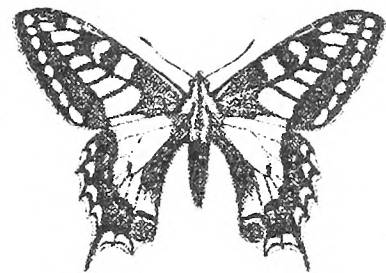


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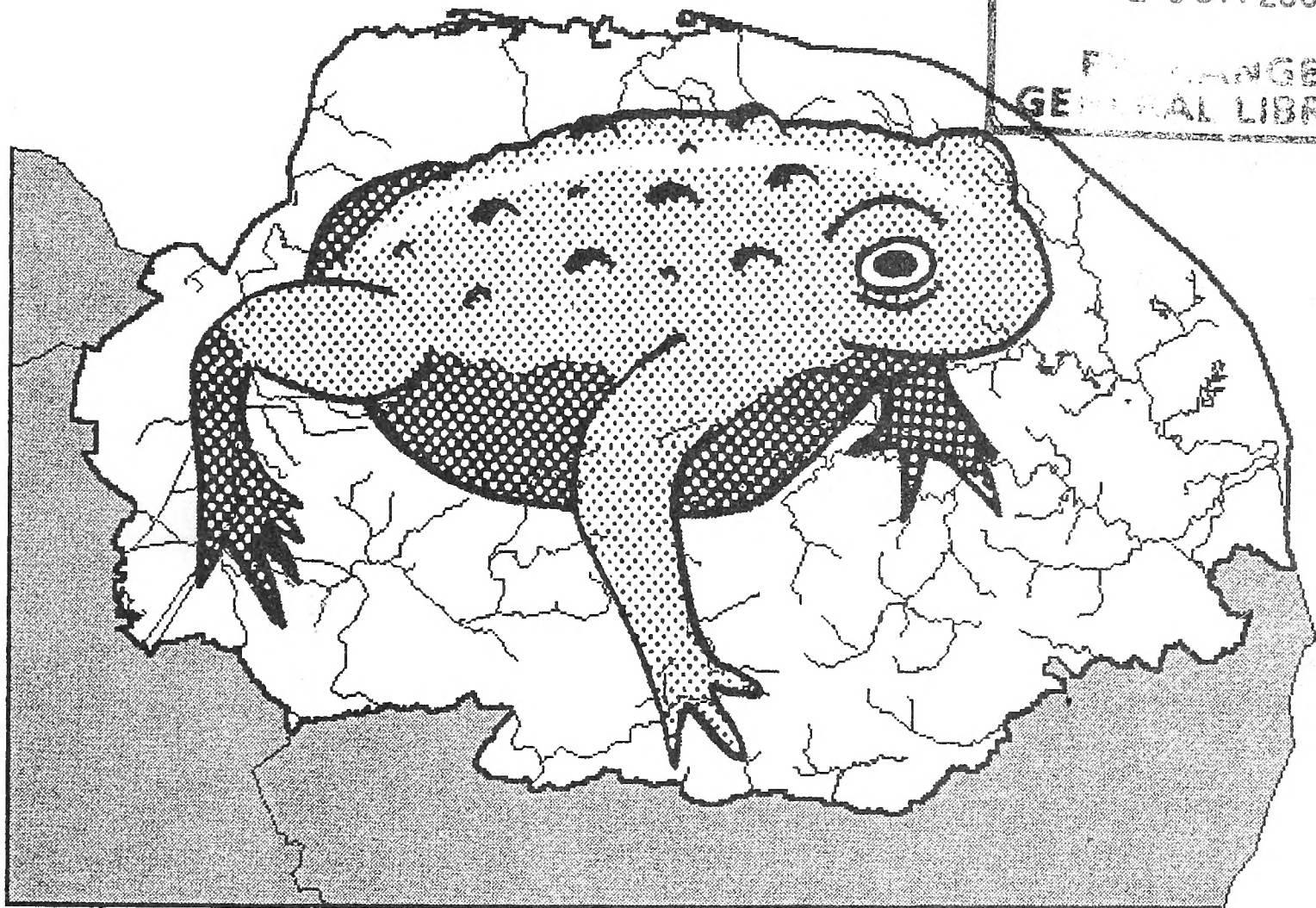
Natterjack

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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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 issue contains information on surveys and requests for our lesser known creatures, earthworms, woodlice, ants and snails. So if you fancy getting down to ground level and trying to help record these invertebrates please turn to pages 13 and 14.

The White-tailed Eagle controversy continues and there is a new gall for the County. My thanks to all contributors and please continue to send in your notes and observations.

Free Lunch Find

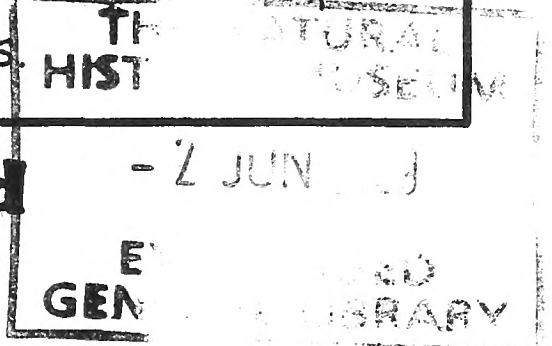
Robert Maidstone

I was in a quandary, lying in bed as the golden glow of the street lights gave way to the silver daylight. I didn't feel like getting up - I didn't feel like doing anything! It had been my birthday on Friday and I'd had a wee celebration in the pub on Friday night - well, it started on Friday night! Yesterday my daughter had invited me over for tea to celebrate her partner's birthday and we had a wee celebration, then I got volunteered to run my other daughter home afterwards. At her home we were greeted by her partner and a couple of friends so after the normal social intercourse there was another wee celebration before I was able to head home thankful that the golden glow from the street light was still with me.

As I was driving I had restricted my alcohol consumption but I was shattered - late nights I am not used to! Today I had been invited out for lunch and afternoon tea by one of my employers. Normally I'm one for any free lunch but this one was at a posh hotel at the other end of the county.

Eventually I managed to find the enthusiasm to go and, slightly late, I set off. On the way there I planned to slip into the car for a short doze between lunch and tea, so when I found the car park I looked for a quite corner to park the car. I rushed in to the hotel a few minutes before my employer and their party were ushered into the dining room.

The lunch went well, partly because in addition to my employer I also knew one or two of the other guest so was able to spend some time catching up on each other lives. After lunch I suddenly I felt immensely tired and excused myself saying I intended to take a short walk for some fresh air.

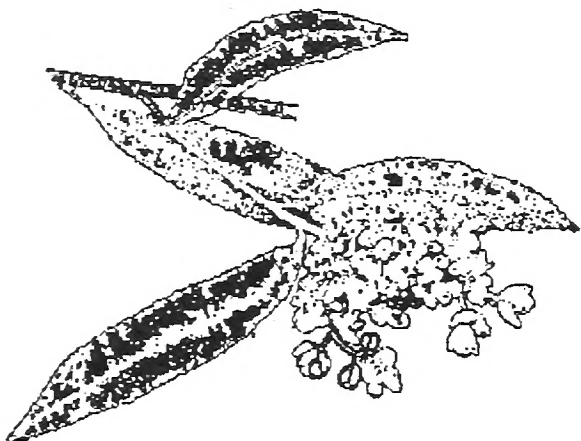


Outside it was certainly fresh, a brisk sea breeze lifted my jacket and ruffled my hair as I headed for the car. Then the sight of something swaying in the wind on a nearby bush caught my eye. A bunch of slightly browned flower buds was waving at me from the top of a Bay bush beside the wall. Thoughts of rest vanished as I quickly nipped back into the hotel to asked the slightly bemused receptionist if I might have a piece off their bay tree.

Since 2006 there had been reports of a new species of mite gall being found on Bay bushes in the London area in the magazine 'Cecidology'. Since I knew of several Bay bushes in the gardens where I worked I had kept an eye out but had seen nothing. This find today was certainly different and in some respects matched the photographs in the magazine.

With great enthusiasm I broke a piece off the tree and returned indoors. I knew that a friend of my employer had a digital camera with them and I was eager to have my find recorded for posterity. A picture or two was duly taken. I kept the piece of bay in my pocket for the rest of the afternoon

On the way home I decided to take a short diversion and visit the County's senior gall expert. His confirmation that my find appeared to be the gall caused by *Cecidophyopsis malpighianus* and was the first record for Norfolk.



Mistaken Identity

Francis Farrow



If it wasn't for the invitation to speak at the NNNS AGM last March I may never have discovered a case of mistaken identity. Thanks to Tony Irwin, who after the talk mentioned that one of my hoverfly slides might not have the correct name, I re-examined the image.

Looking again at the picture, which I had taken in 2006, I decided that I had indeed misidentified the species. What I had thought was the Greater Bulb-fly *Merodon equestris* turned out to be the much more interesting *Criorhina berberina*. This hoverfly is generally found in mature deciduous woodland where its larvae live in rotting wood. It is commonest in southern and central England although its range reaches Scotland. In Norfolk it is again found generally in the central and southern areas.

I sent a copy of the picture to Tony who confirmed the identification. At the same time I found on the computer an even earlier image taken in 2005, which on further investigation turned out to be *M. equestris*. This means that I still have the original and a new record for Beeston Common. These records have since been sent to Roger Morris of the National Hoverfly Recording Scheme at www.hoverfly.org.uk

Interesting wildlife can turn up anywhere

Paul Woolnough

I regularly go out with a conservation group on a Sunday using a BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) minibus. On 29 March 2009, I found a *Diaea dorsata* crab type spider on a seat inside the vehicle. The spider has a green head and long green legs and a chocolate coloured body with a cream / pale yellow border.



How the spider got there no one will ever know. Probably from a site near Norwich.

For a colour photograph see the following website:

<http://insectmacros.com>

Diaea dorsata



Day Hunting Owls

Tony Howes



For the last few weeks I have been spending time on the marshes close to St Benets Abbey, the main attraction being the Barn Owls that hunt over these lonely, bleak flatlands, rough grass meadows dissected by a network of dykes. In the summer months cattle are brought here to graze, but now, in the depths of winter, only the wildlife is evident.

The Barn Owls can be seen hunting all through the day, even in bright sunshine, making them lovely subjects for photography. If I stood very still next to a gatepost they would often approach closely, showing off their beautiful plumage and silent flight as they passed by.

I also saw short-eared owls, at this site, which are an uncommon winter visitor to Norfolk. With their big yellow eyes, beautiful markings, and long wings they are very impressive birds.

Predation on Barn Owls

Tony Howes



While attempting to photograph Barn Owls recently, I have come across behaviour that I have rarely seen before. It shows how creatures can adapt and make use of any opportunity that comes their way, and reap benefit from it.

The tale starts with Barn Owls hunting through the daylight hours, why they are doing this is unknown to me, as they are normally nocturnal in their wanderings. Lack of voles does not seem to be the problem, as their runs and holes can be seen all over the marshes, so it looks as if the owls are doing ok prey wise.

But other avian predators seem to be taking advantage of the owls success, both Kestrels and Crows have been seen attacking and trying to steal from them when a catch is made. Watching an owl that has made a kill it is evident that they are aware of the danger, looking round all the time, and often flying with the prey into thicker cover.

This of course would not be happening if they were to hunt only at night, normally Barn Owls would hunt during the day only during the breeding season, when there are other beaks to fill, -- just another of Mother Nature's mysteries.



Rock Pipits



Hans Watson

There are some birdwatchers that consider pipits to be rather uninteresting, and whilst I would have to acknowledge that pipits lack the charisma of their more flamboyant near relatives, the wagtails, I feel that a closer look at pipits can reveal much of interest. In fact, failing to look closely at pipits can sometimes result in missing some of the rarer migrant pipits that visit this country.

Although I am fond of all of the three species of pipit that breed in Britain, I have a special fondness for the Rock Pipit, which I have always found to be the most confiding of the three species. Sometimes even coming for crumbs. The Rock Pipit is the only one of the three species that does not breed in Norfolk, although I have often wondered why this is, as I have often found breeding pairs in areas that are rather similar to parts of the North Norfolk coast. It does however, visit Norfolk in the winter months, and can often be seen feeding on quaysides at a number of coastal villages and towns.

In the spring of last year I spent several very pleasant hours watching and photographing nesting Rock Pipits in Scotland, in a type of habitat that many textbooks do not mention, a loch shore at least 25 miles from the open sea. Most textbooks describe the Rock Pipit as a coastal bird, and this word (coastal) can be misleading. Certainly it is not often far from salt water, but as the large tidal sea lochs extend deep inland in Scotland, so as a result, Rock Pipits can be found nesting in places, such as Fort William, many miles from what we would normally regard as the coast. Here they can be regularly seen along the loch shore, and even running about with Pied Wagtails on traffic islands and the well manicured lawns of The Square.

Two separate days to remember for different reasons.

Brian Macfarlane



I was sitting in the fen hide at Strumpshaw Fen at the beginning of February enjoying a fine sunny day. Two other people were also in the hide. After a few minutes the guy on my right said there is a Penduline Tit in the reeds. The difficulty was seeing it, and trying to focus on it among the swaying reeds. I persevered for half an hour without much success, because the bird never came close to the edge of the reed bed to get a clear view for a sharp picture. All was peaceful!



At this point two men entered the hide, and were immediately informed of the Penduline Tit. Without looking for the bird, one of them got on his Mobile phone to tell somebody. Within half an hour we were besieged by what I can only describe as a swarm of locusts. People were arriving by the shed full, and most of them out of breathe! The hide was bulging, and photography became impossible.

I was knocked, and people were trying to get sat on the bench where no gap existed. It was time to leave before I received an injury. The behaviour was unbelievable. They weren't interested in the bird to look at, only in so far as to tick a box to claim they had seen it. It appears to be a competition to see how many different species can be seen in one day. As I walked back to the car there must have been at least another 20 people who passed me on the way to the hide. I have only been back once in the last 6 weeks, and I was told it was still bedlam in the fen hide. I shall not return until the bird has flown. The bird has not been seen since the beginning of March.

Now I spend far more time down at South Walsham Fen, watching Barn Owls hunting in the water meadows. Up to eight birds have been seen in the air at once. How much more peaceful to spend time enjoying nature at it's best. I was also lucky enough to see a Short-eared Owl on one very dark dull day. (The sun can't shine all the time!)

Another unusual bird (for me) I saw was a female Hen Harrier swooping low over the water meadows. Also several Chinese Water Deer running around.



This last week (third in March) has seen a slowing down of sightings of the Barn Owls. Could be the females are sitting on eggs now. So I was delighted when I last went, and sat in my usual place near the public footpath looking into the sun. a Barn Owl suddenly approached flying straight at me oblivious that I was sitting in his flight path. He filled the frame before alighting on the ground 20 feet in front of me. He stayed just long enough to get a shot of him before the click of the camera scared him off. The closest I have been to an owl on the ground. A magic moment that will live with me for a long time.



White-tailed Eagle

Mark Cocker and Richard Mabey

I hope that we may be permitted to offer a contrary opinion to that contained in two letters published in the last Natterjack, objecting to proposals by Natural England to reintroduce White-tailed Eagles to East Anglia.

We believe that this wholly laudable and inspirational project should enjoy the support of the entire wildlife community in East Anglia. It restores a keystone predator to our coastline, which is one of the wildest and most natural in Europe. It brings within range of millions of people the opportunity to enjoy a bird that is beyond debate among the most magnificent in Europe. The project crucially re-states the importance of wildlife in a modern densely populated country such as ours.

The reintroduction of red kites across southern England suffered at its origins from similar adverse criticism. Yet who would now continue to oppose this hugely successful project. It has restored one of our most charismatic resident birds back to its original heartland in a way that is celebrated and cherished by millions.

One of the arguments made by those opposing the eagle plan is that, unlike the Red Kite, there is no documentary proof of this species breeding in the region. The assumption is that written archival evidence is the only source capable of validating what was or was not a native species. This ignores the fact that detailed written material on any natural historical subject is a very shallow and patchy soil indeed - a matter of 150-200 years.

There is however strong environmental proof in Germany, Holland and Poland that white-tailed eagles are extremely well adapted to lowland coastal environments adjacent to the North and Baltic Seas. Norfolk and East Anglia fall within that ecological zone. There is moreover archaeological proof for the presence of White-tailed Eagles in our region. There is further fossil and place-name evidence which confirms the persistent, widespread occurrence of White-tailed Eagles across the whole of southern lowland England, concentrated in large river-valley systems.

Given the visionary scope of the White-tailed Eagle proposals some initial doubts are perhaps inevitable. Yet we would argue that is precisely the challenge inherent in these plans which should make its appeal to naturalists of all colours. True, it is daring and bold, but all the more reason to applaud Natural England for championing the cause of our wildest predators. True,



resident eagles will involve some precaution and adjustment by particular interest groups - gameshooters, pig breeders, etc. For far too long the British countryside and wildlife have suffered under a mindset that only what is absolutely convenient can be tolerated.

In our opinion one of the most depressing aspects of the White-tailed Eagle story to date has been the lack of unity among naturalists. There are many specialist lobbies who strongly oppose parts of nature conservation in general, and birds of prey in particular. In this instance, however, they need hardly have raised their voices, given the succession of high-profile naturalists intent on doing their job for them. Shame on us, perhaps for not supporting a cause which should be dear to us all - championing the wild in wildlife.

Eagles - A right to our opinion

Rob Lucking

The last edition of The Norfolk Natterjack (Feb 2009) contained two letters concerning the proposed re-introduction of White-tailed Eagles. Suffice to say, this proposal has generated much debate and there are both strong supporters and opponents to the project.

I would however like to respond to Ian Keymer's letter, in particular the line in the second paragraph: *'I can only assume that the idea has come from people with urban backgrounds and little personal knowledge of the countryside'*.

Following this line of logic, it seems that Mr Keymer holds the view that 'people with urban backgrounds' are not entitled to any opinions about or aspirations for our countryside. I wonder how fellow members of NNNS who happen to live in urban areas feel about that?

In the United Kingdom, 90% of the population live in urban centres covering around 10% of our land area. 'The countryside' comprises the remaining *ca.* 90% of the UK's land area, 70% of which is owned by just 1% of the population. Here in Norfolk, just over 13% of the county is owned by ten individuals. This doesn't include the land owned by charitable organisations or institutions. In short, ownership of the 'countryside' is disproportionately skewed towards a tiny segment of the population.

Nationally, landowners receive £1.6 billion a year in terms of subsidies via the Single Farm Payment. A further £3.9 billion is available to farmers between



NATS' GALLERY: May 2009



IDENTITY PARADE *Criorhina berberina* (left) and Greater Bulb-fly *Merodon equestris* show the value of a 'specimen'. See article. Photos: Francis Farrow.



SPECKLED WOOD Edgefield, April 2009. After the disastrous summer of 2008, the dry and often warm weather in April this year produced a good show of spring butterflies, but what will the summer bring? Photo: Simon Harrap / norfolknature.co.uk.



BARN and SHORT-EARED OWLS hunting by day near St Benets Abbey, Horning. A risky strategy, as it offer opportunities for others to benefit – Carrion Crow and Kestrel. See articles.

Photos: Tony Howes.





HEN HARRIER and BARN OWL at South Walsham Fen – solace for a frustrated Brian Macfarlane driven from his Strumpshaw stamping grounds by a Penduline Tit! See article.

Photos: Brian Macfarlane.



PARTIAL ALBINO COAL TIT at Blakeney. See article. *Photos: Chris Wheeler.*

ROCK PIPIT

Thus charismatic but subtly-marked bird is a winter visitor to Norfolk, preferring to breed along the 'harder' coasts of northern and western Britain. See article. *Photos: Hans Watson.*



2006 and 2013 via the Rural Development Plan for agri-environment and other land management schemes. This money comes from domestic taxation as well as contributions from the EU.

Assuming income tax payment is equally weighted between the urban and rural population, our poor townies make a disproportionately large contribution to the total amount of funding available to the small segment of the population fortunate enough to own land. I therefore suggest that on financial grounds alone, our urban population is rightfully entitled to an opinion on how the English countryside is managed and if 90% would like to see White-tailed Eagles restored as a breeding species, who are us rural types to deny them?

We also know that over the past decade, there has been a downward trend in the number of visits to the countryside and that the disconnect between consumer and producer has widening alarmingly. Attitudes such as Mr Keymer's will only reinforce this whereas surely we should be fostering a greater appreciation of the countryside so that future generations will be as interested and committed to protecting it as we are.

An unusual Coal Tit at Blakeney

Chris Wheeler



I received an e-mail from a resident in Blakeney in January to say that she thought that she might have an Azure Tit coming to the feeders in her garden. I replied that it was rather unlikely and that if she did it would be a new bird for Britain, but from her description I did wonder whether it might be a Long-tailed Tit of the northern and eastern race which does occasionally turn up in the winter. I have seen them in Poland and Hungary and they are rather smart birds with a completely white head so I thought it was worth checking out. Just after I arrived the bird duly appeared and I was surprised by the jumble of feathers that flew on to the feeder. It took me a few minutes to decide what it actually was but several features indicated that it was in fact a Coal Tit. Albinism in birds is not that unusual but I have never seen it in a member of the tit family before; however what was strange about this bird was the state of the plumage which could be best described as untidy. Some of the feathers appeared longer than they should have been and some were sticking out like little tufts, especially noticeable on the head. None of this however seemed to hinder the bird and it was active and behaved like any other Coal Tit. Unfortunately I don't know what eventually happened to the bird.



TRANSACTIONS

After fifteen years at the helm, Peter Lambley has decided to step down as Editor of the Society's Transactions and I have agreed to take on the job. First published in 1869, and annually since, this journal has recorded amateur and professional investigations of Norfolk's natural history. Since the publication is deposited in public and academic libraries, this information becomes available to future generations of scientists and naturalists.

I will endeavour to maintain the publication's scientific reputation and its interest to Norfolk's naturalists that Peter has nurtured over his 15 years editorship. I would, however, like to further establish Transactions as a journal of record so that full reports of all species new to Norfolk, and other observations of interest, find their way on to its pages and to this end hope to expand the newly-established Wildlife Reports. But the quality of any publication depends on its contributors and I will always be happy to receive papers and notes for publication. It is very helpful to have these presented using the general conventions and style which can be gathered from a recent copy of Transactions. Please let me know if you would like a copy of the revised 'Instructions to Authors'. Ideally manuscripts should be submitted as Word documents with separate tables and illustrations. The latter should be of the highest quality available. However, inability to meet these requirements should not deter any potential author from submitting and I would be particularly interested to hear from anyone who has suitable material but feels unable to present it or write it in finished form.

It is unfortunate that publication of Transactions has been delayed in recent years. I intend to restore the date of publication to mid-summer but that will not be possible in a single step. The very last date for submission of material for the 2009 part will be **June 30th** but earlier submission will ensure that there is time for proper dialogue between authors and editors.

Simon Harrap
1 Norwich Rd., Edgefield, Melton Constable, Norfolk NR24 2RP
harrap@onetel.net

Happy Birthday NNNS

The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society was 140 years old on April 27th, having been formed in 1869. The following page presents an extract from the Address given by the first President, Rev. Joseph Crompton, whose words in the last paragraph are still appropriate for 21st Century members.



140 Years Ago from the N&NS Transactions

*Extract from the Address delivered by the President, the Rev. Joseph Crompton, to the members of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, at their first meeting, on April 27th, 1869.
(Transactions, Volume I, page 13).*

'During nearly thirty years that I have lived in Norwich, it has been satisfactory to see that there is a decided step being made in the love of all departments of knowledge and science. I can remember when there were one or two little clubs just dying out—little private societies, at which papers were read, and which did a deal of good. I remember myself being a member of such a society. It had three members when I joined it, and we soon finished with being a nice little gossiping club. Mr. Fitch was one of the members, and at his house the last meeting was held.

Some of us tried to stir up the Norwich people, and one after another of these societies arose and died away, each rotting and adding something to the soil. It may be the fate of this society to die- also, and if so, we shall leave a nice little *debris* for other people's benefit afterwards. Here we are, then, trying to form what seems to be a wider and larger, and, I fancy, more promising society than any that has arisen in Norwich. Let us look at the scope of this society, and what it is to do if it comes to maturity, and does its work in life. You have first to take a wide sweep over all nature's works, except the field of geology. We have a society of geologists, and let us leave them to their special department only we ought to work in alliance and in union with them, for all parts of knowledge, all parts of nature, are allied to each other. There is no such thing as a scientific man worthy of the name who confines his attention to one subject, however important, without looking at the relation which science shows it has to the things around it.

Our variety of pursuits will be our union; we have no narrowness, no separation in this room. Some of us may know a great deal upon one topic, some nothing, and some little; and we shall want patience and perseverance – patience to learn to understand how our friend's favorite topics bear upon our own special pursuits. As to that particular sin which still exists among scientific men as elsewhere – jealousy between one branch and another, we must consider that banished and never enter here.'

N&NNS Questionnaire.

Thanks very much to all of you who have filled in and returned your N&NNS questionnaire. We've had about 80 responses so far, which is encouraging, but it would be great to hear from the other 500 of you! Please do take the time to fill it in if you possibly can - even if you never go to meetings, submit any records or read our publications, it's useful to know this, and to know why. If you do, now's your chance to tell us how we can improve on the service we're providing you. Please send any completed questionnaires to:

Dave Leech, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU
dave.leech@bto.org



County Moth Recorders Split

Exciting news.. I am very happy to have been offered the job of Norfolk County Macro Moth Recorder.

Dave Hipperson and myself are splitting the task between Micros and Macros.

We have just installed an updated Recorder 6 system that should enable us to compile a new master database.

The first results of this are now on the Norfolk moths web site, with (most) county records from 1980 - 2009 now mapped. ;-)

So where do you send your Norfolk records?

It doesn't really matter! Duplicates are not a problem, we would rather have 10 records of same species than none!

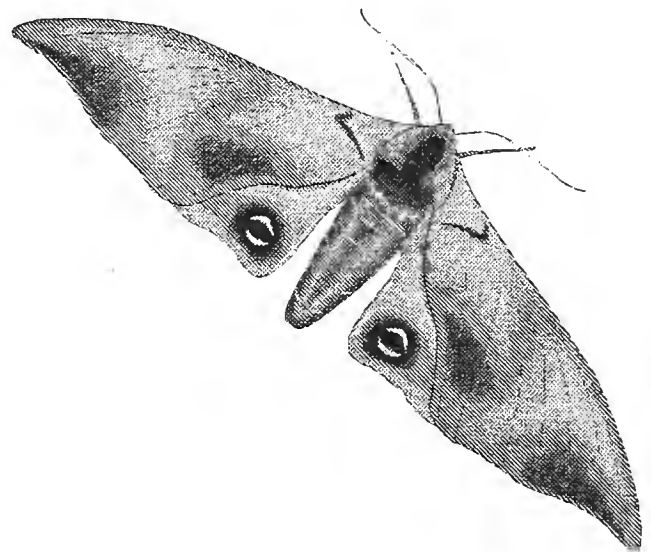
As a general guide....

Dave Hipperson
(Norfolk County Micro Moth Recorder)

Micro Records
Mixed Records
Record Cards
Paper Records

Jim Wheeler
(Norfolk County Macro Moth Recorder)

Macro Records
Mixed Records
MapMate
Spreadsheets



Entering records via the website "Recorder" system has proved very popular over the last year and is a good way to enter data into the system.

So... Look out if you haven't sent in your records, a new sheriff in town! ;-)

Jim Wheeler
Norfolk County Macro Moth Recorder

Norfolk Moths
<http://norfolkmoths.co.uk>



RECORDING ANTS IN NORFOLK

As I have now taken on the role of County Recorder for Ants and as Norfolk is very much under-recorded, I would appreciate your help. Should you see any ant activity when you are out and about, please would you send me an e-mail:

wells_doreen@hotmail.com

giving a grid reference, or approximate location, so that I can follow up the sighting and identify the species. Common or rare species, in town or countryside, all need recording if we are to put Norfolk on the map!

Doreen Wells

Woodlice on the Web

David Richmond

How about woodlice? - That was Stephen Livermore's suggestion for the next species guide on the Society website. It's 25 years since Tony Irwin and Dick Jones did their Transactions article on the Woodlice of Norfolk, and with the British Myriapod and Isopod Group about to publish a national atlas, now seems an ideal opportunity to raise the profile of this group in Norfolk. By the time you read this, we hope to have a preliminary guide up and running on the web with photos of the most common species and 10k distribution maps for all of the 25 species to be found in Norfolk.

What we'd like you to do is go out and look for woodlice in your local patch (or anywhere else for that matter) so that we can upgrade the maps to tetrad level. Keep an eye on the website, because when Dick's photos come back from supporting the BMIG project we hope to be able to increase the number of photos in our guide. Why not use your digital camera to help you identify your local species? Look under rotting logs in damp ground and use macro settings to photograph what you find, and compare your photos with those on the web to confirm your identifications.

I've heard a rumour that Dick may be retiring as county recorder, so please check out the last page of the website presentation for the latest details of how to submit your records.



Survey Spotlight

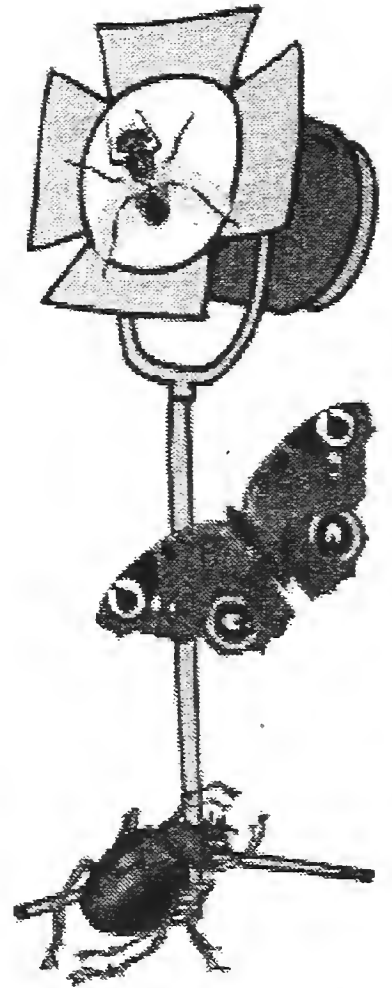
Soft Spots

This summer I would like to ease all you naturalists a little out of your comfort zones. Forget fur, feathers and leaves; think invertebrates. And not even the invertebrates everyone loves (butterflies and dragonflies) but worms and snails. Two serious examples of 'citizen science' await your help.

The first is a nationwide project to research the distribution and habitats of earthworms. You may have assumed that there is only one kind of earthworm, but the blessing of biodiversity brings 26 to our islands. [We don't know how many there are in Norfolk because earthworms are one the few groups for which there is no County Recorder – is there a volunteer?] Only half of these are widespread (it is thought) and included in the study. They are all long, thin and pinkish but they can be distinguished – participants will receive a field guide (as well as the mustard necessary to irritate them from their comfort zones).

This Soil and Earthworm survey is a lottery funded part of OPAL (Open Air Laboratories) and has been developed by scientists from Imperial College, London; Natural History Museum; Environment Agency; British Geological Survey; Field Studies Council and the University of Central Lancashire. All the details you need are on www.opalexplorenature.org although thanks to Tony Irwin further details are also printed below.

If you go looking for banded snails you might be excused for thinking that there are many species of them too; but there are only two, *Cepaea nemoralis* (Brown-lipped Snail) and *C. hortensis* (White-lipped Snail). The large number of shell colours and patterns are variations (or morphs) like eye-colour in humans. What, if any, benefit such polymorphism brings to these species has been much debated over the years: does it provide camouflage in different habitats; do darker forms absorb heat more effectively; does diversity itself prevent song thrushes developing an effective search image? Some light may be shed on this if it can be shown whether or not the frequency of occurrence of different



pattens has changed during the many years over which this phenomenon has been studied. So log on to www.evolutionmegalab.org and search your patch. This project is organised by the Open University and is excellently supported with information.

If you do take part in either of these surveys, or any other national surveys, please send Dave Leech a copy of your results (dave.leech@bto.org) and he will ensure that they are passed on to the appropriate County Recorder or the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service. You might also like to submit a note to Natterjack!

Tony Leech

Do you want to become an expert on earthworms?

The Natural History Museum is looking to recruit and train volunteers to help sample and identify British earthworms.

Background

In March 2009 OPAL (Open Air Laboratories – a consortium in which the Natural History Museum is a lead partner) will launch the National Survey of Soils and Earthworms (for details see www.opalexplorenature.org). The national survey invites the general public to identify the earthworms in their local area using a specially developed key to the 12 most common species of British earthworms. It is likely that the majority of earthworm records generated by the survey will be from urban and suburban habitats across lowland England. Therefore, the rarer species will be absent from the results, and many natural and semi-natural habitats will be severely under-recorded. As a consequence, it will be difficult to analyse or interpret the distribution of the British earthworm fauna without addressing these gaps in our knowledge.

The project

The Natural History Museum, funded by Natural England, is going to investigate these rarer species and under-recorded habitats with the help of dedicated volunteers. The project aims to assess the distribution, habitat preferences, and conservation status of British earthworms. This work will compliment the findings of the OPAL national survey.



The volunteers

The Natural History Museum needs volunteers from across the country. The volunteers will be trained by museum experts in how to sample earthworms, and how to identify all species using Sims & Gerard's taxonomic key to British earthworms. The volunteers will then sample earthworms at a list of critical sites in their region. Museum experts will assist with some of the field work. Volunteers will send the data, plus any unidentified specimens, to the Natural History Museum. Travelling expenses and collecting equipment will be provided by the museum.

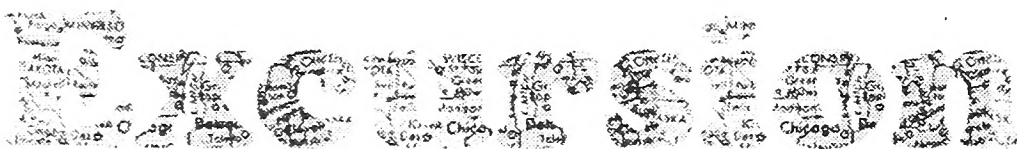
Requirements

Each volunteer must have:

1. about 6 to 10 days available during April, May and June 2009 to do the sampling
2. their own transport, and be willing to drive to remote areas in their region (volunteers should work in pairs)
3. if possible, their own microscope and light source.
4. an active interest in natural history and experience of invertebrate identification

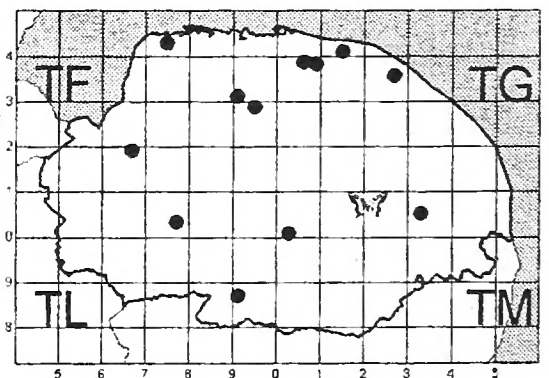
Contact

If interested, send your CV to: Dr David Jones, Soil Biodiversity Research Group, Department of Entomology, Natural History Museum, London, SW7 5BD. For further details, please contact David Jones on 020 7942 5706 or email: dtj@nhm.ac.uk



Reports

● 2009-10 Field Meeting location
St. Andrew's Hall
Eaton
Indoor meetings



Please note that the venue for indoor meetings starting later this year will be St. Andrew's Hall Eaton. Details with location map will be available to members in good time.





The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be August 2009. Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by **July 1st 2009** to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD Email: 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

Membership subscriptions

The N&NNS membership year runs from 1st April to 31st 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 *1st 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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