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# The Norfolk



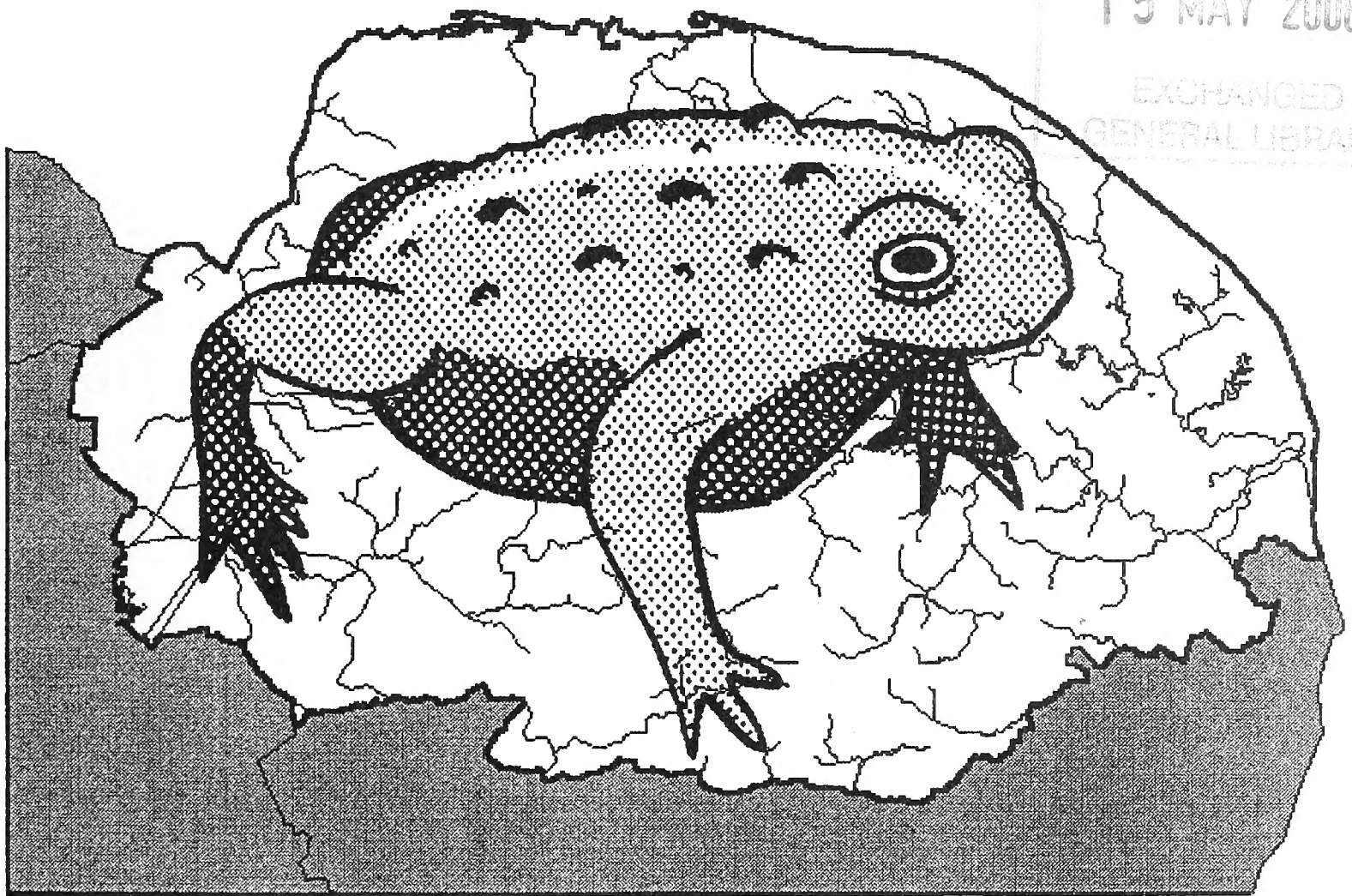
# *Natterjack*

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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**Number 101**

**May 2008**

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# Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

Founded 1869

Reg. Charity No. 291604

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Articles with the camera symbol have associated photographs in the Nats' Gallery (centre pages)

## **Toad-in-the-hole....**

This edition covers once again the many facets of natural history, including the answer to the question posed in the last edition (no. 100) regarding the origin of the word 'Nostoc'. Below are members responses. Also there are more requests for data, including moles, which apparently do not like West Norfolk, or do you know better! The phrenology survey highlighted in the last newsletter should be well under way now or again are local weather conditions affecting the sightings? Whatever your interest and if you feel like sharing a particular natural history moment - please send it in.

**FF**

## ***Nostoc Mysteries Answered***

*Hans Watson*

We rather hoped that the item on Nostocs in the February issue of *Natterjack*, would provoke some response from members, and sure enough it did. I am indebted to David Paull for supplying me with information relating to the origins of the word Nostoc, which I had been informed was regarded by members of the scientific community as being of unknown origin. The literature supplied by David informs us that the word Nostoc was invented by a German physician and alchemist known as Paracelsus, who lived between 1493 and 1541.

Paracelsus held the position of town physician at Basle and lectured in chemistry at the university. He seems to have led a life flouting and testing the conventions of the day. He taught in the German language rather than Latin, because he disagreed with the authorities who preferred learning to be kept from the populace. His work became very influential and it is clear that his thinking was ahead the times in which he lived. He emphasized the need for observation and experiment, and discovered many techniques that would later become standard laboratory practice.

Often an answer to a question, raises further questions, and so it is with the solution to the Nostoc origin. For me the new question is, who invented the name Paracelsus, for it was not the real name of this gentleman, but simply the name by which he was generally known. The name refers to Celsus, a celebrated Roman physician, and Para means 'beyond' or 'better than'.



We now know that Paracelsus created the name Nostoc, but did he also create the name by which he would thereafter be known? His real name was Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, and with the burden of such a name, who could blame him. It may also explain his penchant for snappy names like Nostoc.

## From a Plethoretical and Wanton Star

*Godfrey J. Curtis*

Philippus Aurelius Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim was born soon after Columbus left for the edge of the world. Not that there was a connection - except that in time (1530) at the age of 38 our Philipus made the first diagnostic description of Syphilis and proposed the mercury cure which took nearly three centuries to catch on. Indeed he was never known as Philipus but as Paracelsus (above and beyond Celsus - a renowned first century physician) - a name he dubbed himself. And who could blame him, saddled as he was with that seventeen syllable name. Paracelsus in his time was all things to all men and his hugely enquiring mind made him one of the most outstanding doctors of the Renaissance. He was also a first rate field naturalist.

So what has this to do with that weird star thing in the heading - or with Norfolk Natural History for that matter?

Ah! Well, let's start with Plethoretical -- We can find it in *An Universal and Etymological English Dictionary being also an Interpreter of Hard Words* by Nathan Bailey, 1730. (This dictionary predates Johnson's by 35 years'). Plethoretical means according to young Nathan - "Fuller of Humours than is agreeable to a natural State of Health, either from natural Evacuation or from Debauch". There you have it. Oh yes. Wanton means "the attribute of lafcivioufnefs". Thus spake Nathan Bailey.

Now about that star and Norfolk. You see elsewhere in the same dictionary there is stated "Nostock -- ftinking tawny Jelly of a fallen Planet, or the Nocturnal Solution of fome plethoretical and wanton Star". Forgive the f's for s's - I merely quote.

Now - any dictionary worth its salt will tell you that Nostock was a word invented by one Paracelsus and since he lived in Switzerland he spelled it Nostock or Nostoch. Modern usage dispenses with the H or K to arrive at the serendipitous word Nostoc - which sounds so much more botanical.

Well, you did ask.

Incidentally - yes you're right, it was the eponymous Paracelsus who was the origin of the word bombastic. Qui, moi?



## ODDBALLS

Tony Leech



Although Jackie Welton and Mike Ottley have only recently turned their hands to identifying fungi they have a good eye for the unusual. Last autumn they brought two mycological puzzles for me to help unravel, each involving three different organisms.

The first, found at Drayton, consisted of a spherical black object about 1cm in diameter, first thought to be a gall. It was firmly attached to a live Ivy (*Hedera helix*) stem and bore numerous small discomycete fungi. The fungi turned out to be *Hymenoscyphus fructigenus* (Nut Disco), commonly found on old acorns and other 'woody' fruits. But what were they growing on? A sharp knife provided the answer; an haustorium from the ivy had penetrated the shell of an old hazel nut and grown round the kernel, holding it tightly to the stem.

The second object, from Salthouse, was clearly a rabbit pellet but was covered in pink 'candyfloss' and attached to grass. The pink threads were readily identified as the basidiomycete fungus *Laetisaria fuciformis* which parasitises grasses and causes Red Thread Disease on utility grasslands. What appears to have happened is that the fungus had begun growing on the grass but then moved to the nutrient-rich dung and bound it to the grass stem.

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## Whitish Waxcap

Tony Leech



One of the commonest waxcaps on lawns is the Blackening Waxcap (*Hygrocybe conica*) but on sand dunes it is 'replaced' by the Dune Waxcap (*H. conicioides*), often rather stouter and more crimson in colour. These are the only waxcaps that blacken as they age, finally becoming completely black before they decay. On the Society's foray to Holkham last autumn, Tracy Money spotted a whitish waxcap which had the same characteristic shape as the Dune Waxcap. Microscopic examination of the spores revealed that it was indeed a leucistic Dune Waxcap – lacking the red pigment but blackening nevertheless.



# A find from far away



I received a phone call from my friend Francis Farrow in January 2008 saying that he had found a dead insect in a packet of Rocket salad bought from a local supermarket and thought it looked like a Shield Bug.

From his description of it as having pointed sides on its thorax I felt fairly sure that he had the shield bug *Picromerus bidens* L (fig. B- Nats' Gallery) that are fairly common here, but not for January. I know that the females of the season, after they have mated in July or August, usually perish shortly after they have laid their eggs, which usually hatch in early April the following year.

As soon as I saw the specimen I realised that it was not what I had originally thought it to be, so out came all the European Heteroptera keys that I possess, but none of them led to the specimen that I was looking for.

I then called Dr. Tony Irwin at Norwich Castle Museum and he sent me two photographs of bugs nearly answering the problem but still not correct. He then told me that as he was coming to a meeting in Cromer shortly he could call and pick up the specimen to check.

Imagine my surprise when early the next morning after he had taken the specimen he rang me to say that he had found its name as *Andrallus spinidens* Fab. (fig. A-Nats' Gallery), but the information that went with it would take too long to read out over the phone so he would send it to me by post.

It is found in nearly every major southern country in the world, including Canada, Mexico and the United States in the west, but none in South America. The nearest that it is found to the UK are Italy, Israel and Greece. It is used as a biological control agent, particularly in rice fields.

(NB. The packet of rocket salad stated that it was 'a product of many countries' so no help there as to its origin – FF)

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## A REQUEST

I am looking to complete my collection of Wild Bird Protection in Norfolk and still require editions of the NNS Transactions for 1926, 1929-33, 1937 and 1945.

If anyone wishes to sell these volumes or might know where I may be able to obtain them could they please contact me on 01493 600705.

Keith Dye



# Sculthorpe Moor

*Brian Macfarland*



I visited the recently opened Nature reserve at Sculthorpe. It is an Owl and Hawk owned reserve, and has erected a very nice visitors centre. My main reason for going was to photo Water Rails in an accessibly location. They are usually a very shy bird, and they tend to skulk around in reed beds and rarely show themselves. So I went with great expectations, and I was not disappointed. They have laid down 1500 yards of boardwalk, all by volunteers. The reserve has several hides of high quality, and I think it will be a good place to visit in the spring and summer. It has a large number of dragonfly species, a pair or of Marsh Harriers, which they hope will breed this year. The main hide has a feeding station for birds, which they keep well stocked with food, which draws in many bird species. I was lucky not only to see Water Rail but a Brambling also showed up. I think my most enjoyable shot was of a Long-tailed Tit, which had taken a sunflower seed to eat. The conventional way to eat it was like the Coal Tit, holding the seed between its feet. Not so the Long-tailed Tit, it had to do different. It hung by one leg, and ate the food held in it's other foot. (See photograph) I hate to think how the holding leg would have taken the strain of a heavier piece of food! Such a beautifully delicate bird. A joy to watch.

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## **Change of county bird recorder.**

Please note that the following have succeeded Giles Dunmore as the County Bird Recorders. Could members please alter their 2008/2009 programme card to reflect this change so that records are not sent to the wrong address.

Dave and Jacquie Bridges  
27 Swann Grove  
Hempstead Road  
Holt, NR25 6DP

Tel: 01263-713249 Email: [dnjnorfolkrec@aol.com](mailto:dnjnorfolkrec@aol.com)

Giles will be editing the 2007 Report as normal - the changeover is a gradual process, however, he would prefer that records are initially sent to the new county recorders - Dave and Jacquie Bridges.



# *The Colour of Purple*

*Hans Watson*



When I was ten years old, I was given my first bird book. It was a copy of Kirkman and Jourdain's "British Birds", almost A4 in size and lavishly illustrated by some of the great bird painters of a bygone age such as G.E.Collins, Winifred Austen, H.Gronvold, and my favourite, A.W.Seaby. The birds that I knew well were so accurately illustrated in the book, that I became eager to find and see new birds, especially waders and none more so than the exotic sounding Purple Sandpiper. Thus it was, that I was doomed to have one particular disappointment.

The painting of Purple Sandpipers in the book is of four birds with dark purple backs on a seaweed covered rock, and I expected my first sighting of these birds to look similar. The first Purple Sandpipers that I saw, however, had darkish lead-grey backs, not purple.

Since that distant day, I have seen Purple Sandpipers on many occasions and grown used to their somewhat disappointing appearance. I have also found that every other birdwatcher that I have asked if they had ever seen any purple on a Purple Sandpiper, has answered "No". However, although many bird books do not mention any purple being present in their description of Purple Sandpipers, some books mention that in good light, and when seen close-up, there is a purplish sheen on feathers of the back and scapulars.

Recently, whilst showing a fellow birdwatcher some photographs of Purple Sandpipers taken in January (in rather dull weather), the conversation turned to the birds lack of visible purple, and from this developed a challenge to photograph the birds in conditions that captured the purple coloration.

Sadly, Purple Sandpipers are now rather scarce visitors to Norfolk, and so I had to go across the border into Suffolk to photograph a fairly reliable group of up to nine birds. I chose a day with hazy sunshine, and arrived one hour after high tide when the birds would be eager to feed on the most recently exposed seaweed (nearest to shore).

The Purple Sandpipers, were very obliging and seen at less than 20 feet in the hazy sunshine, gave good views of a metallic amethyst/mauve sheen in the central portions of some feathers on their backs, scapulars and some coverts. The metallic sheen was brighter on some birds, but all had the colour to some degree.

I now, after over 40 years of birdwatching, can say I have seen Purple Sandpipers "in a new light".





# Snettisham Delights

*Brian Macfarland*



It is always a good idea to check the tide timetable before visiting Snettisham RSPB. I decided to take off last Saturday afternoon arriving about 2-45pm. Of course when I came up from the car park onto the beach the tide was 3 miles out of sight. Therefore there were very few birds in sight, as they feed way-out on the mud flats, and are forced into view as the tide drives them towards the shore. This day the high tide was 7-30pm so there was no chance of seeing much activity.

Anyway it was a lovely sunny day, and I thought it would be worth waiting for the sunset. I was not disappointed! There were a few birds to see before it got too dark.

I then went again on the Monday morning leaving at 6am to get there for the tide coming in. Unfortunately the tide was already in, but it was not a particularly high one. This meant there was some mud flats not covered so the birds were staying off shore to feed. It was another beautiful morning, and the light was perfect for photography. There were some consolations as there were spectacular views of the birds swirling like shoals of fish. They were some way off, but when the light caught the under side of their wings, it was very dramatic.

It was so worthwhile going all that way, despite the bird photography was limited. What turned out to be a surprise on walking along the beach, was the scream of a Rabbit being pursued by a Stoat. It was in among bushes so difficult to see at first, but I luckily got a brief glimpse of the Stoat standing on the rabbit. It was in deep shade, and fled on seeing me. The Rabbit got up and staggered off into the undergrowth to live another day, hopefully! The memories will live on for a long time.

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## The Beeston Bittern

*Francis Farrow*

In *Natterjack* no.100 I mentioned a sighting of a Bittern at the small pond on Beeston Common, little did I think then that it would become such a celebrity. The Bittern was first seen around 13<sup>th</sup> January and last observed on 16<sup>th</sup> February. For the first 2-3 weeks it was not well known to the 'bird world', however from about 8<sup>th</sup> Feb. its fame spread and being not at all shy gave many a photographer great delight. A frozen pond and possibly the presence of up to 50 observers on its last day saw it depart for ponds anew.



# Odds and Sods

*Tony Howes*

Recently, at various places in the Yare valley I have seen an Egyptian Goose that is very pale in colour, especially round the head, the normal dark eye-patch is almost non-existent. This makes it stand out well from the other Egyptians, even at a fair distance, a very unusual goose.

The Marsh Harriers are busy sorting out mates and territory and while watching them at Strumpshaw fen last week I was reminded of their imminent nest building. Harriers often bring in a couple of reed stems for the nest from a long way off, despite having many thousands it could have gathered much closer.

Another sighting of spring behaviour was two cock Pheasants having a sparring match, they looked very aggressive, and went through various threatening postures. There are many colour variations in Pheasants round the Strumpshaw area, they range from white through to black, but this pair were of normal colouring, with the white ring round the necks. Their little scraps never seem to come to much, and no harm is done that I am aware of.

Cormorants are a common enough bird in the County these days, sitting about on dead trees or posts near water between fishing excursions. They seem to need to dry their wings between each hunting trip, standing like mythical creatures with spread wings, maybe their water-proofing isn't all it should be.

Last week I managed to capture a Great Crested Grebe with the camera just as it was submerging, the body had gone already, the neck and head followed a split second later, they seem to do this with hardly a ripple on the surface. Grebes have excellent water-proofing, the globules of water fall away instantly when they surface from a dive.

Reed-buntings and Bearded-tits are birds of the reed and sedge beds, both move freely in thick cover, often creeping like mice right at the base of the stems as they search for insects and seeds. I have managed to photograph both in the last few weeks as they went about their business, one of the Reed-buntings had a ring on its right leg. Also caught by the camera recently was a Robin in full song, and strangely this bird was also wearing a ring.

So,- as I write this article spring is just round the corner, lets hope it will be lovely sunny days with nature's bounty spread out all around us.

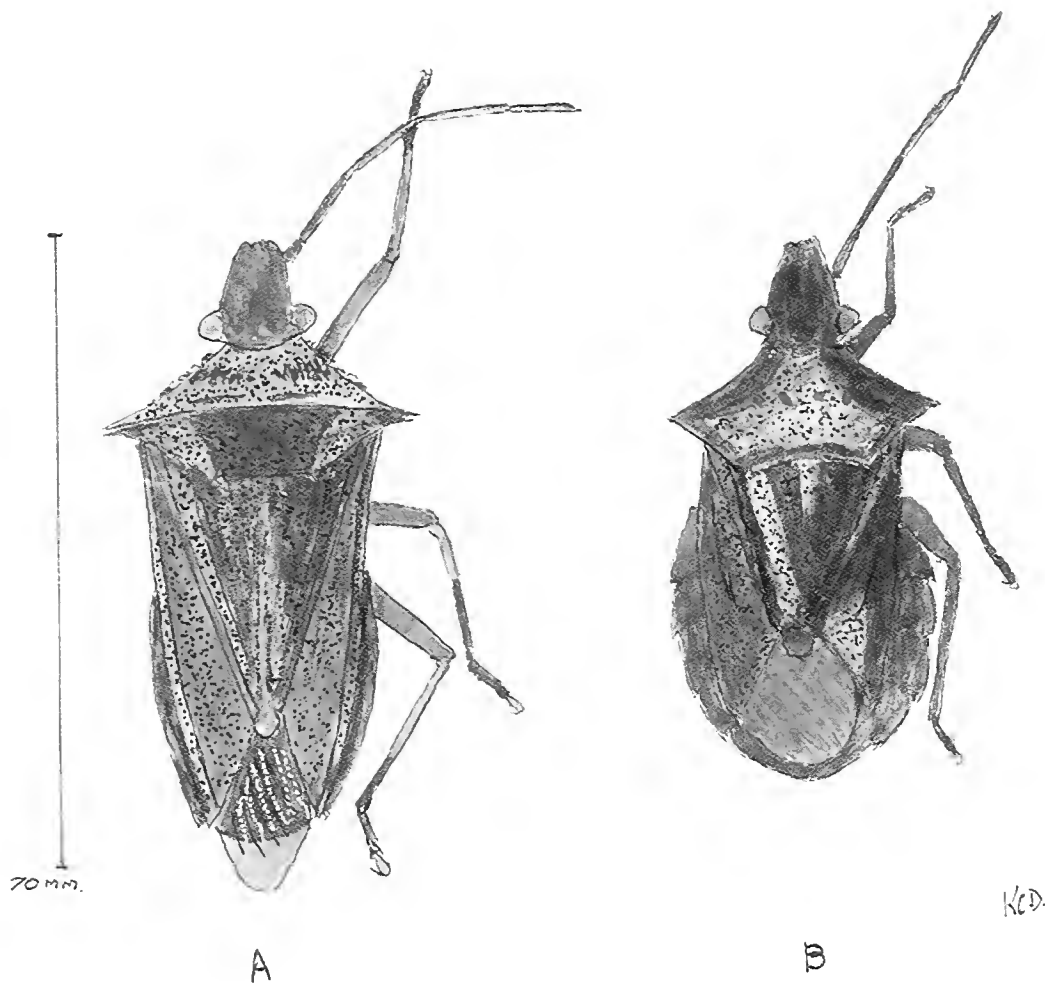


# NATS' GALLERY: May 2008



**PURPLE SANDPIPERS** in Suffolk. They really can be purple! Although it has bred in Scotland, this boreal wader is a winter visitor to most of Britain and scarce on 'soft' coasts such as Norfolk's. See article. *Photos: Hans Watson.*





**SHIELD BUG** *Andrallus spinidens*. An unusual find in a packet of supermarket Rocket salad! The nearest 'wild' populations are found in Italy, Israel and Greece. It is used as a biological control agent, particularly in rice fields. See article. *Drawing left: Ken Durrant; photo below: Francis Farrow.*



**WILD HONEYBEE** on Hawthorn blossom at Strumpshaw Fen, 12 February 2008. Hundreds of bees were visiting this old tree. *Photo: Bob Blandford.*



**BLACKBIRD** A portrait of a female in a snowy garden at Rockland All Saints on 24 March 2008. Spring 2008 has been topsy-turvy, with unusually warm weather early in the season and then a long cool spell, with some short periods of snow, in March and April. *Photo: Bob Blandford.*



**COMMON CRANES** A bonus for the photographer on his way home from Horsey! See article. *Photo: Brian Macfarlane.*



**LONG-TAILED TIT**

When dealing with an insect too big to swallow immediately, they will hang by one foot from a twig and hold the food item in the other foot to peck at it. See article. *Photo: Brian Macfarlane.*



### **DUNE WAXCAP**

*Hygrocybe conicioides* An unusually pallid example found on the NNNS Fungus Foray at Holkham on 21 October 2008.

See article.

Photo: Tracy Money.

### **RABBIT PELLETT**

covered with pink, candyfloss-like growths of *Laetisaria fuciformis*. Salthouse.

See article.

Photo: Mike Ottley.



### **NUT DISCO**

*Hymenoscyphus fructigenus*

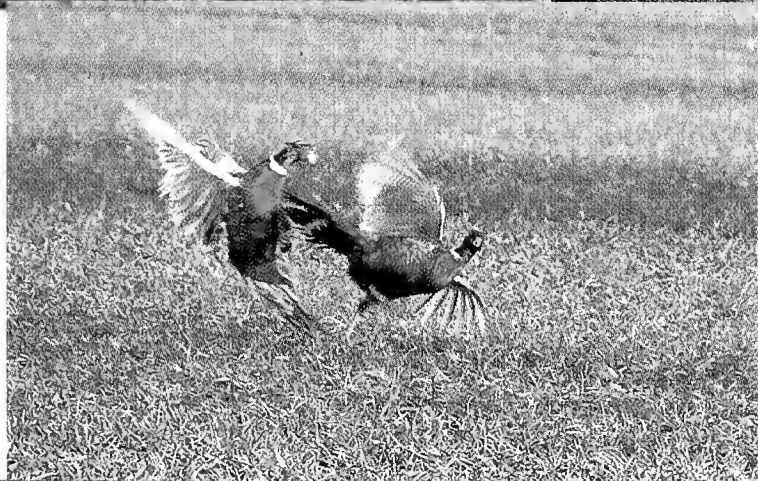
Growing on the remains of a Hazel nut. Drayton.

See article.

Photo: Mike Ottley.



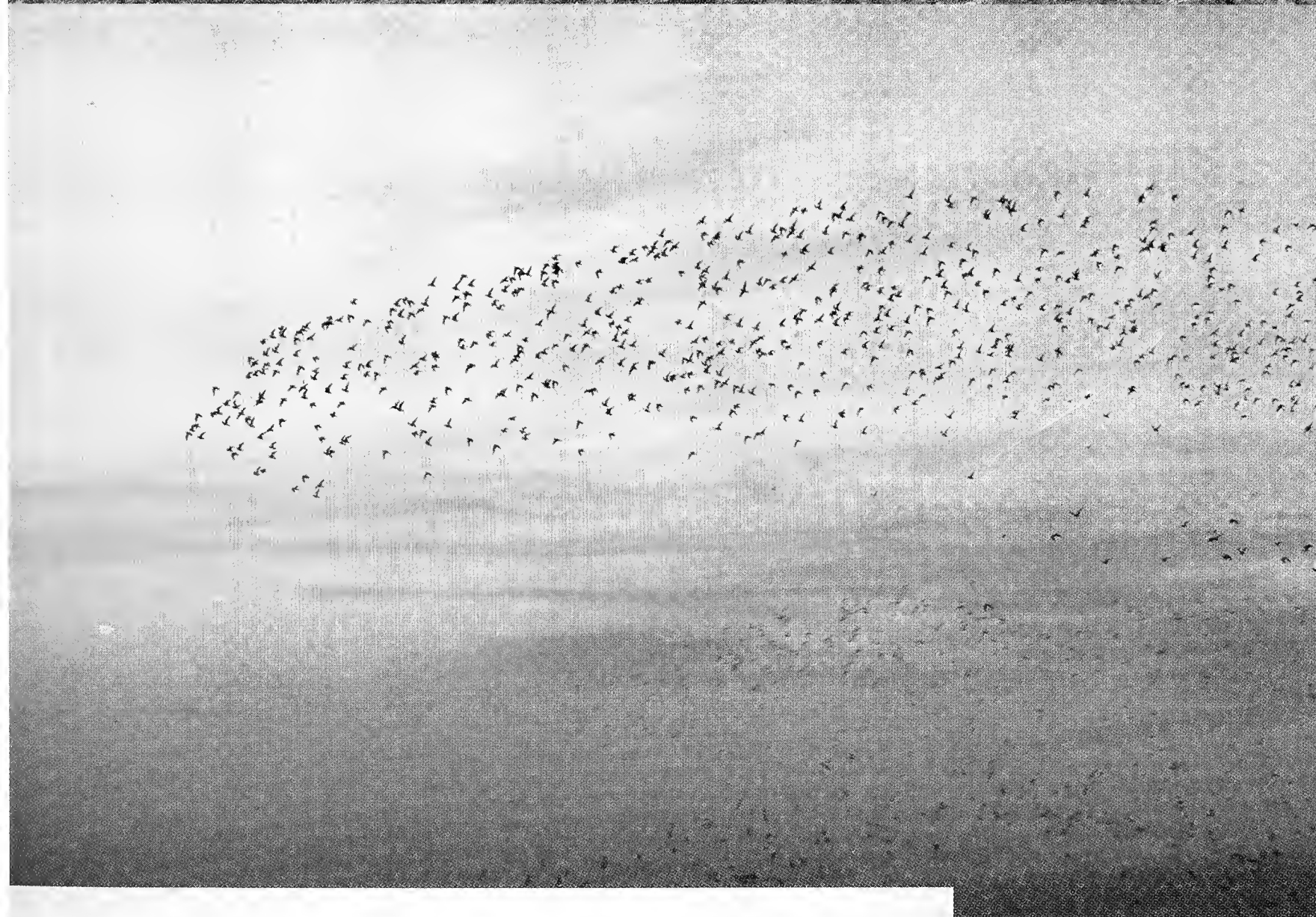
**SPRING!** Clockwise:  
Egyptian Goose, Robin,  
Great Crested Grebe,  
Reed Bunting, Pheasants,  
Bearded Tit.  
See article.  
Photos: Tony Howes.





**SPRING HIGH JINKS** at Buckenham.  
Hares and, above, Chinese Water Deer.  
See article. *Photos: Brian Macfarlane.*





## **SNETTISHAM**

Spectacular skies  
and brilliant birds  
(including Dunlin, left).  
See article. *Photos:*  
Brian Macfarlane.



**LORDS-AND-LADIES** Bulfer Grove. *Photo: Simon Harrap/norfolknature.co.uk.*

# Horsey Seals

*Brian Macfarland*



I have been to Horsey a couple of times over the winter period to see the seals. I went initially to see the pups being born last November, and at that time I only counted about thirty adults, with a few pups. At the beginning of the New Year I went again to discover no more than 50 animals. Naturally I would have expected that sort of number, as a lot would have returned to the sea after giving birth. I then got news there were a lot more at the end of February so I went back again, and to my astonishment there were over 400 lying around along the beach. I have never known that many before especially at that "late" time in their season. Usually there would only be a few adult males (bulls), and young ones left, where their coat had not become sufficiently waterproof to go to sea. So that was interesting to see so many, so I don't think I'll bother to go up to Donna Nook in Lincolnshire next year.

On the way home I passed several groups of people peering through binoculars, presumably looking for those elusive Cranes. The icing on the cake for me, was the fact they had flown straight over my head when on the way back to my car, and I got photos to prove it!

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## Two's Company, Three's a Crowd

*John Hampshire*

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008, I was walking along the top of the dunes between Horsey and Winterton when I heard the most horrible noise coming from the direction of the nearby grazing marshes. It was somewhat reminiscent of a scolding Jay but somehow far more unpleasant. Looking across from my vantage point, I saw three Foxes, two of which were – or had been- copulating. They stood back to back and were clearly 'stuck'. The third Fox was a second male, it was facing up to the pair and a conflict was inevitable so I sat down to watch through my telescope

What followed was astonishing. For the next five or more minutes the aggressor stalked around the pair and attacked both individuals but most of the time it appeared to be deterred by the gaping mouth (and the teeth!) of whichever animal it was facing up to at the time. It was more interested in confronting the

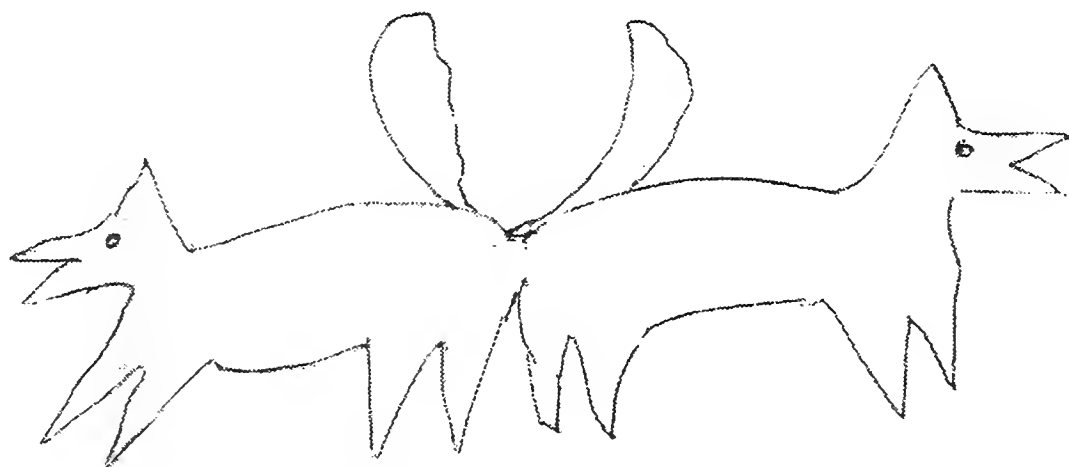


the pair but the female also had to endure his attacks. The pair wheeled around and around so that one animal was always facing the aggressive male.

Eventually, during a particularly violent bout of fighting the pair became separated and the vixen fled. The two males then fought for a minute or two in what appeared to be an evenly matched fight. It was easy to keep tabs on which male was which because the penis of the male from the pair was very swollen and obvious. After a while the aggressor got the upper hand and forced his rival to flee. There then followed a period of ten minutes or more where the aggressor chased the other male randomly around a very large area of marsh. They were in view all of this time and it seemed that the fleeing animal was running aimlessly apparently unsure in which direction to head. As he ran he held his tail high and it could be seen that his testicles were very swollen. Finally, they were lost to view when they entered an area of bushes.

Goodness knows how long the pair had been 'stuck together' or for how long the attack from the second male had been going on before my arrival. I guess the outcome of the conflict was inevitable; after all the male of the pair must have been exhausted and in a lot of pain as well as being at a distinct disadvantage while he was attached to the vixen, he must also have been suffering from bite wounds. I couldn't help feeling sorry for him.

As an aside, it was interesting to see how close in size the three animals were. I don't know whether the vixen was particularly large for her sex but she appeared only marginally smaller than the two dogs. It made me realise that those people who confidently sex every fox that they see are probably making a lot of mistakes.



### Note:

It is known that Foxes get "stuck" when copulating and sometimes with rear ends meeting and each animal facing in the opposite direction. Foxes have a similar penis to other members of the Canidae, such as domestic dogs. They have a rigid penis due to the presence of a bone (os penis) in the anterior part of the organ, extending behind the sheath for several inches depending on the size of the animal. Immediately at the base of the sheath is a bulbous enlargement surrounding the penis which contains erectile tissue. This organ is known as the *bulbus glandis*. It greatly enlarges during erection and prevents immediate withdrawal after ejaculation, only slowly returning to normal size.

*Ian Keymer*

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## **Hare today and gone tomorrow!**

*Brian Macfarland*



I have been hoping to photograph Hares boxing as seen on the TV. Unfortunately I have not been able to witness that so far. However I got to hear about some Hares seen in the Buckenham area. So the other day I arrived at 6-30am and parked beside this field. The car makes a good hide as Hares are difficult to approach without some cover. I was situated on a line between a ploughed field and a field of winter barley. The sun was shining into my face which made it difficult to see, but at least I was out of the viciously cold wind.

The four Hares on the barley field were 400 yards away so not near enough for a photo. I turned my attention towards the ploughed field where I immediately saw several Hares running around. Of course they were slightly more difficult to see against the brown background. However, I spent the next two hours observing them, and they did come within range for a photo occasionally. They spent most of the time chasing around at high speed over the ploughed field, which was no easy task. Have you ever tried it? Very tiring and uncomfortable!

Despite all the chasing they did not give me a view of them boxing. They did do what nature intended and obliged with some feverish activity which I recorded. One thing I had not seen Hares copulating before, but was very impressed with the athletic finish!!

My day was suddenly curtailed when a horse rider rode round the edge of the field past me scattering the Hares, who then ran out of sight. As I was preparing to leave, a Chinese Water Deer ran out of the hedge right across the front of the car at 20 paces, so I gave it both barrels and got a few shots! A nice conclusion to a very interesting couple of hours. I went back the next morning and there wasn't a single Hare to be seen. How lucky can you get?



# PESTS – AND CUNNING WITH IT!

*David Paull*

Squirrels, it seems, are even more devious than we already knew they were. A study by scientists at a university in Pennsylvania has concluded that they possess “a rare form of animal cunning and intelligence”.

We all know that they can penetrate even the most elaborate defences protecting bird feeders and they will steal anything they can get their teeth into. But what do they do with food once they have got it? Some of it they bury as a larder for when the going gets tough. But it's not so simple as that. The Grey Squirrels were observed digging holes and apparently secreting food, which they then carefully covered with soil and leaves. But the scientists discovered that a lot of the burials were fake. The squirrels had only pretended to bury the food and actually hid it elsewhere. And the number of bogus burials shot up when the observers raided the spots where the squirrels had apparently stored their food and were themselves observed by the squirrels as they did so.

So, was this behaviour a sign of advanced intelligence or, as another scientist has suggested, simply that the squirrels have learned through trial and error that certain behaviour protects their food from theft? But, David Paull asks, have the American scientists actually discovered anything new? In fact, the pseudo-burials were observed in Norfolk many years ago, as Ken Durrant reports:

“Fifty years ago when I visited various large houses in mid-Norfolk some of them had lawns backing on to woods. Hazel bushes were often planted at the edge of the wood, providing a suitable place for birds to wait before the owner fed them on the lawn.

When I visited one property, the owner called me to say that she was going to feed the Red Squirrels. Was I interested? We went on to the back lawn of the house and she began to call, at the same time throwing a number of shelled peanuts and other food on to the grass. I was amazed to see a number of Red Squirrels come running from the bushes and start to gather the free food provided.

Watching more closely, however, I noticed that I was also being observed by the squirrels as they took the peanuts. They would go to the edge of the lawn and begin to scrape away some soil as if to bury the nuts but I soon realised that after all the show they would quickly pick up the nut and rush off into the bushes and the wood, returning after a short while to pick up another nut and repeat the whole action.

Later, however, we watched them from the back window of the house. They took their nut directly into the wood behind the bushes, apparently thinking that we were not there watching them.”



**THE JUNIOR BRANCH OF THE  
NORFOLK NORWICH NATURALIST'S SOCIETY**

ANNUAL REPORT, 1933

The Junior Branch is primarily intended for those you who, being at school or college, are unable to attend the of the Senior Society, but others interested are eligible annual subscription is 2s. 6d.

The present membership numbers about 50.

A Nature Log is circulated among the members hoped each will contribute something to it.

Three meetings were held in 1933, viz.:-

January 7th.-Mr. Jim Vincent gave a most it lantern lecture on the Birds of Hickling.

April 24th.-An excursion to Horsey Mere by kind invitation of Major Anthony Buxton who personally conducted members round and showed them many interesting birds.

September 8th.-An excursion to Salthouse and Cley, where R. M. Garnett very kindly took the members round.

The Hon. Sec. will welcome suggestions as to future excursions from senior members or their friends who would be invite the members of this Branch to visit any suitable place; also offers from any who would be willing to give a talk on a suitable subject during the Christmas holidays. A copy of the Annual Report and statement of accounts is sent to each member.

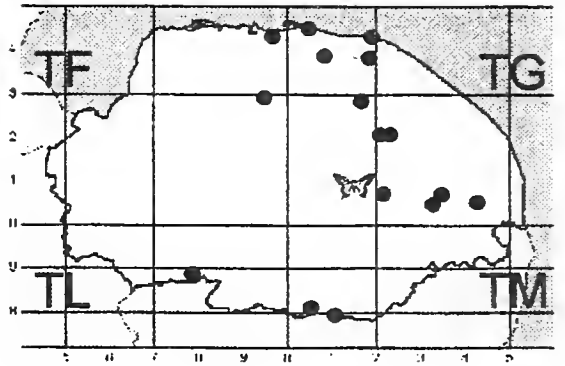
JUDITH M. FERRIER, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U., (HON.SEC.)



# EXCURSION

## Reports

● 2008-09 Field Meeting location  
Easton College  
Indoor meetings



## Spring Exhibition

The Society put up a stand at 'Spring Fling' on 27<sup>th</sup> March at the Royal Norfolk Showground. This event's aim was for children aged 4 - 14 years to learn more about food, farming and the countryside.

It was very cold but the eager young faces kept us going. Dissecting owl pellets proved most popular and Robert Maidstone was able to field a wide range of questions on our displays. Thanks are due to Diane, Janet and Robert for organising materials.

(Our next exhibition is at 'Wild About the Wensum,' 10 to 5 on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2008 at Pensthorpe Nature Reserve.)

*Dilys Jones*  
(Membership Committee)

# RESEARCH

## **Round-up**

### ***A chance to contribute***

*A meeting at the NT Moorgate marshes on July 23<sup>rd</sup> is a chance for members to become more involved with the Research side of the Society. You do not have to be an expert naturalist - an 'extra pair of eyes' is most useful when on a visit to a new area. Meet at the Blickling Lake NT car park, off the Ingworth-Ittringham minor road at 11.00 am. (TG 179296)*





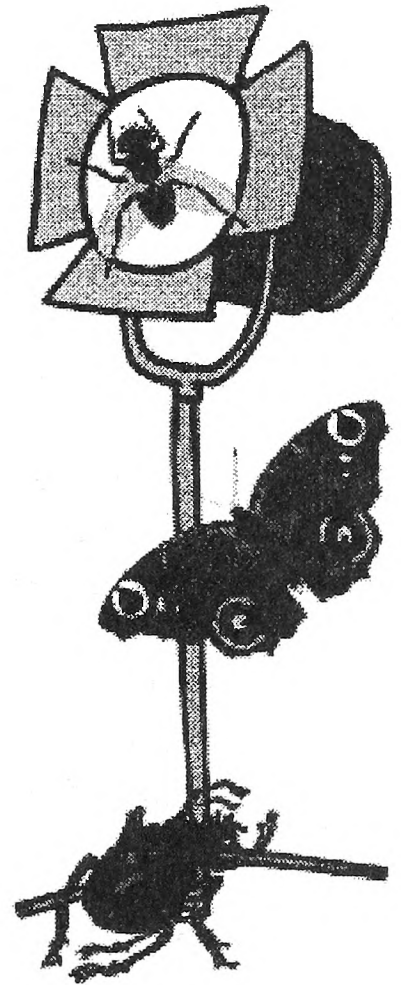
# Survey Spotlight

## PTES Molewatch - making a data point out of a molehill

Those of you with good memories, or with a questionable taste in pop music, might remember the Southlanders' 1950s hit '*I am a Mole and I Live in a Hole*'. If you don't, I strongly recommend that you never try to remedy this situation. If you do, you'll have doubtless noticed that the songwriter was no ecologist – any small child know that Moles live in holes, but the important questions are: where are they, how many of them are there and at what time of year do they make them?

To address this lyrical omission, the People's Trust for Endangered Species have started the on-line Molewatch survey ([www.molewatch.org.uk](http://www.molewatch.org.uk)). We really know very little about the UK Mole (*Talpa europaea*) population, perhaps unsurprisingly as individuals are so seldom seen. The perception of many people, particularly those who prefer their lawns to resemble billiard tables rather than mountain ranges, is that the species is as common as it ever was, if not more so. However, there has been some concern amongst conservationists about the impact of the introduced New Zealand Flatworm (*Arthurdendyus triangulatus*), first recorded here in the 1960s, on earthworm populations. Changing agricultural practices might also influence soil invertebrate densities and therefore the amount of food available to Moles.

While only a few of us might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a live Mole during one of their occasional forays above ground, it's difficult to imagine anyone in the country who hasn't set eyes on a molehill at some point in their life. Yet how many people think to send the record in to their county recorder? The last Norfolk Mammal report contained fewer than 190 reports, less than half as many as for Chinese Water Deer. Molewatch provides a quick and easy way to log your sightings on-line, and by doing so you'll be contributing to a national database that will enable conservationists to produce a map of the species' current distribution. To date, over 162,000 records have been logged,



impressive total, but a glance at the on-line map, available to all who take part in the survey, shows a complete absence of records to the west of a line running from Sheringham to Thetford. We must be able to do better than this!

To register for the survey, simply visit the Molewatch website, click on the 'This is my first visit' button and fill in your name and email address. Once you've done this, you'll be asked for a few brief details about the location and type of site on which you're recording, the number of molehills that you've observed (or their absence if you haven't seen any) and whether they have been freshly dug or not. You can enter information for as many sites as possible and the organisers ask that you try and enter one count for each month throughout the year. So go on - help to fill in those gaps on the map today!

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### **Diary Dates:**

#### **Saturday 7 June 2008 *National Moth Night and Day 2008.***

Organised by Butterfly Conservation and Atropos. Target species are *Anania funebris*, Bordered Gothic and Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth, but as ever you can set your own targets or just get out and record moths. If you do organise a public event, you can promote it for free via [www.nationalmothnight.info](http://www.nationalmothnight.info). This is the 10<sup>th</sup> National Moth Night event, so make sure you are part of it this year.

#### **Monday 23 June – Sunday 29 June 2008 *National Insect Week.***

This Royal Entomological Society event is back and aims to give people of all ages the opportunity to learn more about the most fascinating creatures on our planet. For more information, please visit [www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk](http://www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk).

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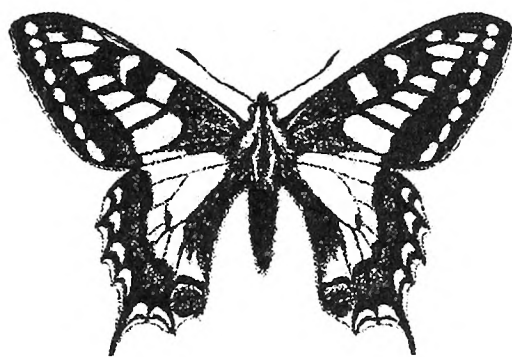
## **PHOTOGRAPHS FOR NATS' GALLERY**

Please send photographs to:

**Simon Harrap (1 Norwich Road, Edgefield, Norfolk, NR24 2RP;  
e-mail: [harrap@onetel.net](mailto:harrap@onetel.net)).**

Prints and slides are welcome and will be returned when finished with. Digital images can be e-mailed or sent on CD. If possible, the original images straight from the camera are preferred. Otherwise, JPEGs, saved at the highest quality setting, are fine; please do not add any sharpening to your pictures. CDs (and CD cases) will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope with the correct postage. The Society is also looking for pictures for its website, and by submitting photographs to Nats' Gallery you are agreeing to their use on the website. Of course, in all instances, copyright remains with the photographer.





The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be August 2008. Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by **July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008** to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD Email: [francis.f@virgin.net](mailto:francis.f@virgin.net)

Please send all photographic material to:  
Simon Harrap, 1 Norwich Road, Edgefield,  
Melton Constable, Norfolk, NR22 2RP Email: [harrap@onetel.net](mailto:harrap@onetel.net)

## Membership subscriptions

The N&NNS membership year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March. During this time members will receive four copies of the quarterly *Natterjack* newsletter, and annual copies of the Transactions of the Society, and the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report.

**Membership renewals** are due on *1<sup>st</sup> April each year* and should be sent to the treasurer:

- David Richmond, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

**New memberships** should be sent to:

- David Paull, 8 Lindford Drive, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6LT.

**Current rates are £12 for individual and family memberships** (£15 for groups, £18.50 overseas).

*Cheques payable to: Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.*

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