

MONTHLY STAFF RECORDING SHEET – DECEMBER AND JANUARY 2014/15

1. Pintail (*Anas acuta*)



- If you're out and about near an estuary or sheltered coast this December and January, bring some binoculars along and try to spot the northern Pintail duck.
- Although some pintails are a UK resident, many migrate over from central and western Europe during the autumn and can be seen in high numbers in Scotland, Ireland and western England – particularly in December.
- Look out for the male's white neck which is prominent, even at a distance. The males are dark grey in colour with dark brown heads. Females are generally more speckly brown.
- They do have a level of conservation concern due to their small breeding population and significant winter population, making them an Amber species.

2. Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*)



- The waxwing is a beautiful winter visitor to Britain - a small plump bird that resembles the shape of a Starling. Look out for its distinctive pinkish-brown plumage, black face and reddish-brown crest. In flight, you can spot the bright yellow tip of its tail.
- The Waxwing can be spotted in Britain from October - March, with December being its peak month. Upon arrival, they usually re-locate to the east coast of Britain. As the months get colder, and food becomes scarcer, they slowly move inland in search of more food.
- Being a winter visitor to Britain, Waxwings eat many berries including rowan and hawthorn. They also feed in cotoneaster and rose berries.

3. Flat backed millipede (*Polydesmus angustus*)



- Millipedes are long, thin, heavily-segmented invertebrates that live in the soil, under rocks, or even under the barks of trees.
- Millipedes can often be confused with centipedes – Here are a few facts that distinguish the two:
 - ➔ **1.** Millipedes have two pairs of legs per body segment; centipedes have just one pair of legs per body segment.
 - ➔ **2.** Millipede's legs usually extend directly downwards; centipede's legs visibly extend from the sides of its body.
 - ➔ **3.** Millipedes are slow crawlers and often curl up and lie still, even when disturbed; centipedes are fast crawlers, scurrying into the ground when exposed or disturbed.
 - ➔ **4.** Millipedes are detritivores, feeding on decaying organic matter along with young roots and leaves; centipedes are carnivores that prey on smaller invertebrates by biting and injecting them with venom.
- A common group of millipedes is the flat-back millipede - orangey-brown in colour, with a long flattened body that can resemble a centipede.
- Millipedes, along with many other overlooked minibeasts are important soil nutrient-recyclers. They are also an incredibly important food source for many other invertebrates and animals including mammals, birds and amphibians.

4. New Zealand flatworm (*Arthurdendyus triangulatus*)



- The New Zealand flatworm is widespread around Scotland, and is causing havoc with our native earthworms, which are its main source of food. The flatworm was first recorded in Scotland in 1965, and is now widely distributed across Scotland including the Highlands and Islands.
- The New Zealand flatworm can usually be found under wood and stones lying on the bare earth.
- They are a dark brown-maroon colour and are very flat, pointy at both ends and covered with a sticky mucus. These flatworms can greatly vary in shape, from short and stumpy to long and narrow and can reach up to around 15cm in length.
- The flatworms feed on earthworms in a fairly gruesome manner – it's thought that they firstly anaesthetise the worms by releasing digestive enzymes and then finish by sucking up the remaining parts like soup!
- It's really important to record these species due to the detrimental effects they are currently having on British earthworms. Low populations of earthworms are also negatively impacting soil drainage. Mammals and other animals dependent on earthworms for food (such as badgers, moles and birds) are also being affected.
- If you want to check the state of your soil, take part in the OPAL Soil Survey, which looks at the different types of earthworms within the soil.

A top predator of the brown-lipped snail is the Song thrush – they crack open the shell by hitting it against a hard surface.



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5 & 6. White (*Cepaea hortensis*) and brown-lipped (*Cepaea nemoralis*) snails



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White-lipped snail



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Brown-lipped snail

Did you know? Air breathing land snails like these breathe through a hole near the shell opening, known as the pneumostome. They can close it to ensure moisture does not get lost through evaporation.

- The closely related brown and white lipped snails are common land invertebrates to Britain.
- Although both species have vast shell colour variations, it is easy to distinguish between them by identifying the white or brown band around the opening of the shell.
- Brown-lipped snails are slightly larger, ranging from 20-25mm wide, with white-lipped snails ranging from 16-22mm wide.
- White lipped snails usually appear yellow in colour but may also be brown, pink or red with 5 spiral dark bands.
- Brown lipped snails have the most colour variations than any other snail in the UK. They may have up to 5 horizontal bandings across their shell or even none at all.
- During particularly dry conditions, the snails will retract back into their shells for refuge, and 'shut down' for a period of inactivity known as estivation.
- Both snails live in a variety of habitats including grassland, hedgerows, woodland, sea cliffs and gardens. Look out for these snails in areas with plenty of moisture and damp soil, as well as on plants and trees in particularly moist weather. In Scotland, the white lipped snail has been found to favour sand dunes and cliffs.
- The white-lipped snail prefers to feed on nettles, ragwort and hogweed. The brown-lipped snail is known to feed on a wide on a wide range of fresh vegetation.
- Although these snails possess both male and female organs and can self reproduce, they usually mate with another snail between spring and autumn.

And some spiders....(apologies about the lack of common names - prize to the group who come up with the best names!)

7. *Pachygnatha clercki*



- Quite a distinctive spider to spot, *P.clercki* is fairly widespread and frequent throughout Britain, although there are not many current records in Scotland.
- *P.clercki* is around 6mm in size and is light brown in colour. The sides of the abdomen are usually pale white, along with a large pale stripe down its back.
- Its preferred habitat location is within wet habitats such as bogs and marshes and along the banks and sides of rivers and lakes. It can even be spotted on the water on occasion! However, it is a ground-living species.
- You can spot these spiders most of the year round – even in the freezing cold winter.

8. *Clubiona terrestris*



- This species is predominantly widespread in England, although there are a few scattered records throughout Scotland – so it's important to get new records for this one!
- This species can be found in a wide mixture of habitats ranging from within leaf litter, in the garden, on shrubs and trees, under stones to even sometimes in the house.
- It's a small spider, with a pinkish light yellowy-brown appearance, with distinctive black chelicerae (mouthparts).
- Spiders can be a bit tricky to identify in the field so try and take a photograph and upload it to ispot to get some advice if you're unsure.