

Introducing ... Steve Scoffin, our Senior Reserve Manager

With a Geography degree from Dundee University, and an MSc in Recreational Land Management Studies from Reading University, I have worked in countryside management in a variety of roles. Starting as a Countryside Warden with Durham County Council, I managed the wetland, fen carr, and woodland at Hardwick Hall Country Park and Wingate Quarry LNR's Magnesian Limestone grassland. I then established Tehidy Country Park as a Countryside Ranger for Cornwall County Council, introducing woodland management for a range of different woodland types. I moved to Kit Hill on the border with Devon, where conservation grazing was reintroduced on 140 hectares of lowland heath; this was one of only two sites in east Cornwall with breeding Dartford Warblers. Kit Hill now forms part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Following this, I moved on to managing Stockton Borough Council's Countryside Ranger team before taking over as Executive Director of the Great North Forest (the Community Forest covering 96 square miles around Gateshead, Sunderland and the north of County Durham). Projects included restoration of former colliery sites, management of semi-natural ancient woodland and the creation of newly planted sites. With the departure of my colleague at the Tees Forest, I combined the Executive Director role for both, as the Director of Operations for North East Community Forests. Northumberland Wildlife Trust was next, with development work for projects on and around Druridge Bay, such as the 'Coal and Coast' project.

Returning to the South West, I managed the development phase of the "Moor than meets the eye" Landscape Partnership Scheme for Dartmoor National Park Authority and twelve partners, on important wildlife habitats and archaeology in south east Dartmoor.

I have an Advanced Diploma in Management Studies and a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and have taught at four colleges including Hadlow College in Kent and Askham Bryan on Teesside, lecturing on countryside management, ecology, business management, farm livestock handling and management, and ICT.

Outside of work, my activities have included being appointed as a Member of the North York Moors National Park Authority, being a Trustee for Durham Wildlife Trust, Chair of the Northumberland Coast and Lowlands LEADER Local Action Group and a member of the County Durham Local Access Forum (LAF) as well as chairing Natural England's national conference for LAFs in 2013. I have been an Accredited Assessor for the Expedition Section of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award since 2002, and am a Voluntary Ranger with the North York Moors National Park.

I see managing the range of Foxglove Covert habitats as a welcome return to more practical management, and as an opportunity to further develop skills as a trainee bird ringer. I will also be working with Durham Bat Group to gain the relevant bat licences.

Steve Scoffin



Steve, Senior Reserve Manager

... and Ian Wilson, Reserve Manager

Since before I can remember I was interested in natural history and was involved in practical conservation work since the age of 11 when I volunteered for the Blue Lake Restoration Project, photographing and cataloguing the dam during dismantling, with more practical responsibilities coming my way as I grew up.

After studying at university, firstly at Durham and then an MSc. at Leeds, I carried out practical conservation work as a volunteer with charitable groups before moving to Norfolk. It was here that I first considered the possibility of pursuing a career in the countryside sector while volunteering for the Norfolk Wildlife Trust as an Assistant Warden, and at Ranworth Broad Visitor Centre, which gave me lots of valuable experiences that will certainly help me in my role at Foxglove Covert LNR.

I finally secured my big break: an actual paying job in conservation as a Warden with The Conservation Volunteers on the Solent Way Project. The Heritage Lottery funded project offered many great experiences and opportunities to further my practical education and understanding of our natural heritage. After half a year with the team I was promoted to the role of Senior Project Officer, with added responsibilities for organising large scale path renovations and construction projects. Alongside my team of five Solent Way wardens we worked with community groups across the Hampshire coast and alongside many volunteers, carrying out an array of practical conservation tasks, events, and workshops. After the end of the project I worked as a Ranger for the National Trust at Maidenhead & Cookham Commons where I was involved in all aspects of practical work across the portfolio, from running events to managing woodland rides for the rare White-letter Hairstreak butterfly. Aside from the customer facing role and practical work that the job entailed, I was also in charge of overhauling the website for the sites, and fostering partnerships to create new trails and walks.

Being a part of the Foxglove Covert team has enabled me to keep doing what I love most and see a most welcome return to the county where I grew up. I am very much looking forward to the challenges and experiences that the Reserve offers.

Ian Wilson



Ian, Reserve Manager

Not Fake News, but “false” species ...

Throughout the year sightings on the reserve are added to the Observations Board in the Field Centre. Each month these are recorded before the board is cleaned ready for the next month, and the lists are entered into the Species List Programme. At the end of the year a check is made that all data has been entered.



Brimstone Butterfly

It is so good to see sightings of our only reptile on the reserve, the Common Lizard. Last year, several individuals, recognised by the state of their tail re-growth, (they can lose their tail if threatened by a predator) were seen sunbathing on the wetland bank and by the boardwalk to the wetland hide.

Brimstone butterfly sightings were recorded more often in 2017, and although this was not reflected in the Butterfly Survey, there were many opportunities for good photographs to be taken during the season.

It is unusual if Roe Deer are not recorded on the reserve every month of the year. Last year they kept their kids well-hidden, but one special morning when out walking whilst the mist nets were being raised, I had a memorable close encounter with a young deer with his small antler buds covered in velvet, as I captured a photo of him sticking his tongue out! Magical!

During the year our monthly Flower Walks recorded all the flowers that passed the

‘flower test’, meaning that they are in flower and not in bud. By February we are searching thoroughly for some colour, but usually we have to wait until March. December saw only five flowers recorded. It is rare that we find new species of flower but in 2017 Foxes and Cubs, Trailing Tormentil and Large Bindweed were recorded, taking the total number of flower species to 392, excluding sedges, rushes and grasses.

June saw us down by the Bullet Catcher pond hunting for Four Spotted Chaser dragonflies, when a beetle was seen hanging on to a thistle. Out came the cameras and then the insect books. We found that it was a Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle. The ID was confirmed by the VC65 beetle recorder, who also informed us that it was the most northerly sighting of this beetle!

The moth trap was set most Tuesday nights during the year. Due to the weather, we did not have many opportunities to set the trap away from the Field Centre so some catches were not as high as we had hoped. However, on the Moth Night, as part of the Foxglove 25 celebrations, eight new species were recorded. In July, Alicia and Stacey got more than they bargained for as they carried out their net round and returned with what initially was thought to be a large wasp but



Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle

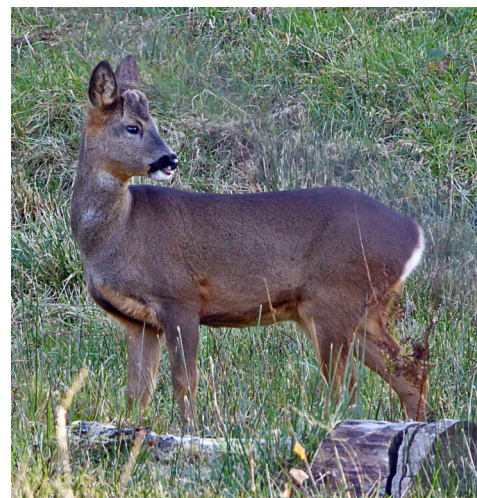
turned out to be a Lunar Hawkmoth; another first for the reserve, raising the total for moths to 557.

A shout of ‘Hurry up and get your camera, we’ve got a funny ladybird!’ saw me running (well, walking quickly) to the log pile opposite the Field Centre, and sure enough it was a ‘funny ladybird’. Insect identification books revealed that this was actually a False Ladybird, another first record for VC65. This species usually feeds on fungi found on the cut ends of logs, so it was in an ideal habitat.

The North East Fungus Study Group visited Foxglove in September and spent most of the day fungi hunting. Their list was amazing, adding 31 new species to our species list! Chris Meek and Pauline Cordner have kept up the good work and have recorded many more fungi right through into December, adding three more new species.

Fungi are an amazing group of living things and after the flowers, bugs and beasties have gone, then I look for anything unusual or different that catches my eye. A small red spike of something was photographed and sent to Chris who identified it as Scarlet Caterpillar Club. This fungus parasitizes a moth pupa, basically by mummifying it; one of the more gruesome stories from the amazing world of nature!

So, what about 2018? When will we find our first new species of 2018 and how many will we have by the end of the year? Lots of looking, searching, watching, rooting and walking will be needed by our dedicated species hunters! There will be a regular moth night, weather permitting, and we hope to set the moth trap on the heath to try to catch the adult of the Eyed Hawkmoth.



Roe Deer



False Ladybird