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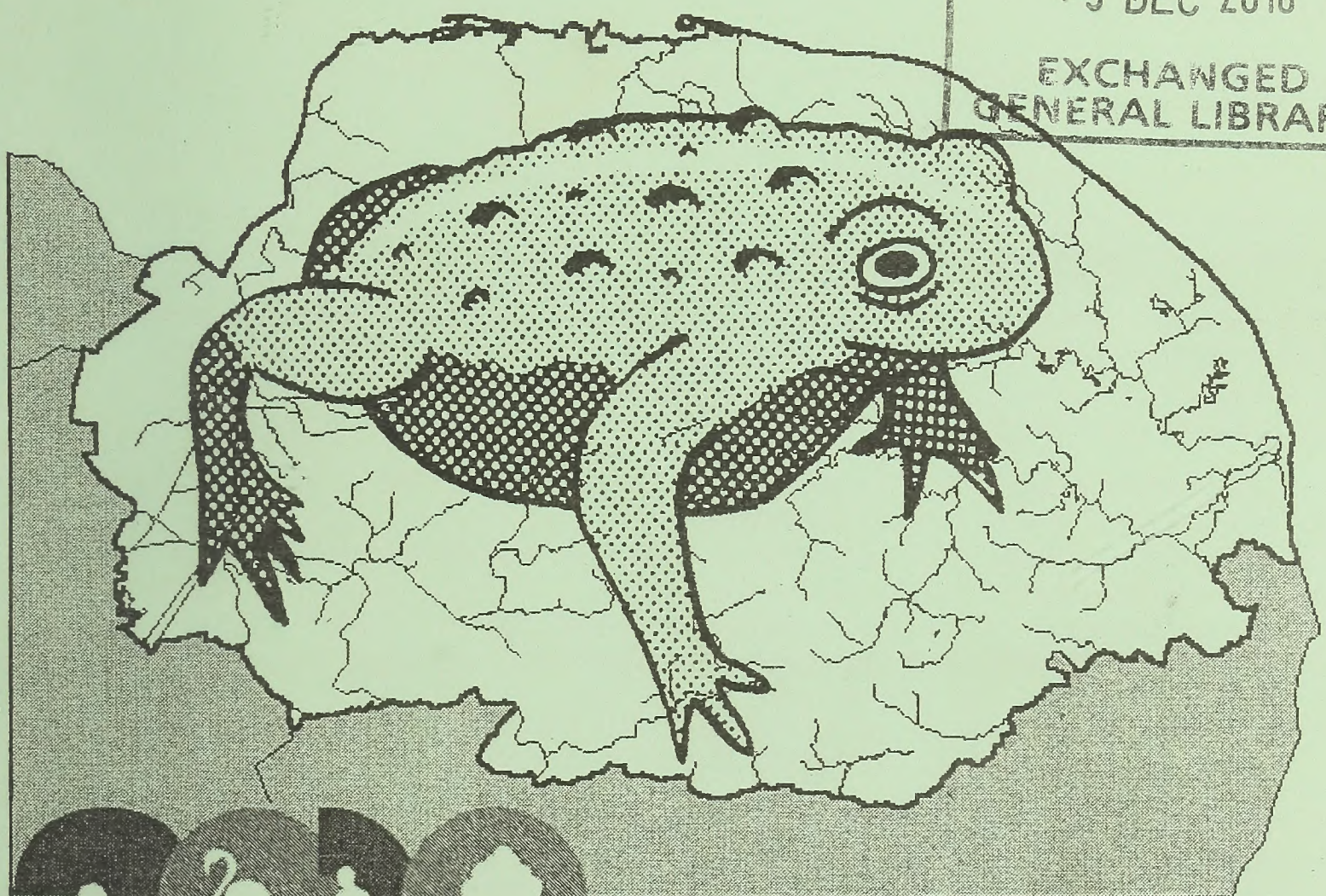
The Norfolk



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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Retiring 2013: A Brazil, Dr R Carpenter, G Coupland, S Paston, S Perkin, H Watson



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

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For NNNS Microscopy enquires:

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Toad-in-the-hole....

Normally as we approach the end of another year it is both a time to reflect on what has past and what will come. In a natural history sense this is shown by the number of records, photos and specimens noted and the prospect of visiting an area next season to locate the missing 'dot', however, more and more of us are 'now' naturalists-posting a picture or a record on a website almost instantly and getting 'feedback' from like-minded individuals. If this is 'you' check out the 'Norfolk Wildlife Forum' below. My thanks again to all contributors and apologies for the errors in the last edition! **FF**

Become a nattering naturalist.....

Photographed a fungus you can't identify? Curious to find out whether anyone else has been seeing Painted Ladies this week? Want to know the best spot to see Chinese Water Deer? Find the answer to all your questions on the Norfolk Wildlife Forum and keep up to date with the latest news from the county's natural history community.

The Norfolk Wildlife Forum allows subscribers to share their observations with other naturalists in the county via email. It's free, easy to use and provides the perfect opportunity to compare notes, to post photographs, to ask for help with identification and to catch up with news of the latest sightings and events in your region. It is also fully moderated, which means you will not receive any unwanted advertising or spam, just stimulating bits of news from your fellow members.

A huge range of topics are discussed – messages in the last month alone have featured snails, fungi, cetaceans, butterflies, moths, dragonflies, brambles and birds. The more people who contribute, the better the resource, so anyone who's interested in the county's wildlife should join the 225 naturalists currently subscribed. Whether you're an amateur seeking support, or an expert providing the benefit of your experience to those just starting out, your contribution would be much appreciated.

To join, simply send an email to norfolk-wildlife-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. As soon as you hear from the moderators, you will be able to start sending and receiving messages. If you have any questions, feel free to email dave.leech@bto.org.



Norfolk and Suffolk Bryological Group meetings 2010 – 2011.

Beginners are always very welcome, the only equipment needed is a handlens (x10 or x20) and some paper packets for collecting specimens.

Meetings begin at 10.30am and will only be cancelled if there is snow or hard frost.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Bryological Group is an informal interest group with no formal status or legal identity. All attendees at the events set out in the annual programme participate in those events entirely at their own risk and no responsibility for any injury loss or damage shall lie against the organisers of the events. The distribution of the programme of events is not intended and does not form any contract or any other legal relationship between the organisers and the participants.

REMAINING PROGRAMME

Saturday 11th December 2010, Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve, by permission of the Hawk and Owl Trust. Wet woodland. Meet on the car park by the Visitor Centre at TF 900 305. The reserve has been considerably enlarged since our previous visit.

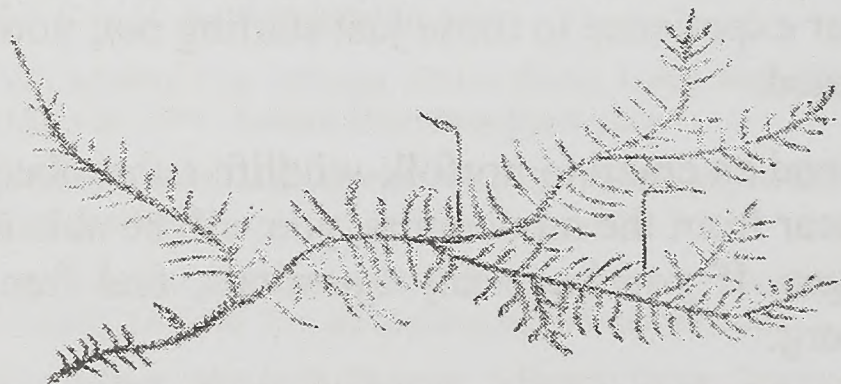
Saturday 8th January 2011, Horsford Rifle Range CWS by permission of the Smallburgh Rifle and Pistol Club and NWT. Dry dwarf-shrub heath and acidic grassland, part of the former Horsford Heath. Turn NE into lane imm W of ctgts at TG 187 175. Chain across entr not locked – unwind from post. Gate onto range will be unlocked, park further down track by Rifle Club bldgs. Access to rest of Horsford Woods from main car park at TG 184 175.

Saturday 22 January 2011, Thurlton Fen, managed by and with permission of the Gt Yth Wildfowlers' Asstn. Willow/alder carr with dykes & pools; mixed woodland; drier ground by entrance with imported sand over rubble of smallholding bldngs. Entrance & parking at TM 419 987 almost opp (just W) of Holly Farm Garage.

Sunday 6th February 2011, Little Wood, Edgefield SSSI, by permission of Mr.J. Calver. Sessile/Pedunculate Oak ancient wood previously coppiced. With Pine, Larch and Birch. Park on verges along N side of wood at abt TG 108 343

Saturday 19th February 2011, Coston Fen SSSI, by permission of the Gill family & Barnham Broom Fen by permission of the Barnham Broom Fen Trust. For Coston Fen park on verges by gate at TG 059 065. For Barnham Broom Fen turn W into track SP Fen Farm just S of Rush Green Farm. Go past first farm on R then turn R & follow boarded fence on L to park on rough track just past gateway to Fen Farm at TG 074 070, perhaps 4x4's go in first. Please do not obstruct access to Fen Farm. Parking by permission of Mr & Mrs G. Meredith, Fen Farm.

Sunday March 6th 2011, Holkham to Gunn Hill, part of the Holkham National Nature Reserve. Conifer woods and dunes. Meeting cancelled last year due to snow. Park in Holkham Village car park at TF 891 437. Either walk down to Lady Anne's drive or double-up and drive down, sharing car park charges, £5.00 per car.



Saturday 19th March 2011, High Ash Hill and Shakers Wood by permission of the Forestry Commission. Conifers with some broad-leaved woodland, marl pit, concrete bases of the 7th Armoured Division (The Desert Rats) station, January to May 1944 before leaving for the staging areas and the subsequent invasion of Normandy in June 1944. Car park behind Desert Rats' Memorial (wartime tank) at TL 812 966 then forest rides W & N to High Ash at TL 806 973. Other wetter, more mixed woodlands in the area accessible from TL 804 952 and TL 794 966.

Saturday 2nd April 2011, Marham Fen managed by NWT. "Fen/mire, calcareous and dry grassland vegetation communities and ponds, possibly relict river channels and/or periglacial pingos. The site is affected by the significant and strategically important water abstraction for the drinking water supply to Kings Lynn" – Bill Boyd, Warden. Parking for 3 or 4 cars in Hogg's Drove by entrance at TF 718 108 and 2 or 3 more beside the track a short distance N.

British Bryological Society Recorders

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New East Norfolk Bryophyte Record

Francis Farrow



While looking for Mudwort (a plant that first appeared in 2008 after a 106-year absence from Norfolk) in the dried out Dew Pond at Beeston Regis, near Sheringham, I spotted a small pale green, round liverwort growing on the damp mud.

I collected a sample (7th August 2010) and later searched through the references concluding that it was Cavernous Crystalwort, *Riccia cavernosa*. Not being familiar with the Genus I emailed photographs to Mary Ghullam (East Norfolk Bryophyte recorder) followed by a specimen in the post. Mary agreed that it was most likely the correct ID and three days later (10th August) Mary emailed back saying that she had also discovered the *Riccia* at Felbrigg!

The specimens were sent to the Bryophyte referee who said of the Beeston plant that it 'had nice ripe spores so is definitely *R. cavernosa* rather than *R. crystalina*'. Thus with the ID confirmed the liverwort has been accepted as a new East Norfolk record. A month later I could not find the liverwort but by then the pond had started to retain water again.



Autumn Wonders

Tony Howes



During September and October I enjoy searching out and photographing fungi, the range of shapes, sizes and colours is fascinating. Recently a friend and I were at Holt Country Park, searching out these wonders of nature, and two finds stand out from that day. A group of the Dog Stinkhorn (*Mutinus caninus*) growing in a shaded clearing, not often seen and much less common than its bigger relative (*Phallus impudicus*). The other was a specimen of *Sparassis crispa*, commonly called the Cauliflower fungus, again these are fairly unusual, they tend to grow at the base of pine trees and resemble a large cream-coloured sponge.

Another much rarer fungus was photographed at Drayton during October, this was *Battarrea phalloides*, commonly known as the Sandy Stiltball. It has a longish stem that looks like a miniature pine trunk, with a brown cap on top and grows from an egg like capsule just beneath the soil. These fungi stay intact long after the spores have been shed, often for many months.

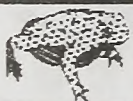
Wild Flower Twitching

Colin Jacobs

I recently received communication from a member who lives in North Yorkshire asking to accompany me in the Waveney area of Suffolk where I live and work for a day's plant twitching. Thankfully after the previous evenings rain and strong winds we met in fine weather on 7th September.

The week before I was sent a letter with a considerable wish list and thought that we could get a few of the plants. First we walked onto Beccles Common to see the abundant Small Balsam *Impatiens parviflora*. Still in flower with many fruits, which pleased my guest as he studied the features and took a voucher. Next we looked at the fruits of Hybrid Rose *Rosa pimpinellifolia* x *R. canina* = *R. hibernica*, first located in 2001 by The Lowestoft Field Club. Passing a few non-flowering Cut-leaved Bramble *Rubus laciniatus* we walked on to the car and off to Weybread Churchyard for the large patch of Birthwort *Aristolochia clematitis* and then to Mettingham Churchyard for several Lesser Teasel *Dipsacus pilosus*.

Our next stop was a bit scary as it was a small plant growing in a road drain right on the brow of Haddiscoe Road Bridge in Norfolk (just) Our target here was a local rarity, Chinese Mustard *Brassica juncea*, the hybrid between *B. nigra* x *rapa*, and there were flowers and fruits showing characteristics of both parents.



Orange Ball *Buddlija globosa* was also on my new friend's list and the very big specimen in a Corton hedgerow just north of Lowestoft, sadly produced nothing but vegetative characters for my guest.

Now one thing that the Wild Flower Society is good at is locating good places for alien plants and garden escapes along with some new arrivals. From an earlier WFS meeting in Kessingland I was able to show my fellow member Huntingdon Elm *Ulmus x vegata*, Neapolitan Garlic *Allium neapolitanum* and both Canadian Fleabane *Conyza canadensis* and the new arrival in Kessingland Guernsey Fleabane *C. sumatrensis*. A surprise not seen on my previous field trip was Chinese Aster *Callistephus chinensis* growing in a pavement crack along Church Road in Kessingland.

Although this was not what I normally did on a Nature guiding trip it was good to travel about and tick off old favourites and even find some new ones.

Slug Love

Carol Carpenter



About 9.30pm on 2nd September my son called me from my back garden to 'come quickly'. He had spotted what he at first thought was a snakeskin hanging down the wall of the house, just next to the door and wondered why I had put it there. On closer inspection he thought that it was three slugs twisted together and worth a photo.

As soon as I saw them I knew they were two leopard slugs performing their wonderful mating ritual. I have never seen it before although I have viewed it on film. I understand that sightings are quite rare.

I have always understood that the pair hang by a string of very strong mucus from a branch of a tree or shrub but these were hanging down the wall. They twisted around each other then each produced a long whitish translucent tube from just behind their heads, which they also entwined. Then the ends fanned out into a flower like shape before sperm were passed to each other. Being hermaphrodite, they both retracted these male parts absorbing the exchanged sperm into each body. One slug then dropped to the ground and the other climbed up the rope of slime. I left them to it at this point expecting to find a gooey mess on the wall in the morning. The following day however, there was no sign that they had ever been there.

I am afraid that my photo does not do them justice but it was the best I could take.



Garden observations

Michael Palles-Clark



I'm not a specialist when it comes to arthropods or cameras. This year, in our garden at Tunstead, I had an opportunity to take photographs of a spider (25th May) sitting on Primula leaves in some rough grass that we leave untouched for most of the year and a moderately large Dipteran fly (21st July). This latter was one of several that appeared in the garden visiting Marjoram flowers. Both were new to me so I emailed the images to two of the Society's Recorders and in both instances they were promptly identified; the spider as *Pisaura mirabilis* and the fly as *Nowickia ferox*. The identifications were provided by Peter Nicholson and Tony Irwin to whom I'm most grateful. I understand that the spider is not uncommon. Its stance, with the first two legs on each side held close together, is characteristic. The fly is less well recorded but is probably more common than realised.

Chapel Bloodsuckers!

Robert Maidstone

Our local Chapel has, like many religious establishments, an aging and dwindling congregation. No longer able to maintain the small garden and car park around the building by their own efforts they enlisted my professional help. My ability to fit the work into my busy schedule was because of the convenience of living a few doors away and that I could undertake the work early in the morning or in the evening, at times when I am not normally freely accepted into private gardens.

The first stint went OK, - ignoring being accosted by one of the local Constabulary. Well, I suppose it IS their duty to investigate men carrying large sacks about shortly after first light, even if the sack is full of weeds – garden weeds, that is. My second task was to remove the weeds around the asphalt car park. This time the interrupting came from a small but persistent fly that kept circling my face and occasionally settling on my beard. After about a half hour of vigorous hoeing and pulling I felt quite warm, albeit only half six in the morning so I rolled up my sleeves and undid the buttons down the front of my shirt.

Minutes after this I felt a tickling on my belly and a slight pricking sensation. Standing up I noticed the small black fly sitting near the area in which I had felt the movement. At first I was puzzled because it was unusual for mosquitoes to feed in the early morning, but I just brushed the fly off and continued my work.



Annoyingly the fly returned first around my face than again settled on my belly. This time I got a good view of it and realised it looked similar, though much larger, to the tiny 'No-see-ums' which used to annoy us, and our cow, during milking sessions on our small holding at Wacton. So intent on biting was the fly that I was able to catch it between my finger and thumb and carry it home without hurting it. Having transferred it to a jar I returned with another jar, and finished my weeds catching two more flies in the process.

By the time I finished and returned home the site of the earlier bites were marked by a bright red weal and itching like mad. Insect bites seldom affect me even to the extent that I often allow them to get a good feed of blood without harming them. The reaction to this fly needed further investigation!

The 'No-see-ums' belong to a family of biting flies known technically as Simuliidae, but often are also referred to colloquially as 'Black-flies' due to their colour, 'Buffalo gnats' because of their hump-backed appearance resembling the forequarter of the American Buffalo or just 'Midgies' of the Scottish fame.

All the species breed in flowing water usually fast mountain streams, so are not common in the relatively flat plains of south Norfolk. These particular ones could be identified by the silvery grey face and distinctly marked thorax as *Simulium ornatum*, a lowland species of larger streams where there is a moderate current and much aquatic vegetation. Whether these had bred in the local stream or some fast flowing garden water feature I have yet to find out.

Semi-spotless Gatekeeper in north Norfolk

John Furse



The female Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus* depicted here was seen and photographed at one of my birding 'patches', Gramborough Hill, Salthouse on 3 August 2010. I do not look carefully at each common butterfly I encounter and, in any case, there were dozens of these flying on the sunny, southward-facing and grassy slope and around the various bushes that day. I just happened to notice something odd about it and, after losing it for a while, relocated it and managed to take a few photos.

At the time, I didn't realise how unusual this was, but indications are that it might very well be unique! Geoff Martin, of the Museum of Natural History, London, has searched the 1700+ specimens in their collection and found none with no eyespot on only one wing. There were, however, three with no eyespots on both- the aberrant form *obsoletissima*.



A suggestion was made that it was gynandrous (hermaphroditic, or having characters of both sexes). However, Francis Farrow pointed out that, were this the case, there should be a dark sex brand on the male side and T.J. Simonsen, at the London Museum of Natural History, mentioned that, anyway, both sexes have eye-spots on their fore-wings. He said it was more likely that a gene essential for the eye-spot development was switched off in the left side of the animal during the pupal development, quoting relevant research on African butterflies.

Andy Brazil thought that 'there could have been a disruption of the enzyme pathways responsible for laying down the colour. This disruption would itself most likely be genetic - a mutation in one of the genes responsible for the eye patch. It must have occurred after fertilisation, the mutation thus being irregularly distributed through the body and ending up in a single wing.' Emails, with photographic attachment, to the major collections in Paris, Madrid and Leiden (the Netherlands) have not yet added to the information.

Silver-washed Fritillary in Norfolk

Mike Gasson



Along with other butterfly enthusiasts in the county, I was fortunate to stumble across a Norfolk Silver-washed Fritillary, *Argynnis paphia*, earlier in the year. In my case I was in Foxley Wood checking out the White Admirals and hoping for a few better photographs. Whilst walking the rides, a distinctive, fast-flying, orange butterfly caught my attention, appearing bigger and paler than the resident Commas. I managed to track it to areas of thistle and bramble where it settled down to feed, providing all too brief photo opportunities. The butterfly was a male Silver-washed Fritillary, part of a pattern of sightings for the species in Norfolk and Suffolk that began on 16th July. The Norfolk butterfly recorder, Andy Brazil, has collated records for the county which amount to 23 individuals from 16 different sites. Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire all witnessed increased sightings. In the case of Suffolk, 15 from a single wood on one day suggest that a small breeding colony may well be established, especially as the site has records from 2009.

With respect to Foxley Wood, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust archives include a letter from 1968 giving clues as to the former abundance and sad decline of the Silver-washed Fritillary. Their correspondent, David Ruthven, notes that he recorded very low numbers in 1966-68 (down to only two or three individuals) and attributes this to the widespread pheasant rearing and felling. He states that 15 years previously in the 1950s they were "without exaggeration" reasonably common in the wood, sometimes 6 at a time being seen on one large clump of brambles.



The influx of small numbers of this beautiful butterfly raises hope that it may be able to establish itself once more in Norfolk. However, it does have demanding requirements, depending on Common Dog Violet in shady woodland and laying its eggs on trees, using crevices in the bark. The larvae hibernate over winter but in spring make their way to the ground where they use the violets as food. Foxley Wood has an abundance of seemingly ideal oak trees and the woodland rides have large populations of violets. Obviously it will take more than one male Silver-washed Fritillary to restore this beautiful butterfly to Norfolk's biggest ancient wood but hopefully the East Anglian influx will continue and lead to an eventual natural re-colonization.

Across its established breeding territory, the Silver-washed Fritillary has enjoyed a good year. Quoting from Andy Brazil's report for Butterfly Conservation: "New colonies have appeared in Bedfordshire, while Sussex, Hampshire and Wiltshire report exceptional numbers." Also, a friend from the Chilterns monitored an impressive increase in a population that recently colonized a 40 year old conifer plantation better known as the location of J. E. Lousley's famous 1947 picnic during which he rediscovered the then "extinct" Military Orchid, *Orchis militaris*. The butterfly is attracted by warm, wide forestry rides with ample bramble as a nectar source and whilst oak is considered to be the tree species of choice for egg laying, here the confers are used. This is interesting in the sense that some Norfolk sightings are from similar evergreen plantations. For example, quite a few people saw Silver-washed Fritillaries at Holt Country Park where they very obligingly fed on a buddleia bush next to the car park, seemingly untroubled by a constant passage of school holiday visitors. I watched a rather tatty male there on 11th August, which is probably one of the year's latest records for the species in Norfolk.

I also went back to Foxley Wood after the first sighting and on a couple of occasions encountered what I am 90% certain was a Silver-washed Fritillary flying down one of the main rides at breakneck speed. No chance of a photograph this time but a nice still bright but overcast day did help gain some better shots of the White Admirals which, with brambles getting sparse, were inclined to feed on Hogweed and Wild Angelica. The Foxley White Admirals also had an especially good 2010 with large numbers congregating on favoured "nectaring" sites and individuals apparent throughout the wood. Having one of the biggest and most impressive of the Fritillaries share the Foxley brambles on a regular basis would be a just reward for all the hard work that the Norfolk Wildlife Trust has done to restore this important remnant of our ancient woodland. Can but hope!

See also www.moorendnature.com



The Chameleon Grasshopper

Nick Owens



I have been amazed by how closely Mottled Grasshoppers (*Myrmeleotettix maculatus*) can match their background on Kelling Heath. Many have an orange-brown patches which closely match the colour of dead sprigs of heather, while the green on the sides of the head is similar in colour to live heather stems (see photo).

When a 3ha area of tall gorse was burnt beside the railway line in October 2009 I was ready to look for any changes in grasshopper colours which matched their new charred background. So in June this year I set out to see whether I could find any black grasshoppers on the burnt patch. Sure enough, the very first grasshopper I saw was dark all over! The great majority were very similar, being either dark mottled or stripy brown with no green or orange at all. Even those with some green showed black patches or mottling. (see photos).

I immediately surmised that the grasshoppers could change colour during their lifetime to match their backgrounds, reasoning that there had not been time for natural selection to cause such changes. However, it is unwise to jump to conclusions about grasshoppers! On further investigation I found that there were quite large numbers of all-dark mottled grasshoppers in unburned areas too – and these could be quite cryptic on woody heather stems.

I decided to record the proportions of the different forms across the heath. On each patch I walked slowly until a mottled grasshopper jumped, then homed in with a photo. This provided a representative, unbiased sample - and very dirty knees! I took further photos on East Ruston Common. All photos were of fourth/fifth instar or adult Mottled Grasshoppers. 192 photos were taken in total.

No two Mottled Grasshoppers looked exactly alike, so I stuck to a simple classification (from the photos) of whether there was any green colour at all on each animal. The results are shown below: 'Green' means some green colour was present; 'Not green' means no green colour was present anywhere on the body.

	Green	Not green	Total	% Not green
Fire site	12	37	49	75.5
Old fire site	7	15	22	68.2
Car Park	11	11	22	50.0
Sand cliff	28	15	43	34.9
E Ruston	30	26	56	46.4



NATS' GALLERY: November 2010



Leopard Slugs mating - an event that is seldom seen. See article. *Photo: Carol Carpenter.*



Wildlife in a Tunstead garden: the spider *Pisaura mirabilis* and the fly *Nowickia ferox*. See article. *Photo: Michael Palles-Clark.*



Female **Gatekeeper**,
Gramborough Hill, Salthouse, 3
August 2010. This individual is
'semi-spotless', lacking an eye
spot on one wing, and may have
been unique. See article.
Photo: John Furse.



Purple Hairstreak
A rare close-up
view of this tree-top
butterfly captured 20
metres above ground
from the tree tower at
NWT Hickling Broad,
22 July 2010.
Photo: Tim Peet.



Greyling at Bawsey
sand pits, near King's
Lynn, showing its
superb camouflage as
it settles, wings closed,
and tilts its body to
one side. *Photo: Robin
Stevenson.*



Winterton NNR was the venue for a memorable evening meeting of the Society, in search of Natterjacks and Nightjars, jointly with the Norfolk Amphibian and Reptile Group. *Photos, left and below: Derek Longe.*

Lakenheath Fen RSPB Reserve was the venue for a joint meeting of the Society with the Lowestoft Field Club on 20 June 2010. A variety of wildlife was recorded, reflecting the varied habitats. See article. *Photo: Derek Longe*



*Below: Goldilocks **Ranunculus auricomus**, an uncommon buttercup at Saxlingham Nethergate. Photo: Trevor Stephens*





Mottled Grasshoppers *Myrmeleotettix maculatus*, showing the variation on fire sites (nos 1-8)



and non fire sites (nos 9-16, right). See article. Photos: Nick Owens.

Stange happenings at Kelling Heath: A male Dartford Warbler in an intimate relationship with a pair of Stonechats. See article. *Photos: Hans Watson.*



Robber Fly with prey
Above, a damselfly, right, a dragonfly; both victims are themselves predatory. Bawsey sand pits, near King's Lynn. *Photos: Robin Stevenson.*





Above: **Water Vole** and **White Admiral** at Strumpshaw - both exciting summer observations. See article. *Photos: Brian Macfarlane.*

Left: **Cavernous Crystalwort** *Riccia cavernosa*, a liverwort new to East Norfolk found at Beeston Regis. See article. *Photo: Francis Farrow.*

Below: **Dog Stinkhorn** *Mutinus caninus* at Holt Country Park (left) and, much rarer, **Sandy Stiltball** *Battarrea phalloides* at Drayton. See article. *Photos: Tony Howes.*





Silver-washed Fritillary Foxley Wood, 26 July 2010. Part of an exceptional influx of 23 individuals to 16 sites in Norfolk in summer 2010. Perhaps we will soon see its return as a breeding species? See article. *Photo: Mike Gasson / www.moorendnature.com.*



- Fire site: Kelling Heath - 3ha burnt in October 2009
- Old fire site: Kelling Heath - 0.5ha burnt March 2008 on opposite side of the railway cutting
- Car Park: Kelling Heath - 0.5ha of overgrown granite chippings
- Sand cliff: Kelling Heath - bare ground with sparse heather/bell heather. Sandy cliff nearby
- East Ruston Common: sandy path with grass and heather/bell heather in east Norfolk

There was clearly a much higher proportion of dark grasshoppers on the burned site than elsewhere. A site burnt two years before also showed higher than usual proportions of dark grasshoppers. Non-burned areas did nevertheless contain up to 50% of all-dark specimens.

Several explanations of these differences between burnt and non-burnt areas seem possible:

- Grasshoppers can change colour to match their backgrounds.
- Grasshoppers move to places where their colour matches their background
- Natural selection (eg by lizards, birds and solitary wasps) removes less-camouflaged individuals from the population within one generation.

The jury is still out on the answer and I suspect a little of all three happens (hedging my bets!). Any thoughts or comments gratefully received.

Bits and Pieces

Tony Howes

Exploring our countryside is always a fascinating exercise, you never know from day to day what is going to turn up. I always like to have a camera with me on such jaunts to record what I see, a few of which are listed below.

Sitting in one of the hides at Cley, a group of Starlings landed in the grass a few yards away, squabbling among themselves as they do. One of them stood out from the rest, it had a pure white head and shoulders as if it were wearing a cloak, within minutes they all flew to pastures new but not before I managed to get two shots.

On the same day I had been watching a group of Black-tailed Godwits, feeding right out in the middle of the scrape, hoping that they would wander closer so that I could get a photograph or two. Then a Marsh Harrier came gliding over the reeds and everything took off, including the godwits, they did a circle of the scrape passing very close to where I sat; click, another one for the album.



Lastly, I watched a Grey Heron going through its ablutions routine down at Strumpshaw Fen, periodically ducking almost completely under the water, then giving itself a good shake. You could see the nictitating membrane come across the eye, I presume this also happens when they make a lunge for a fish.

The natural world is a real Pandora's box; you never know what is going to come out. Enjoy it!

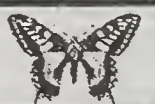
Curious Relationships

Hans Watson



In nature there are many kinds of relationships between different species. Some relationships are to the mutual advantage of the species involved, and in some cases the relationship appears to benefit one of the species involved but not the other. Again, some relationships are regular and common, but others are casual and uncommon. Extreme examples are the ones where two species are so reliant on one another that their very existence depends upon the relationship.

An example of the more casual relationships came to my notice in June on Kelling Heath. On an evening walk to listen for Nightjars, I saw a cock Stonechat fly very close to me chasing a small dark coloured bird. My first impression in the poor light was that the chased bird was a Dartford Warbler, and I decided to come back to the area early next morning. Sure enough next morning there was a very conspicuous cock Dartford Warbler on a gorse bush, and a pair of scolding Stonechats close-by. I was later informed by friends who spend much more time bird-watching in this area, that the unmated Dartford Warbler was feeding the Stonechat's brood of young and had frequently been seen aggressively chasing the cock Stonechat away from the nest. The Dartford Warbler in fact, took over the role of the cock Stonechat completely. It would be natural to suppose that a third bird, albeit of a different species, helping with feeding, would be to the benefit of the chicks, but in this case it was not. Out of 6 eggs laid, only one chick fledged. Inclement weather during the week after the eggs hatched could not have helped, but the experienced local naturalists monitoring the nest were convinced that the Dartfords aggressive disruption to the normal feeding pattern was the primary cause of only one chick fledging. The Dartford even continued to offer food to the young Stonechat up to 2 weeks after it had left the nest. There are other recorded cases of Dartfords feeding young Stonechats, most notably on Dunwich Heath in 1993.



For many years ornithologists have been fascinated by the interaction of Stonechats and Dartford Warblers, and it is only relatively recently that any studies have been made to attempt to make sense of this behaviour. So far these studies have revealed some interesting information.

One study of feeding patterns during the winter period revealed that Dartford's seen closely following feeding Stonechats caused changes to the normal Stonechat feeding pattern, so that the prey capture success of the Stonechat, was reduced by half. What would at first seem curious behaviour, now appears more sinister and parasite-like, benefiting the Dartfords at Stonechat expense. There is obviously much more to learn.

Strange things at Strumpshaw

Nick Gibbons

Visiting Strumpshaw reserve in early June to look for Swallowtail butterflies I was more intrigued by the happenings on the pool in front of Fen hide.

The first occurrence was after a Heron landed. Having spent several fruitless minutes stalking the pond it walked up to some dead sticks projecting from the water – presumably placed there to attract Kingfishers? The Heron then positioned its neck in a strange twisted fashion as if it was deliberately to align itself with the reflection of the stick in the water. After stealthily changing its neck position a couple of times it froze for a while. It then successfully lunged and caught a large fish. After a quick flick of the head it tossed the fish in the air to allow it to swallow it head first.

I have never seen a Heron using outside assistance before.

Soon after this a Water Vole swam out from the bank and spent a few minutes circling around in the middle of the pool until spotted by a pair of Coots which had a nest at one side of the pool. Immediately sighting the vole the Coots splashed across the pool and pounced, forcing the vole to dive. Not content to swim away to the adjacent bank vegetation the vole re-surfaced near the middle of the pool and started swimming round and round again. As before, as soon as the Coots saw it they splashed across and forced the vole to dive again to avoid a repeat attack. This went on several times before the vole decided it was no place for a quiet paddle around and retreated to the depths of the marginal reeds, which is where I expected to go after the first attack.



Strumpshaw Diary

Brian Macfarlane



The last three months have generally been quiet bird wise. There were a distinct lack of Little Egrets compared to last year. The Heron has been showing again at the Fen hide after deserting this summer. One reason could be the water level has been kept higher than usual, and I have noticed in the past that the Heron and Egret seem to fish better in shallower water.

What did interest me in mid July was a Water Vole in the Dipping pond. There appeared to be an adult and young. It had a nest hole in a small reed bed between the two lots of decking. Being a public place everybody who past by were keen to see what I was photographing as I sat there with my camera and tripod. When that happened there was no chance of seeing anything for some time afterwards. I found the best times were early morning or early evening.

I did see for the first time a White Admiral butterfly at Strumpshaw on the wooded path. The first brood of Swallowtail butterflies in June were far more numerous than the later brood in August.

The Otter was occasionally seen from the Fen hide after the young left their parents by mid year. Usually just bubbles and a brief head showing was all you saw as it past us. Some people saw, and photographed the Osprey, but I only saw it once at a distance along the river. Kingfishers are not in evidence like they were last year, and are usually flying past at speed.

I have included a photo of a flying goose showing the centre bird nearly upside down, similar to the one I took at Strumpshaw last year. It's obvious that this happens a lot, but rarely close enough to photograph.

I'm looking forward to the Strumpshaw staff cutting swathes of reeds about 30feet wide and 100yards long extending away from the Fen hide. This will give views of Chinese Water deer, and Bitterns walking across the opening. This was very enjoyable for the visitors over the winter months. The current reeds are 7 foot high and completely blot out any life the other side of the water channel.

I occasionally visit Cley where there is much more flying activity than Strumpshaw. Well you need to keep practising otherwise the camera shutter will cease up. One of the more exciting times was when I was lucky enough to see the Spoonbills. Both times I only saw them in the sky. Each time they came over the Daukes Hide and finished up landing on the North scrape out of sight! No surprises there!



Thoughts on the 'Mysterious death of a Deer'

Robert Maidstone

The article in the May 2010 edition of *Natterjack* was no mystery to me! No, I didn't put it there but the remains John Vincent found would differ little from what he could recover from my compost bins, albeit of Roe or Muntjac.

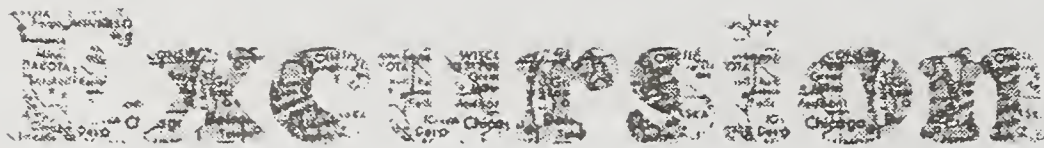
It is most likely that these remains were the left over's from human predation either illicit poaching or scavenging from road kill. The latter, of course, is my usual method of obtaining meat. The backbone, tail (if any), ribs and leg bones would remain in the meat joints. If the feet and hooves were absent then it might be that skinning and quartering of the carcass was done in the field and these bits were retained on the carcass for ease of handling; to be cut off later and put in the rubbish bin. The pluck, paunch and other soft bits would have rapidly rotted away together with the flesh from the skull which would release the lower jaw which could have easily been removed by some scavenger.

While typing this I'm thinking that this winter will be a Hare winter similar to two year ago when I was thoroughly fed up with the taste of venison. Due to the pressing need to maintain my food stocks I keep a good look out for carcasses as I travel about the counties minor roads to and from work but give little thought to Mammal Recording. I began to wonder how many mammal finds are recorded in the freezer log rather than the Societies database. So to redress that somewhat, when I had a quick shuffle around in the freezer to accommodate my new supplies, I noted that there was three packs of Hare and two large bags of venison, plus innumerable bags of pheasant and partridge bits. Also there was several bags of rabbit caught in a garden at Shotesham. The venison, a Roe, was found near the Hempnall cross roads on the A140 at Long Stratton; the hares were picked up :- between Diss and Scole, between Wacton and Great Moulton and between Mundham and Sisland. All during this summer.

Interestingly this method of sustaining myself is becoming more difficult, not because of the competition in the current recession but because of the design of the cars. Many more carcasses have been 'rolled' and often partly skinned by the low slung modern cars, in the past recent kills often sustained major head injuries and little other damage.

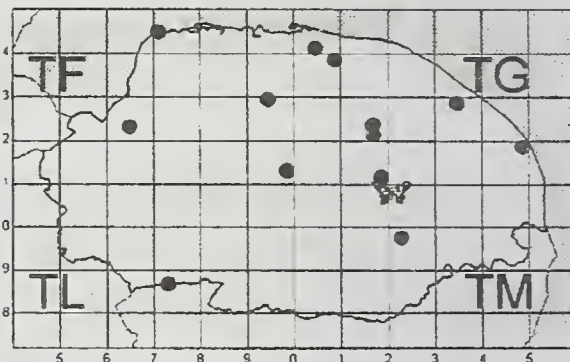
This 'rolling' effect' may be the reason for the large numbers of hedgehog kill I have seen lately, as the animal usually rolls up and can easily be straddled between the wheels by careful drivers. In the past these animals would have been able to potter off after the car had passed none the worst for their experience.





Reports

● 2010-11 Field Meeting location
St. Andrew's Hall
Eaton
Indoor meetings



Marriott's Way / River Tud, New Cotessey

Wednesday 5th May 2010 (7pm)

Ten members were present on this pleasant but a bit chilly two hour stroll, which all very much enjoyed. The diversity of wildlife in the area is large but we only saw two mammals, the inevitable Grey Squirrel and many Rabbits.

Numerous plants were found, with two of particular interest, Moschatel, which is also known as the Town-Hall-Clock. Four of the small yellowish-green flowers are arranged on the top of the stem at right angles to each other like the faces of a town hall clock. There is a fifth flower pointing to the sky. One of our party told us that Richard Mabey as a small child at the end of the war was told "This one is for the spitfire pilots to read"! Two very large Bird Cherry *Prunus padus* trees were noted. These were the biggest ever seen by any of those present. It is common only in northern England, whilst in Norfolk it is occasionally found in moist woodland and fen carr and then as a small tree or shrub.

We were delighted to identify 31 species of bird by sight or sound. Disappointingly we had only three summer visitors, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Common Whitethroat, whilst Kingfisher was also missed. We had very good views of a Grey Wagtail whilst late on a Barn Owl gave much pleasure.

This is my local patch and if anybody would like to visit it please let me know and I will pleased to show you round. Marriott's Way was once the Midland & Great Northern Railway affectionately remembered as the "Muddle & Go Nowhere". The line was closed to passenger traffic in February 1959.

John Butcher

Bird List – 5th May 2010

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Blackbird | Chiffchaff | Carrion Crow |
| House Sparrow | Great Tit | Mallard |
| Dunnock | Blackcap | Green Woodpecker |
| Heron | Song Thrush | Common Whitethroat |
| Wood Pigeon | Pheasant | Red-legged Partridge |
| Collard Dove | Jay | Barn Owl |
| Starling | Long-tailed Tit | Wren |
| Chaffinch | Grey Wagtail | Greenfinch |
| Robin | Stock Dove | Egyptian Goose |
| Blue Tit | Magpie | |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | Jackdaw | |



Parish Wildlife Walk at Saxlingham Nethergate



Saturday 8th May 2010

Leaders: *Teresa and Trevor Stevens*

Despite a pessimistic weather forecast, a group of about ten of us turned up for the pleasant prospect of a stroll around the footpaths of Saxlingham Nethergate in the company of local residents who know the area well. As Saxlingham Nethergate has nearly fifty miles of footpaths we would only be covering a small amount of them today, leaving the rest to enjoy another time.

During 2008 and 2009, local residents recorded a snapshot of the wildlife in the village as part of Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Natural Connections project, resulting in an impressive booklet full of wildlife notes and photographs.

The rain started as we gathered in the village hall car park, but undaunted, we donned a selection of waterproofs and set off on a day more like November than early May.

The path we followed ran along a meadow which was dotted with Cuckoo-flower *Cardamine pratensis*. One of the reasons it is so called is because it blooms at the same time as the Cuckoo first arrives. The chances of hearing one today seemed quite remote, however, a Mistle Thrush was heard, but they are also known as the 'storm cock'! Janet Negal pointed out Greater Chickweed *Stellaria neglecta*, this can easily be confused with luxuriant forms of Common Chickweed. Scattered along our path were several plants of Thyme-leaved Speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia*. I wondered why this genus had the name *Veronica*. One reason put forward is that it is dedicated to Saint Veronica who is said to have wiped Christ's face on his way to the cross.

More speedwells were to follow, with Common Field Speedwell *Veronica persica* growing beside the path crossing a field of wheat. Reaching a lane at the top of the field, Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys* was spotted growing alongside Ivy-leaved Speedwell *Veronica hederifolia* by the side of the road. On reaching Saxlingham Green we found Slender Speedwell *Veronica filiformis*. Although it is found widely naturalised in short grassland, it is in fact sterile in Britain. Also seen along the roadside was Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus* and Bush Vetch *Vicia sepium*.

Leaving Saxlingham Green we passed a ditch lined with Primrose *Primula vulgaris* and Cowslip *Primula veris* and a little further on a nice specimen of False Oxlip *Primula polyantha*, the hybrid between Primrose and Cowslip. The true Oxlip *Primula elatior* is no longer to be found in Norfolk and is now a nationally scarce species.

Turning back towards the village, a Yellowhammer was heard calling from a hedge despite the weather, as was also a blackcap, and a little further along in the same hedgerow a male Linnet was singing from the top of a Hawthorn. Our



attention was drawn to a rather scruffy looking buttercup which on closer inspection turned out to be Goldilocks *Ranunculus auricomus*. This is our only non-acrid buttercup and the flowers are often incompletely formed with one or more petals or sepals missing. We entered a small wood containing the remains of St. Mary's church and were confronted with a patch of Goldilocks covering several square metres, probably indicating a former ancient woodland.

As we returned to the village we passed through The Saxlingham Meadows project. Situated adjoining the village playing field, over 1000 trees of more than 30 varieties were planted in the winter of 2004 and 2005. There is also a wild flower meadow planted with several species of native wild flowers including: Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa* and Birdsfoot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*.

Returning to the cars for lunch, half the party decided to call it a day and return on a better day. Those of us who stayed on were invited into the church rooms for a chance to dry out and have a welcome hot drink supplied by Teresa. During lunch, Susan Ireson, who lives in the village, told us about a pair of Little Owls that she often sees and offered to show us where they were. After the pleasure of putting our wet waterproofs back on we went in search of owls. Susan showed us the posts they often sit on, but being wise owls they had probably found somewhere drier. However, I did return a few weeks later and was fortunate to see one on the post as described.

Also in this area were some unusual Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* pollards. Hornbeam is more usually coppiced in this area, but in other places such as Epping Forest it was often pollarded in the past to provide fuel and beansticks. Carrying on, we passed a fairly large patch of Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare* and a little further on on the edge of a ditch was a small area of Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*. This is usually found in ancient woodland but also found as an indicator of where such woodlands once occurred. Crossing a small stream we found yet another 'Veronica'. This one was Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*. The specific name comes from the German beck, 'a stream'. This is one plant that does what it says and can 'bung up the becks'!

Returning to the village we had a look around the churchyard where we found Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata* growing amongst Field wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, also a Holm Oak *Quercus ilex* and Turkey Oak *Quercus cerris*. Unlike other oaks, the wood of Turkey Oak decays quickly when used outdoors so was used indoors for wall panelling and an earlier name for it was 'Wainscot Oak'.

Returning to our starting point, we all agreed that despite the weather it had been a worthwhile day and that a further visit was needed to appreciate more of what Saxlingham Nethergate has to offer. Many thanks to Teresa and Trevor for arranging our route and showing us just some of the sights and wildlife of their delightful village.

Bill Mitchell



Lakenheath Fen

(Joint Meeting with the Lowestoft Field Club)
Sunday 20th June 2010



Lakenheath Fen, the venue for this year's joint meeting with the Lowestoft Field Club, is an RSPB Reserve with a remarkable recent history. Up to the mid 1990s the area was producing crops, principally carrots, and was intensively agricultural. From 1995 the RSPB began recreating fen, planting many thousands of reeds by hand and raising the water table. Controlled management has tempted many marshland birds to return, including Marsh Harrier, Hobby, Bearded Tit, Bittern and Crane. However, the site is most famous for Golden Orioles which breed in small numbers in the Poplars, originally planted by Bryant & May for matchstick production but subsequently abandoned.

A small number of the Society's members joined those of the Lowestoft Field Club at the well-equipped Visitor' Centre on a cool, breezy dry morning. The Centre and the car park to the east are situated in sandy, Breckland conditions, enabling the botanists to record 157 vascular plant taxa, of which 102 were in flower. Most notable of these were Silver Hair-grass *Aira caryophyllea*, Drooping Brome *Anisantha tectorum*, Slender Sandwort *Arenaria leptoclados*, Thyme-leaved Sandwort *A. serpyllifolia* so that the slight differences between them were clear to see, Fixweed *Descurainia sophia*, Smooth Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris glabra* whose flowers only open on sunny mornings, Cat's-ear *H. radicata* with the two sub-species, *ssp. ericetorum* and *ssp. radicata* growing side by side and Lesser Hawkbit *Leontodon saxatilis* close by, Bur Medick *Medicago minima*, Brookweed *Samolus valerandi*, Rough Clover *Trifolium scabrum* and Bearded Fescue *Vulpia ciliata ssp. ambigua*.

The birdwatchers were not successful in spotting the Golden Orioles but Peter Hansford of the LFC recorded 42 species including Marsh Harrier, Hobby and Crane. Butterflies were scarce, deterred by the north wind and fitful sunshine; only Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and Meadow Brown were seen. However, Mullein Moth caterpillars were feeding on Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus* accompanied by one or more unidentified species of weevil. Also of note was the discovery of two Grass Snakes, one very large, the other small, upon lifting a purposefully placed sheet of corrugated iron.

The meeting ended at 4.00pm, a parked coach and a well-filled car park testifying to the deserved popularity of this recently created Reserve.

The Society wishes to thank Rebecca Pitman, the former Information Officer, for contributing to the arrangements for our visit.

Arthur Copping



OLD TRANSACTIONS

I recently bought some lots at the auction of Ted Ellis' library and have a number of parts of the Transactions of the N & N Soc that I don't need that may be of interest to members. I am not trying to sell the items and would ideally like to exchange them for some more recent issues of the Transactions that I lack in my collection.

Peter Riches

The parts I have to exchange are:

Vol XII part III 1926-27
Vol XII part V 1928-29
Vol XIII part II 1930-31
Vol XIV part I 1935
Vol XIV part II 1936
Vol XIV part IV 1938
Vol XV part 1 1939
Vol XV part II 1940
Vol XVI part I 1944 (marked "ex libris E.A.Ellis") + another copy
Vol XVI part V 1948
Vol XVII part V 1953
(2 copies)
Vol 18 part 3 1956
Vol 18 part 5 1957
and the parts I am trying to obtain are:
Vol 20 part 6
Vol 23 part 6
Vol 24 part 6
Vol 25 part 2
Vol 25 part 6
Vol 34 part 1

I also have available to anyone who wants them the following:

- 1) The Amateur Naturalist in a Changing Countryside. Occasional Publication No. 2 of Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, 1987.
- 2) Annual Reports of the Norfolk Naturalists Trust (all marked "ex libris E.A.Ellis") 37th – 53rd, (excluding 43rd, 49th), 1983, 1984.
- 3) Proceedings of the Heacham and West Norfolk Natural History Society (all marked "ex libris E.A.Ellis")

Vol 3 No 1, Sept 1969

Vol 4, No 1, July 1970

Vol 4, No 2, Dec 1970
(2 copies)

Vol 5. No 1, Summer 1974

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email at pfriches@hotmail.com



75 Years Ago from the *R.N.S.* Transactions

Wild Bird Protection in Norfolk in 1935 (Transactions Part 1, Vol. XIV. Pages 86-105)

Notes from the Kelling-Salthouse-Cley Area
Nov. 1934 - Oct. 1935
By Ronald M. Garnett

October 1935

An immigration of winter visitors was in progress on the 14th, when lapwings, skylarks, linnets, and a few snow buntings came along. A marsh-harrier was seen the same day. A grey wagtail returned to the beck in Kelling village where one had wintered in 1933 and 1934. Several arctic skuas were seen during September and up till October 20th. On the 21st Mr. C.R. Eddison shewed me five long-tailed ducks and a Slavonian grebe on Salrthouse Broad; three of the former and the grebe remained until the end of the month.

On the 23rd birds were pouring in from the sea along the stretch of coast from Cley beach to Blakeney Point, among them redwings, grey crows, chaffinches, blackbirds, and many other species. There were many rock pipits in the gutters and a common redstart in the bushes, while we heard of another at the huts on the point. A short-eared owl was seen on Salthouse beach on the 24th and a very tired brambling, which was without difficulty driven into the trap and ringed. The same day a male hen-harrier was seen on Kelling heath.

Festive Fun Cross-word Answers:

Down		Across	
12 Goodyera	1 Hampshire	3 Bullhead	5 Wall
16 Tongue	2 Fawn	17 Heathland	6 Bonxie
19 Holt	3 Black	18 Prominents	8 Pink
20 Estuary	4 Hobby	19 Hornet	11 Esker
	7 Lichens		13 Grouse
	9 Chiroptera		14 Clouds
	10 Bracket		



FESTIVE FUN

CROSS-WORD



Across

3. What is another name for the miller's thumb?
5. What man-made feature names a lizard, a creeper and a butterfly?
6. What is another name for the Great Skua?
8. What is the main colour of Sainfoin flowers?
11. What special glacial feature is found at Blakeney?
13. What bird can be described as red, black or sand?
14. What do nephologists study?
15. What is the collective name for quail?
17. In Norfolk what habitat is ling generally found?
18. What type of moths are iron, maple and pebble?

19. What is the largest true wasp in the UK?

Down

1. In which county is the New Forest?
2. What is a baby deer called?
3. What colour is a melanistic bird?
4. What bird of prey catches dragonflies?
7. What group of plants are part fungi and part algae?
9. What is the Order bats belong to?
10. What type of fungi are beefsteak and razor-strop fungi?
12. What Genus does Ladies Creeping Tresses belong to?
16. What part of a snail is its radula?
19. What is an otter's home called?
20. What is the name given to the wide tidal area where a river meets the sea?





The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be February 2011. Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by **January 1st 2011** 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 £15 for individual, family and group memberships (£25 for individuals living overseas).

Cheques payable to: Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.

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