

## Message from the Chair



Hello. Firstly, let me introduce myself as the new Chair of the Foxglove Covert Charitable Trust. I took over in January from Lesley Garbutt and I would like to pay tribute to her stewardship and hard work whilst in the role. As with everyone involved in the work of the reserve, all the effort and energy that goes in at all levels is truly appreciated. Many tributes have also

been made to the late Major Tony Crease for his vision and drive and I would like to echo that. A hard act to follow!

The Charity that governs the reserve has changed. This does not affect what the reserve is there for in undertaking nature conservation work to provide habitats for flora, fauna, and valued wildlife species. The new Charity simply has a different status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation which in a nutshell provides better support for the Trustees to do their work and in turn, support the Reserve Managers and volunteers. The Trustees are Tony Waldron (Treasurer), John Walker (Secretary), Mark Williams (Recordkeeper) and myself as Chair. Graham Newcombe is an Ex-Officio member of the Trust in his role continuing to provide the link with the MOD.

So, the work goes on from an impressive 22 years of the reserve's declaration and progress as a Local Nature Reserve. There is much to do to plan for the next few years and the Trust Board will be addressing this over the coming months.

Hopefully, Covid restrictions are largely behind us and what can be better than getting out in the fresh air whether as a visitor or one of our volunteers helping to maintain the reserve. We hope that visitor numbers will increase over the summer and get us back to something like business as usual. Just to help, recent visitors will know there have been problems with access and the security gate. This has now been fixed, so no excuses!

Whether to observe, have a walk, sit somewhere quiet and just enjoy the place, or even have a picnic we look forward to seeing you soon.

*Peter Simpson*

## Foxglove is 30 years old!



The old entrance

In 1992 a small conservation area was established behind Cambrai Lines and that as they say was that. 30 years on and the reserve has seen many developments, including a wetland of national importance for biodiversity, a wild flower meadow, Plover's Pool, a Stone Circle and Spigot Mere. Each of these habitats helps the flora and fauna to thrive. Furthermore, encouraging new species to colonise.



Even the diggers look old!



The Scrapes

We are also in the 30th year of the CES bird ringing scheme, (Constant Effort Scheme) where the same nets are raised for the same length of time during 12 days from May to the end of August. It is a long day for the bird ringers as the nets are up for 10½ hours. Start times are dawn so it is a 4am start in June.

To celebrate 30 years of Foxglove Covert Local Nature Reserve, we are holding a BioBlitz day when there will be opportunities to join Natural History experts on guided walks.

It will be interesting to see what is caught in the moth traps and it is not always moths! In August almost every flower seems to have attracted insects of all shapes and sizes, including bees, butterflies and even some moths. Spiders often lie in wait hidden amongst the flower petals. The dragonflies and damselflies will abound on the ponds throughout the reserve. Summer fungi may be making an appearance, and the mosses, lichens and liverworts will be present.

We held our last Bioblitz in 2013 when 150 new species were recorded, which included 44 new lichens and 53 new moths! As the years have passed, finding new species is becoming more difficult, but so far this year we already have 4 on the list; 2 trees, a moss and a lichen. We are hoping by the end of our Bioblitz day that we will have a grand total of 30 new species, only 26 to go! (It would be great to find more – a challenge?)

Come and join us for some Citizen Science and help us to record as many species as we can that are found on the reserve.

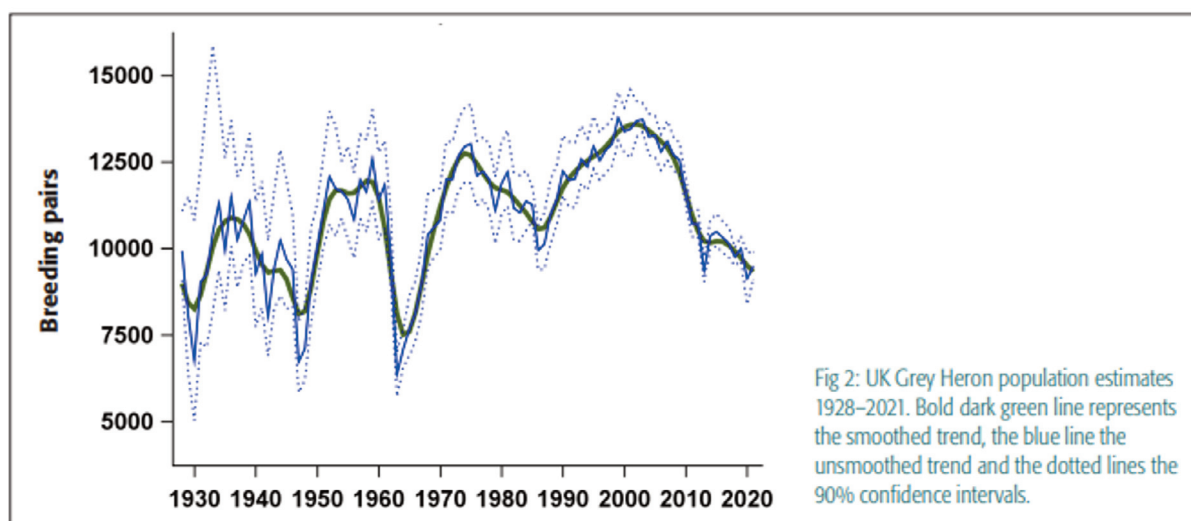
## BTO Heronries Census

It's April 2018 and I'm walking down a quiet lane at Hutton Bonville, just north of Northallerton, trying to discover whether a previously recorded heronry still exists. The only problem is that it was last recorded in 1928. That's the year that the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Heronries Census began as a one-off investigation for 'British Birds' magazine. To mark its 90th birthday, sites of long-forgotten heronries were re-visited just in case they were still occupied. This Census is now an annual survey and has the longest-running data set for any breeding bird in the world.

These days, volunteers do annual counts of nests at known active sites not just for Grey Herons but also for various egret species and other colonial waterbirds. The problem is that we do not know the locations of all of them. Currently, over 500 sites are counted in the UK every Spring. It is estimated that only about 2/3 of those in England are counted. The more we can count each year, the more certain we can be of population trends. Even those colonies that are very short-lived or comprise of single nests are of value to the Census.

The long-term trend for Grey Herons is up but there are many peaks and troughs along the way, often associated with the severity of winters. The general increase is thought to be due to a combination of factors including cleaner waters (but not yet clean enough!), a reduction in persecution and a growing number of suitable nesting and feeding sites as

gravel pits have been flooded and restored. The latest UK estimate (2021) for Grey Heron is 9,479 Apparently Occupied Nests (AON – the counting unit for the survey) and for Little Egret 1,102 AON.



## BTO 2021 Heronries Census Summary

So, have you seen a Grey Heron lately? I'm sure that you have. But finding breeding colonies is much harder than you might think given the size of the birds and their habit of nesting high up in trees. In the BTO area for which I co-ordinate bird surveys (roughly the northern Dales, the northern part of the Vale of York and the area around Barnard Castle), we only know of five sites (including the two at Wathgill) and last year these totalled about 20 AONs between them. Most have no more than one or two nests. We are certain that there are more sites out there – there's certainly plenty of suitable habitat – not only for herons but also for Little Egrets.

Please can you help by providing us with details of colonies that you either know of now or might find in the future. We always seek landowners' permissions to access any that are on private land. Remember that the Census covers all colonially-nesting waterbirds. Even better, if they are sites not currently known to BTO, you might be able to help further by doing an annual visit yourself to count them as part of the BTO survey!

I would welcome any information that you might have or any queries about the BTO Heronries Census as a whole – or about any of the BTO's other surveys for that matter. You can get an overview here <https://www.bto.org/how-you-can-help/take-part-project>

Different surveys require different levels of expertise and different levels of commitment so don't be put off! Thanks for any information that you can provide.

*Mike Gibson*  
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Image courtesy of BTO/Sarah Kelman



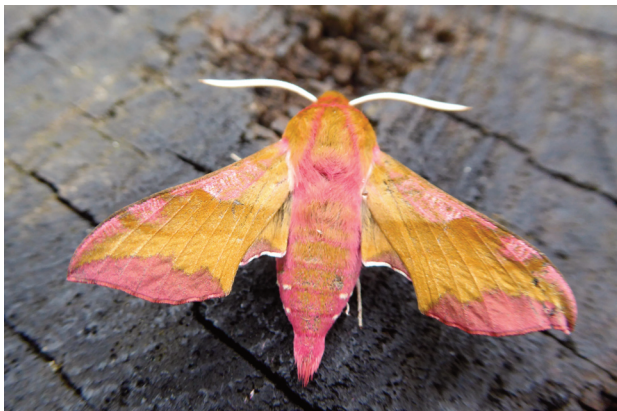
## Moth Trapping

Moth trapping is great fun and can be a very addictive hobby. There is always something new to find and it is particularly exciting when real beauties come along. You can discover a wide variety of moths that visit your garden over the course of a year.

There are many varied factors that affect moth trapping. The time of year and weather play a very important role in the catch size. March-October are the most productive months for moth trapping, but moths may be found at any time of the year. The main factors in the weather that affect the catch rate are wind, precipitation, cloud cover and, most importantly, temperature. Moths prefer to fly on still, muggy, warm nights. Heavy rain should be avoided but light drizzle can be very good for moths and improve catches. Temperature obviously varies with the different seasons and is relative to the average night temperature of that time of year. A minimum temperature of 6 degrees in July is relatively cold for summer and may not be good for moths at that time of year but a minimum of 6 degrees in January is relatively warm and good for winter-flying species. Night temperatures should preferably be above 4 in winter, above 6 in autumn and spring, and above 8 in the summer months, although double figures are preferable.

With the different seasons comes different moths. From spring to summer to winter, there is always a selection of marvelous species. Spring is an exciting time of year for moths. Colourful spring-flying species include Oak Beauty, the Streamer, Shoulder-stripe, and Brimstone moth. As spring moves to summer, a greater variety of moths can be seen. Elephant, Eyed and Lime hawkmoth are some of the most impressive species. Garden and Ruby tiger, Swallow and Iron prominent and Cinnabar moth are all lovely summer moth species. Although autumn brings the onset of cooler weather, many intriguing autumn specialists take to the wing. Between September and November, you may find Pink and Center-barred Sallows, Green-brindled crescent, Feathered thorn, and Angle shades.

Of course, there are fewer moths flying in the sometimes freezing nightly temperatures of mid-winter, but a few species are specialists of colder weather. The aptly named Winter moth, November moth, December moth, Mottled umber and Sprawler can all be found in the early winter. The Dotted border, the Chestnut and Red-green carpet fly on milder nights towards the end of winter.



Elephant Hawkmoth

Apart from the couple of species that are found in all habitats (their larvae are not at all picky about what they feed on), the majority of moth caterpillars feed on only limited plant species and so the adults are found only where their foodplants grow. This means that the caterpillars that feed on the more common plants, such as nettle and dock, are found in a variety of habitats. However, there are those, such as the Chimney sweeper, whose foodplant grows in a specific habitat and so the moth exists in local colonies wherever the foodplant grows.

Moths are often under-appreciated but are indeed very beautiful and have adapted to surviving British weather.

*Maxwell Alderson*



Angle shades moth

There are many ways that moths survive the winter. Many species overwinter as a pupa (chrysalis) deep in the soil or in leaf litter. Some overwinter as caterpillars and many geometrid (looper moth) caterpillars spend the winter very well camouflaged on a bare branch. Others go into hibernation in leaf litter or in the soil below the foodplant and emerge to finish feeding in the spring. Some autumn-flying moths lay their eggs on a twig of the foodplant which then spend the whole winter as eggs before hatching in early spring.

Apart from the couple of



Garden Tiger

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## From the Editor

As I write this, I am on a few days countdown to being one of the two lucky volunteers who will attend Buckingham Palace in recognition of our Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Our recently retired Chair, Lesley Garbutt and I are both deeply honoured to represent the reserve. I know the late Major Tony Crease will be in both of our minds throughout the day.

As mentioned on Page 1 we are planning a day of celebrations on Saturday 6th August for our 30th Birthday.

As part of the day, we will be drawing our raffle, the funds of which will go towards our Water Vole appeal.

Thank you to the following organisations who have already committed to donating a raffle prize: Archers Ice Cream, Bamfords, Barn Craft, Black Sheep Brewery, Bolton Castle, Braithwaites Garden Centre, Catterick Golf Club, Catterick Racecourse, Cross View Tearooms, Dales Bike Centre, Fairhursts Catering, Fish & Chips 149, Heck Sausages, Holts Bank, Love Property, Severfield PLC, Smart Garden Products, Stonegate Farm, Tennants Garden Rooms, The Forbidden Corner, Wheatsheaf Inn Carperby and UK Tea & Coffee Teabags and Coffee.

If anyone can kindly donate a prize, please drop it in to the Field Centre or send us an email.

Tickets will go on sale shortly at £1 a ticket and will be available from the Field Centre. If anyone can help with selling them to their friends and family, it would be very much appreciated. Thank you in advance.

My thanks also go to those who have contributed to this issue.

*Katie Awdas*

## Gifts for birthdays, Father's Day and more!

### Adopt a Box

There are over 100 nest boxes on the reserve and each of them is checked by the bird ringers annually. It is a huge task which takes several days to complete.

Our adopt a box scheme makes a lovely gift for someone who has everything and starts at just £6. By sponsoring a box, you will be helping to fund our conservation work, improving habitats for many species. In pre-Covid 19 years we have always welcomed supporters to the reserve to be present when we check their box and hope this will once again be possible in the future.

## Field Centre shopping!

Looking for a gift for a wildlife enthusiast aged 0-100? We have a wide range of books and gifts in the Field Centre suitable for everyone!



Just some of the boxes for sale

One of the Foxglove volunteers has kindly crafted bespoke wildlife homes and feeders. They are all for sale and all proceeds will go directly to the reserve.

### Amazon Smile

Did you know that when buying from Amazon you could help support Foxglove Covert LNR, by making one simple switch? Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of any item you buy if you shop through: [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) selecting Foxglove Covert as your Charity. This is a really simple way to help us and costs you nothing other than the purchase price of your items.

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