Minutes of Annual General Meeting for North West branch of RSB held on 29 September 2022 at Salford University

Introduction and welcome – by Michael Clapham, Chairman

Apologies for absence – Liam Blacklock.

Minutes from the previous AGM – Proposed as correct by Jean Wilson, seconded by Alan Bedford.

Review of committee roles – Jean Wilson proposed that Andy Richardson should take the role of Chair, and Jean Wilson and Michael Clapham would support him in his new role as joint Vice-chairs, this was seconded by Geoff Holroyd and unanimously voted in.

Geoff Holroyd was proposed by Michael Clapham to be re-elected as Treasurer, and seconded by Andy Richardson, this was unanimously voted by members.

Elisabeth Green was proposed by Jean Wilson to be re-elected as Secretary, and seconded by David Wareing, this was unanimously voted by members.

Elect new committee members – Liam Blacklock has resigned as a committee member, thanks for his services this year. Jean Wilson proposed Lorraine Nzvede as a committee member, seconded by Michael Clapham.

Chairman’s report –

At our last AGM on September 23rd 2021 I bemoaned the lack of face to face events, but at last, real events with real people face to face!

And we’ve had a busy year.

In February we began a series of 1 day ecology/invertebrate events aimed at developing awareness and skills in identifying and recording invertebrate species in a whole range of environments and habitats. Ultimately we were able to contribute to records in national databases relating to each group covered by our workshops, some of which, for example the Diptera, (notwithstanding sterling work done by dipterists in areas such as South Cumbria and Warrington) have been sorely neglected in the past in the North West of England. All these workshops were held at Wyre Estuary Country Park, Stanah, and enormous thanks is due to the staff at Stanah for their invaluable hospitality and expert help.

All our workshops were well attended within the limits of the ‘laboratory’ and outdoor classroom at Stanah. This resource has to be equipped on each of our events with various essential equipment for collecting and identifying each specific group of invertebrates, equipment ranging from sweep nets to tullgren funnels, pitfall traps to trawl nets, laptops to microscopes; an enormous undertaking with
equipment provided by the Country Park, committee members, Wyre Rivers Trust and not least the expert leaders of each event.

What follows is a list of these events:

February 26th – Introductory workshop led by Dr Alan Bedford, a general introduction to collecting and identifying invertebrates, for example photography of captured organisms and the use of microscopes.

March 19th – Introduction to Diptera led by Dr Alan Bedford, key features of the order, further development of microscope techniques and the use of dichotomous keys and apps for identification. Alan has the ability to make it all sound so easy, then we started to examine intricate details of fly wings.

April 2nd – Collection and Identification of Soil Invertebrates led by Dr Matthew Shepherd of Natural England; who thought worms, mites and springtails could be so interesting, or that we have done so much damage to our soils through over-cultivation and chemical use? Particular thanks to Matthew for the massive amount of equipment crammed into his car and brought to us all the way from Exeter!

April 23rd – Identification of Coleoptera, beetles, led by Hilary Bedford. Hats off to Hilary for taking on this one, coleoptera represent one of the largest number of species of any insect group and identification requires familiarity with details of antenna structure, mouthparts and ventral structures such as coxae, all very diverse and not generalizable! Well done Hilary.

May 21st – Identification of Marine Plankton led by Dr Mark Woombs. This specialised workshop dovetails with and contributes to Mark’s yearlong project to look at the plankton of the Wyre estuary and how it varies over the seasons. Together with our committee vice chair Jean Wilson and MCS (Marine Conservation Society) colleague Barry Kaye he has been sampling estuary plankton every two weeks and the end of 2022 should produce a report on the diversity and dynamics of plankton populations in the Morecambe Bay area.

June 18th – Identification of the Hemiptera, true bugs led by Dr Alan Bedford. What would we do without Alan and Hilary? Piercing and sucking mouthparts is the unifying feature in this group, then it gets harder!

June 22nd – Identification of fresh water invertebrates led by staff from Wyre Rivers Trust. Even more keys, guides and apps to learn from.

July 23rd – Identification of Crustacea led by Dr Mark Woombs and Caitlin Woombs, Barry Kaye and Jean Wilson. Another group with a ‘general’ recognisable feature, they all have two pairs of antennae. They can also compete with beetles in terms of diversity, and who thought that crabs could learn how to negotiate mazes?

Watch this space as we have another 9 similar events pencilled in for next year!

That in itself would constitute a full year of activity, but there’s more!

March7th – Manchester Metropolitan University Annual Postgraduate Research Conference. Andy Wilkinson and Callum Kinch (two of our committee members) manned a stand for the RSB at this event and generated quite a lot of interest in our society.

May 4th – Lecture on pelagic fisheries at Blackpool Sea Life by Dr Andrew Richardson, fisheries analyst at Ocean Life and a member of our committee. We are always very pleased and grateful for
the opportunity to hold events at this prestigious venue, special thanks to Scott Blacker at the centre! Not only did we hear an enthralling lecture (the speed of mako sharks stands out for me, close to 50mph!) but also all guests were able to have a private view around all the exhibits at the centre.

June 29th – Our (used to be!) annual Schools Quiz is back!

We have an excellent new venue at Myerscough College in Bilsborrow, the staff there made us extremely welcome and couldn’t do enough to make this regeneration event the success that it undoubtedly was. A total of 22 schools applied to take part but covid is still with us, so 4 schools had to pull out due to infections in students and staff. Teams of 4 students from each school/college tackled 10 challenges ranging from forensic science to tiger shark jaws and deadly bacteria to formation of stripes and spots in mammals. The team with the highest score won a top range compound microscope for their school/college and each student in the top 4 teams received a glossy book prize on subjects related to biology and nature. The first prize winner this year was Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School, second were Xavarian College, third Lancaster Royal Grammar School and fourth Stonyhurst College.

We hope that Myerscough will continue to host our revived schools quiz in future years.

July 8th – Presidents Medal awarded to Dr Eric Greenwood.

This medal is awarded for ‘meritorious service’ for the RSB. Eric was nominated by our committee for his many years service as a world class botanist, serving on the North West committee for many years and acting as chairman for several years from 2000. He has many published works including Hunting Plants and Flora of North Lancashire. Eric was unable to attend the usual London based award ceremony so Mike Clapham, Jean Wilson and Alan Bedford travelled to his home in the Wirral to perform a personal award ceremony with Eric’s family and friends present.

July 21st – Prize giving event at Salford University, attended by yours truly.

Organised by the School of Science, Engineering and Environment where 6,000 students graduated in July 2022, 40 of whom were chosen for special recognition at this prize giving event. Of the 31 prizes given, one was the ‘Royal Society of Biology Award for Highest Percentage in a Bioscience Degree’, which I presented to Phoebe Potts; speaking to Phoebe and her family afterwards it was obvious how proud they all were for her achievements.

Finally, on September 7th members of the committee also took part in a national Soil Bug Barcode Bioblitz (not an RSB event!) organised by Dr Matthew Shepherd, so more detailed analysis and photography of mites and springtails and other soil inhabitants. Images and samples were sent to Matthew to contribute to the Natural History Museum’s ‘Barcode of Life Project’ which aims to add all the species found to a growing database of genetic codes which will enable fast, cost effective analysis of soil communities and contribute to their conservation.

I think you will all agree another packed year of events, long may it continue

Mike Clapham, Chairman
Treasurers report –

Financial Report 2020-21 and 2021-22

Operating Account

Account balance as at 30 September 2020 was £29.61 in June 2021 we received £1220.39 from Central to give a starting balance for the year (starting October 2020) of £1250.00 which is our annual allocation.

With no expenditure in 2020/21 no top up for 2021/22 was received and we started with £1250.

Total Income £ 1250.00 (including balance at start plus £0.00 top up)

Expenses Expenditure £ 301.07

Event Expenditure £ 847.20

Total Expenditure £ 1148.27

Closing Balance £ 101.73

The allowance for the North Western Branch for 2022/23 remains at £1250
This is same it has been since 2016

Our bank account is made up to this allowance amount at the beginning of the year (in theory) taking into account any residual from the previous year. We can carry no revenue forward.

As of 4.30 pm on 29/09/2022 we have received none of the monies collected by Central through the website for any of the events the North Western Branch has put on this year. This despite numerous requests and promises.

Saturday 26 February, Introduction to Invertebrates - £45
Saturday 19 March, Introduction to Diptera - £30
Saturday 2 April, Identification of Soil Invertebrates - £25
Saturday 23 April, Identification of Coleoptera - £90
Wednesday 4th May, Fisheries for Large Pelagics - £100
Saturday 21 May, Identification of Marine Plankton - £60
Saturday 18th June, Identification of Hemiptera - £unknown
Wednesday 22nd June, Identification of Freshwater Invertebrates - £unknown
Wednesday 29th Jun, RSB NW Schools’ Quiz - £unknown

**Update on events payments:** At 5.15pm today, 29/09/2022, the North Western branch of the Royal Society of Biology received £1060.00 into its account from RSB Central Finance as the funds owed for events carried out during the year. Outstanding event costs and expenses have been paid leaving a final closing balance on the year of £133.51.

**Current Branch Assets**

2 x NW branch branded pop up banners

1 x Laminator

~100 NW branded mugs

Various catering items

3 Garmin eTREX 10 GPS units

2 Magenta BAT5 bat detectors.

2 Binocular Dissector microscopes

1 Microscope digital camera

Large laminated Ecology posters

Various ecology keys and guides
**Event reports** – Bioblitz- Jean Wilson

A Bioblitz has been held every 3 years at Wyre Estuary Country Park, the last one being in 2021. All of our Ecology Events aim towards training people to participate in identification of species for the Bioblitz. The report from last years’ Bioblitz was distributed to attendees,

**Future events** – the committee would very much welcome new ideas.

There is a STEM day at Myerscough College on 19 October which the Branch is participating in.

We have several ideas for future Ecology days, including GPS, microscopy and photography, birds, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles, bats and botany. We are always seeking new ideas.

**Michael Clapham was thanked for his time as Chair.**

**There was a Vote of Thanks** for Stephen Martin’s very interesting talk on the Varroa mite, its effect on bee colonies and their adaptations to survive.

The Meeting closed at approximately 19.30

14 attended