Annual Report 2015

Southampton Natural History Society

Some Highlights from the Society's Meetings

Julian Moseley arranged our usual programme of varied and interesting indoor talks and outdoor walks.

In February, Shanna Dymond told us lots of funny stories about the 'New Forest Wildlife Park'. In March, Richard Hedley talked about the 'Joy of Hampshire Woodlands'. We returned to Hampshire's woods in September when Manny Hinge told us about the 'New Forest Woodcock Project'. More ornithology in October, looking at 'Autumnal Birds with Graham Giddens. Then back home for 'Gardening for Insects and Other Wildlife' by Jon Oakley in November. Finally, in December, a fascinating and little-known jewel under great threat: 'Seagrass and Seahorses' by Ken Collins and Jenny Mallinson – see Daphne's article.

8 February, Southampton Common: As well as the mosses we were studying, we found a lacebug *Acalypta parvula* on Heath Star Moss *Campylopus introflexus*, a Red Admiral butterfly and two early species of hoverfly — *Episyrphus balteatus* and *Eristalis tenax*, to get the Hoverfly Survey underway for the year.

21 February, Hayling Oysterbeds: A Red Kite was mobbed by three Oystercatchers. There were a pair of Pintail and over 10 Red-breasted Merganser offshore.

29 March, The Holt, Upham: We found some plant species we hadn't seen there before, such as: False Oxlip (Primrose x Cowslip); Sweet Violet; Wood Dog Violet; the moss *Scleropodium cespitans* and the lichen *Physcia aipolia*. It wasn't a good day for insects, but Cluster-fly *Pollenia rudis* was a first for the site as was Grey Squirrel!

7 July, Lord's Wood, Gypsy Mile: Despite the sunshine and showers, there were lots of butterflies, including several White Admirals, Silver-washed Fritillaries, Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Large and Small Skippers, a Red Admiral and a Comma and an immature male Southern Hawker *Aeshna Cyanea*.

11 July, St Giles, Winchester: 38 species of moths were recorded at an SNHS moth event in a private garden, 24 of which had not been seen at a similar event last year. The prettiest were 5 Large Elephant Hawk Moth, but the most interesting species were Crescent Plume, Dog's Tooth and Scarce Silver-lines. A Summer Chafer beetle was also attracted to the trap.

2 August, Magdalen Hill Down: The chalk pit was especially good for butterflies and we found 20 in total, including a Helice female Clouded Yellow, plus 3 Dusky Sallow Moth, a Striped Lychnis caterpillar on Dark Mullein and the Mirid bug *Polymerus unifasciatus*, which is associated with bedstraw.

15 August, Broughton Down: The weather was bright enough for some interesting insects: Hairy Shieldbug, the red and black bug *Corizus hyoscyami*, Bloody-nosed

Beetle, the Harebell-loving bee *Melitta haemorrhoidalis*, the flies *Nowickia ferox* and *Physocephala rufipes* and least 12 species of butterfly, including Small Blue, Chalkhill Blue and Brown Argus. The highlights were several Silver-spotted Skippers and single well-worn Adonis Blue and Dark Green Fritillary. It was also a good day for plants, including Yellow Bird's-nest, the chalk form of Dodder, Sainfoin and Bastard Toadflax.

30 August, Shedfield Common and Wickham area: As this was a joint walk with Hampshire Ornithological Society, birds were the main objective and 24 species were seen, including Spotted Flycatcher and a male Blackcap, but members also saw a Wasp Spider, *Argiope bruennichi*, several butterfly species, including 3 Brown Argus, and a black-phase wild Rabbit.

13 September, Longdown, New Forest: There was a good display of the target species, Marsh Gentian, a spike of Autumn Lady's-tresses and a white flowered variety of Ling (Common Heather). Were the members lucky?

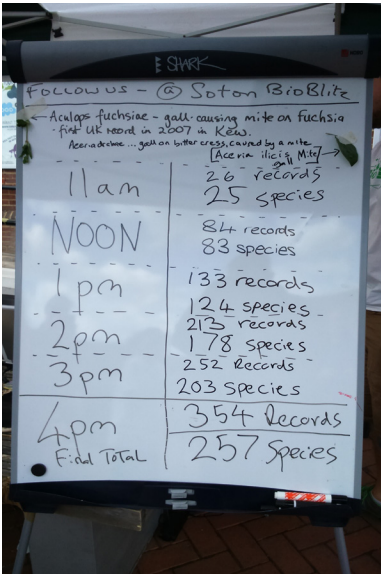
10 October, Coldeast Fungus Foray: Only 15 species were found in the dry conditions, but one highlight under pines and Rhododendron was Deadly Webcap *Cortinarius rubellus* (2 specimens). Otherwise,they were mainly common species. There was an unusual weed near the Balancing Pond that looked like Argentine Fleabane *Conyza bonariensis*.

1 November, Southampton Common, Fungus Foray: This was the 25th annual foray here with an attendance of 37. Despite the number of past forays, we still managed to find a species that was new to the site among the 29 found: Golden Spindles *Clavulinopsis fusiformis*, under Yew in the Cemetery and White Knight *Tricholoma album* was new to the Cemetery. Other species of interest included a good crop of *Clitocybe geotropa* plus *Fistulina hepatica*, *Grifola frondosa* and *Hygrocybe russocoriacea*, known as Cedarwood Waxcap.

27 December, Weston Shore, West Wood, Mayfield Park: Only 36 bird species were seen on our last walk of the year, a low number due to very mild weather and high tide at Weston Shore. Highlights were Firecrest in West Wood, Little Egret at Mayfield Park and 2 Chiffchaff at Unwin Close near to Weston Shore. There were many examples of out-of-season flowers, including Lesser Celandine (3 places), Bulbous Buttercup (Grange Fields), Holly (Mayfield Park), Yarrow (near West Wood) and Cherry Laurel (West Wood and Mayfield Park).

Thanks as ever to the tea-makers and walk leaders and all our speakers.

Southampton Bioblitz 2014 & 2015



This year I agreed to write a piece about the Southampton Bioblitz in 2015 based on the one that wrote for the Annual Report 2014, only to discover that in fact there was no mention of the 2014 bioblitz in the 2014 Annual Report apart from a brief mention of the date upon which the event took place! I intend to put that right this year.

Firstly, it is worth explaining what a bioblitz is because it is such a new concept that many people may be unfamiliar with it. As briefly as possible, a 'bioblitz' is an event, usually extending over an entire day or any 24-hour period, within which time as many biological species are recorded as possible within a certain defined locality or localities. Most of the species recorded are then entered onto a recording system on site, with additional species requiring more considered examination, being identified and recorded later. The word bioblitz consists of two components. 'bio' is a reference to living species of flora and fauna reflecting the fact that a wide range of species are recorded. 'Blitz' is the German word for lightning and is a reference to the fact that the aim is to record as many species as is reasonably possible within a limited time frame. Bioblitz events serve several purposes including the following:

- they enable useful biological data to be gathered from a site or sites, in this way important habitats and possibly scarcer species can be identified;
- they provide an opportunity for experts and others with various interests, to work together and to meet each other;
- they provide good publicity for nature recording and conservation groups,
- they assist in the learning of the identification of species;
- they can introduce the general public, including children, to wildlife.

I have attended several bioblitz events in the last few years. For example, there are annual bioblitz events at Christchurch and similar events have been held at Queen Elizabeth Forest Park, in the New Forest, at Basingstoke and at Marwell Zoo. On 14th June 2014 the first such event took place in Southampton followed by a second

on 6th June 2015. Both events took place at the main campus of Southampton University and they also included adjacent parts of Southampton Common within the recording area. Both events covered an almost 24-hour period from about 7 pm on Friday evening to 5 pm on the Saturday. There will not be a bioblitz in 2016, but there might be another in 2017.

Early June was chosen as the best time for bioblitz events at Southampton University for three main reasons: firstly, this is a time of year when the weather is generally favourable; secondly, there are as many species as possible to be found; and, thirdly, this timing fits in with the academic calendar — most university students have completed their courses and examinations, but most of them have not dispersed for the summer break.

The first bioblitz event at Southampton University on 14th June 2014 followed an agenda that was more or less repeated on 6th June 2015. On the Friday evenings there were very popular bat walks and also a moth lamp event. On the Saturdays the programme was centred on the concourse outside the Student Union building and a series of about four walks radiated out from there, including an early morning bird walk. There were displays, activities and the showing of moths and insects from the previous evening's recording. Experts could also spread out from this central area to record species individually and there was provision for two operatives to enter data collected on the day into software packages such as Living Record and Mapmate. Any future bioblitz events, based at Southampton University, are likely to follow a similar format.

For the 2014 event the weather was reasonable, but the moth event was cut short by a thunderstorm and the conditions were cool with a lunch time shower the following day. It was dry and rather warmer for the 2015 event.

The 2015 was also rather larger, with more groups involved and thus more displays to look at. Eventually there were 473 accepted records of 324 species entered as records for the 2015 bioblitz. For the 2014 bioblitz, despite the poorer weather, we did rather better — 521 records of 355 species.

There is no total number of species recorded for both years, but this figure is likely to exceed 500.

Phil Budd

The 2015 Botanical Survey on Southampton Common

Introduction

In 2014, the five-member committee of the Hawthorns Wildlife Association (hereafter referred to as HWA) decided to cease operating as a voluntary support group for the Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre after supporting this facility, and the previous Southampton Common Study Centre (SCSC), for some 33 years. In 2015, our society took over the surviving activities of the HWA, including supporting public walks on the common.

During the long period that the support group operated, a reasonable fund had built up in the bank and, at the termination of the group, various ideas on how to dispose of these funds were raised by the HWA committee. The majority of these funds were spent on two memorial benches; these were installed in 2015/6 winter at the entrance to the Hawthorns Centre/Café and by the site of the former SCSC and members may have noticed these. It was also decided that some of these funds would be used to compile a report on the current state of the flora of the Common. It was considered that this would provide an informative legacy against which future trends in the flora of the Common could be measured. Furthermore, the results of this survey could be compared to a previous similar survey conducted in 1979 by the City of Southampton Society and published in their booklet entitled 'Southampton Common'.

This survey was undertaken in the spring, summer and early autumn of 2015 by me and covered the entirety of the publicly accessible part of Southampton Common, including the Old Cemetery. All species of Vascular Plant were covered in the survey, including trees, grasses and ferns, but other 'flora' such as mosses, lichens and fungi were excluded. All native and naturalised species were listed and their status defined and compared to that of the same species in 1979. Unlike the 1979 survey, species considered to be deliberately planted were excluded.

In November 2015, a report on these findings entitled 'Flora Survey, Southampton Common, 2015, Report' was produced. At the time of writing this report has not been formally published and no decision has been made on how to proceed with it, but the information contained within is available to Southampton City Council. Furthermore, all of the plant record data was submitted to the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) recorder for south Hampshire vice-county. Some interesting records also appear in the Members' Records section of this Annual Report.

Results

When the total list was compiled I was amazed that it included 572 species of Vascular Plant and that all of these have been recorded in the last 36 years. This is a very high list of species for an area of only about 365 acres and reflects the high biological diversity of the Southampton area and the quality of habitat on the Common. Furthermore, it appears that the flora of Southampton Common has shown a net increase of 139 species between 1979 and 2015. 81 of the species that were listed as present in 1979 were not found in 2015. Conversely, 220 of the species recorded in the 2015 survey were apparently not present in 1979. It was difficult to determine the increase or decrease of species due to the qualitative nature of the findings, but it was found that 19 species may have increased and that 20 species may have decreased over the 36-year period.

There are relatively few rare or uncommon plants on the Common, but two Hampshire BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) species were found on the Common in 1979 and were also still present in 2015; these species are Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis (Orchis) morio* and Pale Heath Violet *Viola lactea*. It appears that another Hants BAP species, Petty Whin *Genista anglica* has been lost since 1979. A further Hants BAP species Hampshire Purslane *Ludwigia palustris* has appeared since 1979, but is thought to be an introduction.

A number of rather striking changes in the flora of Southampton Common have occurred between 1979 and 2015 including the following:

- **There seems to have been a great increase in the quantity and variety of fern species, especially in the woodlands of the Common.** Only two fern species were listed in 1979: the Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilitata* and Male Fern *D. filix-mas*. Both have clearly increased in abundance. A further eight species of ferns and horsetails seem to have appeared since 1979. Since most of these fern species grow on walls or in shady woodland, two habitats that appear to have remained fairly stable, this change of status appears to be due to climatic factors. The climate, especially winter conditions, appears to have become warmer and wetter since 1979.
- **An increase in the species diversity of native, woodland plants.** There appears to have been a net increase of 20 woodland species. Furthermore, only two woodland species appear to have declined since 1979 as opposed to 11 that may have increased in abundance. It appears that species favouring dry, very shady woodland have increased most: such as Herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum* and Wood Dock *Rumex sanguineus*. Some native woodland plants that prefer a little more light have either disappeared — Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana* — or are now

confined to the shady parts of the old cemetery — Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* or Pig-nut *Conopodium majus*.

- **A considerable decline in the heathland flora of the Common.** Old maps show that in the past the Common contained large tracts of heathland and much less woodland. These habitats were maintained by grazing. Today the heathland is confined to small pockets and most of the associated flora has been lost. Clearly this process is continuing because no heathland plants have increased in abundance on the Common since 1979 and 7 species have declined. 13 more species have vanished completely and 5 further species are now confined to the heathland habitat in the east of the Old Cemetery. Curiously two new species have appeared in the well-managed Green-winged Orchid site near Burgess Road crossroads: Pill Sedge *Carex pilulifera* and Heath Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*.

- **32 species of native, or thoroughly naturalised, flowering plants recorded in 1979 are now confined to the Old Cemetery.** The Old Cemetery provides a very valuable refuge for many species of plants because of the mosaic of natural open woodland, heathland and acidic grassland habitats that still exist there. The current rotational mowing regime that began in 1989 also favours a high diversity of species. Grassland plants that now appear to be confined to the Old Cemetery including Betony *Betonica officinalis*, Common Toadflax *Linaria vulgaris*, Goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis* and Salad Burnet *Poterium sanguisorba*.

- **A considerable increase in the number of species of non-native plants that have become naturalised on the Common.** Only two established non-native plants appear to have been lost from the Common since 1979 whereas a total of 66 species of non-native flowering plants have become established. To a lesser extent this may be due to better recognition of non-native species as a result of improved identification guides since 1979. However, the main reason for this change is probably the trend toward milder weather, especially the much milder and wetter winters that we experience these days. A few of these species may be native elsewhere in the UK, but most originate from warmer climates, especially southern Europe. Examples of these include the following:

    - **Bird-sown and self-sown trees and shrubs:** Bay *Laurus nobilis*, Holm Oak *Quercus ilex*, Portugal Laurel *Prunus lusitanicus* and Lauristinus *Viburnum tinus*.

    - **Spring-flowering bulbous plants:** Most of these are plants of Mediterranean origin commonly grown in gardens. Examples established on the Common include Early Crocus *Crocus tomassinianus*, Few-flowered Garlic *Allium*

paradoxum, Garden Grape-hyacinth *Muscari armeniacum*, Summer Snowflake *Leucojum aestivum* and Three-cornered Leek *Allium triquetrum*.

- **Garden perennials:** Most of these have spread from neighbouring gardens, very often as garden throw-outs. Examples include, Balm *Melissa officinalis*, Druce's Crane's-bill *Geranium x oxonianum*, Green Alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, Siberian Iris *Iris sibirica* and Sowbread *Cyclamen hederifolium*.
- **Escapes in the Cemetery:** Many plants have appeared in the Cemetery as escapes from cultivation. These include self-sown trees such as Lawson's Cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*; naturalised ground-cover plants like Winter Heliotrope *Petasites fragrans* and summer-flowering perennials like Orange Lily *Lilium hollandicum.*
- **Other species:** These include the rather invasive Yellow-flowered Strawberry *Potentilla indica* on the soil banks by Cemetery Road that might have been introduced during works to restore these banks. Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata* only grows by The Avenue and nowhere else in Southampton. It is much more commonly naturalised in northern England on roadsides, so may have spread here from the north via the road transport system.

Reference

The City of Southampton Society (1979) *Southampton Common — its place in the life of Southampton over the centuries,* The City of Southampton Society (November 1979).

Philip Budd

Seahorses and Sea Grass
Daphne Woods

Report of a talk given 14th December

Dr Ken Collins and Jenny Mallinson, Ocean and Earth Science, University of Southampton

Ken and Jenny have been diving for years and are passionate about our marine life. Their study of seahorses on the south coast is very time consuming and has needed to be conducted over several years to demonstrate that loss of sea grass (*Zostera marina*) habitat seriously impacts on the number of seahorses.

Historical photographs show extensive areas of sea grass at Studland Bay, but in recent years an increasing number of bare patches have been recorded. The damage is done by boats which moor up for an hour or two. Dragging anchors have ripped up swathes of roots, leaving extensive holes and channels in the sea grass which increase year on year. The underground rhizomes and roots of the sea grass help bind together and stabilise the seabed sediment. Exposed areas are scoured by waves, winnowing out fine clay material and nutrients, creating an underwater environment unsuitable for recolonisation by the sea grass which is slow growing. The sea grass provides a habitat for a wide range of small fish and invertebrates, acts as a nursery to commercially important crustaceans, molluscs and fish, protects against erosion, and rapidly absorbs CO_2. Sea grass meadows are scarce around the UK and globally they are declining and under threat from poor water quality, coastal development, dredging, trawling and natural impacts. They are on the list of threatened or declining species/habitats produced by OSPAR, the mechanism by which 15 governments & the EU cooperate to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic.

There are two British seahorses found in Studland Bay: the Spiny Seahorse *Hippocampus guttulatus* and the Short Snouted Seahorse *Hippocampus hippocampus*. They are surprisingly large, the length of a hand when extended, but still very difficult to spot as they blend in so well with the sea grass. The spiny seahorse is most commonly found, but having said that numbers have declined in recent years from 40 found in surveys five years ago to four in 2013 and this year none.

In 2008, both British seahorses were added to a list of protected species under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981). It is now illegal to kill, take or disturb seahorses in British waters and their habitat is also protected, which all sounds

like good news. A licence is required to study them. But the UK is doing nothing to protect them. Other countries take this seriously and protect their sites, in Spain and Portugal they do this with concrete boulders, some with two lumps fixed to protruding railway lines likely to completely destroy expensive fishing nets or snare an anchor.

Under EU law (the precautionary principle), any species which is thought to be at risk should be investigated and protected and many countries have marine protection areas to protect vulnerable species. The UK government and Natural England have spent huge sums on studies and consultations, but nothing to protect the sea grass meadows at Studland Bay. Some of the boating community refuse to accept they are damaging the habitat. The easy solution is for permanent moorings be put in place which do not damage the seabed, but who would pay? I cannot help but think the money already spent by our government on studies would have been better spent on the solution as they already knew the problem. Many conservationists believe that, unless urgent action is taken, both the sea grass and seahorses will be lost completely from Studland.

Further studies have been undertaken by Ken and Jenny on sea grass populations along the south coast and Isle of Wight. One good news story is that the sea grass at Calshot has been increasing in recent years and several seahorses have been found within Southampton Water.

References

Garrick-Maidment, N., Trewhella, S., Hatcher, J., Collins, K. J. and Mallinson, J. J. (2010) 'Seahorse Tagging Project, Studland Bay, Dorset, UK'. *Marine Biodiversity Records*, 3 (e73): 1-4.
http://journals.cambridge.org/repo_A78xoirC

For more information see the Seahorse Trust website, run by Neil Garrick Maidment **http://www.theseahorsetrust.org/**

The Seashore Trust also produces a beautiful full-colour booklet on 'British Seashorses'.

Not a picture of a Solent seahorse, but a beautiful photo of a Large Elephant Hawk Moth larva from a Locks Heath garden

Weather Records 2015
Records made at Bitterne Road East, Bitterne (SU454129)
Phil Budd

2015 was another very warm year, but there was only slightly more rainfall than average. Every month was significantly warmer than average except for May and September which were close to normal. The 2014/15 winter was significantly milder than normal with all three months (December 2014 to February 2015) seeing above average temperatures. In terms of rainfall, the 2014/15 winter was about average overall. Only one significant snowfall was recorded, plus a few, mostly slight, frosts. Spring was warmer and drier than normal up to mid-May, but not exceptionally so. Although there was a significant heat wave in early July, the summer worked out about average in terms of temperature. In terms of rainfall, summer was drier than normal before the deluges of 23rd to 26th August; these rainfalls turned a drier than normal summer into a wetter than normal one. Autumn was about normal in terms of rainfall and not particularly stormy, but in terms of temperature it became relatively milder as time went on. Autumn 2015 in the UK has been described by the Meteorological Office as the dullest and third-mildest ever recorded. December continued in the same vein — a wet month, extremely mild and distinctly cloudy. In fact, the temperatures were over 5°C warmer than normal!

I will now summarise the main weather phenomena of 2015:

January 9th/10th: Exceptional minimum of 12.0°C. This was the mildest night before May 4th/5th. The temperature was still 14°C at 10 pm on the 9th. **15th:** Windiest day of 2015. Force 11 winds (force 12 on Isle of Wight) in early morning. **22nd/23rd:** Minimum of −2.8°C, the coldest night of 2015. A minimum of −9°C recorded in some parts of southern England.

February 3rd: First covering of snow in Bitterne for two years, but it had all melted by lunch time.

March 4th to 23rd: Prolonged dry weather; only 1.2 mm rain fell in three weeks. **5th:** The last of only ten air frosts recorded in the early 2015. **31st:** A bizarre day. Sunny throughout, but the northwest winds reached severe gale force 9 at times.

April 5th to 24th: A second spring dry spell; only 1.5 mm rain recorded in 20 days. **15th:** A maximum temperature of 25.4°C; 21°C (70°F) on 4th April.

May 5th & 6th: Rare May gales; southwest winds up to force 8 recorded both days.

June 1st/2nd: Severe (force 9) southwest gales in night; very unusual for early June. **June 23rd to July 16th:** Prolonged dry period; only 1.7 mm rain in 24 days. **June 27th to July 22nd:** Prolonged period of 25 concurrent warm nights with minima above 13°C. **June 30th/July 1st:** Warmest night ever in my records of the last

30 years, a sultry minimum of 23.8°C. The following day maximum of 32.4°C (over 90°F) was the hottest temperature recorded in 2015.

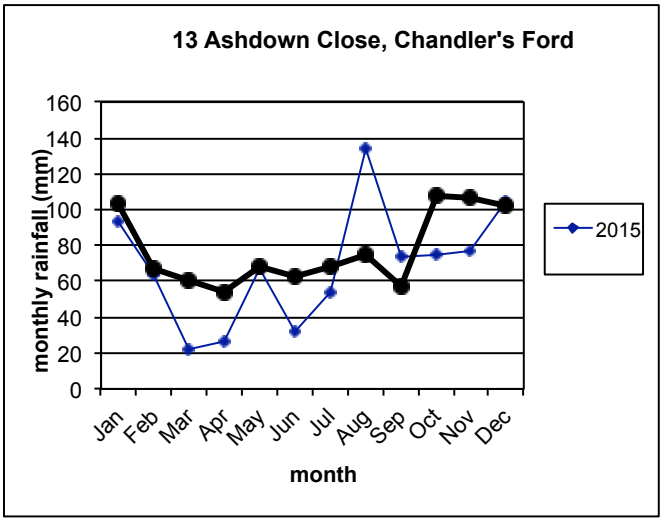
July 24th to 26th: Two depressions that came in from the Atlantic dumped 46.5 mm rain in three days. 34 mm of this fell on 24th to the early hours of the 25th. Only 4 mm rain fell prior to this in July.

August 23rd to 26th: 98 mm rain (two-thirds of the August 2015 total) fell in four days. **26th:** The wettest day of the year; 41 mm rain in total and 30 mm of this fell between 11am and 1pm. Also there were force 8 gales recorded at times on this day.

September 14th to 16th: 40 mm rain recorded in three days; caused by ex-tropical storm Henri. **September 25th to October 4th (midday):** Almost continuous sunshine for 9 days. **September 26th to October 18th:** The only prolonged spell of easterly winds in 2015 after mid-April.

October: No strong winds were recorded (nothing more than force 4); extremely unusual. Also every day this month reached a maximum of at least 14.4°C (just below the October average). **5th & 6th:** 36 mm rain in two days; this is half of the October 2015 total. **8th to 20th:** 13 days with no rainfall recorded; the longest totally dry spell in 2015.

Thanks to Andy Barker for the graph below, comparing rainfall in his garden with the average (in black) he recorded from 2004 to 2015.



November 21st to 23rd: These were the only three days in November 2015 with maxima below 10°C. **21st/22nd:** The first air frost in Bitterne in the winter of 2015/2016 and the only one in late 2015.

December: The maximum temperatures were 3°C or more above the long-term average every day. **17th:** A remarkable maximum temperature of 16.2°C. This was thus the mildest December day in my records apart from 4th December 2007 and the mildest ever for the second half of the month. **26th/27th:** An exceptional night-time minimum for December of 13.5°C. No minima lower than 4°C were recorded all month in Southampton.

Weather Records for 2015 at Bitterne Road East, Southampton by Phil Budd

	Mean max temp		High temp	Mean min temp		Low temp	Air frost§	Wet days*	Total rainfall	
	°C	°F	°C	°C	°F	°C			mm	in#
Jan	9.5	*49.1*	14.5	4.5	*40.1*	-2.8	4	13	101.2	*4.0*
Feb	9.0	*48.2*	14.5	2.8	*37.0*	-1.2	5	12	52.2	*2.1*
Mar	12.6	*54.7*	15.2	5.0	*41.0*	0.1	1	6	21.9	*0.9*
Apr	17.7	*63.9*	25.4	7.3	*45.1*	3.2	0	7	22.0	*0.9*
May	17.8	*64.0*	21.4	10.2	*50.4*	6.1	0	10	64.0	*2.5*
Jun	21.9	*71.4*	29.4	12.6	*54.7*	8.1	0	5	25.3	*1.0*
Jul	22.9	*73.2*	32.4	15.1	*59.2*	9.3	0	6	54.0	*2.1*
Aug	22.2	*72.0*	27.7	15.0	*59.0*	10.8	0	15	145.5	*5.7*
Sep	19.6	*67.3*	23.8	11.5	*52.7*	8.0	0	9	76.9	*3.0*
Oct	16.7	*62.1*	20.4	10.4	*50.7*	5.5	0	9	72.7	*2.9*
Nov	13.9	*57.0*	16.9	9.9	*49.8*	0.1	1	16	77.0	*3.0*
Dec	14.1	*57.4*	16.2	10.6	*51.1*	4.3	0	20	100.3	*3.9*
Mean/ total	**16.5**	***61.7***	**32.4**	**9.6**	***49.3***	**-2.8**	**11**	**128**	**813.0**	***32***

§ Defined this year as a minimum below 0.5°C because the thermometer is close to the house.
***A wet day is defined as a day where 1 mm or more of rainfall fell.**
 # Approx.

Members' Records 2015
Phil Budd

I would like to thank the following people for contributing to the records submitted during the course of 2015: Alan Budd, Andy Barker, Andy Collins, Anna Stewart, Anthea & Vernon Jones, Bruce Larner, Catherine Corney, Daphne Woods, Darren Naish, David Hubble, David Stewart, Dennis Trunecka, Gary Palmer, Ginnie Copsey, Graham Harrison-Watts, Graham Manchip, Ian Watts, Ian White, Jan Schubert, John Norton, John Vetterlein, Josh Phangurha, Julie Watson, Julian Moseley (Field Meeting records), Kate Reeves, Kathy Emmott, Keith Plumridge, Kieran Amery, Lydia Trunecka, Mark Jackson, Mark Painter, Paul Winter, Rose Nicole, Rowan Bright and Simon Currie. Apologies if I have missed anyone out. In addition, several records of interest were extracted from the Soton Nature site and are indicated as such. See our new web-site: http://sotonnhs.org for on-going up-to-date reports during 2016.

Flora & Fungi

A lot more information on flora records can be found on certain web-sites such as those produced by the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group: www.hampshirefungi.org.uk/, the Wessex Lichen Society: http://wessexlichengroup.org/ and the Flora Group of the Hampshire Wildlife Trust: http://www.hwt.org.uk/pages/-hampshire-flora-group

Fungi & Lichens

Spring and summer 2015 was relatively dry and warm, therefore not very productive for fungi. At Lord's Wood the **False Morel** *Gyromitra esculenta* appeared again at the usual site and on 17th February **Scarlet Elf Cup** *Sarcoscypha sp.* was found in this wood, with numbers rising to a maximum of 12 on 24th February. On 6th April 8 more **Scarlet Elf Cup** were found in the wet woodland of Mayfield Park. Later in the spring a large quantity of the pink-gill ***Entoloma saundersii*** was found under Blackthorn scrub at Old Winchester Hill on 25th May, no doubt encouraged by the wetter weather then. Warm, dry weather continued into the summer and despite the wet period in August there were not as many fungi about as would be expected. The most interesting August record was the colony of **Striated Earthstar** *Geastrum striatum* found under Leyland Cypress by Bursledon Rd, Sholing on 23rd August. This species was previously recorded at St Mary's Extra Cemetery; Sholing in 2012.There were also two records of the slime mould ***Stemonitis fusca*** at Lord's Wood on 27th April and on rotten willow wood at Highbridge Farm water meadows on 5th September. Additionally, an interesting record of plant rust was of ***Puccinia primulae*** on Cowslip (it is usually on Primrose) at St Catherine's Hill, Winchester on 17th May.

Macrotyphula juncea

Autumn was very mild and the balmy conditions continued to late December and also the autumn became steadily wetter over time. As a result there was a very good flush of fungi in grassland, habitats, but fungi in woodland were in short supply throughout the season and the season also started very slowly. The SNHS held three fungus forays. The first at Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 10th October took place before the season really

got going and only 15 species were recorded, the highlight being two mature specimens of **Deadly Web Cap** *Cortinarius rubellus* in the pine woodland. The visit to Chilworth Manor Gardens on 31st October was much more productive with 47 species recorded, the highlights being **Slender Club** *Macrotyphula juncea* in abundance in woodland south of the lake and abundant wax cap and clubs on the hotel lawn, for example the club ***Clavaria acuta*** and wax caps such as **Yellow Foot Wax Cap** *Hygrocybe flavipes*, **Heath Wax Cap** *H. laeta* and **Crimson Wax Cap** *H. punicea*. The following day the attendance of 37 outnumbered the number of species of fungi recorded on Southampton Common — only 29.This was the 25th annual foray on the common so not surprisingly only one species was 'new' to the site — **Golden Spindles** *Clavaria fusiformis* under Yew trees in the old cemetery. There was one more foray to which members of the society were invited. This took place at Southampton University – Highfield Campus on 11th October and was attended by four people. Despite the early date, 40 fungi species were identified, the highlights here included **Death Cap** *Amanita phalloides*, ***Collybia impudica*** growing abundantly under a Swamp Cypress *Taxodium* tree and the rather uncommon club ***Clavaria tenuipes*** (confirmed microscopically).

Relatively few other fungi records of interest, including the following in date order:

Snakeskin Grisette *Amanita ceciliae***,** a good year for this normally uncommon *Amanita* – found at Waltham Chase on 10/9 and at Hatch Grange, West End, 13/9; this species is associated with clayey soils

Death Cap *Amanita phalloides***,** at another 'new' site – Southampton Sports Centre on 19/9

Blue-spot Knight *Tricholoma columbetta*, also at Southampton Sports Centre on 19/9

Clavaria tenuipes, a second site at Weston Shore in grassland north east of Weston Parade on 28/10

Wrinkled Peach *Rhodotus palmatus*, the Conkerfield, Netley – 8 on Hawthorn on 28/10

Lactarius circellatus, Somerset Avenue, Bitterne – under Hornbeam (3rd Southampton record), seen on 11/11

Collared Earthstar *Geastrum triplex*, Kathleen Rd, Sholing – in a garden, seen on 18/12

Mild Milk Cap *Lactarius subdulcis*, woodland by Hiltingbury Lakes, Chandler's Ford on 28/12 – a very late date

Previously the National Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) lichen known as **Golden-eye Lichen** *Teloschistes chrysophthalmus* occurred on an apple tree at Peartree Green. This specimen appears to be lost but another was found on an old pear tree at Weston Shore on 23rd March before it was accidently knocked off! Therefore there are now two Southampton site records for this species. A survey at the Conkerfield, Netley on 11th March yielded several lichen species of interest including ***Opegrapha rufescens*** on Sycamore bark and ***Pertusaria multipuncta*** on dry Pedunculate Oak bark. A new discovery at Hall Lands, Fair Oak on 3rd January was ***Arthonia cinnabarina***.

Bryophytes

During the course of the Field Meeting on Southampton Common on 8th February five Bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) new to the common were identified, including **Southern Crestwort** *Lophocolea semiteres* north of the Ornamental Lake. The identity of this liverwort was later confirmed by John Norton. Another liverwort **Common Pouchwort** *Calypogeia fissa* was found surviving by a stream at Dumbleton's Copse, Thornhill on 1st March. Three

mosses of interest found during a survey at the Conkerfield, Netley on 11th March were **Lateral Cryphaea** *Cryphaea heteromalla*, **Elegant Bristle-moss** *Orthotrichum pulchellum* and **Yellow Crisp-moss** *Tortella flavovirens*.

Vascular Flora

Phenological Records

Due to the very mild weather in January, and again at the end of 2015, there were many examples of out-of-season, very early or very late flowering of wild plants to be seen. Early in the year blooms were seen on **Cherry Laurel** at Thornhill Park Wood on 2nd January; **Bulbous Buttercup** by Bitterne Bypass on 17th January and on **Cherry Plum** at Millers Pond LNR on 25th January. Some incredibly early **Lesser Celandine** was out at Little Shore Lane, Bishop's Waltham on 27th November and this plant was seen flowering at several other localities in December. Also **Hazel** was already out at Northam, Southampton on 16th December and **Blackthorn** blooms seen at Stubbington on 31st December.

Native Species

Late summer 2015 was exceptional for **Autumn Lady's-tresses**, an orchid of grazed or mown dry grassland on light soils. At a new site — Sheridan Close, Thornhill — 25 plants were seen on 23rd August; elsewhere in Thornhill in the same week of August counts were as follows: Carey Rd (16), Moorhill Gardens (4), Pine Drive (40) and Priestwood Close (21). 25 more seen at the known site at Archery Rd, Weston and there were unusually large numbers at the known sites at Southampton Common. Many were also found during the Field Meeting at Longdown, New Forest on 13th September. 520 **Pyramidal Orchids** were counted on Peartree Green on 1st July (Soton Nature) and three were found by the Bitterne Bypass on 7th June. There were lower counts of **Bee Orchid** at the Bitterne sites this year; a total of 9 north of the bypass (and later mown down) on 7th June and 14 at the main site on 22nd June. There were 7 Bee Orchids at Southampton University – Highfield Campus on 9th June and a new site on Southampton Common on 29th June (Soton Nature). Finally there were 4 **Green-winged Orchid** at a new site in Swaythling on 24th May but going over by that date. Negative news was the failure to find **Green-flowered Helleborine** at the Riverside Park site on 3rd August.

Slender Hare's Ear

Two major botanical surveys were undertaken in 2015 by me. One of these covered the area at Weston Shore between Victoria and Netley Abbey and was undertaken at the request of the Friends of Weston Shore. At the eastern end of this large area, the woodland between the Conkerfield and Netley Hill, several native woodland plants can still be found, including **Dog's Mercury** (seen on 17th February), **Wild Daffodil** (seen on 11th March) and **Wood Anemone** (seen on 13th May). At Weston Shore the most interesting

discovery, on 17th August, was of the Hampshire BAP species **Slender Hare's-ear** *Bupleurum tenuissimum*; hundreds of plants were found in an area 7 metres in diameter and were the first seen here for 90 years. Also, nearby 30 plants of **Rough Clover** *Trifolium scabrum,* were found on 29th July in a paved area of the upper foreshore and these were the first sightings at Weston shore since 1974. The Southampton Common flora survey undertaken by myself at the request of the Hawthorns Support Group was the first since 1979, and many changes were noted especially the loss of native heathland species and the spread and appearance of non-native species. Several heathland species still survive here, including **Bristle Bent Grass**, **Bog Pimpernel**, **Brown Bent Grass**, **Green-ribbed Sedge**, **Common Yellow Sedge**, **Cross-leaved Heath**, **Heath Wood-rush** and **Creeping Willow**. **Devil's-bit Scabious**, found in the Merritree Bushes area in the centre of the Common on 10th September, was a surprising addition to the list. (See separate article.)

Trifolium scabrum

Other interesting records of native species in 2015 included the following in date order:

Rustyback (fern), 73 on wall at Station Hill, Bursledon on 18/1

Ivy Broomrape, 4 dead stems at base of willow by Monk's Brook Greenway on 5/3; the plants at Riverside Park were not seen this year though, another discovery on the disappointing evening of 3/8

Corky-fruited Water-dropwort, found but not in bloom, on boundary bank at Peartree Green on 21/3

Wood Anemone, surviving in woodland at Mayfield Park, 6/4 and Telegraph Woods, 9/5

Smith's Pepperwort, 4 plants at eastern end of Millers Pond LNR on 14/6

Annual Beard Grass *Polypogon monspeliensis*, at Hannay Rise, Thornhill on 14/6

Dark Mullein, at Shedfield Common, near Wickham on 3/7; this plant is unusual in heathy areas

Corn Mint, at Thornhill Park Wood on 23/8; rare within Southampton city boundary

Pale Flax, 25 plants found near the upper playground at Southampton Sports Centre on 19/9 – a new site

Goldenrod, found in two locations at Southampton Sports Centre on 19/9; unfortunately this plant seems to have disappeared from Southampton Common where it has probably been shaded out.

Non-native Species

Some of the most interesting records of these (in date order) included:

Fairy Foxglove *Erinus alpinus*, one on old brick wall at High Street, Bursledon on 18/1

Hairy Garlic *Allium subhirsutum*, a great spread of this plant in 2015 with records by Miller's Pond at Sholing on 12/2; Lower Vicarage Rd (Woolston), at Weston Common on 21/3 and at Staplehurst Close, Weston on 4/5

Giant Fir *Abies grandis*, 50 self-sown trees at the eastern end of Stoke Park Wood, Fair Oak on 14/2

Stranvaesia davidiana, a berry-bearing garden scrub sown by birds at Dumbleton's Copse, Thornhill on 1/3

Neapolitan Garlic *Allium neapolitanum*, colonising Bitterne Road East and seen at two locations on 12/3 and 11/11

Paper-white Daffodil *Narcissus papyraceus*, strange sighting on a low crumbling cliff at Weston Shore, 23/3

Lesser Glory-of-the-snow *Scilla sardensis*, naturalised and spreading at Stoneham Cemetery on 27/3

Balkan Spurge *Euphorbia oblongata* and **Sulphur Cinquefoil** *Potentilla recta*, both at Weston Shore Lorry Park on 13/5 and growing on a bank by Weston Parade

Camassia leichtlinii, a white-flowered American bulbous plant, 2 in flower on bank by Copperfield Rd at Daisy Dip, Bassett on 31/5; this is a very unusual plant to find naturalised and the identity was confirmed by E. J. Clement.

Pilosella flagellaris subsp. flagellaris, the first record of this alien hawkweed south of Bursledon Rd; a colony was found on a grass bank at Anson Drive, Sholing on 14/6

Paper-white Daffodil

Euphorbia oblongata

Camassia leichtlinii

Manna Ash *Fraxinus ornus*, self-sown by Priors Hill Copse, Old Netley on 4/7

Hairy Finger-grass *Digitaria sanguinalis*, abundant on kerb side at Chadwick Rd, Eastleigh on 8/8

Grey Alder *Alnus incana* and **Walnut** *Juglans regia*, single small trees of both species found at locations on Southampton Common on 21/8

Argentine Fleabane *Conyza bonariensis*, single plant found at Coldeast during Field Meeting on 10/10. Identification confirmed by E. J. Clement. This is a very rare plant in Hampshire.

Indian Horse-chestnut *Aesculus indica,* a 7-foot-high self-sown sapling by Cutbush Hidden Pond on 2/12

Fauna

Marine Invertebrates

As in 2014, there were several records of **Barrel Jellyfish** *Rhizostoma pulmo (=R. octopus)* cast up dead. These included 4 at Weston Shore on 7th June and 3 more there on 30th September; 3 seen at Ferryman's Quay, Netley on 9th June and even one up as far as Chessel Bay on 9th July (Soton Nature). In addition, several live specimens of Barrel Jellyfish were seen in Ocean Village Marina on 30th July. The storms in the autumn resulted in the cast-up of 5 **By-the-Wind Sailors** *Velella velella* at Meon Shore on 6th December; this is a species related to jellyfish.

Non-marine Invertebrates (except Arachnids & Insects)

One of the most interesting records in this category was of a sighting of Landhopper (=Woodhopper) ***Arcitalitrus dorrieni*** just north of Shedfield Common, near Wickham, on 10th April. There was also a discovery of the flatworm ***Kontikia vetrolineata***; 20 of these were seen feeding on a decaying slug in a Bishopstoke garden on 15th May.

Arachnida

Many of the Arachnid records received this year were identifications of *Aranae* (spiders) by Dennis Trunecka in the Bishop's Waltham area (see below). Other interesting records included the galls of the gall mite ***Vasates quadripedes*** on leaves of Silver Maple at Trebourba Way, Southampton on 28th June and ***Aceria erinea*** on Walnut at Southampton Old Cemetery on 2nd August ; the **Black Harvestman** *Nemastoma bimaculatum* at Bishop's Waltham Palace on 28th August and at Waltham Chase on 25th September; the harvestmen ***Oligolophus tridens*** and ***Opilio saxatilis*** at Oak Rd, Bishop's Waltham on 29th August and 9th August, respectively. Other spider records included **Woodlouse Spider** *Dysdera crocata* at Bitterne Manor and Midanbury Lane on 26th March and 20th April, respectively; ***Myrmarachne formicaria*** in a Bishopstoke garden on 4th May and ***Segestria florentina*** at several new sites including Anson Drive, Sholing and near Deacon Rd, Bitterne on 14th June & 15th July, respectively.

Spider records of interest in the Bishop's Waltham area (in site order) include:

Philodromus albidus, at Bishop's Waltham Church on Lauristinus *Viburnum tinus* on 1/7
Hypsosinga pygmaea, at Bishop's Waltham Moors, female on 30/5
Neriene clathrata, at Bishop's Waltham Palace on 22/4
Tegenaria duellica, under a pile of rubble at Church Rd, Swanmore on 19/4
Dictyna pusilla, at Claylands Nature Reserve on 2/5
Segestria senoculata, female on wall at Free Street, Bishop's Waltham on 17/8
Robertus lividus and ***Clubiona reclusa***, at North Pond, Bishop's Waltham on 24/2 and 26/3, respectively
Micaria pulicaria, **Spitting Spider** *Scytodes thoracica* and ***Philodromus albidus***, all females at Oak Rd, Bishop's Waltham on 9/4, 12/5 and 19/5, respectively
Ozyptila praticola, male at Little Phrympth Copse, Dundridge on 18/6
Clubiona lutescens, female at Pondside Lane, near Bishop's Waltham on 2/5
Harpactea hombergi, male at Rareridge Lane, Bishop's Waltham on 23/5
Theridion melanurum, female under window ledge of bank, The Square, Bishop's Waltham on 23/4
Lepthyphantes minutus, male at base of huge oak, West Hoe Lane, Bishop's Waltham, 15/8

Insects

The spring and summer of 2015 was generally favourable for insects, with only short spells of cooler, damp conditions and these mainly occurring in May and August. A very mild autumn and another mild preceding winter allowed for interesting phenological records, although the mildness of the winter periods and high rainfall in January and December were not favourable for the over-wintering stages of insects. A cold winter every now and then would be useful.

Odonata

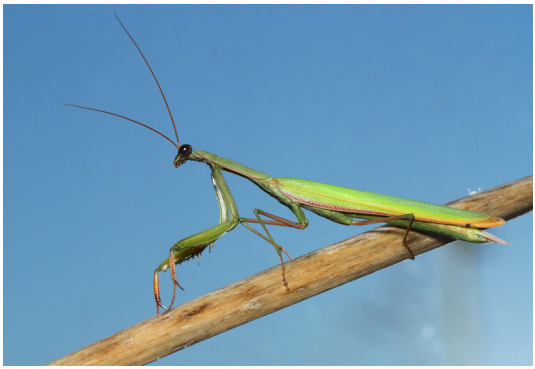
The earliest dated adult Odonata record was for **Large Red Damselfly** (2) at Titchfield Haven on 18th April and the latest were for **Migrant Hawker** (2) and **Common Blue Damselfly** at Badminston Gravel Pits on 28th October (both reported on the Soton Nature site). In the centre of Southampton both **Large Red Damselfly** (1) and **Azure Damselfly** (about 20) were recorded in the water feature at the rock (alpine) garden at East Park, Southampton on 21st June. There were a few other records of interest including **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** (5) reported on the known site of Boating Lake, Southampton Common on 1st July; 3 **Red-eyed Damselfly** seen at the lake at Priors Hill Copse, Butlocks Heath on 4th July and a male **Brown Hawker** patrolling the River Itchen near Highbridge Farm on 5th September.

Orthoptera

The latest Orthoptera record in 2015 was **Common Green Grasshopper** *Omocestus viridulus* at Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 20th October. **Bog Bush Cricket** *Metrioptera brachyptera* still survives at the small bog on the city boundary at Dumbleton's Copse, Thornhill and 5 were seen there on 6th August. The survey for Friends of Weston Shore picked up 3 specimens of **Short-winged Conehead** *Conocephalus dorsalis* swept out of grass land by the sea at the Conkerfield, Netley on 23rd July. The same survey confirmed that **Wood Cricket** *Nemobius sylvestris* still occurs at the north-western end of Weston Shore near to Jurd's Lake; they were heard there on various dates from 29th July onward. Wood Crickets were also recorded at Hillier's Arboretum on the edge of Ampfield Wood on 9th October.

Dictyoptera

Undoubtedly the most outstanding insect record in 2015 was the **Praying Mantis** *Mantis religiosa* caught in flight in a garden at South Sway Lane, Sway on 1st October. The weather was warm (maximum about 20°C) and mostly sunny with easterly winds on 1st October and the previous five days had been very similar. Therefore, it is possible that this insect was a genuine migrant from the Continent. However, it is also quite possible that this insect was an escape from captivity. The only previous record that can be found is of one at East Sussex in 1959 (Brock, 2014).



Reference:

Brock, P.D., (2014) *A Comprehensive Guide to Insects of Britain and Ireland*, Pisces Publications, Newbury.

Hemiptera & Homoptera

Interesting records of Hemiptera (in date order) are as follows:

Deraeocoris lutescens, seen on cut timber at Bishopstoke on the very early date of 29/1

Moss Lace Bug *Acalypta parvula*, found on Southampton Common during the Field Meeting of 8/2 on the moss *Campylopus introflexus*; another specimen found at Farlington Marshes on 13/12 on the moss *Dicranella varia*

Juniper Shield Bug *Cyphostethus tristriatus*, 3 on Lawson's Cypress at Saltmead, St Denys on 10/3 and 4 more on conifer cuttings in a Bitterne Manor garden on same date

Tingis ampliata, a lace bug associated with Creeping Thistle, 2 at North Pond, Bishop's Waltham on 27/4

Small Grass Shield Bug *Neottiglossa pusilla*, mating pair at Newtown, Bishop's Waltham on 4/5

Bordered Shield Bug *Legnotus limbosus*, near Stakes Farm, Bishop's Waltham on 7/5

Peritrechus geniculatus, a ground bug found near Pondside Lane, Bishop's Waltham on 3/6

Common Bark Bug *Aneurus laevis,* adults and nymphs at Bishop's Waltham Palace on 1/7

Heather Shield Bug *Rhacognathus punctatus*, found near Clumber Inclosure, New Forest during Field Meeting on 5/7

Western Conifer Seed Bug *Leptoglossus occidentalis*, came to U.V. light at Purewell Meadows, Christchurch on 22/8

Conifer Seed Bug *Orsillus depressus*, beaten off Lawson's Cypress at Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 20/10

Regarding Homoptera there are some interesting records of species found on non-native Bay Laurel *Laurus nobilis*. The leafhopper ***Synophropsis lauri*** was found on an old Bay tree at Oak Rd, Bishop's Waltham on 30th August and the 2nd and 3rd records of **Andromeda Lace Bug** *Stephanitis takeyai* in a Bitterne garden were seen on Bay on 29th September and 12th October.

Clouded Yellow

Lepidoptera: Butterflies

The earliest records of selected species were as follows:

Brimstone, at Dundridge Nature Reserve on 8th February

Clouded Yellow, near Cromarty Pond, Lord's Hill on 3rd July (Soton Nature)

Comma, at Lord's Wood 18th March **Holly Blue**, at a Cedar Avenue, Shirley on 7th April

Large White, at Hum Hole, Bitterne on 12th April

Painted Lady, at Locks Heath and at Bitterne Precinct 5th June

Peacock, flying at Lord's Wood on 17th February, although one was seen indoors at Bishopstoke on 1st January.

Red Admiral, at Hinkler Rd, Thornhill on 30th January (earliest butterfly report in 2015)

Small Copper, at Pondside Lane, Bishop's Waltham on 4th May

Small Tortoiseshell, at Itchen Valley Conservation area on 4th March

Small White, at Coates Rd, Sholing and at West Wood, Netley on 6th April

Speckled Wood, at Sholing Wild Park, Elgar Rd on 6th April

The latest dates of selected species are as follows:

Brimstone, at the Hawthorns Centre, Southampton Common and at Chilworth Manor Gardens on 31st October

Comma, at Hilliers Arboretum on 9th October but further afield one was seen flying at Marsh Lane, Christchurch on 4th December

Holly Blue, feeding on heather at Southampton Sports Centre on 19th September

Large Skipper, at Thornhill and at Netley Common on 6th August and at Biddenfield on 9th August

Large White, at Bitterne Road East on 1st October

Meadow Brown, at Weston Shore on 30th September

Painted Lady, at Weston Shore on 11th October (Soton Nature)

Red Admiral, at Whitemoor, New Forest on 22nd November and one flying at Hawoth Close, Christchurch on 4th December (the latest butterfly reports in 2015)

Ringlet, at Southampton Old Cemetery on 2nd August

Small Copper, at West Wood Tip (? Grange Fields) on 25th October (Soton Nature)

Small White, several at Weston Shore on 11th October

Speckled Wood, by Oslo Towers at Weston on 28th October

Other butterfly records of interest in 2015 (in date order) are the following:

Peacock, a significant count of 24 seen at Lord's Wood on 13/4

Small Heath, this butterfly appears to be on the increase again in the Southampton area, records included at the Conkerfield, Netley on 13/5, Daisy Dip, Bassett Green on 31/5 and later at Dumbleton's Copse, Thornhill on 6th August

Monarch Butterfly, at Hollybrook Cemetery on 30/6 (Soton Nature), seen by many but alas not by me!

White Admiral, at an unusual habitat at St Catherine's Hill, Winchester on 19/7; closer to Southampton there were small numbers on various dates at Lord's Wood and also at Hut Wood on 22/7 and at Rownhams Wood on 31/7 (Soton Nature)

Adonis Blue and **Dark Green Fritillary**, singles both seen at Broughton Down – The Turret on the Field Meeting on 15/8

Green-veined White, first record for a Locks Heath garden on 15/8

Clouded Yellow, pale *Helice* form of female, in a Locks Heath garden on 16/8

Holly Blue, a large count of 15 at Lord's Wood on 17/8

Brown Argus, 3 seen feeding on heather at Shedfield Common during the Field Meeting on 30/8

Lepidoptera: Moths

Scarlet Tiger

Again in 2015, there were mild winter periods with a mostly dry and warm spring and summer but relatively little very hot weather. As a result, 2015 was a generally good year for moths. A very good web-site for more information about both macro moths and micro moths is www.ukmoths.org.uk

Macro Moths

Hummingbird Hawk Moth

Garden Tiger

There were records of **Hummingbird Hawk Moth** from eight sites; the first report of the year was of one at Sirdar Rd, Portswood on 14th June and the last report by an SNHS member was at a Locks Heath garden on 8th September, although a later individual was seen at Quayside Rd, Bitterne Manor on 19th September (Soton Nature). There were several records of Hummingbird Hawk Moth feeding on *Buddleia*, but also they were seen at *Salvia* in a Bishop's Waltham garden on 30th August and on Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* at the Hawthorns Centre on 5th September. 2015 was a very good season for **Scarlet Tiger Moth**; 10 were seen at a previously unknown city centre site in Bevois Town on 17th June; three evenings later 6 individuals were seen flying there between 8pm and 8:30pm. **Scarlet Tiger larvae** were found feeding on *Pulmonaria* on 14th March and 6th April at a garden in the Mount Pleasant area and not far from the last site. There were a number of other moth larval records received including of **Garden Tiger** on Hogweed at Old Winchester Hill on 25th May; 20 larvae of **Figure-of-Eight** on Himalayan Honeysuckle at a Bishopstoke garden on 30th May; **Lime Hawk Moth** at Sirdar Rd, Portswood on 11th August; **Eyed Hawk Moth** on apple at Bitterne Manor on 19th August and **Buff-tip**, again at Sirdar Rd, on 25th September. A pupa of **Privet Hawk Moth** was found at Stoke Park Wood on 12th April and an adult emerged on 30th June.

Ni Moth

Lime Hawk Moth

L-Album Wainscot

Channel Islands Pug

Merveille du Jour

Cypress Carpet

All other macro moth records of interest were night-time records at moth lights and traps. These are listed in date order as follows:

Common Quaker, first of the year at M. V. light at a Locks Heath garden on 18/2 (an early date)

L-Album Wainscot, at Actinic light at a Locks Heath garden on 23/5

Ni Moth, at M. V. light at a Locks Heath garden on 11/6 and the identity confirmed from a photograph

Red-necked Footman, at M. V. light at a Woolston garden on 3/7

Cream-bordered Green Pea, at Actinic light at a Locks Heath garden on 6/7

Scarce Silver-lines and **Dog's Tooth**, at M. V. light at a St Giles Hill garden, Winchester on 11/7 (Field Meeting)

Scarce Silver-lines, also at light at a Locks Heath garden on 28/7

Figure of Eight

Channel Islands Pug, at light at a Locks Heath garden on 3/8 and the identity confirmed from a photograph
Poplar Kitten, at M. V. light at a Locks Heath garden on 10/8
Jersey Tiger, at M. V. light at a Locks Heath garden on 22/8
Cypress Carpet and **Figure of Eight**, both at Actinic light at a Locks Heath garden on 27/10 and the former again on 3/11
Merveille du Jour, at M. V. light at a Locks Heath garden on 3/11

Eudonia pallida

Micro Moths

A sample of the more interesting records of micro moths (in date order) is as follows:
Mompha subbistrigella, seen indoors at Bishop's Waltham on 11/2 and again on 21/4
Epiblema sticticana, seen in the day time during a survey at Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 13/5
Bryotropha terrella and ***Eudonia pallida***, both seen in a Bishop's Waltham garden on 8/6 and 19/6, respectively
Monopis crocicapitella, at M. V. light at a Locks Heath garden on 11/6
Piniphila bifasciana and ***Yponomeuta malinellus***, both recorded at M. V. light at a Woolston garden on 3/7
Piniphila bifasciana and ***Marasmarcha lunaedactyla*** **(Crescent Plume),** both recorded at M. V. light at a St Giles Hill garden, Winchester on 11/7
Aroga velocella, at M. V. light at a Locks Heath garden on 14/6 and the identity confirmed by Mike Wall

Aroga velocella

Cochylis mollucana

Pammene aurita, seen in the day time near the larval food plant Sycamore at the Conkerfield, Netley on 23/7
Mompha propinquella, at Actinic light at a Locks Heath garden on 17/8
Argyresthia albistria, recorded at Beechen Copse, near Bishop's Waltham on 20/8
Cochylis mollucana and ***Eudonia pallida***, both at M. V. light at a Locks Heath garden on 22/8
Blastodacna hellerella, seen in a Bishop's Waltham garden on 29/8
Tachystola acroxantha, seen at lighted window of building at Anson Drive, Sholing on 30/9 and, again, on 18/10

Hymenoptera

Due to the very mild conditions in 2015 there were many records of early or late Hymenoptera in 2015; here is a selected list of first dates:
Andrena bicolor **(Gwynne's Mining Bee)**, at Whiteley Pastures on 12th March
Andrena cineraria **(Grey Mining Bee)**, 32 near Ashton, north of Bishop's Waltham, on 14th April
Andrena clarkella **(a mining bee)**, at Weston Common, Southampton on 6th April
Andrena flavipes **(a mining bee)**, nests at Little Shore Lane, Bishop's Waltham on 8th April

***Anthophora plumipes* (Hairy-footed Flower Bee),** at a Shirley garden on 27th February
***Apis mellifera* (Honey Bee)**, flew out of a shed in a Bishopstoke garden on 29th January
***Bombus hypnorum* (Tree Bumble-bee)**, 3 at *Mahonia* at Saltmead, St Denys on 10th March
***Bombus lapidarius* (Red-tailed Bumble-bee)**, at Paradise Lane, Bishop's Waltham on 13th March (a queen)
***Bombus pascuorum* (Common Carder Bee)**, at Vernon Hill, Bishop's Waltham on 5th March
***Bombus terrestris* (Buff-tailed Bumble Bee),** at Merryoak Green, Bitterne on 2nd January (a queen)
***Nomada fucata* (a nomad bee)**, at Little Ashton Lane, Bishop's Waltham on 14th April
***Nomada lathburiana* (a nomad bee)**, near Ashton, north of Bishop's Waltham, on 14th April
***Osmia rufa* (Red Mason Bee)**, on Green Alkanet at Weston Shore on 6th April

Due to the exceptionally mild autumn there were also a number of remarkably late dates of Hymenoptera as follows:

***Bombus pascuorum* (Common Carder Bee)**, Millers Pond Local Nature Reserve, Sholing on late Bramble flowers on 25th October
***Bombus terrestris* (Buff-tailed Bumble Bee)**, on *Cyclamen* flowers at West End on 23rd December (Soton Nature)
***Colletes hederae* (Ivy Bee)**, the latest this bee has been recorded locally, still active at Test Lane, Redbridge on 19th December and 10 also seen on ivy there on 7th December
***Dolichovespula sylvestris* (Tree Wasp)**, a very late record at a Shirley garden on 8th December
***Vespa crabro* (Hornet)**, one seen sitting on a beech tree at the edge of Buxey Wood, Chilworth Manor Gardens on 31/10 (Field Meeting) but there was an even later record of 4 at Itchen Valley Country Park on 18th November (Soton Nature)

A selection of other Hymenoptera records of interest (in date order):

***Andrena clarkella* (a mining bee)**, 2 at Lord's Wood on 13/4
***Nomada goodeniana* (a nomad bee)**, at Trebourba Way – Tesco's car park on 23/4
Ichneumon extensorius, female at Claylands Reserve, Bishop's Waltham on 2/5
Crossocerus cetratus, one female in a Bishopstoke garden on 4/5
***Neuroterus saliens* (Sea Anemone Gall)**, 3 sexual-generation galls were found on Turkey Oak at Hilliers Gardens on 13/5
***Tenthredo mesomelas* (a sawfly)**, at Hoe Road Memorial Meadow on 30/5 and a pair at Hoe Road Cemetery on 24/6
***Ancistrocerus gazella* (a mason wasp)**, at Oak Rd, Bishop's Waltham on 8/6
***Anthidium manicatum* (Wool-carder Bee)**, on Bramble at Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 24/6
***Andrena barbilabris* (a mining bee)**, numerous bees were nesting on loose sand at Shatterford, New Forest on 29/6
***Cerceris rybyensis* (Ornate-tailed Digger Wasp)**, at Bishop's Waltham Palace on 1/7

***Ectemnius cavifrons* (a digger wasp)**, at Park Lug on 7/8 and at North Pond on 11/8; both sites near Bishop's Waltham

***Melitta haemorrhoidalis* (a mining bee)**, female at Harebell at Broughton Down on 15/8 (Field Meeting)

***Urocerus gigas* (Horntail)**, one female at Highbridge Farm in Itchen valley on 15/8

***Ectemnius continuus* (a digger wasp)**, at Dundridge Meadow, east of Bishop's Waltham, on 22/8

***Ancistrocerus parietinus* (a mason wasp)**, in the Lower Lane area of Bishop's Waltham on 11/9

***Cimbex femoratus* (a sawfly)**, at Little Shore Lane, Bishop's Waltham under a birch tree on 2/10

In 2015, an excellent new identification guide to bees was published and this guide is certainly to be recommended to all of those with an interest in these insects:

Falk, S. & Lewington, R. (2015) **Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland**, British Wildlife Publishing, London. ISBN (paperback version) 978-910389-03-4

Diptera (Two-winged Flies)

I have decided to omit the hoverfly records for 2015 from this report to save space even though there were several interesting sightings. These records were incorporated into the Hoverflies of Southampton Booklet which was published in spring 2016.

Once again I will start this section with mention of the continued increase of the **Spotted Bee-fly** *Bombylius discolor.* This insect is known to occur at Lord's Wood, Southampton Sports Centre and Hollybrook Cemetery; furthermore is has been recorded at Chandler's Ford. In 2015 three individuals were seen at Lord's Wood between 13th April and 27th April and it was seen for the first time on Southampton Common, with one recorded in the far north west corner of the common on 8th April, also the first sighting this year. There is still no record on the eastern side of Southampton, but one was found much further east at Damson Hill, Dundridge on 11th April. There were many records of **Common Bee-fly** *Bombylius major,* the earliest sighting being of a mating pair at *Pulmonaria* at Gregg School, Townhill on 22nd March.

There were several other Diptera records of interest in date order:

Elgiva cucularia, one adult found near the River Itchen at Bishopstoke on 23/4

***Tipula lunata* (a crane fly)**, at North Pond, Bishop's Waltham on 27/4

***Sicus ferrugineus* (a thick-headed fly)**, one was seen in a Bishopstoke garden on 10/5

***Zophomyia temula* (a parasitic fly)**, at Old Winchester Hill on 25/5

***Argyra diaphana* (a long-legged fly),** at Bishop's Waltham Moors on 30/5

***Chrysops viduatus* (Square-spot Deer Fly)**, one female was seen at Crockford, New Forest on 29/6

Chrysopilus asiliformis and ***Rabdophaga clausililla***, both seen in the River Itchen flood plain below Fair Oak on 1/7, the former an adult and the latter a gall on White Willow

***Ptychoptera contaminata* (a crane fly)**, near Priors Hill Copse, Hound on 4/7

***Tabanus sudeticus* (Dark Giant Horse Fly)**, at Bishop's Waltham Mill on 11/7

***Nowickia ferox* (a parasitic fly)** and ***Physocephala rufipes* (a thick-headed fly)**, both at Broughton Down on 15/8 (Field Meeting); the latter was seen feeding at Greater Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*

***Gymnosoma rotundatum* (a parasitic fly)**, at Beechen Copse, Bishop's Waltham on 21/8
***Leopoldius signatus* (a thick-headed fly)** and ***Nowickia ferox* (a parasitic fly**), both on ragwort at Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 29/8 and 15/9, respectively

Coleoptera (Beetles)

Again there were many records of **Alder Leaf Beetle** *Agelastica alni* in 2015, all of these were found on either Common Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Grey Alder *A. incana* or Italian Alder *A. cordata* or on vegetation very close to these trees. The earliest record was at Bitterne Bypass on 7th April, about five weeks earlier than in 2014. The last record of the year was at Mayfield Park on 4th October, two weeks later than in 2014. The maximum count was of over 400 on Common Alder at Valley Gardens, Southampton University on 16th April. It is also clear that this beetle occurs in the New Forest area and, unusually, one was recorded on birch (well away from any alder) at Raven's Nest Inclosure on 8th May.

Very large numbers of beetle records were received in 2015 so I will only report the most noteworthy here; these are given in date order as follows:

***Chrysolina polita* (a leaf beetle)**, seen at North Pond, Bishop's Waltham on the early date of 10/3

Anthicus antherinus and ***Rhyzobius chrysomeloides* (a ladybird)**, both recorded at Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 15/4

Aphthona nonstriata (a leaf beetle), 4 were seen on Yellow Iris by the River Itchen near Bishopstoke on 16/4

***Acupalpus meridianus* (a ground beetle)**, at Midanbury Lane, Southampton on 20/4

***Cytilus sericeus* (a pill beetle)**, at Oak Rd, Bishop's Waltham on 27/4

Epuraea melina, 4 adults seen at Southampton Old Cemetery on 3/5

***Coccidula rufa* (a ladybird)**, at Station Roundabout, Bishop's Waltham on 4/5

Byturus ochraceus and ***Scymnus interruptus* (a ladybird)**, both at Cricklemede Meadow, Bishop's Waltham on 4/5

Altica lythri* (a flea beetle)** and ***Psammoecus bipunctatus, both at Wickham near to the River Meon on 11/5; the former on Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum* and the latter on Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula*

***Agapanthia villosoviridescens* (Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle)**, found at Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 13/5 and another was reported at the Shelter Belt at Sparsholt Agricultural College on 20/5

***Rhyzobius litura* (a ladybird),** one was seen near the pond in a Bishopstoke garden on 14/5

Aphthona herbigrada and ***Crytocephalus hypochaeridis*** (both leaf beetles); at St Catherine's Hill, Winchester on 17/5

***Nicrophorus humator* (a sexton beetle)**, seen near Hocombe Mead, Chandler's Ford at 11:25pm on 22/5

***Plateumaris sericea* (a leaf beetle),** the brown form was seen near Brooklands Farm, Bishop's Waltham on 25/5

Soronia grisea, recorded at Oak Rd, Bishop's Waltham on 26/5

***Cetonia aurata* (Rose Beetle = Rose Chafer)**, first known Southampton record on *Pyracantha* at Southampton University – Highfield Campus on 6/6 (one of the highlights of the Bioblitz event)

***Cantharis lateralis* (a soldier beetle)**, seen by old railway line at Bishop's Waltham on 19/6; 2015 was a good year for soldier beetles with many records of which this was one of the most interesting sightings

***Scymnus frontalis* (a ladybird)**, identified in a Bitterne Manor garden on 1/7; there was another record of this ladybird at Bishop's Waltham Palace on 28/8

***Platydracus stercorarius* (a rove beetle)**, at Weston Shore and recorded as part of the survey there on 23/7

***Paracorymbia fulva* (Tawny Longhorn Beetle)**, an uncommon longhorn; one recorded at Lower Test NR on 30/7

***Pogonocherus hispidulus* (a longhorn beetle)**, seen in a garden at Bitterne Manor on 4/8

***Cryptocephalus pusillus* (a leaf beetle)**, 2 beaten off birch at Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 29/8

***Lucanus cervus* (Stag Beetle),** one flying at Cobbett Rd, Bitterne on 4/5; this was the earliest ever date of an adult. 2 adult males at Weston Shore on 27/9; the latest ever recorded date in the SNHS database

***Trechus rubens* (a ground beetle)**, at Oak Rd, Bishop's Waltham on 17/10

***Lilioceris lilii* (Lily Beetle)**, sheltering in a dead Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense* at Millers Pond LNR on 29/11

Amphibians & Reptiles

Amphibian records included **Common Toad** near Suett's Farm, Bishop's Waltham on 10th September and **Smooth Newt** reports included a sighting at Bishop's Waltham Palace on 28th August. Of the reptiles a **Grass Snake** was reported at Lower Test Reserve on 9th June and another seen in Southampton Airport area on 26th August (Soton Nature). At Millers Pond, Sholing on 4th June no less than 8 terrapins were counted, of these most were the subspecies now known as **Red-eared Slider** *Trachymes scripta elegans*, but at least two individuals were identified as **Yellow-bellied Slider** *Trachymes scripta scripta*. The earliest report of **Common Frog** spawn was at a Bishopstoke garden on 28th February.

Birds

Again I have decided to include a bird section to this report because various members reported items of interest, many of which might not necessarily be reported elsewhere. However birds are thoroughly and extensively reported generally and it would be appropriate for members with an interest in bird records to seek other sources of information including the annual Bird Report and the quarterly Kingfisher magazine (of which I am currently the editor) produced by the Hampshire Ornithological Society: www.hos.org.uk/. There are also a lot of up-to-date sightings on the web, including our own site: www.sotonnhs.org/ and, particularly the very good Hampshire Going Birding site: www.goingbirding.co.uk/hants/

Some of the more interesting bird reports (in alphabetical order of name) include:

Black Redstart, a good start to the year for this species; one was at Royal Victoria County Park on 11/1 and another in the Hanover Buildings area in town on 13/1; both of these birds were males

Black Swan, these bred on the River Itchen in the late summer/early autumn and there were many reports on Soton Nature and from elsewhere; on 2/12 five half-grown young were seen with the adult pair at Riverside Park

Blackbird, partial albino male with a white head reported at Alfriston Gardens, Sholing on 14/6

Bonaparte's Gull, this rare American gull visited the River Itchen in May and was seen at Weston Jetty on 4/5; it was also seen at various other locations on the River Itchen up as far as Riverside Park

Chiffchaff, there were several wintering records and seen at Oak Rd, Bishop's Waltham on 8/2, Riverside Park on 11/2 (2) and at Unwin Close, Weston on Field Meeting on 27/12 (2)

Cuckoo, a very good year, records included at Lord's Wood on 27/4, Peartree Green on 28/4 (Soton Nature) and at Chickenhall, Eastleigh on 4/5

Egyptian Goose, one at the Cemetery Lake, Southampton Common on 1/6

Firecrest, this bird continues to be widely reported, records in 2015 came from various locations including Hum Hole, Bitterne on 12/4, Coldeast, Sarisbury Green on 15/4 and 15/9, Southampton University – Highfield Campus on 16/4 and at Home Covert, Nursling on 25/4. All were singing males.

Gadwall, the single male bird was seen again at Millers Pond, Sholing up to at least 6/4 and again on 4/10

Greenshank, as many as 7 birds seen at Badnam Creek, Bursledon on 18/1 – a high number in one place

House Martin, this is a much declined bird locally but two seen at Hamilton Rd, Bishopstoke on 17/5.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, a rare bird these days but a female seen on Southampton Common on 20/12

Little Owl, one seen in broad daylight at Mortimer's Lane, near Fair Oak on 13/5 and another seen at Manor Farm Country Park on 12/4.

Mediterranean Gull, 53 (maximum count) on River Itchen at St Denys on 4/8 (Soton Nature) and also one on Cemetery Lake, Southampton Common on 30/5

Nightingale, a rare Southampton visitor but one singing male was present at West Wood, Netley from at least 21/4 to 26/4 (Soton Nature).

Red Kite, two sightings in the records, one over Hoe Road, Bishop's Waltham on 20/1 and another at Hook Shore on 4/4

Ring-necked Parakeet, one seen visiting a garden in the Bassett area on 11/5. This bird is rarely seen in Southampton.

Shoveler, sightings of this duck on Cemetery Lake, Southampton Common included 2 males on 8/4 and a pair on 20/12

Spotted Flycatcher, reported on Southampton Common on 16/9 but not common there these days

Starling, a flock of 50 at Cedar Avenue, Shirley on 25/5 was a particularly high number

Stonechat, a male at Butlocks Heath on 7/2 and a female at Peartree Green on 12/2

Tree Pipit, one on autumn migration at Southampton Sports Centre on 19/9

Water Rail, a good year for this bird, 3 at Riverside Park on 27/1 (Soton Nature), one in water cress bed at Paradise Lane, Bishop's Waltham on 13/3 and one at Mansbridge Meadows on 22/3

Wheatear, one on autumn migration at Southampton Sports Centre on 19/9

Willow Warbler, two singing males north of the Cemetery Lake, Southampton Common on 10/4

Mammals

There was a good number of interesting mammal records in 2015. **Pygmy Shrew** was identified at Mansbridge Marsh on 11th March (Soton Nature) and there were also a pleasing number of records of **Hedgehogs** from gardens; at Cedar Avenue, Shirley where the earliest date reported was 6th March and the latest activity occurred on 8th December. Other records included sightings at Cobbett Road, Bitterne (2 adults) on 9th June and also a dead young Hedgehog seen in June; at a Woolston garden on 3rd July; in a Bishopstoke garden on 18th August (proof of successful breeding); at Belmont Road, Portswood on 12th September and at Bitterne Road East on 17th September. Of the rodents a **Water Vole** was seen swimming in the River Itchen at Riverside Park on 20th January. There was a report of a black-phase **Rabbit** north of Wickham on the Field Meeting of 30th August. A dead **Brown Long-eared Bat** was seen clinging to a Yew tree at Stoke Park Woods on 26th March.

Records of **Common Seal** figured prominently in 2015, suggesting an increase of numbers of this species. Reports included at River Itchen, Bitterne Manor on 17th February (eating a Flounder), River Itchen at Riverside Park on 16th February, off Town Quay on 8th March and at Ocean Village Marina on 4th December. The first three of these reports were from the Soton Nature site. In addition, an unidentified seal, probably a **Grey Seal,** was seen in the River Itchen at Windy Bay on 13th January. Another very interesting sea mammal record was of **Common Dolphin** cast up dead at Meon Shore on 6th December. This species was identified by the number of teeth present in the jaw. Finally, there were two records of **Otter** to report, firstly an immature individual found dead on a busy road in Sholing on 25th January and then one of a living Otter seen in the Itchen Valley on 24th March.

Photographs by:
Phil Budd
Mike Creighton
Kathy Emmott
Vernon Jones
Bruce Larner
Gary Palmer
Josh Phangurha
Keith Plumridge
Daphne Woods

And, finally — a view of West Wood:

What a beautiful peaceful place in our crowded city.

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Southampton Natural History Society

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You can contribute to future annual reports by recording your sightings on the Southampton Natural History Society web-site.

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