plantain**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

Sagittaria sagittifolia L. **Arrowhead**
Canal between Aldermaston Lock and Frond's Bridge 21.3.92, near Thatcham 2.5.92 (J&SW).

HYDROCHARITACEAE

Hydrocharis morsus-ranae L. **Frogbit**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

Stratiotes aloides L. **Water-soldier**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

LILIACEAE

Polygonatum multiflorum (L.) All. **Solomon's-seal**
Padworth 11.4.92 (AB).

Fritillaria meleagris L. **Fritillary**
Stratfield Saye 22.4.92. Many plants very deformed as if a weed-killer of some sort had drifted near (KMH).

Ornithogalum umbellatum L. **Star-of-Bethlehem**
Wargrave 20.5.92 (AB).

AMARYLLIDACEAE

Narcissus pseudonarcissus L. **Wild Daffodil**
Satwell, Rotherfield Greys, Oxon 18.4.92 (KMH).

ORCHIDACEAE

Cephalanthera damasonium (Miller) Druce **White Helleborine**
Swyncombe Downs 2.6.92 (C&RG).

Coeloglossom viride (L.) Hartman **Frog Orchid**
Wallington Hill 16.8.92 (C&RG).

Ophrys apifera Hudson **Bee Orchid**
Hartslock 12.6.92 (AB); Lower Earley (RHD).

Dactylorhiza fuchsii (Druce) Soó **Common Spotted-orchid**
One plant among *Saxifraga umbrosa*, Antirrhinums and small garden weeds in shady neglected garden near Reading West station, Det. H. Bowen (MVF).

Dactylorhiza fuchsii (Druce)Soó x *praetermissa* (Druce)Soó
Woolhampton Quarry 28.6.92 (AB).

LEMNACEAE

Lemna trisulca L. **Ivy-leaved Duckweed**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

CYPERACEAE

Rhynchospora alba (L.)Vahl **White Beak-sedge**
Wellington College bog 20.6.92 (John Robbins, BRB).

Carex paniculata L. **Greater Tussock-sedge**
By the Kennet & Avon Canal, near Thatcham 2.5.92 (J&SW).

Carex otrubae Podp. **False Fox-sedge**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

Carex pendula Hudson **Pendulous Sedge**
Wargrave 20.5.92 (AB).

GRAMINEAE

Alopecurus aequalis Sobol. **Orange Foxtail**
Runnymede Meadows 5.7.92 (AB).

CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks are due to the following contributors:

Brian Baker (BRB), Alan Brickstock (AB), Bob Davies (RHD), Michael Fletcher (MVF), Colin & Renee Grayer (C&RG), Ken Horswell (KMH), John & Sheila Ward (J&SW).

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THE RECORDER'S REPORT FOR FUNGI 1992

Alan Brickstock

This was the sort of fungus season we remembered having in the past, but memory may have played us false. It was a very early season, starting four or even five weeks earlier than usual. As a result of cool, wet August weather the woods throughout September were carpeted with fungi, some species appearing in great numbers. *Clitocybe nebularis* and *C. flaccida* were both present in the form of many large rings at Sulham.

By early October, usually prime foraging time, the early flush was rapidly declining. The number of species continued to be high, but on many October forays, diligent searching was needed to find them. The overall total of species for the Reading area, at 453, was easily a record - previous best was 380 in 1982 - as was the total of 154 species on the society foray at Sulham on October 4th. The Earth Stars, *Geastrum triplex* and *G. sessile*, were both found in several additional locations in the woods there, for the second year running. A notable find there was *Rhodotus palmatus* growing on Beech. This is a species found almost exclusively on old Elm logs. Another nice find was *Pulcherricium caeruleum*, a brilliant blue corticioid which grows on the underside of fallen Ash twigs. Very unusually, one patch was found growing on a dead Honeysuckle stem. The second society foray, at Fence Wood on October 18th, produced a comparatively modest 99 species - but this would be considered a marvellous count in most years.

An interesting sideline, following the establishment of a wildflower area on the slope below the Mansion House in Prospect Park was the reappearance of two *Hygrocybe* species. At one time these were regularly recorded here, but have been absent for some years.

Two interesting Boletales were *Boletus satanoides*, several specimens of which were found by Paula Millard at Binfield, and *Phylloporus rhodoxanthus*, found at the Warburg reserve. Gordon Crutchfield recorded many species from Reading Golf Course, including the uncommon *Leptonia incana*. Unusual numbers of the Old Man of the Woods, *Strobilomyces floccopus*, were found at both Lambridge and Satwell. *Amanita phalloides* appeared in considerable numbers, notably over 100 specimens, reported by Neville and Mary Diserens, from Harpsden. Jew's Ear was particularly abundant towards the end of the year, with large colonies growing on Beech and a few on Cherry as well as on the more usual host, Elder.

A selection of the more interesting records is given below.

AGARICALES

Agaricus augustus Fr.
Reading Golf Course 2.8.92 (GC).

Agaricus bitorquis (Quél.) Sacc.
Reading Golf Course 21.8.92 (GC).

Agaricus bresadolianus Bohus
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH), has a whitish root-like mycelial strand at the base of the stipe.

- Agaricus comtulus* Fr.
Highdown School 26.8.92 (GC).
- Agaricus haemorrhoidarius* Schulzer apud Kalchbr.
Reading Golf Course 14.5.92 (GC).
- Asterophora lycoperdoides* (Bull. ex Merat)S.F. Gray
Virginia Water 17.10.92 (BMS).
- Cantherellus cibarius* Fr.
Ufton Nervet 5.9.92 (AB).
- Cortinarius bolaris* (Pers. ex Fr.)Fr.
Pamber Forest 21.9.92 (PEC)
- Cortinarius calochrus* (Pers.)Fr.
Sulham 4.9.92 (AB).
- Cortinarius duracinus* Fr.
Wellington Country Park 31.10.92 (GC); Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).
- Cortinarius paleaceus* (Weinm.)Fr.
Newtown Common 10.10.92 (AB).
- Cortinarius sertipes* Kuehn
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92, with Birch and Beech, gills initially brown (BMS).
- Craterellus cornucopioides* (L.)Pers.
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH); Lambridge 11.10.92 (AB).
- Entoloma sinuatum* (Bull. ex Fr.)Kummer
Sulham 5.9.92 (AB).
- Flammulaster subincarnata* (Juss. & Kühn.)Watl.
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).
- Hygrocybe coccinea* (Sch.)Kumm.
Prospect Park 3.10.92, in newly created flower meadow, after being absent for many years (AB).
- Hygrocybe foetens* (Phill.)Arnolds
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).
- Hygrocybe streptopus* (Fr.)Bon.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).
- Hygrocybe nivea* (Scop.)Fr.
Prospect Park 29.9.92, in newly created flower meadow, after being absent for many years (AB).
- Hygrocybe psittacina* (Schaeff. ex Fr.)Wünsche
Wilderness, Whiteknights, under holly 12.10.92 (PEC).
- Inocybe griseolilacina* Lange
Heath End, Checkenden 31.8.92 (PEC); Sulham 4.10.92 (NH).

Inocybe godeyi Gillet
Cucumber Wood 28.9.92 (GC)

Inocybe jurana Pat.
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).

Inocybe pyriodora (Pers. ex Fr.)Kummer
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH).

Lactarius acris (Bolton)S.F.Gray
Davenport Wood 19.9.92 (N&MD).

Lactarius azonites (Bull. ex St Amans)Fr.
Snelsmore Common 10.10.92 (AB).

Lactarius brittanicus Reid
Whiteknights Park, under *Populus* 30.10.92 (PEC).

Lactarius obscuratus (Lasch)Fr.
Pamber Forest 21.9.92 (PEC); Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).

Lentinus tigrinus (Bull. ex Fr.)Fr.
Runnymede, on willow 20.7.91 (PEC).

Lepiota clypeolaria (Bull.)Kummer
Sulham 28.10.92 (AB).

Lepiota ignivolvata Bousset-Joss
Heath End, Checkendon 31.8.92 (PEC)

Lepiota leucothites (Vitt.)Orton
Emmer Green 19.7.92, 21.8.92 (GC).

Lepiota oreadiformis Vel.
Sulham 28.10.92 (AB).

Lepiota petieri (Bond.)Sing.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Leptonia incana (Fr.)Gillet
Reading Golf Course 27.8.92 (GC). A striking, bright green species.

Lyophyllum fumatofoetens (Secr.)Schaeff.
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).

Macrolepiota rhacodes (Vitt.)Sing var. *hortensis* Pilat
Emmer Green 26.8.92 (GC).

Marasmius recubans Quél.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Marasmius wynnei Berk. & Br.
Sulham 5.9.92 (AB), 4.10.92 (NH); Bottom Wood 4.10.92 (IMB).

Melanophyllum echinatum (Roth ex Fr.)Sing.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS)

Mycena pura (Pers. ex Fr.)Kummer var. *rosea* Schum.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS)

Mycena rorida (Scop.)Quél.
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).

Mycena speirea (Fr.)Gill.
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).

Mycena tortuosa P.D. Orton
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS)

Panus torulosus (Pers. ex Fr.)Fr.
Ufton Nerve 3.10.92 (IMB).

Psathyrella cotonea (Quél.)Konrad & Maubl.
Lambridge 11.10.92 (NH).

Rhodotus palmatus (Bull. ex Fr.)Maire
Sulham, on Elm, its usual host, and also on Beech, a most unusual host 4.10.92 (NH);
Arborfield Cross 8.10.92 (AB); Lousehill Copse 21.10.92 (AB).

Russula aurea Pers.
Davenport Wood 19.9.92 (MD det. Alan Rayner).

Russula brunneoviolacea Crawsh.
Reading Golf Course 24.7.92 (GC); Newtown Common 10.10.92 (AB).

Russula caerulea (Pers.)Fr.
Ufton Nerve 5.11.92 (AB).

Russula foetens Pers.
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).

Russula laurocerasi Melzer
Davenport Wood 19.9.92 (N&MD).

Tricholoma ustaloides Romagn.
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).

Volvariella bombycina (Schaeff. ex Fr.)Sing.
Shiplake College 13.9.92 (N&MD).

Volvariella surrecta (Knapp.)Sing.
Greenham Common Bomb Dump, growing on *Clitocybe nebularis*, 11.10.92 (N&MD).

BOLETALES

Boletus luridus Schaeff. ex Fr.
Reading Golf Course 20.7.92 (GC).

Boletus satanoides Smotlacha
Binfield 30.7.92, a number of good specimens growing in grass or moss under Oaks (PM).

Gyroporus castaneus (Bull. ex Fr.)Quél.
Harpsden 19.9.92 (N&MD).

Leccinum duriusculum (Schulz.)Sing
Whiteknights Park, under *Populus* September 1992 (PEC).

Leccinum ruseofractum Watling
Snelsmore Common 10.10.92 (AB).

Phylloporus rhodoxanthus (Schw.)Bres.
Warburg Reserve 20.9.92 (N&MD).

Strobilomyces floccopus (Vahl. ex Fr.)Karst.
Lambridge 11.10.92, quite numerous (AB); Satwell 6.9.92, c.40 specimens (N&MD).

APHYLLOPHORALES

Bjerkandera fumosa (Fr.)Karst.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Clavariadelphus fistulosa (Fr.)Corner
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).

Clavariadelphus junceus Fr.
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC).

Ganoderma lucidum (Curt. ex Fr.)Karst.
Windsor Great Park 22.8.92, growing on Red Oak (N&MD).

Hymenochaete corrugata Fr.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92, growing on Hazel (BMS).

Inonotus cuticularis (Bull. ex Fr.)P.Karst
Lambridge Wood, on Beech 11.10.92 (PEC).

Merulius tremellosus Fr.
Ashampstead 1.10.92 (AB); Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC); Bottom Wood 4.10.92 (AB).

Phanerochaete velutina (Fr.)Karst.
Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH).

Phanerochaete igniarius (L. ex Fr.)Quél.
Dinton Pastures, by Teal hide, on *Salix fragilis* 8.3.92 (PEC); Runnymede, on *Salix* 20.7.92 (NH).

Phellodon confluens (Pers.)Pouz.
Davenport Wood 19.9.92 (N&MD).

Phellodon tomentosus (L. ex Fr.)Banker
Newtown Common 10.10.92 (AB).

Physisporinus sanguinolentus (Alb. & Schw.)Pilat
Lambridge 11.10.92 (AB).

Pulcherricium caeruleum (Schrad. ex Fr.)Parm.
Sulham 4.10.92, present on large number of fallen and standing ash twigs but also, very unusually, one specimen on honeysuckle (NH).

Serpula himantioides (Fr. ex Fr.)Karst
Wellington Country Park 31.10.92 (GC).

Steccherinum fimbriatum (Pers. ex Fr.)Erikss.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Steccherinum ochraceum (Pers. in Gmel. ex Fr.)S.F. Gray
Sulham, on Beech, 4.10.92 (NH).

Stereum subtomentosum Pouzar
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH); Binfield Copse, on Ash 10.10.92; Lambridge 11.10.92 (AB).

Trechispora farinacea (Pers. ex Fr.)Liberta
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH); Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH).

Typhula quisquiliaris (Fr.)Corner
Pamber Forest 21.9.92 (PEC); Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH).

Tyromyces wakefieldiae Kotlaba & Pouzar
Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH); Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Vuilleminia comedans (Nees. ex Fr.)Maire
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH); Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

GASTEROMYCETES

Geastrum sessile (Sow.)Pouz.
Sulham 19.9.92 (see note under *G. triplex*) (AB); Davenport Wood 19.9.92 (N&MD).

Geastrum triplex Jungh
Sulham 19.9.92 (appears to be spreading at Sulham, found in fresh places last year and still further ones this year); Ipsden 27.9.92 (PEC).

Langermannia gigantea (Batsch ex Pers.)Rostk.
Emmer Green 23.8.92 (GC); Sulham 27.8.92, numerous large specimens to 8" diameter and 1 lb 12 oz (AB);

HETEROBASIDIOMYCETES

Auricularia auricula-judae St. Amans
Sulham, on Holly 4.10.92 (NH); Whiteknights, on *Elaeagnus pungens* an unusual host, 9.10.92 (PEC).

Exidia thuretiana (Lév.)Fr.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Myxarium nucleatum Wallr.
Fence Wood 3.10.92 (NFC); Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Phleogena faginea (Fr. ex Fr.)Link
Pamber Forest, on Alder 21.9.92, Shiplake Copse, on Ash 10.10.92 (PEC).

Pseudohydnum gelatinosum (Scop. ex Fr.)Karst
Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH), a tongue-like jelly fungus with lower surface covered in whitish spines.

ASCOMYCETES

Bisporella sulfurina (Quél.)Carpenter
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Ciboria batschiana (Zopf)Buch.
Virginia Water 17.10.92 (BMS).

Cordyceps ophioglossoides (Ehr. ex Fr.)Link
Newtown Common 10.10.92 (AB).

Encoelia furfuracea (Roth ex Pers.)Karst.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92, a brown cap fungus growing on dead hazel (BMS).

Eutypa flavovirens (Fr.)Tul. & C. Tul.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Geopora sumneriana (Cooke)de la Torre
Whiteknights 5.3.92, Caversham Court 22.3.92, both under Cedar (PEC).

Hypocrea rufa (Pers. ex Fr.)Fr.
Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH).

Hypomyces rosellus (Alb. & Schw.)Tul.
Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH).

Hypoxyllon rubiginosum (Pers. ex Fr.)Fr.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Lasiosphaeria ovina (Fr.)Ces. & de Not.
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH).

Morchella vulgaris (Pers.)Boud.
Reading Golf Course 20.4.92 (GC).

Nectria berkeleyana (Plowr. & Cooke)Dingley
Pamber Forest 21.9.92, purple-coloured growing on *Stereum* (PEC).

Nectria coccinea (Pers. ex Fr.)Fr.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Neobulgaria pura (Fr.)Petraik var. *foliacea* (Bres.)Dennis & Gamundi
Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH); Sulham 16.11.92 (AB).

Otidia bufonia (Pers.)Bond.
Greenham Common Bomb Dump 11.10.92 (N&MD).

Otidia cochleata (L. ex St. Amans)Fuckel
Bramshill 12.9.92 (N&MD).

Ustulina deusta (Fr.)Petraek
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH).

Xylaria carpophila (Pers.)Fr.
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH).

FUNGI IMPERFECTI

Trichoderma viride Pers.
Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH).

MYXOMYCETES

Arcyria denudata (L.)Wettstein
Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH).

Badhamia utricularis (Bull.)Berk.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa (Müll.)Macbr.
Lambridge Wood 11.10.92 (PEC); Fence Wood 18.10.92 (NH).

Dictydiaethelium plumbeum (Schum.)Rost.
Sulham 4.10.92 (NH); Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS). Rose-coloured, eventually turning lead-grey.

Leocarpus fragilis (Dicks.)Rost.
Warburg Reserve 1.11.92 (BMS).

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Brickstock (AB), Ivy Brickstock (IMB), Paul Cook (PEC), Gordon Crutchfield (GC), Neville & Mary Diserens (N&MD), Paula Millard (PM), British Mycological Society Foray (BMS), Newbury Field Club Foray (NFC), Reading & District Natural History Society Foray (NH).

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THE RECORDER'S REPORT FOR ENTOMOLOGY 1992

Brian R. Baker

The order and nomenclature used in this report are those given in Kloet and Hincks (1964-1978), supplemented by Bradley and Fletcher (1979, 1986).

ODONATA : DRAGONFLIES

Agrion virgo (L.) **Demoiselle Agrion**

Pamber Forest 23.6.92, in abundance on the Silchester Brook (BRB).

ORTHOPTERA : CRICKETS, BUSHCRICKETS, GRASSHOPPERS etc

Acheta domestica (L.) **House Cricket**

Hargrave Road, Maidenhead, heard stridulating on several warm nights 17.5.92 to 25.5.92 (MVA).

DICTYOPTERA : COCKROACHES

Supella supellectilium (Serville) **Brown Cockroach**

1 female and several nymphs, Wokingham 13.1.92 (coll. J. Mahoney, det. HHC).

HEMIPTERA : PLANT BUGS, LEAF HOPPERS, APHIDS etc

Elasmotethus interstinctus (L.)

Temple Golf Course 21.8.92 (MVA).

Legnotus limbosus (Geoffroy)

Hargrave Road, Maidenhead 16.5.92 (MVA).

Eysarcoris fabricii (L.)

A colony, on *Stachys vulneraria* at 10 Northbrook Road, Caversham Park, was watched from adults in cop. with ova and some 1st instar nymphs 10.6.92, to 2nd instar 7.7.92, 3rd and 4th instars July-August, 5th instar 11th July onwards to adults in August (early and late cohorts coexisting) (HHC).

NEUROPTERA : ALDERFLIES, SNAKEFLIES, LACEWINGS

Chrysopa ciliata Wesmael

Temple Golf Course 21.8.92 (MVA).

LEPIDOPTERA : BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS

Adscita statices (L.) **The Forester**

Hazelwood Lane Meadow near Bracknell 13.6.92 (DS).

Ladoga camilla (L.) **White Admiral**

Pamber Forest 19.6.92 and continuing in good numbers until early August. The black variety *nigrina* Weymer 23.6.92 and the partially black variety *obliterae* Robson & Gardner 22.7.92 (BRB).

Apatura iris (L.) **Purple Emperor**

Pamber Forest 15.7.92 (BRB).

Cynthia cardui (L.) **Painted Lady**

Beech Lane, Earley, 3.7.92, 15.7.92, 23.7.92, 24.7.92, 5.9.92 (BMN); Crawshay Drive, Emmer Green 16.7.92 (JHFN); Aldermaston 24.7.92, Surley Row, Emmer Green 25.7.92 (PS); Burghfield Common, a few during July and August (DAY).

Aglais urticae (L.) **Small Tortoiseshell**

Little Court, Cleeve 16.9.92, and many noted 28.9.92 (EVW).

Polygonia c-album (L.) **The Comma**

Matlock Road, Caversham. After hibernating in the garden shed all winter a specimen flew 28.2.92 (BRB); Burghfield Common from late March after hibernation and from July to September (DAY); Aldermaston 27.2.92 (PS); Crawshay Drive, Emmer Green 15.7.92 (JHFN); Little Court, Cleeve one 16.9.92 and one 28.9.92 (EVW).

Argynnis aglaja (L.) **Dark Green Fritillary**

Swyncombe Downs several 19.7.92 (N&MD).

Tethea or (D. & S.) **Poplar Lutestring**

Burghclere 20.5.92 (GGE-F).

Rhodometra sacraria (L.) **The Vestal**

Wash Common, Newbury 20.5.92 (NC).

Orthonama obstipata (Fabr.) **The Gem**

Burghclere 14.5.92, first site record (GGE-F).

Chloroclysta siterata (Hufn.) **Red Green Carpet**

Harcourt Drive, Earley 10.10.90 (NMH); Burghfield Common 11.4.92, first record from garden trap (DAY); Burghclere 22.5.92, very late after hibernation, 19.10.92, 6.11.92, 21.11.92, 22.11.92 (GGE-F).

Plemyria rubiginata (D. & S.) **Blue-bordered Carpet**

Surley Row, Emmer Green 24.6.92 (PS).

Rheumaptera cervinalis (Scop.) **Scarce Tissue**

Crawshay Drive, Emmer Green 8.4.92 (JHFN).

Perizoma bifaciata (Haw.) **Barred Rivulet**

Temple Golf Course 21.8.92 (MVA).

Eupithecia irriguata (Hüb.) **Marbled Pug**

Wash Common, Newbury 14.5.92, 20.5.92 (NC); normally found annually at Wash Common and Burghclere but not noted at the latter locality in 1992 (GGE-F).

Chloroclystis chloerata (Mab.) **Sloe Pug**

Burghclere 12.6.92 to 7.7.92 (GGE-F).

Semiothisa notata (L.) **Peacock Moth**

Harcourt Drive, Earley 20.7.92, Greenham Common 21.8.92 (NMH).

Agriopis leucophaearia (D. & S.) **Spring Usher**

Burghclere 5.2.92, in remarkable abundance with 189 specimens in the Robinson light-trap (GGE-F).

Macroglossum stellatarum (L.) **Humming-bird Hawk-moth**

Surley Row, Emmer Green 6.6.92 (PS); Matlock Road, Caversham 30.7.92 (BRB).

Deilephila elpenor (L.) **Large Elephant Hawk-Moth**

St. Andrew's Road, Henley-on-Thames 19.7.92, two larvae feeding on *Menyanthes trifoliata* L. growing in the middle of a small pond (KMH). An unusual foodplant not mentioned in recent works but given in Barrett (1895), *Lepidoptera of the British Islands*, vol. 2.

Orgyia antiqua (L.) **The Vapourer**

Crawshay Drive, Emmer Green 26.9.92 in the Robinson light-trap (JHFN). An unusual occurrence for this day-flying species.

Atolmis rubricollis (L.) **Red-necked Footman**

Wash Common, Newbury 13.6.92 (NC).

Callimorpha dominula (L.) **Scarlet Tiger**

Harcourt Drive, Earley 15.6.92 (NMH); Burghclere 29.6.92 (GGE-F); Moor Copse N.R. 3.7.92 (BRB).

Mythimna vitellina (Hübner) **The Delicate**

Wash Common, Newbury 8.9.92 (NC).

Lithophane hepatica (Cl.) **Pale Pinion**

Burghclere 17.3.92, 1.4.92, 8.4.92, 18.4.92, 28.4.92 (GGE-F); Burghfield Common 18.3.92, first site record (DAY).

Lithophane ornitopus (Hufner) **Grey Shoulder-knot**

Burghclere, three after hibernation between 29.3.92 and 26.4.92, thirteen autumnal records between 10.10.92 and 18.12.92 (GGE-F); Burghfield Common 20.3.92, 1.10.92, 7.11.92, Wellington C.P. 20.3.92, 3.4.92 (DAY); Tanners Lane, Chalkhouse Green 7.10.92 (JHFN).

Lithophane leautieri (Boisd.) **Blair's Pinion**

Crawshay Drive, Emmer Green larva 16.6.92 (JHFN).

Conistra rubiginea (D. & S.) **Dotted Chestnut**

Edgecumbe Park Drive, Crowthorne 1.4.92 (DS).

Xanthia citrigo (L.) **Orange Sallow**

Hargrave Road, Maidenhead 20.9.92 (MVA).

Craniophora ligustri (D. & S.) **The Coronet**

Burghclere 26.6.92 (GGE-F); Moor Copse N.R. 3.7.92, first reserve record (BRB).

Dicycla oo (L.) **The Heart Moth**

Burghfield Common 26.6.92, first site record (DAY).

Cosmia affinis (L.) **Lesser-spotted Pinion**
Harcourt Drive, Earley 20.7.92 (NMH).

Apamea ophiogramma (Esp.) **Double Lobed**
Moor Copse N.R. 3.7.92 (BRB).

Elaphria venustula (Hüb. n.) **Rosy Marbled**
Burghclere 25.5.92, first site record (GGE-F).

Panemeria tenebrata (Scop.) **Small Yellow Underwing**
Aldermaston 14.5.92, 15.5.92, 18.5.92 (PS).

Heliothis armigera (Hüb. n.) **Scarce Bordered Straw**
Burghfield Common 6.8.92, first site record (DAY).

Trichoplusia ni (Hüb. n.) **The Ni Moth**
Wash Common, Newbury 30.7.92, 6.8.92 (NC).

Hypena crassalis (Fabr.) **Beautiful Snout**
Harcourt Drive, Earley 29.6.92 (NMH).

COLEOPTERA : BEETLES

My thanks go to HHC for the usual preselection of records from the comprehensive list submitted by TDH.

Dyschirius aeneus Dejean
Nr Sonning Eye 22.5.91, one specimen running over bare mud on shore of river backwater (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Agonum fuliginosum Panzer
Pamber Forest 1.4.92, one specimen under bark of log near a pond within Oak woodland (TDH). Two old records (HHC).

Agonum moestum Duftschmid
Pamber Forest 1.4.92, one specimen under bark of log near a pond within Oak woodland (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Helophorus arvernicus Mulsant
Nr Sonning Eye 22.5.91, one female found amongst fine plant debris on sandy shore of river backwater (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Cercyon quisquilius L.
Leighton Park School 24.5.92, one specimen attracted to mercury vapour lamp set up on flat roof of building (3.3 m above ground level) in parkland, at 22.30 hrs (TDH). One old local record (HHC).

Abraeus globosus Hoffmann
Leighton Park 1.1.92, one in a piece of rotting wood from base of diseased but standing Oak within parkland (TDH). One old record (HHC).

Ochthebius minimus Fabr.
Pamber Forest 3.4.92, three specimens obtained by dipping a net into a pond within Oak woodland (TDH). One old local record (HHC).

Nargus wilkini Spence

Pamber Forest 3.4.92, one male and one female on underside of log in clearing within Oak woodland (TDH). Two old records (HHC).

Catops kirbii Spence

Leighton Park 31.10.91, a male and female resting on hedgehog carcass placed in garden (TDH). Two old records (HHC).

Catops tristis Panzer

Pamber Forest 9.4.92, four specimens in pit-fall trap baited with fish heads, in clearing within Oak woodland (TDH). One old record (HHC).

Scydmaenus rufus Muller

Leighton Park 26.10.91, two specimens found under bark of Oak log at edge of mixed deciduous wood (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Megarathrus sinuaticollis Boisduval & Lacordaire

Nr Carter's Hill Farm nr Sindlesham 17.3.92, three specimens in straw in hay barn (TDH). One old local record (HHC).

Phloeocharis subtilissima Mannerheim

Whiteknights 26.2.92, one specimen under bark of Beech log in deciduous wood (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Stenus bifoveolatus Gyllenhal

Nr Hall Farm, Shinfield 19.12.91, two specimens obtained by breaking up stalks of *Glyceria* over a sheet, plants growing on margin of water-filled ditch on edge of marsh (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Stenus binotatus Ljungh

The Ridges, Finchampstead 8.5.91, one male obtained by treading *Juncus* into pond within mixed deciduous wood (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Nudobius lentus Gravenhorst

The Ridges, Finchampstead 8.5.91, four specimens under bark of fallen conifer tree in open mixed deciduous wood which contained planted conifers (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Philonthus albipes Gravenhorst

Leighton Park 1.11.91, one male by shaking decomposing plant matter over an upturned plastic dustbin lid, the plant matter had been dredged out of a pond and lay decomposing on the bank (TDH). One previous local record (HHC).

Philonthus quisquiliarius Gyllenhal var. *inquinatus* Stephens

Nr Sonning Eye 22.5.91, one male by trampling more or less bare mud on shore of river backwater (TDH). Two old local records (HHC).

Quedius scintillans Gravenhorst

Leighton Park 30.10.91, one obtained by shaking handfuls of compost (mostly grass stalks) over upturned plastic dustbin lid, compost taken from compost heap beside a tree-lined hedgerow in parkland (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Quedius ventralis Aragona

Whiteknights 27.12.91, two specimens found in red rotting wood of a branch hole on a solitary Horse Chestnut tree within parkland (TDH). Two old local records (HHC).

Tachyporus pallidus Sharp

Nr Hall Farm, Shinfield 19.12.91, five specimens by breaking up and shaking stalks of *Glyceria* over a sheet, plants were growing on margin of water-filled ditch on edge of marsh (TDH). Two previous local records (HHC).

Gyrophaena latissima Stephens

Nr Hampstead Norris 27.2.92. Numerous specimens collected from a piece of *Pseudotrampetes gibbosa* which was taken home and kept in a box. The fungus was growing on a deciduous tree stump at edge of deciduous wood (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Leptusa fumida Kraatz

Whiteknights 7.1.92, several specimens found under bark of fallen Horse Chestnut tree in a conifer plantation which contained a few mature Horse Chestnuts (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Euplectus piceus Motschulsky

Nr Cranbourne Tower, Windsor Forest 8.1.92, one male inside piece of rotting wood at margin of mixed deciduous wood (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Euplectus sanguineus Denny

Nr Carter's Hill Farm, nr Sindlesham 17.3.92. Numerous specimens obtained by shaking straw over a sheet, straw taken from hay barn (TDH). One local record (HHC).

Bryaxis bulbifer Reichenbach

Nr Hall Farm, Shinfield 19.12.91. One male obtained by breaking up and shaking stalks of *Glyceria* over a sheet, plants were growing on margin of water-filled ditch on edge of marsh (TDH). One old local record (HHC).

Eucinetus meridionalis Laporte de Castelnau

Heckfield Heath 10.6.92. Four specimens found resting on underside of a flat piece of wood in woodland (Oak, Birch and planted conifer) (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Prosternon tessellatum L.

Burghfield Common 20.5.92. One specimen obtained by beating conifer tree (*Pinus* sp.) on the margin of open ride in mixed conifer, Oak and Birch wood (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Trixagus carinifrons (de Bonvouloir)

Heckfield Heath 10.6.92. One specimen obtained by beating Oak tree in mixed wood (Oak, Birch and planted conifer) (TDH). Two old Berkshire records (HHC).

Lampyris noctiluca (L.) **Glow Worm**

Males and females Hartslock Reserve 25.6.92 to 30.6.92 (SH).

Ochina ptinoides (Marsham)

Leighton Park 24.5.92. Several specimens beaten from Ivy growing on trunk of Sycamore tree in tree-lined hedgerow at edge of parkland (TDH). One old local record (HHC).

Anobium inexpectatum Lohse

Leighton Park 20.6.92. One male obtained by beating Ivy growing on a Hawthorn tree in a tree-lined hedge at edge of parkland (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Axinotarsus marginalis Laporte de Castelnau

Pamber Forest 19.6.92. One female obtained by beating plants of Hemlock Water-dropwort growing on verge of track near pond in Oak woodland (TDH). One local record (HHC).

Carpophilus mutilatus Erichson

Shirburn Hill 23.5.92. One female obtained by beating small Hawthorn in area of deciduous scrub at margin of deciduous woodland (TDH). No local record (HHC).

Omosita discoidea (Fabr.)

Pamber Forest 3.4.92. One specimen resting on underside of Oak log in clearing in Oak wood (TDH). Two local records (HHC).

Monotoma bicolor Villa

Nr Carter's Hill Farm, nr Sindlesham 17.3.92. One specimen obtained by shaking straw over a sheet, straw taken from hay barn (TDH). One previous local record (HHC).

Monotoma longicollis Gyllenhal

Nr Carter's Hill Farm, nr Sindlesham 17.3.92. One specimen obtained by shaking straw over a sheet, straw taken from hay barn (TDH). One previous local record (HHC).

Cryptolestes duplicatus Waltl

Leighton Park 29.12.91. One female under bark of diseased but standing Beech tree in deciduous wood (TDH). One previous local record (HHC).

Psammoecus bipunctatus Fabr.

Nr Hall Farm, Shinfield 19.12.91. Three specimens obtained by breaking up and shaking stalks of *Glyceria* sp. over a sheet, plants growing on margin of a water-filled ditch on the edge of a marsh (TDH). Two previous local records (HHC).

Paramecosoma melanocephalum Herbst.

Nr Hall Farm, Shinfield 19.12.91. One specimen under bark of log (probably Alder) on ground beside solitary diseased Alder on river bank in area of pastureland (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Atomaria pulchra Erichson

Pamber Forest 3.4.92. One mating pair and one other found resting on sawn surface of Oak log on ground in Oak woodland (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Ephistemus globulus Paykull

Leighton Park 30.10.91. Two specimens obtained by shaking handfuls of compost (mostly grass stalks) over upturned plastic dustbin lid, compost taken from compost heap in garden (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Diplocoelus fagi Guerin-Meneville

Nr Hall Farm, Arborfield 23.3.92. Two specimens under bark of dead but standing Sycamore in a copse of Horse Chestnuts and conifers (TDH). Two previous Berkshire records (HHC).

Clitostethus arcuatus Rossi

Leighton Park 24.5.92. One specimen beaten from Ivy growing on trunk of Sycamore tree, in tree-lined hedgerow at edge of parkland. Further searching produced no more specimens (TDH). Two old records (HHC).

Scymnus suturalis Thunberg

Burghfield Common 20.5.92. Several specimens beaten from conifers (*Pinus* sp.) on the margin of open ride in mixed conifer, Oak and Birch wood (TDH). One old record (HHC).

Symbiotes latus Redtenbacher

Leighton Park 2.1.92. One specimen under bark of diseased but standing Beech tree in deciduous wood (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Lathridius minutus L.

Nr Carter's Hill Farm, nr Sindlesham 17.3.92. Six specimens obtained by shaking straw over a sheet, straw taken from hay barn (TDH). Two old local records (HHC).

Enicmus histrio Joy & Tomlin

Leighton Park 1.11.91. Six specimens obtained by shaking decomposing plant matter over upturned plastic dustbin lid, plant material had been dredged out of pond and left to decompose on the bank (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Cis bilamellatus Wood

Leighton Park 26.10.91. Numerous specimens under bark of dead but still standing trunk of Horse Chestnut (probably) in mixed deciduous wood (TDH). One local record (HHC).

Mycetophagus multipunctatus Fabr.

Whiteknights 26.12.91. Five specimens under bark of dead but standing deciduous tree (probably Sycamore) at edge of deciduous wood (TDH). Two old records (HHC).

Cicones undatus Guerin

Nr Hall Farm nr Arborfield 23.3.92. Numerous specimens under bark of dead but standing sycamore in small copse of Horse Chestnuts, Sycamore, Ash and conifers. First recorded in the U.K. in 1984 (Windsor Great Park), presumably spreading (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Tetratoma desmaresti Latreille

Heckfield Heath 6.11.91. One female under bark of branch of fallen Oak tree, in Oak and Birch wood (TDH). Two local records (HHC).

Ischnomera cyanea Fabr.

Leighton Park 3.5.92. A piece of decomposing wood was collected from base of diseased but standing Oak tree in deciduous wood on 29.12.91. Wood kept in a tin, beetles emerged and found on 3.5.92 (TDH). One local record (HHC).

Meloe rugosus Marsham

Chambers Copse 20.4.85, Emmer Green 23.10.92 (DGN). No previous record (HHC).

Phytoecia cylindrica L.

Elmdown nr Skirmett 3.5.92. One specimen found resting on leaf of Stinging Nettle in tree-lined hedgerow (TDH). Two Berkshire records (HHC).

Hydrothassa marginella L.

Pamber Forest 9.4.92. One specimen obtained by dipping a net amongst aquatic vegetation at margin of pond in Oak wood (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Aphthona euphorbiae Schrank

Leighton Park 20.6.92. One male obtained by beating Ivy growing on Hawthorn tree in tree-lined hedge at edge of parkland (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Longitarsus nigrofasciatus Goeze

Shirburn Wood, nr Watlington 23.5.92. Five specimens on leaves of *Verbascum* sp. on verge of track in open mixed deciduous wood on calcareous soil (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Rhinomacer attelaboides (Fabr.)

Pamber Forest 5.5.92. Two specimens by beating Pine tree in clearing in Oak wood (TDH). One previous local record (HHC).

Anthribus nebulosus Forster

Shirburn Hill, nr Watlington 23.5.92. One specimen obtained by beating a small Hawthorn tree in an area of deciduous scrub at margin of deciduous woodland (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Apion simile Kirby.W.

Burghfield Common 20.5.92. One specimen obtained by beating a Birch tree on margin of open ride in mixed conifer, Oak and Birch wood (TDH). Two previous local records (HHC).

Strophosomus capitatus Degeer

Pamber Forest 19.6.92. One specimen obtained by beating a Birch tree on edge of ride in Oak woodland (TDH).

Dorytomus rufatus Bedel

Pamber Forest 19.6.92. One specimen obtained by beating Willow tree in grassy clearing which supported Hazel scrub, within Oak woodland (TDH). One previous local record (HHC).

Anthonomus humeralis Panzer

Pamber Forest 19.6.92. One specimen obtained by beating a Hazel tree at edge of open ride in Oak woodland, possibly beaten from Crab Apple which had been beaten prior to the Hazel and overlooked on beating tray (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Hylesinus oleiperda Fabr.

Burghfield Common 20.5.92. One specimen found resting on my trousers after I had cycled from Reading (TDH). One old record (HHC).

Hylastes attenuatus Erichson

Burghfield Common 20.5.92. Two specimens were obtained by beating Birch trees on the margin of open ride in mixed conifer, Oak and Birch wood (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Taphrorychus bicolor Herbst.

Nr Ranger's Lodge, Windsor Forest 8.1.92. Several specimens under bark of fallen section of Beech tree in open mixed deciduous wood (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Pityophthorus pubescens Marsham

Pamber Forest 5.5.92. Several specimens obtained by beating Pine tree in grassy clearing within Oak woodland (TDH). No previous local record (HHC).

Orthotomicus laricis Fabr.

Leighton Park 31.12.91. Five specimens were taken from galleries under the bark of a conifer log at the edge of deciduous wood (TDH). Two old local records (HHC).

HYMENOPTERA : SAWFLIES, ICHNEUMONFLIES, ANTS, BEES & WASPS

Rhadinoceraea micans (Klug)

Caversham Court upper pond 1.5.92, first local record (HHC).

Ephialtes manifestator (L.)

Emmer Green 25.6.92, female probing trap nest in dead log (JHFN).

Rhyssa persuasoria (L.)

Benyon's Inclosure 22.5.92, many males flying along stack of cut Pine trunks and females ovipositing in emergence holes of the woodwasp *Urocerus gigas* (L.) see Baker (1992) (BRB).

Trichrysis cyanea (L.)

Emmer Green 12.6.92 resting on dead log (DGN).

Dipogon variegatus (L.)

Emmer Green 12.6.92 (DGN).

DIPTERA : TRUE FLIES

Syrphus ribesii (L.)

Female on bag of buns outside Town Hall 6.1.92, a very common species but a most unusual date (HHC).

Volucella inanis (L.)

Hargrave Road, Maidenhead 13.6.92 to 22.6.92 (MVA)

Merodon equestris (Fabr.)

Hargrave Road, Maidenhead 17.5.92 to 25.5.92 (MVA).

CONTRIBUTORS

The Recorder expresses his thanks to:

Martin Albertini (MVA); Hugh Carter (HHC); Nigel Cleere (NC); Neville & Mary Diserens (N&MD); Lt.Col. Gordon Eastwick-Field (GGE-F); Norman Hall (NMH); Thomas Harrison (TDH); S. Holden (SH); Ken Horswell (KMH); Betty Newman (BMN); David Notton (DGN); John Notton (JHFN); Peter Silver (PS); Des Sussex (DS); Dr Eric Watson (EVW); David Young (DAY).

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RECORDER'S REPORT FOR OTHER INVERTEBRATES 1992

Hugh H. Carter

ARACHNIDA : SPIDERS

Scytodes thoracica Latreille **Spitting Spider**

In study, 19 Donkin Hill, Caversham 12.9.92, this was kept in a tube and fed flies to observe the spitting behaviour, before releasing (FEMC).

Clubiona terrestris Westring

Burnt Platt Wood, Kingwood Common 19.9.92 (FEMC).

Diaea dorsata (Fabricius)

Burnt Platt Wood, Kingwood Common 19.9.92, swept from Bracken (FEMC).

Trochosa terricola Thorell

Sulham Woods, in leaf litter, 4.10.92 (FEMC).

Tegenaria parietina (Fourcroy)

Dead male indoors at Caversham Court March 1992 (HHC).

Metellina mendei (Blackwall)

Burnt Platt Wood, Kingwood Common 19.9.92 (FEMC).

Larinoides cornutus (Clerck)

Crowsley Park 27.10.92 (FEMC).

Agalenatea redii (Scopoli)

Pamber Heath 21.9.92 (FEMC).

Araniella cucurbitina (Clerck)

10 Northbrook Road, May 92 (HHC); Sulham Woods 4.10.92 (FEMC).

Cyclosa conica (Pallas)

Wilderness, Whiteknights 8.8.92 (FEMC).

Linyphia hortensis (Sundevall)

Heath End Wood 31.8.92 (FEMC).

Linyphia montana (Clerck)

Sulham woods 4.10.92 (FEMC).

Microlynphya impigra (Pickard-Cambridge)

2 immature females Hill's Meadow 6.2.92, a new record for the Reading area (HHC).

CONTRIBUTORS

Hugh Carter (HHC), Frances Cook (FEMC).

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RECORDER'S REPORT FOR VERTEBRATES 1992

Hugh H. Carter

PISCES : FISH

Leuciscus cephalus (L.) Chub

Ten in Holy Brook at Central Library 16.6.92, ranging in size from 150-350 mm. About 10 in Emm Brook at Dinton Pastures, ranging in size up to 250 mm, 17.7.92. About 20 at Blake's Lock turbine house, ranging in size up to 600 mm (HHC).

Salmo trutta L. Trout

One with Chub at Blake's Lock (HHC).

AMPHIBIA

Triturus helveticus Raz. Palmate Newt

1 in basement of 11 Prospect Street, Reading (Mrs Payne) removed to pond at Caversham Court 17.6.92.

Rana temporaria L. Frog

Spawn in pond, 350 m east of Coach and Horses, Binfield Heath 20.3.92, tadpoles there 28.3.92. Spawn in lower pond, none in upper pond at Greenmore Hill, Woodcote 31.3.92 (HHC). Frogs at Netherleigh, Pangbourne ranging in age from this year's young to about 3 years old (CF).

Bufo bufo (L.) Toad

One on Old Peppard Road 16.3.92, 6 dead there and on adjoining Lowfield Road 17.3.92, 3 dead in Kiln Road near Coach and Horses, about 10 pairs and about 10 unmated in Coach and Horses pond 20.3.92. The last were all small, probably breeding for the first time at a site which has recently suffered two disasters. No toads there 28.3.92, but about a litre of toad spawn. No spawn in upper pond, spawn in lower pond but much of it piebald and coated with algae at Greenmore Pond, Woodcote 31.3.92. Toad 30 mm long at 10 Northbrook Road, Caversham Park 26.9.92 (HHC). Toad 75 mm long South Street, Caversham 22.4.92 (MJC). Often disturbed in vegetable garden at Netherleigh, Pangbourne (CF).

REPTILIA

Anguis fragilis (L.) **Slow Worm**

One adult and 2 juveniles, 104 Blenheim Road, Caversham 25.7.92 (MC per MJC). Bred in compost heap, Netherleigh, Pangbourne (CF).

Natrix natrix (L.) **Grass Snake**

One at 104 Blenheim Road, Caversham 25.7.92 (MC per MJC).

MAMMALIA

Sorex araneus (L.) **Common Shrew**

One dead Blackhouse Wood, Caversham 28.6.92 (MJC).

Talpa europaea L. **Mole**

Many molehills at Marsh Lock 12.1.92. Moles active beside London Road, Wokingham 31.7.92 (HHC).

Erinaceus europaeus L. **Hedgehog**

Six living juveniles, 9 adults dead on roads in Caversham Park Village, April to October, December 1992 (HHC, EMC, MJC). 1 dead on road Emmer Green 18.5.92, Tilehurst Road 20.5.92, Caversham 13.6.92 and 25.6.92, East Hendred 5.9.92, west of Hurst 14.10.92. Frequent at Netherleigh, Pangbourne (CF).

Arvicola amphibius (L.) **Water Vole**

One seen, several holes, Thames Side Promenade 12.1.92 (HHC and MJC)

Lepus capensis Pallas **Hare**

One dead on the Portway 9.5.92. One by Binfield Heath Lane north of Bishopsland Farm 7.7.92. One in field by New Road, Sonning 5.8.92 (HHC). Two Nott Wood 22.3.92 (N&MD).

Oryctolagus cuniculus (L.) **Rabbit**

Juvenile on Peppard Road, 1 at Greenmore Hill; 1 at Kennylands, Sonning Common; 1 dead on road near Sonning Common, all 31.3.92. Juvenile on Peppard Road, about 65 at Hardwick Stud 10.5.92. Two dead on Peppard Road 3.6.92; 11, and 1 dead, Henley Road 8.6.92; 2 north of Bishopsland Farm 7.7.92; 1 dead New Road, Sonning 29.7.92; 1 east of Hurst 31.7.92; 2 dead on road near Maidenhatch 31.8.92; 1 dead on road near East Hendred 5.9.92; 1 dead on road east of Hurst 10.9.92; 1 dead on Road north of Bishopsland Farm 22.10.92; 1 in Clay Lane, Wokingham 23.10.92; 1 on Peppard Common, 1 dead on Peppard Road 31.10.92 (HHC). Two at Westleaze Cottage, 4 at Bix Manor Farm 22.3.92 (N&MD).

Rattus norvegicus (L.) **Brown Rat**

Juvenile dead at Row Lane Farmhouse, Dunsden 8.3.92, 4 dead on Binfield Heath Lane north of Bishopsland Farm, 1 dead at Kennylands, Sonning Common 12.9.92 (HHC).

Apodemus sylvaticus (L.) **Wood Mouse**

Seven feeding on apples at Cockney Hill, trapped late January 1992 (AB).

Sciurus carolinensis Gmelin **Grey Squirrel**

One Marsh Lock Car Park 4.1.92, 2 at Caversham Court 13.1.92, 1 Old Peppard Road 3.2.92, 1 dead Caversham Park Road 12.3.92. One dead Peppard Road, 5 juveniles in Chiltern Lane, Caversham 30.4.92. 1 dead Peppard Road 3.6.92, 1 alive there 4.6.92. One dead south of Checkendon 14.6.92, 1 dead Emmer Green 24.6.92, 1 dead at

Charvil 10.7.92, 1 on Warren House Road near Wokingham 24.7.92, 1 dead Lowfield Road 29.7.92, 1 Old Copse, Sonning Common 27.9.92, 2 College Wood, Goring Heath 5.9.92, 1 dead on Caversham Park Road 6.9.92, 1 at Charvil near Wee Waif 15.9.92, 1 raiding litter bin at Prospect Park 12.10.92, 1 dead at Rose Hill, Caversham 31.10.92, 1 dead Lowfield Road, Caversham 3.11.92, 2 south of Blackhouse Wood, Caversham Park 21.12.92, 1 in lane from Caversham Park to Littlestead Green 30.12.92 (HHC).

Dama dama (L.) **Fallow Deer**

Footprint by pond east of Coach and Horses, Binfield Heath 11.3.92; footprint, most probably of this species, in Clay Lane, Wokingham 23.10.92 (HHC). Four at Swan Wood 22.3.92 (N&MD).

Capreolus capreolus (L.) **Roe Deer**

Two at 42 Long Lane, Tilehurst 6.11.92 (C&FB).

Muntiacus reevesi Ogilby **Muntjac Deer**

One crossing Old Peppard Road 5.7.92 (MJC); 1 at Balmore Ride, Caversham 31.7.92 (MC and MJC); 1 Rumerhedge Wood 26.10.92 (N&MD).

Vulpes vulpes (L.) **Fox**

One dead on A4074 near Dorchester 6.2.92 (HHC); 1 flushed by dog at Hardwick Stud 10.5.92 (MJC); 1 dead on road north of Goring 5.9.92 (HHC); nightly visitor at Netherleigh, Pangbourne (CF).

Lutra lutra (L.) **Otter**

Unconfirmed and doubtful report at Southcote Lock end of February.

Meles meles (L.) **Badger**

One dead on Shinfield Road south of River Loddon 5.2.92; 1 dead on road near Twyford 9.10.92 (HHC); 2 at Cockney Hill, end of February (AB).

Mustela erminea L. **Stoat**

One Whistley Green 9.5.92 (N&MD); 1 dead on road between Reading and Wokingham July 1992, 1 dead on road south of Hurst 29.7.92, 1 dead on Peppard Road near Bishopsland Farm (HHC). Stoat or Weasel attacked by dog near Balmore, Caversham late September 1992 (MJC).

Mustela nivalis L. **Weasel**

One Winterbourne 10.5.92 (N&MD); 1 in Blackhouse Wood, Caversham 28.6.92 (MJC).

CONTRIBUTORS

My thanks are due to the following contributors:

Alan Brickstock (AB), Catherine & Frank Butcher (C&FB), Elizabeth Carter (EMC), Mary Carter (MJC), Marion Cunningham (MC), Neville & Mary Diserens (N&MD), Clare Frank (CF), Mrs Payne.

THE WEATHER AT READING DURING 1992

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1992 was generally a very mixed but significant year weather-wise since, after five consecutive dry years, it proved to be the wettest year for a decade. The first half of the year continued the dry spell (the driest winter for at least 80 years) but monthly aggregates exceeded 100 mm in August, September and November and this wet spell brought considerable relief to the local water authority. For most of the year, temperatures were at or above average but below-average values for January, October (especially) and December counteracted this warmth and gave an annual mean temperature which was very close to normal. Sunshine hours were 15% below normal making it the dullest year since 1939. Indeed, only one month (May) recorded over 200 hours of sunshine compared with four months in the brilliant year of 1990.

The following monthly weather summaries are based on the table of weather records provided (Table 1), along with mean values for the station over the period 1971-1990 (Table 2). All these data have been kindly provided by the Department of Meteorology at Reading University.

January was a very dry and calm month, with anticyclonic weather giving a mean barometric pressure of 1030.7, which was the highest for any month of the year since before 1960. Consequently precipitation was only 24% of the monthly average, the lowest aggregate since 1987 and the second lowest since 1921. The number of rain days was the lowest for any January since 1950. As is expected with winter anticyclones, overcast conditions and fogs persisted so that sunshine totals were 12% below average, making it the dullest January for 15 years. The stable weather reduced wind speeds with the main velocity at 0900 hours the lowest since 1964. Temperature-wise, the month was very mixed with above-average values in the first week (with a maximum of 13°C on the 5th) plummeting by the third week. This cold spell produced the lowest temperatures and highest number of air frosts since 1987.

February continued the dry, dull anticyclonic weather since the main barometric pressure was the highest since 1975. Precipitation was consequently 48% below average since the blocking high diverted our rain-bringing depressions further north than normal. The anticyclonic gloom continued though with the highest number of fogs recorded since 1975 and sunshine hours were 20% below normal. Fortunately, temperatures remained well above average since the location of the anticyclone maintained a mild west to southwesterly airflow over Reading, to prohibit the 'big-freeze' easterlies of the previous February (ie only 45 hours below 0°C, compared with 200 hours in February 1991).

March was a mild, very dull month with rainfall remaining below average. Temperatures were almost 2°C above normal, with only one air frost recorded in the month. Precipitation was about 20% of normal so accentuating the chronic water deficit in the area. The month, however, will be remembered for the overcast gloomy weather since the total hours of sunshine recorded (46% below average) were only 15.6% of that possible in March, the lowest in the Reading area since before 1939.

April ended the dry spell at Reading with more disturbed, cyclonic weather recorded. In fact, the barometric pressure on the first day of the month was the lowest observed on any April day since 1972. For only the second time in the last nine months, the monthly rainfall was above normal with the aggregate some 46% above average. Temperatures remained slightly above average due to the predominance of south-southwesterly winds. Once again, for the fourth consecutive month, sunshine was below normal (by 21%) making it the dulllest April since 1979. By now, local residents were fed up of the continuing dull, gloomy conditions and the only compensation was the associated reduction in skin cancer risks!

May ended all our weather frustrations and turned out to be a marvellous month, with dry, hot and (at long last) sunny weather. This complete atmospheric turn-around emphasises the vagaries of British weather and the more-conducive conditions of summer anticyclones. Temperatures were about 3°C above normal and there were 16 days on which maximum values exceeded 20°C, with a peak reaching 25.8°C on the 19th (the second highest recorded in May since before 1960). Rainfall was some 20% below normal and indeed most (68%) of the month's aggregate was recorded during the last four days to avoid an even more critical water deficiency especially for local gardeners. Sunshine hours were 34% above average and indeed represented 54% of the total hours possible in May. The month ended up the third sunniest May in Reading since 1939 and the sunniest for any month since May 1989 (even exceeding the super sunny months of the 1990 summer).

June was a pleasant, summer month with warm, dry, calm and sunny weather. There were two, short hot periods around the middle and end of the month and the warmest day of the year was observed on the 29th (the highest recorded for any June day since the summer of 1976). Aggregate rainfall was low with only 42% of the monthly average recorded, especially during the first week of June. Sunshine totals were slightly above average and represented an appreciated 40% of the total expected at this time of the year.

July recorded very disappointing weather, particularly after the excellent start to the summer. Temperatures remained close to average throughout the month, although a warm spell did occur during the last few days reaching 27.6°C on the 31st. Rainfall was 28% above normal and was evenly spread over the first 3 weeks of the month which helped local gardens. The outstanding features of the month's weather were the dull, overcast conditions with sunshine totals some 34% below normal, representing a pathetic 27% of the total expected. Indeed, it turned out to be the dulllest July since 1965.

August proved to be a complete disaster weather-wise (so different from August 1991) and it was generally dull, wet and windy to ruin the plans and hopes of holiday makers in the local area and to encourage the growth of garden weeds! Temperatures were very close to average but it was a month of extremes, with a warm first half counteracted by a cool second half. Indeed minimum temperatures plunged to 6.6°C on the 31st (the lowest for a decade) and a ground frost was just avoided. Sunshine hours were 16% below average and wind speed measurements at 0900 were the highest before 1960. However, the most outstanding weather feature was the heavy rain and the interminable number of rain days. Aggregate rainfall exceeded 100 mm and was indeed almost double that expected, making it the wettest August since 1977 and the third wettest since 1921.

September was a most remarkable month with the first few weeks experiencing dry, mild weather followed by a very wet and warm spell after the 21st. During this spell, temperatures exceeded 22°C on three days, with the warmest day of the month on the 26th (22.7°C). Overall, the temperatures for the month were close to normal. The very wet spell was dominated by a colossal deposition of 76 mm rain on the 22nd, in a 13 hour period. This was the heaviest fall of rain for any day of the year since measurements started at Reading in 1921 (with 60.5 mm on the 11th June 1970 the second heaviest). To cap an eminently forgettable month (especially when compared with September 1991), sunshine hours were down on average by 18%, to present the dulllest September since 1984.

October did not produce the hoped for 'Indian Summer' weather (which had taken place in 1991) and had failed to start in September. Indeed, even though rainfall and sunshine were close to normal, temperatures were more than 2°C below average and represented the second lowest recorded since 1921 (following 1974). Consequently, the number of air frosts and ground frosts was well above average, the highest since 1980 and 1951 (respectively).

November was a very wet, windy, dull and mild month with unsettled, cyclonic conditions dominating the weather patterns. Temperatures were 1°C above average despite a cold spell in the middle of the month (with a grass minimum of -8.1°C recorded on the 14th), although the air temperature remained below freezing for only 8 hours during this spell. Sunshine hours were well below normal (by 21%) for the eighth month of this year. However, the main feature of the month's weather was the incessant rainfall (recorded on nearly every day from the 13th onwards). Indeed, the number of rain days was 7 above average, the highest for almost two decades. Aggregate rainfall exceeded 100 mm for the third month this year (for the first time in 40 years) and was more than twice the average total.

December was a month of two distinctive halves, the first half being cyclonic with mild, stormy, dull and wet weather. Conversely, the second half was anticyclonic with cool, calm, clear and dry weather. Overall, the month recorded temperatures some 1°C below normal, precipitation 25% below normal (the driest month since June) and sunshine hours close to normal. Eight air frosts and 9 ground frosts occurred during the cold, dry spell over the last 11 days of the month, with the lowest air minimum (-6.6°C) and grass minimum (-11.9°C) recorded on the 30th.

POSTSCRIPT

It is useful to summarise the 1992 weather in the Reading area with a close look at the seasonal patterns indicated in Table 3 (again based on data from the Department of Meteorology).

Winter was decidedly anticyclonic with the so-called 'blocking high' dominating the south of Britain and giving Reading a mean barometric pressure considerably above average. However, maritime westerly air circulations were associated with this anticyclonic dominance (not the 'Big Freeze' continental easterlies). Consequently, temperatures were generally very close to average, with mean and maximum values slightly positive (cf. to Winter 1990/91 means some 1°C below normal). The anticyclones were responsible for very dry weather (with rain-bringing depressions diverted northwards), with precipitation only some 29% of normal. As a result, the winter was the driest since before 1920 and probably the driest this century. Anticyclonic 'gloom' characterised the weather since it was overcast and dull for long periods of time. Consequently, hours of sunshine were about 9% below average.

Spring experienced temperatures between 1.8° and 2.7°C above average, mainly due to the very warm May weather. In fact, the mean temperature of 10.5°C was the sixth highest recorded since 1921, following 1928 (11.6°C) and 1945, 1943, 1952 and 1949. Similarly, even though sunshine hours were within 4% of the seasonal average, this respectability was only brought about by an extremely sunny May following overcast, gloomy March and April. The spring rainfall was very close to normal.

Summer was a very poor, disappointing season although with a good June following a brilliant May, prospects for a hot dry summer looked bright. However, even though temperatures were close to normal during July and early August, a cool second half of August spoiled temperatures somewhat. Even so, temperatures remained between 0.4° and 1.0°C above normal making this summer the eleventh warmest since 1950. The dry June was followed by above average July rains and August deluges. The rainfall aggregate for the summer of 1992 was 26% above average and the August total in excess of 100 mm (double the normal rainfall) completely ruined the weather for the school holidays. The disturbed cyclonic weather of July and August was associated with very dull conditions and below-average sunshine totals. Overall, despite a reasonably sunny June, the season's sunshine was 19% below average, making it the fifth dullest summer since 1956 (after 1956, 1965, 1968 and 1958).

Autumn continued the unsettled summer weather and the desired 'Indian Summer' failed to develop. Although temperatures remained above average in September and November, the very cold October weather caused the season's overall mean temperatures to be between 0.2° and 0.6°C below normal (the fifth coldest Autumn since 1960, after 1974, 1972, 1965 and 1975). Precipitation was considerably above average mainly due to the deluges in September and November, which both recorded aggregates above 100 mm, which were double the average totals. This season was the wettest since 1976 and the sixth wettest since 1921 (after 1974, 1960, 1976, 1935 and 1948). Sunshine was sadly lacking throughout the Autumn with the total number of hours 15% below normal, making it the seventh dullest since 1956 (after 1976, 1968, 1984, 1963, 1983 and 1956).

TABLE 1 WEATHER RECORDS: 1992

STATION: READING UNIVERSITY (MITEKNIGHTS)

		Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov..	Dec.	Year
Mean Daily Temperatures °C	Max.	6.6	9.0	11.1	13.1	19.8	21.7	21.2	20.7	17.9	11.8	11.4	7.1	14.3
	Min.	1.3	2.1	4.8	5.1	9.2	11.0	13.2	12.6	10.5	4.7	4.5	1.1	6.7
	Mean	4.0	5.5	8.0	9.1	14.5	16.4	17.2	16.7	14.2	8.3	7.9	4.1	10.5
	Range	5.3	6.9	6.3	8.0	10.6	10.7	8.0	8.0	7.4	7.1	6.9	6.0	7.6
Extreme Temperatures °C	Extreme Max. Date	13.0 5th	13.0 27th	14.4 20.22	17.0 18.20	25.8 19th	29.9 29th	27.6 31st	26.8 1st	22.7 26th	16.7 2nd	15.7 6th	13.2 2nd	29.9 29/6
	Extreme Min. Date	-7.5 24th	-4.1 20th	-1.2 9th	-0.6 5th	2.4 3rd	7.3 19th	8.2 28th	6.6 31st	6.5 5th	-1.8 17th	-1.9 14th	-6.6 30th	-7.5 24/1
	Extreme Grass Min. Date	-10.4	-8.5	-6.5	-6.2	-3.8	0.1	0.4	0.9	-0.1	-8.8	-8.1	-11.9	-11.9
		22nd	20th	9th	5th	3rd	18th	28th	31st	14th	17th	14th	30th	30/12
Days with air frost		14	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	11	40
Days with ground frost		19	19	8	10	4	0	0	0	1	19	14	21	117
Hours at or below 0.0°C		127	45.5	2	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	16	8	122	320.5
Sunshine Hours	Sum	49.4	55.5	57.5	122.6	259.5	195.7	136.5	143.6	118.0	92.0	56.8	48.2	1335
	% of possible	18.7	19.0	15.6	29.6	54.0	39.6	27.4	31.9	31.1	27.7	21.0	19.3	29.7
	Daily Mean	1.6	1.9	1.9	4.1	8.4	6.5	4.4	4.6	3.9	2.9	1.9	1.5	3.6
Precipitation	Amount in mm	13.8	21.5	43.4	60.1	40.3	21.6	52.2	109.7	113.5	57.7	104.5	47.8	686.1
	Rain Days	6	11	25	15	8	7	13	20	16	11	20	11	163
Maximum rain in one day "		3.3	6.9	6.9	16.3	15.6	6.5	15.1	22.8	76.3	25.4	13.1	10.1	76.3
Date		8th	10th	25th	10th	28th	1st	20th	13th	22nd	19th	14th	18th	22/9
Longest run of consecutive rain days		3	5	11	7	3	2	4	7	4	5	7	5	11
Longest run of consecutive dry days		15	8	2	4	13	12	5	4	3	10	5	11	15 March 15 Jan
Snow or sleet days		0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
Days with snow lying		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Visibility	Days with fog at 0900 GMT	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	16
Thunderstorm Activity	Days of thunder	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	4	1	0	0	0	10
	Days of hail	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Barometric Pressure mb	Mean Highest Date	1030.7 1045.5 27th	1023.7 1038.4 19th	1014.9 1035.0 9th	1011.8 1026.9 16th	1018.6 1037.2 16th	1017.7 1030.8 17th	1016.7 1030.7 28th	1011.1 1024.5 6th	1015.0 1025.3 12th	1011.0 1029.5 8th	1012.3 1032.5 6th	1017.0 1044.5 28th	1016.7 1044.5 27/1
	Lowest Date	997.3 9th	1006.6 9th	980.4 31st	986.1 9th	1004.4 9th	1006.8 1st	1005.9 12th	985.6 30th	1005.7 22nd	990.0 25th	989.7 11th	981.6 4th	980.4 31/3

Table 2. Monthly and annual weather averages, University of Reading, Whiteknights, 1971-1990

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR
MEAN BAROMETRIC PRESSURE	1014.2	1015.2	1014.0	1015.8	1014.9	1016.5	1017.2	1016.6	1017.0	1015.2	1015.9	1015.0	1015.7
MEAN TEMPERATURE	4.2	4.2	6.3	8.2	11.6	14.5	17.0	16.7	14.0	10.8	6.9	5.5	10.0
MEAN MAXIMUM TEMP.	7.0	7.3	9.8	12.4	16.2	19.1	21.9	21.4	18.4	14.5	10.1	8.2	13.9
MEAN MINIMUM TEMP.	1.3	1.2	2.6	4.0	7.0	9.9	12.2	11.9	9.7	7.1	3.7	2.7	6.1
DAILY RANGE TEMP.	5.7	6.1	7.2	8.5	9.3	9.2	9.7	9.6	8.8	7.4	6.3	5.5	7.8
SOIL TEMP. 5cm	3.1	2.9	5.1	8.8	13.6	17.2	19.3	18.1	14.5	10.1	5.9	4.2	10.2
" " 10cm	3.3	3.1	4.9	8.0	12.4	15.9	18.1	17.1	13.9	10.0	6.1	4.5	9.8
" " 20cm	4.0	3.9	5.3	7.9	11.8	15.1	17.5	17.0	14.3	10.8	7.1	5.2	10.0
" " 30cm	5.0	4.7	6.1	8.4	11.7	14.8	17.0	16.9	14.8	11.9	8.4	6.2	10.5
" " 50cm	5.5	5.2	6.3	8.4	11.4	14.4	16.5	16.8	15.1	12.4	9.2	6.8	10.7
" " 100cm	6.6	5.9	6.4	8.0	10.5	13.1	15.1	15.9	15.0	13.0	10.5	7.9	10.7
AGGREGATE RAINFALL (mm)	58.6	41.3	54.5	41.1	50.9	51.9	40.6	52.6	52.1	60.8	53.6	64.4	622.3
RAIN DAYS (0.2mm or MORE)	16	13	16	13	14	11	11	11	10	14	13	15	157
WET DAYS (1.0mm or MORE)	11	8	12	9	10	9	7	8	8	10	9	9	112
SUNSHINE (No. of HOURS)	55.9	69.3	106.3	155.6	193.4	189.0	206.5	193.0	144.5	97.1	71.9	48.7	1531.2
MEAN DURATION	1.80	2.48	3.43	5.19	6.24	6.30	6.66	6.23	4.82	3.13	2.40	1.57	4.19
DAILY MEAN DURATION POSSIBLE AT LATITUDE 51°	8.51	10.05	11.86	13.83	15.51	16.45	16.03	14.53	12.65	10.73	8.97	8.04	12.27

Table 3 Seasonal Weather data, Reading (Average for 1971-90)

A) Winter 1991/92 (Dec., Jan., Feb)

	<u>1991/92</u>	<u>Average</u>
Mean barometric pressure	1027.7 mb	1014.4 mb
Mean temperature	4.7°C	4.6°C
Mean max.temperature	7.7°C	7.5°C
Mean min.temperature	1.6°C	1.7°C
Aggregate rainfall	47.6 mm	163.3 mm
Rain days	24	44
Hours of sunshine	158.4	173.9

B) Spring 1992 (Mar., April., May)

	<u>1992</u>	<u>Average</u>
Mean barometric pressure	1015.1 mb	1014.9 mb
Mean temperature	10.5°C	8.7°C
Mean max.temperature	14.7°	12.0°C
Mean min.temperature	6.4°C	4.5°C
Aggregate rainfall	143.0 mm	146.5 mm
Rain days	40	43
Hours of sunshine	439.6	455.3

C) Summer 1992 (June., July., Aug)

	<u>1992</u>	<u>Average</u>
Mean barometric pressure	1015.2 mb	1016.8 mb
Mean temperature	16.8°C	16.1°C
Mean max.temperature	21.2°C	20.8°C
Mean min.temperature	12.3°C	11.3°C
Aggregate rainfall	183.5 mm	145.1 mm
Rain days	40	33
Hours of sunshine	475.8	588.5

D) Autumn 1992 (Sept., Oct., Nov.)

	<u>1992</u>	<u>Average</u>
Mean barometric pressure	1012.7 mb	1016.0 mb
Mean temperature	10.1°C	10.6°C
Mean.max.temperature	13.7°C	14.3°C
Mean min.temperature	6.6°C	6.8°C
Aggregate rainfall	275.7 mm	166.5 mm
Rain days	47	37
Hours of sunshine	266.8	313.5