

# THE VASCULUM

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and

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THE POPLARS, CHESTER-LE-STREET

## BY THE WAY

### TOXIC CHEMICALS.

There is, at present, great anxiety in Ornithological circles at the number of birds being poisoned by the greatly increased use of toxic chemicals by farmers and gardeners to control pests. Examinations, conducted under the auspices of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, have shown that persistent chemicals such as Aldrin, Dieldrin, D. D. T. , BHC, are particularly potent.

Despite this expert research, the Gardening Correspondent of a local newspaper has advocated the use of such poisons, and ridiculed the anxiety on the grounds that he uses them and never finds the corpses of birds in his own garden.

There has been an alarming decline in the numbers of birds of prey during recent years, and investigations as to why the egg of a Peregrine Falcon was infertile revealed that it contained a lethal dose of one of these poisons, due apparently to the parent bird having eaten a woodpigeon or similar bird which had died as a result of feeding on grain treated with these poisons.

The British Trust for Ornithology is conducting an enquiry into the distribution of birds of prey, and in this connection records are required of the occurrence of the Kestrel from the middle of May until the end of June, 1964. If members would forward any records to Mr. C. J. Gent, 30 Berkeley Square, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, 3, he will be pleased to incorporate them in a report he will be submitting.

### INSECT MIGRATION IN 1962 AND 1963.

Insect immigrants in our two Northern Counties have been few and far between during the last two years. In 1962 only a few specimens of the Red Admiral Butterfly, *Vanessa atalanta* L. were seen in September and October. The other immigrant butterflies were completely absent from Chester-le-Street.

Of the moths, the Silver Y, **Plusia gamma** L. appeared in fair numbers but was much below its usual abundance. The Dark Dart, **Agrotis ipsilon** Hufn. , however, was unusually abundant, which proved once again that our local weather could not be blamed entirely for the general paucity. of immigrant insects.

In 1963 matters were even worse, without any significant explanation. This, moreover, appears to have been the case all over the country, the cause being in all probability something to do with conditions at the point of origin of the insects. In most cases this is North Africa. During the whole year not a single immigrant butterfly was noted. In September, some six or so Silver Y Moths were encountered and a single **Agrotis ipsilon** Hufn. We look forward with hope for a somewhat more interesting 1964 season.

#### THE HANDBOOK OF BRITISH MAMMALS.

This new publication written by members of the Mammal Society of the British Isles, edited by H. N. Southern and published by Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, is to be recommended. It is in two parts, the first dealing with the general biology, and the second with the individual species. A considerable volume of information is concisely condensed into a small space. Attention is also directed to the aspects of the biology of our mammals in respect of which further research is needed. C. J. G.

### THE SOCIETIES.

#### NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION.

The Fortieth Annual Meeting was held in the Hancock Museum, at 3 p. m. on Saturday, March 14th, 1964, by kind invitation of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne.

During the short business meeting an appeal for more new and active members was made on behalf of the Treasurer. Mr. E. Alker was elected as the new President whilst the retiring President, Mr. C. J. Gent and Mr. I. C. Lawrence were elected Vice-Presidents. In accordance with the new rules of 1962 the other officers remain in office for 5 years.

Next came the Presidential Address, given by Mr. Gent on "Some impressions of the Scottish Highlands," illustrated by colour transparencies, mostly of birds, but also of scenery and flowers seen during visits to Speyside, Strathpeffer and the Island of Handa, as well as other places. He began by describing the various geological formations and the influence of man on the vegetation, as, for example, the damage caused by Viking raids between 800 and 1100 A. D.

The larger mammals were dealt with next, and colour transparencies were shown of Oyster Catchers, Redshanks, Razor-bills, Black-throated Diver, Sandpiper, etc. , and of the Butterwort,

Sundew and various Orchids. The lecture ended with a vote of thanks from Dr. Todd.

Tea was then most ably served by Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Weatherley and Mrs. Stock of the Birtley Natural History Society, and the exhibits were examined. Mr. Cooke had again brought a collection of 68 specimens of beautiful Spring flowers, which made a magnificent show and were greatly admired. Other exhibits included postage stamps of zoological subjects from Czechoslovakia, French Somaliland, Israel, etc. , by Mrs. Gibby, herbarium specimens by Mr. Hird, an old book, 'Nature and Naturalists' giving aspects of Natural History in the North, by Dr. Todd, and a most interesting and unusual display of Myxomycetes or Slime Fungi by Professor Burnett.

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

The Annual Meeting and Social Evening was held on January 25th in the Public Library and Methodist Church Schoolroom. Nearly one hundred members were present, the meeting being presided over by Miss A. Renwick, the Vice-President.

Silent tribute was observed in memory of six members who had died during the past year and particularly of Mr. A. Daly who died during his term of office as President.

The Secretary, Mr. F. Wade, in his report, said that 1963 had been a very successful year both in the pleasure derived from the 14 outings and the 13 lectures that had been held. After thanking all the officers for their services, Mr. Wade appealed for donations for the restoration of Escomb Church and for the World Wild Life Fund, both of which received a grant from the Club funds. In addition, a donation was sent to the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Another appeal, this time for volunteers to carry out all night watches for luminous insects in the Cheviots, produced five willing members.

The Treasurer, Mr. Atkinson and the Excursions Secretary, Mr. Reay were both able to report favourably on the state of the Club funds, with a credit balance on the year's working in each case.

After the election of the officers, the summer rambles were discussed and out of 36 suggestions a number of interesting places was chosen.

Tea was provided in the Methodist Schoolroom and then we all returned to the library, where Miss Turnbull, Mr. Hunter and Mr. Reay showed coloured transparencies. The winners in the photographic competition were Messrs. Carr, Wade, Wardle and Phillipson.

Lastly Miss Renwick thanked the members for the excellent attendance and for making the day such a resounding success.

## BIRTLEY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The 1964 session began with the Annual Dinner which was held in Hall's Cafe, Chester-le-Street, on January 7th.

The Chair was occupied by Mr. Dunn, who, after thanking the various officers for their help during the year, called upon Mr. J. Thompson to introduce the Guest of Honour, Mr. G. Stansfield, Secretary of the recently formed Sunderland Natural History Society. Mr. Stansfield replied suitably, in the course of which he suggested ways in which members could help the Sunderland Museum.

The speeches were followed by Mr. Hall's films of the Society's summer outings and of his holiday in Majorca the previous summer.

On January 21st we were fascinated by Dr. Corby's lecture on Forensic Medicine. This was followed on February 4th by Dr. W. A. Clark talking about Botanising in North Northumberland. Again we were treated to a most interesting evening with most beautiful colour transparencies showing Northumberland at its very best. On February 18th Mr. Horril talked about our Local Geology and the Landscape, during which our local pre-history was traced in the formation of our present day scenery. Seaweeds were the subject of a talk from Dr. B. Moss on March 3rd. The more common species were shown on coloured slides and the seashore zonation particularly dealt with. Our last formal lecture was on March 17th when Mr. Evans showed us some really expert photography in his transparencies of the Cotswolds.

The Annual Meeting was held on March 24th when we had to accept, with regret, the resignation of our Secretary, Mr. T. W. Wanless. Mr. E. . Burns was elected in his place, whilst most of the other principal officers were re-elected. This short business meeting was followed by a film of a holiday in Austria shown by Mr. Burns and slides by Miss Gordon, Miss Theobald and Mr. Harris. The evening was rounded off by a short exhibition, with explanations, of archaeological discoveries made by Mr. Dunn during the past year in excavations carried out by building contractors at Chester-le-Street Grammar School.

## NOTES AND RECORDS

### NOTES.

**An Immigrant Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*.** —On 26th December, 1963 I trapped and released in my garden at Gosforth, Northumberland, an adult Starling carrying a ring "Stavanger Museum 776 058". I was subsequently informed that the bird had been ringed as a full grown migrant on 12th October, 1962 at Revtangen (58° 45' N; 5°30' E), Klepp, Co. Rogaland, SW Norway. C. J. Gent.

**Immigrant Bullfinches at Chester-le-Street.** —On 5th January, 1964, I was surprised and very pleased to see a flock of four bullfinches of the brightly

coloured northern form in my garden. There were three females with a single male and they were attracted to the Cotoneaster berries which they devoured with great gusto. T. C. D.

**A further Note on Luminous insects.** —On February 23rd, whilst on a ramble in Coquetdale, I called on a friend of mine, Mr. Cummings, who lives in Rothbury. In a discussion about my experiences on the Cheviot Fells last November, he informed me that "fireflies" exist on the moors round Rothbury, being more common in the Autumn than at any other time. This fits in with my own observations so well that I am now more determined than ever to carry out a series of all night watches during the coming season in an attempt to solve the mystery. Fred Wade.

**Some Early Dates for Flowers.** —The following notes consist of first dates for flowering of some of our commoner plants:—

Snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis* L. 2nd Feb. Close House Woods, 67.

Dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale* Web. 1st March, Ryton, 66.

Gorse, *Ulex europaeus* L. 1st March, Ryton Willows, 66.

Groundsel, *Senecio vulgaris* L. 1st March, Ryton, 66.

Grey Willow, *Salix atrocinerea* Silva & Sobr. , 1st March, Ryton, 66.

Daisy, *Bellis perennis* L. , 1st March, Ryton, 66.

*Arabis caucasica* Willd. , 1st March, Ryton, 66. Miss N. Taylor.

Coltsfoot, *Tussilago farfara* L. , Wylam, 11th Feb. , 67.

Hazel, *Corylus avellana* L. 11th March, Wylam, 67.

Winter Aconite, *Eranthis hyemalis* Salisb. , 11th March, Wylam, 67.

J. W. H. H. & T. C. D.

Cowslip, *Primula veris* L. , 12th April, Vigo Railway, Pictree 66, J. W. H. H.

**Recent Observations on our Willows.** —A visit to Witton-le-Wear was made on April 5th to look at the Tea-leaved Willow, *Salix phylicifolia*, growing there. The plants grew along the edges of the stream and pools in considerable abundance and were just coming into leaf. With them flourished a very small number of bushes of *Salix nigricans*, the Black Willow. The area was too muddy to make a very close inspection of the site but we did find the Speedwell, *Veronica polita*, and the Pearlwort *Sagina procumbens*.

Later, on April 12th, we spent a full day examining the willows at a number of well-known habitats. Along the Vigo Railway in the Harraton area the species proved to be chiefly *Salix caprea* but, nevertheless, some *S. atrocinerea* were present, with hybrids between the two forms. Furthermore, variation in the two species was far from negligible.

Accompanying these two pure species and their hybrids were many specimens of the hybrid osier *Salix rubra* = *Salix viminalis* X *Salix purpurea*. The origin of *X S. rubra* is difficult to determine as it is a plant not likely to occur naturally in its present habitats nor to be planted in them. Again, some plants studied suggested back crosses but all were more or less sterile.

The Black Willow, *Salix nigricans* used to occur and to flourish in the same colony.

At Waldrige Fell, on the same day, the willows were found to be chiefly *S. atrocinerea* and these were in varying stages of flowering. The same remark applied to the near ally of *S. atrocinerea*, namely *S. aurita*. This shrub, whilst not rare, seems, as far as Waldrige Fell is concerned, to be decadent.

A glance was also given to the Willows along Newton Lane near Brasside. These were mainly *S. caprea* and *S. atrocinerea*.

Here and also along the Vigo Railway the *S. caprea* proved on close inspection, to support colonies of the Hornet Clearwing Moth, *Sphexia bembeciformis* Hubn. (= *crabroniformis* Lew. ). On Waldrige Fell both *S. aurita* and *S. atrocineria* carried old burrows of the larvae of the Ruby Clearwing Moth, *Aegeria formiciformis* Esp.

Whilst along the railway banks we noted that spring flowers were just beginning to appear, the most noteworthy being the cowslip as noted elsewhere.

We also found a dead Tawny Owl on the railway but we were unable to determine the cause of death. J. W. H. H. & E. Hall.

**Distribution of Water Cress.** —In the Team Valley area and adjacent stations. Water Cress is far from common. In fact the only strong colonies known to us are along Vigo Railway and at the Low Flatts Pond, Chester-le-Street. It seems to flourish in polluted water and should be avoided. J. W. H. H. & T. C. D.

**The Moths of the Genus *Oporinia*.** —All the four European November Moths, *Oporinia dilutata* Schiff. , *O. christyi* Prout, *O. autumnata* Borkh. , and *O. filigrammaria* H. S. occur in Northumberland and Durham, although they vary in their ranges and in the density of their populations. In fact for a long time I could only rely on one or two colonies to keep my experiments going. However, quite by chance, I determined to work the wych elms growing not far from Staward Station, near the West Allen. This was a fortunate choice for, although I found the woods had been felled, there were sufficient elms growing along the bases of the cliffs to be worth beating. These yielded quite a number of *O. christyi* larvae and provided me with a new stock of wild blood to replenish my old stocks. The larvae were reared with but little loss and gave an abundance of whitish types and one beautiful var. *latifasciata*. J. W. H. H.

**Waxwings.** —With us, these beautiful birds are irregular winter visitors from more northerly latitudes. Thus in some years they are never seen at all and in others a substantial irruption takes place when birds are seen all over Britain. This last winter seems to have been one of the 'good' years and even as I write, reports continue to be received of their presence round Chester-le-Street.

Waxwings were first noted in our counties towards the end of November 1963 when quite large numbers were noted in the centre of Newcastle, at Chester-le-Street and in other places. Towards the end of December and during January records were fewer; then in March and April they began to increase once more. Thus in Chester-le-Street Mr. V. L. Morley reports the presence of a pair in his garden (feeding on cotoneaster berries as usual), from April 9th, 1964 and for practically every day up to going to press. In addition, he also reports the birds at Hylton near Sunderland whilst Mr. Gent has returned a record for a single bird in the grounds of Messrs. Proctor and Gamble Ltd's offices at Gosforth on March 30th. He also points out that reports of two other birds at Jesmond have appeared in the local press.

My own friends and neighbours in various parts of Durham have mentioned the presence in their gardens, of birds that they thought were unusual but insufficient details were available for certain identification. There seems little doubt, however, that some of these would be waxwings.

Thus we have records in November and early December, then a lull followed by many more records in March and April. It seems reasonable to deduce that the first batch of notes referred to birds flying south for the winter and the more recent records to birds flying north again to their breeding grounds. T. C. D.

**Pigmentation in *Geranium rotundifolium*.** —Just because I like the plant, I have recently reared a number of plants of *Geranium rotundifolium* L. Most of the progeny were quite normal but in one specimen the red pigment, instead of being restricted to the lower side of the leaf, also appears on the upper side along the veins. In the case of some of the leaves the pigment is exaggerated and knotted. The remaining portions of the leaf are green, both on the upper and lower sides. J. W. H. H.

**Present Bird Numbers.** —This season, so far, shows a serious diminution of bird-life along the Vigo Railway. Few examples of the usual species were seen, but a thrush's nest with four eggs was noted on April 11th. On the other hand, nests of the magpie seem to be distinctly more abundant than usual. E. Hall.

**Abnormal Primrose Flowers.** —Of three flowers from the same plant, one is normal, all three outer whorls (sepals, petals and stamens), being in fives: a second flower has five sepals, four petals and four stamens whilst the third flower carries all three whorls in fours—four sepals, four petals and four stamens. The pistil is normal, and perfect in all three flowers. It is short-styled, the flowers being thrum-eyed. The anthers are normal and produce an abundance of good pollen. J. W. H. H.

RECORDS.  
BIRDS.

**Corvus cornix**, Hooded Crow. 67  
A party of five birds near Dunnington on January 25th.  
**Pyrrhula pyrrhula**, Bullfinch. 66,67,68  
The Bullfinch seems to be on the increase in our area. A pair has been visiting a bird table in a suburban garden on the outskirts of Gosforth, and I saw a cock at Gosforth Park Lake in July, 1963. During the past few years I have recorded the bird at Howick, Great Tosson, Mitford, Bardon Mill and Chopwell. C. J. G.

INSECTS.

LEPIDOPTERA—BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

**Eurois occulta** L. Great Brocaded Rustic. 67  
One at Riding Mill 1954, found wedged into a crevice in the bark of a lime tree in a high wind.  
**Orthosia munda** Schiff. Twin-spot Quaker. 67  
Not observed at Riding Mill prior to 1951 but taken there in that and subsequent years. It now seems to be well established.  
**Calocaipe undulata** L. Shell Scallop.  
This striking insect has not, so far as I am aware, been recorded from this part of the country. Several were taken near Corbridge in 1951 and 1952. By dint of much searching in August I obtained two larvae, one of which produced an ichneumon. Since then odd ones have been seen in subsequent years.  
**Calocaipe cervicalis** Scop. Scarce Tissue. 67  
One taken at light at Riding Mill in 1953.

- Euchoeca nebulata Scop.** Dingy Shell. 67  
 In the past I have not found more than occasional single specimens of this species in the Tyne Valley area and they have been of the typical brown colouration. Last summer, however, it occurred quite freely and it was noticeable that the moths were distinctly grey in colour. (This moth occurs commonly and every year on Waldrige Fell v. c. 66, always in the brown form. T. C. D. ).
- Eupithecia linariata Schiff.** Toadflax Pug. 67  
 A pug which came to my light some years ago appeared to be *linariata* but was so worn as to leave a little doubt as to its identity. A fresh specimen obtained in 1954 in the same way confirms its occurrence in Northumberland.
- Eupithecia valerianata Hubn.** Valerian Pug. 67  
 Another insect exhibiting some diversity of colour. Moths bred in 1954 from Riding Mill larvae are grey, whereas those taken in the past at Prestwick Carr are brown. F. W. Gardner.

FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS.

- Spergularia rubra (L. ) J. & C.** Presl Sand-spurrey. 67, 68  
 In the valley of the river Blyth near Plessey Checks (67). By the Till near Chillingham. In a quarry near Great Ryle (68).
- Hordelymus europaeus (L. ) Harz.** Wood Barley. 67  
 We discovered on 7/7/62 that the part of Chapel Wood on the N. bank of the R. Wansbeck, where we previously knew this species, had been cut down. Fortunately, however, we found it still growing on the S. bank of the river.
- Koeleria cristata (L. ) Pers.** Crested Hair-grass. 67  
 Near Sewingshields.
- Hippuris vulgaris L.** Mare's-Tail. 68  
 Holy Island Lough.
- Rorippa islandica (Oeder) Borbas.** Marsh Yellow-cress. 67  
 Grindon Lough. W. bank of the E. Alien near Sinderhope.
- Phleum arenarium L.** Sand Cats-tail. 68  
 Sand dunes at Alnmouth.
- Convolvulus arvensis L.** Bindweed, Combine. 68  
 Sand dunes at Alnmouth.
- Allium vineale L.** Crow Garlic. 68  
 Sand dunes at Alnmouth.
- Filago germanica (L. ) L.** Cudweed. 68  
 Basalt N. of Craster. E. bank of Wooler Water near Haugh Head.
- Arabis hirsuta (L. ) Scop.** Hairy Rock-cress. 68  
 Ratcleugh Crags.
- Lythrum salicaria L.** Purple Loosetrife. 68  
 Quarry Pond near Hetton Steads. G. A. and M. Swan.



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## BY THE WAY

### JUNIOR INTERESTS AND OUTINGS.

It is with regret that we have noticed, during recent years, a great falling off of interest in our junior members. The seaside outing to Cullercoats or St. Mary's Island used to attract up to 100 young people a few years ago, but now can only draw a maximum of about 30. During his year as President of the Union, Professor Burnett suggested an additional junior outing to see if we could stimulate a little more interest. Accordingly, the Waldrige Fell expedition has become an annual fixture. Contrary to expectations this has proved a dismal failure. Last year 12 young people appeared and this year only 5. We are wondering whether it is worth while continuing it or letting it lapse.

In spite of this disappointing state of affairs, never has there been a larger number of School Societies affiliated to the Northern Naturalists' Union. The trouble is that few ever appear at meetings and so fail to benefit from the expert knowledge of field studies that the organisers try to provide.

What do these young people want? Perhaps some of them or their teachers could find time to write to the editors with suggestions. In this way we might just be able to provide the answer.

We would take this chance of pointing out that there are great opportunities within the framework of the Union for fieldwork research in certain of the less well-known groups of animals and in some of the more critical groups of plants. If any junior would like to take up such a study he would be given every help available and be doing a great service to Natural History in the North at the same time. Now what about it?

Secretaries' reports intended for the next number should be in the hands of Mr. T. C. Dunn before September 10th. This date also applies to notes and records for the same issue. Copy is

urgently required from a greater number of members. At the moment only a faithful handful keeps the **Vasculum** going.

## THE SOCIETIES.

### NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION.

For the 107th Field Meeting we went to Leamside Woods on May 23rd, the party being led by Mr. T. C. Dunn.

Although about 30 members turned out, this was somewhat fewer than usual, despite the beautiful weather.

On entering the wood, which is National Trust property, we were struck, immediately, by the extensive growth of the Field Rose, **Rosa arvensis** Huds. This plant is not common in our counties but in this locality it most certainly wasn't rare. In addition, the usual woodland plants were in full bloom. These included such species as **Geranium sylvaticum**, L. , **Geum urbanum** L. , **Geum rivale** L. with several different genetic forms in a hybrid swarm of the last two. **Ranunculus auricomus** L. , and **Hypericum hirsutum** L. A large colony of the Butterbur, **Petasites hybridus**, (L) Gaertn. , Mey. & Scherb. , with female plants in fruit, was discovered by the river bank, and it was near this that a clearing in the wood showed typical heath plants like **Calluna vulgaris** L. , and **Vaccinium myrtillus** L.

The moth hunters found few imagines on the wing, the commonest insect being the Green-veined White Butterfly, **Pieris napi** L. Larvae, however, were in plenty, especially on the oaks, so beating became the most profitable method to be used. Many larvae were seen, including those of the Winter Moth, **Operophtera brumata** L. , November Moth, **Oporima dilutata** Schiff. , May Highflyer, **Hydriomena coerulea** Fab. , July Highflyer, **H. furcata** Thunb. , and the Mottled Umber, **Erannis defoliaria** Clerck.

Dr. Crosby drew our attention to the song of the Chiff-Chaff which is not common in Durham but seemed to be present here in some numbers.

On the return walk to Leamside, a beautiful dog Fox was observed loping through the grass in a nearby field. He passed quite close to us, not seeming to notice our presence at all, or if he did, was totally unconcerned.

Two junior meetings have also been held. The first was at St. Mary's Island, Whitley Bay, on May 2nd, with our President, Mr. E. Alker, in charge. About 30 juniors gathered and we made our way across the causeway just after 10 a. m. First the seaweeds and animals sheltered by them on the landward side of the island were examined and named. We then worked our way round the island examining the rock pools and the seaweeds at different positions down the rocky shore. Such interesting animals as Sponges, Chiton,

a small Sea Squirt, and the long-nosed marine Stickleback were found and examined by everyone present.

It is pleasant to relate that the weather was good, the first time it has been so on this outing for about five years.

The second expedition was to Waldrige Fell on June 5th when only 5 young people put in an appearance. This was very disappointing but Mr. Dunn carried on as usual. First of all the Willows were looked at critically, and the characteristics of the different species pointed out. Then different methods of sampling insects were demonstrated, following which the boys interested themselves in seeing what they could discover of the insect fauna. The heath and bog habitats were then inspected, a very interesting afternoon being enjoyed by those present.

#### BIRTLEY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

So far this spring and summer we have held two long distance outings, the first for the juniors to the Fame Islands on 31st May and the second to Crimdon Dene on 21st June.

As we left Chester-le-Street for the Fames, a little rain seemed possible, but as we drove North our spirits rose as the weather became clearer and finer. We lunched in the sand-dunes at Bamburgh, sheltering meanwhile from a cold easterly wind. On our arrival at Seahouses we were most disappointed, for the boatman declined to take us out to the islands, the sea being too rough. We therefore set off south to Craster to walk along the coast to Dunstanburgh Castle. Before reaching Craster it had already started to rain, and by the time we had walked to the Castle and back we were thoroughly soaked. In spite of this we enjoyed hunting for the interesting seaside plants. Insects however were a complete failure.

We were somewhat luckier with the weather when we went to Crimdon Dene. In spite of the excessive pressure of people due to the introduction of caravans, chalets and amusements by the local Council, the dene still had lots of interest in it. Such plants as the Gromwell, Crow Garlic, Sand Rue, Twayblade and Spotted Orchid were still flourishing and we have yet to find a place with a more varied collection of Wild Roses in such a small area. Butterflies were almost non-existent in a place which used to be so abundantly stocked. Only a few Microlepidoptera and one or two beetles were worth examining.

#### SUNDERLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The first excursion of the year to St. Mary's Island had to be cancelled, but the excursion to Hamsterley Forest was well attended and very enjoyable in spite of overcast sky. Nothing very exciting was seen, but members had excellent views of a family of stonechats, linnets, common sandpiper, long-tailed tits and pied wagtails. The botanists found that the New Zealand willow herb was still spreading, and the entomologists that the wood ant nest building

was well under way. Apart from **Planaria** there was little freshwater life, but the geologists collected some fine corals from the Bollihope Burn.

On June 29th, members of the Society were able to see the Natural History Gallery at Sunderland Museum—now open to the public but not yet completely finished. Members of the Society were thanked for the help that they had given in providing specimens and local information.

#### CONSETT AND DISTRICT NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB.

On May 9th and 10th we went on a two day outing of the Club which was arranged by Mr. G. Evans.

From Consett the bus proceeded to Chesterfield with a picnic lunch on the way. The town itself was looked at and then we drove to Hardwick Hall about 4 miles away. This magnificent house was built in 1591-1597 by Elizabeth, Dowager Countess of Shrewsbury, who was known as Bess of Hardwick. The Hall stands on a magnificent hill-top site in its 500 acre park on the Derbyshire— Nottingham border, and today it stands almost as Bess left it. After visiting the house and enjoying tea in the Great Kitchen, we proceeded by coach again via Baslow and Ashford to Monsal Dale with a lovely view of the River Wye at Longstone Head. From here we went through limestone country to Buxton where we stayed the night.

On Sunday we went to see the Well Dressings at Tissington. There were five wells completely surrounded by tableaux made entirely of flower petals, leaves, moss, etc. From Tissington we went to Thorpe Village at the entrance to Dovedale. Here the party split up, some taking a short walk of 1½ miles over Thorp Cloud and up the River Dove a little way, whilst the hardier members left the bus at Beresford Dale and followed the Dove for a distance of about 5 miles to meet the rest at the Stepping Stones. The rock formations, scenery and flowers were magnificent on this walk. After leaving Dovedale we returned first to Buxton then home to Consett. This was truly a memorable outing and enjoyed by all.

#### NOTES AND RECORDS

##### NOTES.

**A Blackthorn Thicket.** —South of Craster, and on the cliff top (v. c. 69) there is a remarkable thicket of blackthorn which, unfortunately, has been fired by vandals. Enough, however, has been left to demonstrate that it was, in the main, built of fairly low-growing, but otherwise characteristic bushes. Among them, and even competing successfully with them, are quite a number of wild roses. These are chiefly well-grown examples of the northern *Rosa mollis* with odd specimens of the more southern *R. dumetorum*, the former with bright pink and the latter with white flowers.

Despite their exposed position, many of the roses were well advanced. In fact, in some cases, the hips showed signs of ripening. Moreover, the sepals were already erected. A small number of sycamores were likewise present, and likewise displayed points of interest. On the blackthorns was quite a

large number of galls produced by mites of the species **Eriophyes similis** Nal. whilst, on the sycamore leaves, galls of **E. macrorrhynchus** Nal. abounded.

In the thicket was growing quite an abundance of agrimony and also of the grass **Brachypodium sylvaticum**. The latter was quite remarkable inasmuch as the leaves on the various plants were of an extraordinary breadth.

Scattered throughout the thicket were numbers of our common vetches. These were examined critically for their special galls but, just as we have found elsewhere this season, none were detected. J. W. H. H.

**Note Concerning the Bladder Campion.** —This plant is quite common on the disturbed ground west of the main workings in the quarries at Old Quarrington. It is very variable in its flowers. The calyx varies from whitish to pale green in colour and in shape from an elongated form to subglobular. Nearly every combination may be found in the sexual organs even in a very restricted area. J. W. H. H.

**The Range of *Aricia agestis* Schiff.** —It is nearly fifteen years since the areas between Cassop Vale and Old Quarrington were examined in respect to their butterfly fauna. Even then the examination was cursory, inasmuch as difficulties of access arose at once. Nevertheless, we discovered that the Brown Argus Butterfly, ***Aricia agestis* Schiff.**, occurred there.

Recently, during July, thanks to Mr. E. Hall and Mr. T. C. Dunn, we have been able to make several journeys to the area to study the various rockrose colonies. In practically every one of the stations we have discovered ***Aricia agestis***. These provide the most southerly of the inland Brown Argus colonies in Durham. Further, it was noted at once that the specimens captured were much more typical than those from more northerly places. In fact, taking into account all of the Durham colonies, its distribution forms a sort of cline in our country. J. W. H. H.

**Pink-flowered Burnet Roses.** —This season, for the first time, we noticed that one of the Cornforth (66) colonies of the Burnet Rose, ***Rosa spinosissima***, was producing beautiful pink flowers. Elsewhere, such pink flowers have been seen on the sand dunes near Seaton Sluice (67). In previous seasons, pink-flowered Burnet Roses have been seen on Holy Island, Ross Links (68), South side of Hawthorn Dene, and Crimdon Dene (66). J. W. H. H.

**The Tortoiseshell Butterfly in Durham in 1964.** —Recently, the small disused quarries lying west of Strawberry Hill have been explored by members of the Birtley Natural History Society. They proved to be more or less unproductive, only one plant, ***Sherardia arvensis*** being added to our lists. Nevertheless, we were delighted to discover on a huge mass of nettles growing in one of them, a very large web of larvae of the Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly, ***Aglais urticae* L.** Not far away, we detected two smaller webs. These may have been derived from the major one. In spite of our careful observations, we have been unable to detect other webs elsewhere in the two counties, although we did observe hibernated females earlier in the year at several points.

**Immigrant Lepidoptera in 1964.** —As far as our counties are concerned, very few immigrants have been reported. Chief amongst these was the Large White Butterfly (66, 68) which appeared in some numbers in Durham and Northumberland in late June.

Although both the Red Admiral and the Painted Lady have been seen at widely separated points (66, 69), the numbers involved have been small.

More recently, on July 1st, a single Death's-head Hawk Moth has been found in a housing estate at Farringdon, Sunderland (66). From Sunderland also, comes a report from Mr. Shaw, Director of Sunderland Libraries, Museum and Art Gallery, of a Humming-bird Hawk Moth seen feeding at flowers in his garden on June 25th.

**Reef Limestone Exposed.** —Two temporary exposures in the reef limestone of the Magnesian Limestone have come about by building operations

on Tunstall and Humbledon Hills. These have produced the typical fossils of Bryozoa, Crinoid stems, Productus and other shells. G. Stansfield.

**A Permian Fish Fossil.**—Whilst on an expedition, with Birtley Natural History Society, to the quarries at Old Quarrington a grey band of marl slate lying just below the Magnesian Limestone, was carefully examined for fossils. After a fruitless search lasting for about 1 hour, I was lucky enough to split a slab which yielded a perfect example of a Permian Fish. A. R. Dunn.

**Monster Goldfish.**—Recently whilst investigating the fauna in the Flatts Pond, between Birtley and Chester-le-Street, a number of huge goldfish were seen in the deeper parts of the pond. Each fish was well over a foot in length and there seem to be perhaps 6 to 12 individuals. On making inquiries from the nearby caravan squatter, Mr. Burnside, I was given the following story.

Mr. Burnside is a rag and bone merchant with the usual horse-drawn flat-cart and bell, perhaps not seen so frequently nowadays as they used to be. Some years ago he saw an advertisement for the sale of goldfish in bulk from somewhere in the south of England. As a result he ordered up a whole barrel of goldfish comprising several hundreds. These were duly despatched per British Railways. Somewhere en route, unfortunately, the goods train was shunted into a siding and there it remained for about a week. On arrival at Newcastle the goldfish were gasping for oxygen and many were already dead. Mr. Burnside rescued as many as he could then tipped the "dead" ones into the Flatts Pond. Some, however were not quite so dead as they looked and recovered to find a habitat evidently very much to their liking. Ten years later and we have these giant fishes in our local pond. T. C. D.

**Bullfinches at Chester-le-Street.**—Further to my note on immigrant bullfinches in the April number of the *Vasculum*, a pair of birds of our own resident race appeared in the same garden on June 7th. Other recent records seem to show that this bird is either on the increase or changing its habits by visiting urban areas more frequently. T. C. D.

**Notes from Stanley.**—

Great Crested Grebe: Successful nesting. On June 20th, a pair were accompanied by three young on a pond in Co. Durham.

Common Pochard: On the same pond, where successful breeding has taken place in previous years, four pairs were present on June 20th but no young were seen.

Tufted Duck: Five pairs were noted on June 20th, but no young were seen.

Rook: The rookery which was established a few years ago in the Haymarket district in the centre of Newcastle, this year contained 8 occupied nests.

Bullfinch: During June, two different pairs were observed near Shield Row, Stanley.

Badger: On May 20th, I came across a dead badger which was lying by the side of the road between Kip Hill and the Causey Arch Inn. It appeared to have been hit by a vehicle. R. Marston Palmer.

**Plants at Whittle Dene.**—The following extract from a letter I have received from Mr. Geoffrey F. Glover, Chairman of the South Buckingham Branch of the British Naturalists Association, who was in Northumberland in early June, may be of interest:—"Many frog orchids at Whittle Dene reservoirs were seen with twayblade, northern marsh orchid, **O. purpurella** and spotted orchid, **O. fuchsii**, also huge numbers of early purple orchid. We were excited to find the globe flower, **Trollius europaeus**, and also Marsh Cinquefoil, **Potentilla palustris**. C. J. G.

**Voles in a Garden.**—Early this year it was noticed that several young seedlings, in my garden at Chester-le-Street, were being bitten off. At first slugs were suspected, but it became evident that a small mammal was the culprit as plants were found dragged some distance away from their rootstock. Then the animal was seen and sure enough it was a small mammal of the mouse type.

A box trap was duly set, and within an hour the first victim had been caught. On close examination it proved to be a Bank Vole, *Clethrionomys glareolus* Schr. It was taken some distance away from the garden and liberated: then the trap was set again. Within a short time a second vole was captured, and again it was liberated at the same place as before. We expected to find a family of young, but further efforts at trapping proved quite unsuccessful. T. C. D.

#### RECORDS.

##### FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS.

<b>Zerna erecta</b> Panz. Upright Brome.	66
In some quantity at various points near Old Quarrington: of its known range with us.	
<b>Galium mollugo</b> L. Great Hedge Bedstraw.	66
This plant also turned up in the quarry workings near Old Quarrington. The find is remarkable as the plant tends to be western in its distribution in our counties. In this discovery, we have the most easterly of its colonies in Durham.	
<b>Symphytum officinale</b> L. Comfrey.	66
Also common, but only in the western areas of the quarries. The corolla varies greatly for it may be white, purplish or bright pink.	
<b>Senecio squalidus</b> L. Oxford Ragwort.	66
Quite plentiful in the old quarries near Old Quarrington, showing strong signs of hybridising with the groundsel and ragwort.	
<b>S. sylvaticus</b> L. Wood Groundsel.	68
Not rare on the rocks inland near Craster.	
<b>Astragalus danicus</b> Retz. Purple Milk Vetch.	66
In the barer spots near the rock rose colonies; generally found on sand dunes with us, occurring inland at Bishop Middleham and Old Quarrington.	
<b>Plantago maritima</b> L. Sea Plantain.	66.
Distributed in the same areas as the preceding plant, but much more thinly; also at Haswell.	
<b>Thymus serpyllum</b> L. Wild Thyme.	66
One or two patches of white-flowered thyme were noted with the preceding.	
<b>Rosa mollis</b> X <b>spinissima</b> . Hybrid Rose.	66
An enormous plant over a dozen yards long grows in the hedge south of Cassop Vale. Generally totally sterile, this plant occasionally produces ripe hips which may contain a very small number of viable seeds.	
<b>Senecio erucifolius</b> L. Hoary Ragwort.	66
Extremely rare near Old Quarrington but rarer north of the ridge.	
<b>Stachys arvensis</b> L. Field Woundwort.	66
A single specimen in a field near the Church, Quarrington.	
<b>Holcus lanatus</b> L. Yorkshire Fog.	66
A form with white inflorescence near Cassop Vale.	
<b>Arabis hirsuta</b> (L. ) Scop. Hairy Rock-cress.	66
Not rare at Old Quarrington around the edges of the quarry, likewise at the Highland Quarry and Bishop Middleham.	

<b>Ranunculus bulbosus</b> L. Bulbous buttercup.	66
A single example of this species was observed with flowers almost white, near Cornforth.	
<b>Coeloglossum viride</b> L. Frog Orchid.	66
This occurred in very great numbers at Thrislington. It varied greatly in depth of colour and size.	
<b>Melandrium rubrum</b> Garcke. Red Campion.	66
This plant in its typical form was plentiful in the disturbed area west of the quarries at Old Quarrington.	
The hybrid between it and the white Campion was also present, but the White Campion, <b>M. album</b> was very rare.	
<b>Papaver dubium</b> L. Long-headed Poppy.	66
Examples of this species, which seems to be vanishing from Mid-Durham, were found in one limited area near the houses at Old Quarrington. J. W. H. H.	

#### INSECTS.

#### LEPIDOPTERA—BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

<b>Craniophora ligustri</b> Schiff. The Coronet.	67
Occurs sparingly at Riding Mill.	
<b>Agrotis ipsilon</b> Hufn. Dark Sword-Grass.	67
Well in evidence in some years, scarce or absent in others at Riding Mill. This fluctuating habit is due to its being an immigrant, of course.	
<b>Euxoa triticea</b> L. The White-line Dart.	67
Common on the coast in Northumberland, only occasional inland at Riding Mill.	
<b>Lycophotia varia</b> Vill. True-Lover's Knot.	67
Common on moors. Also comes freely to light in the garden at Riding Mill, a considerable distance from any expanse of heather.	
<b>Peridroma porphyrea</b> Schiff. Pearly Underwing.	67
Occasional. Larvae found feeding on <b>Nicotianum</b> in the garden at Riding Mill.	
<b>Ammogrotis lucernca</b> L. Northern Rustic.	68
Taken sparingly at Catcleugh in the Cheviots.	
<b>Amatnes castanea</b> Esp. Neglected Rustic.	67
Probably distributed on the moors in Northumberland, comes occasionally to light at Riding Mill.	
<b>Diarsia nibi</b> View. Small Square Spot.	67
Occurs only sparingly at Riding Mill and though it has been taken in every month from May to September is usually seen as a large pale form in late June or July.	
<b>Lampra firnbriata</b> Schreber. Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing.	67
Comes to light at Riding Mill but not very frequently, more easily obtained as larvae.	
<b>Anaplectoides prasina</b> Schiff. Green Arches.	67
Fairly common at Riding Mill.	
<b>Polia nebulosa</b> Hufn. Grey Arches.	67
A few taken at light, not common.	
<b>Melanchra persicariae</b> L. Dot Moth.	67
Only one ever taken in the light trap at Riding Mill—in 1959.	
F. W. Gardner.	



# THE VASCULUM

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## BY THE WAY

### IMMIGRANT INSECTS.

Each year, many insect species leave their native lands and travel to other countries. Some are known to make a return flight, whilst many others are thought to do so. The latter group is still the subject of difficult research but thanks to the efforts of the late Mme. Vera Musprat and other workers, in the Pyrenees, some of the facts are now known.

The most conspicuous of these immigrants are, of course, the butterflies, but the Lepidoptera is not the only insect family to provide instances of the phenomenon. Locust migrations are all too common, some of them even occasionally reaching our shores. Some dragonflies, beetles, two-winged flies and possibly sawflies are also known to migrate to the British Isles.

The majority of our immigrant insects comes to us from North Africa, where numbers of some species build up to such an extent that they must move away from the breeding grounds to find food. Others may come across the North Sea from Germany and the southern parts of Scandinavia.

Thus, it is probable that many of the Large Cabbage White butterflies (*Pieris brassicae* L. ), that suddenly appear towards the end of June, are immigrants from the Continent. Indeed, the high mortality rate of locally bred caterpillars, due to parasitism and the vagaries of our weather, is such that it is probable that our native Cabbage Whites would soon become extinct.

At about the same time, we sometimes see such butterflies as the Red Admiral and Painted Lady. These lay their eggs so that a second generation is produced on our own nettles and thistles, the adults emerging in September and October. Very often, these butterflies do not appear at all until the autumn, particularly if the spring is cold and summer lingers on into the autumn as it has done this year. The moths are not quite so well documented because they are mostly nocturnal but the Silver Y, *Plusia gamma* L.

the Death's-head Hawk, **Acherontia atropos** L., and the Convolvulus Hawk, **Herse convolvuli** L. are common examples. There are many others.

This year has proved to be an exceptional one, in that many more immigrant butterflies than usual have been reported. Some of these reports have already appeared in the July Vasculum. Further to these, we can now add that exceptionally large numbers of Red Admirals and Painted Ladies arrived in our Counties from the middle of August onwards into September. Thus we have a note of the Painted Lady being quite numerous in the Cullerose Point area of Northumberland (67) on August 16th. Another report, on August 25th, mentions the same insect as 'in swarms' at Sunderland. We saw it ourselves at Chester-le-Street at the same time. In September, the numbers of Red Admirals seemed to increase almost everywhere in our Counties. A less common immigrant butterfly, the Clouded Yellow, **Colias croceus** Fuorc., seldom flies as far north as our Counties but one was reported at Sunderland flying with the Painted Ladies and a butterfly which was probably another Clouded Yellow was reported to us as having been seen at Bishop Middleham on September 2nd. Truly this has been a vintage year for immigrant Lepidoptera.

#### THE GUISER'S PLAY.

Some time ago, (Vasculum Vol. XLVIII, No. 4) we appealed for information on local versions of the Guiser's Play. We wish to thank all those readers who were good enough to send us their notes. We are now making careful comparisons of the different versions.

#### THE STATUS OF THE FIELD MAPLE, ACER CAMPESTRE L, IN OUR COUNTIES.

The Field Maple is not a common shrub in our counties but specimens do exist at several points in Durham and Northumberland. Some of these appear to be truly native but the circumstances surrounding the distribution of many others suggest that they have been introduced. We believe that the most northerly native specimens grow near Wylam (v.c.67), but further information is required from other interested naturalists. If you have any comments to make about the status of the Maple in either Durham or Northumberland we would be pleased to have them for publication in a future edition of the Vasculum.

#### PLANTS GROWING ON BUILDINGS.

The following is an extract from a memorandum sent to all Naturalists' Trusts by the Conservation Committee of the Botanical Society of the British Isles:—"1. Several cases have recently been brought to the notice of our committee of rare or interesting plants being lost or endangered by cleaning or repointing operations on the buildings on which they grow. Examples of this include **Polypodium australe** in Pembrokeshire and **Teucrium chamaedrys** in Sussex. Such incidents could easily be avoided if the owner or authority concerned were informed

of the presence of such species.

2. The Conservation Committee strongly recommends that a list of sites (+owners or authorities) and species, be compiled by County Trusts, with the help of local naturalists. Such a list, which would probably not be very extensive, could then be sent to the owner or authority, with a request for ample notice before any operations, so that with his co-operation the plant could be safeguarded."

The Naturalists' Trust of Northumberland and Durham has asked for our help. Will members of the N.N.U. interested in this project please send their lists to the secretary of the Trust, Mr. Tynan, the Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne. Please give:—

- (1) Name of plant.
- (2) Name and location of building, wall or bridge.
- (3) Name of owner or authority responsible for maintenance.

Secretaries' reports intended for the next number should be in the hands of Mr. T. C. Dunn before November 20th.

## THE SOCIETIES.

### NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION.

The 108th Field Meeting took place on July 11th at Craster. The party of some twenty members was led by Mr. C. J. Gent.

On leaving Craster, we walked south along the cliff path taking note of the plants growing on the slopes. One or two of the members walked along the foreshore to investigate the marine life in the rock pools.

On the way to Cullernose Point several large stones were lifted in the field on the top of the cliffs. Many covered ant's nests and the entomologists were interested in the reactions of the ants when a stone was overturned. Inquilines like woodlice and aphids were found to be quite common. Several ground beetles were found under stones that did not harbour ants. Taking the afternoon as a whole, however, other insects were very scarce. Only three specimens of the Common Blue butterfly, **Polyommatus icanis Rott**, a single specimen of the Large White butterfly, **Pieris brassicae L.**, and a few specimens of the Yellow Shell moth, **Euphyia bilineata L.**, were seen.

The ornithologists were interested in the Eider Ducks swimming in the sea close to the shoreline and also in the Fulmars at Cullernose Point itself. Mr. Gent also reported Kittiwakes as plentiful south of Craster and many House Martins nesting under the overhanging cliffs in Howick Bay. Other species noted at other points during the expedition included Cormorant, Oyster Catcher, Whimbrel, Redshank, Dunlin, Greater Black-backed Gull, Skylark, Swallow, Rook, Jackdaw, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Meadow pipit, Starling and Linnet. A stroll to the north of Craster in the early evening added the following species—Lapwing

(apparently with fledglings in the vicinity). Ringed Plover, Sandwich Tern and Wheatear.

Just south of Cullernose Point the party was much interested in a blackthorn thicket with several species of rose. It was at this point that the Consett Field Club members joined us, having come by special bus which arrived a little late.

Those returning home by bus turned inland to Howick Village. Along the lane leading through a wood there were quantities of Sea Buckthorn, **Hippophae rhamnoides**, and nearby, a large clump of Hemp Agrimony, **Eupatorium cannabinum**. While waiting in Howick, Mrs. Gibby noted four ferns growing together on the same wall, viz. **Asplenium ruta-muraria**, **Ceterach officinarum**, **Polypodium vulgare** and **Phyllitis scolopendrium**.

The autumn outing was to Teesmouth on September 12th, when we were guests of the Teesmouth Bird Club. About forty members were met at Hartlepool Lighthouse by Messrs. Graham Bell and I. C. Lawrence. This field meeting was essentially for the purpose of bird watching, so we began by looking for seabirds from the lighthouse. Next, we moved north to Hartlepool promenade where a large assemblage of Herring Gulls with a few Greater Black-backs were gathered on the rocks near the shore. A cavalcade of motor cars then proceeded to Teesmouth where we saw many gulls and waders. Later we walked along the embankment at the side of Greatham Creek where, as well as watching more sea birds, we were able to do a little botanising. Here were such plants as **Limonium vulgare**, **Aster tripolium**, **Artemesia maritima**, **Artemesia vulgaris**, **Senecio viscosus**, **Senecio squalidus**, **Salsola kali**, **Suaeda maritima**, **Salicornia spp**«, **Sagina nodosum** etc.

This was something of a new venture for the Northern Naturalists' Union and one which was full of interest for everyone. Our thanks go to the leaders for a thoroughly well organised meeting.

#### BIRTLEY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The last summer outing of the Society was to Newton by the Sea in Northumberland on July 19th. The main attraction proved to be the pond behind the sand dunes. The marsh plants were quite interesting with large quantities of Purple Loosestrife, **Lythrum salicaria**, and Marsh Bedstraw, **Galium palustre**, giving colour to a huge expanse of rushes of several species. **Juncus inflexus**, **Juncus effusus** and **Schoenoplectus lacustris** were easily recognised together with possible hybrids of the first two. In one place we were pleased to see a very large expanse of the Mare's-tail, **Hippuris vulgaris**. The Entomologists managed to flush many examples of the large Scottish form of the Common Blue Butterfly, **Polyommatus icarus Rott.** and also many grass moths of the genus **Crambus**. One member was lucky enough to take a very good specimen of **Epirrhoe galiata** Schiff. The only larva to be seen was an almost full-grown caterpillar of the Sword-grass Moth, **Xylena exsoleta** L.

Meanwhile, the birdwatchers had been enjoying a real field day. Apart from the nesting swans the following species were recorded:

Tufted Duck, Shoveller, Mallard, Pintail, Pochard, Crested Grebe, Dabchick, Coot, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Kittiwake and a single Reed Bunting.

Some of the members, having discovered that, by this time, the tide had receded sufficiently to allow access to the Emble Stones, then walked out to the end of those rocks. A group of Atlantic Grey Seals from the Fames was watched for some time. On the return walk the various lichens growing on the tops of the rocks were examined.

#### ANNFIELD PLAIN NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB.

The summer programme began on April 18th with a local walk from Burnopfield to Beamish and this was followed at regular intervals by more distant excursions to such places as Devil's Water Valley, Morebattie, the Simonsides, Cross Fell, Talkin Tarn, Middleton-in-Teesdale and Richmond.

The meetings have been very well attended, a pleasing feature being the number of junior members who turned out for the long walks. There has also been an influx of new members, most of whom are quite keen to learn.

The most interesting botanical discoveries of these outings have been a clump of **Astrantia major** flowers (probably a garden escape), along the Hudeshope Beck near Middleton-in-Teesdale, several Butterfly Orchids in a field at Ayle near Alston, a patch of Hare's-tail Cotton Grass, **Eriophorum vaginatum** in Greencroft Wood where the Common Cotton Grass, **Eriophorum angustifolium** is much more plentiful, and the Maiden Pink, **Dianthus deltoides** on a craggy hillside near Petersfield, Wooler.

#### SUNDERLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

A number of excursions have been held, some of which have already been reported.

The main target of the outing to Muckle Moss on July 12th was the Large Heath Butterfly, **Coenonympha tullia** Mull. In this the expedition was unsuccessful, only three specimens being seen. However, other interesting insects such as the Wood Tiger Moth, **Parasemia plantaginis** L., the Narrow-winged Pug, **Eupithecia nanata** Hubn., Riband Wave, **Sterrhia aversata** L., the Tortrix, **Epinotia cruciana** and the Birch Sawfly, **Cimbex femorata** were discovered. Extensive beating operations were undertaken but larvae and other insects were decidedly scarce. Only larvae of **Pheosia tremula** CL, **Achlya flavicornis** L., were obtained from Birch, whilst the pine trees yielded only larvae of **Thera firmata** Hubn. and adults of the Ladybird Beetle, **Neomysia oblongoguttata** L.

The botanists, on the other hand, were very busy examining the various species of Willow, being very much intrigued by the variation shown in specimens of the Creeping Willow, **Salix repens**. They were also interested to see the Cranberry, **Vaccinium oxycoccus** and the Marsh Andromeda, **Andromeda polifolia** in such large masses.

On Grindon Lough, nearby, we found **Veronica scutellata**, **Potentilla palustris** and **Galiium palustris**.

The society has for some time been considering the question of records. Enquiries to other Natural History Societies revealed that there is very little organised recording in Northumberland and Durham apart from that of birds. Sunderland has therefore decided to go ahead with the collection of records from the eastern half of County Durham. With this in view, maps have been duplicated, record cards printed and notes provided for the guidance of members submitting botanical, geological, ornithological, marine and entomological records. A start has been made in collecting the published records on to cards and we shall, in due course, welcome any records from members of the N. N. U.

Here are a few recent outstanding submissions of the kind we hope to have in large quantities:—

Garden Spider, *Aranea diadema*—seems to be enjoying a good year. One enquirer at Sunderland Museum thought that they were the subjects of an experiment, having been marked with a white cross for identification!

Herring Gull—for the first time we have records of successful breeding of two pairs on buildings in the town.

Great Skua—dead bird found in a fishing net off Sunderland had been ringed in Foula in July 1960.

Fossil Fish—a fossil fish, *Acentrophorus varians* has been found in the concretinary limestone in Sunderland. As far as we are aware, this is the first from this horizon for many years.

Wall Butterfly—*Pararge megera* L. ,—a single specimen from Crimdon Dene on August 28th 1964.

## NOTES AND RECORDS

### NOTES.

**Bird Migration, Spring 1964.**—The following observations were made during the early part of the year:—

A single swallow and a sand martin were flying over a flooded pit subsidence at Low Gosforth (v. c. 67) on the evening of April 13th, and a willow warbler was also heard in song. On the 25th seven or eight willow warblers were in song in Gosforth Park Bird Sanctuary. Chiffchaffs were in song in the Portinscale area (Cumberland) on the 18th but no willow warblers were heard. Wheatears were present on the lower slopes of the nearby mountains. A blackcap was in song near Portinscale on the 19th. On May 3rd willow warblers were plentiful in the vicinity of Edmundbyers (66) and a tree pipit was also heard. Lower down the valley a wood warbler was singing at Coombe Bridges and four swallows were flying round at Allensford. About six Swifts were circling over Gosforth on the morning of May 6th, numbers increasing to about 24 by the 15th. A house martin was present in Plessey Dene (v. c. 67) on May 9th, C. J. and I. C. Gent.

**Bird Migration, Autumn 1964.**—The following ornithological observations concern autumn wader migration at Tanfield Ponds near Stanley (v. c. 66).

Spotted Redshank: A party of 3 birds on August 23rd and 24th, gone again on the 25th. Another party of 4 birds on August 29th.

Greenshank: From July 30th to August 30th, present on most days with a maximum of 7 birds on July 30th and August 29th. During this period it was estimated by very careful observation and counting at least 16 different greenshanks passed through these ponds at Tanfield.

Common Redshank: Present from mid-June to August 3rd, with a maximum of 7 birds on July 26th.

Green Sandpiper: From July 26th to September 4th, present on most days with a maximum of 9 birds on August 23rd. During this period it was

estimated that 18 different Green Sandpipers passed through the ponds.  
Common Sandpiper: Present from July 8th to August 19th, with a maximum of 4 birds on July 19th.

Dunlin: On July 5th, two; July 8th, one; July 30th, two; September 3rd, three, a late date.  
Common Snipe: July 30th, 9 birds, very few before this date. An influx of 34 birds on August 23rd, increasing to at least 75 birds by August 29th. R. Marston Palmer.

**Butterflies in 1963.**—In years previous to 1963, it has been normal to see Large White Butterflies, *Pieris brassicae* L., in my garden at Benton, Newcastle upon Tyne, almost every day during the summer, and also Small Tortoiseshells frequently, particularly on a Buddleia bush. In 1963 Large Whites were seen on only two occasions and Small Tortoiseshells not at all. This is presumably due to the use of insecticides and the bad winter of 1962/63. A. Macdonald.

**The Tea-leaved Willow at Bishop Middleham.**—Some years ago tipping of rubble and waste in Bishop Middleham quarry destroyed one of our few lowland colonies of the Tea-leaved Willow, *Salix phylicifolia*. I am now pleased to be able to record the presence of another healthy bush in another part of the same quarry. J. T.

**Ergots:**—In the Vasculum Vol. XLVI No. 3, I recorded Ergots, *Claviceps* spp. on *Glyceria fluitans* and *Lolium perenne* from a marsh near Pittington. This autumn we found the same two grasses infected with ergots in a swamp near Bishop Middleham and also near West Rainton. As on the previous occasion, although we examined the other grass species in the vicinity, we were unable to find any other species with a similar infection. J. T.

**Spartina townsendii in Budle Bay.**—During a recent visit to Budle Bay with Sunderland Natural History Society, we were surprised at the way the grass, *Spartina townsendii*, is colonising the mudflats. It is only a few years since the first colony was seen there. Now, there are clumps scattered everywhere. This, of course, is just another example of what is happening all round our coasts, wherever the habitat conditions are suitable. T. C. D.

**Lepidoptera in 1964:**—My only record of immigrant Lepidoptera this year is of a single Red Admiral, *Vanessa atalanta*, which was seen at Gosforth, (v. c. 67) on September 25th.

Other butterflies seen during the year have been very few and far between. Small Heath butterflies, *Coenonympha pamphilus*, were on the wing near Twice Brewed (v. c. 67) on June 27th, whilst the Common Blue, *Polyommatus icarus*, was flying in fair numbers on the cliff top near Hartley (v. c. 67), on August 2nd, when Six-spot Burnet moths, *Zygaena filipendulae*, were abundant. Meadow Brown butterflies, *Maniola jurtina*, were also seen at the same time. C. J. Gent.

## RECORDS.

### INSECTS.

#### LEPIDOPTERA—BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

<i>Zygaena filipendulae</i> L. Six-spot Burnet.	66
Quite abundant along the main road from Chester-le-Street to Edmondsley where it crosses Waldrige Fell. A recent arrival. T. C. D.	
<i>Hadena bombycina</i> Hufn. , Glaucous Shears.	67
Distributed on moors round Riding Mill, where it is occasionally found at rest on posts.	
<i>Hadena nana</i> Hufn. , Shears.	67
Once only at light at Riding Mill.	
<i>Hadena conspersa</i> Schiff. Marbled Coronet.	67
Most frequent near the coast in Northumberland, but also distributed inland especially around Riding Mill.	
<i>Hadena cucubali</i> Schiff. , Campion.	67
Distribution in Northumberland similar to the last, but only occasional inland at Riding Mill.	

<b>Dryobotodes protea</b> Schiff. , Brindled Green.	67
Only of very occasional, irregular appearance round Riding Mill.	
<b>Bombycia viminalis</b> Fab. , Minor Shoulder-knot.	66,
Common on Waldrige Fell where the predominant form is the coal-black melanic type. Fairly common at Riding Mill. F. W. Gardner	

FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS.

<b>Selaginella selaginoides</b> (L. ) Link Lesser Clubmoss.	66
There is a flourishing colony at Cassop, which, as far as I am aware, has not previously been placed on record. I take this opportunity of doing so and stating that it is in good condition. J. T.	
<b>Epipactis helleborine</b> (L) Crantz. , Broad-leaved Helleborine.	66
Three plants at Ebchester and two more at Coombe Bridges.	
<b>Lysimachia vulgaris</b> L. , Yellow Loosestrife.	66
A number of plants near Ebchester.	
<b>Melica uniflora</b> Retz. , Wood Melick Grass.	66
Common in wooded country along the Derwent at Ebchester.	
<b>Deschampsia cespitosa</b> (L) Beauv. , Tufted Hair-grass.	66
Ebchester.	
<b>Brachypodium sylvaticum</b> (Huds. ) Beauv. , False Brome Grass.	66
Ebchester.	
<b>Phleum pratense</b> L. , Timothy Grass.	66
Ebchester.	
<b>Carex pendula</b> Huds. , Pendulous Sedge.	66
Ebchester. L. P. Hird.	
<b>Botrychium lunaria</b> (L) Sw. , Moonwort.	67
Near Plankey and in W. Allendale near North Ashes.	
<b>Viola hirta</b> L. , Hairy Violet.	67
Near the mouth of the Chevington Burn.	
<b>Plantago media</b> L. , Hoary Plantain.	67
Bank of the Wansbeck near Kirkwhelpington.	
<b>Clinopodium vulgare</b> L. , Wild Basil.	67
Near Kirkwhelpington Mill. Island in the N. Tyne near Hesleyside.	
<b>Origanum vulgare</b> L., Marjoram.	68
E. bank of Coquet opposite Bygate Hall.	
<b>Malva moschata</b> L. , Musk Mallow.	68
Bank of Bowmont near Kilham.	
<b>Papaver argemone</b> L. , Long Prickly-headed Poppy.	68
Bowmont gravels near Kilham.	
<b>Scrophularia umbrosa</b> Dumort.	68
Bank of Tweed near Union Bridge.	
<b>Centauria scabiosa</b> L. , Great Knapweed.	67
Bewclay Lime Quarry (N. of Little Whittington).	
<b>Ranunculus aquatilis</b> L. <b>subsp. peltatus</b> (Schrank) Syme.	67
Colt Crag Reservoir.	
<b>Galium boreale</b> L. Northern Bedstraw.	67
Island in the N. Tyne near Hesleyside.	
<b>Melampyrum pratense</b> L. , Common Cow-wheat.	67
Hareshaw Linn.	
<b>Trollius europaeus</b> L. , Globe Flower.	67
In N. Tynedale, between the Mounces and Otterstone Lee. In Redesdale, near Evistones.	
<b>Chaenorhinum minus</b> (L. ) Lange, Small Toadflax.	67, 68
Bellingham Station. Old railway near Kielder and Deadwater (67). E. bank of Wooler Water near Haugh Head. (68).	
<b>Antennaria dioica</b> (L. ) Gaertn. , Cat's-foot.	67
Near Fellgrove, Blanchland.	
<b>Carex muricata</b> L. , Prickly Sedge.	80
Shaw Crags near the upper reaches of the Jed Water.	
<b>Phyllitis scolopendrium</b> (L. ) Newm. , Harts-tongue Fern.	67
Cottonshope Burn, not far E. of the main« road. S. Tyne near Featherstone. G. A. and M. Swan.	



# THE VASCULUM

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## BY THE WAY

Secretaries of Societies and other contributors to the "Vasculum" should send their material to Mr. Dunn before February 20th, 1965.

### RESERVOIRS IN UPPER TEESDALE.

Readers will remember a threat to construct a reservoir in Upper Teesdale some years ago. That proposal fell through because of the unsuitable geological faulting in the area, and every local naturalist heaved a huge sigh of relief. It is with very great regret that we have to report that the same peril threatens our Teesdale rarities once more. Already boring machines are in operation on Cow Green, and naturalists will have to move very quickly if the area is to be safeguarded.

The botanical treasures of the area have long been known to the professional and amateur alike. In recent years it has become an outdoor laboratory for research students at the Universities of both Durham and Newcastle. Over the last 100 years, it has been visited by biologists not only from all over the British Islands, but also from many other parts of the world.

This wonderful collection of plants and animals must not be allowed to go the way of so many of our rarities in recent years. The requirements of locally important industries are fully recognised by naturalists. Those industries must similarly recognise that the preservation of our natural heritage is every bit as important as collecting thousands of gallons of water. We would urge them to look for reservoir sites elsewhere. Meanwhile the Northern Naturalists' Union will resist the threat with every means in its power.

### THE QUAIL IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

A few weeks ago we were looking through an old diary that had been written by Thomas Robson, sometime schoolmaster of Burradon School, when we came across the following entry for August 27th, 1870 :—

"Quail, *Coturnix vulgaris*, Nesbit, Wooler. Received a dozen eggs from Mr. A. Johnston, taken from a nest containing 13, found in a hayfield at the beginning of July; incubation had commenced. The call of the quail, like that of the landrail, is very deceptive, sometimes appearing to be close at hand when in reality far distant. It is difficult of approach and rarely to be seen even where it is comparatively abundant, as appears to be the case in the neighbourhood of Wooler, Mr. Johnston having caught several young ones whilst harvesting this year. He supposes the reason why the nest is so seldom found is because they breed amongst the growing grass and have hatched before the hay-cutting commences. "

In another entry, this time for February 7th, 1872, we read :— "Notes on birds, received from Mr. Robt. Hedley, Garretshields Farm, Otterburn, Northumberland.

Quail, *Coturnix vulgaris*—a Quail's nest was found on Mr. John Hedley's Farm, Otterburn, Northumberland. It is the only nest known to be found in Redesdale. "

These entries seemed to strike a cord in our memory. Some 4 years ago a collection of birds' eggs was presented to Chester-le-Street Grammar School by the heirs of Mr. John Baxter, a well known amateur naturalist of the period 1900-1930. When we searched in it for quail's eggs we found a box containing 10 of them together with a little screwed up piece of paper. This was carefully unfolded and smoothed out, when we were able to read, "Corn. Quail (13 clutch): Wooler, 1870:— Andrew Johnston of Nesbit near Wooler, Northumberland. " What a coincidence! We think our ornithological members would be hard put to, to find quails in the same places nowadays.

#### THE VAPOURER MOTH, *Orgyia antiqua* L. IN DURHAM AND NORTHUMBERLAND.

The Scarce Vapourer, *Orgyia recens* Hubn. , has never occurred in our counties, but *Orgyia antiqua* L. would, at one time, have been reckoned as a common moth. In the country as a whole, it is still looked upon as common, but ask any Lepidopterist to procure eggs for breeding purposes and he will, in all probability, have to make a special expedition to get them. In Durham and Northumberland we have not seen it for about 50 years. It is possible that small colonies may still exist here and there, but we fear that it has disappeared from us completely. On the Continent it is very common, and it is also known in Canada and the United States.

Its distribution was always curious for, although it was found throughout the country from the south coast to a point on the west coast near Cape Wrath, it missed out many suitable localities between. The same curious behaviour was noticeable, in the old days, in Durham and Northumberland. Colonies existed in Billingham Bottoms, Castle Eden Dene, Waldrige Fell, Satley, Chopwell Woods, Tyne Woods, Corbridge, Blanchland and Pigdon. There was probably at least one colony in the Barnard Castle area, for

Durham specimens, labelled "Teesdale," are in the late Mr. J. P. Robson's collection. The possibility of obtaining specimens was reasonable in 1900, but after this it became progressively more difficult to find.

There was plenty of variation in facies from colony to colony, throughout the country as well as in Northumberland and Durham. If this had been properly worked out, some sort of clinal structure may well have emerged. The possibility of an interesting investigation here might well attract some of our younger workers. If it does, we would urge them to waste no time about it, for this is a moth which is dying out in many of its old haunts.

#### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION.

Some years ago (*Vasculum* Vol. XL, No. 2. , July 1955), as the result of requests from members, we published the minutes of the Wallis Club, which led to the decision to form the Northern Naturalists' Union. The other day, we found a copy of the original notice of the Union's first Annual Meeting. Here it is :— "The first Annual General Meeting of the Union will be held in the Science College, South Road, Durham, (by kind permission of Professor I. Masson), on Saturday, January 31st 1925.

#### **Programme.**

2-45 p. m. Inspection of the new laboratories, etc

3-15 p. m. Revision and adoption of rules.

Election of Officers.

Address by Mr. F. Gerald Simpson, M. A. (Director of Archaeological Research in the Durham Colleges), on "The Archaeological Work of a Field Club."

Arrangements are being made for tea after the meeting. Convenient trains leave Newcastle 2-3 p. m. : Sunderland 1-48 p. m. ; Darlington 1-52 p. m. ; cheap tickets can be obtained by these trains on Saturdays.  
January 19th, 1925. F. C. Garrett, Hon. Sec"

#### THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION.

It is proposed to publish another edition of the Transactions as soon as it is possible to do so. To this end, money has been set aside to pay for its printing. The Editors will be most willing to receive suitable contributions, which should be sent in as soon as possible.

#### TAWNY OWL SURVEY.

In connection with the above, records are required of the occurrence of Tawny Owls during the months of October, November and December 1964. Records from N. N. U. members would be appreciated and should be sent to Mr. C. J. Gent, 30 Berkeley Square, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, 3, in the following form:—

Date, Name of area (and map reference, if possible), Heard or seen.

## THE SOCIETIES.

### NORTHERN NATURALISTS' UNION.

The Autumn Meeting this year was held at Sunderland Museum, on October 24th, where we were the guests of the recently resurrected Sunderland Natural History Society.

It was with great pleasure that the Union members were able to meet in Sunderland after a lapse of many years. It is necessary also to comment on the sumptuous accommodation and hospitality provided by the authorities of the Sunderland Museum. We were, indeed, most grateful.

The President, Mr. E. Alker, himself a Sunderland man, was in the Chair to introduce the lecturer, Mr. J. Stansfield, the Secretary of the Sunderland Natural History Society. The talk was entitled "Flies, Fleas and Birds."

Mr. Stansfield described how he had worked in the bird observatories on Skokholm and on Fair Isle. As a side-line to the usual trapping and ringing work that goes on in these places, he had also collected and studied the ectoparasites from trapped birds by a special delousing device. As a result of this, 5 main types of ectoparasites had been studied. These were the Flat Fly, a bloodsucking insect which was most common and present on about 60% of all the birds; Fleas, which were present on about 30% of all birds; Feather Lice, insects which actually chew away the feathers; Ticks, which were confined to the head. Not many of these were obtained because the head of the bird is out of the apparatus during the delousing process; and Feather Mites.

The life-histories of some of these were then aptly described with reference to very good charts to illustrate the various points. Finally, fleas found in birds' nests were discussed, together with techniques on collecting and studying them.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. T. C. Dunn, after which followed tea, very kindly provided by the Museum. During and after tea we inspected the exhibits. These included a collection of local fishes by Mr. Alker, an extremely well-produced exhibit illustrating the life-history of the Fox Moth by Mr. Cook, a collection of plants from the Canary Islands, brought by Mr. A. R. Dunn, who had recently returned with them from an expedition mounted by the Exploration Society of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, a collection of cigarette cards of the "Wild Flower" series and two vases of garden weeds by Miss Taylor, three drawing books of 1810 showing lithographs of animals and flowers all by Thomas Fairland and exhibited by Professor J. W. Heslop Harrison, a local collection of pressed flowers by Mr. Michael Mullin (a visitor), some sheets of postage stamps of insects and birds by Mrs. A. N. Gibby and, of course, Mr. Stansfield's live specimens of fleas, flat flies and lice, under the microscope, in specimen bottles and in the infested nests which illustrated his lecture.

## BIRTLEY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The autumn programme of indoor meetings began on September 22nd with a talk by an old friend, Mr. W. E. Gladstone, on "Medieval Monasticism." This was followed by Mr. P. F. O'Neill who showed some magnificent slides of flowers and insects in colour. Next, Mr. Fred Wade talked on "Echoes of Other Days," in which he recalled incidents of his younger days, with photographic evidence to corroborate what he said. The lecture entitled "Looking Round" and given by Dr. A. Todd was illustrated by the expert photographs with which we have all come to associate him. On November 17th Dr. G. H. Banbury gave his lecture on "Toxic Compounds in Agriculture." He told us about the current usage of weed killers and pesticides in the field, and of rodent killers in food stores, emphasising the dangers that accompany the use of the chlorinated hydrocarbons in particular. This was followed by Mr. T. N. Scaling showing photographs of North Yorkshire, where again we had an exhibition of expert photography. Lastly Mr. D. Bellamy gave a most interesting and lucid description of peat formation in many different habitats.

At the same time, field outings on the first Sunday of each month have continued to take place. Thus we have widened our visits to Waldrige Fell, to include some of the woodlands round the edges, and in September we visited a very interesting area near Fishburn.

## ANNFIELD PLAIN AND STANLEY NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB.

During the summer, several outings of great interest have been held, which have been well attended by both grown-ups and juniors alike. These have been to such places as Cross Fell, Talkin Tarn, Upper Teesdale, Ravensworth, and in the Cleveland Hills from Scugdale to Hasty Bank.

Of special note, there was the joint meeting with the Consett Field Club on October 10th. For this we walked from Staward Station to Beltingham via Plankey Mill and Ridley Hall. There was a very large attendance with a high proportion of junior members from both clubs. Great interest was shown in the very old yew trees in Beltingham churchyard. These are reputed to be about 900 years old.

The lecture season started on September 9th with Dr. R. L. Tounsin talking about "Ships and Shipbuilding." Since then we have had the pleasure of hearing Mr. W. E. Gladstone talking about an archaeological dig, Mr. S. Phillipson about "Sweden and Lapland," and Dr. Ibbotson about insects. In all cases attendances were good, and some interesting discussions have been stimulated.

## NOTES AND RECORDS

### NOTES.

**Bird Records from Durham.** —The following ornithological observations have been collected over the second half of 1964.

Wood Sandpiper: Autumn passage. Tanfield ponds from September 3rd to 6th, when a single bird of this rare species of wader was present at these ponds.

Ruff: Autumn passage. On September 2nd two birds were by a pool behind the sea wall on the north side of the Tees estuary.

Dunlin: Tanfield Ponds. From September 9th to 19th, up to 3 birds were frequently present.

Shoveller: Tanfield Ponds, September 6th, two. Teal: From July 19th to August 29th, a flock of up to 28 birds haunted the Tanfield Ponds.

Tufted Duck: Tanfield Ponds, August 23rd, a pair.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: On July 5th, a party of 4 immature birds visited the Tanfield Ponds. This species of gull is rarely seen inland. (These ponds are 13 miles from the sea).

Kestrel: During August and September, a pair frequented the Tanfield valley and the Causey Woods.

Swallow: Autumn migration. On August 19th, there was an extremely large concentration of birds on wires near Shield Row, Stanley; estimated at between 1,400 and 1,600 birds. Late date, a single swallow flew over Newcastle University on October 7th.

Marsh Tit: A family party of 4 birds at Greencroft, on July 12th.

Yellow Wagtail: Brasside Ponds, near Durham City, June 20th, 3 birds.

R. Marston Palmer.

**Palatability of Danewort Fruits.** —During October, we revisited the Danewort, *Sambucus ebulus* L., at Rainton, with the intention of getting photographs of the ripe fruits but found very few of them left. We examined fifty inflorescences and on these we counted twenty one berries. No inflorescence had more than two fruits remaining. We suspect that they had been taken by birds, although some small mammal, light enough to climb the plant without breaking it, could also be the culprit. Neither elder berries nor haws growing nearby showed similar signs of being eaten, although they also were ripe. It would seem that danewort fruits are very palatable to some bird or small mammal. We would be very interested to know which. Can any of our Zoologists help? J. T.

**Bullfinches at Rowlands Gill.** —I find these birds much more common than they used to be in the past. For the last few years the bullfinch has visited my garden quite frequently. In the spring the flower buds of the apple trees are its first choice. I find this destruction of the flowers does not greatly affect the output of the trees as I get quite good crops of fruit. In the summer it visits the flower beds for the seeds of dead flowers. One of its favourites is the seed of the candytuft. I recently saw four bullfinches feeding on about a square yard of this seed.

I come across the bullfinch in the hedgerows quite often now. I wonder if this bird is no longer caught for the cage as it used to be in the past, and is therefore increasing its range. C. Hutchinson.

**Waxwings.** —This is about the time of the year we expect this bird to pay us a visit, so anyone interested in this welcome visitor should watch the berry bushes in the hedgerows, gardens and parks.

The 1963-64 influx started, in Rowlands Gill, on November 22nd 1963, when I saw four waxwings feeding on some apples which had been left on the trees in my garden. During the months until March 21st, 1964, these birds were in the district in varying numbers ranging from two to twelve. They are quite easy to approach and do not seem to mind humans, especially when they first arrive.

A few years ago, I was walking along the main road near my house, when I came across a bicycle parked at the kerbside, and seated on the handlebars was a waxwing. We looked at each other for a few minutes at a range of two yards before it departed. At the moment I am on the lockout, and hoping for one of the large invasions we get occasionally. C. Hutchinson.

**Variation in *Cepaea nemoralis* at Seaton Sluice and Bamburgh.** --*Cepaea nemoralis* is our commonest shelled land snail, and is a well-known example of stable variation within one species, believed to be due to selective pressure by predators such as the song thrush. There are three varieties of shell colour, brown, pink and yellow. Together with this, there are different banding patterns on the shell, ranging from no bands at all to five bands, which are sometimes fused into one extremely broad band. All stages between the two extremes exist. These variations are genetically determined, no bands being dominant to all other kinds of banding, and brown in colour dominant over pink and yellow. One might expect, therefore, that plain brown shells would be the most frequent, but such is very seldom the case. The frequency of a particular type of shell depends upon the type of environment in which it is found. Bird predators searching for snails will obviously pick out those which are most conspicuous.

In the course of investigations carried out on snail populations at the above-mentioned places, it was found that at Seaton Sluice, the commonest type of shell was five-banded, comprising 91.3% of the total population. There were only 7.5% no banded shells, in spite of the fact that no-bands is dominant over 5-bands. The snails collected were in loose sand dunes, on which coarse marram grass was growing. This is a varied sort of background, and it seems from the results that five-banded forms are favoured. A few four-banded shells were also found. The population at Bamburgh, however, was very different, even though the habitat was the same. Here a new type of shell was found, with one band. On the average the frequency was 60% as against 28% 5-banded forms, and hardly any no-banded ones. The selection against no-banded shells amongst a varied background is again seen, but why one-banded shells should be so common here and not at Seaton Sluice is not immediately obvious. Judith Dunn.

**An unusual Blackbird's Nest at Durham.** —In mid-April this year, a blackbird built a nest on top of a garden broom, hanging upside down in the back porch and less than 6 inches from the kitchen and garage doors, which were in constant use. Most of the time an iron gate closes this porch and the bird had to fly between the bars to and from the nest. She successfully reared 5 young, apparently unmoved by our comings and goings. Mrs. A. N. Gibby.

**Some Plant Notes from Annfield Plain.** —During the outing of the Annfield Plain and Stanley Naturalists' Field Club to Upper Teesdale, Miss R. Wade found a rare flower growing alongside the Hudeslope Beck. Later identification proved this to be *Astrantia major*, a garden plant which sometimes becomes naturalised. I have since learned that it is growing "wild" in other parts of Upper Teesdale.

In October, while rambling along the Linhope Burn, we found a colony of about a dozen coal black fungi, the largest being about 6 inches across. A description was sent to the Hancock Museum where Mrs. Jones suggested that it might be *Russula nigricans*, a species which is rather uncommon. F. Wade

## RECORDS.

### INSECTS.

#### LEPIDOPTERA—BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

<b><i>Apamea ophiogramma</i></b> Esp., The Double Lobed Moth.	67
A rare moth in the north. Taken at Riding Mill in 1959 and in 1960.	
<b><i>Apamea epomidion</i></b> Haw. ( <i>hepatica</i> L.) Clouded Brindle.	67
Another rare moth with its headquarters in Derbyshire. Fairly common at light at Riding Mill.	
<b><i>Aporophyla luteolata</i></b> Schiff., The Deep-brown Dart.	67
Once only at Riding Mill—in 1936.	

<b>Aporophyla nigra</b> Haw. , The Black Rustic. Of regular occurrence at Riding Mill, but never in abundance.	67
<b>Dasypolia templi</b> Thunb. , The Brindled Ochre. A single specimen found dead in a gutter in Newcastle in 1921.	67
<b>Antitype chi</b> L. , The Grey Chi. Well distributed throughout Northumberland, taken on walls and on tree-trunks in early autumn, both type and var. <b>olivacea</b> .	67
<b>Griposia aprilina</b> L., The Merveille du Jour. Fairly common, wherever oak is found.	67
<b>Brachionycha sphinx</b> Hufn. , The Sprawler. South does not mention Northumberland as one of its stations. It is of regular occurrence in the woodlands round Riding Mill.	67
<b>Celaena haworthii</b> Curt. , Haworth's Minor. Fairly common, but chiefly on the damper moors which is not surprising since its caterpillar feeds on Cotton Grass, <b>Eriophonim vaginatum</b> .	67
<b>Hydraecia petasitis</b> Doubl. , The Butterbur. Of regular occurrence wherever Butterbur grows.	67
<b>Nonagria typhae</b> Thunb. , The Bulrush Wainscot. Occasional at light at Riding Mill, though no breeding ground is known in the vicinity. F. W. Gardner.	67

#### FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS.

<b>Campanula glomerata</b> L. Clustered Bellflower. Island in N. Tyne near Heselaside.	67
<b>Calamagrostis epigejos</b> (L. ) Roth. , Bushgrass. W. bank of N. Tyne near Tyne Bridge and near Otterstone Lee.	67
<b>Carex laevigata</b> Sm. Smooth Sedge. By a tributary of the Chirdon Burn at Goat Linn (67). By the Common Burn below Commonburn House (68).	67, 68
<b>Equisetum variegatum</b> Schleich. ex Weber and Mohr. Variegated Horsetail. Chirdon Burn below Allery Bank.	67
<b>Equisetum telmateia</b> Ehr. Great Horsetail. W. bank of S. Tyne near Lintley.	67
<b>Senecio squalidus</b> L. Oxford Ragwort. Roadside near Walbottle Colliery.	67
<b>Teesdalia nudicaulis</b> (L. ) R. Br. Shepherd's Cress. By the Common Bum below Commonburn House. River gravels near Westnewton.	68
<b>Trifolium arvense</b> L. Hare's-foot clover. E. bank of the Wooler Water near Haugh Head.	68
<b>Coeloglossum viride</b> (L. ) Hatm. Frog Orchid. Meadow near Botany on Hepburn Moor, with <b>Listera ovata</b> .	68
<b>Carex lepidocarpa</b> Tauch. Delf Burn near Harwood.	67
<b>Typha latifolia</b> L. Great Reedmace. Kielder Burn just below the junction with Ridge End Burn.	67
<b>Equisetum hyemale</b> L. Dutch Rush. Cottonshope Burn, not far E. of the main road.	67
<b>Gymnadenia conopsea</b> (L. ) R. Br. Fragrant Orchid. Cottonshope Bum, near Cottonshope. Near the mouth of Chevington Bum.	67
<b>Myriophyllum alterniflorum</b> DC Alternate-flowered Water-milfoil. Rede between Blakehopeburnhaugh and Robs Wood.	67
<b>Genista tinctoria</b> L. Dyer's Greenweed. Arcot Hall Golf-course (near Seaton Burn).	67
<b>Vicia lathyroides</b> L. Spring Vetch. Sand dunes 1 mile S. of Alnmouth. Basalt S. of Craster and at Spindlestone and Easington Crag. The Heugh, Holy Island. Sand pit near E. Learmouth. River gravels near Westnewton. Bank of Wooler water near Turvelaws. G. A. and M. Swan.	68