

# THE VASCULUM

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*Edited by*

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## BY THE WAY

### CONSERVATION

Whilst we fully endorse the need for a vigorous conservation policy in dealing with our wild plants and animals, and agree that an extensive effort must be made at all times, we are a little dubious about the wisdom of constant "plugging".

The most urgent task of the "conservationist" is to get the general public on his side. The public, however, is traditionally suspicious of obsessions and of cranks, and we must be careful to avoid giving the impression that we are such. Unfortunately, we have already found this idea in the minds of people with whom we have talked. It may be that, in part, this is due to certain tactical mistakes made by "conservationists" in other fields than ours, and that to some people the terms "conservationist" and "crank" are synonymous. In our campaign, therefore, we must be careful to benefit from the mistakes of others and to prevent the spread of such ideas. J. T.

### THE RANGES OF THE TWO BRYONIES

Winch, in his *Flora* (1838), gives as the northern limit of the Black Bryony, *Tamus communis*, "Woody Bank (67) in Heaton Dene", whence it has long since been extirpated. In Durham, not so very long ago, it still persisted in the Square Wood near Lamesley Station (66). Recent investigations, in that area, however, in search of the species have proved fruitless, although, elsewhere in Durham, on the Magnesian Limestone, it is still locally abundant. Almost certainly, the great changes produced by the Trading Estate and other developmental operations have been responsible for its disappearance.

The other "Bryony", the White Bryony, *Bryonia dioica*, had a similar distribution with us, but its northward limit seems to have been reached near Rugley (68). Even with this occurrence, care must be taken about its acceptance for representatives of the species have been observed on the dunes near Alnmouth (68), and these are, in all probability, casual introductions. However, this plant still exists with us near Birtley, North Durham, from which locality it was reported in the 1770's by a local worker, and later recorded by Winch in his *Flora* (1838).

In this latter station, interested workers have studied the plants (of which both male and female plants occur), for a long series of years.

Their insect visitors likewise have been subjected to a long period of study.

#### WILD LIFE AND CHEMICALS

We have received a letter from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds about the indirect effects of seed dressings on our wild bird populations. Many individuals are being killed as a direct result of eating the grain whilst, in other cases, breeding success has been notably reduced. This year many young birds died early, and some eggs failed to hatch. Chemical analyses in all cases revealed the presence of chlorinated hydrocarbons, substances which could have been obtained from such seed dressings as aldrin, dieldrin, and heptachlor. The R.S.P.B. is most anxious to have information about the effects of these chemicals, and we are therefore appealing to every member of the N.N.U. to help in this matter. The basic information required is the number and species of birds killed, the place and date of the occurrence and the type of chemicals used in the vicinity.

This letter has also reminded us of the growing practice of County Councils and Town Councils, of spraying road verges with weed killer and of mowing the grass. In the first case, i.e. spraying with weed killer, we have noticed the gradual change in the hedgerow vegetation from the mixed species suitable to the particular soil to a monoculture of various grasses. Such a change of vegetation will of course mean a change of animals feeding upon it. Under such circumstances, the insect population is inevitably the first to suffer, but the matter will not stop there. Birds and other animals feed on the insects so that in the long run the whole animal population of an area will be depleted. Even the continuous mowing of grass verges will have similar, although perhaps less drastic, effects. Here it is more likely that a few rare plants may suffer extinction in our counties. Again, we are most anxious to have evidence of any serious threats of extinction to our animal and plant populations. Will any member with observations to report either now or during the coming months, please send them to Mr. T. C. Dunn, at the Poplars, Chester-le-Street ?

#### DRAWINGS OF BRITISH PLANTS

The eighteenth part of Miss Stella Ross-Craig's beautiful work figuring British plants has just come to hand. In it are set out figures of our *Hieracia* and their allies.

These groups are notoriously difficult to determine. Nevertheless, one feels that the labours of "working out" any given plant are greatly lessened by the fine figures at one's disposal.

The work is one which we can recommend, without reservation, to our readers.

The Editors regret the delay in the publishing of this issue of the *Vasculum*, which unfortunately, is due to the illness of Professor J. W. Heslop Harrison.

## THE SOCIETIES

### NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION

By the kind invitation of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, the 39th Annual Meeting of the Union was held in the Hancock Museum on March 9th 1963. A large number of members and associates was present. After voting on an alteration to Rule 4, enabling us to elect twelve Vice-Presidents, Mr. C. J. Gent was elected President with three new Vice-Presidents, Miss Oates, the retiring President, Messrs. R. Lowe and J. Thompson.

Miss Oates then gave a most interesting talk on "Some Memories of a visit to Iceland in 1960". She began by reference to a large map of Iceland on which she traced the route followed during her holiday with comments on the geography and general natural history of the island. This was followed by beautiful slides illustrating features she had emphasised.

Starting at Reykjavik, we had views of the town itself and its Whooper Swans. Moving outwards and Northwards, we saw some of the indigenous plants like the Sea Purslane, the Oyster Plant, the Iceland Poppy etc. We were then taken to Akureyri and then east to Lake Myratin. The most astonishing views consisted of photographs of the nest of a White-tailed Eagle with a single full-grown chick. Other birds included the Redwing on its nest. Leech's Petrel, Storm Petrel, Harlequin Duck, Slavonian Grebe, Fulmar and Red-necked Phalarope. One of Iceland's mammals, a field mouse, was also figured. The lecture ended with a hearty vote of thanks to Miss Oates, proposed by Mr. Fred Bell.

After this, we took tea served in a newly decorated room nearby. Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Weatherly and Mrs. Stock of Birtley Natural History Society worked hard to supply all comers and to them our sincere thanks are due. Exhibits were laid out in the same room. Mr. Cooke's lovely flowers were on show as usual, despite the fact that they had been free from their mantle of white only three days. Other exhibits included lava, sulphur and reindeer moss from Iceland brought by Miss Oates, Dr. Todd's beautiful colour transparencies, a collection of stamps depicting various animals from Mrs. Gibby and a series of pressed flowers from our two counties shown by Mr. Hird. A special group of exotic ferns, cacti and other succulents, set up by Mr. Alker and the boys of Bede Grammar School, formed a very unusual, but attractive, element of the exhibit.

## BIRTLEY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The lecture season began on September 18th with Professor J. W. Heslop Harrison going back over the years to tell of his experiences in many parts of the world in "Reminiscences of a Naturalist".

These were in most cases anecdotal but always with a Natural History twist. On October 2nd we were all enchanted by Mrs. Clarke's collection of dolls and the history attached to the various kinds. October 16th saw Professor Burnett of the Dept. of Botany, King's College, talking about "Fungi", of which he brought many kinds. The slime fungi cultured on Quaker Oats were shared out amongst our members, and some are still going strong. Mr. G. A. Cowan talked about our larger mammals on October 30th. He dealt with the badger, fox, the otter and the various species of deer.

On November 13th we had something of an innovation in Dr. W. A. Prowse's lecture on "Artificial Satellites". He talked first of all about the various radiations and electro-magnetic layers encountered round the earth. Then he showed us pictures of satellites that have been sent into space during the past few years. On November 7th, Mr. James Alder lectured on "Bird Photography". We have learned in the past to expect a very high standard from him and we were not disappointed. His lightning sketches in chalk on the blackboard also had us fascinated. A set of beautiful slides of the Zermatt Valley by Mr. T. W. Wanless on December 11th rounded off the pre-Christmas session, and were greatly enjoyed. The photographs in colour were all taken during a holiday with a fellow Birtley member in June 1962. The Matterhorn, almost always in the background of the pictures, was a magnificent sight.

Our 1963 season opened on March 3rd, when a few enthusiasts ventured forth for our first official outing. This took us to Houghall Woods where the most attractive features were the numerous tracks made in the snow by small mammals and birds in search of food. The first bird noted was the Robin followed by many others and finally a Woodcock. Where the snow had melted we saw many fallen oak leaves bearing galls of various species—Marble, Spangle, Artichoke and Oak apple. Many of these were old and had yielded their tenant.

## ANNFIELD PLAIN AND STANLEY NATURALISTS' CLUB

With an excellent attendance our Annual Meeting and Social Evening were held in the Public Library, Annfield Plain on Saturday January 19th.

Before business, silent tribute was made to memories of Mr. J. W. Lawson (founder member), Mrs. Daly, Mrs. Ramsey, Mrs. Chrisp

and Mr. R. Lowson, all of whom died during the year.

The secretary, Mr. Fred Wade, reported that 1962 had been a most successful year for the club's membership now stood at 230. During the year 14 rambles had been held, each favoured with fine weather.

These rambles took the club to the Cheviots, Simonside, Cleveland Hills and Yorkshire Dales. An abundance of members favoured the long walks. Thirteen lectures were held, all being well attended. Mr. Wade emphasised the help he had received from the local press and the members.

The Treasurer, Mr. Atkinson was able to report favourably on the finances whilst Mr. Reay, the Excursions Secretary, also agreeing with Mr. Wade about the success of the outings, pointed out that they had incurred some loss to the club's funds. Mr. Toyn, retiring President said that the activities of the club had given him great phasure during his term of office.

The officers elected were Mr. Daly, President, Miss A. Renwick, Vice-President, Mr. Wade, Secretary, Mr. Toyn, Assistant Secretary, Mr. Atkinson, Treasurer, Mr. Reay, Excursion Secretary and Mr. Dodds, Auditor.

The 1963 summer rambles were discussed and from 44 suggestions a representative series was chosen.

Tea followed in the Methodist schoolroom, after which we returned to the Library to see coloured slides of holidays shown by Mr. Toyn and Miss Turnbull. Two films by Mr. Jackson followed, one entitled "The Bavarian Alps" and the other "Down the River Rye".

Mrs. Morrison presented prizes to the winners of a photographic competition judged by Mr. Wray of Stanley.

Finally, Mr. Daly thanked all who had helped to make the day such a great success.

#### SUNDERLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Inaugural Meeting of the Society was called for September 3rd when a working committee was elected to draw up the constitution and arrange a programme of meetings. Since this date, fortnightly meetings have been held, except for a short break at Christmas, with attendance varying between 45 and 85. There are now 86 paid up members. One excursion was arranged on January 27th when some 40 members were able to watch waders and sea-birds at St. Mary's Island and Seaton Sluice in comparatively mild weather.

The Committee have mostly been concerned with the constitution and with the programme, but it is felt that some programme of work should be arranged, and some system devised for the records. With this in view, a meeting will be called on April 1st which will take the form of a *Conversazione* at which members will be invited to form themselves into groups with similar interests. In this way it is hoped to learn more about the potentialities and the feelings of the members.

The Society is to cooperate with the Museum to arrange a display for National Nature Week. The scope of the exhibition will be dependant upon the space available in the renovated building. Guide lecturers will also be available to conduct parties around the completed display during that week, and the Museum authorities have arranged a public lecture by Bruce Campell 'Speaking up for Nature' on the evening of May 20th.

Four whole day excursions have been planned during the summer and shorter specialised excursions will be planned in addition.

## NOTES AND RECORDS

### NOTES

**The Badger in Durham**—Recently, this fine mammal has been increasing greatly in numbers in North Durham (66). However, too many have been found dead locally. Thus, on April 1st, I found no fewer than two dead ones and a dead fox on Waldrige Fell. We have previously reported the occurrence of examples killed by motors; these recent individuals seem to have been wantonly killed by human agencies. If that is so, surely some methods can be devised for punishing such wanton destruction, and to secure the confiscation of weapons used in bringing it about?—E. Hall.

**A Note concerning the Hedgehog**—After an apparent absence of two years the hedgehog has reappeared in Birtley. On March 3rd, a big female was noted in the garden behind Field House. No doubt it will still exist in the Birtley gardens it used to frequent—G. Perry.

**A Waggon-Way in March**—On March 18th a visit was paid to the disused railway behind the Church, Birtley (66). There the Coltsfoot was in full bloom as was also the alder. On the other hand, catkins were visible on the birch, hazel, willows and sallows of various species; these being in different stages of development. As far as leafing was concerned the wild rose and hawthorn had made good progress in sheltered nooks but displayed few signs of movement otherwise.

The presence of an old flowering spike of the marsh orchid, *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, tempted one to look at the state of growth at ground level. There, a short green shoot, clearly marking that growth for 1963 had begun, was discovered.

Similarly, an old inflorescence of the Carline Thistle, *Carlina vulgaris* was noted. It was in almost perfect condition and provides the first known station for the species on this side of the Team Valley. Although galls of very many species were very rare in 1962, a cursory examination of the stems of the hawkweeds along the railway banks revealed the fact that galls of the Cynipid species, *Aulacidea hieracti*, abounded on the hawkweed stems. There it forms a spherical and very obvious gall—J.W. H. H.

**An Abnormality in Starlings (67)**—On January 7th, I observed a starling in the grounds of King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne, with a bill which was about twice the normal length and downward curved, curlew-like fashion. It was also noticeably smaller in body size than the average starling which may have been due to retarded growth the results of its being handicapped in feeding, although it fed on bread crumbs in the normal manner.

It is probably worthy of note that, of about 10,000 starlings examined at Ohio State University, there were 38 birds with abnormal bills—R. Marston Palmer.

**The Manchester Treble-bar, *Carsia Sororiata* Hubn. (*paludata* Thun.)**—Until this species was recorded from Widdybank Fell (66) in 1954 by Professor J. W. Heslop Harrison and myself, it had not been noted in our counties for nearly a hundred years.

When collecting along Hisehope Burn (66) in August 1962, it again turned up but only in small numbers. Robson's "Catalogue of the Lepidoptera of Northumberland and Durham" attributes to Stephens in his "Illustrations" that the

moth is "apparently very common in the North of England, whence I have received numerous examples". Robson could not confirm this although he thought that it must have been abundant at one time. It is possible that the moth has been overlooked in recent times, or that it has been going through a period of decline until comparatively recently. In favour of the former theory is the fact that it only occurs on rather swampy Fells where its foodplant exists. This, according to P. B. M. Allan in "Larval Foodplants," is either Cowberry, *Vaccinium vitus-idaea* L. or Cranberry, *Vaccinium oxycoccus* L. This could be so in the Hisehope Valley where Cranberry occurs, but rather doubtful on Widdybank Fell. However South's new edition of "Moths of the British Isles, Series II," also includes Billberry, *Vaccinium myrtillus* L. as a possible foodplant. This is a most likely substitute and we feel that this must be the caterpillar's pabulum on Widdybank Fell.

It is also worth noting that on 18th August, when we last saw the moth, it appeared to be just emerging for it was very fresh. When it was observed on Widdybank Fell the date was September 4th, 1945, and the moth seemed to be in full flight at this time. South gives the flight period as July and August, but I think his times are wrong for the Durham Pennines, although they may be correct for other parts of the country. My own evidence points to an emergence in mid-August and a flight lasting well into September, which is about a month later than South's contention.—T. C. D.

**The Red Underwing Moth, *Catocala nupta* L. in Durham**—When leading a party from the Cleveland Naturalists' Field Club and the Teesmouth Bird Club on a bird-watching expedition at Seaton Carew (66) on 18th September 1960, I had the great pleasure of seeing a specimen of the Red Underwing, *Catocala nupta* L. At the time, some of the young members of the party had a mist net erected in the extensive growth of sea buckthorn. There had been a huge influx of passerines on the 17th, mainly from the Scandinavian region—many Bluethroats, one or two Wrynecks, etc., and some of the stragglers were still present on the 18th. The boys were trying to drive birds into the mist net and in doing so they must have disturbed the moth which flew out of the buckthorn and alighted on my coat. It stayed there for about five minutes and all the members of the club saw it. It was a perfect specimen.

Could it have been a migrant? On the previous day there was a Cirl Bunting at Redcar on the other side of the estuary which would indicate that some of the arrivals may have been of Central European origin. This drift movement of the 16th, 17th and 18th September 1960 is the largest of its kind ever recorded at Teesmouth and indeed was quite something by national standards. We had 16 Bluethroats between South Gare and Crimdon Dene, 124 Willow Warblers, 168 Wheatears, 61 Whinchats and 8 species of birds of prey including 3 Ospreys and the first Hobby for Co. Durham this century.—Philip J. Stead.

(Although *Catocala nupta* L. is not mentioned at all in Robson's "Catalogue of the Lepidoptera of Northumberland and Durham," single specimens have infrequently been noted in our counties. The observation of Mr. Stead is the first for some time and is therefore very noteworthy. Ed.)

**Notes on the cold winter of 1963**—Observations collected from a few localities in the North East point to the reasonable inference that wild life of all kinds has fared more hardly in the hill areas, and that everywhere birds show the highest mortality.

The most important long-term result of prolonged snow cover may prove to be the loss of plantations and small woods. In the Pennines trees of all species and ages, but especially rowan, have been debarked, often 10 feet or more above ground level. Sheep are largely responsible together with hares and deer, finding access over drifted walls. Shrubs and fruit trees in farm gardens have suffered as has ivy, but sheep have been poisoned on, for example, rhododendron. From Alston Moor are reports of dead hares and of very weak roe deer., Grouse have suffered heavy mortality, and a dead black-cock was noted.

In the lowlands all mammals seem to be surviving, with predatory mammals and birds picking up abundant carrion. Fox stomachs have yielded small birds and parts of a sheep. Foxes, hares, rabbits and many birds have been close in

to such food sources as gardens and farm steadings. Hares have been particularly conspicuous against the snow. Small seed and insect eating birds are the most numerous casualties reported—sparrows, starlings, redwings, fieldfares—with some coastal waders (frozen mud not evident as in South and West) and some oiled-up sea birds (late 1962 wrecks?). Abundant dead coots are reported from the Lake District.—Angus G. Lunn.

For several years I have watched the activities of a female hedgehog in my kitchen garden at the Isolation Hospital, Chester-le-Street. In the Autumn of 1962 she hibernated as usual in a place where I could keep an eye on her. After the severe winter of 1963 the hedgehog did not awake at the usual time, so it was taken out of its hibernating quarters only to discover that it was dead. Further more, nestling between the forelegs of the hedgehog was a dead fieldmouse and later, on disturbing the hibernating materials, a dead rat was found under the hedgehog's bed! Had all three been huddling together for warmth when they were killed by the low temperature?—R. Harris.

**Notes on Fasciation**—During the past summer we have noticed a number of examples of fasciation and distortion of inflorescences of Ribwort Plantain, Rosebay Willow Herb, Self-heal, Perennial Ryegrass, Crack Willow and Spotted Orchid.

Mechanical damage by breaking or grazing was obvious in some cases, whilst in others dissection disclosed a cavity often containing insect larvae, but sometimes empty.

Whilst it is possible that some cases may be of genetic origin, we suspect that most are due to damage, probably mostly by insects feeding or laying eggs. Thus a plant of self-heal which had a multiple inflorescence three summers ago was marked and in the two following years has borne quite normal inflorescences. Any other notes bearing on this problem would be very welcome.—J. Thompson.

## RECORDS

### FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS

<b>Carex lepidocarpa</b> Tausch. By the Risey Burn, N. of Great Wanney Crag (67). By the Coquet near Barrowburn (68). Newham Bog (68).	67, 68
<b>Carex diandra</b> Schrank. Newham Bog.	68
<b>Carex distans</b> L. Distant Sedge. On the shore, N. of Waren Mill. Around the Snook, S. of Seahouses.	68
<b>Carex hevigata</b> E. B. Smooth Sedge. In the woods at Twizell Mill (Warenford) (68) in a meadow out he N. side of the Coquet, near Windyhaugh (68), lower part of the Cheviot Burn (80).	68, 80
<b>Utricularia minor</b> L. Lesser Bladderwort. In a small pond, S. of Linnheads (Near Ray).	67
<b>Peplis portula</b> L. Water Purslane. Pond at Shaftoe.	67
<b>Glyceria maxima</b> (Hartm.) Hoim. Reed-grass. In a wooded swamp, near the Breamish, N. E. of the road-bridge at Hedgeley.	68
<b>Lactuca virosa</b> L. On a wall at Coldstream (81). By the Tweed near the Union Bridge (68). G. A. & M. Swan	68, 81

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## BY THE WAY

### CONSERVATION

In our work in Northumberland and Durham we have encountered a tendency on the part of workers to be one-sided. For instance in a case known to us, it was urged that the lower leaves of birches should be trimmed so as to give these trees scope for more open growth. This fails to recognise the facts that quite a number of lepidopterous and other larvae feed on the lower twigs, and the leaves they bear. They are equally in need of protection.

### LOCAL NAMES FOR PLANTS

Recently, I was talking to someone from the Harnham and Bradford area of Northumberland who informed me that the Wood Anemone was known to him and to "certain of the natives" as the Snowdrop. To what extent does this use of the word occur?

Similarly, in searching for local names for plants, I examined old numbers of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club (Vol. III, 1854-87), where I found it stated that the Blue Gentian was known in certain areas in Teesdale as the Blue or Spring Violet. Can anyone throw more light on the use of these names? Are they still in use? We have never met them.

Secretaries' reports intended for our next number should be in the hands of Mr. T. C. Dunn, The Poplars, Chester-le-street, before September 10th. This date also applies to Notes and Records to be included in the same issue.

## THE SOCIETIES

### NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION

The 104th Field Meeting of the Northern Naturalists' Union took place on May 25th, in Whittle Dene Woods near Ovingham, with our President, Mr. C. J. Gent, leading the party.

The attendance was good despite some early morning rain. However, the weather in the afternoon was quite fine. As we entered the Dene from Ovingham, we were thrilled to see the luscious spring growth everywhere. The trees in particular were beautiful. The usual forest trees were present with a great preponderance of birch in one part and hazel in another. The path through the wood was flanked by the stream on one side and by a swampy ditch on the other. The latter spread out into frequent marshy patches with a most luxuriant cover of such things as *Potentilla palustris*, *Crepis paludosa*, *Angelica sylvestris*, *Caltha palustris*, *Cardamine pratensis* and *Galium aparine*. In these places such moths as *Xanthorrhoe montanata* Schiff., *Electrophaes corylata* Thunb., *Epirrhoe alternata* Mull., and *Epinhoe galatia* Schiff. were disturbed by walking through the vegetation.

Some of the more important plants encountered were *Ranunculus auricomus*, *Viola reichenbachiana*, *Circaea lutetiana*, *Asperula odorata*, *Galium mollugo* and *Melica uniflora*.

Insects were relatively scarce, with only a few individuals of *Bornbus hortorum* in evidence apart from the moths. Apart from these Lepidoptera already mentioned, the Clouded Border, *Lomaspilis marginata* L. was also taken on the wing by one of the junior members. Larvae beaten from the trees included the November Moth, *Oporinia dilutata* Schiff., July Highflyer, *Hydriomena furcata* Thunb. Winter Moth, *Operophtera brumata* L. and a few micros.

Mr. Gent took careful note of the birds and his report is as follows:— Amongst the summer migrants Willow Warblers were well distributed and in song, whilst the common Whitethroat and Blackcap were also heard. Resident species were also in good voice, the songs of the Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Great Tit, Yellow Bunting, Corn Bunting and Chaffinch being noted. A distant Curlew was also heard.

Other birds recorded included Swift, Swallow, Mistle Thrush, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw and Greenfinch.

Two junior meetings have also been held. In both cases the numbers attending have been very disappointing. This is difficult to understand considering that the numbers of school societies affiliated to the Union has never been greater. Could we ask teachers in member schools to do their utmost to try to increase the members of juniors attending these special outings next year?

The first one was held at St. Mary's Island, Whitley Bay on May 11th, with Dr. Moss of King's College in charge. Unfortunately the weather was very wet but this did not damp the enthusiasm of those present. Dr. Moss pointed out the various species of seaweeds and the animals of the rock pools, cracks and crevices. Others netted the plankton in the incoming waves to take away for further study. The ecology of the various species was stressed so that a very interesting morning was enjoyed by all. It must be seldom

that such a large number of starfishes in so many beautiful colour varieties could be seen all together.

The second outing was on Waldrige Fell on June 1st, when 12 young people were present. Mr. Dunn was in charge and by contrast with the previous meeting the weather was perfect. First of all the various species of willows were examined and their characteristics emphasised. Next the party inspected typical heath, bog and lastly woodland flora and fauna on different parts of the Fell. Again much of interest was seen and collected.

#### ANNFIELD PLAIN AND STANLEY NATURALIST'S CLUB

The summer outings started on April 20th, but the first two, one from Stanhope to Eastgate and the other into the country from Kirby Stephen were marred by very wet weather.

On May 11th, however, the weather was good to us during our walk from Bowes to Greta Bridge, along the banks of the River Greta. Here the river runs through a deep gorge the sides of which were clothed with masses of spring flowers. The botanists had another busy day between Coldingham and Eyemouth on June 1st, when again the early flowers were in great evidence. It was interesting to find such a contrast between these species of the coast and those of the wooded inland slopes of the previous outing. On June 15th we were able to see yet another type of flora in the Lake District. Here we climbed along Cat Bells, Maiden Law and Eel Craggs to Rosthwaite. When on the high ridge, we were struck by the very stunted growth of the various wild flowers encountered there. A fortnight later saw us in the hills again but this time in North Yorkshire. Starting from Osmotherley we walked over the Hambleton Hills to Kewick, and as we neared the latter village the walk took us through the most beautiful woodlands where the flowers and trees were magnificent.

It is with deep regret that we have to announce the death of the President of the Club, Mr. A. Daly. He was a member for very many years and always had the interests of the club at heart. His wise advice will be greatly missed in the conduct of the club business.

#### BIRTLEY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

During the spring and summer we have held four long distance outings, the first specially arranged for the juniors to the Fame Islands on May 26th, the second to Alwinton on June 9th, then to Winch Bridge on June 30th, and the fourth to Alnmouth on July 14th.

The trip to the Farnes was in beautiful weather, and although we saw the same birds as in previous years, we were able to photograph them more satisfactorily than usual. One feature of the Inner Fame was the way the Ferns have extended their breeding ground to include much of the central area of the island.

On our expedition to Alwinton we pushed on to the village of Linsheels and then walked over the moors to Linsheels Lake. Immediately we encountered the three buttercups, *Ranunculus acris*, *R. bulbosus* and *R. repens* within a few yards of each other. In the pasture beyond the farm we were surprised to find Wood Anemone growing in the open with Moorland Spotted Orchid, *Dactylorhiza maculata* ssp. *ericetorum* and the Mountain Pansy, *Viola lutea*. Out on the open moor we paid particular attention to the damp patches where we saw the Sundew, *Drosera rotundifolia*, Butterwort, *Pinguicula vulgaris*. Sweet Gale, *Myrica gale*, *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, and the two Cotton Grasses, *Eriophorum vaginatum* and *E. angustifolium*. Just before reaching the lake a ravens' nest, just recently vacated by the chicks, was discovered on a steep cliff. Under this we found a collection of woodland plants although no tree grew there. During the course of the afternoon we were most pleased to find a small colony of the Chickweed Wintergreen, *Trientalis europaea*, a plant which is extremely rare in our two northern counties.

At Winch Bridge we set off to walk to High Force in slight rain, but in a short while it became a downpour. In spite of the weather, immediately in the vicinity of the bridge, we saw the Melancholy Thistle, the Viviparous Fescue Grass and the Alpine Rush. The orchids were in great abundance and seldom have we seen such masses of them. They included the Twayblade, *Listera ovata*, the Fragrant Orchid, *Gymnadenia conopsea*, the Moorland Spotted Orchid, *Dactylorhiza maculata* ssp. *ericetorum*, the Common Spotted Orchid, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, and the Northern Fen Orchid, *Dactylorhiza purpurella*.

At Alnmouth the weather was again somewhat showery but we made our way north to the sand dunes at Boulmer, botanizing and hunting for insects on the way. The latter were extremely scarce but we did manage to see the Meadow Brown butterfly, *Maniola jurtina* L., and the common Blue Butterfly, *Polyommatus icarus* Schiff. Quite a large variety of coastal plants were noted en route, the most important being Crow Garlic, *Allium vineale*, and the Sand Rue, *Thalictrum minus* ssp. *arenarium*.

#### CONSETT AND DISTRICT NATURALIST'S FIELD CLUB

The highlight of the Consett Club's activities so far this season has been a visit to the Fame Islands on Saturday 6th July. Some 50 members were present to enjoy the sights of nesting birds, mostly

with young, on the various islands. The visiting population of birds seems to increase yearly, a gratifying tribute to the protection afforded by the Farn Islands Association. This year we saw kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills, shags, cormorants, blackbeaked gulls, puffins, herring gulls, oyster catchers, ringed plover, sandwich terns, arctic terns, common terns, roseate terns, eider ducks, fulmars and even grey lag geese, which appear mysteriously for short periods. An added attraction was the resident population of Atlantic or grey seals.

July 6th, proved to be the assembling day for the puffins in preparation for their migratory departure. They sat in thousands awaiting the signal to leave, whilst visitors moved amongst them, clicking their cameras, yet leaving the birds quite unconcerned. The young puffins were still in their burrows, starving for about two weeks before proceeding to sea to follow their parents.

The guillemots, too, presented an amazing sight on the Pinnacle Rocks off Staple Island with Kittiwakes and Shags crowding the nesting ledges below and in Kittiwake Gully.

A day on the Farnes is always a day to remember, and the members of Consett Field Club saw much to interest them under the guidance of their leader, Mr. J. J. Robson, M.B.O.U.

## NOTES AND RECORDS

### NOTES

**The Giant Thistle, *Cirsium eriophorum* L.** (Scop.) in Durham—Since this fine plant was discovered in the Highland Quarry, it has been found in similar stations elsewhere on the Magnesian Limestone as also has its relative the Melancholy Thistle, *Cirsium heterophyllum* L. (Hill).

**The Oak Eggar in Durham**—The Oak Eggar Moth, *Lasiocampa quercus* L. used to be widespread in Co. Durham. Now, it is restricted to a few colonies on the more remote moorlands of the Pennines, and the coastal sand-dunes. On the moors, the larvae feed on heather, and the moth has a two year life cycle, whilst, on the coast, their foodplants are the Dwarf Sallow and the Burnet Rose, when the moth usually has a one year life cycle. Because of these differences the moorland form is referred to as *Lasiocampa quercus ssp. callunae*. The moths themselves can also be distinguished quite easily.

**A Vole and a Wagtail**—In a walk down Lamesly Lane, I observed a pied wagtail on the bed of the shingle lying below the bridge leading toward Featherbed Lane. At the same time, a water vole swam across the stream which here is quite broad. As it was doing so, two or three times the wagtail made a dive on the vole, causing it to sink temporarily below the water. In swimming, the vole was well exposed above the surface of the burn.—C.R.

**Melanism in the Tineid Moth, *Diurnea (Chimabache) phryganella* Hubn.**— This curious species was reported by Robson in his great work on our Lepidoptera as being quite common in our counties where its larvae fed on oak, hazel, willow etc. It is one of those forms which are described as having apterous females although these may have wings varying from 17 mm. to 19 mm. in length. On the other hand, its males may have a wing-length of 25 mm. Normally, as stated by Meyrick, the colour of the wings is of a light ochreous brown. Still, a fine form with blackish wings has been taken in a wood near Birtley.

These facts, are, of course, in harmony with the trend in the same direction shown by its allies *D. fagella* F. and *Cheimophila salicella* Hubn. In the last species, in any given colony up to 30 of the insects found may be melanic.

**A Note from North Wylam**—As I wished to renew my set of the Sallow Kitten, I worked the river banks at Wylam below the railway bridge. Just above the waterworks, I came across a bed of white champions which I beat and searched vigorously. This yielded a fine lot of larvae of the Campion Pug, *Eupithecia venosata* F.

**The Feathered Thorn Moth, *Colotis pennaria* L. at Chester-le-street**— This fine insect was taken in a very pale, nearly white form on November 4th. Most of our local forms, as well as those from more rural areas, are of a distinctly darker type.

**The Hard Fern, *Blechnum spicant* (L) With.**—At the beginning of the present century this fern was to be found in many stations in the Team Valley, on Birtley Fell, Ravensworth Woods, Urpeth and Sacriston. Now it is difficult indeed to find it in the area just mentioned. The position is much the same in other easterly habitats which once supported this fine plant.

**The Glow-Worm with us**—This unusual insect which is rare in our counties is still on the sea banks along the Budle Bay and also in hedge-banks near Stocksfield.

**Bird notes from the Breamish Valley**—Recently some of the members of the Annfield Plain and Stanley Naturalist's Field Club rambled along the banks of the river Breamish from Linhope Hall to Powburn. During the course of a single afternoon the Goldfinch, Willow warbler, Wheatear, Whinchat, Cuckoo, Blackbird, Pheasant, Oyster Catcher, Sandpiper, Curlew, Snipe, Lapwing, White Wagtail, Skylark, Wood Pigeon, Dipper, Yellow Hammer, Coot, and rook were seen or heard whilst a dead Raven was discovered alongside the tow path.—F. Wade.

**The Teazel in Annfield Plain**—In the back premises of a disused Methodist Church at Annfield Plain five teazel plants have been found growing. This is the first time it has been noticed in this district but no doubt the seeds have been blown from garden plants somewhere nearby.—F. Wade.

**An Unusual Blackbird**—At each side of the back door of The Poplars are two round metal objects, presumably meant to hold potted plants, although I have never used them for this or any other purpose. Early one morning towards the end of April, it was noticed that both plant pot holders were festooned with long dangling strands of dead grass. Shortly afterwards a female blackbird appeared on the scene and busied herself at one of the holders. Within the next few days a nest was constructed in the right hand pot and in the course of time four eggs and then four young ones appeared. This was all very interesting and exciting, especially as we passed within 9 inches of our blackbird several times a day. At first she was a little wary but later came to accept us completely. When the young had flown we felt that we had done a good job in not frightening her at any time.

About a week later, we were very surprised to find our blackbird back on the nest again. Without any further repairs to the nest she started to lay again This time she produced only three eggs, then three chicks and now they have flown. Is it not most uncommon for a blackbird to bring up two successive broods in the same nest? Can we expect to see her a third time?—T.C.D.

**The Kingfisher in Durham**—Although this colourful bird is known to frequent certain quiet stretches of the River Wear, I was surprised and very thrilled to see one near Shincliffe during the evening of May 24th, 1963 whilst punting on the river from Durham City—Carolyn Venn.

**A White Scented Violet**—Although it is quite common to find white flowers of most plants. I was, nevertheless, very pleased to find a clump of white scented

violets growing on a wooded hillside three quarters of a mile north of Fourstones on April 15th, this year—F. Wade.

**Double Mayweed, *Matricaria inodora***— Whilst botanizing near Brasside Pond a plant of Mayweed was discovered with magnificent perfectly double flowers. No doubt this was a mutation but it is interesting to note that it has been recorded in these pages before from the Target Heap at Birtley by the Editor, (see *The Vasculum* Vol. XXI, No. 3 of August, 1935.) T.C.D.

## RECORDS

### INSECTS

#### LEPIDOPTERA—BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

<b><i>Laothoe populi</i> L.</b> Poplar Hawkmoth.	66
One seen resting for about 10 minutes, on a tuft of grass near a poplar tree, in the "wild" part of our garden in Durham City, on June 18th. 1961.—A. N. Gibby.	
<b><i>Philudoria potatoria</i> L.</b> Drinker.	66
Not generally distributed now with us; still it has turned up recently in Newham Bog: it occurs sparingly on Waldridge Fell and on the coast.—J.W.H.H.	
<b><i>Cerura hermelina</i> auct.</b> Poplar Kitten	67
Occurring occasionally at Riding Mill.	
<b><i>Cerura furcula</i> Clerck.</b> Sallow Kitten.	66, 67
Eggs discovered on a leaf of Goat Willow near Coombe Bridges in August 1962 (66). Occasional near Riding Mill (67).	
<b><i>Notodonta ziczac</i> L.</b> Pebble Prominent.	67
Common round Riding Mill.	
<b><i>Odontosis carmelita</i> Esp.</b> Scarce Prominent.	67
Taken at light in my garden in Riding Mill in most seasons recently, though only singly.	
<b><i>Thyatira batis</i> L.</b> Peach Blossom.	67
Common at Riding Mill.	
<b><i>Orgyia antiqua</i> L.</b> Common Vapourer.	67
Well distributed in the south of Northumberland.	
<b><i>Dasychira fascelina</i> L.</b> Dark Tussock	67, 68
Seldom met with, but found near Riding Mill where, as in other districts, larvae found resting exposed in spring are practically all parasitised. Also taken on Longframlington Moor in the north of the county. (68).	
<b><i>Leucoma salicis</i> L.</b> White Satin.	67
A fresh male at light. Riding Mill, in 1957.	
<b><i>Trichiura crataegi</i> L.</b> Pale Eggar.	66
Larvae taken in some numbers near Catcleugh.	
<b><i>Poecilocampa populi</i> L.</b> December Eggar.	67
Fairly common round Riding Mill.	
<b><i>Celama confusalis</i> H.S.</b> Least Black Arches.	67
Fairly common at Riding Mill in some seasons.	
<b><i>Sarothripus revayana</i> Scop.</b> Large Marbled Tort.	67
Occurs sparingly at Riding Mill, usually seen after hibernation.	
<b><i>Nudaria mundana</i> L.</b> Muslin Footman.	67
Fairly common at Riding Mill.	
<b><i>Cybosia mesomella</i> L.</b> Four-dotted Footman.	67
One only taken at light at Riding Mill in 1958.—F. W. Gardener.	
<b><i>Eupitheda succenturiata</i> L.</b> Bordered Pug.	67
Along the river near Newburn.	
<b><i>Eupithecia linariata</i> Schiff.</b> Toadflax Pug.	66, 67
Only a few years ago, this pretty little insect was regarded as a very rare insect with us. Now, chiefly owing to the spread of its foodplant, over pit heaps and waste land, it is quite common everywhere.	

- Eupithecia subfulvata** Haw. (*icterata* de Villers). 66.67.68  
 Also plentiful as larvae on various species of *Artemisia*.  
**Eupithecia trisignaria** H. S. Triple-spotted Pug. 66  
 This beautiful little pug moth has not been recorded previously from Co. Durham. Nevertheless, its larvae may be beaten freely from *Angelica* growing along the pathsides in Chopwell Woods.

HEMIPTERA-HETEROPTERA—PLANT-BUGS

- Salda scotica** Curtis. 66, 68  
 This interesting species is scattered over boggy land, especially near the coast, Alnmouth, Ross Links, Warkworth and Greatham Marshes.  
**S. littoralis** L. 66, 67, 68  
 Not so rare as the preceding, but with the same general distribution in our counties.  
**S. mono** Zett. 66  
 Quite rare in the Derwent Valley.

HYMENOPTERA—BEES, ETC.

- Psithyrus bohemicus** Seidi.  
 Bees were quite late and small in numbers in April and May. Still the Dwarf Willows attracted a few bumble bees to their catkins. Amongst these was a single queen of *Psithyrus bohemicus*; this bumble bee is a parasite on bees of the genus *Bombus*.—J.W.H.H.

FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS

- Myrrhis odorata** (L.) Scop. 66  
 At the base of a hedge near a main road in Durham City.—A. N. Gibby.  
**Neottia nidus-avis** (L.) Bird's-nest Orchid. 66  
 As usual with us only a single specimen was discovered near Muggleswick.  
**Lysimachia nemorum** L., Yellow Pimpernel. 67  
 In great quantity in the marsh along the Tyne near Wylam.—J.W.H.H.  
**Trientalis europea** L., Chickweed Wintergreen. 68  
 On the moor near Linsheels in the Cheviots.  
**Corydalis claviculata** (L.) —D.C. 68  
 With the preceding species and in great quantity.—J.YT.  
**Malaxis paludosa** (L.) Sw., Bog Orchid. 66  
 This orchid has attracted much attention during the last 30 years, for it has displayed a great tendency to abandon all its known stations in Northumberland and Durham. However, Winch recorded it from moors south of Wolsingham; a very close, planned examination of that area may reinstate it in our lists.  
 J.W.H.H.  
**Trifolium striatum** L., Soft Trefoil. 68  
 Sand pit near E. Learmouth.  
**Echium vulgare** L. Viper's Bugloss. 68  
 River gravels near Westnewton.  
**Anthyllus vulneraria** L., Kidney Vetch, Ladie's Fingers. 67, 68, 70  
 By the S. Tyne at Warden, Haltwhistle, Featherstone, Softley and Slaggyford (67). Ratcleugh Grags, near Hatton Steads, roadside near Holborn Mill, Coal Burn near Hetton Nortn Farm (68). Gowk Banks (70).  
**Scirpus sylvaticus** L., Wood Club-rush. 67, 68  
 S. Tyne near Featherstone, Rede between Blakehopeburnhaugh and Robs Wood, N. Tyne at Reedsmouth, Tyne Bridge, and at Otterstone Lee (67). N. bank of Coquet near Warton (68). G. A. & M. Swan.

# THE VASCULUM

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## BY THE WAY

### VANDALISM AND CRUELTY.

The news columns of many of our newspapers are full, nowadays, of complaints about wilful damage done by hooligans in public parks, houses in the process of erection, street lamps, street nameplates and the like. Only yesterday we came across a gang of youths busily engaged in felling young ash trees, in order to be ready for bonfires on November 5th. Not long ago we observed that the heather and purple moor-grass on Waldrige Fell had been fired in several places. In one case, permanent damage had been done as the fire had penetrated to the peat layer.

Another form of vandalism plus cruelty we saw practised a week ago, when we encountered half-a-dozen individuals, each armed with a gun, shooting at the wild fowl on one of the few sheets of water left in this area. The extent of their success may be gauged by the two Pintails which one of them was dangling proudly before him. If killing such tiny and interesting creatures represents sport then we do not recognise the description.

### LOCAL FOLKLORE.

Recently, in an informal discussion in one of our Societies, we were astounded to discover that most of those present knew practically nothing about our local folklore; the Lambton Worm seemed to provide the limit of our local knowledge.

In Northumberland and Durham, Mrs. H. H. Clark has lectured to our Societies on the subject, but little has been done otherwise to revive interest in it. Fifteen years ago, we made an appeal in the *Vasculum* for such a revival but this provoked a mere passing interest. Is it not possible for all of our Societies to join in, and stimulate a permanent interest in the subject?

### NEW SOCIETIES.

We were very glad when we learnt that the Sunderland Natural History Society had been successfully re-established for, in the past,

it played a useful part in the early days of the Northern Naturalists' Union. However, its success reminds us of Oliver Twist's famous request — more!

Formerly, quite a number of our original Societies have flourished for a while, and then faded out. Such Societies were the Hexham Natural History Society, the Wolsingham N.H.S., the Vale of Derwent N.H.S. Besides these, there are several apparently suitable centres which have never possessed a natural history society. In Durham such centres are Bishop Auckland, Stockton, Hartlepool, Barnard Castle and South Shields. In Northumberland, except in Hexham and Newcastle (if the latter may be regarded as being in Northumberland) there has never been a natural history society in spite of the number of apparently suitable positions. Further, in both counties, there exist suitable centres in which junior societies could be built up. These could be independent, or attached, like the Chester-le-Street school group, to major societies.

Such juvenile units function by forming sections likely to advance the study of Natural History in all of our areas. Such a tendency has been a marked feature of the N.N.U. outings during the past years.

#### PRINTING NEWS.

It was with deep regret that we learnt some weeks ago, of the death of Mr. Allan, the head of the firm of printers, Messrs. T. & G. Allan, Ltd., who printed this journal. Not only was Mr. Allan a naturalist himself but he was keenly interested in the continued success of the *Vasculum*. This manifested itself in the very favourable terms he charged the Union. With his death the remaining partners have decided to close down the printing works so that we have lost not only a friend but our printer as well.

Inevitably the change to a new printer heralds a more realistic charge for this journal, and it may be necessary, in the future, to raise the subscription rate to cover its cost. For the time being, however, the price remains the same, and we will wait for at least a year before reviewing the position. We are quite sure that our new printers, Messrs. Clemmet and Grimes, will do their best to meet our rather special demands.

### THE SOCIETIES.

#### NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION.

The 105th Field Meeting took place in Shadforth Dene and the nearby quarries on July 13th. A somewhat smaller party than usual assembled at Shadforth Village, but shortage of numbers was amply made up for by tremendous enthusiasm.

Led by Mr. Dunn, the party set off along the path at the east end of the village and soon met Dr. Todd who acted as our guide during the course of the afternoon. In the fields leading towards the dene we encountered plants such as Yellow Rattle, Petty Spurge,

Field Scabious, Black Knapweed, Greater Knapweed, Bladder Campion, and Agrimony. As soon as we entered the dene the character of the flora began to change, plants more typical of magnesian limestone becoming more frequent. These included Thyme, Lady's Bedstraw, Greater Knapweed, Restharrow, Quaking Grass, Sea Plantain, Burnet Saxifrage, Black Bryony, Rockrose, Salad Burnet, etc. Several wet patches yielded Sneezewort, Brooklime, Ragged Robin, Water Mint, and several species of **Juncus** and **Carex**.

We all settled down for a picnic tea amongst the limestone flowers at the top of the dene, after which several members left with Mr. R. Lofthouse to see the museum which he has made in his home at Ludworth. The remainder walked through several fields to some old limestone quarries west of the dene. Here the limestone flora was even more specialised with Vipers Bugloss, Musk Thistle, Blue Moor Grass, **Sesleria caerulea**, and extensive patches of Greater Knapweed and Rockrose.

Not many insects were on the wing but we did see the Small Heath Butterfly, the Silver Ground Carpet moth, Middle-barred Minor, Lead Belle and the two grass moths **Crambus culmellus** and **Crambus pratellus**.

Throughout the afternoon Mr. Gent worked away at the birds to record Partridge, Carrion Crow, Rook, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Greenfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Corn Bunting, House Sparrow and Swift.

On September 14th, for the 106th Field Outing we went to Nicholson's Pond at East Rainton by kind permission of Mr. J. Wilson. The weather was fine and in spite of the difficulty of finding the pond some twenty to thirty members were present. Amongst them was Professor J. W. Heslop Harrison and how pleased we were to see him after his long illnesses.

Leaving Mr. Wilson's hut, we worked right round the pond making little detours into bays and on to islands wherever possible. We found the pond well vegetated with the Canadian Pondweed, Water Milfoil, Water Persicaria, Marestalk, and two pondweeds **Potamogeton pectinatus** and **P. natans**. In one small bay we found a species of **Nitella** which had not been noticed in the pond previously. The banks also were heavily clothed with quantities of the Great Hairy Willow Herb, the Great Reedmace, Bullrush and many species of **Juncus**. In one corner we were amazed to see literally hundreds of seeding heads of **Orchis purpurella** and could imagine what a beautiful sight it must have been in the early part of the summer.

Insects were not common but a few Microlepidoptera were seen whilst larvae and pupae of **Nonagria typhae** were found in the Great Reedmace, **Typha latifolia**. A school party from Sunderland concentrated on the investigation of the pond animals which were found to be very plentiful. They found the Pond Skater, Water

Scorpion, **Daphnia**, Whirligig Beetle, larvae and adults of other Water Beetles, Dragonfly nymphs. Mayfly nymphs and at least three species of Water Boatmen.

Mr. Gent reported that the bird population of the pond was not large and consisted of a dozen Coot with two fledglings, two Moorhens, a Little Grebe, a small party of Black-headed Gulls and an adult and immature Common Gull. Several Swallows were flying about and a Magpie and a Carrion Crow were observed flying past.

A flock of about two hundred Linnets were seen in the fields alongside the pond, and the harsh call-note of the Willow Tit was heard in the dense scrub which clothed its banks. Other birds noted were Blackbird, Greenfinch and Meadow Pipit.

A picnic tea was taken near Mr. Wilson's hut and indeed some members were fortunate enough to be his guests round his fire.

Altogether this was a very varied and interesting afternoon. We left after a profitable time, feeling very grateful to our host for so generously throwing open his property for our investigation. We hope we did not do too much damage.

#### ANNFIELD PLAIN AND STANLEY NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB.

There have been three full day outings of the Club during the late summer, first to Stainmore on July 29th, to the Wooler district on August 10th and to the Nenthead, Alston and Garrigill district on August 24th.

On the Stainmore excursion we ascended the William Gill as far as the Arkengarthdale Moors where we inspected some very old coal mines. From here we crossed the moors to the head of Gunnerside Gill where we saw old lead mines and smelting mills. The ramble ended at Gunnerside after a fine, warm day.

In the Cheviot Hills we started at North Middleton but before we had reached the Harthope Valley it began to rain heavily. In spite of this we followed the Harthope Burn to its confluence with the Carey Burn where most of the party took a short cut back to Wooler. The more hardy members continued up the Carey Burn to the lonely farmhouse of Broadstruther and then over the moors to Wooler. All this time it had been raining steadily but we enjoyed the walk in spite of it.

On the last excursion we split into two parties, one starting at Nenthead and the other at Alston. Later we met at Garrigill and so home again. This ended our outings for the 1963 season and looking back we must admit to having had many more wet ones than usual, an indication of the excessive rain this year.

#### BIRTLEY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The most ambitious activity of the Birtley Natural History Society to date was the expedition to South Rona in the Inner Hebrides, during July and August. This was made possible by the permission of Messrs. Gillies and Macleod of the Island of Fladday, from whom

the cottage was rented and who readily granted us complete freedom of the island. Accordingly, ten members arrived on the island on 27th July and settled in. Four more arrived at the beginning of the second week and after a very memorable stay we left on August 17th.

Efforts were made to carry out botanical and zoological surveys which would be as complete as the time allowed but the lighter side of life was not forgotten. Those who took part will always remember the happy, carefree days and the wonderful weather. The biological results of the expedition will be published in due course.

Apart from this the usual local outings continue to be a feature of the society. Since the summer we have visited such places as Brasside Ponds and the woods between Holmside and Bumhope.

#### SUNDERLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

After a successful winter programme of indoor lectures, the Society has continued its activities during the summer months with a series of outdoor meetings.

A number of working groups has been organised to cover the more important branches of Natural History, i.e. Ornithology, Botany, Geology and Entomology, and these groups have arranged a series of evening outings to local places of interest, usually on Wednesday nights. Most of these have been very well attended and quite a lot of valuable work has been done on the Natural History of the areas worked.

In addition to these local outings, four general, full day excursions have also been arranged to the Fame Islands, Widdybank Fell, Crag Lough and Weardale.

Naturally, all these outings were primarily to examine the fauna and flora of the areas visited but they also had another function very important to a young society like ours. They have given the members a chance to get to know each other and enabled the officials to gain some idea of the range of interests and abilities present among the members. All this should be very useful in ensuring the continued smooth running of the society.

The highlight of the season, at least in the bird world, was the arrival of a duck Smew on Mowbray Park Lake outside the Museum in Sunderland on July 1st.—it is still with us today (September 9th.).

A full programme has been arranged for the winter session, with the Annual General Meeting on September 30th.

#### NOTES AND RECORDS

##### NOTES.

**The Sheep's Bit, *Jasione montana* L. in our Counties.**—In Baker and Tate's Flora several localities for this species of plant in our counties are given. However, no recent records for the species in its old stations exist; nor have any new ones been detected. However, we have found it not

uncommonly in the adjacent county of Kirkcudbright (v-c. 73). Can anyone supply recent records for it in Northumberland or Durham?

**The Fruiting of the Black Poplar.**—For several years I have had a black poplar, *Populus nigra*, under observation because most of the branches fail to fruit. Nevertheless, one branch, facing south-west, has recently produced female catkins. This season, for the first time, I have noted that these catkins have fallen after having undergone a process of ripening(?). Catkins picked from the ground proved to have aborted seeds, covered by dense masses of long white silky hairs arising from the stalks of the ovules.

**Distortion of Greater Knapweed Fruits.**—This is a brief additional note to that in the *Vasculum*, Vol. XLVII, No. 3. October, 1962, reporting distortion of the Greater Knapweed at East Rainton. These plants were visited again in March and we confirmed that many heads were galled by *Urophora* larvae. It was also noted that a number of others appear to have been attacked, probably by birds; the heads were torn and although still containing chaff and some seeds, had empty spaces in the middle. We were unable to be certain whether the gaps had contained seeds or whether there could have been galls there. However, if birds had been the cause, in no case had all the seeds been taken. J.T.

**Bird Notes from Tanfield**—Green Sandpiper—At Tanfield Ponds on August 7th, a party of 5 birds on Autumn Passage. Common Sandpiper—Three birds on Autumn Passage were frequently noticed between August 7th and September 8th. Greenshank—Tanfield Ponds, August 19th, one; August 21st, a party of 4 birds; August 25th, one, all on Autumn Passage. Dunlin—Tanfield Ponds, August 19th, one and August 21st, one. (These ponds are 13 miles inland from the coast but in most years a few Dunlin are seen in July and August on their way from the moorland breeding grounds to the coast.) Common Wheatear—On August 25th at least six birds in a field near Shield Row, Stanley. Marsh Tit—On July 20th a single bird noted near the ponds at Tanfield. Tufted Duck—Tanfield Ponds, July 13th and August 3rd, three immature birds. R. Marston Palmer.

**Bird Notes for Spring and Summer 1963.** — Conditions of severe cold prevailed during the early part of the year, the ground at Gosforth not being clear of snow until March 8th. Fieldfares and Redwings as well as a cock Brambling visited the garden at the rear of the house for scraps. More Greenfinches were about than usual, one bird trapped in a neighbour's aviary and released carried a ring which had been attached at Bamburgh in January 1962.

Two Willow Warblers were in song in Gosforth Park on April 19th and had increased in numbers by the 23rd when two Swallows were flying over the lake. A Tree Pipit was heard near Ryton on April 25th.

Common Sandpipers were present along the Wansbeck between Morpeth and Mitford on April 27th. A single Cuckoo was heard, as also was a Chiffchaff and the many sounds of Willow Warblers showed them to be well distributed. Swallows and Sand Martins were also about.

On May 4th a Sedge Warbler was heard at Gosforth Park Lake. Swifts (10 plus) were first observed over their breeding site at Gosforth on May 10th. House Martins were seen near Gosforth Park on May 18th when several Whitethroats and a Wood and Garden Warbler were heard in song. A small party of Tree Sparrows were observed at Gosforth Park Lake on April 23rd, birds being also noted at several points between Morpeth and Mitford on the 27th.

The Mistle Thrush would appear to have had a successful breeding season. Family parties have been seen in the playing fields at the Royal Grammar School and in Forsyth Road, Newcastle as well as in Gosforth. C. J. Gent.

**A note about two interesting plants.**—Whilst on the Cheviot ramble referred to above under the Annfield Plain and Stanley Naturalists' Club report, the Maiden Pink, *Dianthus deltoides* L. was found growing freely among the crags at Old Middleton. Later on the same day the Alpine Willow Herb, a plant only 6 inches high, was found in marshy ground by the side of a tiny burn on the slopes of Hart Heugh. Fred Wade.

(The old "Alpine Willow Herb," *Epilobium alpinum* L. is now split into two species, *E. anagallidifolium* Lam. and *E. alsinifolium* Vill. It would be useful, therefore, if Mr. Wade or his naturalist friends could find out which of the two species they did in fact see in the Cheviots.) Ed.

**Plant Notes from Consett.**—During the summer outings of the Consett Naturalists' Field Club, the following observations on plants are of interest. At Gunnerside Gill we found the New Zealand Willow Herb, *Epilobium nerterioides* A. Cunn. Round-leaved Sundew, *Drosera rotundifolia* L. Common Butterwort, *Pinguicula vulgaris* L. and Grass of Parnassus, *Parnassia palustris* L. were all seen again in Juniper Valley where it was pleasing to note that the Butterwort and Grass of Parnassus are both increasing in numbers. At Combe Bridges the Broad-leaved Helleborine, *Epipactis helleborine* (L) Crantz, and the Giant Bellflower, *Campanula latifolia* L. were both in full flower, as also were the Alkanet, *Pentaglottis sempervirens* (L) Tausch and Orpine, *Sedum telephium* L at Blanchland in September. On the same day at Blanchland we saw a white variety of Devils-bit, *Succisa pratensis* Moench. Fred Bell.

**Note on Sawfly Galls in Durham.**—Of our gall-making sawflies the commonest is that of *Pontania pedunculi* Htg. This species is attached to Salices of the Caprea group but, within that group, it seems to prefer *Salix aurita*. In fact, the other two members of the Capreae, *Salix atrocinerea* and *S. caprea* are often totally neglected.

Yesterday, in a wood near Haswell, we found a great number of sawflies, most of which belonged to the species *S. atrocinerea* or its hybrids. A careful search revealed the presence of *Pontania bridgmanni* Cam. upon them in some numbers. However, amongst our finds were three *Pontania pedunculi* galls, the first time we have encountered that form in the Haswell Rainton area or locally on *S. atrocinerea*. J.W.H.H.

**Remarks on Chimbacche Fagella Fab.**—A careful examination of most established oak and birch woods in April in the Team Valley area will reveal the fact that *C. fagella* is present in both sexes. Moreover, many are difficult to see on the tree trunks; firstly, because many examples of both sexes are melanistic, and secondly, because the females are more or less apterous.

Eggs are laid in due course, and the resultant larvae pupate in September and October. These larvae have very remarkable front legs similar to those of the allied species *C. phryganella* Hubn. and *Cheimophila salicella* Hubn. The range of these species is quite wide, but little is known of their stations in the area between Durham and the coast. Therefore, it is worthwhile to place on record the fact that *C. fagella* occurs in Hawthorn Dene and in the Pespool Woods near Haswell. J.T. & J.W.H.H.

**Birds and their Nests in 1963.**—Not many nests were noticed during the past season, but the following notes are of interest, though by no means exceptional. On June 14th, whilst wandering about in the Derwenthaugh Railway Sidings I came upon the nest of a Yellow Wagtail in a tussock of grass. There were five young birds in the nest and a later observation showed that they were all successfully reared. On the same day, but under some stacked rails, I found a Pied Wagtail's nest which later yielded four youngsters. The next day, June 15th, a Willow Warbler's nest with young was discovered on the banks of the River Tyne at North Wylam. I did not count the young as the parents were busily feeding them and anxiously waiting to get into the nest. On June 25th a pair of Kestrels successfully reared two youngsters in the Vickers-Armstrong Elswick Works. I handled one of the young which had fallen into the yard and carefully released it to make a safe landing on the roof of the factory. L. P. Hird.

RECORDS.

INSECTS.

LEPIDOPTERA—BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

**Euchloe cardamines** L. Orange Tip Butterfly.

Of regular occurrence throughout the Riding Mill district and fairly common in favourable years.

67

<b>Colias croceus</b> Fourc. Clouded Yellow Butterfly.	67
An immigrant which comes from Europe nearly every year but seldom reaches as far north as our counties. 1947 is the only year with definite records in the Riding Mill district. In that year it was frequently to be seen about the district between August 20th and October 3rd.	
<b>Gonepteryx rhamni</b> L. Brimstone Butterfly.	67
A hibernated male taken flying across the garden in June 1950. The insect has not been seen in the locality since and I feel certain that the capture was that of an accidental introduction.	
<b>Argynnis aglaia</b> L. Dark Green Fritillary.	67
Probably well distributed in the woodlands of the Tyne area, though only in small numbers. Occasionally visits the garden at Riding Mill.	
<b>Argynnis euphrosyne</b> L. The Pearl-bordered Fritillary.	67
Well established in the West Tyne area, and sometimes plentiful in clearings.	
<b>Argynnis selene</b> Schiff. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.	67
Occurs in the same area as <b>A. euphrosyne</b> but much more local and less plentiful.	
<b>Nymphalis antiopa</b> L. The Camberwell Beauty.	67
This beautiful butterfly arrives in this country from Scandinavia only very occasionally. A worn male was taken in a neighbouring garden in Riding Mill in April 1948.	
<b>Nymphalis io</b> L. The Peacock butterfly.	67
Observed in most recent years in Riding Mill, but not more than two or three individuals in a season.	
<b>Eumenis semele</b> L. The Grayling Butterfly.	67, 68
On the Northumberland coast only in our counties, where it prefers sand dunes. It is particularly common at Bamburgh and on Holy Island.	
<b>Coenonympha tullia</b> Mull. Large Heath Butterfly.	67, 68
Very local on the moors in the Pennines and Cheviots of Northumberland, but usually in strong colonies where it occurs.	
<b>Callophrys rubi</b> L. Green Hairstreak.	67, 68
Apparently overlooked in Northumberland prior to 1926, but has in fact a wide distribution wherever heather. <b>Calluna vulgaris</b> L. occurs.	
<b>Erynnis tages</b> L. Large Skipper.	67, 68
Distributed in Northumberland, but usually only taken singly.	
F. W. Gardiner.	

#### FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS.

<b>Ranunculus auricomus</b> L. Goldilocks.	66
A small colony of this plant was seen in a small wood within the Durham City boundary.	
<b>Saxifraga granulata</b> L. Meadow Saxifrage.	66
This plant was noted again this year in a field in Durham City, where it has persisted for many years. A. N. Gibby.	
<b>Carex pendula</b> Huds. Pendulous Sedge.	66
Not common round Chester-le-Street, but a large colony was discovered last May in the Mill Wood at Lumley. T. C. D.	
<b>Blysmus compressus</b> (L.) Panz. ex Link. Broad Blysmus.	67
North bank of S. Tyne near Whitechapel (2 miles E. of Bardon Mill). Rede between Blakehopeburnhaugh and Robs Wood. Near the mouth of the Chevington Burn. Wansbeck near Kirkwhelpington Mill.	
<b>Juniperus communis</b> L. Juniper.	67
West bank of the E. Alien near Sinderhope.	
<b>Epilobium nerteriodes</b> Cun. New Zealand Willow Herb.	67, 68
Kielder Burn near its junction with Ridge End Burn. Pond near Plashetts (67). Harthope Burn near Langlee. Lilburn Burn near Lilburn Tower (68).	
<b>Stellaris nemorum</b> L. Wood Stitchwort, Wood Chickweed.	67
Hareshaw Linn. G. A. and M. Swan.	

# THE VASCULUM

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## BY THE WAY

### THE FARNE ISLANDS SLAUGHTER 1963.

Recent events leading to the slaughter of hundreds of grey seals must have sickened all true naturalists. We have read with disgust of the way two sharpshooters have gone amongst defenceless, trusting seal pups and put them to death. This, mark you, has taken place on the Farn Islands, which is Natural Trust land. We have always understood that National Trust properties were created for the specific purpose of providing sanctuaries for our native plants and animals; places where the wild creatures would be able to enjoy a little peace and quiet, away from man's interference. If the special provisions of the National Trust can be broken so flagrantly by a Government Department, how can we possibly expect our native species to survive elsewhere? Here is a mammal, the largest mammal breeding in Britain, which in terms of world numbers is rare. Yet it is killed off in large numbers to satisfy "Big Business" in the shape of the salmon fisheries of the Tweed and the East Coast of Scotland.

We would suggest, too, that the attempt to justify the killing set out in H.M. Stationery Office leaflet "Grey Seals and Fisheries" (1963), is woefully deficient of scientific data or reasoning. No long term research work has been carried out to attempt to predict the effect on the Grey Seal population as a whole, of this mass murder. We would prefer that man should learn to live with this animal rather than exterminate it. All over the world concern is being expressed about the future of the world's big game and especially of those in Africa. For this a World Wild Life Conservation Society has recently been formed. Yet here, on our very doorstep, our own big game is being slaughtered and this with the sanction of a Government Department, indeed with its recommendation. We just cannot understand this.

What are we to do? There is nothing to be done about the present affair, but we can do something to see that such a disgraceful thing never happens again. Write to your M.P., write to your local newspaper, publicise it in your local society meetings and give it the notoriety it deserves.

#### THE GUISER'S PLAY.

Nearly thirty years ago casual references to our local folklore, made in some of our Societies, caused a renewal of general interest in the Guiser's Play. Almost immediately, it was discovered that, whilst detached fragments could be recovered in the remoter areas of Northumberland, in Durham, matters were almost hopeless. However, by the efforts of one of our group the whole of the Team Valley Text was collected. Further, Miss Heron trained some of her school children to act the play, and her work met with great appreciation and success. In addition, the text was published in that fine work "The Three Northern Counties of England."

Recently, inquiries have been made in some of our Societies about the present position when it was found that very few of our members knew little more than a few odd lines. Still, we should like to have these with a view to making comparisons of the play as it existed throughout our two Counties, Northumberland and Durham.

If any of our members remember lines, detached or otherwise, which they have heard in our district, we should like to have them as well.

### THE SOCIETIES.

#### NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION.

The Autumn Meeting was held by the kind invitation of the Science Laboratories of Durham University in the Appleby Theatre on Saturday, October 19th, 1963.

The President, Mr. C. J. Gent, took the chair, to introduce the lecturer, Mr. D. J. Bellamy, who talked about "A Botanist's First Look at Africa."

Mr. Bellamy began by showing a few slides of the journey he and his party undertook to Sierra Leone where they were to carry out some botanical research. After taking a few days to acclimatise, the party then started on the first of three trips they had planned to the limits of the territory. This was to the swamps near the coast in the north. We were taken through mangrove swamps and rice fields and shown slides of the swamp plants some of which, e.g. a pipewort, were new to science. The second trip went in the opposite direction through huge forest trees to the southern border with Liberia. Lastly an excursion eastwards to the mountainous region

was undertaken for the special purpose of studying the upland rice fields there. In this district rice was grown, not in swamps, but on hill slopes which have such a high rainfall that there is enough water from precipitation to simulate the conditions of a lowland swamp. The members of the party were unable to enter these rice fields because of abundance of the Bilharzia parasite. It was necessary, therefore, to persuade the immunised rice planters to collect the swamp plants required by the expedition. Again we saw several species of pipewort.

The lecture was followed by tea and then we inspected the exhibits in a nearby room. These included colour slides and a table cloth decorated with pictures of Bewicke's birds brought by Dr. Todd. By a sheer coincidence Professor J. W. Heslop Harrison also showed a copy of one of Bewicke's woodcuts but his was on an old Insurance Policy ! There was also an exhibit of postage stamps showing butterflies, beetles and birds by Mrs. Gibby, and a series of butterflies and moths caught by Mr. Dunn on the Hebridean Island of South Rona during the summer expedition of the Birtley N.H.S. These were important in that a parallel series of each species from England showed how evolution is occurring on the island. There were also diploid and tetraploid examples of *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* by Professor Harrison, pressed plants from north Italy by the University Department of Botany, pressed plants and pictures of Corsica by Mr. K. Thompson and a series of succulent plants from the greenhouses of Bede Grammar School, Sunderland, brought by Mr. Alker and his boys.

#### BIRTLEY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The winter lecture programme has proved a great success so far. It started on September 17th with Mr. Dunn's account of the Society's expedition to the Island of South Rona, illustrated by coloured transparencies taken by various members of the expedition. This was followed on October 1st by Mr. R. Lowe talking about our local Mollusca, a subject which has never been attempted before in our society. On October 15th. Dr. J. C. Coulson of Durham University's Department of Zoology lectured on the life-history and habits of the Kittiwake, a bird which he has studied for many years along the coasts of our two counties and elsewhere. Then followed a talk by Mr. G. Stansfield of the Sunderland Museum, on our small mammals which proved to be quite fascinating. On November 12th. Dr. Jones talked about the history of firedamp in the coalmines of Durham and Northumberland which took us right from earliest coalmining times through the terrible years of 1830 to 1860 in our local coal mines to the present day. This was followed by the beautiful slides of Fungi from the camera of Mr. J. J. Robson, to a carefully reasoned discussion of British and foreign violets by Professor D. H. Valentine of the Department of Botany, University of Durham.

At the same time we continued our organised field meetings on the first Sunday each month together with several irregular ones.

These have taken us to Bumhope Woods, Holmside, Cocken, Brasside and to various points along the Wear and other local streams.

#### ANNFIELD PLAIN AND STANLEY NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB.

The first lecture of the Winter Session was given on September 11th by Mr. J. Vincent of Consett, on "North and o'er the Border." This was accompanied by coloured slides and a very amusing commentary. October 9th saw Mr. W. E. Gladstone talking about the Roman Wall, then Dr. D. A. Robson, on October 23rd, lectured about volcanoes with special reference to the Cheviots. On November 6th Mr. Wanless gave an illustrated talk on the Zermatt valley during which the beauty and technical perfection of his transparencies, both of the scenery and of the flowers, impressed us very much. Mr. W. B. Toyn spoke on December 4th on "More North Country Songs," when he gave examples of the two local poets Tommy Armstrong and Alec Barrass, songs on the tape recorder and some new tunes composed by himself to fit the words of some of the poems.

We had our last organised ramble of the summer series on September 21st from Sunderland Bridge to Esh Winning with Mr. J. Pickering as leader. Other less formal outings have been to the Cheviots and along parts of the Northumberland Coast.

#### SUNDERLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The first half of our Winter session has been very successful, both in the quality of the lectures and in the numbers attending them.

On October 14th Dr. Moss dealt very fully with our local seaweeds and on October 28th, Mr. Bellamy discussed more general biological problems in "An Energy Flux called Life." On November 11th Miss Oates corrected many of our misconceptions when she described her trip to Iceland and the profusion of wild life to be found there; and Dr. Ashby, on November 25th, gave a very instructive talk on the "Natural History of Field Mice."

However, it is chiefly in the efforts of its own members that the vigour of a society is best judged and the *Conversazione* which was held on December 9th left little doubt on this score and augurs well for the future. Geology was represented by an exhibit showing the Lower Cambrian succession in Scotland by Dr. White, and an exhibit of local geology by Dr. Bennison,—both models of lucidity.

Mr. Dartnall and Miss Boyes had, respectively, a saltwater and a freshwater aquarium, and the botanical exhibits included a selection of herbarium sheets of our local flora by Mr. Alker, and a collection of over twenty plants found in flower the previous day by Mr. Lowe. After a discussion of these exhibits, the meeting was ended by showing a series of slides of our fauna and flora, taken by members during the past year.

## CONSETT AND DISTRICT NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB.

On Wednesday, 27th November, the Club's Annual Dinner was held in the Freemason's Arms, Consett, when there was a gathering of over a hundred members.

The Chair was occupied by Mr. T. Hall, who, after saying Grace, gave the toast of the Queen. Mrs. Lynn then proposed the toast of our guest of honour. Professor J. W. Heslop Harrison, who was filling this position for the fifteenth time. During her speech she produced an old photograph of an N.N.U. meeting at Shull in the 1920's which she passed around. On it we saw the Professor with one of Mrs. Lynn's relatives. Replying to the toast Mr. J. J. Robson emphasised how much Professor Harrison had done for Natural History in the North and how much we needed men of such calibre in view of the proposed grey seal killing on the Fame Islands.

The toast of the Club was proposed by Mr. Hall, during which he thanked the various officers of the club for their various contributions to make 1963 such a successful year.

Lastly Mr. Ashworth gave a lecture entitled "Island in the Sun." The island proved to be Sardinia and the accompanying slides gave us a perfect picture of the sun. A vote of thanks to Mr. Ashworth followed and this was carried with acclamation.

## NOTES AND RECORDS

### NOTES.

**Notes on the Downy Rose, *Rosa villosa*.**—Early in December, we paid a visit to Urpeth Bottoms in order to see what shrubs had fruited well, and which badly. Incidentally, as we walked along the narrow path, we examined a fine colony of the white-flowered, *Rosa villosa* var. *incerta*. As all the *Villosa* roses, unlike the *Canina* forms, had already shed their leaves we were able to study the bark on branches and stems of all ages. In doing so, we found that the bark on plants appertaining to the var. *incerta* was greenish in colour, freckled faintly with red. On the other hand, that on typical bushes was of a rich deep red. There was thus no difficulty in differentiating between the two forms, even in late autumn and winter. J.W.H.H.

**A Curious *Salix viminalis* L. at Cocken.**—On December 1st we worked the banks of the Wear near Cocken. Practically all the trees had shed their leaves. Nevertheless, one male *S. viminalis* carried a full complement of leaves. These, although predominantly yellow, carried an irregular mosaic of yellow and green. J.W.H.H.

**A Hybrid between *Rosa villosa* L. and *R. spinosissima* L.**—Early in October we went to Blanchland to obtain seeds from a hybrid between *R. villosa* and *R. spinosissima* which grows along one of the small streams not far away. We had formerly considered this rose as being totally sterile, for its petals fall at once, whilst the sepals and floral appendages turn brown. On this occasion, however, about four per cent of the hips did not do so. In their cases, irregular and sometimes isolated portions grow slightly and change from green to red. No matter what the amount of growth the hip displays, it dies finally. Further, it must be pointed out that, what look like sound fruit do not give rise to young plants. J.W.H.H.

**Poppies in County Durham.**—At the beginning of the century all three of our commoner poppies, *Papaver rhoeas*, *P. dubium*, and *P. argemone*, were not uncommon with us. Now, however, as a general rule, only the Field Poppy, *P. rhoeas*, occurs with us. Nevertheless, this season a strong colony of *P. dubium* was discovered along the Newton Road (66). Can anyone supply further stations for the species? The same request applies to *Papaver argemone*, last seen in the Team Valley fifty years ago. J.W.H.H.

**The Ivy Broomrape, *Orobancha hederæ* Duby.**—A dozen years ago, a single spike of this plant occurred spontaneously on ivy in my garden. This plant, and its progeny, have flowered each successive year in July, producing variable numbers of inflorescences but, this year, one flower-head only was noted in July, and this supplied an abundance of good seeds. Later, however, during the last week in October, seven fine flower spikes were developed only to be destroyed by early frosts. J.W.H.H.

**The Valerian Pug in our Counties.**—Robson, in his Catalogue of the Lepidoptera of Northumberland and Durham, states that the only collector who had met with the Valerian Pug Moth, (*Eupithecia valerianata* Hubn.) in our counties was Mr. John Gardner who found the larvae not uncommonly on *Valeriana officinalis*. Robson, himself, never met with it either as larva or imago. Although the foodplant, valerian, is quite common and widespread, despite careful search, the moth has not been met with elsewhere in Durham than in Gardner's station, Hesleden Dene. Nevertheless, Mr. George Nicholson, discovered the species in some numbers in Prestwick Carr and at Wylam in Northumberland. More recently, we have a previously unrecorded note, by Mr. F. W. Gardner, of larvae at Riding Mill. Mr. Nicholson does not suggest beating as the best method of securing the larvae: he recommends bundles of the foodplant to be taken from favourable localities to be kept in water, and later shaken over white paper. The larvae fall, and are conspicuous amongst the fallen petals. Then they are collected and placed in receptacles suitable for pupation—an event which takes place in August. J.W.H.H.

**We Visit Three Minor Quarries.**—On October 27th we went to several small quarries lying north of the main Durham-Hartlepool Road, not far from Strawberry Hill. We found that their flora was much the same as that of larger ones and just as rich. However, there were novelties, for we discovered great quantities of the Field Madder, *Sherardia arvensis*—usually a fairly common plant but not detected by us previously on the Magnesian Limestone. Further, on Cleavers, *Galium aparine*, we observed its special Eriophyid Mite. This, likewise, had not been noted in this area.

As the time for our examination was limited we left, determined to conduct a more scientific survey later. E. Hall.

**Bird Notes from Stanley.**—Two adult Whooper Swans were on the Tanfield ponds, Stanley, on October 13th, during a period of severe northerly winds, on which the birds may have drifted from their breeding grounds in Iceland. (My first record for these ponds during fourteen years of birdwatching there.)

**Waxwing:** From November 25th to November 29th, a party of nine birds frequented the gardens of Eldon Place, off the Haymarket in the centre of Newcastle. They fed mainly on haws and were very tame, coming to drink from pools of rainwater by the side of a pavement busily thronged with passing students. (Waxwings erupt and invade this country in those winters when there is a short supply of berries, their chief food, in their breeding grounds in Northern Russia.)

Curlew Sandpiper: Budle Bay, Northumberland, September 14th, a party of four birds.

Grey Plover: Budle Bay, on September 14th, a party of three birds.

Great Skua: On September 14th, one flying north off the Stag Rocks, Bamburgh.

Arctic Skua: On September 14th, at least a dozen birds over the sea in the Bamburgh area. R.

Marston Palmer.

**More Bird Notes.**—It is worth noting that during a visit to Bolam Lake in Northumberland on December 14th, a large number of birds were seen. These included 6 Whooper Swans (5 adults and 1 cygnet), one pair of Mute Swans with at least two cygnets, 3 Shovelers, many Pochard, Tufted Duck, Coot and others too far away to identify.

Another outstanding event was the presence of a single waxwing in the orchard of the Isolation Hospital at Chester-le-Street on December 16th. R. Harris.

**A Mystery in the Cheviots.**—While rambling in the Cheviot Hills on November 10th, a day of incessant rain, I had the misfortune to be overtaken by fog and in consequence lost my way. I was benighted on the fells among crags and heather. While sheltering behind a cliff, a strong wind dispersed the fog and I was amazed to see points of light gliding about above the heather. I watched them, fascinated, and must admit that I had never seen anything like this before. I am certain they were insects flying in an erratic manner, about a foot or so above the heather. I quite forgot my plight and tried to catch one but they were too illusive. The bright speck of light appeared to be on the insect's head as it could move it about and when on the ground the light could be made to shine for either a short or a long distance, plainly showing up the grass and the stems of the heather. I also noticed that some of them could change their light from white to pink.

When the moon arose, I was able to make my way to Wooler Moor Farm where the farmer and his wife made me very welcome. Later, I arrived at Wooler Youth Hostel at 4-30 a.m. where I spent the rest of the night.

Looking at the map some time later at home, I think the place where I saw the insects was near a high point called Watch Hill near Wooler Common Farm. To verify my statements I intend to go back to the place with a companion next summer and even if I have to stay out on the moors all night I will spare no effort to capture one of these night-flying insects. Fred Wade.

Can anyone throw any light? on this mystery? So far as we know, the only insect which fits Mr. Wade's description is the European Firefly. It seems impossible that this insect could be found so far north, and even so it would not be on the wing on a cold, wet, English, November night!—Ed.

**The Recovery of a Bird Ring.**—On Sunday, November 17th, when leading a party of rambles along the Northumberland coast from Boulmer to Beadnell, I found a dead shag with a ring on the foreshore near Newton by the Sea. I took the ring off its leg and sent it to the British Trust for Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire. In due course I received a letter of thanks together with details of the ringing. The bird was adult and had been ringed on the Farn Islands between 1953 and 1961. Fred Wade.

**Hibernation in Bumble Bees.**—Bees of the genus *Bombus* die out in the Autumn of each year except for the young queens, which hibernate. All this is well known from the textbooks but I had never before encountered a hibernating queen until December 1st this year. When digging up some dahlia tubers in my garden I unearthed a queen *Bombus terrestris* which moved slightly, showing that it was alive. This occurred in very loose soil so the insect was carefully buried again. T.C.D.

## RECORDS.

## INSECTS.

## LEPIDOPTERA—BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

<b>Smerinthus ocellata</b> L. Eyed Hawk-moth.	67
Occurs sparingly at Riding Mill.	
<b>Colocasia coryli</b> L. Nut Tree Tussock.	67
Taken near Corbridge many years ago, not seen since. t	
<b>Episema caeruleocephala</b> L. Figure of Eight Moth.	67
Of regular occurrence but in small numbers near Riding Mill.	
<b>Apatele leporina</b> L. The Miller Moth.	67
Occurs sparingly at Riding Mill.	
<b>Apatele megacephala</b> Schiff. Poplar Grey	67
Occurs sparingly at Riding Mill.	
<b>Craniophora ligustri</b> Schiff* The Coronet.	67
Occurs very sparingly at Riding Mill. F. W. Gardner.	

## FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS.

<b>Potamogeton crispus</b> L.	66,67
In Langley Station Big Reservoir, above Haydon Bridge; also River Wear near Durham.	
<b>Potamogeton berchtoldii</b> Fieb.	67
In the same locality but mixed with the Canadian Pondweed, <b>Elodea canadensis</b>	
<b>Juncus effusus</b> X <b>J. communis</b> *	
Several clumps, apparently all sterile, Langley Station.	
<b>Mentha aquatica</b> L.	67
In the above station with hybrid, <b>M. verticillata</b> .	
<b>Anemone nemorosa</b> var. <b>apetala</b> Salisb	66
Wood anemone without petals; Shincliffe.	
<b>Ranunculus lingua</b> L. Spearwort.	68
Still in the dyke near Dunstanburgh Castle.	
<b>R. sceleratus</b> L. Celery-leaved Crowfoot.	67
Abundant along the burn at Seaton Sluice.	
<b>Trollius europaeus</b> L. Globe Flower	67
By the North Tyne at Falstone.	
<b>Papaver somniferum</b> L. Opium Poppy.	66
On tips in Fulwell Quarries.	
<b>Lepidium ruderales</b> L.	66
With the preceding.	
<b>Linum perenne</b> L. Flax.	66
Also with the preceding.	
<b>Oxalis acetosella</b> L. Wood Sorrel.	66
The purple-flowered form <b>subpurpurascens</b> occurs sparingly in Eden Dene.	
<b>Sagina ciliata</b> Fr.	68
On paths etc. at Craster, Dunstanburgh Castle and Airmouth.	
<b>Melissa officinalis</b> L. Balm.	66
On the Tees near Piercebridge.	
<b>Prunella vulgaris</b> L. Selfheal.	66
Around Langley Station near Haydon Bridge.	
<b>Thiaspis arvensis</b> L.	66
A single plant was found in a stackyard near the Sneap, between Castleside and Muggleswick. J.K.M.	