

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL

## Yorkshire 2014



| # | DATE                  | LOCATIONS                                   |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1 | 22 <sup>nd</sup> June | arrival, Cresswell Arms, Appleton le Street |
| 2 | 23 <sup>rd</sup> June | Flamborough Head and Warrham Quarry         |
| 3 | 24 <sup>th</sup> June | Ellerburn Bank, Dalby Forest & Harwood Dale |
| 4 | 25 <sup>th</sup> June | Fen Bog and Little Beck                     |
| 5 | 26 <sup>th</sup> June | Staveley and Ashberry                       |
| 6 | 27 <sup>th</sup> June | depart                                      |

## **Monday 23 June 2014 (cake: Cherry Genoa)**

After the first night followed by our first breakfast in the Cresswell Arms at Appleton-le-Street, John the taxi man arrived bang on 9am and we were soon loaded and heading along the northern edge of the Howardian Hills and across the western side of the Vale or Pickering. We crossed the River Derwent at Malton, which we learned had Roman roots, two closed breweries and a bridge within a bridge, before heading east on to the chalk hills of the Yorkshire Wolds. The road wound past dry glacial valleys and through quaint farming villages, with lovely Yorkshire names (Thwing, Scagglethorpe, Duggleby, Octon etc) towards the coast. We passed the monument to the Waggoners at Sledmere, erected in their honour by the Sykes family. The waggoners were local farmers who had been recruited to drive supply wagons on the continent in WW1.

We arrived at a calm, but cloudy Flamborough Head and headed firstly down the path to the Fog Horn Station. We notched up our first maritime species here, including **Alexanders**, **Sea Plantain** and some (presumably-planted) **Sea Buckthorn**. The grasslands yielded a fine show of purple spiked **Northern Marsh Orchids**, while overhead **Skylarks** and **Meadow Pipits** sang, and **Linnets** flitted around. We had our first views of the towering chalk cliffs from here and also the streams of auks, **Kittiwakes** and **Gannets** offshore. Sadly, no porpoises were on show today, but a sleepy **harbour seal** gave good views. Next we followed the clifftop path round the northern head to North Landing. Fine views were had of many of the common seabirds, delighting in both **kittiwake** and **Guillemot** chicks. A few comical yet always endearing **Puffins** showed on the chalk cliffs and the unique noises and smell gave us the full sensory experience.



*Northern Marsh Orchid*

As we arrived at North Landing, the sun came out fully and the air warmed up. We met Kat Stoye from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust who explained about her marine awareness work whilst we enjoyed our sandwiches above the beach. Shortly, we met up with John and he transported us round to the Living Seas Centre at South Landing, where we found out a little more about the Trust's Living Seas work and enjoyed a hot drink.

John next took us back west through winding lanes across the scenic Wolds and down into the picturesque Wharram Le Street village. Here we spent a lovely hour or so walking around Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's Wharram Quarry nature reserve. It was hot in the quarry but a cooling breeze made it bearable. The quarry floor was truly a carpet of wild flowers, with the delicate lilac of **Common Spotted Orchids** and the yellows of **Bird's-foot Trefoil** the most dominant. We picked out **Quaking Grass**, Jono's favourite **Mouse-ear Hawkweed**, a scattering of delightful **Bee Orchids**, a cluster of **Common Twayblades** and a good number of magenta blobs on sticks, **Pyramidal Orchids**. As the sun came out, the quarry became alive with butterflies, with **Small Heath** and **Common Blue** being dominant. We watched a couple of dappled pied **Marbled**

**Whites**, a **Brimstone** and then one of our targets, the rather nondescript **Dingy Skipper**. We headed on round, admiring a tiny **Yellow Meadow Ant** on top of one of the many ant hills. As we neared the end of our walk, we came across a patch of superb **Yorkshire/Thistle** | **Broomrapes** in flower. This rare species lives at only a small handful of sites in Yorkshire and nowhere else in the UK, so a real treat, and a fine end to our first day.



*Bee Orchid and Yorkshire Broomrape*

### **Tuesday 24 June (cake: Ginger Cake)**

What a day! We headed north across the Vale of Pickering to Thornton Dale and then north on to the North York Moors fringe where we met Jono's YWT colleague Elizabeth at the sawmill, for a walk around Ellerburn Bank nature reserve. We walked down the track through the pines noting one or two new plants, and sorting out **Ringlet** butterflies from the **Meadow Browns**. On to the site and the orchid filled grassland ran down into the valley ahead of us, with fine views across the Dalby Beck to the hills and pine woods beyond. A **Chimney Sweeper** moth greeted us, and new plants for the list came thick and fast with the paper-thin **Rock Rose** abundant, along with **Salad Burnet** and dozens of **Common Spotted Orchids**. Our main quest was further down and we soon found a scattering of the tiny-flowered **Fly Orchid**. The flowers were starting to fade on many, but we found some lovely specimens. Sadly, the same could not be said for the one **Greater Butterfly Orchid** we saw which had its basal leaves only. Nearby a well-named **Penny Bun** mushroom provided an interesting contrast to the flowers. A family of **Common Buzzards** made a lot of noise from the Larch plantation but remained out of sight. We found yet more **Fly Orchids**, along with **Wild Mignonette**, **Dropwort**, more **Cowslips** and learned that **Quaking Grass** is also delightfully known at 'Totter Grass'. We headed back up to meet John, arriving just in time, as the heavens opened and a brief deluge ensued.



*Fly Orchid*

We said our goodbyes to Elizabeth and shortly said our hellos to Richard from Yorkshire Coast Nature, at the Dalby Forest Visitor Centre. After a cuppa and a rest, we headed deep into the forest, stopping only to admire a pair of fledgling **Mistle Thrushes** by the road. Our next stop would be Bickling Gate from where we walked into the forest. Along the way, we came across some truly stinky **Stink-horn** fungi among the pine litter. With Richard's knowledge we found some new moths including **Brown Silver-lines**, and he identified the bird-dropping coloured **Clouded Border** that we had seen earlier. At the bottom of the rocky track we reached a fire road which led down to a lovely little clearing in the woods. Here, we soon found **Large Skipper** and lovely **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** butterflies. Richard called us over and we had wonderful close views of a rather large female **Adder** basking on top of a pile of dead bramble. She warmed up and decided she didn't like being stared at and slithered off into the vegetation. We strolled back up the track and momentarily got a bit lost as engrossed in conversation we missed our turning! We soon refound our route and a little later arrived back at the car park. We headed downhill into Troutdale and to a bridge over the headstream of the River Derwent at Hilla Green. A dapper **Dipper** performed well, looking a little sleepy on a rock in the river allowing us all good views through the telescope. We crossed a cow field and found a family party of **Grey Wagtails** feeding in the river. A **Kingfisher** shot past, but unfortunately too quickly for most of us! Birds of prey failed to perform but we enjoyed views of **Willow Warbler**, **Jay** and a lovely family party of **Long-tailed Tits** in the afternoon sunshine.



*Dipper and Adder*

We headed back for dinner and a freshen-up, before heading back out. We drove over to Scarborough and then north up the coast road towards Whitby. Near Ravenscar, we headed inland back into the forest at Harwood Dale, where we were greeted by lovely views of Jagger Howe, and a massive cloud of bloodthirsty **Midges**! This was Richard's **Nightjar** spot, and after a short walk to keep away from our biting friends, a male Nightjar turned up right on cue, sitting in a roadside Beech, and churring loudly. We walked down the road and got excellent views of the bird silhouetted against the sky. Another male flew in and the two chased past us giving great views. For the next twenty minutes before the darkness truly closed in we were afforded really great views and a fitting finale to a great day.

### **Wednesday 25 June (cake: Walnut Sponge)**

A slightly later start after last night's Nightjar special. John arrived at 10am and Jono had brought another colleague, Caroline from YWT. We headed to Malton and then across to Pickering and then north on to the North York Moors. We soon passed the canyon-like Hole of Horcum, also known as the Devil's Punchbowl. Dropping down along Newtondale, we shortly arrived at YWT Fen Bog nature reserve. A YWT volunteer team were busy at work strimming bracken to prevent it covering the heath. We spent the first couple of hours exploring this upland habitat and discovering many species of grasses, along with many characteristic plants of this area, such as **Cranberry**, **Bog Asphodel**, **Sundew** and **Cross-leaved Heath**. With the first sunny spell, **Small Pearl-**

**bordered Fritillaries** became active, seemingly much fresher in appearance than the individuals we had seen at lower altitudes yesterday. Presumably these butterflies had just emerged. We enjoyed cake and then headed down lunch in hand to the valley mire adjacent to the North York Moors railway.



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary*

We were greeted by a superb male **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** who put on a terrific show hawking back and forth right in front of us for a few minutes, allowing us all great views. We picked our way along the track, spotting a fine **Whinchat** atop the **Bog Myrtle** and more fritillaries. After lunch we headed on to the bog proper, where we had good looks at **Heath Spotted Orchid**, **Marsh Cinquefoil**, **Large Heath** butterfly and a **Large Red Damselfly**. On the way back, a female **Keeled Skimmer** gave us a brief fly-past shortly before a chuffing steam train headed down the track to Pickering.



*Heath Spotted Orchid and Large Skipper*

A cuppa was the order of the day, so we headed north to Sleights just above Whitby where we refreshed ourselves in The Salmon Leap pub. We took the opportunity to do an early run down of the plants we had seen so far and entertained ourselves with the slightly peculiar establishment we had found ourselves in! Cheryl survived a close shave with a pencil (!) and we deemed it time to depart, so we hailed John and headed south. Soon, we were at Littlebeck village a delightful

little hamlet on the Little Beck, a tributary of the Esk. Here we found real tranquillity as we wandered up through the woods to the alum mines. In this YWT reserve we noted quite a few ancient woodland indicator species such as **Dog's Mercury** and **Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage**. Few birds sang though we did find a **Southern Hawker** dragonfly and our first fish of the trip, a **Brown Trout**. Sadly, our last walk of the day had to come to an end so we headed down the path and back to the bus. Brief stop at the Hole of Horcum added a couple of new grasses to the list and there ended another lovely sunny day in Yorkshire.

#### **Thursday 26 June (cake: Carrot)**

Perhaps unbelievably, another sunny start in Yorkshire! John arrived bang on time as has been the routine and we loaded up and headed west for a change, across the valley and into the Hambleton Hills, passing Stonegrave and its ancient small minster. Down the steep slope of Sutton Bank, through Thirsk and down the A1 to Minskip. Shortly, we arrived at Staveley Nature Reserve nestled on the bank of the River Tut, between Knaresborough and Boroughbridge. We walked slowly round east lagoon in the old part of the reserve with our first wildlife encounter with a web of Peacock butterfly caterpillars on some nettles. **Common Terns** were feeding young around the lagoon and we enjoyed our cake whilst watching their antics. On a little further and we came to a clearing with many **Common Spotted Orchids**, a sprinkling of **Bee Orchids** and some lovely **Field Scabious**. A little further on into the fen meadow and we found an amazing show of **Marsh Helleborines**, looking glorious in the morning sunshine. Time had somehow escaped us again so we walked round to the new strawbale hide overlooking the west lagoon and there we had our lunch, whilst watching **Little Ringed Plovers**, **Lapwings** and **Sand Martins**, plus a lovely brood of '**Swallowings**' being fed by their parents under the porch. After lunch we went for an expensive, yet refreshing cuppa at the Royal Oak which was unusual in that we had to make it ourselves!



*Marsh Helleborine – Staveley YWT*

From here, we drove back to Thirsk and up Sutton Bank and down into a secluded valley; Ashberry. This wonderful YWT nature reserve is off the beaten track and yet contains some of the best ancient woodland and fen meadow in the region. We took a lovely walk along the limestone-bedded stream up the valley, looking at the flowers as we went. Soon we came across our tenth orchid species of the week, a **Southern Marsh Orchid**. A profusion of plants grew along the stream here, gradually becoming more interesting the further we went. Unexpectedly, we chanced upon **Fragrant Orchids** – an eleventh species for the week! Then, once through the gate safely (only Cheryl managed a muddy boot!) we soon found one of our target species, **Globe Flower**. Many had already gone over, but a few fine blooms remained. Safely under the belt, we potted on among hordes of **Twayblades**, **Fragrant** and **Common Spotted Orchids**. Cath then pulled out our prize, finding a beautiful **Birdseye Primrose** growing on the stream bank. A really exquisite and rare flower and a fitting finale to our walk at Ashberry and indeed our Yorkshire trip. Before heading back, we identified **Marsh Hawksbeard** from the similar **Rough Hawkbit** and then retraced our steps to the road. John had for once disappeared but was soon hailed with the help of a passing landrover who took a message up the hill. Following a brief detour to view the impressive edifice that is Reivaulx Abbey, we headed back through Helmsley and on to the Cresswell Arms, for our final meal and log, and the conclusion of a lovely trip to Yorkshire.



*Fragrant Orchid and Globe Flower*

*Birdseye Primrose and proper Yorkshire Tea!*

Jono Leadley, Wildlife Travel, June 2014