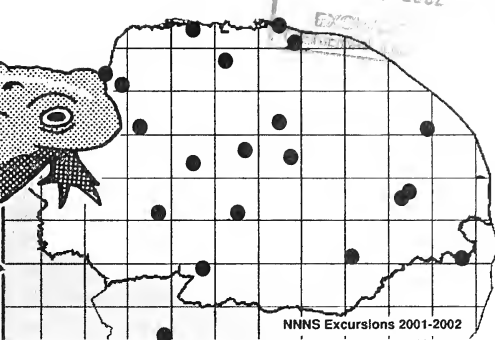
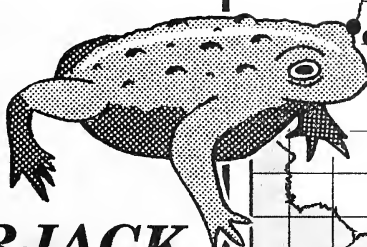


THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
20 FEB 2002
EXHIBITION

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



Toad-in-the-hole...

Another packed 'Bulletin' with lots of information wanted and discoveries made. My thanks to all contributors and hope 2002 brings something of interest to all members. FF

Congratulations

I am sure that all members of the Society will join with me in sending our congratulations to Ernest Daniels who celebrated his ninetieth birthday on the 11th November last.

Ernest is our longest serving member, having joined the Society in 1928. He held the office of Honorary Treasurer for twelve years; he has been a Vice-President since 1970 and was President for the year 1979/80. His natural history interests are very wide - a keen birdwatcher, joint entomological recorder for a time, and in more recent years much of his interest has centred on botany: a true all rounder.

We wish him and his wife Bessie many more years of active interest in the Society's affairs.

David Paull,
Chairman.



YOUNG NORFOLK NATURE WRITING AWARD

Cash prizes totalling £75 are being offered by Norfolk Wildlife Trust and The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society in a new annual competition designed to revive the art of nature writing.

The competition is open to all young people under the age of 16 living in Norfolk. Entrants need to submit an illustrated diary or an essay of no more than 800 words based on personal observations or thoughts about nature or a specific aspect of it.



The prize, which will be accompanied by an engraved trophy, is being generously donated by

Sylvia Seago in memory of her late husband Michael Seago - a well known and respected naturalist who dedicated 60 years to the study of Norfolk's birds. Author of 'Birds of Norfolk', he edited the annual Norfolk Bird Report for 44 years. Readers of the Eastern Daily Press will best know Michael for

his popular wildlife column. Members of The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society and



staff from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust will join Sylvia on the judging panel. The top prize of £50 plus the title 'Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year 2002' will go to the best entry. There is also a second prize of £25. In addition five runners up will receive a certificate.

Entries need to be sent by 30th September 2002 to:

NWT,
72 Cathedral Close,
Norwich NR1 4DF.

Winners will be notified by 1st November and the results will appear in the April 2002 *Tern*, alongside the winning entry.

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



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Number 76
February 2002



Winter Birds in Wells

For me, Wells in winter has a special attraction. The summer birds have gone, but so have most of the visitors. In their place have come a plethora of winter birds - and I use that delightful word advisedly! As described in a previous *Natterjack* article, the numbers of Pinkfeet Geese can be almost beyond belief, but they are not alone, though other birds can be much less predictable. For example, I have sometimes seen as many as fifteen Mergansers diving near the Lifeboat House, but this year there are none. There have been a few Eiders and, for the first time, three Guillemots. Single ones, often oiled, occasionally turn up at the Quay, but December this year (2001) produced a morning viewing of these three in the harbour channel, apparently healthy, certainly fishing actively. Didn't they realise they should have been at sea? They have a rather fetching way of turning up the points of their wings at the moment of diving.

In recent winters quite large flocks of Scoters have been assembling just off-shore, forming long lines of black specks. You'd think they would be easy to see, but take your eyes off them for a moment while you point them out to a friend, and you might think you had imagined them. Firstly, they have the annoying habit of taking off and flying a couple of hundred yards; secondly, if the sea is at all agitated, they can easily disappear behind the long incipient breakers, being not very large ducks. Speaking of ducks, the Widgeon have been doing very well. Though sometimes almost literally eclipsed by the great herds of Pinkfeet, large assemblies can be seen on the Holkham fresh marshes, often accompanied by smaller numbers of Teal. In flight, the size difference is quite apparent.

Paul Banham

Wings over the Garden

Wendy and I usually have breakfast at about 8 a.m. after putting the bird food out. There is always something to watch during the half hour or so that we are sitting looking out over the garden. Earlier this winter (November 2001) I just happened to glance up as a bird passed over at about 50 feet, it was in view only for a second or two but the shape, size and jizz was unmistakable, the first Woodcock of the year.

It made me think about other bird sightings seen passing over the garden from time to time. Soaring Sparrowhawks in spring and early summer are a fairly regular thing now, also adults passing over carrying prey for the youngsters in the woods close by. Common Buzzard seen on two occasions, Herons and flocks of Waxwings and the skein of Pink-footed Geese giving the game away by their lovely high pitched 'talking' as they passed over one cold winters day.

Another time while working in the greenhouse I was thrilled by one of my favourite sounds, the calling of Bewick Swans. I watched the large herd pass across the autumn sky in an ever changing formation, always a magical experience. I have often stood outside in the garden after dark in October and November listening to the lisp flight calls of Redwings as they pass over from the north. On one occasion only have I seen a Marsh Harrier going over, probably taking a short cut, as the two major river systems in Norfolk, the Yare and Bure are only a few miles apart at Thorpe St Andrew. Grey lag and Canada Geese also use this route between the two valleys.

These are just a few casual sightings, I am quite sure many more could be added to the list with some serious watching. I remember Ted Ellis writing in one of his EDP articles that he had been sky watching one day when a large, gull like bird came into view, as it got closer he saw it was a glorious Osprey.

Tony Howes

Red Squirrels

Red squirrels are very unusual now in most of England, therefore I was pleased when somebody told me of a place where they might be seen in numbers. Last October, a friend and I were having a few days photography in the Lake District, the squirrel 'hot spot' was in the grounds of a hotel just north of Keswick. We spoke to the staff and were given permission to wander at will in the spacious grounds.



Feeders for birds and squirrels were numerous, some wrought iron free standing nut holders, full of hazelnuts, were placed on the terrace below the dining room windows. At times each of them had a red squirrel sitting inside chomping the nuts, unfortunately it rained all day making photography very difficult. As always with mammals, one turned out to be slightly more friendly than the rest. This individual would approach over the lawn almost to our feet and take hazelnuts from the grass. In good light it would have presented superb photographic opportunities, but it was nevertheless a magical few hours spent watching these wild, beautiful animals going about their business.

At one point we had seven in view at one time, a day to remember with pleasure.

Tony Howes

**Please note: Red Squirrels are the subject of a Photographic Group meeting - see programme on page 8.*

A Leaf-miner New to Norfolk?

At the end of November 2001 my son, who is responsible for the control of pests and diseases at R. H. Meredith & Son (Bressingham) formerly Bloom's of Bressingham, brought me a couple of leaves of *Helleborus foetidus* that were heavily mined. Fairly obviously the mines were of a type caused by flies and the most likely culprit was a member of the Agromyzidae. Checking the RES Handbook (Spencer, 1972) I could find nothing shown as a miner in *Helleborus*, however, in the Fauna Entomologica Scandinavica publication (Spencer, 1976) one species was listed but said to be from Finland and local but not uncommon in central Europe and also found in Corsica but not in Britain. Thinking the mining agent might be from another Dipterous group I then checked in Hering (1957) and again found just the one species, *Phytomyza hellebori*, and here the description of the mine seemed to fit very well with those from Bressingham, although my German is hardly adequate for easy translation. At this stage I began to think there must be something, somewhere that I had missed.

A little later my son was talking to Andrew Halstead, from Wisley, about the mines and was told that indeed *Phytomyza hellebori* had been described as new to Britain in 1999 (Stubbs, 2000). I then found a paper by Colin Welch (2000) describing, in some detail, the mine and listing a number of gardens in and around Peterborough where it was to be found. By this time I had remembered the *Helleborus foetidus* in our own garden at Scote and indeed that was quite heavily infested with leaf-mines. After a discussion with Isobel Havercroft, a friend from north Norfolk, she confirmed that the mine was in plants in her garden which is between Sheringham and Cromer. Now I had discovered that this species relatively "new to Britain" was well established in both the north and south of the county, but in garden plants. What about in the

wild? Looking in the recent flora (Beckett and Bull, 1999) I found that *Helleborus foetidus* was growing, presumably wild, in some profusion on the Bath Hills at Ditchingham. With the kind permission and direction from Dorothy Cheyne I was able to look at a number of these plants and again all we saw were quite heavily infested with the leaf-mines. According to Galpin (1888) this was a prime site for the hellebore in his day so it has obviously been there for well over a century at least. Dorothy then showed me some slides of plants she had taken in the 1970s and as far as we could see there was no sign of the mines at that time.

Whilst there is virtually no doubt in my mind that these mines have been caused by *Phytomyza hellebori* until adults have been reared from the mines and positively identified I cannot be certain. Hopefully something should emerge in the spring of 2002 and Tony Irwin has kindly agreed to look at any Agromyzids. Until then any other records of leaf mines in the leaves of *Helleborus foetidus* would be greatly appreciated. Apparently the fly does not attack other species of hellebore.

Mike Hall

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AN EXOTIC FUNGUS ON BEESTON COMMON?

During the early months of 2001 English Nature contractors cleared trees, mostly oak, ash and sycamore, from the north-east corner of Beeston Common near Sheringham and chipped the wood on-site. It was intended that these woodchips would be incinerated at the end of the operation but foot and mouth disease precautions intervened and a 20 x 5 metre mound of woodchips still remains. On 9th August 2001, I noticed an unfamiliar fungus on the wood pile and e-mailed a photograph to Tony. I also showed a specimen to Bob Ellis a couple of days later who thought it reminiscent of *Tricholomopsis rutilans* (Plums and Custard). By mid-September the clump of fungi had all but disappeared and as I had not heard from Tony I was left with a mystery.

I am ashamed to say, I did not register anything as being of particular interest from the photograph but when, a couple of months later, Francis brought me some fresh specimens after the fungus had reappeared, I realised we had something very interesting indeed.

Each clump, and in October there were at least five, consisted of dozens of small deep golden-yellow toadstools densely covered with purple scales on the cap and purple fibrils on the stem. Imagine a small Plums and Custard toadstool and you will have a very good idea of its appearance. Despite appearances, however, it was eventually located in *Gymnopilus*, although no British species has these features. Furthermore, a photograph of *Gymnopilus purpuratus* in 'Fungi of Switzerland' Vol 5 was a seemingly perfect match and was accompanied by the intriguing information that in Switzerland the species had been found only in greenhouses and that it is a native of Australia and South America.

Armed with this possible identity, Francis conducted a search on the Internet and was amazed to find 57 sites. It did not take long for him to realise that the great interest in such an obscure fungus lay in its reputed hallucinatory properties - indeed one

(Continued on page 4.)

site allowed him to calculate the mass of dried fungus needed for a level three experience! But before all you latter-day hippies head north in camper vans, read on.

In addition to our research I had also sent Reg Evans a specimen and had received a letter in early November which confirmed the genus *Gymnopilus* but indicated the specific name of *picreus* (although qualified with 'the spores maybe a trifle smaller than the type'). This now gave us two names, however, Tony had continued with his determination and consulted other experts.

I sent a specimen to Dr Brian Spooner at Kew who informed us that the fungus was actually *Gymnopilus dilepis* (as indeed was the 'Swiss' fungus), a non-hallucinogenic fungus recently described as new to Britain from a specimen growing on the compost of a *Philodendron* purchased in an Edinburgh supermarket in 1997. It subsequently transpired that the fungus had been found 'in the wild' in 1995 on Brentmoor Heath, Surrey - on a mound of woodchips generated by conservation work on the site!

So where had the fungus come from? One answer is tropical South-east Asia where it is common on woodchip mulches and oil palm debris. Another intriguing possibility is that it is a native British fungus which very rarely 'fruits' but for which woodchips provide an ideal substratum. In any case, *G. dilepis* joins a growing list of apparently exotic fungi which are seen more and more frequently on woodchips - look out for more reports of *G. dilepis*.

As a passing thought it is possible that the production of the woodchips during the winter means they are invariably wet when heaped. Such trapped moisture is seen to escape as steam, indicating an internal generation of heat and humidity which may create favourable conditions for a tropical fungus. English Nature are still intending to remove the woodchips from the Common as originally planned, however, it is a habitat worth investigating wherever they are found.

Francis Farrow
& Tony Leech

Is the *Slender Speedwell* on the way out?

Most members will be familiar with the Slender Speedwell *Veronica filiformis*, which often embellishes lawns, cemeteries and other grassy areas with its delightful pale blue flowers in early summer. An alien plant, originally introduced by the Victorians, it has spread all over Britain in the last half-century as an invasive weed of mown grass. But is it now on the decrease?

Ten years ago when I started on the field-work for my '*Flora of King's Lynn*' (published by the Society in Transactions, 1995) it was easy to find this speedwell on lawns all over the town. I have recently begun a similar survey in Ely (Cams.), and have only seen it in three places, and even then only in small quantity. Dr. Eva Crackles, who has just written a paper on the flora of Hull, has noted a marked decline of the species in that city (which she has known all her life), and thinks it may have lost some of its vigour.

Gillian Beckett has suggested to me that the increased rainfall in recent years may have led to this delicate plant being overgrown by coarser, strong-growing plants, and Bob Ellis wonders if the greater use of rotary mowers these days may be partly responsible.

Ron Payne

VETERAN TREES

Ancient trees are not only a feature of the countryside that we all enjoy seeing but they also have great ecological significance because they can provide a variety of unique habitats that have a continuity down the generations.



A man who wants to know where all Norfolk's veteran trees are is Nick Coleman, a Norwich-based tree surgeon who is currently studying for a Masters Degree through Middlesex University. The data he collects for his thesis will be available to such organisations as English Nature, Norfolk County Council's countryside section, the Centre for East Anglian Studies at UEA, and the county's Landscape Archaeological Unit.

So, can you help him? Do you know of trees that, as he puts it, "have lasted beyond their anticipated natural life expectancy"?

If so, you can contact Nick at:

39 Catton Grove Road,
Norwich NR3 3NJ
Tel: 01603 402621
Email: Treecarenorwich@AOL.com

Mammal Records: Note the Recorder's details were omitted in error from '*The Norfolk Bird and Mammal Report 2000*', therefore please send your 2001 observations asap to: Dr. Martin Perrow, ECON, School of Biological Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR14 7TJ or via Email: m.perrow@uea.ac.uk

Flora Facts and Fables

The wild flowers of Britain have suffered very mixed fortunes. In early times plants and their properties were understood and trusted, but through the ages drastic changes in politics and religion meant that the study of plants has often been discouraged, sometimes to the point of having the country "wise women" destroyed for witchcraft.

During the age of the Victorians plant hunting and study again became ultimately respectable, but even then some of the knowledge of the medicinal properties of plants was deliberately hidden or destroyed.

All too soon Britain became an industrial country, fought two World Wars and then initiated a huge building programme and drastic changes in agricultural practice.

We now know that more than 95% of our old wild flower meadows vanished at this time, and wild plants from fields, roadsides and river edges were ruthlessly sprayed and slashed.



Thankfully some of the plants are now being coaxed back, for they can be replaced. What can never be replaced is the knowledge which went with those plants.

There are still those among us who remember being cured by a gypsy, a wise woman or perhaps a grandmother who had inherited the knowledge of plants. In perhaps as little as one more generation that knowledge will have gone forever.

It is vital that every possible scrap of plant knowledge is recorded now. It is ironic that only now is it being realised that the botanists and herbalists of years gone by knew exactly what they were doing, and many of the recipes and remedies they recommended have been found to be efficient and perhaps more powerful than drugs produced by industry.

May I ask the readers to please search their minds and their family bookshelves for every piece of plant information they can find. It is essential that this is done as soon as possible. Tomorrow may be too late.

Please send recipes, remedies, anecdotes, plant-lore and folklore to me, **Grace Corne, Flora, Facts and Fables, Church Farm, Sisland, Norwich NR14 6EF**
Tel: 01508 520235
e-mail: Grace@e-fs.demon.co.uk

NAME CHANGE

Further to my note on the Beeston Common harvestman (*Dicranopalpus caudatus* Drasco) which appeared in the November edition of 'Natterjack' (No. 75) I have since seen it named as *Dicranopalpus ramosus* (Simon) in 'The Country Life Guide to Spiders of Britain and Northern Europe' by Dick Jones. This name is the one used to describe some harvestmen observed by Colin Penny at Taverham in 1996. The article, in 'Natterjack' (No. 55), also states previous East Norfolk records from Scratby and Norwich which featured in a paper in 'Transactions' (Vol. 30, part 1. May 1984) by Rex Hancy. It is interesting therefore to speculate whether the harvestmen have moved north from the Norwich area or north west from Scratby! Maybe other members have knowledge of the species and can shed further light on its distribution. Has there been any sightings in West Norfolk yet?

Francis Farrow

OTTERS MAN HONOURED

The Sydney Long Memorial Medal, jointly presented every two years by the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, has been awarded to Philip Wayre for a lifetime of work in the conservation of wildlife and the countryside.

He received the medal, which commemorates the Society's long-serving secretary and founder of the Trust, at the Trust's annual meeting from the president, Sir John Blofeld.

The citation noted that Philip Wayre opened a wildlife park at Great Witchingham in the early 1960s and in 1971 he established the Otter Trust at Earsham.

"The intention was to breed otters for eventual release to the wild to recolonise their original habitats. The publicity and interest in otters created by the work of that trust has had an important influence on the subsequent success of the campaign to re-establish otters in the wild."



The citation also recalled Mr Wayre's role in popularising natural history and promoting the cause of wildlife conservation through his work on wildlife programmes and films for television.

David Paull

One Hundred Years Ago
(Transactions Vol. VII p346-348)

With our recent frosty weather, icy roads and snow at about the same period as described here it seems appropriate to remember and respect such natural events. Ed.

**ON THE SILVER THAW
AND GLAZED FROST
OBSERVED AT KING'S LYNN,
20-21ST DECEMBER, 1901**

by C. B. Plowright M.D.

The phenomenon of a glazed frost was well observed at King's Lynn and its neighbourhood, on 20th and 21st December, 1901. For three or four days preceding Friday, 20th December, we had a succession of frosty nights, and more or less sunny days without either snow or any appreciable amount of rime frost. The roads in the country were frozen hard, but they were perfectly dry, free from ice, and not in the least bit slippery. On the afternoon of the 20th I drove through the village of Castle Rising, reaching home about half-past four; the roads were then hard and good, and the horse did not require roughing. Soon after this a gentle damp wind sprang up from the south-west. About six o'clock I had occasion to walk a short distance in the town, when to my surprise I found the streets had become slippery as to be dangerous for ordinary pedestrians. Not only were the pavements extremely slippery, but the roadways were even worse, whether paved with granite cubes or macadamised. A little later a gentle rain began to fall which rendered the silver thaw more noticeable still. The suddenness with which the hard dry roads became almost impassable sheets of ice astonished everyone; the change taking place within an hour, probably in half that time, and this too before any rain actually fell. The drivers of vehicles did not realise the state of the roads in the dusk until the horses slipped and fell. People who drove into Lynn from the country during the afternoon found they could not return without having their horses

roughed. The macadamised roads were far worse than those streets paved with granite setts or rounded pebbles. One of our mainstreets (High Street) has within the last year or two had its granite-cube pavement replaced by asphalt; this is apt at times to be so slippery that many persons driving valuable horses avoid passing down it. Curiously enough this street was the least slippery in the whole town. On the Gaywood road the silver thaw was very well developed; between Gaywood corner and the East Gates, a distance of about a half-a-mile, eleven horses fell during the evening. The blacksmiths had to reopen their shops, and did a brisk business in "turning up" or "roughing" horses. During the evening two children were treated at the Hospital for scalp wounds, caused by slipping on the ice; and later a man was admitted with concussion of the brain, and a woman with a fracture of the fibula from the same cause.

During the night the rain ceased, and it again froze, so that on the morning of the 21st we had an excellent illustration of a glazed frost. It was the more noticeable owing to the previous absence of snow or ice on the roads, and for the suddenness with which the icy coating had developed upon them.

The explanation of this phenomenon is given by Mr. Scott* in these words: "The glazed frost is really the frozen surface which is occasionally produced at the beginning of a thaw if a warm wind suddenly sets in. The damp air, passing over the ground, of which the temperature is exceedingly low, has its moisture deposited in solid form, and all objects on which this deposit takes place are covered with a sheet of ice."

Instances may commonly be observed on walls where the porous

bricks become coated with ice when a long frost is breaking up, but as there is generally more or less snow on the ground, the phenomenon is not so noticeable as it was upon the present occasion. Sometimes glazed frosts cause a great amount of injury to trees by breaking their branches from the weight of ice deposited upon them.

On the morning of the 21st, the ice-coating on the pebble pavements in some of the streets was found to have become detached during the night from the convex surface of the stones. This was effected by the expansion of the ice as it was deposited, lifting itself from the stone because it was unable to expand laterally, owing to the proximity of the neighbouring pebbles. These ice films were about 5 or 6 m.m. thick, smooth on the concave side where they had been applied to the stone; rough from ice crystals on the convex surface. When held up to the light and viewed from the convex side they were seen to be composed of rounded hexagonal plates, about 8 or 10 m.m in diameter, reminding one of the diagrams of squamous epithelium, figured in works of anatomy. On 22nd December a slight fall of snow enabled the possessors of snow sledges to enjoy a few hours sledging the country.



*Elementary Meteorology, Robert H. Scott, F.R.S., 4th edition, 1887, p115

EXCURSION REPORTS

Fungus Foray Foulden Common

October 7th 2001

The annual Fungus Foray was held at a new venue this year as, apart from the leader none of those present seemed to have looked for Fungi on this Common with its variety of habitats. The meeting was held jointly with the the Norfolk Fungus Study Group which was formed early in the year, this resulting in the meeting getting a notice in the British Mycological Society's Newsletter. Among those present were Drs Adrian and Lynn Newton from Cambridge who, until fairly recently had been living and working in Scotland on Scottish grassland Fungi with emphasis on the genus *Hygrocybe* (Waxcaps), as this group have been declared of Biodiversity importance in a European context, and Foulden Common is one of the more important sites in Norfolk for the genus. Lynn Newton is also an expert on the difficult genus *Entoloma* and added a not inconsiderable number of members of this genus to our final list.

The morning was spent on the chalk grassland to the south of the road, where a goodly number of specialist chalk plants such as Clustered Bellflower and Autumn Gentian were still blooming. This area also has a few pingoes scattered round the edges, the wetter ones fringed with Sallows. The pingoes were actually being investigated by members of a coachload of about 40 students whose arrival in the car park had caused a certain amount of dismay, this being quite small. We were amazed to only see one group at study on the part of the common we were visiting, the rest having melted away into the undergrowth, and they had departed by lunch time.

The Waxcaps were the main point of interest for most members of the party, and though total numbers were small, 10 species were found including several species in shades of red and orange such as *H. coccinea*, *H. chlorophana*, and the large *H. punicea*, green and yellow and slimy with *H. psittacinus*, the dry capped, fawnish orange and supposedly edible *H. pratensis*, the white *H. virgineus* and the rare brown and white *H. colemanniana*.



Amongst the *Entolomas* one of note as it is relative easy to identify being a delicate shade of green (though this soon fades to yellowish) was *E. incana*. The so-called Club Fungi were represented by one of the less common black species, *Trichoglossum hirsutum* whilst two of the *Clavaria* group were also identified, these being *Clavulinopsis cineroides* and *C. fusiformis*.

After lunch we moved across the road where the pingoes are set in woodland which has largely sprung up since the demise of the rabbits in the 1950s. Not only that, but the ground flora reveals here, we were on former acid heathland with patches of heather here and there in clearings in the trees. The list from this side of the road was fairly typical of beech/oak woodland anywhere with five species of *Russula* and three of *Lactarius* and the inevitable Devil's Stinkhorn *Phallus impudicus*. One interesting point about the afternoon's collections were the relatively high number of Ascomycetes collected and named, from the so-called Eyelash Fungus, *Scutellinia scutellata* and the small disc fungus, *Chlorociboria aeruginascens*, which is green and which turns dead wood on which it grows bright green

throughout and the disc fungus *Rutstromia infirma* to various cup fungi such as *Tarsetta cupularis*, *Peziza repanda* and the rather uncommon *Humaria hemisphaerica* plus a relative of the *Helvella* group, *Otidea alutacea*.

Altogether an excellent day, the rain holding off until just as we returning to the cars in the afternoon with a total of 125 species identified.

Alec Bull

RECORDS GALORE

October 13th 2001

Two small groups of members were given a fascinating electronic tour by John Goldsmith of the newly established Norfolk Biological Records Centre at Gressenhall. We were shown a presentation on the purpose of the centre - very simply, to build up a huge bank of records from which trends can be identified and action plans drawn up where the evidence shows that species are under threat. We were also shown how records are entered into the data bank - 200,000-plus so far, with a target of two million.

Later, several members said they regretted they had not come along, either because they had other commitments or because they thought the sessions would be oversubscribed. If you did miss out, you have not missed your chance. John has kindly said he is happy to arrange one or more further sessions, if there is the demand.

If you would like to take up John's offer, please contact me and I will try to fix a convenient date.

David Paul
- 01603 457270



Hoppy's Miscalculation

As I sat having breakfast one morning last November various birds were doing likewise on the bird table outside the window. Among them was 'Hoppy', a wood pigeon that we have known here for three years, he limps badly due to a damaged left leg, otherwise he is fine. Suddenly he took off from the table and flew down the garden towards the woods beyond, but much to my surprise and horror he flew straight into one of the shed windows. The glass smashed from the impact and the pigeon seemed to turn in his own length and flew off over the bungalow roof. The force of the hit was considerable but he went off strongly and didn't seem to be injured in any way. I shall keep watch for him with tremulous anticipation, maybe he will be wearing glasses as well as limping when I see him next.

He must have flown over that shed hundreds of times, what miscalculation occurred to cause such an accident this time? That I was actually watching when it happened is also very strange.

Tony Howes

NNNS MEETINGS

February - April 2002

Indoor meetings to be held at Room 7, The Sports and Leisure Centre, Easton College, Easton, Norwich. 7.30 p.m

Tuesday 19 February

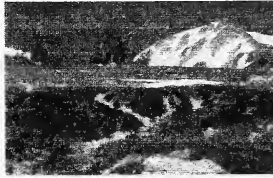
"The Natural History Slides of Ted Ellis"
David Nobbs

Sunday 10 March

Full-day Field Meeting
for mosses at Hockering Wood
Robin Stevenson
Meet 1100hrs at entrance on 'one-way'
lane (ie from east to west) at north
edge of wood TG072150

Tuesday 19 March

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
followed by
"Flowers in the Alps"
Ken Durrant



Sunday 14 April

Full-day Breckland Field Meeting
mainly for spring flowers
Alec Bull
Meet 1100hrs at Ramparts Field
car park, West Stow' TL788716

See next panel for details of the
Photographic Group meetings

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP MEETINGS

The photographic group welcomes any body within the society who has an interest in capturing, with a camera, wild life in its many forms. Whether your particular interest is birds, flowers, insects, mammals or the environment generally, you will find knowledgeable people to talk to, we all learn from one another. So come along to Easton College and have a pleasant evening, see how others tackle the delicate task of getting nature onto film.

Guest speakers show us their work and tell us about their equipment and methods. Hope to see you at the next meeting.

Monday 25 February

Through the Lens:
Galapagos Magic
Illustrated talk by
Julian Bhalariao

Monday 25 March

Red Squirrel:
Beautiful and on the Brink
Illustrated talk by
David Stapleford

Tuesday 16 April

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP LECTURE
A Celebration of the Seasons:
Winter

April meeting Room 7,
All others Room 4
All starting at 7.30pm

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next 'Natterjack' will be in May. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence or disc could be sent to the editor at the following address, as soon as possible by April 1st 2002, or by e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

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

FF

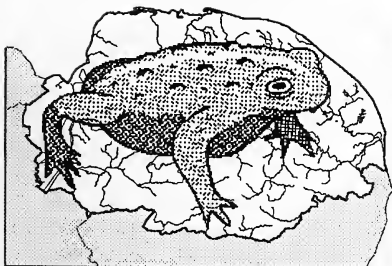


Garth's
Corner

WHY THE FUNNY VOICE
FRANK... GOT A FROG IN
YOUR THROAT?

MURK!MURK!





The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Number 77
May 2002

Toad-in-the-hole.....

There is a slightly different look to 'The Norfolk Natterjack' with this spring issue. Apart from the logo / heading change I have added a contents/subject listing which I hope will be useful.

Again my thanks to all contributors and please keep sending in your observations and notes. This can be done at anytime - it is not necessary to wait for the deadline!

Please note also the *Norfolk Wildlife Trust* change of address for the competition below.

Young Norfolk Nature Writing Award

Since publication of the last 'Natterjack' the Norfolk Wildlife Trust has moved so would all would-be entrants please note the change of address.

NWT (Young Nature Writer),
Bewick House, 22 Thorpe Road,
Norwich, NR1 1RY.

This change, however, does give another opportunity to state the aims of the competition.

As you will recall the competition is open to all young people under the age of 16 living in Norfolk. Entrants need to submit an illustrated diary or an essay of no more than 800 words based on personal observations or thoughts about nature or a specific aspect of it.

The prize, which will be accompanied by an engraved trophy, is being generously donated by Sylvia Seago in memory of her late

In addition to the bulletin you should have received the new programme card - another excellent round of excursions and indoor meetings - which I hope many of you will be able to attend. Leaders please remember to send in your reports.

There is also a supplementary sheet included. This is on the identification of some Norfolk Tree Aphids. Again it is hoped that members will take part in this WILDLIFE 2000 project. I'm sure that a good look around the garden will turn up something that is not your usual sap-sucking green aphid!

FF

husband Michael Seago - a well known and respected naturalist.

Members of The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society and staff from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust will join Sylvia on the judging panel. The top prize of £50 plus the title 'Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year 2002' will go to the best entry. There is also a second prize of £25. In addition five runners up will receive a certificate.

Entries need to be sent by:

30 September 2002

Please note if the entrant is 16 prior to 30 September their entry must be received before their birthday.

Winners will be notified by 1 November and the results will appear in the April 2002 *Tern*, alongside the winning entry.

If you have children at, or are connected to, a local school in anyway please pass a copy of the above to the head teacher as it may then reach more potential contributors.

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The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society

Founded 1869

Registered Charity No 291604

NORFOLK TREE APHIDS

We are putting the finishing touches to our list of Norfolk tree aphids. For the 2002 season we're planning to target about a dozen species for special attention to get a better idea of their range and occurrence, and to do this we are hoping to enlist some volunteers. The targeted twelve (below) include some rare and unusual species and a few that have very specific ant associations.

<i>Monaphis antennata</i>	<i>Pterocomma tremulae</i>
<i>Callipterinella tuberculata</i>	<i>Tuberolachnus salignus</i>
<i>Stomaphis quercus</i>	<i>Eriosoma lanigerum</i>
<i>Stomaphis graffii</i>	<i>Schizolachnus pineti</i>
<i>Lachnus roboris</i>	<i>Aphis farinosa</i>
<i>Lachnus pallipes</i>	<i>Symydobius oblongus</i>

If we get good coverage we may be able to establish or refute some long-standing theories in aphid ecology, as well furthering our knowledge of the natural history of this neglected group in Norfolk.

If you would like to help by keeping your eyes peeled for these aphids an identification sheet is included with this edition of 'Natterjack'. Please send records or any queries to:

Dr Jit Thacker & Dr GW Hopkins
29 Capps Road
Norwich NR3 4AZ

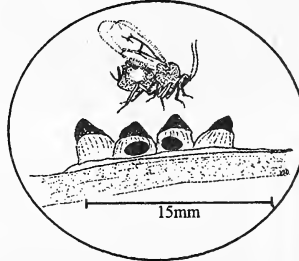
Or Email: Jit1.helen@virgin.net

The Barnacle Gall

There is one gall that has eluded me in north Norfolk for the past thirty years although I frequently found it in mid Norfolk; it is the Barnacle gall, caused by the wasp *Andricus testaceipes* Hart. on shrub oak twigs.

Imagine my delight when my colleague, David Mower who was assisting a contractor clearing scrub etc., on Beeston Common in February, spotted an example of this gall on an oak twig just as it was about to be burnt. Most of the galls, however, appeared to have been damaged possibly by birds during the winter. In fact this gall stage lasts for three years before reaching maturity*.

Other examples, however, were found and one particular fine twig contained some forty fresh galls, most of which I managed to rear through, they emerged over a three week period ending 15 March 2002. I retained a few for my collection then releasing the remainder back onto the Common near some young oaks.



One morning in late March I received a small bottle from Keith Zealand, the National Trust warden at Sheringham Park. I was doubly delighted to find the specimen it contained was also *Andricus testaceipes*. He told me he had taken it near the oaks in the park, thereby destroying my theory that the north Norfolk coast was too cold for the survival of this small wasp, or is it due to our winters getting warmer!

Ken Durrant

*An alternate generation gall occurs as a swelling on the petiole of an oak leaf, maturing in August-September.

Motacilla cinerea - THE BEAUTIFUL ONE

The very stylish grey wagtail is mainly a bird of the uplands in the British Isles. They prefer the fast flowing water associated with mountain streams, our rather sluggish rivers here in Norfolk are not really to their liking. However they do turn up on some of our faster stretches of water and especially the mill pools and the livelier reaches downstream of them.

The first recorded breeding for the county was in 1923 at Taverham, but they seem to have done better recently. Nowadays a look at any of our water mills or old bridges might turn up a pair during Spring.

While looking round the upper Bure valley yesterday I came across a pair of these beautiful wagtails at Itteringham mill and another pair at Corpusty. Several mills on the Wensum have also had pairs during the breeding season in recent years. The mild winters over the last five years or so have probably been of great benefit to this species, long may their elegant beauty grace our rivers and streams. To see a grey wagtail in all its spring finery is to gaze at a water sprite, the very spirit of the stream.

Tony Howes
March 2002

Spring issues

The recent sunny spring weather has brought out the butterflies, at least in north Norfolk. Below are some early sightings reported from Beeston Regis and Sheringham:

Small Tortoiseshell - 18 Feb
Comma - 5 March
Brimstone - 21 March
Holly Blue - 27 March
Peacock - 29 March
Small White - 29 March
Speckled Wood - 4 April
Orange-tip - 13 April



LAWN SURPRISE

While I was working as a gardener at a property in a suburban garden some years ago, I was puzzled by the presence of a small, crinkly-leaved plant that grew in a large patch some two feet in diameter in one corner of the lawn. Each year these leaves appeared at the same time as the daffodil leaves broke the surface but because the lawn was regularly mown at fortnightly intervals throughout the summer, I never saw any sign of the flowers. Neither had my employer, who had lived there for over twenty-five years.

Eventually I asked permission to remove part of the plant to my garden in order to find out what it was. I planted it in the centre of my lawn and erected an elaborate framework to prevent damage by the animals, children and me in an absent-minded moment.

It was not until late May or early June that I noticed a pale, spindly

flower stem appear, with four or five small pinky-white buds. The leaves by now were completely unfolded, some three-quarters of an inch across, almost circular with deep, rounded lobes. When the stem was three to four inches high, large white flowers, similar to those of the Mossy Saxifrage, a common rockery plant, gave me a clue to the plant's identity.

My plant was a Meadow Saxifrage, a once-common meadow plant now much reduced in numbers by the ploughing up of old meadows and the widespread use of herbicide in others. Its presence in this garden brought several questions to mind: for instance, how long had it been there? Obviously, since before my employer had bought the property some twenty-five years before and, from the size of the patch, much longer, the property was a Victorian house set in a large garden in a much sought after part of the city. Since the plants spread by detaching small, round bulbils from their roots that create new plants and here the

closely-mown turf had kept the bulbils tightly packed restricting their spread.



Although this plant is now scarce in its wild habitat, could large populations be found in suburban gardens where they had been present before the land was developed? Could seeds or bulbils have established themselves after the garden had been laid out? Like the primrose, it is possible that the plants had been collected from some field and introduced as a garden plant that later "escaped" onto the lawn.

Robert Maidstone

A Weighty Matter

Those with a good memory may recall that I wrote, a few years back, of a lone Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*) which is growing amongst Corsican Pines on the Holkham Reserve. Some time in the last fortnight or so it has lost a major limb, around 30cm in diameter at the break. I was somewhat puzzled, as there have been no particularly strong winds lately. At considerable risk from the vicious brambles surrounding it, I went to have a look, and was amazed at the quantity of cones still attached to the branches. I suppose I shouldn't have been, as I know that this, like many American species, keeps its cones until they are sprung open by a forest fire.

I believe it was the sheer weight of cones that had brought it down. I detached an atypical cluster, where two whorls had developed without

the usual annual growth of branch (c. 40cm) between them. These nine cones totaled 1.8 kg, and can be seen in the accompanying photograph.



However, even the normal cone distribution must add up to a considerable weight. On balance, though, I think I prefer the *status quo*, with its risk of occasional branch fall, to the alternative of regular forest fires!

Paul Banham

NATURAL IS BEST

Any person keen on water gardens and rockeries can spend a lot of time, effort and money on such creations, even then it takes much patience to get it all to gel and look right. A visit to the Lake District last year gave me a wonderful opportunity to see Mother Nature's efforts in this discipline.

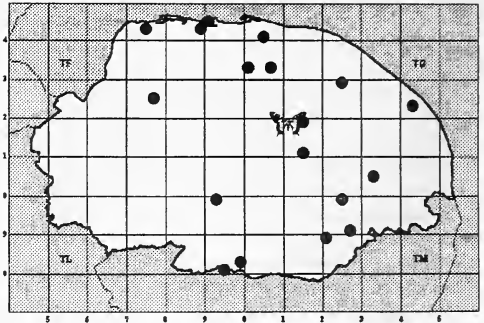
Almost any fissure or depression in a hill side would be a natural watercourse, lined and edged by boulders and rocks, large and small. From crevices grew ferns and juniper scrub aplenty, all lush and green. The sound of water as it came down the tumbled rock face was a therapeutic back drop to the lovely sight.

Water falls are always a thing of great beauty but in the long term I think the genuine article far exceeds our puny efforts. I can imagine nothing more pleasing, as a gardener, than to have a natural watercourse and beautiful rock formation on your own property, clothed in plants and ferns that are suitable and natural to the conditions.

Tony Howes

Excursion Reports

The 'dot' map opposite indicates the position of a field meeting that appears in the new 2002 - 2003 programme card, which is distributed with this issue of 'Natterjack'. The NNNS 'Swallowtail' denotes the position of the Easton College Conference Centre where most of the indoor and photographic meetings are held.



2002-2003 Programme

Following the popularity of the 'Wild Flowers Revealed' excursions last year, and in response to many requests, we are continuing the series by visiting three further habitats in 2002. These include the chalky boulder clay of south Norfolk, where we should find characteristic species like sulphur clover and pyramidal orchid; Felmingham, where we hope to see the delightful small-flowered catchfly and perhaps take a closer look at some of the grasses; and then West Harling Heath for Breckland specialities with Gillian Beckett.

Looking at the indoor programme, we are delighted that Professor Brian Moss has agreed to talk to us in September. As I am sure you are aware, he spent 17 years at the University of East Anglia undertaking pioneering research into freshwater ecology and he is the author of the recent book 'The Broads' in the New Naturalist series.

Please note that the November meeting will be held in the Noverre Suite at the Assembly House. We hope it will be a lively debate on farming and wildlife. We intend to follow the same format as the millennium forum. Members are invited to submit written questions, which they will be able to pose to the panel on the night (the debate will then be opened to the floor). Please send questions to me or to Stephen Martin - details are on the programme card.

Bob Ellis

BIRDING AT BURNHAM

Sunday, February 2nd 2002

If I had had the 'phone numbers of members who planned to join me on a birding field trip at Burnham I would have called them and cancelled it. The weather forecast was appalling. But I'm glad I didn't. Typically for Norfolk, while most of the county had rain from mid-morning onwards, we had a fine, bright day - and, despite the strong wind that tried hard to topple our telescopes, we "ticked" 50 species of birds.

At Burnham Overy Staithe in the morning, it was high tide in the channel, so there were few waders to be seen. But in the fields to the east we had our fill: plenty of curlew, large numbers of wigeon, plus gadwall, shoveler, shelduck, pochard, teal, tufted and mallard, and, of course,

geese - brent, pinkfooted, greylag and Canada. A marsh harrier put in a brief appearance, then sensibly got down out of the wind.

As lunch approached and we made our way back along the sea wall, the tide was receding and the waders began to appear, principally turnstone, dunlin, redshank and oystercatcher. Several little grebe were diving in the channel near the hard.

For the afternoon, we moved on to Burnham Norton and there the star was a brent goose - not any old brent but a leucistic bird. We all had good views of this silver-grey goose among the large herd. Don Doring, who wrote the brent goose section in *The Birds of Norfolk*, was with us and was certain that this bird was one of the first recorded in the same area in 1982 and was therefore at least 20 years old!

David Paull

HOCKERING WOOD

Sunday, March 10th 2002

The trip to Hockering Wood was one dedicated to mosses, although, as usual, it did not deter others from pursuing a variety of other interests. The party that assembled was quite large, and included both experienced bryologists (moss hunters), as well as relative beginners.

Interest first centred on the walls and asbestos roof of an old hut near the site entrance, which yielded a number of interesting species, such as fine fruiting *Bryoerthrophyllum recurvirostrum* and *Schistidium crassipilum*, as well as commoner species such as *Hynum cupressiforme*. We then

moved off, towards an area which had been planted up with chestnuts, the trunks of which bore several epiphytic species such as the rather uncommon *Orthotrichum lyellii*, found by Mary Ghullam.

Gradually we made our way into the acid habitats which are more characteristic of the wood, which is dominated by Small-leaved Lime, although extensively 'coniferised' in parts. Here species such as *Isoetium myosuroides* occurred on tree bases, as well as common species such as *Dicranella heteromalla*, *Eurhynchium praelongum*, *Mnium hornum* and *Plagiothecium curvifolium*.

(Continued on page 5)

Shane Plant found *Pleurozium schreberi*, a typically acid loving plant, though perhaps commoner on heathlands than woodlands. The commonest epiphyte throughout was *Hypnum resupinatum*.

Variety was provided by a pond, on the surface of which the floating liverwort *Riccia fluitans* was abundant, whilst *Leptodictyum riparium* occurred on semi-submerged branches. However, the area around the most proved of greater interest, since it was here that we found several of the small leafy liverworts, such as *Lepidozium reptans* and *Diplophyllum albicans*, as well as species such as the handsome *Dicranum majus* and *Tetraphis pellucida* (Shane Plant again) which are typical of rotting wood.

The concrete surface of some of the old wartime roads that criss-cross the wood also added to the variety, since they allowed lime-loving species to colonise. The most surprising species found on these roads is *Schistidium apocarpum*, a plant which is much more typical of western Britain. Other lime loving species included *Didymod tophaceus*, *Tortula muralis* and *Sytrichia intermedia*. A real surprise was a solitary specimen of the liverwort *Riccia sorocarpa*, found by the sharp eyes of Mary Ghullam; this is normally a species of stubble fields.

A total of eleven species were added to the list, which was very satisfying, even though one or two plants recorded previously evaded us on this occasion. The total moss and liverwort flora recorded from the wood now stands at 66 species (the number of species recorded from the whole 10km square is only 137).

Robin Stevenson



A Walk round Strumpshaw Fen

I had been sitting in the tower hide for a couple of hours watching the marsh harriers displaying, these Strumpshaw Fen birds never cease to thrill me. There are four of them at the moment, an adult male, a young male and two females but there may well be others passing through in the next few weeks, it's sorting out time for them.

The various ducks on the fen were constantly being put up as a harrier gave a low pass over the fen channels. Several crows were sitting about on trees in the marsh, they would give chase if a harrier came within their range, then they would have an aerial tussle, twisting and turning until the crow had had enough. I stayed watching until it was almost too dark to see and then walked back along the river and up the track towards reception.

On passing the flower meadow I scanned the areas of rough grass looking for water deer, there were two in view, probably others I could not see in the gathering gloom. The last point of interest I wanted to check before it was too dark was the owl box put up on the edge of the wood three years ago. Much to my pleasure there was a barn owl sitting at the entrance, easily seen from the path 250 yards away. As I watched it took to wing and began hunting over the meadow, I saw it go over towards the river before losing it in the gloom. On looking back to the wood, there was a second barn owl sitting at the entrance to the box. Almost certainly a pair - and they may breed this year - very good news.

I continued on to the car park and home feeling very content with life.



Tony Howes
March 2002

25 Years Ago

THE GREENFLY 'INVASION' of July, 1979

Multitudes of greenfly appeared in the air over East Anglia during the last week of July, 1979 and similar 'blizzards' of these insects occurred in many other parts of England, from Yorkshire to the south coast. Large concentrations were encountered at the coast, due to the operation of sea breezes, which tend to have a similar effect on the swarms of ladybirds, hover-flies and other insects after they have risen from the countryside with the help of thermals in anticyclonic weather during the summer. The aphids involved on this occasion proved to consist very largely of species associated with cornfields.

Following a wet June, prolonged dry weather in July hastened the withering of wheat, oat and barley foliage and as sap flow diminished, the aphid colonies produced a very numerous brood of alate (winged) viviparous females, which took to the air, trusting to drift migration as a means of finding greener pastures. The predominant species taking part in this operation was *Metopolophium dirhodum* (Walker). The following observations on the behaviour of these insects were made in and near the parish of Surlingham, some seven miles east of Norwich. On July 24th the first swarms of aphids appeared in this vicinity and were

attracting much attention from swallows, swifts and martins during the day. Towards evening great numbers of the insects descended to alight on the ground and on various low-growing plants. On the following morning my attention was drawn to a thick mass of greenfly covering a damp coconut fibre mat lying in a yard at Coldham Hall, near the river Yare. During the next few nights similar aggregations were seen on fresh cow dung, wet ground in farmyards and in association with bright yellow plastic buckets, yellow painted doors and in one instance a yellow-handled garden rake from the shiny surface of which the insects had slid to form a heap at the bottom (providing a breakfast for two blackbirds on the following morning). Spiders' webs everywhere became overloaded with the aphids and in the evening of July 27th I saw an *Araneus umbraticus* cutting its old aphid-smothered web adrift on the north wall of a greenhouse. At 10.0 pm. on July 28th this spider was still eating aphids from an upper fragment of this web, but had completed the construction of a new web by 7.0 am. on the following day.

Each day while the weather remained fine, many aphids could be seen rising again into the air as soon as the sun's warmth began to take effect, but this activity had ceased by the end of the month.

E. A. Ellis

(Part of a paper published in the NNNS Transactions Vol. 25 Part 2 - May 1980)

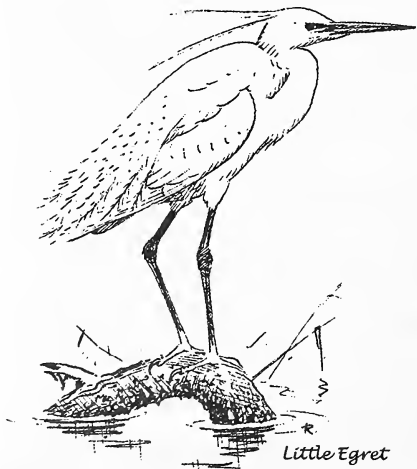


RICHARD RICHARDSON - a biography

Dr. Moss Taylor has completed his book "*Guardian Spirit of the East Bank*", a celebration of the life of Richard Richardson. The text and illustrations are currently in the hands of the printers, and as Moss is ahead of schedule, the date of publication has been brought forward to August.

The book, to be published privately, will be hard back, A4 in size and with approximately 230 pages. The cost will be in the region of £30, however, there will be about 190 illustrations, almost half of which will be in colour. They include copies of Richard's watercolours, vignettes (two of which are reproduced here) and personal photographs. In addition to containing much biographical detail, the text also contains previously unpublished excerpts from Richard's diaries written between 1939 and 1970. Robert Gillmor has kindly written the Foreword.

The book is to be launched at an exhibition of Richard's art and memorabilia to be held at the Cley Parish Church of St Margaret's from Friday 9th to Sunday 11th August 2002.



Little Egret

(Please note the exhibition will be open to the public as follows:
Saturday 10am - 6pm
Sunday 11am - 6pm).

The launch, itself, will be held at a reception, for contributors and other invited guests, on the Friday evening. Copies of the book will also be available the following weekend at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water.



Indian Hill Mynah

Biographical Notes:

Born at Blackheath in south London in 1922, Richard Richardson moved to Norfolk in 1940, when he joined The Royal Norfolk Regiment. He was billeted at Aylsham until embarkation for the Far East in 1943. He served with his regiment in India, Ceylon and Singapore, before returning to England after the war.

In 1949 Richard moved to Cley-next-the-Sea in north Norfolk, where he lived for the remainder of his life. He established the Cley Bird Observatory in the same year and served as its only warden until it closed in 1963.

Following his first visit to Fair Isle with the author and naturalist, Richard Fitter in September 1948, he came under the spell of Shetland, and returned in the mid 1950s and again in 1961 & 1962, while his friend Barry Spence was assistant warden.

From the mid-1960s he made regular visits, often in both late spring and autumn.

As a self-taught artist, Richard had been perfecting his skills at bird illustration since his teenage years. His prodigious talent was first recognised by Richard Fitter in the late 1940s. Together they worked on the highly successful *Pocket Guide to British Birds* and *Pocket Guide to Nests and Eggs*, published by Collins in the 1950s. His illustrations subsequently appeared in over twenty books, as well as many annual bird reports. His watercolours still adorn the walls of many birdwatchers who knew him.

His skill as a field ornithologist is legendary and he is still remembered as a treasured friend by many, despite dying twenty-five years ago, in 1977.

Support the NNNs
at the
ROYAL NORFOLK SHOW
(Stand no. 42)
Wednesday and Thursday
26th & 27th June
2002



Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by **July 1st 2002** to the following address: Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francisf@virgin.net



Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society



Presents



WILD FLOWERS REVEALED!



LEARN HOW TO IDENTIFY WILD FLOWERS
GUIDED BY A TEAM OF NORFOLK'S LEADING BOTANISTS
AT SOME OF THEIR FAVOURITE PLACES

An Introduction.....



Saturday 29th June 10.30 am.

'Plants of the chalky boulder clay'

Led by Dr. Stephen Martin

'Bedingham Corner Roadside Nature Reserve'
Park on south side of Topcroft Rd. on verge &
cornfield edge, just east of Sycamore Farm



TM 278909

Saturday 13th July, 10.30am.

'Felmingham for flowers and grasses'

Led by Dr. Bob Leaney

Meet in Weavers' Way car park TG 252287



Saturday 27th July, 10.30 am.

'Breckland plants'

Led by Gillian Beckett

West Harling Heath

Meet at Fire Road 79 TL 985832



ALL ARE MOST
WELCOME

NO CHARGE

Good walking shoes, boots or Wellingtons are best. Bring a packed lunch.



Identification of target tree aphid species.

Field maple, *Acer campestre*

Stomaphis graffii, the maple bark aphid. This aphid is up to 6mm in length and is found on the trunks of field maple. Other aphids may be found on the shoots of maple, but not the main stem. Very rare.

Birch, *Betula pendula* and *B. pubescens*

1. Small Brown Birch Aphid, *Callipterinella tuberculata*. Minute, up to 2.2mm. Brownish, on new shoots of birch. Only known from silver birch. Other aphids on the new growth of birch are green.
2. Rare Birch Aphid, *Monaphis antennata*. Dark green, up to 4.3mm. Antennae are long, black, and tapering. Usually on the upper side of the leaf, found singly. Other species may be encountered, but normally feed on the underside of the leaf, in groups, and are pale green. Rare.
3. Birch Twig Aphid, *Symydobius oblongus*. Brown, up to 3.5mm, always ant-attended, on twigs of birch. A similar species drops off the twig if disturbed, contrary to *Symydobius*, which crawls away.

Beech, *Fagus sylvatica*

Beech twig aphid, *Lachnus pallipes*. Brown, up to 4mm, attended by ants. On 2 year old twigs. Rare.

Apple, *Malus sylvestris* and *M. domestica*

Woolly Apple Aphid, *Eriosoma lanigerum*. Small, red-brown; its colour is concealed by tufts of white wax-wool. On trunks and branches, in masses, often causing deformation. A noted pest.

Scots pine, *Pinus sylvestris*

Grey Pine Needle Aphid, *Schizolachnus pineti*. Grey, wax-covered, 2.5mm, arranged in a file on needles.

Aspen, *Populus tremula*

Aspen Aphid, *Pterocomma tremulae*. On 2 year old twigs, attended by ants. Up to 4.3mm, brownish, with yellow siphunculi*.

Oak, *Quercus petraea* and *Q. robur*

1. Oak trunk aphid, *Stomaphis quercus*. Pear-shaped, brassy. Up to 7mm. Attended by the Jet Black Ant, *Lasius fuliginosus*. The only aphid on the trunk of mature oaks. Rare.
2. Oak twig aphid, *Lachnus roboris*. Up to 5.1mm, brown, attended by ants on the twigs of oak. *L. ilicophilus* is very similar. It has pale siphunculi*, while *roboris*'s are black; its tibiae (penultimate leg joint) has two melanic patches, while *roboris* has one.

Willow, *Salix* spp. (particularly narrow-leaved species)

1. Red and green willow aphid, *Aphis farinosa*. Small, up to 2.5mm, in dense colonies, attended by ants. In early summer, green and red individuals are found. These are males and females respectively.
2. Large Willow Twig Aphid, *Tuberolachnus salignus*. Kite-shaped, up to 6mm. On twigs. Brown, siphunculi* are stumpy black cones. Distinct "thorn" arises vertically from the middle of the abdomen.

*Siphunculi are the "twin exhaust pipes" at the back end of the abdomen of some aphid species. They are always present in some form, but in many species are reduced to stumpy cones or are even nearly undetectable.

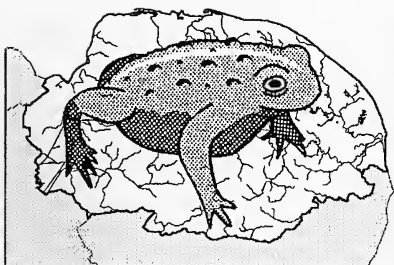
All records should contain date, location/grid reference, host plant species and which part of the plant is colonised. Other information such as attendant ant species, abundance, whether in shade/sun and age of tree ie sapling/mature would also be extremely useful. Please send details of any finds to:

Dr. Jit Thacker & Dr. GW Hopkins, 29 Capps Road, Norwich, NR3 4AZ
(Email: Jit1.helen@virgin.net)



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The Norfolk
NATTERJACK

Number 78
 August 2002

Toad-in-the-hole....

Welcome to the summer edition of the bulletin. A great many subjects are on offer so I trust there is something of interest for all.

Excursion reports are included for some of the recent meetings and I would like to make particular reference to the item on the Royal Norfolk Show - for those members that visited the stand will know what an excellent job David Nobbs did for the Society. David will also be heavily involved with the Natural History Day at Wheatfen (details page 8). Finally my thanks to all artists as well as contributors. Line drawings are always gratefully received for possible inclusion. **FF**

Reminder:

If you would like to put written questions to the panel at the 'Farming & Wildlife' forum on November 19th please submit them in good time to Stephen Martin (3 St John's Close, Hethersett, NR9 3DQ; e-mail stephen@smartin.fsnet.co.uk) or Bob Ellis (11 Havelock Road, Norwich, NR2 3HQ; e-mail bob@elymus.demon.co.uk).

WANTED: MAMMAL RECORDER/EDITOR

The society is currently looking for an editor for the mammal section of the Bird and Mammal report, and mammal recorder for the county. If you would like to apply or wish further information please contact me at the address below.

For those of you wish to send in mammal records, The Norfolk Biological Records Centre is happy to accept these records direct, until such time as a new mammal recorder is found. Records should be addressed to:

Norfolk Biological Records Centre,
 Union House,
 Gressenhall,
 Norfolk. NR20 4DR.



I am currently changing my phone number so the advertised one is no longer available. Until all changes are complete, if you wish to contact me please use my mobile number below.

Roger Fenton,
 Publications Chairman,
 22 Elm Grove Lane,
 Norwich,
 Norfolk, NR3 3LF

Tel: TBA
 Mobile: 07798 678449
 email: rfenton@fentonphotography.co.uk

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CHICHESTER ELM PROVENANCE

Mr Richard Smith is trying pinpoint the provenance of the Chichester elm (*Ulmus hollandica x vegeta*), which is sometimes confused with the well documented Huntingdon hybrid originally raised at Brampton in about 1750 by nurserymen Ingram & Wood. At present the first record of the tree is identified with George Lindley's nursery at Catton in Norwich (1801) but in the elm section of John Cree's famous *Hortus*, it can be seen that this influential nurseryman was selling the tree in 1829 near London. John Lindley cites the Chichester in the 1823 Cambridge Botanic Gardens catalogue, but John Loudon tends to follow the Huntingdon name in his writings.

Can any Society members help with the name of a plantsman/nurseryman of the early 19th century who propagated this fashion tree? Any information will be very gratefully received.

Richard Smith, Summersbury, Chichester Road, Midhurst, West Sussex GU29 9PS.



The quarterly bulletin
 of the
 Norfolk & Norwich
 Naturalists' Society
 Founded 1869

Response to "Lawn Surprise" (*Natterjack* 77 May 2002)

When we first moved into our bungalow about 50 years ago, the rough part of our garden contained coppiced stumps of oak and elm. The ground between the stools was dense with bramble and nettle, which we painfully cleared away.

As the grass, and other plants, grew back, we began to find Meadow saxifrage, or as we have always called it, Bulbous saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*). As the years came and went, gradually a carpet of these lovely white flowers developed and we noticed some appeared on our neighbours' plots too.



On the lots where the grass was pampered and regularly cut, the flowers became depleted. Ours became vastly fewer in number as the trees grew and created an enclosed top canopy which shaded out much of the ground flora. A few still managed to join in the display provided by the bluebells, periwinkles, crocuses and daffodils.

This year we definitely had more again since some of the trees have been removed or cut back, so allowing more light to penetrate.

Our soil is almost pure sand. These bulbils must have the ability to lie dormant for a good while as none were showing in 1954 when we moved in. A farmer kept chickens on that part of the plot before that. During the first world war the whole area was part of a battle training ground. No houses here then!

Barbara Hancy

A PROBLEM SHARED.....

Whilst visiting Wheatfen on Saturday 25th May I found some curled leaves in Surlingham wood on Hazel *Corylus avellana*. They were loosely closed hanging vertically from the branches. I opened one up hoping to find it's host but could find nothing. I knew that they are found on Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and are caused by the weevil *Deporaus betulae*. Were they, however, the same species on the Hazel?

Once at home I consulted the Naturalists Handbook on Weevils by M.G Morris, which stated that the Weevils did visit Hazel. Great, my identification was confirmed.

On the following Monday evening I was reading "Tapestry of Nature" by Ted Ellis where, upon page 82, Ted

had written about the same weevil and how he had found them rolling Hazel leaves in Surlingham Wood. Just like myself, Ted was puzzled by the inhabitants of these rolls.

Colin A Jacobs



Roll-leaf gall on Hazel



Roll-leaf gall on Birch

The Grey wagtail

Tony Howes piece on grey wagtails (May 2002) is "spot-on" in identifying that lowland birds of this species seem to prefer faster stretches of our slow flowing rivers, and particularly mill weirs and pools. In the London area these are where you find them on canals.

However readers may not be aware of another less idyllic habitat where they can be found, particularly in winter. They are frequently seen on the clinker beds of sewage works, as at Holt, Cley, Langham and Wighton, to name only a few that I know. There the only running "water" is that from the rotating arms, distributing effluent onto the surface. Other typical birds include pied wagtails and meadow pipits.

Undoubtedly grey wagtails will search out any suitable niche, even in the most unlikely habitats. I have just returned from a holiday in Tenerife, where the grey wagtail is the only resident wagtail. You will look hard and long without seeing any suitable mountain streams on this volcanic island, where the south is almost desert-like. Even there the species is common enough by any tiny dammed water.

Moreover it also seems quite at home in the vast holiday apartment complexes, wherever there are stretches of grass to relieve the concrete. On Tenerife all such grass has to be regularly watered, perhaps nowhere more than on the increasing number of golf courses. If the grey wagtail is to survive on Tenerife it has had to adapt, and seems to be doing so very successfully.

Ian Johnson



THE GAMES WE PLAYED AS CHILDREN.

Whilst attending the Grasses & Sedges course at Wheathfen on Sunday 26th May I happened to mention to the group that as children we played a game of "Cock or Hen" with False Oat Grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. One would run their clasped fingers up the stem of the grass thus grabbing the spikelets in the hand. If one of the spikelets protruded above the others this constituted the cock and if no "tail was produced then it was announced as the hen.

David Lester had played the game as a child too, but some of the older generation present on this day had never heard of it. This reminded me that blow pipes were made from the dry stems of Alexanders *Smyonium olusatrum*, Flea Darts were thrown from the heads of Wall Barley *Hordeum murinum*. (the irritating hairs would have presumably been the fleas) & itching powder would be sprinkled down the backs of children from the fruit of the Dog Rose *Rosa canina* agg. The seeds within & the wooly covering could be very irritating indeed.

Can anybody else remember these plant based games?

Colin A Jacobs.

I remember the above and the following games with plants also come to mind whilst growing up in the '50s.....

'Kiss-chase' utilising the hooks of Cleavers/Goose-grass (*Galium aparine*). A length of the plant would be thrown at someone and if it stuck they then had to chase others to deposit the plant on them and so on.

Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). The flowering stem would be picked and bent over behind the 'head' and then pulled forcing the head off so forming a plant gun.

Using a blade of grass between cupped hands and then blowing into them to create a sound. Who needed TV?

FF



Moonwort

The "Dell", between the Caravan Site and the Pinewoods in Wells, is an area which attracts numbers of birds and bird-watchers, but it is also of great botanical interest, with a many kinds of damp-loving plants - in fact, we have always known it, only partly with tongue in cheek, as the "Orchidetum", because of the variety and numbers of orchid species occurring there.

Six years ago my wife Eleanor's eagle eyes located a Moonwort, *Botrychium lunaria*, which has re-appeared every year since then. This weird fern is related to the Adder's Tongue, found in consider-

able abundance in the same area. It seems possible that our Moonwort may be the only one in the County (we had previously only seen it in France), but I should be glad to be proved wrong!

The accompanying photograph, taken with a temporary artificial



background, shows the typical single pinnate sterile frond and the "spikes" of the spore-bearing fertile frond.

Paul Banham

Night-time collecting years ago.

In 1931 I was told that a number of large moths were found one morning on the walls of Cromer lighthouse, suspecting a migration of convoluted hawk moths because my informant handed to me a dead specimen.

I obtained permission from the keeper's wife to hunt around the lighthouse and gardens the following night.

It was dusk when I started out with only an occasional hoot of a tawny owl from the nearby Warren Woods, but as I started to cross Happy Valley I suddenly felt cold all over as I suspected I was being followed; when I stopped walking so did the other noise. I was beginning to feel a little frightened with only my net and satchel to protect myself, then the light from the lighthouse turned around and I could then see that a few yards behind me was a large black dog.



My hair stood upright as my first thought was "Old Shuck" and that the mythical hound of the Norfolk cliffs was real after all.

It was not foaming at the mouth though but wagging its tail; I could see that it was more frightened than I was. I pointed with my finger the way we had just come and told it to go home, it just turned and vanished.

Needless to say I did not get many moths that night, I spent too much time looking behind at every rustle in the undergrowth, after all I was only eleven at the time!

Ken Durrant

Tales from the garden - 1

With the years advancing, we have had the back garden relaid to reduce the size of the flower beds and the amount of work. It has meant moving a lot of plants. Two in particular flourished. We congratulated ourselves on transplanting them so successfully - until we realised, when they came into flower, that we had been carefully nurturing *Epilobium ciliatum* and *Lapsana communis* - American willowherb and nipplewort!!

David Paull

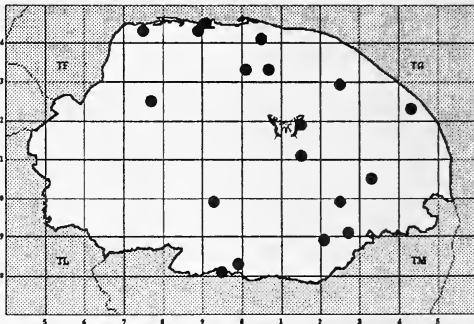


Excursion Reports

Featuring:

- Suffolk Breck Spring Flowers
- A Shotesham Stroll
- Wells Pinewoods
- The Royal Norfolk Show

● 2002-03 Field Meeting location
Easton College Indoor meetings



Suffolk Breck Field Meeting for Spring Flowers

Sunday 14th April 2002

The long spell of dry and cold weather resulted in Spring Flowers being at a premium. Some 30 members made their way to Ramparts Field at Icklingham to find everywhere very dry and with very little new growth showing. However, Meadow Saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*) was just coming into flower, though still very short, while Shepherd's-cress (*Teesdalia nudicaulis*) could still be appreciated though it had been flowering now for several weeks. In places, the path had a red edging with the tiny plants of Mossy Stonecrop (*Crassula tillaea*) already showing well. The last two species named are classified as Nationally Scarce plants, occurring in less than 100 hectads in the UK. Other common Breck spring flowers found included Early Forget-me-not, (*Myosotis ramosissima*), Thale Cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*) and Spring Vetch (*Vicia thyroides*). Several plants of Russian Cinquefoil (*Potentilla intermedia*) were noticed. This alien plant was first recorded from this site in 1981 so can be regarded as well and truly naturalised. At least two Common Lizards (*Lacerta vivipara*) were sent scuttling into the long grass.

Mr John Browning from Weatherhill Farm joined us for the morning. He owns Ramparts Field and leases it to Suffolk County Council, and he also owns several fields of setaside which we visited next, and we were extremely grateful to him for coming along and filling us in on the management of the setaside which has been down for about 10 years. It was interesting to see how the smallest of

the fields, about 4 or 5 acres in size differs very markedly from the others. When cropped, all the fields had approximately the same yields from the same rates of seeding and fertiliser. After ten years, the other three fields are all well grassed with just a few bare patches for flowering plants to thrive. The small field, however, is almost bare, with just a small amount of things like Early Forget-me-not and Rue Leaved Saxifrage (*Saxifraga tridactylites*), and with a few rosettes of Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*). The present management is a single cut in late summer to control the Ragwort. Incidentally, we were told that a pair of Stone Curlew nested on the small field in 2001 but had so far not returned in 2002.

After lunch we moved on to Icklingham Plains where we admired the 11 native Black Poplars (*Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*) this being probably the largest colony in East Anglia, though several of the trees now have branches missing due to wind damage and old age.

We followed the footpath through to the northern part of the Plains and walked across the arid Lichen heath so typical of many sites in Breckland before forestry and intensive agriculture eroded the area of heathland. There was still plenty of Shepherd's Cress in flower here again, and we also saw more Mossy Stonecrop. Making our way to a former sandpit, the party now spent some while grovelling on hands and knees, much to the delight of our resident "staff photographer". The reason for our down to earth approach became

evident when several small plants of Spring Speedwell (*Veronica verna*) were located. This is one of the trio of rare Speedwells that grow in Breckland, and this site is one of its few native sites. Most of the extant sites for this and the other two species, Breckland Speedwell (*Veronica praecox*) and Fingered Speedwell (*Veronica triphyllos*) are now controlled introductions, as at the Tuddenham Gallops site which several members went on to after the main meeting had finished. More Spring Speedwell was found in disturbed corner of the nearby field. There is also an old record for this species on Ramparts Field.

Those who did not go on to Tuddenham Gallop included a number of members who concluded their day by stopping at Wordwell on the way home, beside the roadside nature reserve where a good number of plants of Wild Grape Hyacinth (*Muscari neglectum*) were well in flower, one of the Suffolk sites where it is considered to be native.

Alec Bull



A Shotesham Stroll

Saturday May 19th 2002

Fortunately, the thunderstorms that were forecast failed to arrive and the threat of them didn't deter the twelve members who turned up for a look at the wildlife in the parish of Shotesham. Our leader for the day was Frank Mitchell who, along with his wife Diane, and others in the village have surveyed and recorded the wildlife of Shotesham in a booklet: 'The Natural History of Shotesham in 2000'. A lot of work had gone into producing this booklet, which has the same objective as our Wildlife 2000 project, and we look forward to seeing some of the species therein.

After walking along the village street, noting wayside plants and garden escapes, we turned onto a footpath beside a stream. The margins of this small stream were full of fool's water-cress *Apium nodiflorum* while on the drier areas there was a lot of lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* subspecies *bulbilifer* - this is the subspecies generally found near villages. On the bank we noted common valerian *Valeriana officinalis* and green alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*.

We were fortunate to have the company of Rex and Barbara Hancy so we could, perhaps, expect to find a gall or two - but along with Robert Maidstone they managed a grand total of 32 species plus a new record for Norfolk: *Diplolepus mayri* - a gall wasp which induces a gall on *Rosa* species, resembling an old Robin's pincushion but smaller.

The footpath led us to Stubbs Green, an area of unimproved grassland. In the wetter parts we noted ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, cuckoo-flower *Cardamine pratensis*, dame's violet *Hesperis matronalis* and tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*. The sedges were represented by lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis*, glaucous sedge *C. flacca*, hairy sedge *C. hirta* and false fox-sedge *C. otrubae*. As well as the common soft-rush and hard-rush, we also noted jointed rush *Juncus articulatus* and bulbous rush *J. bulbosus*. Bob Ellis pointed out meadow fescue *Festuca pratensis* and Mary Ghullam drew our attention to a hawthorn in a nearby

hedge that turned out to be the hybrid *Crataegus x media* with both single- and double-styled flowers.

At the top of Stubbs Green there is a pond that had fairly recently been dredged but has quickly recovered with a variety of aquatics including: greater reed-mace *Typha latifolia*, branched bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, mare's-tail *Hippuris vulgaris*, broad-leaved pondweed *Potamogeton natans*, common spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris* and even some New Zealand pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii* had found its way there. This is an invasive alien from Australasia introduced as an aquarium oxygenator but it is finding its way into even isolated ponds where it can form dense mats, out-competing our native species.

As we walked beside a hedge, Robert Maidstone pointed out a female scorpion-fly *Panorpa communis*. The male's abdomen is shaped like a scorpion's tail. This is not a sting but a genital capsule tipped with a claw used to hold the female while mating. There were numerous black-and-red froghoppers in the grass that Robert informed us were *Cercopis vulnerata*, the larvae of which feed mainly on couch grass roots.

We stopped for lunch just before Shotesham Little Wood. There was much discussion of the species seen so far and we were treated to the songs of two blackcaps and one chiffchaff.

Moving on into Little Wood we noted the delicate heads of wood melick *Melica uniflora* peeping out of the dark undergrowth with three-veined sandwort *Moehringia trinervia* below. The hornbeam, ash and hazel in the wood used to be coppiced but they have not been cut for quite a few years and many of the coppice growths are quite sizeable trees now. Our attention was drawn to numerous hornbeam seedlings. As far as I'm aware, hornbeam seeds rarely germinate this far north but perhaps in this instance the warm April and the wet start to May provided the right conditions.

Among the ground flora in the wood were: bugle *Ajuga reptans*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, wood speedwell *Veronica montana*, enchanter's night-

shade *Circaea lutetiana* and hairy woodrush *Luzula pilosa*. Both narrow buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and broad buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata* were recorded. Two more sedges were added to the list with remote sedge *Carex remota* and wood sedge *C. sylvatica*.

Several fungi were seen - among them was a substantial specimen of dryad's saddle *Polyporus squamosus* on the base of an ash, witches butter *Exidia glandulosa* on oak, yellow brain-fungus *Tremella mesenterica* on hazel and cramp-balls *Daldinia concentrica* on ash. A new bryophyte was added to the Little Wood list when Laurie Hall found the liverwort *Chiloscyphus pallescens*.

As it was a dull day, no butterflies were on the wing but Robert pointed out a winter moth caterpillar *Operophtera brumata* on hornbeam and a garden tiger caterpillar *Actia caji* on nettle.

An area of scrub adjacent to the wood provided more plants of interest with early purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, common agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, broad-leaved willowherb *Epilobium montanum*, creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*, yellow pimpernel *L. nemorum*, pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus* and Square-stalked St John's-wort *Hypericum tetrapterum*. Water plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica* was growing in a small pond in the same area. One plant here had us puzzled until Bob came to our rescue and identified it as common gromwell *Lithospermum officinale*, which is more often seen on the light chalky soils in the west of the county.

As we made our way back to the village the rain that had held off all day started to fall but nobody seemed to notice, as there was still much to see on the hedgebanks, including tufted vetch *Vicia cracca*, bush vetch *V. sepium* and common vetch *V. sativa* subspecies *segetalis*.

Our thanks go to Frank and Diane for agreeing to show us around the parish. We look forward to returning soon to sample more of the natural delights of Shotesham.

Bill Mitchell



Wells Pinewoods

Wednesday 12th June, 2002

Half a dozen members turned out on what proved to be a fine summer evening in Wells. Mainly botanists, they were able to see an area of the dunes which had been flooded by the sea in 1953, and subsequently planted with Monterey Pines, contrasting with the Corsican and Maritime Pines which had survived the flood on higher ground. Though not yet fifty years old, the Monterey Pines are tall, and well loaded with cones.



Nearby, the area known to bird-watchers as the Dell was showing off its wealth of plant-life. The ground here is permanently waterlogged, supporting fen rather than bog flora. We were too early for the Marsh Helleborines, but Marsh and Spotted Orchids were doing well, and the party was able to see *W. Norfolk's* (we believe) only Crested Buckler Fern, as well as the Moonwort (see page 3).

A new site was discovered for the low-growing Mossy Stonecrop *Crassula tillaea*, which shows up because of its conspicuous reddish colour, but another even lower-growing species (if this is possible) required one of the party to lie prostrate, his lens as it were glued to the eye, to be certain that this was Fenugreek, *Trigonella Foenum - graecum*, a tiny clover of bare ground near the sea, rarely found in Norfolk.

As we made our way back in the surprisingly still good light after nine o'clock, the last botanical challenge, not completely resolved, was which species of Small-reed was growing by the path. Even a hand-lens could not clearly reveal whether the upper side of the leaves was pubescent, but the general opinion was that it was the Wood Small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos*. All agreed, too, that Wells is not just for bird-watchers!

Paul Banham

THE ROYAL NORFOLK SHOW

Wed/Thurs. 26th/27th June, 2002

After last years absence because of the foot and mouth epidemic, the Society returned to the Royal Norfolk Show. The stand was in the same venue as last time, however, with a great change in its surroundings, with the show committee having altered the front area to our great advantage, meaning many more visitors paid us a visit this year.

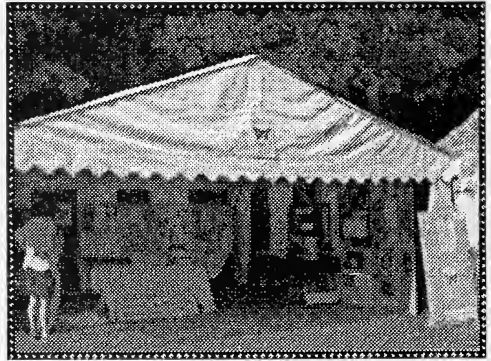
The displays were on the history of the Society, with recent finds from the home of Ted Ellis creating interest, Robert Maidstone showed his collection of wasp and bee nests, and how to identify the different species under the microscope; a great pull for the children and school groups and a collection of bracket fungus to promote the Norfolk Fungus Study Group was backed by a visual display provided by Mike Woolner. To promote the Norfolk

grasshoppers and allied insects publication, David Richmond supplied display boards and Ken Durrant kindly loaned his collection of the mounted specimens for added interest. Robert Maidstone also collected live specimens, which were presented under plastic, shown for a while and then released. All the Society's recent publications were on sale and excursion details were also actively promoted.

Thanks to all who helped on the stand over the two days, to make it a great success, along with the fine weather!

David Nobbs

The display area set up and awaiting its first visitors.



Grass Snakes

A trip to Upton Fen in mid June to hopefully photograph a dragonfly or two was unfruitful due to heavy cloud building up. Although it remained warm all the 'dragons' retreated to the vegetation.

But as I walked round the fen I began to see several grass snakes coiled up on the paths and clumps of dead reed piled up at the edges of cleared areas. Once you had 'got your eye in' they could be seen and approached from several yards away if you moved with care and very slowly. These snakes are harmless and don't bite, but if handled roughly can emit a foul smelling substance that is extremely unpleasant and difficult to get rid of.

Seen at close quarters the colouration is a dull grey/green with darker marking down the sides, most have a yellowish

dark edged collar. If disturbed they tend to flick their forked tongues before gliding off into the vegetation, if you are close enough a gentle rustling can be heard, very often they will return to the same spot within an hour or so. Upton Fen has lots of frogs of all ages, so I would imagine these are one of their main food items. The biggest snakes seen were about a metre a length, on hot sunny days they seem less approachable, you just get a quick glimpse of a tail disappearing.

They can swim well with a zigzag motion, keeping the head clear of the water, and they will visit garden ponds for frogs and fish. A friend at Thorpe had one caught up in the net he uses to keep the herons away from his fish. We had to cut the net to free it, but it seemed O.K. and went quickly on its way.



Tony Howes



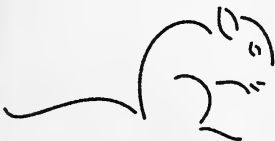
Jewels on the Marsh

Recently (May 2002) I was given the opportunity to see one of Britain's rare dragonflies; *Libellula fulvar*, the scarce chaser. It is only known in the south eastern parts of the country and in Norfolk it is thinly distributed but it can be numerous in particular locations as it was when I was shown this colony.

All along the dyke system larvae could be seen emerging from the water and climbing reed and sedge stems, many were hatching into the perfect insect, drying and hardening as they hung from the exuviae. There were some already on the wing, flying in the sunny glades nearby or hanging up in surrounding vegetation on the dyke sides. Seen in close detail the overall colour is a rich red/brown with a series of black marks down the abdomen. The wings are beautiful with gold lace veining on the front edges and a triangle of gold netting over black at the base of the rear wing. On first emerging both sexes are similar, the main difference being the dark smudge on the wingtips of the female. The males assume their lovely blue abdomen over a period of a few days.

The following day not one single hatching could be found taking place and most of the adult dragonflies had dispersed into nearby open areas. There they could be seen hanging up on vegetation or hunting for insects with fast flight during sunny spells, a privilege to see them.

Tony Howes



OAKS UNDER THREAT

Our English oaks are in danger from a fungus that has probably been imported accidentally from America where it has already devastated large expanses of trees in California and Oregon.

The disease is sudden oak death *Phytophthora ramorum*. It has been found, not in oaks so far but in viburnums, in garden centres in several counties, including neighbouring Lincolnshire. Emergency action by the Government has included a ban on the importation of plants from the USA and stringent checks on rhododendrons, viburnums, oaks and beech from the Continent and elsewhere.

So, what should we look for on our field trips? The fungus establishes itself as a canker when a spore lands and germinates. It grows into the bark and feeds on the live cells, killing them as it spreads. It is characterised by dark red to black sap oozing from the trunk as the bark splits and wilts. When the outer bark is removed, mottled areas of dead and discoloured tissue may be seen. Trees can die within months. So far as is known, sudden oak death has not yet reached Norfolk. But it is a notifiable disease and, if we do see possible signs of it, we should report it to DEFRA.

Sundews

The sundews of Beeston Common have responded well to the three year rotational mowing carried out by English Nature contractors and the last two wet winters. The Common now has a healthy population of both the Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) and the Round-leaved Sundew (*D. rotundifolia*). Last June David Mower was checking out the various clumps of sundews when he spotted an unusual robust form with broad oval leaves. On closer inspection it proved to be the hybrid between the two aforementioned species known as *D. x obovata*. David had last seen this cross at Holt Lowes many years ago and as far as we know it is a first for the Common.

May Lily

A number of Norfolk botanists trekked to a north Norfolk heath at the beginning of June to view the Red Data Book plant - May Lily (*Maianthemum bifolium*). A patch some 10x20 yds was found by Roger Garrad while walking his dogs. The find was amongst recently cleared scrub and constitutes the third known Norfolk site for this doubtful native.

Francis Farrow

Tails from the garden – 2

The mystery is where they come from and where they disappear to. Our back garden is small, completely enclosed, and surrounded by other gardens and houses. Yet, as we looked out of our kitchen window, there coming up a flight of steps was a weasel. From just a few feet away it looked so much larger than the weasels you normally see sprinting across a lane a hundred yards ahead. But weasel – not stoat – it undoubtedly was, with not a trace of a black tip to the tail. It spent a minute or two exploring a flower bed, then scampered off down the sideway. A memorable “first” for the garden.

Another creature with a distinctive tail also pays us the occasional visit, much to our delight. We see leaves moving on the plants in the border. Then a shiny nose and a pair of bright eyes appear, followed by a golden brown body and finally that very long tail that gave the wood mouse its former name. We have seen one twice this year so far, foraging among the seeds that have fallen from the hoppers on the bird table, then it vanishes for a few more weeks or months.

David Pault



A CORNUCOPIA, JUST WAITING TO BE USED

Nestling at the foot of the mound of Norwich's imposing Norman Castle is a rather nondescript building. In its heyday, it has had its moments of colour as red-robed judges arrived in horse-drawn carriages, and drama as murderers were tried and sentenced. Then the Crown Court moved to a new court house at Whitefriars and the building lapsed into almost complete anonymity as municipal offices. But today the old Shire Hall in Market Avenue has a new role and it should be a place of pilgrimage for members of this Society. It is now the home of the museum's Natural History Department, previously housed in cramped and inconvenient quarters up in the Castle.

The Society's links with the department go back to its earliest days. Some of the remarkable array of collections of specimens, which include insects, birds, plants and mammals, are the gifts and bequests of Society members. In a survey of biological holdings, Norwich ranked third among non-national museums for the size and coverage of its collections. Also in the department is an extensive library. The Society's own library, which contains some rare and historic volumes, has been incorporated into it but the books are tagged with yellow markers to indicate that they still belong to the Society. And the significance of all this to the Society? The collections and the library are there to be used by members. There is an open invitation from the Curator of Natural History, Dr Tony Irwin, to members who want to study a whole range of natural history subjects – or simply to gaze in admiration at, for example, the astonishing Fontaine-Neimye collection of butterflies, the results of a lifetime of collecting world-wide by a Norfolk vicar's daughter and her companion.

Although there is not a great deal more room than the department had in the Castle, the available space is a much more convenient and much easier to organise. It helps, of course, that the refurbishment budget included specially designed storage cabinets which are a vast improvement in terms of both conservation of specimens and ease of access.

There is now a visitor room where Society members and others can study collections. There is also study space, with microscope, in several of the collection rooms.

So how can members make use of this cornucopia? Visits "on spec" are not really a good idea because, with limited staffing – Tony Irwin, occasional assistants and a few volunteers! – and because of the value and fragility of much of the material, there cannot be open access. Tony may not always be available and feels that it is essential, certainly for initial visits, that he should spend some time showing people how the collections are organised and how they can be accessed.

All you need to do is make an appointment- in one of three ways:

By email:

tony.irwin.mus@norfolk.gov.uk

By telephone:

01603 493642 - there is an answering machine so that you can leave a message

By letter:

Dr. Tony Irwin, Natural History Dept.,
Shire Hall, Market Avenue, Norwich,
NR1 3JQ.

David Paull,
Chairman

Richard Richardson

An exhibition of RARs
art and memorabilia
In association with the
publication of his biography

"Guardian Spirit of the East Bank"
by Moss Taylor

CLEY PARISH CHURCH
OF ST. MARGARET'S

Saturday 10th August (10am - 6pm)
Sunday 11th August (11am - 6pm)



WILD ABOUT NORFOLK

An exhibition featuring local
wildlife groups, slide shows
and a children's theatrical
workshop

Saturday 5th October
10.00 am - 3.00 pm

Connaught Hall,
Attleborough

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
(Free Entry - Lottery Grant Support)



Norfolk and Norwich
Naturalists' Society

Natural History Day

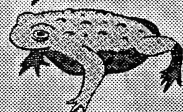
at Wheatfen

Sunday 4th August
starting at 10.00 am

A series of short walks, talks and
displays with a chance to meet some
local naturalists

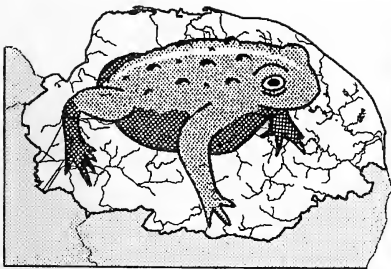
For further information contact:
David Nobbs (Warden)

Would all contributors
please send your notes etc.
to the editor as soon as possible
by October 1st 2002 to the
following address: Francis Farrow,
Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road,
Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD
or by email to:
francis.f@virgin.net



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THE NORFOLK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
- 9 NOV 2002



The Norfolk **NATTERJACK**

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 79
November 2002

Toad-in-the-hole....

This edition of *Natterjack* amounts to 10 pages, however, it still isn't enough to accommodate all the material received, particularly some excursion reports. Excursions that have been held but not included are 'Wild flowers revealed' at Felmingham, a meeting with the British Plant Gall Society at Knettishall, a walk around the Stody Estate and a Fungus Foray with the Fungus Study Group at Bayfield. Reports were received for some of these, however, the lack of space means that they will have to be carried over to the February issue. My apologies to those contributors who laboured to get their reports in before the deadline.

Again my thanks to all contributors and best wishes to all members for Christmas and the New Year. **FF**

Can Farming and Wildlife co-exist in the 21st Century?

Are you worried about the management of our countryside? The introduction of GMOs or if set-aside can sustain wildlife?


If you would like to put written questions on your concerns to the panel at the 'Farming & Wildlife' forum on November 19th (to be held at the Noverre Suite, Assembly House, Theatre Street, Norwich), then please submit them in good time to Stephen Martin (3 St John's Close, Hetherset, NR9 3DQ; e-mail stephen@smmartin.fsnet.co.uk) or Bob Ellis (11 Havelock Road, Norwich, NR2 3HQ; e-mail bob@elymus.demon.co.uk).

The meeting will be chaired by Rex Hancy and the panel includes: Adrian Darby, O.B.E. (Plantlife), Ross Haddow (Stody Estate) and Ian Henderson (B.T.O.).

The debate starts at 1930hrs.



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DON DORLING HONOURED

We are delighted to announce that Don Dorling, who has given devoted service to both the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust for many years, has deservedly been honoured with the award of the Sydney Long Memorial Medal. It was presented to him at the annual meeting of the Trust on October 18 by the Trust president, Sir John Blofield.

The award is made jointly by the Society and the Trust in memory of the Society's former secretary, Dr Long, who founded the Trust in 1926.

The award citation reads:
"Don Dorling's service to both the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society over many years is perhaps unsurpassed. He was Treasurer of the Society for 25 years and has also served as a Vice-president, Chairman, and Chairman of the Publications Committee. He has been a member of the Trust Council for ten years and was Chairman of the Trust for more than three

years during a particularly busy time in its history, including its 75th anniversary celebrations.

For nearly 40 years he played a vital role in the compilation, production and distribution of the annual Norfolk Bird Report and was a co-author of *The Birds of Norfolk* published in 1999.

The Councils of the Society and the Trust feel that through this long period of service Don has made a significant contribution to wildlife conservation in Norfolk and to the continued success of both organisations.

Throughout, he has had the constant support of his wife Mary who has also given notable service to the Society and the Trust for many years.

Accordingly, the Councils of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society have the greatest pleasure in awarding Don Dorling the Sydney Long Memorial Medal for the year 2002.



The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society
Founded 1869

Registered Charity No. 291604

Birch Leaf Cornet Rolls

Every year either on a Society meeting or at another event I notice the neat cornet-shaped rolled leaves of birch, alder or hazel. These leaf galls are said to be caused by a species of weevil, formerly of the *Rhynchites* genus but now called *Deporaus betulae*. Every year I open up one or two and find nothing!

Until this year, mind you I had not had a holiday. Three days away with the wife - well two days, since she was attending a conference on one day and I was left to my own devices. Now taking a holiday in Britain is chancy at the best but in June - well, expect the worst - and we got it! Three days of almost solid rain, not dark clouds and torrential rain but dull grey clouds and light but persistent wet.

On my footloose day I decided to go out and look at the local wildlife and having found a small area of heathland designated as a Local Nature Reserve I tramped about in the wet heather and gorse trying to spot anything interesting through my rain splattered and streamed up glasses.

Around the edge of the heath birch trees were slowly attempting to

invade the heather and one tree was festooned with the green rolls so familiar to me. Assuming the beetles had more sense than me and had stayed at home in bad weather I picked several of the rolls, at the same time holding a collecting container under the roll to make sure they did not drop out when the leaf was disturbed. I stuffed the container in my bag for inspection later.

When I returned to our accommodation that evening I carefully unrolled one or two of the rolls and noticed that some had small blisters on the upper surface of the leaf. The beginnings of a gall included by accident I thought and replaced them in the container for later examination at home.

By the time I got home and had a chance to look at them again the leaves had gone brown and started to decay but crawling around the side of the container was one minute weevil. Barely two millimetres long it was not much wider than the petiole of the leaf it had been found on. Surely a little thing like that could not roll up a leaf that large?

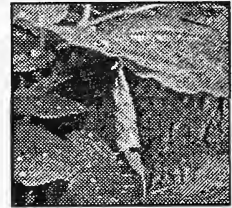
The supposed galls were now much larger, some had amalgamated into irregular blotches and were a pale straw colour in contrast to the coffee coloured decaying leaves. Under the microscope I carefully lifted the thin

epidermis over one of the blisters to reveal a small maggot with dark gnashing jaws.

No wonder I had never found anything inside one of these rolls before - I had been expecting to find a substantially larger beetle or its larvae. Just cutting the leaf bade through must have been a daunting task for this weevil but to roll it as well! I have several books which describe and illustrate the weevil, including giving the size, and its nursery but I had not envisaged the relative sizes until now.

How often do we miss something because we fail to relate the given sizes, illustrations or television pictures with comparable and known objects?

Robert Maidstone



Roll-leaf gall on Alder

NB The above photograph shows a rolled Alder leaf. See 'Natterjack' no.78 for examples of Birch and Hazel.

Children's Games.

I was interested to read Colin Jacobs' contribution "The games we played as children" in the August 'Natterjack'. During the last two weeks of June an eleven-year-old Polish girl was staying with me at Roydon and at that time *Arrhenathem elatius* was in its prime. Quite spontaneously she used the spikelets to play "Cock and Hen". The Polish words for these terms are "Kogut and Kura", but I think she used different ones for describing the spikelet arrangements.

She also fashioned blowpipes out of dead hogweed stalks. Alexanders does not grow in Poland (nor in Roydon for that matter), but she readily adopted it when we went to Dunwich and became quite adept at using its seeds as missiles!

So, whatever the current state of these childhood pastimes in England, they appear to be alive and well in Poland.

Arthur Copping

CORRECTION

In the last issue of 'Natterjack' (08/02) the report on the Wells Pinewood visit notes fenugreek *Trigonella foenum-graecum*. The name fenugreek was correct, however, the plant was English fenugreek or Bird's-foot Clover (as Stace calls it) *Trifolium ornithopodioides* and not as stated. A slip of the pen no doubt which could cause a bit of confusion - the 'other' fenugreek being mainly recorded as a bird-seed alien which originates from the eastern Mediterranean.



MAMMAL REPORT EDITOR(S)

Following the note in the last *Natterjack* the Council of the Society are pleased to announce that the vacancy of Mammal Report Editor has been filled by two volunteers. The role of editor has been taken on by Mike Toms and that of assistant editor by David Leech. Both are currently staff members of the British Trust of Ornithology (BTO) which is based in Thetford.

All records / observations and other mammal contributions should be sent to:



Mike Toms (NNNS Mammals),
c/o BTO, The Nunnery,
Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU
Email: mike.toms@bto.org

David can also be contacted
at the same address or by
email: dave.leech@bto.org

Please send 2002 records etc. by Jan. 31, 2003

NNNS Hand Lens Offer

All naturalists need a hand lens. A simple x8 or x10 lens transports its user into an otherwise unseen world. Again, through the goodwill of *Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies*, the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society can offer good quality 12mm diameter x10 Ruper lenses for £8.50 each including p & p.



Order from Tony Leech (3 Eccles Road, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6HJ. Tel: 01263 712282 or email leech@dialstart.net), to whom cheques should be made payable, and remember that buying a young naturalist a good lens is an excellent way of encouraging interest.

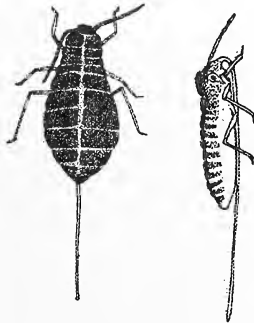
OAK TRUNK APHID

When one sees a request in *Natterjack* for information on certain species it is generally assumed that anything listed as rare would not be found by the average naturalist. The chances of coming across these rarities on a random excursion are remote however with a small amount of background information the odds are reduced considerably.

One such example is the Oak Trunk Aphid, *Stomphis quercus*, for which records were requested in the May 2002 *Natterjack*. Its habitat, oak trunks, are simple to find, the associated ant the Jet Black Ant, *Lasius fuliginosus*, is easily recognised being three or four times as large as the common black ant found in our houses and gardens and shiny black. This ant follows defined trails from its home in rotting tree stumps to feeding sites one of which is the honeydew exuded by the Oak Trunk Aphid.

Thus on a wet and miserable Tuesday afternoon in August when the rain had almost stopped I decided to liven up my day by visiting a site nearby where earlier this year I had noticed some Jet Black Ants trundling up and down an Oak trunk. The tree trunk concerned was well sheltered by an overgrown hedge and partly festooned with Ivy and I struggled through the vegetation to find a dry section of the bark.

Here the ants no longer followed each other along a well used roadway but ambled apparently aimlessly across the rough fissured bark, aimlessly until I noticed them congregating in one or two deep fissures. A sharp puff of breath sent the ants scurrying off to reveal a few brown pear-shaped objects in the bottom of the fissure.



I then had to equip myself with a probe, a slender twig broken off a strand of honeysuckle, to dislodge one of the objects into a small plastic bag. When it finally fell into the bag several smaller leg-waving creatures went with it. It seemed to be held in the fissure by a long thick straight cord.

However once I had got them home the long cord turned out to be its needle-like mouth parts - a necessary implement to bore through the inner bark into the sap bearing bast.

The time I took between leaving my car to look at the tree and my return with my capture probably took no longer than you have taken to read this.

The ants are not common, Norfolk's Biological Record Centre had only one record, (who looks for big ants?) and none for the Oak Trunk Aphid but they could be in your area - no one will know until you get out and look!

Robert Maidstone



A new host for Mistletoe?

Many years ago a Norwich friend and former colleague, Ellis Marks, introduced mistletoe to a small apple tree in his garden. Male and female plants grow side by side and set a good crop of seed annually. Beneath the apple tree a young plant of *Lonicera syringiantha* was planted and, over the years, has sent up strong shoots amongst the apple branches. Much to everyone's surprise, during recent pruning operations, several young mistletoe plants were seen on two of the *Lonicera* stems. *L. syringiantha* is a shrubby ornamental honeysuckle introduced from China in about 1890. Though not commonly planted, it is well distributed across the gardens of Britain and must come close to mistletoe colonies in other places. As the mistletoe's main host is a member of the Rosaceae, its appearance on a plant of the Caprifoliaceae may seem surprising. I wonder whether the fact that the two plants have been in such close proximity for a number of years has had some effect.

Kenneth Beckett

PINE INVADERS

I have several scots pine trees grown as Bonsai in the garden. The largest of these, almost a metre tall and 25 years old was being tidied up earlier this week. Scots pine are usually trouble free and not very much bothers them, but I found one branch that had become infested with caterpillars, many of the needles had been eaten leaving just bare twigs exposed. On checking through the books I identified them (?) as pine sawfly (*diprion pini*). I went back to the tree and began taking them off one at a time, there were about 30 and they were very sticky to the touch. Rather than killing them I put them out on the bird table, I then retired back indoors to see what, if anything, was interested in eating them. The blackbirds were the most likely candidates, but of the several we get on a regular basis, not one would eat a caterpillar, they picked them up but dropped them instantly. I can only assume the bitter taste and texture of pine resin was not to their liking, can't say that I blame them.

Tony Howes

www.whatsthis caterpillar.co.uk

For those who find the average Lepidoptera field guide pretty useless when it comes to identifying caterpillars, try the above website.

A Plant Gall on Tansy

Whilst visiting my In-laws garden at Blundeston, just north of Lowestoft last August I came across a small non-flowering plant of Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare* growing in soil beside their wildlife pond. On the leaves, mid-rib and leaf edges I found c100 flask like galls looking a much paler green than the leaves.

I checked the Norfolk Galls publication by Rex Hancy against the host plant and came up with the midge *Rhopalomyia taneciticola*. It was written that it could be found on the inflorescence or stem, but no mention of the gall appearing on the leaves.

As I had no previous experience with this particular gall I sent a sample to Rex and Barbara with the line "Have fun with this one." A few days later I was pleased to receive a reply stating that, yes they did indeed have fun with this one.

It was correctly identified as *R. taneciticola* and it has been recorded on the leaf before but this was the first one they had both personally seen. Finally, Rex also noted that the larvae in the sample galls were orange whereas in some papers they are said to be pink or rose.

The much larger flowering Tansy plants were all unaffected by this midge gall.

Blundeston is three miles south of the political Norfolk border. The recording boundary is to the south side of Breydon Water. I have checked Tansy in the 'no-mans' land area of both counties but have not seen any more affected plants.

LIGHT FANTASTIC

What do shooting stars have in common with centipedes? Answer - they bring people out at night to see them. This year on a number of occasions I have had calls from various people to inform me that whilst out watching the display of numerous 'shooting stars' they have seen what at first thought were glow-worms at their feet. However, when a torch has been shone down to get a better view, to their amazement all they could see was a long, very thin centipede approximately 60 mm in length.

Out of the 45 species of centipedes in these islands, three species exhibit phosphorescence by a substance secreted from their sternal glands when they are disturbed. Two of these have been found in Norfolk.

Geophilus carpophagus Leach is often found in leaf litter in woodland, but has also been recorded from inside houses. It is reddish-brown and approximately 50 mm in length. *Haplophilus subturneans* Shaw, which is yellowish-brown and can reach 70 mm in length, is more often found in sugar beet fields. It is the only species that has turned from being carnivorous to vegetarian and has been blamed for causing damage to root crops. From the descriptions given to me recently this would be the species referred to by my contacts.

Ken Durrant

Colin A Jacobs



The Hellebore Leaf-miner, *Phytomyza hellebori* Kaltenbach (Dip.: Agromyzidae) in Norfolk

Last year, in *Natterjack*, I reported on the discovery of leaf-mines on plants of stinking hellebore, *Helleborus foetidus*, at the Bressingham nursery of R. H. Meredith & Son. It was thought likely that they could have been caused by larvae of the Agromyzid fly *Phytomyza hellebori* but as, at that time, it was unknown in Norfolk and only comparatively newly recorded in Britain it was necessary to identify adults bred from the larvae in the mines to confirm its presence in Norfolk.

Adults from these mines duly emerged late in 2001 and, early in 2002, from leaves collected from both my garden here at Scole and on the Bath Hills at Ditchingham and all were confirmed as *Phytomyza hellebori* by Tony Irwin – many thanks Tony. Whilst this confirmed the species in Norfolk it had almost certainly been noted a couple of years earlier but not identified as such at that time. Robert Maidstone tells me that he had bred an Agromyzid from leaf-mines in stinking hellebore in 1999 but as *Phytomyza hellebori* had not been reported anywhere in Britain at that time the specimen was tentatively identified as a closely related species *Phytomyza ranunculi* (Shrank). The original paper by Stubbs (2000) describes the species and records it as being new to Britain, in the Peterborough area, in 1999 so Robert's record indicates the fly was also to be found in Norfolk at that time – if we had only known.

In the last year I have had reports of the mines in leaves of stinking hellebore from the Norwich Castle Gardens, Sheringham (although some gardens have the mines and others are still completely free which would seem to indicate fairly recent colonisation), Caston, Dersingham, Thursford, North Creake and Taver-

ham Garden Centre as well as the original records from Bressingham, Scole and Ditchingham. I have also found the mines in a garden at Halesworth in Suffolk so it is obviously well distributed across East Anglia. Up to now *Phytomyza hellebori* has only been recorded from leaves of *Helleborus foetidus* and no other species of hellebore and, indeed, other species of hellebore do not seem to have any species of Agromyzid (or anything else) mining their leaves. However, last year Francis Farrow noted mines in the leaves of *Helleborus argutifolius* (previously known as *Helleborus corsicus*) on plants at the Taverham Garden Centre but as yet nothing has been bred out to confirm this record (all plants having been sold when he went back to get one). As the European distribution of *Phytomyza hellebori* is given as Finland, central Europe and also Corsica (Spencer, 1976) and the two species of hellebore are very similar, this seems a very likely second host for the fly.

It would be very interesting to confirm another hellebore as being susceptible to mining by *Phytomyza hellebori* and also to find the current distribution of the species in Norfolk and perhaps chart its spread on a host plant that is virtually only to be found in gardens, as it does seem to be a very new arrival in the county. Any records of leaf mines in hellebores will be greatly appreciated and can be sent to me at 'Hopefield', Norwich Road, Scole, Diss, IP21 4DY.

Mike Hall

References;

- Spencer, K.A. (1976). The Agromyzidae (Diptera) of Fennoscandia and Denmark. *Fauna Entomologica Scandinavica* 5 (2): 426-427, Scandinavian Science Press Ltd., Denmark.
Stubbs, A. (2000). The hellebore leaf-miner, *Phytomyza hellebori* Kaltenbach (Diptera, Agromyzidae) New to Britain. *Dipterist's Digest* 7: 33-35

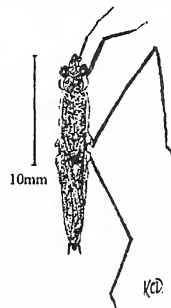
[Correction to my note in *Natterjack* no. 76, February 2002 on the same subject – the page references to Spencer should have been 426-427 (as above) and not 305-306, my apologies]

Another rare bug from the south

Whilst browsing around the pond on Beeston Common, near Sheringham, on 19th Sept., 2002 I was surprised to see three examples of a species of very large pond skater (Gerridae) darting across the surface of the water catching flies etc.

The only time that I had seen their like before was when I had collected a rare immigrant, *Limnoporus rufoscutellatus* (Latr.), from a small pond on Hoe Common, near Dereham some 54 years earlier on 13th March, 1948.

Thinking that these may be the same species I carefully waded into the pond and with luck managed to position myself so as to steer one of them towards the bank where I was able to net it, the others, meanwhile beat a hasty retreat to the centre of pond.



I was more than pleased however, when I later keyed it down using the microscope to find that it turned out to be *Gerris=Aquarius paludum* Fabr. It is considered a southern species which is found up as far as Essex, so here it seems we have another insect moving northwards, possibly a Norfolk first?

Ken Durrant

Ref: Southwood & Leston's 'Land and Water Bugs of the British Isles' Warne (1959) pages 348, 354-356.

BLACK WOODPECKER

On 26th December 1835, according to the diaries of John Salmon quotes in the Society's latest *Transactions* (Vol. 35 Part 1), "a black woodpecker [was] taken at Billingford near Diss in a wood with alder buckthorn and guelder rose."

But the black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) is not, and never has been, on the British List!

Here's what *The Bird's of Norfolk* (1999) says: "Two black woodpeckers were said to have been obtained by Francis Blake at Billingford, near Scole, in 1835, but the record was ejected by Stevenson and Riviere. Richard Fitter, who in 1959 analysed all claimed sightings in the British Isles, also rejects the Billingford record." So that's that!

Or is it? Salmon was an observant, careful naturalist with a penchant for ornithology; that's clear from the diary extracts in the *Transactions*. Black woodpecker is easier to identify than almost any other bird on the European List and the rather casual reference to its discovery in Norfolk by John Drew Salmon in his diary - or was the entry for Boxing Day 1835 extended? - hardly invites rejection. It is almost as though the diarist did not feel it exceptional or that the record was so definite that further details weren't needed.

Both Thetford, where Salmon was living in 1835, and Billingford are in the south of the county and it is almost unbelievable that this keen naturalist didn't leave his brewery immediately to go and have a look at these exceptional specimens.

I wonder what Francis Blake did with the birds he collected? Whatever they were.

Michael Freer

After receiving the above article I searched the 'Transactions' to see

if there were any early references to John Salmon and found the following interesting note written by Thomas Southwell in 1904 (Vol. VII p.737). FF

Great Black Woodpecker

With reference to the repeated reports of the appearances of this species in England, most of which may at once be dismissed as "unproven," it may be well to put on record a circumstance which has recently come to light. Mr. W.H. Tuck informed me that in the year 1897, seven or eight of these birds were brought from Sweden, where they had been taken from the nest by a friend of his personal knowledge, but he was not allowed to mention the circumstance until a period of three years had expired, and it will doubtless account for the examples reported by the Rev. E.T. Daubeny as seen at Ixworth, Euston Park, and Brandon in 1897, and possibly also for those said by Mr. Digby Pigott to have been seen in Sheringham Park in 1903. That this sedentary species should ever, of its own accord, desert its native forests and migrate hither is so exceedingly improbable, that ornithologists were fully justified in rejecting any but the fullest evidence of the occurrences, and such an introduction as that mentioned ought to be regarded with reprehension even if conducted openly, much more so if secrecy were enjoined on the part of the few who were aware of the transaction. - T.S.

Marsh Tides

During my time at Wells Field Study Centre, and even subsequently in retirement, I think I have been asked more questions about tides than anything else. As tides frequently matter to coastal naturalists, a few words would perhaps not come amiss. Visitors to Wells who happen to be here in the morning or evening are sometimes amazed to see that the saltmarsh has disappeared under water. This really provides the first question: why is the day tripper unlikely to see a "marsh tide"?

Our established, stabilised marshes are about 2.8m above mean sea level, so only tides rising more than this will flood them. This happens only during the bigger spring tides (nothing to do with Spring the season), when the gravitational pull of the sun is added to the much greater pull of the moon. Spring tides occur around New Moon and Full Moon, i.e. for a few days every fortnight, the biggest ones coming a couple of days after new or full. At any given point on the coast such tides always occur at the same time of day, and in Wells that time is roughly between seven and ten o'clock a.m and p.m., quite different from Yarmouth, by the way. Spring tides are "bunched", with only just over 12 hours between one and the next. Their opposite, "neaps", can stretch to around 13.5 hours between them. The average difference over the fortnight is about 12.5 hours.

The biggest forecast or "astronomical" tides rise about 3.5m above sea level in our bit of the North Sea, and, of course, fall about that much below sea level at low tide, giving a tidal range of up to 7m during springs. Such predictions can, of course, take no account of the weather, which can alter things considerably, as anyone who was here in 1953 or 1978 will be only too aware.

Another factor affecting saltmarshes is that the further "up the creek" you are, the shorter the time of flood, and the longer the ebb. At Wells Quay the tide floods for about 3.5 hours and ebbs for about 9. The change from ebb to flow in a creek system can be quite sudden, with the water moving at quite surprising speed. This is also something to bear in mind when botanising on our marshes, as is the fact that the considerable volume of water making its way back to the sea as the tide falls cuts deep creeks, which may be concealed by plants, especially Sea Purslane, growing over the edges. Good hunting!

Paul Barham



Excursion Reports

Featuring:

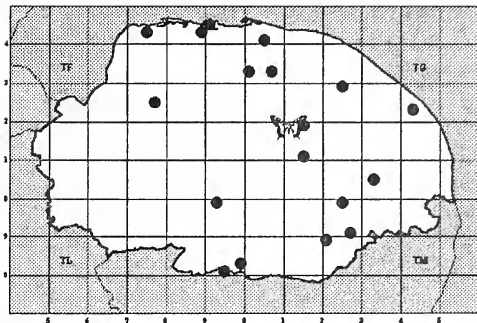
Bedingham Corner RNR

West Harding Heath

National History Day

Hidling RNR

- 2002-03 Field Meeting location
- ✈ Easton College Indoor meetings



'Wild Flowers Revealed': Bedingham Corner RNR

Saturday June 29th, 2002

This was the first of three meetings arranged this season as introductions to identifying plants typical of various Norfolk habitat-types, by way of a sequel to the very successful gatherings along similar lines held last year. As our outing to this Roadside Nature Reserve was combined with one of the Flora Group's 2002 Sulphur Clover Survey meetings, a fair number of members, friends and Society botanists met on a fine morning in late June.

Visiting south-Norfolk roadside wild-flower sites, many of which are on the narrow verges of country lanes, usually poses parking problems to motorists in numbers. Fortunately, the Bedingham RNR is flanked at present by 'setaside' grassland in place of the former arable, and we were able to use its margin. The edge of the 'new' grassland on the north side of Topcroft Road is particularly interesting, as the Sulphur Clover (*Trifolium ochroleucon*) and Spiny Rest-harrow (*Ononis spinosa*), both special plants of the chalky boulder clay, are starting to spread there from the verge - or at least are re-appearing there. The north verge itself is up to four metres wide in places and represents one of the county's best sites now for the nationally-scarce Sulphur Clover. This species, with straw-yellow flowers which become browned as they age, also lines both sides of the road to the west of the stretch designated an RNR and had earlier this

season given a wonderful show, though verges outside the reserve unfortunately had been cut three days before our visit! Most plants of the Rest-harrow were not yet in full flower, but they were plentiful and easily found. Although some species characteristic of the boulder-clay are absent from Bedingham Corner, we did see a few plants of Pepper Saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*), an umbellifer with flowerheads of a colour rather similar to Sulphur Clover, but not yet showing them to advantage.

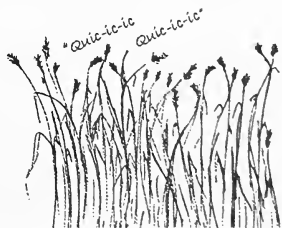
The RNR is backed by a hedgerow at its eastern end and a ditch, mostly open but scrubby in places, along the remainder of its length, which helps account for its species richness. Some 112 higher plant species were identified on and near the RNR, including 18 grasses, 5 rushes and 5 sedges. The last of these groups included, in addition to its parents, the hybrid of the False Fox and the Remote Sedge, *Carex x pseudoaxillaris* (*C. otrubae* x *C. remota*), which A Flora of Norfolk mentions as recorded at four other Norfolk sites, all in the east of the county. Amongst the other interesting plants were Hairy St. John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*) and Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*). This is a good roadside orchid site, with four species recorded in the recent past, but this year was disappointing, apart from the ever-increasing Common Spotted-orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) which were much varied morphologically and in flower colour. A single Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) was found in contrast to the dozens of some previous seasons on the banks of the ditches on both sides of the road, but the few Pyramidal Orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) previously

noted growing on a short stretch of steep ditchside formerly almost bare of other vegetation were not to be seen. Possibly they remain amongst the now more-luxuriant growth, but it seems the ditches may be due for sympathetic and selective cutting and clearing.

Bedingham Corner RNR is rich in butterflies and other insect life: most noticeable were the large numbers of Six-spot Burnet moths on the abundant bluish-violet Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*). As for birds, at one point a member drew the attention of botanists intent on the plants at their feet to a Quail calling in the adjacent grassland.

As lunchtime approached, field-meeting participants bent (literally) on improving their botanical identification skills enjoyed a bonus when quadrat recording was undertaken as part of the Sulphur Clover Survey. In the afternoon, remaining members split into smaller groups and set out in various directions by car to assess other *Trifolium ochroleucon* sites in the district, finally reassembling in the car park at Caister St. Edmund Roman Town to pass the results of their recording labours to Bob Ellis.

Stephen Martin



'Wild Flowers Revealed': West Harling Heath for Breckland Plants

Saturday 27th July, 2002

On a very hot day at the end of July, about 30 members and others assembled by a massive heap of wood chips that was all that was left of a section of forest. Gillian Beckett welcomed us and told us that the Forestry Commission has been taking art in a Heathland Re-creation Scheme.

The main area of the forest at Harling was originally planted largely on heathland, the eastern part (where we were) mainly on chalk or sand over chalk, the part farther west on deeper, acid sands. Because this land had been planted with conifers and never had any fertiliser, the soil chemistry was not changed and reverts very easily to heathland. The Forestry Commission protected it from the large carrot growing farmers of the area.

This area was one of the three chosen because it still has some of the Breckland specialities. In time it will be grazed by sheep.

Unfortunately Gillian was not able to stay with us and handed the meeting over to Bob Ellis, who was assisted by Arthur Copping, Colin Dunster, Mary Ghullam, Laurie Hall, David Mathias, Bill Mitchell and Stella Taylor.

The conifers had been felled about two years, the roots having been bulldozed into rows, which left the ground open and plants easy to see. We first set off in the chalky area, quickly getting Wild Mignonette (*Reseda lutea*), Hop Trefoil (*Trifolium campestre*), Heath Groundsel (*Senecio sylvaticus*), Cat's ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Long-headed Poppy (*Papaver dubium*), Wall Lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*), Thale-cress (*Arabis thaliana*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) and Square-stalked Willow-herb (*Epilobium tetragonum*).

The next plant was Tall Rocket or Tumbling Mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*), which I had not seen before. There were only a few plants.

So far we had only walked about 100 m. There was Viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), Toadflax (*Linaria vulgare*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Hair-

Rockcress (*Arabis hirsuta*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) with yellow flowers, Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*) with white flowers and Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*).

Next Bob showed us Sickle Medick (*Medicago sativa* ssp. *falcata*) which was bright yellow and the hybrid with Lucerne, Sand Lucerne (*Medicago sativa* ssp. *varia*), which was various shades of pink/blue/purple. This was much more widespread than the pure Sickle Medick. Both of these are nationally scarce species.

On the centre of a path was growing Corn Camomile (*Anthemis arvensis*). Then we found two different species of Scabious. Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), a stout, roughly hairy plant and Small Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*), a more delicate plant with upper leaves linear, which prefers chalky soil. Then there were two species of Knapweed, Common (*Centaurea nigra*), sometimes called Hard Head and Greater (*Centaurea scabiosa*), a much more spectacular flower.

As we were on heath land, even though only recently re-instated, you would expect to find a few grasses, and we had the expert: Arthur Copping. We found Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Black Bent (*A. gigantea*) and Creeping Bent (*A. stolonifera*). Barren Brome (*Anisantha sterilis*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), False Cat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Quaking grass (*Briz media*), Soft Brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), Wood small-reed (*Calamagrostis epigejos*), Cock's-foot grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), Common couch-grass (*Elytrigia repens*), Red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Smaller Cat's-tail (*Phleum bertolinii*) and Annual Meadow-grass (*Poa annua*).

Further on was Musk Mallow (*Malva moschata*) growing at the side of the track, and Hoary Plantain (*Plantago media*) growing in the middle of the track. Next was Common Rest-harrow (*Ononis repens*), Basil Thyme (*Acinos arvensis*), both pink and white forms, and Long-stalked Crane's-bill (*Geranium columbinum*).

In a patch next to the track was an area fenced off in which was one plant of Spiked Speedwell (*Veronica spicata*), a

Red Data Book species. This is becoming very scarce in Breckland.

Further on there was Salad Burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*) with its neat little leaves, Large Thyme (*Thymus pulegioides*) and Ribbed Melilot (*Melilotus officinalis*). On the track back along the bottom of the site was plenty of Rock Rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*) and Purple-stemmed Cat's-tail (*Phleum phleoides*). This is similar to Smaller Cat's-tail, which we had seen earlier, but the stem is purple and the inflorescence is slimmer. Smaller Cat's-tail has swollen bases of its glumes, longer ligules, wider leaf blades and blunt tips to its glumes.

The party collected under a large Sallow (*Salix caprea*) which gave some welcome shade from the mid-day sun.

Several members left after lunch and the depleted party set off in the opposite direction to the more acid area. Here we found Hawkweed Ox-tongue (*Picris hieracioides*), Fig-leaved Goosefoot (*Chenopodium ficifolium*), Canadian Fleabane (*Conyza cana-densis*), Common Stork's-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*), Bur Medick (*Medicago minima*), a nationally scarce species, Bugloss (*Anchusa arvensis*) and what we had come looking for: the remains of Sand Catchfly (*Silene conica*), a nationally scarce species, and Spanish Catchfly (*S. oites*), a Red Data Book species, both in decline due to changes in agriculture.

For those interested in butterflies, the following were seen: Brimstone, Common blue, Essex skipper, Gatekeeper, Green-veined white, Large skipper, Large white, Meadow brown, Painted lady, Peacock, Red admiral, Ringlet, Small copper, Small skipper and Small white.

I am indebted to Bill Mitchell who kept the card for the records and who kindly typed out both the English and Scientific names on his new computer and then managed to email them to me.



John Mott

Gatekeeper



Natural History Day at the Ted Ellis Trust Wheatfen Reserve

Sunday August 4th, 2002

Traveling from Lowestoft on Sunday 4th August, I anticipated an enjoyable day with my fellow Naturalists at the Wheatfen Natural History Day. It was very warm with bright sunshine. However, on arrival blustery rain showers greeted me. Luckily there were a few tents and gazebos housing the varied exhibitions to shelter under. By lunchtime, however, the rain had subsided.

As usual there was plenty to keep everybody occupied and it was pleasing to see that the visitors were bringing items for identification. As I am a member of the Norfolk Fungus Study Group, David Nobbs, our host for the day, put me in charge of the Fungus table.

Here were displayed the Brackets, *Daedalea quercina*, *Diatrype disciformis* and the Rhizomorphs of *Armillaria mellea*. A quick foray alongside Home Marsh produced a metre long branch covered in *Stereum hirsutum*.

Dr Pam Taylor was able to show us a Southern Hawker dragonfly as it emerged from its exuvia in the dyke by the thatch (hide). This produced much amusement for the children.

After lunch I joined Bob and Pam Ellis for a walk around the reserve and Bob pointed out some relatively new arrivals to the reserve such as Green Figwort *Scrophularia umbrosa*, Prickly Lettuce *Lactuca virosa* and a small colony of Broad-leaved Helleborines *Epipactis helleborine*. Other members of the Society manned their various exhibits throughout the showers - ranging from moths to mayflies, bees and wasps to grasshoppers and galls whilst TET members provided a plant stall and a supply of tea and cakes.

I left with Pam Ellis for the journey home tired but full of yet more knowledge about the inhabitants of Wheatfen. Thanks to all who took part and to David for organizing the day.

Incidentally all the insect bites I received there were very painful. I was itching all that next week.

Colin A Jacobs

Joint Meeting with GYNS at Hickling NNR

Sunday September 8th, 2002

It was a wet day that got even wetter. Our joint meeting with the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Hickling Broad reserve was probably the dampest field trip of the year. We drove there in the rain, wondering if we were completely mad and whether we would even leave the car park. The rain almost stopped and, after a brief encounter with a nosy piglet who seemed attracted to the smell of walking boots and wellies, the intrepid dozen or so of us set out.

Then the rain started again and got steadily heavier. The effect was that we saw very little. The dragonflies sensibly kept their heads down. The few flowers still in bloom were looking very sad. But we did at least see two of the county's rarer birds. First, we spotted a male marsh harrier, perched on a bush and looking very bedraggled, with his wings outstretched cormorant-fashion. Then a female got up and glided effortlessly over the reed bed for a minute or two. But the "lick" of the day was a common crane, standing almost motionless in the pool overlooked by the new Cadbury Hide. At least we were able to watch it in the dry!

David Paull

'Roots of Norfolk'

'Roots of Norfolk' was the title of an exhibition staged at the Norfolk Rural Life Museum, Gressenhall on Sunday September 29th, 2002. Its theme was wildlife and conservation and local, city, county and national organisations were represented.

I attended with Ken Durrant and Robert Maidstone and helped with the large display of galls, parasites and more easily recognisable insects put together by Ken to promote the Society.

With Ken and Robert busy explaining to the visitors about the various insects displayed I manned a small table illustrating the Society's recent publications and membership details. As Ken's stand drew in the people we became very busy answering many queries, such as: Are badgers increasing in Norfolk? Will there be any more wildflower days and how long do snails take to mate?

It was clear that the event was well worth attending and thanks must go to Robert for organising our presence and to Ken who volunteered to put on the display. It may be run in the future, if so, the Society should be there.

Francis Farrow

Photographic Group Winter Meetings

Monday Nov 25th

'Golden moments of time'

-A photographer's memories.

Tony Howes will take a ramble down memory lane and show us some of the subjects that have been in front of his camera over the years, those special, magical moments that live in your mind forever. Come and see the Norfolk countryside and it's wildlife.

Monday Feb 24th

This is an evening to bring along your latest work, any Society member with an interest in photography is welcome, you have no need to worry about not being an 'expert' we all learn from one another. Recording on film what each of us is interested in, and what we find as we stroll around the Norfolk countryside, or enjoy on more exotic trips abroad, will help keep those memories fresh and in focus, so bring some slides along and tell us all about your experiences.

All the above meetings will be held in the Sports and Conference Centre, Easton College, beginning at 7.30pm.

Tony Howes

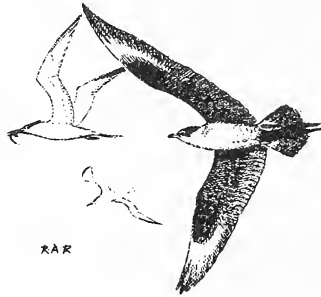


Review of 'Guardian Spirit of the East Bank'

Cley Church was crowded on the evening of the 9th August for the formal launch of Moss Taylor's book on the life of Richard Richardson – *Guardian Spirit of the East Bank*. The fact that so many people were present twenty-five years after his death bore testament to the impact that Richard had exercised on the post-war birdwatching scene. In addition to Moss, Robert Gillmor and Richard Fitter were the principal speakers. The two Richards had cooperated, fifty years ago, on the publication of Britain's first real bird field guide, *Collin's Pocket Guide to British Birds*.

The large format book of some 230 pages covers Richard's life from his early days in London, his wartime experiences in Norfolk and the Far East and, particularly, the period of 28 years he lived at Cley. It is illustrated throughout with very many of Richard's line drawings and paintings together with a selection of photographs, many of which were taken from his photograph albums.

The book is an excellent read and has taken your reviewer back to the many happy days spent on the East Bank at Cley [in the days before there were hides on the Reserve] when bird watching seemed a more leisurely affair. It was usual to gather along the Bank wherever Richard had settled down – the scene resembling a prophet surrounded by his disciples! As indicated in the story, he was very generous in sharing his knowledge with other bird-watchers, both young and old.



Richard was, in many ways, a very private person and many of those who knew him were ignorant of much of his background. Fortunately, he kept immaculate records in his diaries and logbooks, which have enabled Moss to piece together Richard's life story from these and the contributions of his many friends and acquaintances. A total of 231 contributors are named in the Appendix and Moss is to be congratulated on the major effort in condensing this vast source of material into such a readable and visually attractive book.

The sometimes-difficult relationships that existed between Richard and The Norfolk Wildlife [then Naturalists] Trust and its Warden at Cley have not been ignored but have been dealt with sympathetically. Although Cley was never able to entice his beloved Black-tailed Godwits to attempt breeding again, Richard was aware, just before he died, that Avocets had bred successfully on the Reserve. I believe that he would be very pleased with the success that the Avocets have enjoyed locally during the 25 years since his passing.

Although many readers of *Natterjack* will not have known RAR, I am sure that anyone interested in birdwatching in Norfolk would enjoy reading this narrative and, particularly, would relish the opportunity to study the many examples of his work which are liberally scattered throughout the book. It is worth owning a copy for these alone.

Don Dorling

Guardian Spirit of the East Bank by Moss Taylor.
Wren Publishing 2002 (ISBN 0-9542545-0-3). £35.00 hbk.

Michael's Memorial

On Sunday September 8th about thirty people gathered for the unveiling of Michael Seago's memorial near the Berney mill at the southern end of Breydon.

This is a worthy tribute as this area is where Michael started



his great love affair with birds that continued the rest of his life. The R.S.P.B. have now named part of the wetland here 'Seago's Marsh'. Another of Michael's interests was windmills, so it is fitting that the Berney mill stands majestic close by over looking this brooding landscape of marshes and big skies.

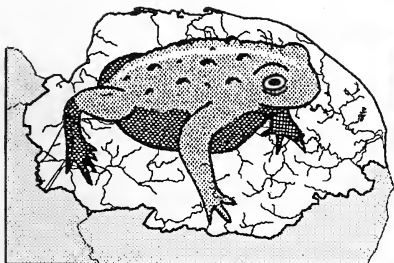
After the unveiling ceremony we all enjoyed refreshments at the nearby Berney Arms where the talk centred on birds and wildlife, Michael would have loved it.

Thanks must go to Sylvia and family for the moving occasion and the hospitality afterwards, also to the R.S.P.B. for all their work in this project, especially Ian Robinson.

Tony Howes

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by January 10th 2003 to the following address: Francis Farrow, Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road, Sheingham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net





The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 80
February 2003

Toad-in-the-hole....

Another New Year and the first 'Natterjack' of 2003, which is at this time of the year looking both back with excursion reports and forward with forthcoming events plus a good mixture of articles. Again my thanks to all contributors, however, if you haven't written before make it a New Year's resolution to do so.

Don't forget also to send your 2002 records to the various County Recorders as soon as possible if you have not already done so. Let's hope for some good days out this Spring with many natural history observations and records.

FF

Outstanding bird records for 2002 should be sent immediately to 49 Nelson Road, Sheringham NR26 8DA. They can be sent by e-mail as an attached Word or Excel file to: JDunmore@ukgateway.net - no scanned sketches or photographs please - these should always be sent by post.

Giles Dunmore - County Recorder

E.B.L.

European Bat Lyssavirus is a virus well known in European bats which can have dire consequences if not treated in humans! The popular press have been terming this "rabies" - which conveys more than a hint of panic - but we much prefer it to be known by its proper acronym - EBL since it is not classic, general mammalian, foam-at-the-mouth, "rabies".

It is recorded in three bat species (P.O.N., Daubenton and Serotine) from Denmark down through Holland and France to Spain, but has only been shown to be present in 2 individual Daubenton bats of the thousands of bats tested in the U.K. Our European friends do not seem to dissolve into a jobs-

worth style frenzy about this virus, and I feel that we should not either. After all, the chances of contracting it are considerably less than winning the lottery during the next 100 years - and we all know it isn't going to be you! (but if it is - please remember the needy cause of bat conservation).

Basic advice though should be not to handle bats - then you won't get bitten? If you ignore this advice and get bitten then see your GP and get the jab. The unfortunate man in Scotland refused the jab - and died. There is another very important bat conservation message "don't fiddle with bats when they are in a breeding colony" - it's really no good for them or bat conservation.

John Goldsmith

Bird Recording

The task of moving to computerisation of the monthly records is now progressing well after a slow start. A smaller team of volunteer recorders is currently involved than was the case with manual recording. The continued success of this venture is totally dependent upon contributors continuing to send in their records at regular intervals throughout the year (preferably every month). It will not be possible to cope with inputting huge volumes of records at the end of a year and still endeavour to meet deadlines to produce the *Bird and Mammal Report* in the late autumn. In order to move towards total computerisation further volunteers are needed. If you have an interest in bird recording and live in north Norfolk I would like to hear from you. You need to be computer literate and have access to a home computer; the necessary software and advice will be provided.

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The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society

Founded 1869

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White or Black

I have a particular fascination for creatures having white feathers or fur, this was brought to mind recently by a coal tit seen at the nut feeders in the garden, this particular specimen was pale yellow and white, it was speckled all over the back with darker markings, a very strange but striking combination.

When I moved to my present address we had a pure white blackbird in the vicinity, the eye was dark and the bill was yellow, this was a lovely bird indeed, it was around for at least two years, then was taken by a cat I believe Blackbirds seem very prone to these pigment variations, I have known others with various amounts of white in their plumage, one on the Gertrude Road side of Mousehold heath resembled a chess board with blocks of black and white all over, another in the Thorpe River Green area had a white head, almost like a skull cap, this one died by being struck by a car.

Other species I have seen or known of have included jay (all white), house martin (all white), robin (all white), starling (albino), grey lag goose (all white), wood pigeon (all white). Mammals have included mole (cream), fox (all white), red squirrel (albino), badger (cream), and fallow deer (all white).

The opposite variation to this is melanism, or dark colouration, this seems to be less common, but I have seen or known this in pheasant, barn owl, rabbit, grey squirrel and adder.

I will be pleased to hear from any body regarding leukistic/melanistic variations, especially birds and can be contacted on 01603 436867.

Tony Howes



HOME BIRDS 2002

Readers may recall that a list of birds recorded on, over or from my home at Frettenham (TG240171) during 1998 and again during 2000, appeared in 'The Norfolk Natterjack' nos. 64 and 72. During 2002, I again maintained a daily list, this time on 352 days (compared with 343 in both 1998 and 2000). The 'blank' days were as follows: January 31; June 3, 4; July 22, 23, 24; August 19, 20, 21; October 17; and December 12, 13, 27. There were no blank days from February to May inclusive, and in September and November.

In general, daily observations were gathered over periods of between one and six hours; two hours having been the average. The 2002 daily average of 21.6 species falls between those of 20.2 in 1998 and 22.7 in 2000. In each of the two earlier years, 75 species were recorded, while only 69 were noted in 2002.

As in 2000, 25 species were observed in each month. Four more species, Cormorant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Lapwing and Mallard, 'missed-out' only in January, February, May and December, 2002, respectively.

Habitats visible from my vantage point include gardens, a small fishpond, rough pasture, species-rich hedges, arable farmland, a mostly wooded, worked-out chalk pit, and the Stone Beck valley, dividing Frettenham from Spixworth and Crostwick parishes.

The list provided is in rank, name, and number of days recorded – the suffix M meaning recorded in every month.

Geoffrey Kelly

1= Wood Pigeon 352M	35 Goldfinch 55
1= Collared Dove 352M	36 Sparrowhawk 51M
1= Starling 352M	37 Cormorant 42
4 Blackbird 348M	38= Turtle Dove 40
5 Chaffinch 346M	38= Skylark 40
6 Blue Tit 340M	40 Green Woodpecker 36M
7 Dunnock 335M	41 Grey Heron 34
8 Greenfinch 332M	42 Redwing 30
9 House Sparrow 327M	43 Long-tailed Tit 29
10 Stock Dove 316M	44 Pheasant 28
11 Great Tit 312M	45 Cuckoo 15
12 Carrion Crow 294M	46 Fieldfare 14
13 Robin 262M	47 Herring Gull 13
14 Black-headed Gull 259M	48= Barn Owl 9
15 Mistle Thrush 236M	48= Goldcrest 9
16 Rook 224M	48= Linnet 9
17 Magpie 211M	51 Whitethroat 7
18 Pied Wagtail 206M	52 Yellowhammer 6
19 Jay 203M	53 Greylag Goose 5
20 Common Gull 185	54= Hobby 4
21 Jackdaw 179M	54= Spotted Flycatcher 4
22 House Martin 126	56= Mute Swan 3
23 Lesser Black-backed Gull 125	56= Teal 3
24 Great Spotted Woodpecker 119	56= Bullfinch 3
25 Song Thrush 88M	59= Canada Goose 2
26 Kestrel 86M	59= Shelduck 2
27 Mallard 85	59= Lesser Spotted Woodpecker 2
28= Great Black-backed Gull 83	59= Blackcap 2
28= Swift 83	59= Willow Warbler 2
30 Swallow 76	59= Siskin 2
31 Lapwing 70	66= Common Buzzard 1
32= Red-legged Partridge 69	66= Moorhen 1
32= Wren 58M	66= Black Redstart 1
34 Coal Tit 56	66= Chiffchaff 1

Hoverfly death

Following a photograph of a white Hoverfly that had been sent to me which was taken in the Waveney Forest Fritton, during a Lowestoft Field Club meeting. I sent the same to Robert Maidstone for assistance. He thought that the Hoverfly had been affected by a fungus which indeed it had. This was given to me as *Empusa sp.* probably *muscae*. This was indeed correct! (Thanks Robert)

It is also known as *Entomophthora muscae*. This is known as this name on the BMS database for East Norfolk where there are 13 records relating to some diptera and seven records for West Norfolk The Hoverfly Robert correctly identified was a female *Melanosoma scalare*.

Armed with this information I found the following sites which I feel will be of interest to those members with Internet access.

<http://194.131.255.3/bmspages/BMSFRD/bmsfrd.htm>

<http://www.museon.nl/ojextra.engvijanden.html>

<http://www.nifg.org.uk/species/atlas2.htm?Item=15484>

<http://194.131.255.3/bmspages/GBCHKLS7/gbsyns.asp?IntGBNum=2232>

Colin Jacobs



Tales from the river bank

Many years ago I was a fanatical angler, and was keen to get out fishing whenever I could, nowadays I tend to pick the days more carefully, waiting for pleasant conditions to occur, a gleam of sun to warm me is very welcome on the river bank.

Recently I have been fishing on the river Bure between the road and rail bridges at Wroxham, this stretch of river can be very good during the winter months, providing good sport. Traditionally many bream shoal up here and can be caught right through the colder months until the seasons end in the middle of March. The bream can go to a large size, 7 lb fish not being uncommon.

However, another species in this stretch has been getting my attention of late, some very good perch have been showing up, the largest I have caught so far being just on the 3 lb mark, but I have heard of larger ones. The perch in my opinion is the most beautiful of our native fish, with its tall spikey dorsal fin erect and the bold stripes along its flank, it's a most imposing fish.



I can remember as if it were yesterday, laying on my tummy on the banks of the upper Yare, I was about ten I suppose, and I was watching a shoal of small roach and minnows flicking and darting in the crystal clear water below me. Then from a weed bed on the edge of the deeper water emerged three magnificent fish, I had never seen their like before, and didn't know what they were, but I can remember very well how impressed I was as they swam slowly over the gravel patch below me, like three majestic Spanish galleons, dorsals erect, and blood-red fins fanning in the clear water. Ever since that day the perch has been my favourite fish.

Tony Howes

Another exotic pest?

In addition to the warning in *Natterjack 78* about a threat to oak trees from a fungus accidentally imported into this country, there comes news of another exotic pest which has devastated horse chestnut trees across Europe and has now been discovered in England.

Horse chestnut leaf miner moth destroys leaves and reduces the number and size of conkers. So far, fortunately, it seems to be confined to Wimbledon, Kingston and Richmond Park. DEFRA has issued an exotic pest alert to every London borough and should be notified if there are any signs of the moth spreading into East Anglia.

David Paull

A Flower for Norfolk

Last year, as part of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, Plantlife launched a scheme for people to vote for a plant to represent their county. The nominations have now closed and we will not know the outcome till the end of February. Speaking with various NNNS members it seems that the Corn Poppy is a favourite but also many would like to see the 'Norfolk' reed as the county's representative.

FF

Check out your local common on the internet:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/common/biosurvey/countyreports/norfolk.pdf>



MICHAEL'S NAME LIVES ON

Over nearly half a century, Michael Seago, former president and vice-president of the Society, became "Mr Birds of Norfolk". In many thousands of words, mainly in articles in the *Eastern Daily Press*, Michael spread the delights of birdwatching to a large and faithful audience and, by founding the Norfolk Bird Report in 1954 and editing it until he died in 1999, he established himself as the authoritative voice of birding in the county. Finally came the monumental *Birds of Norfolk*, written jointly with Moss Taylor, Don Dorling and Peter Allard, which, regrettably, he did not live to see in published form.

Now, his name will live on in what we hope will be the next generation of young naturalists. Through the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, of which Michael was also a vice-president, Sylvia Seago has established an annual Young Norfolk Nature Writing Award in Michael's memory and is generously giving shields and cash prizes.

The award was launched last year and Sylvia, Don Dorling (on behalf of the Trust) and I, assisted by Justine Millard, the Trust's education manager, had the pleasure of judging the entries. It was a small field but a high-quality one and we were greatly impressed by the knowledge and diligence of the entrants.

We awarded first place to 13-year-old Holly Hancock from Potter Heigham for an elegantly written essay (see below), very much in the mould of Michael's *EDP* "In the Countryside" articles, describing what she saw as she rowed her dinghy on the river at Homing. Ellie Farrow (16) from Sheringham and Harry Ewing from Hempnall, who was only nine when he compiled his entry, both submitted detailed and beautifully illustrated nature diaries. We couldn't separate them and decided to make them joint runners-up.

In a delightful ceremony at the Trust's Hickling reserve on December 7th, Sylvia Seago, accompanied by her sons and grandson Robert, presented the awards to the three youngsters, who were there with their families.

Footnote: Holly knew exactly what she would do with her £50 prize. Someone stole the dinghy from which she made her observations and she is saving up for a new one!

David Paul



From left to right: Ellie Farrow, Holly Hancock, Sylvia Seago and Harry Ewing (Photo: Don Dorling)

MY FAVOURITE NATURE TRAIL

Hi - My name is Holly Hancock and I am 13 years old. I want to share with you my very own, favourite nature trail. So come down to the mooring plot and step aboard my rowing dinghy. ...

As I walk across to the mooring, I often spy a young squirrel scampering across the grass and up into the old oak trees that border the plot. I can hear the wood-pigeons cooing and a woodpecker tapping in the distance. Butterflies hover over the azaleas, hydrangea and green ferns.

Approaching the water there are shiny black water beetles skimming across the surface of the water and below there are hundreds of small tiddlers darting to and fro. Two Dragonflies hover above the delicate green lily pads.

As I leave the basin there is what looks like a rough bundle of sticks and reeds thrown together on the opposite bank, but it is in fact a swan's nest and the mother swan sits proudly upright, gently prodding her two young cygnets back under the warmth of her feathers with her beak. Father Swan is busy collecting weed and other food to take back to his brood. As I pass the next plot where tall reeds sway gently in the breeze, a moorhen with its distinctive red beak jerks swims out to see if any food is going. Gently rowing upstream, I can see a coot's nest of twigs piled high against the side of the wooden bridge. Careful not to row too close so as not to disturb it, I turn round and row downstream past our mooring plot, past the boathouse, past another plot bright with mauve rhododendrons to the other little bridge where I used to feed the ducks when I was younger. Mother Duck flies over the water and crash lands to see if there is any bread, Father Duck close behind with seven fluffy ducklings in tow.

I turn left into the cut that leads to the main river and see more nests - another Swan's nest and two coots' nests. A white-beaked coot is feeding her young, their distinctive cheeping guiding her back to the nest. Just as I am admiring their antics, an ominous shadow falls over the water as a heron takes off from the roof of a neighbouring riverside holiday property, where fishing rods are left out from the previous night's fishing for bream etc. I clap my hands and bang with the oar to scare it away from the unprotected chicks and it lands on the bank again, standing on one leg, its long beak pointed to the sky, and I hope it will find a fish for dinner this time.

Oars gently swishing, I continue under the slender arms of the weeping willow and can now see the opening to the main river. An Egyptian goose rushes to the side of the corner plot, honking loudly, to warn off intruders against going too near her young goslings, even though they look almost fully grown by now.

Ahead one of the traditional gaff-rigged Hunter's Yachts is sailing by. To the right, the black-sailed wherry 'Albion' makes it way to Horning Ferry. A crested grebe dives under the water and comes up shaking a small eel in its beak. Another carries its young on its back.

I turn round and row back home, thinking how lucky I am to have my own little piece of Norfolk nature at its best and knowing that it is there for me to see and treasure any time I choose to go on my own special nature trail.

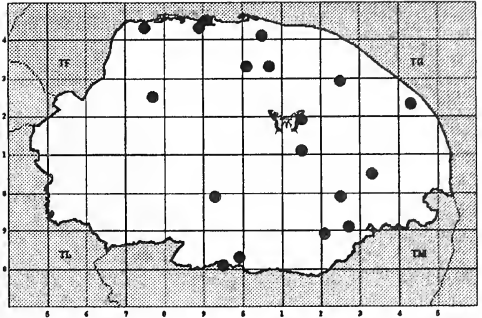


Excursion Reports

Featuring:

Felmingham
Knettishall Heath
Stady Estate
Titchwell

● 2002-03 Field Meeting location
Easton College
Indoor meetings



'Wild Flowers Revealed': Felmingham

Saturday 13th July, 2002

For the second of the three Wild Flowers revealed meetings about 15 hopeful botanists gathered at the Felmingham Weavers Way car park on a bright and breezy morning.

After an introduction to the day by leader Dr. Bob Leany we set off in the direction of Aylsham. The plan was to walk a length of the Weavers Way - the old railway line - looking for some of the days special plants and then to double back along the minor roads for lunch at the car park, taking in some arable field plants (weeds?) along the way. All in all a distance of about three miles we are told.

In the dazzling sunshine of high summer the old railway line seemed particularly atmospheric. I could imagine it in its heyday with trains filling the air with noise or waiting quietly at the station for passengers now unremembered. Yellowhammers and skylarks sang, swallows and numerous butterflies were flying. Every so often we stopped for brief talks on any tricky or especially interesting species and genera from Dr. Leany and others. Opportunities were taken to compare potential confusion species and to point out useful and interesting botanical minutiae.

Lunch, in the shade, was followed by another short talk from our leader, this time specifically on grasses, using specimens he

had collected and labeled. Passers-by must have wondered what we were up to standing in our large circle on the car park. Finally after a brief look at some of Dr. Leany's recommended botanical books we set off in the direction of North Walsham, again on the old railway line eventually making our way onto Bryant's Heath for an hour or so. More interesting plants and discussions were enjoyed.

Thanks to Dr. Leany and others for freely sharing their expertise. I thoroughly enjoyed the day.

David Lester

Knettishall Heath Country Park

Sunday 18th August, 2002

Knettishall Heath Country Park was the venue for the joint meeting with the British Gall Society. This was the second annual meeting of the two societies where the weather was not too kind, as with last year the day was something of a 'wash-out'. We were soon rather wet and those of us wearing spectacles quickly became 'sightless'. The day therefore was, consequently, severely shortened. Despite this the list amounted to 40 galls on 17 hosts of which 4 were attributed to fungi (MLO), 3 to Psyllids, 9 to Mites, 9 to Midges, 2 to Sawflies and 13 to Wasps.

Field Maple:

Mite - *Aceria macrochelus*
Mite - *Artacris cephalonea*

False Oat-grass:

Fungus - *Clavipes purpurea*

Birch:

MLO or Fungus - *Taphrina betulina*

Mite - *Acalitus rudis*

Mite - *Aceria leionota*

Hawthorne:

Mite - *Phyllocoptes goniothorax*

Beech:

Mite - *Aceria stenaspis stenaspis*

Mite - *Eriophyes nervisequus fagineus*

Ash:

Midge - *Dasineura fraxini*

Psyllid - *Psyllopsis fraxini*

Mite - *Eriophyes fraxinivorus*

Goosegrass:

Mite - *Cecidophyes galii*

Ground Ivy:

Midge - *Rondaniola bursaria*

Fungus - *Puccinia glechomatris*

Hogweed:

Midge - *Macrolabis heraclei*

Selected Plants from the excursion:

Morning

White Ramping Fumitory *Capreolata fumaria*

Small-flowered Catchfly *Silene gallica*

Lesser Swine Cress *Coronopus didymus*

Dwarf Mallow *Malva neglecta*

Orpine *Sedum telephium*

Narrow-ld Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus globosus*

Hairy Tare *Vicia hirsuta*

Smooth Tare *Vicia tetrasperma*

Hoary Willowherb *Epilobium parviflorum*

Broad-leaved W/erb *Epilobium montanum*

Square-stemmed W/erb *Epilobium tetragonum*

Short-fruited Willowherb *Epilobium obscurum*

American Willowherb *Epilobium ciliatum*

Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia*

Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hirsutus*

and other similar species

Shaggy Soldier *Galinsoga quadriradiata*

Hook Silky Bent *Apera spica-verti*

Slender Rush *Juncus tenuis*

Afternoon

Alder Buckthorn *Franqula alnus*

Heath Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*

Common Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum*

Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina*

Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*



Common Mallow

Fungus - *Puccinia malvacearum*

English Oak:

Wasp - *Andricus anthracina* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus fecundator* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus inflator* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus quercuscorticis* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus kollari* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus quercuscalicis* (Ag)

Wasp - *Biorhiza pallida* (Sx)

Wasp - *Cynips longiventris* (Ag)

Wasp - *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum* (Ag)

Wasp - *Neuroterus albipes* (Ag)

Wasp - *Neuroterus numismalis* (Ag)

Midge - *Macrodiplosis dryobia*

Midge - *Macrodiplosis volvens*

Psyllid - *Trioxa remota*

Buckthorn:

Psyllid - *Trichohermes walkeri*

Rose:

Sawfly - *Blennocampa phyllocolpa*

Midge - *Wachtliella rosarum*

Wasp - *Diplolepis eglanteriae*

Wasp - *Diplolepis nervosa*

Bramble:

Midge - *Dasineura plicatrix*

Grey Sallow:

Midge - *Iteomyia major*

Osier:

Sawfly - *Rabdophaga clausilia*

White Clover:

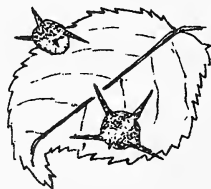
Midge - *Dasineura trifolii*

Glossary:

Ag and Sx - "The majority of gall on the Oak are induced by cynipid wasps, many species of which have a bizarre life cycle of two quite different generations. One of the generations produces both male and female wasps. This is the Sexual (Sx) generation. The other produces all female, the Agamic (Ag) generation."

(From "The Study of Plant Galls in Norfolk" pp. 22-23)

Rex Hancy



Spiked Pea Gall on Rose Leaf
Wasp - *Diplolepis nervosa*

Stody Estate

Saturday, 31st August 2002

This outing was the suggestion of Simon Harrap and at the invitation of Ross Haddow, Estate Manager, who kindly acted as guide for the morning session, with Simon taking over in the afternoon. Attended by around 20 members of most persuasions, and with lovely bright hazy weather, we amassed a very respectable vascular plant list, with several scarce species meriting a grid reference. We also recorded fungi, birds and insects with good butterflies to the fore. A full list of all groups has been sent to Ross Haddow.

Ross kicked off with a brief history of the estate and its historic land-use. Comprising 3400 acres, it includes Heath House wood (part of Edgefield Woods on the 1-inch OS map), and on similar soils as Holt Lowes just over the B1149. Heath House wood was in fact open heath until the second world war. The cultivated land is also predominantly stony poor soils.

The estate is taking part in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and is at present leaving 2 metre wide, yearly cut grass strips along the field margins for ground nesting birds and butterflies, and to protect the usually more botanically rich field banks from herbicide and fertiliser drift. There is, however, an increasing realisation that 6 metre wide strips, also paid for by the scheme, allow better access for machinery for management, and there is also an intention to cultivate some of these strips on a yearly basis. Certainly from a botanical viewpoint this would seem desirable, as light stony soils are especially important for scarce arable weeds. We had little time for stubble edges, but even on the one 30 metre length we looked at next to the disused railway line we found three scarce weeds, sharp-leaved fluellin (*Kickxia elatine*), dwarf spurge (*Euphorbia exigua*) and green field-speedwell (*Veronica agrestis*). Corn marigold (*Chrysanthemum segetum*) is also a feature of this region, and likely to benefit from this management.

After our talk we plunged straight into Heath House Wood at its southern end. The first part encountered was dominated by sycamore and bracken, but with a few fine rowens of great age, presumably survivals from heathland days. In this part we also came across an interesting bank, seemingly old and bereft of pollards or relict hedge - Simon Harrap believes this is the parish boundary across the old heath.

After a clearing where we found climbing corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*) and large colonies of wall lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*) and 'common' hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis tetrahit*) we descended into a wet patch with large bird's-foot trefoil and water mint. More interesting, however, was bulbous rush (*Juncus bulbosus*) on the path - like a spindly trailing toad rush, but giving itself away as usual by its vivipary - the production of young green plants from seeds still on the parent plant.

Ascending again we came into a very nicely managed wide ride, abutting land managed by the Forestry Commission on a 999 year lease from the estate. This ride was dominated by bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) and ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), but with good amounts of heath rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) together with western gorse (*Ulex gallii*), another scarce plant, and one even scarcer, green-ribbed sedge (*Carex binervis*). Here we also saw a grayling butterfly, a typical place for this species.

Returning to the cars we cut across a remarkably bare and stony pasture, reminiscent of the brecks, and with good amounts of century (*Centaurium erythraea*) and corn mint (*Mentha arvensis*) - this field would be worth a look earlier in the year. In a green lane just before the cars was golden rod (*Solidago vigaurea*). Like the gorse and sedge found earlier this now has less than 30 sites in Norfolk.

In the afternoon we moved over to look at the farmland, wood and disused railway around Beck Farm. In the meadow behind the farm were several rushes, including *Juncus acutiflorus*, bringing the rush tally up to 6 species. Also in the overgrown



ditches here were square-stalked St. John's-wort (*Hypericum tetrapetrum*), trailing St John's-wort (*H. Humifusum*), Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus gerincolatus*) and monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*), with yellow wagtail for the birders, and a spotted flycatcher family.

Moving across to North Meadow Covert we recorded abundant bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), wood speedwell (*Veronica montana*), bird cherry (*Prunus padus*) and the black bun-shaped fungus - King Alfred's Cakes or Cramp Balls (*Daldinia concentrica*). Country people used to put these in their pockets to ward off cramp. Just before the disused railway were the three scarce arable weeds already noted above.

The section of track near Beck Far was the second richest found on the NNNS Disused Railway Survey in 1981 (after Walsingham, visited with Gillian Becket earlier in the year). Some losses have occurred and the track edges and cutting sides need some more attention to mowing and raking off, but the line is still very rich - we recorded birds-foot (*Ornithopteris perpusillus*) and basil-thyme (*Clinopodium acinos*) on the track and tall broomrape (*Orobanche elatior*), wild basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*), smooth tare (*Vicia tetrasperma*) and an abundant hawkweed (?*Heracium sabaudum*) on the verges. A clouded yellow butterfly was the highlight of the day for non-botanists, bringing the day's butterfly list to 12, with speckled wood again as common as any. A dark bush cricket was also of interest.

On the way back over a tributary of the Glaven, a quick dip produced spiked water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and horned pondweed (*Zanichellia palustris*).

This was a really good day out in an attractive and varied area, which would certainly "repay further study".



Bob Leany

Birding at Titchwell

Sunday, 17th November 2002

It was a dull and rather misty day for our field trip to RSPB reserve at Titchwell but it didn't spoil the bird-watching. Between us we "ticked" 77 species, a good haul for a winter day, largely thanks to the sharp eyes of our leader, Eunice Phipps.

We had hardly left the car park before we were picking out siskin, goldcrest and goldfinch in the alders beside the path to the visitor centre. Then, on the board walk, we were entertained by a pair of what have become almost rarities - bullfinches. From the main path we saw marsh harrier and little egret and a variety of duck and waders, including large flocks of golden plover, ruff, both godwits, spotted and common redshank, curlew and whimbrel. A few caught a fleeting glimpse of bearded tit.

From the first hide, the more determined sorted out the solitary black brant from the throng of brent geese.



The sea and the beach produced an interesting haul, including black- and red-throated divers, slavonian grebe, eider and common scoter. A skua that stayed on the beach preening for some time started out as a great, became a pomarine, and was finally identified as an arctic. The long resident black-winged stilt put in its customary appearance but more elusive was the yellow-legged gull.

I am grateful to that inveterate lister, John Butcher, for compiling the day's checklist.

David Paul

Excursions and Meetings

Tuesday February 18th

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:
'Moss and other grave matters'
-An illustrated talk by
Robin Stevenson.

Sunday March 2nd

*Mosses and Liverworts
at Tyrrel's Wood*
Leader: John Mott.

Please note that beginners will be particularly welcome. Bring a hand lens if you have one. Meet in Woodland Trust car park (TM205893) at 1100hrs.

Tuesday March 18th
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
followed by

'A "question" of spiders'
- An illustrated talk by
Garth Coupland.

Sunday April 6th
Wayland Wood NWT Reserve
Leader: Paul Newport (Hon. Warden)
Meet in Reserve car park (TL923996)
at 1100hrs.

All the indoor meetings will be held in Room 7 of the sports and conference centre, Easton College, beginning at 7.30pm.

Bob Ellis

Photographic Group Meetings

Monday March 24th

'Good way to "waste" time'
-An illustrated talk by Bill Fairless.

Every so often during trips out into the countryside, I would bump into Bill, we always had a chat, and I began to realise that he was a very capable naturalist indeed, - he also takes photographs, so I grabbed him quick for our programme, come along and enjoy an evening with this Gt Yarmouth naturalist - By the way, the title is his, not mine.

Tuesday April 15th
*'A celebration of the seasons,
"Spring".'*
Photographic group lecture.

This is the last in this series, but surely Spring is the most magical season of the year, every thing new and pristine, fresh life every where, the rebirth of the countryside - come and marvel at the glories of an English Spring. Bring along some of your slides and show us your version of this annual awakening.

All the above meetings will be held in Room 4 of the sports and conference centre, Easton College, beginning at 7.30pm.

Tony Howes



Extinct Norfolk wetland plants in Cambridgeshire

We enjoy great botanical good fortune in Norfolk in possessing a number of wetland plants which, elsewhere in Britain, are very thin on the ground (and sometimes in the water) or even absent. But there are also a couple of wetland rarities lost from Norfolk which one must now journey into neighbouring Cambridgeshire to see.

One is Water Germander (*Teucrium scordium*), last recorded so far as Norfolk is concerned in the nineteenth century on the western rim of the county at Welney and Stowbridge, and in the east at Horning. It now persists as a mainland British native only at a single Fenland site beyond Wickton and in dune-slacks at Branton Burrows in North Devon, though it once grew at a few scattered sites in a number of counties from Berkshire and Suffolk to Yorkshire, with the Fens as its heartland. Its extreme rarity now as a wild species is in marked contrast to its not uncommon presence in gardens in years gone by, where it was cultivated as a versatile medicinal plant: a vermicide, antidote to poisons, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and, in the form of a tincture, good for 'exhilarating and rousing torpid faculties' as Mrs. M. Grieve, the herbalist, put it. Certainly, its fresh leaves, if rubbed, give out a quite penetrating odour rather like garlic. It also yielded a yellow-green cloth dye.

No doubt it was chronic torpidity that prevented my spotting the plant in mid August this year at its Cambridgeshire pond (there are some of the whorled pale pinkish-purple flowers to be seen as early as June and the plants are usually still in bloom in October), but my excuse is that the old flooded pit is now rather overgrown with *Phragmites australis* reeds and other vegetation, and ringed with trees and shrubs. The species is said to prefer more open conditions and was down to 12 plants at one point in the mid-1990's, though its decline generally in Britain is doubtless also attributable to the usual suspects of land drainage and 'reclamation', and to deteriorated water quality.

The Cambridgeshire Water Germander has been the subject of an English Nature 'Species Recovery' Programme and so, having discovered that it had been introduced to the adjacent Kingfishers Bridge Wetland Project site, I returned on 30th August, this time with Bob Ellis, hoping to see at least a few plants in their new home. We were in the event rewarded beyond reasonable hope. First, the 150-acre site itself has been transformed since 1995 from top-grade arable farmland to an attractive approximation of a slice of the old Fenland landscape, not least because a large mere with islands has been excavated (a couple of birdwatching hides

now crown one of the vegetated spoil-heaps!), which is used by wintering wildfowl. A mosaic of reedbed, fen, ditches, ponds, scrapes, wet meadows and even low limestone cliffs has been created. Common Terns are present as are breeding Marsh Harriers, Sand Martins and Kingfishers and it is hoped to attract the Bittern. 300 plant species have colonised the site so far, in addition to those deliberately introduced.

Our second delight was to see the Water Germander in abundant if rather restrained glory. 'Thriving' for once seems no exaggeration, as there has been a very high recruitment rate and over 7,500 healthy- and vigorous-looking plants of this officially vulnerable rarity have appeared. Though these perennial plants with stoloniferous creeping rootstocks produce viable seed, Roger Beercoft, Project Consultant to the Kingfisher Bridge Wetland Trust, told us that broken-off or nibbled-off fragments of the plants seem to root easily and are probably spread about by the feeding birds. The plants that we saw grow, with much Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), near a broad dyke in a fairly open community with barish patches, on land flooded in winter.

Fen (or 'Great Fen') Ragwort (*Senecio paludosus*) has also been introduced at Kingfishers Bridge. We didn't go to see this critically endangered RDB perennial species, as we had earlier paid our respects at its only remaining native station alongside a main road not far from Ely where it was found in 1972, four years after the excavation of its ditch habitat, having been assumed extinct in Britain since 1860. We were rather late in the season and its best flowering heads, in the form of loose panicles, had gone over - quite literally - as most of the now-brittle, tall stems had been broken and bent over, presumably in part by the turbulence from the heavy, closely-passing traffic, which accounts of this station almost invariably mention. (The open site was also noticeably subject to gusts of wind on our visit.) In contrast to the Water Germander at Kingfishers Bridge, the roadside Fen Ragwort has unfortunately demonstrated what the 1999 RDB calls 'poor reproductive performance', possibly owing to the buffeting it suffers and a scarcity of pollinating insects. However, it has now been introduced to Wickton and Woodwalton Fens. At one time Fen Ragwort also grew in Lincolnshire and Suffolk. A *Flora of Norfolk* notes that this plant with large saw-toothed leaves was described in 1714 as growing in 'great plenty' between Outwell and Stowbridge on the old Podike, and there was a record from near Filby Broad for 1876.

A disappointment at Kingfishers Bridge was not seeing the Ribbon-leaved (or 'Grass-leaved') Water plantain (*Alisma gramineum*), another critically-endangered RDB species found now only at the edge of the artificial Westwood Great Pool in Worcestershire and

possibly in the River Glen and associated drains in Lincolnshire This annual or short-lived perennial was first recorded in Britain at Westwood in 1920. There is a strong Norfolk interest here in that the 1975 *Supplement to the Flora of Norfolk* records the fact that Richard Libbey and Eric Swann found the plant in the Forty-foot Drain at Manea in Cambridgeshire a week after making the first and only Norfolk record at Langmere in 1972, where it was flowering submerged in about 18 inches of water. The discoverers felt that migrating wild fowl from Denmark and the Baltic were responsible for its appearance at both sites. The plant had perhaps been seen at Langmere about a dozen years earlier, but its identity had not been confirmed.

Though introduced at Kingfishers Bridge as the subject of another 'Species Recovery' programme, Roger told us that there had been no sign of the *Alisma* in the last year or two, and that it has probably died out. A second introduction may be made to this site, now locally further modified. Some authorities think that the species requires eutrophic water: possibly the clean water seeping from an adjacent limestone ridge at Kingfishers Bridge has, ironically, now rendered conditions rather too pure! The Kingfishers Bridge Project site is not at present open to visitors except by arrangement, though the Trust intends to provide on-site information and signage, has issued a leaflet for public distribution mentioning rarities such as the Water Germander, and holds 'Friends Days' twice a year for those who subscribe.

After thanking Roger for making the trip from his Suffolk home, we continued to the Wickton Fen car park for a picnic lunch and botanical stroll, then on to the famous Cherry Hinton Chalk Pit on the eastern fringe of Cambridge where Moon Carrot (*Seseli libanotis*) and Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) are in flower, not to mention a veritable *Buddleja davidii* jungle.

Stephen Martin

Would all contributors please send your notes etc to the editor as soon as possible by April 1st, 2003 to the following address: Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sherringham, Norfolk, NR26 8GD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net



Norfolk Mammal Recording Form

Please use this record sheet to record mammal sightings within Norfolk. All records will be passed to the Norfolk Biological Records Centre and will be used in production of the Norfolk Mammal Report unless you request otherwise. It would be helpful if you could return forms as soon as completed and all forms for each year should be returned by 31st January the following year. Your help in collating mammal sightings for Norfolk will contribute to our understanding of these species and help towards their conservation. **Thank you for your help.**

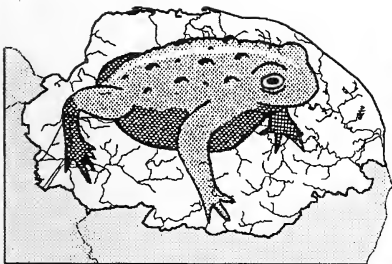
Name:		Tel:		Postcode:	
Address:		Your name and address are stored electronically alongside your mammal records and as such will be passed to the Norfolk Biological Records Centre. Please let the County Mammal Recorder know if you object to this.			

Species	Grid Ref.	Location	Habitat/notes	Date
Muntjac	TL841836	Maiden's Wood	Group of 3, feeding on edge of ride.	03/11/02

Norfolk Mammal Recording Form

Species	Grid Ref.	Location	Habitat/notes	Date
Muntjac	TL841836	Maiden's Wood	Group of 3, feeding on edge of ride.	03/11/02

Please return this form to the County Mammal Recorder: Mike Toms, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU. Tel. 01842-750050. E-mail mike.toms@bto.org



The Norfolk **NATTERJACK**

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 81
May 2003

Toad-in-the-hole....
Many thanks to all contributors. This issue highlights Council, publications and surveys - plenty of opportunity to be more involved if you wish - or just send in your own natural history discoveries and observations. **FF**

SALES HELP NEEDED
Sales of the Society's publications to non-members brings in additional income which can be used to enhance future publications. The publications team would welcome assistance from anyone who can spare a little time to put into action some of our ideas for increasing sales. Please note that this will not involve any cold-calling or junk mail! For more details contact - Tony Leech (Chairman, Publications Committee) on 01263 712282.

Wanted: Council Members

Would you like to play a small part in the running of the Society? We have two vacancies for members of the Council because there were not enough nominations at the annual general meeting on March 18.

It is not a particularly arduous or time-consuming role: five Council meetings a year. What else you take on - being a member of one of the Council's committee, helping at exhibitions, etc - is entirely up to you.

Interested in getting involved? Give me a call on 01603 457270.

David Paull,
Chairman



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Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year Award 2003 Calling all you nature writers! It's competition time!

Do you love watching wildlife and being close to nature?
Do you like creative writing?
Are you under the age of 16?
Do you want to win yourself £50?



Then why not enter our competition to find Norfolk's Young Nature Writer of the Year 2003. All you have to do to win yourself the top prize money of £50 is to write a short article or illustrated diary of no more than 800 words about your observations of nature, and return it to Norfolk Wildlife Trust by 30th September 2003. The entries will be judged in two categories, aged up to 11 and aged 11 to 16, with a lucky prize winner being picked from each category. You could write about the life in your garden pond or a memorable day that you went bird-watching but remember to put your age on it and keep it under 800 words. The prize is being generously donated by Sylvia Seago in memory of her late husband, Michael, who dedicated 60 years to the writing and study of birds in Norfolk.

Entries should be submitted no later than 30th September and sent in to: Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the year, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Bewick House, 22 Thorpe Road, Norwich. NR1 1RY



The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society
Founded 1859

Registered Charity No. 291604

Birds in my small garden

Over the last decade, I have noticed a decline in the birds visiting my back garden and also, a change in the habits of those remaining. I used to have three species of tit visiting my nut containers each morning, all vying for position on the choice perches. During the day, various visitors included greenfinch, chaffinch, goldfinch, robin, wren, hedge sparrow, and the resident house sparrows. Starlings, thrushes, blackbirds and collared doves all investigated their choice corners for food. The garden has not changed, the hedge and the shrubs are still there and each year, it is ablaze with colour from spring to autumn. The containers are still recharged each morning and bread and cake scraps, when available, are left - quartered apples are put out if it gets frosty.

However, the variety of visitors has declined considerably over the years. We still have about a dozen house sparrows each day, many more starlings and the resident pair of blackbirds, who are often joined by two pairs of collared doves. Very occasionally, a pair of hedge sparrows are seen picking up the minutest crumbs left by the others. The tits have long since gone, although a single blue tit does sometimes investigate the pyracanthus and cotoneaster - no doubt looking for spiders - it never visits the nut containers, these were taken over some years ago by the house sparrows and it didn't take me long to work out the hierarchy amongst them as they quarreled for perch positions.

I soon noticed one particular starling taking an interest in those feeding squabbles and, before long, he was on the containers with them and,

with his longer beak, was able to quickly get his fill. However, he and his mate raised a brood nearby of four youngsters and when they could fly, they used to sit on the path while he filled his crop with pieces of nut, then joined them and shared them out to the four noisy, open beaks awaiting.

Youngsters soon become adults and next season I had ten starlings all squabbling on the containers. Had I put some of my coloured cage bird



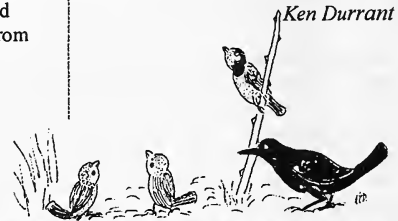
rings on them, I could have identified them. Unfortunately, one starling looks like another when adult. In the morning, the sparrows are the first to arrive but very soon the noisy hoard of starlings take over. But the sparrows have learned new tricks - they all drop to the ground beneath the containers or perch on rose briars near the ground, knowing that he starlings are messy feeders when it comes to extracting nuts from the containers, and many dropped onto the ground. The sparrows, who are awaiting this manna from above, pounce on any piece dropped without having to extract it from the container.

Very recently, I have noticed that our resident female blackbird has taken a great interest in the sparrows' activities underneath the

containers and has also joined them. She usually arrives when the starlings start their noisy squabbles over perch positions and because of her size, she has been able to collect many pieces of nut before the sparrows have had time to move. The sparrows return to the nuts when the starlings move off, as they do, in a group, but the blackbird still sits there beside the path. She has learned that as each sparrow extracts a nut, it flies down onto the path to break it into smaller pieces. When the bird has broken off a piece and is moving it about with its beak before it is swallowed, she rushes at them and, most times, is successful in acquiring the larger part of the nut before the unfortunate sparrow can make off with it. I now notice that the collared doves are taking an interest beneath the nut containers and I am awaiting further developments with interest.

The collared doves who nest in my neighbours holly tree now roam around the ground for any particles left after the other birds have taken their fill, but eyeing them from the roof of the nearby flats are a pair of ring-doves (wood pigeons). Seeing by action of the collared doves that the coast is clear they also fly down and join them in the free feast, and all this takes place within six feet of my french door windows.

The blackbirds are now nesting in the privet hedge nearby and the dunnocks (hedge sparrows) are building at the other end.



Norfolk Amphibian and Reptile Group

For details of Field Visits and events 2003 contact:

Helen Baczkowska at Norfolk Wildlife Trust (01603 598300)



Ermine? In Norfolk?

It was little more than a glimpse of a sleek body, dashing across the road in front of the car as we drove through Guist on the A1067 on February 26. But it was long enough to discern completely white fur – except for a distinctive black tip to the tail.

A stoat in ermine? In Norfolk? On a sunny day in February? My one rather rudimentary mammals book says stoats take on white coats only in Scotland. So I turned to Stefan Buczacki's monumental *Fauna Britannica* (Hamlyn) and found a different story. He quotes a sighting of a white stoat in South Lincolnshire in January 1993 and writes:

"The process [of becoming ermine] was for long a mystery because the transformation ... may take only a few days. It is partly hereditary and partly controlled by temperature. In the northern part of Britain, all stoats turn white; further south the change is usually at best partial.

"The rapidity of the change is because the new white coat grows beneath the old one and becomes apparent only when the old coat is shed. The shortening of the days stimulates the winter coat to grow, while the temperature determines whether or not it is white."

We had had snow and it had certainly been very cold – but cold enough and for long enough to stimulate the change of coat?

Was our sighting a one-off or has anyone else spotted ermine in Norfolk this past winter?

David Paull



White or Black

In response to the article in 'Natterjack' 80 about Tony Howes sightings of plumage abnormalities I can add an all white black-headed gull that frequented the Mediterranean gull flock at Great Yarmouth a few years back. Also carrion crows with white primaries (a common sight in North Suffolk), a leucistic sparrowhawk, an all-white coot, an all-white starling (not albino), an albino pheasant and a melanistic water vole. I have also seen very sandy coloured rabbits.

I wonder, also, if these Puma sightings relate to melanistic foxes?

Colin A Jacobs.

SISKINS

On a visit to Whitlingham Country Park in January I came across a large flock of mixed tits and finches. They were busy feeding on the edge of the track leading down to the Broad.

The reason for their interest in this particular spot was a fallen alder tree, it had blown down over the track and subsequently been cut up by a chain saw, but left on the grass verge, it was the seeds from the cones that were attracting all the attention.

On watching from a distance I could see blue tit, great tit, chaffinch, greenfinch, goldfinch, redpoll, and siskin. The later numbered about sixty birds, in the sunny conditions that prevailed their colours were vibrant, especially the males, these are a stunningly beautiful little finch.

They seem particularly fond of alder seed, I gathered a few sprigs to take home, I shall hang them in the garden along side the peanut holders, and see if they take a fancy to them, more often than not we see siskins during February and March, some times in fair numbers, I always marvel at their acrobatic skills, not seeming to care if they are upside down or not. But they are always welcome, brightening up the dull days of late winter with their finery of yellow, green and black.

Tony Howes

Norfolk Dragonflies

By the time you read this article you should have received your copy of *Dragonflies of Norfolk*. As you will see, the survey data from 1987 to 1989 that first appeared in *Transactions* in 1990, has been republished as an appendix to the new book. The reason for this being the paucity of dragonfly records being submitted during the intervening years.

We now need your help to bring this information up to date. With three species appearing in Norfolk for the first time during the past two years, this county should be at the forefront of dragonfly recording, but we need more people to participate.

Recorders should use the standard RA70 recording cards (available from me) wherever possible. The recording database matches the layout of this card so RA70s are much easier to deal with than casual records sent in other formats. If you don't use the cards, then please treat each site visit as a separate item, rather than lumping all records for the same species together. For further details on recording please send an A5 SAE to me. If you require a batch of RA70 cards for the coming season, please stamp this to the value of 33p.

Dr Pam Taylor, Norfolk Dragonfly Recorder, Decoy Farm, Decoy Road, Potter Heigham, Norfolk, NR29 5LX



A STRANGE FIND IN THE WOOD.

While walking through my local woodlands last January I came across a strange fungus. The overall colour was a bright orange, and it was around 16 inches from edge to edge. It had the appearance of a cauliflower, and was growing from the base of an old scot's pine.

On getting back home I looked it up, and indeed it turned out to have the common name of cauliflower fungus, *Sparassis crispa*.

It's not something I have come across before, so as the conditions were favourable I went back with the camera and took a few shots for the record.

It seemed to me to be very late in the winter for such a delicate looking fungus, especially as there had been several sharp frosts, I had another look at it a few days later, by then the colour had changed to a dirty brown, and the ends of the fronds had a jaded look about them, but it was still firm to the touch, not the slimy mass I had expected.

Tony Howes

FOR SALE

I have in my possession two items of Colin Dack's photographic equipment which are looking for a good home. If anyone is interested please contact me for further details or to see the equipment. These items are for sale at prices to be negotiated with David Richmond. The items consist of:

a) a Paterson contact Proof Printer in its original box,

b) a Simon Slide Viewing System, fan cooled, which projects on an 8 x 8 inch daylight viewing screen and can magnify the slide by factors of 5, 8 or 24. The apparatus can be loaded with a stack of up to 40 slides at a time. (original cost £90)

Mike Poulton

(Tel: 01953 603700)

I wrote the following poem for a friend who was unable to attend the AGM and talk by Garth Coupland. She suggested it might be suitable (as a thank you to Garth) for printing in 'Natterjack' - (definitely-Ed).

'A question of spiders'

I didn't know this but you possibly might,
Most spiders can inflict a sizeable bite.
But at piercing your skin most are a failure.
Identify them by their weird genitalia.

One spider in a bell underwater is found
so don't think they all crawl along on the ground.
(Webs on bushes and grass are a beautiful sight)
Many hide in dark places and come out at night.

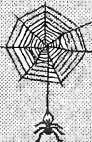
An abundance of eggs huddle close in a sac
The young are carried on poor mother's back
So nothing is wasted webs that were spun
Are eaten with relish before the next one's begun

Spiders come in all colours and patterns you know,
In their own habitat themselves not to show.
They all have their own particular season
Garth kept asking "Why" and "What is the reason"

I learned such a lot I found up my book
Relaxed in my chair for a serious look.
Next time a spider crawls up from the drain,
From drowning the creature I'll surely refrain.

I'm not scientific, worldly wise or clever
But passing a spider again will I never
Without attempting a feel for the "jizz"
I will not feel fear, something more like pure bliss.

Some serious questions at the evening were posed.
Philosophical leanings, to which I'm disposed.
From spiders to humans, we're all here for one reason;
Quite simply TO BE- to live out our season



Janice Grint

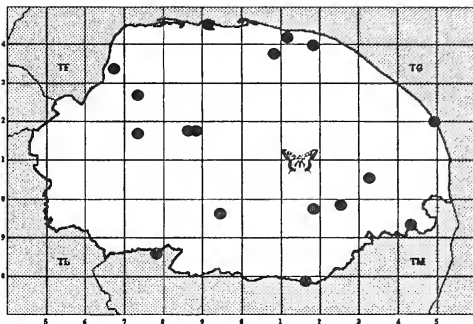


Excursion Reports

Featuring:

Swanton Novers Great Wood

● 2003-04 Field Meeting location
Easton College
Indoor meetings



Swanton Novers Great Wood

Sunday, 26th January 2003

On a damp gloomy day about 20 hardy members met to record the lichens of Swanton Novers Great Wood, by permission of English Nature who lease the wood. This wood does not possess any veteran trees which particularly attract lichenologists but it does have a wide variety of tree species reflecting a tremendous range of soil types in a small area. The soils support a mix of small leaved lime coppice, sessile oak coppice, areas of bird cherry and alder in wet flushes and some high forest. The lichen flora whilst not particularly rich does have a good range of species reflecting this diversity.

The dry bark of the oaks was often covered with *Lecanactis abietina* recognised by small white dots of the pycnidia on a grey background thallus. *Graphis scripta* was relatively abundant on the smooth but acid bark of sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) in the oak coppice area. Other species which favoured acid bark included *Chaenotheca ferruginea* (a pinhead lichen with a rusty-coloured thallus), *Hypogymnia physodes*, *Pseudevernia furfuracea*, *Parmelia saxatilis* and *Pertusaria amara* (tastes bitter). *Arthonia spadicea* occurred on shady trunks and could be distinguished by its small irregular-shaped dark chestnut coloured fruits, often occurring with diminutive but abundant *Dimerella pineti*. The attractive apple-green *Flavoparmelia* (*Parmelia*) *caperata* was frequent on tree trunks and boughs of both ash and oak. It is a species which had declined in the

days of high sulphur dioxide levels but is now with decreasing level reclaiming its old distribution even into the centre of London. On tree stumps were a number of *Cladonia* species including *C. coniocraea*, *C. macilenta* and *C. polydactyla*. The bryologists noted the ball moss *Leucobryum glaucum*, but it no longer occurs in the very large cushions which were once so prominent in the oak coppice. The reasons for its decline are not known. However, they did find *Dicranum majus* in this same habitat.

Despite the weather it was a thoroughly enjoyable day in good company.

Species list:

Lichens

Arthonia spadicea
Chaenotheca ferruginea
Chrysothrix candelaris
Cladonia coniocraea
Cladonia macilenta
Cladonia polydactyla
Dimerella pineti
Flavoparmelia (*Parmelia*) *caperata*
Graphis scripta
Hypogymnia physodes
Lecanactis abietina
Lecanora pulicaris
Lepraria incana
Melanelia (*Parmelia*) *glabratula*
Parmelia sulcata
Parmelia saxatilis
Pertusaria amara
Pertusaria pertusa
Phlyctis argena
Pseudevernia furfuracea
Punctelia (*Parmelia*) *subrudecta*

Bryophytes

Dicranum majus
Leucobryum glaucum

Some notes on the 2003/2004 programme of excursions.

Coastal Walk (11 May 03)

Please note that we will meet at Wells but take some cars on to Stiffkey and walk back from there. Hopefully, there will be enough cars left at Wells to get us back to collect the ones at Stiffkey!

Flordon Common

In 1910, W.H. Burrell and W.G. Clarke presented a paper to the society on the Flora and Fauna of Flordon Common (Transactions ix 170-186). At Janel Negal's suggestion, we thought it might be a nice idea to survey the site this year and make a comparison, perhaps resulting in a paper for Transactions. Four visits have been arranged (two of which will be evenings for moth trapping etc.). Please note that the site can be wet and Wellington boots are recommended.

Ken Hill (15 June 03)

Directions to Snettisham Common car park (TF672.335): Leave A149, signposted to Snettisham Beach; turn right onto a track just at an awkward left hand bend in the road. The car park is signposted.

Shotesham (12 July 03)

As those who attended last year will remember, the entrance to no. 8 The Grove is actually on the main street just past the turning into The Grove. It is best to park in The Grove itself.

Bob Ellis,
Programme Chairman

Peter Lambley



LAWNS and GOD

As the lawn mowers come out in force.....

GOD: St. Francis, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colours by now, but all I see are these green rectangles.

ST. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers weeds and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colourful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and worms. It's temperamental with temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it, sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? It is a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No, sir - just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow, and when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes, sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You'd better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No! What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD: Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE: Dumb and Dumber, Lord. It's a really stupid movie about...

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St Francis.

(Source: Internet/Mike Hall)

Colin Dack's Slides

After much toil and many tribulations I have, with a great deal of help from a number of experts in the society, reduced Colin's natural history slides to a selection of about 1500 slides. These are now stored in the Natural History Department of the Norwich Castle Museum at Shire Hall. Any member wishing to refer to them should approach Tony Irwin who has a complete list of species included, together with a list giving the location of each slide within the 8 slide boxes in which they are stored. The slides include all those which were shown at the commemorative lecture in October 1999 together with several hundred which could not be shown on that occasion.

Mike Poulton

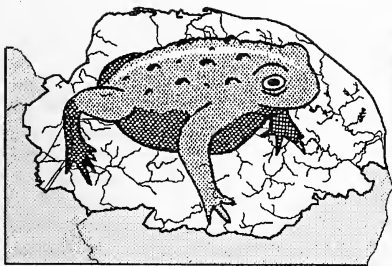
P.S. There are many more slides, some of which are copies of those mentioned above. These are now in the possession of Robert Maidstone who is selecting ones which he can use. He will not want all of them. Any member wishing to look through the remainder should contact Robert on 01508 531287.



Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by July 1st, 2003 to the following address: Francis Farrow, Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net



206 A



The Norfolk **NATTERJACK**

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 82
August 2003

Toad-in-the-hole....

Many thanks again to all contributors. This issue highlights more observations on stoats in ermine, unusual fungi and a remarkable blue tit among others. Alec Bull also attempts to understand the trend in wildlife and plant surveys, which can be both a challenge and a chore. A great two days at the Royal Norfolk Show last June resulted both in new members and good sales of NNNS publications. The Society owes a great deal to David Nobbs who once again organised the event and those that visited the display will know what a tremendous effort was made. Thanks again David. Our thanks also go to ALS whose advertisement appears on the back for their goodwill offer of hand lenses in *Natterjack* no. 79. **FF**

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS


My appeal in *Natterjack* 81 for volunteers to fill two vacancies on the Society's Council produced an unexpected but very welcome response: four volunteers!

They all agreed that the quickest and fairest way of resolving a very pleasant dilemma was that their names should go in the hat. The first two out would join Council as co-opted members; the "losing" two would be "in the frame" for next year when there will be more vacancies to fill.

The "winners" were Mrs Tricia Emslie, of Castle Acre, who has recently completed a spell as chairman of the CPRE in West Norfolk, and the ornithologist, author and columnist Mark Cocker, from Claxton, near Norwich.

David Paull, Chairman

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The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society
Founded 1859

Registered Charity No 291604

100 years ago (1903 NNNS Transactions)

STICKLEBACKS AS MANURE. - In the 'General View of the Agriculture of the County of Norfolk,' by Arthur Young (1804 but referring to a period before 1802), the author writes as follows: "These little fish, which are caught in immense quantities in the Lynn rivers about once every seven years, have been bought as high as 8d. a bushel. The favourite way of using them now, is by mixing with mould and carrying on for turnips. Great quantities have been carried to Marham, Shouldham, and Beachamwell. Mr. Fuller there, is reported to have laid out £400 for them in one year, they always answer exceedingly. Mr. Rogerson, of Narborough, has gone largely into this husbandry, laying out £300 in one year, at from 6d. to 8d. a bushel, besides carriage from Lynn; he formed them into composts with mould mixed well by turning over, and carried on for turnips: the success very great." - T. SOUTHWELL.

Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year Award 2003

Closing date 30th September

Are you a young naturalist / country lover with a talent for observation? All you have to do to win yourself the top prize money of £50 in this competition is to write a short article or illustrated diary of no more than 800 words about your observations of nature. The entries will be judged in two categories, aged up to 11 and aged 11 to 16, with a lucky prize winner being picked from each category. The prize is being generously donated by Sylvia Seago in memory of her late husband, Michael, who dedicated 60 years to the writing and study of birds in Norfolk.

Entries should be submitted by 30th September, 2003 to: Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the year, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Bewick House, 22 Thorpe Road, Norwich. NR1 1RY

Bureaucracy and Wildlife

I started consciously studying wild life and keeping documentary notes early in 1944. Birds from January, Butterflies from March and plants from mid-May. I joined the then Junior Bird Recorders Club of the RSPB in January and the Suffolk Naturalists Society during the summer, though I never attended any of their meetings due to work commitments and lack of transport. My first works of reference were the *Observers book of British Birds*, the *Observers book of British Wild Flowers* and the *Observers book of British Butterflies*, supplemented by pre-war cigarette and Typhoo tea cards. Eight years later, in 1952, and living in Norfolk at Garboldisham, my notebook lists 139 species of birds, with daily song charts for all birds heard singing regularly, 30 species of butterfly, a total almost unreachable in a local context today, 65 species of macro moths as I had by then acquired the two volume *Wayside and Woodland Moths of the British Isles* by R. South, and also Cynthia Longfield's *Dragonflies of the British Isles* in the same series and had listed 13 species of dragon and damselflies, one of which, I can now see, was definitely wrong. I also listed 20 species of mammals and reptiles and 65 species under 'general' insects. My list of flowering plants totaled 634 for that year, and my accounts of daily happenings in the world of wildlife amounted to over 400 handwritten pages of A5. From then until now, I have continued to follow the path of the all round naturalist, by building on those early discoveries and adding Mosses and Liverworts and Fungi to almost the same level of knowledge and understanding as those earlier birds, plants and butterflies, and I find that I have become something of an anachronism.

Not long before I retired after 50 years of looking after dairy stock, a milk lorry driver told me, "You're one

of the last of the old boys. You still look after your cows the same way as people used to thirty or forty years ago. Youngsters today don't want any of that. They want to clock in and clock out, and that's it."

Things may not be quite the same as that in the world of wildlife, but there is an increasing tendency to try and get grants for what I have always done for pleasure, if someone is offering such carrots, and the study of wildlife as I have always known it, is increasingly being channeled into avenues of so called research which by their very bureaucratic nature are anathema to anyone used to just enjoying the other denizens of their surroundings. So even here, I seem to be one of the last of the old boys.

Not that I have any objection to allowing my own records to be used for any worthwhile project, far from it. At an early stage, I started contributing records, anecdotal at first, to the Transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society, but soon, with the recording under way for the first national Plant Atlas, published in 1962, I was recruited to the card ticking brigade, sending in a number of cards to that project and annual records for Francis Simpson's *Flora of Suffolk*, still a quarter century into the future.

When we moved permanently to Norfolk in 1960, Eric Swann soon started sending me cards to fill in for 'Petch and Swann's *Flora of Norfolk*, 1968, and later on, Bryophyte recording cards as well. In 1968, I changed stream for a while and became Regional Representative for West Norfolk for the British Trust for Ornithology, a post which I held for 14 years, organising the collecting of records for their first breeding bird atlas, as well various other surveys, usually of a particular species in any one year. I also participated in their Common Bird Census on a large arable plot at Cranworth, which I completed for 29 consecutive seasons. Before I had given up doing the latter, I had switched channels

again, Moss Taylor took on the BTO work and I became vice county recorder for East Norfolk for the Botanical Society of the British Isles from 1984 to 1998. During this time, the first Monitoring Scheme came along in 1987/8, recording all species in all A, J and W tetrads in every third 10km (hectad) square north and east of Lands End. This done, work commenced on the *Flora of Norfolk*, which involved organising recording in 723 tetrads in my half of the county and, until further help came along in any quantity, I had to do as much of the recording as I could manage on my own, particularly after I retired in 1992. I have never counted up how many tetrad cards I completed, sometimes visiting only once, more often twice, occasionally three times, but I would think that I visited in excess of 500 of the 723 tetrads. All this has been fairly straight forward, but over the last few years, insidious forces seem to have been at work and recording is no longer straightforward. The fact that the plant, bird, butterfly or dragonfly is present in an area, and if sufficiently remarkable is given a 4 or 6 figure grid reference, is no longer sufficient. A few examples to prove my point. The BSBI is re-recording all the monitoring scheme tetrads under the title of 'Local Change' in 2003/4. The instruction booklet for this scheme runs to 20 pages of A5. Quote:- *Emphasis on recording notable species with 6 or 8 figure grid references using a GPS (Global Positioning System) if possible.* These cost a mere £150 I am told so the old calculated grid reference is now considered unreliable.

The BSBI in association with Plantlife are also doing a national survey of Bluebells. Here, the grid reference problem is taken a step further by suggesting that the participant visits the Ordnance Survey website with details on how to find their site after various manipulations of the mouse on the Streetmap website and, providing that the correct information is fed in, the grid reference will appear on screen, BUT you need a new site location every time you go



100 metres. Therefore, if the site being surveyed has bluebells wall to wall for 300 metres x 100 metres, this is not one site but three and three lots of information have to be recorded for it. After this it is necessary to measure the exact size of the bluebell plot. Find a level surface and step and mark ten paces, then measure with a tape measure. Do this three times and you will then be able to measure your plot of bluebells and find exactly how big it is.

The first side of the form to be filled in is fairly straightforward bearing in mind what has already been written, but the questions thereafter read more like a child's treasure hunt. Question 2. *What does the flower stem do towards the top?* There are nine such. Fair enough if you have a strong interest in Bluebells. One thought though, once all this information has been assembled and published, no doubt on the BSBI and Plantlife websites, will it not make the lives of bulb thieves that much easier. Would it be better if the bluebells were not surveyed?

Another survey to land on my doormat this spring is being organised by the Game Conservancy in conjunction with the BTO, to record the presence or absence of breeding Woodcock in woodland selected at random throughout the UK. With this is a habitat recording form to be filled in for points 50 metres north, south, east and west of the point which has been selected as being the most suitable in the wood to observe the roding flight of the Woodcock. (This is a display flight by the male to advertise his presence to the female) For this, you need a compass rather than a GPS!

The survey also included such questions as: *"How many people were seen within 200 metres of the observation point during the habitat recording visit. Of these, how many had dogs with them and how many dogs were on leads".*

For the National Dragonfly survey which is also being carried on at the local level, recorders are asked to fill in standard RA70 recording cards, one for each visit to each site, each pond or stretch of water to represent a site. This has to include details of habitat on each card and the number of each species present on each visit. We have been recording dragonflies in Stanford Training Area for some years, parts of which include many shallow meres and pingoes. For instance, in 2000 we visited and recorded up to 20 such in a day on an almost weekly basis all through the summer. For one with wider interests than just dragonflies, the paperwork involved becomes a burden rather than a hobby.

The study of wildlife should be seen as an enjoyable hobby, at least, that is what the old boys used to reckon. As I consider myself one of the last of these, I think I will use my declining years to do just that and wave goodbye to bureaucratic paperwork.

Alec Bull

A walk around the fen in June

I had been gardening most of the day and felt in need of a walk so mid-afternoon found me at Strumpshaw Fen, few people were there, which suited me fine. The marshes were looking fabulous, so fresh and luxuriant after the recent rain showers, so many shades of green. Overhead spectacular cloud formations were constantly moving steadily across the sky, giving a superb backcloth to the beauty of the fen, great towering anvils of white gave the impression of mountain ranges on the horizon.

I walked down to the tower hide, probably the best place on the reserve to observe from in the afternoon light. There were three marsh harriers circling over the reed beds, catching the light beautifully as they swung on the wind, the two males especially looked superb. I never tire of watching these magical birds. The pair of

carion crows that nested in the central willow tree now have four lusty youngsters and they seem to take great delight in dive bombing any harrier that ventures too close to 'their tree'. The impression was that they all enjoyed it, they would have a short ariel tussle jinking and twisting but the harrier easily out manoeuvred the crows, just dipping a wing here and there, they out flew them with ease.

A kingfisher was seen several times, it would often perch on a reed stem at the waters edge under the hide, the afternoon sun catching the reed stems and turning them rich gold in the lovely light. Some times it hovered over the water in the manner of a kestrel, it was catching small fish and he, (black lower mandible), seemed to glow, so intense was the light on him.

There was a steady, regular "booming" from a bittern somewhere in the middle of the marsh all the time I was there, every ten minutes or so, three booms each time, the last being the strongest. I love the mystery and magic of these birds, rarely seen, their "song" the only indication that they are there at all. The few times you get a glimpse of one is a red letter day, it's usually one in flight over the reeds, or - if you are really lucky one creeping round the waters edge fishing.

There was a pair of redshanks going through their display flight routine over the fen, with drooping wings and plaintive song, but one sound I miss very much is that of a snipe "drumming". I have not heard a snipe at Strumpshaw, or anywhere else for the last two years. It must be one of the most evocative sounds of our wetlands, that wonderful throbbing, vibrating sound as he dives and expands his tail feathers. I just hope there will be a reversal of their fortunes in the future.

At 8.0 p.m. the dark rain clouds had gathered yet again and looked very threatening, not relishing the thought of a soaking I made a quick dash back to the car park, just making it before the deluge started. It had been a very enjoyable few hours, I felt the batteries had been recharged.

Tony Howes



The Dell

Since the 1970's an area of former shallow quarrying between the caravan site and the Pinewoods in Wells has become a popular "twitching" ground, originally as a sort of overflow from Cley, but now much appreciated in its own right. Many visitors in summer, however, have discovered that it is also a prime botanical site. Although it boasts no acid-bog species such as Sundew or Bog Asphodel it has a surprising range of marsh plants. It never dries out completely even during prolonged drought, and yet has sufficient "up and down" to support plants of varying damp requirements.

The only problem is the development of Birch scrub, but this is cut down to ground level every winter by a team from the Holkham National Nature Reserve (of which it is a part). In early spring there is virtually nothing to see, but during May the first Orchids appear, along with Adder's Tongue Fern. At least six Orchid species have been seen: Early Marsh, Southern Marsh, Common Spotted, Twayblade, Bee and last, in late Summer, a marvellous show of Marsh Helleborine. Tall plants of Marsh Thistle by then are dominating the area, but (for thistles!), they are quite attractive. Several Sedges occur, along with Cotton Grass, while, of the true Grasses, Sweet Vernal Grass dominates in spring. The attractive little Brookweed, not particularly common in Norfolk, raises its small white flowers to a height of 10cm or so. There is a scattering of Ferns, including one each of Crested Buckler Fern and Moonwort, the latter mentioned in a previous *Natterjack* article.

The storm tidal surge of 1978 was high enough to spill into the area. Pines and Birches were killed, and we despaired of the Orchids, but they miraculously (it seemed) reappeared in a couple of years. I

expect their tubers were able to survive the salt water. A few salt-marsh plants turned up: Sea Arrow Grass and Sea Milkwort, for example, and the latter was still present and flowering last year.

Paul Banham

ERMINE IN NORFOLK

I don't know about the winter 2002-03 but ermine can certainly be seen in Norfolk (*Natterjack* - May 03).

The last time we had a fairly severe cold spell, complete with snow unmelted for a couple of weeks, I watched fascinated for several minutes a stoat-in-ermine running around the high ground at Beech Walk, off Low Road, Keswick - just three miles from Norwich and not far from correspondent David Paull's house in Eaton. I cannot remember the year exactly but 8-9 years ago I would guess.

Stoats are the mammal I see most frequently in the Norwich suburbs. Only at the beginning of April, at Whitlingham Country Park I witnessed a stoat chasing a hare, with the former making futile attempts (as far as I could see) to catch the larger animal by the throat. The pair of them lolloped around me for some time - it was almost as though they were playing a game of tag. Interestingly the stoat made no attempt to grab the hare by a leg or attach itself to its victim's underbelly: it was throat or nothing.

Another interesting spectacle involving a stoat was an irate moorhen chasing the mammal across the Yare near UEA last spring: got too near the bird's nest I suppose.

Mike Freer

David Paull asks if it is usual for stoats to develop white fur in Norfolk during snowy weather. The answer is yes, if we have as much as a week of snow and sufficiently low

temperatures, some inner mechanism in the animal's make-up seems to be triggered and the development of at least some white fur follows quite rapidly. We saw a stoat which was white apart from a saddle of normal coloured fur at Little Cressingham on February 8th, a little over a week following the heaviest snowfall for some years.

Of greater interest, on April 23rd, whilst waiting for the sun to come out so I could take a picture of a true wild pear *Pyrus pyraeaster* at Little Langford, Stanford Training Area, a stoat appeared along the track nearby which was completely pale sandy in colour. Though I have seen a good number of white stoats over the years, I have never come across any intermediate colour between white and the normal fur colour in this species.

Alec Bull

Whilst plant recording in Gayton on the 24th April 2003, Young Wood, south of the village was examined. Near the entrance was a gamekeepers 'gibbet' displaying the corpses of a variety of vermin, mainly squirrels, but also a normal stoat, and a slightly smaller pure white stoat in ermine. The body was crawling with tiny beetles but was still in good condition, so presumably had not been hanging there long.

Clearly David Paull's sighting was not unique, and ermine *do* exist in Norfolk.

The keeper of the wood said he had also seen stoat in ermine in the Sandringham area, and subsequent enquiries amongst local gamekeepers suggested that ermine are not infrequent. Perhaps the Society ought to instigate some sort of formal contact with the Gamekeeping fraternity since they probably know more about such matters than most of us are likely to?

Robin Stevenson



A note on the parasitic fungus *Sclerotinia tuberosa* in Norfolk

On April 10 1966, my wife and I were walking through Woodrising Wood, admiring the Wood Anemones and Wood Sorrel that were then in full flower, when we came upon a curious little cup fungus associated with the first named. The cups were 1-2 cm across and were home on a stalk up to 4cm long arising from a black underground tuber which was white inside. This proved to be *Sclerotinia tuberosa* a parasitic fungus on the roots of Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), though some books say on the old roots of that plant.

I discovered this record whilst going through some old notebooks, sorting out records from the 1960s to send to Richard Shotbolt, webmaster for the Norfolk Fungus Study Group who is coordinating the records of our county recorder, Reg Evans, and those of others towards the Society's Wildlife 2000 publication on Fungi. As a result of this, I paid two visits to a wood I am studying near Dereham, as it has many acres of Wood Anemones. This first visit, fairly late in March was fruitless as, due to the cold and dry weather, the Wood Anemones were only just beginning to appear. A second visit was paid on April 12, with acres available for searching. Walking slowly through the drifts of nodding white heads, after nearly an hour and a half, I had almost given up hope, especially as I had visited all the damper sites which I thought most likely to hold any of the fungus, the wood-

land floor being relatively dry due to the season. Going up a slight slope, I suddenly spotted some cup fungi in a small bare patch between the Anemones. I did not count them as I was too busy taking photographs, but would estimate there to have been probably between 12 and 20, and all were within the area of a single square metre. As they were growing in a patch where the Anemones were relatively sparse, it could be that they do grow on the old parts of the plants, though then again, do they infect the roots of the young plants this year and produce their own fruiting bodies in the open patch thus created in the following spring? Phillips regards the species as 'rare', though probably under recorded due to their season of appearance. However, they are certainly far from common even where the host plant is abundant.



Alec Bull

Sclerotinia tuberosa.

Three cups *in situ* with wood anemone.
One laying on the surface showing stem and black sclerotia.

Recycling fox

An amusing thing happened on the night of the 8th May. 12.45am walking up Chalkhill Road from Riverside in Norwich. As I passed a side alley I noticed a fox trotting towards me. I stepped aside and waited for it. It had seen me pass but continued to walk towards me. As it got to the end of the alley it realised that I had stopped - it was within touching distance. We stood staring at each other, the fox almost inquisitively. After what seemed like an age, he/she gently turned around and trotted off (a fast walk really) back down the alley.

I continued on my way and turned right into Rosary Road. The fox cut across the open ground at the junction in question to arrive at the top of the alley opening out onto Rosary Road just a little after me.

The same thing happened, we stood and stared at each other. Eventually, the fox turned around and retraced its steps. Amusing as this game of chess would have been to continue, I was keen to get home.

During this sequence the fox remained surprisingly calm. The incredible thing was, that the fox had a mouth crammed full of Morrison's carrier bags!

Ironically, I had earlier watched the film the Matrix (for those of you that know it) - had I really seen a fox with a mouth full of carrier bags or was I just part of the matrix?



Paul Westley

New bird for the garden

I have lived at my present address for twenty years, and in all that time we have never had stock doves visit the garden, but for a week or so in May two of these birds have been coming regularly to feed on the mixed seed on the lawn. They have as yet not ventured on to the bird table as the wood pigeons and collared doves do, they are quite nervous, but it's very nice to see them.

These doves are hole nesters, using hollow trees, old buildings etc. I once had a pair nest in a hide I erected in a tall tree for a heron's nest nearby, the doves and I both used the hide successfully, another pair took over a box meant for tawny owls in my local wood a couple of years ago. My impression is that these doves are less numerous than they used to be, probably another reflection on our modern farming methods.

Tony Howes



Excursion Reports

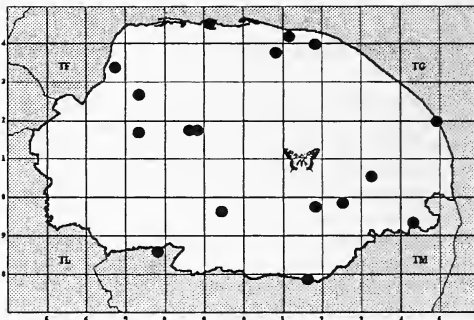
Featuring:

Stiffkey to Wells walk

Holt Lowes evening

Royal Norfolk Show

● 2003-04 Field Meeting location
Easton College
Indoor meetings



A Coastal Walk from Stiffkey to Wells

Sunday, 11th May 2003

In pastel shades of green and grey
For miles ahead the salt-marsh lay
An arc of shoreline where the sky
Gives welcome to the wild gulls' cry.

With Paul's short talk to set the scene

We started off by hedgerow green
And hawthorn blossom scented air
Enticed us on. Fourteen were there.

The botanists looked to the ground;
Bird watchers searching all around,
And insects either high or low
Caught our attention, stole the show.

A stop for lunch in sunny nook
Of light refreshment we partook.
Then slowly on towards Wells Quay,
Where terns and turtle dove we'd see.

The car park at Wells Beach at last
O'erhead the clouds were gathering fast!

In all a very pleasant way
For Norfolk Nats to spend the day.
Janice Grint

Many thanks to Paul Banham for the introductory talk and setting the scene before our walk. Also thanks to Janice who has captured the day so well in verse. During the walk mostly birds were recorded and are listed opposite, along with any butterflies noted. Those of a botanical bent were refreshed towards the end of the walk by the sight of several plants of Pale Flax (*Linum bienne*) on the sea wall at Wells.

Eunice Phipps

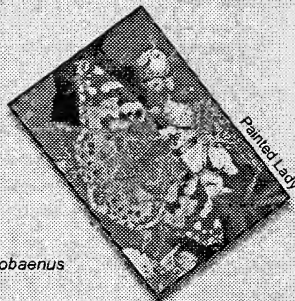
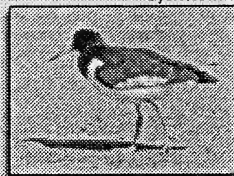
BIRDS

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*
Greylag Goose (plus Donald) *Anser anser*
Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*
Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*
(Common) Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
(Common) Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*
(Common) Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*
Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
(Common) Redshank *Tringa totanus*
Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*
Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
Common Gull *Larus canus*
Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*
Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*
Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*
Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*
Little Tern *Sterna albitrons*
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*
(Common) Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*
Stock Dove *Columba oenas*
Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*
(Common) Cuckoo (H) *Cuculus canorus*
(Common) Swift *Apus apus*
(Common) Skytark *Alauda arvensis*
Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
(Common) House Martin *Delichon urbica*
Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
Dunnock *Prunella modularis*
European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*
Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*
(Common) Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
Sedge Warbler (H) *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
Great Tit *Parus major*
Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*
(Common) Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
(Common) Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*
(Common) Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*
European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

BUTTERFLIES

Small White *Pieris rapae*
Green-veined White *Pieris napi*
Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*
Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*
Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*
Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*
Painted Lady *Cynthia cardui*

Oystercatcher



Painted Lady



Holt Lowes Evening

Friday, 20th June 2003

Over 25 people gathered late on a Friday evening to hunt for a variety of nocturnal prey. We started well with up to three Woodcocks seen flying together in their 'roding' flight, well before dusk. Nightjars were equally early, and after some brief and distant views we finally enjoyed some close looks at the goatsucker. Moving on, a session pond-dipping produced a Water Stick-insect from the rather barren-looking Soldiers' Pond. Then, as it became really dark, we found our first Glow Worm, which was admired at extremely close range. Only 2-3 others were found during the evening, perhaps due to the early season, or possibly the cold (it quickly dropped to 6 degrees C!; on other evenings we have found dozens). The chill evening also put a damper on the moths, and despite Mike Halls brave efforts the catch was limited, although a fine Elephant Hawk-moth was a crowd-pleaser.

All-in-all however, it was a great evening, with some truly memorable sightings.

Simon Harrap

The Royal Norfolk Show

Wed/Thurs 25/26th June 2003

The Society was present again this year at the show, in the same county-side area by the lake. The two days could not have been better, sunny with a cool breeze, and the dragonflies were active, emperor, four spotted chasers and azure damselflies in abundance. This was perfect, as our theme for the main display was dragonflies, this in view of the recent Society publication by Dr Pam Taylor. Ken Durrant supplied the mounted specimens and David Lester the exuvia. As a result several copies of 'The Dragonflies of Norfolk' were sold.



Robert Maidstone had a display of caterpillars, which included peacock, brimstone, emperor moth, oak egger

moth, also shown were the tortoise beetle, on thistle and the figwort weevil. These all caused much interest, the only problem was stopping the caterpillars wandering off! Dr Roy Baker displayed the Asiatic clam and the problem it was causing to the rivers of the Broads. To complete our displays, Brian McFarlane loaned us his superb natural history photographs, which were much enjoyed and promoted the Society's photographic group. The new display boards which were purchased this year were of great benefit in showing the Society's aims.

The two days also brought in seven new members and a chance to promote the society to many more people.

Thanks are due also to those who helped on the stand, David and Iris Paull, Brian McFarlane, Roy Baker, Francis Farrow, Janet Negal, Paul Westley and David Griffin.

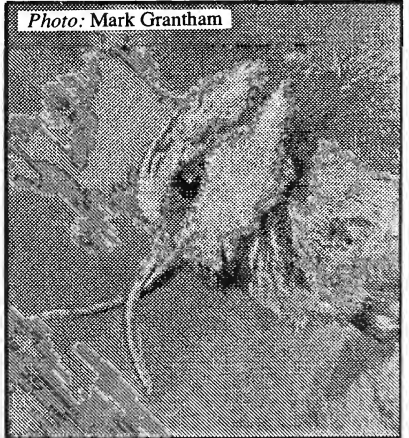
David Nobbs.

Beak of Nature

As many UK bird ringers will tell you, no-one sprints towards a mist net in anticipation of extracting a Blue Tit, one of the most numerous and vicious (don't be fooled by their cute demeanour) members of the Western Palaearctic avifauna. However, an exception to this rule was noted on May 15th 2003 near Thetford when the Nunnery Ringing Group, composed principally of BTO staff members, came face to bill with the individual pictured opposite.

Despite first impressions, the bird had not hybridised with a cross-bill or a wader, but was in fact a pure-bred, common-or-garden Blue Tit. The same bird had, in fact, been caught in July the previous year, at which time it showed no sign of the Bergerac-ian extremity that it was to develop. Abnormal bill development is not unusual in many bird species and often occurs after the bill is damaged. However, the extensions to the bill usually break off well before reaching such an extreme length. Perhaps the most surprising thing about this individual was that it was a perfectly healthy weight, suggesting that the bird's ability to feed was not hampered in any way. Presumably, caterpillars and other foliage-dwelling insects could be picked off the leaves by turning the head to one side. With a bit of luck the bird may be re-trapped again in future years - and who 'nose' what it will look like then.

Photo: Mark Grantham



Dave Leech



Creeping Serendipity

We recently bought a discounted copy of Bob Flowerdew's 'The no-work garden'. Reading through the many pearls of wisdom Simon came across the following passage: "One evening I was overjoyed when a visitor asked me: 'What on earth is this?' This was a strange thing, a golden coloured worm, as long as my hand is wide at full stretch and not much thicker than my hair, winding its way up around a tall grass stem. I had no idea but a learned friend identified it as a *Mermis*, or Thunderworm, a Mermithid nematode; a rare creature only found in old grasslands that is a parasite of grasshoppers." Simon had never heard of

a *Mermis* and forgot to mention it to Anne, and this snippet of information was destined to be soon forgotten.

The very next day (June 15) however, just after a thunderstorm, Anne was outside the back door when she exclaimed 'What on earth is this?' It was a thread-like worm around 10 cm long but perhaps just 2 mm in diameter, winding its way up out of the soil. It was overall greyish in colour with a paler and more golden 'head' and 'tail'. Even Simon could not have forgotten Bob Flowerdew's text after 24 hours, and it was duly consulted. We have no other reference to 'Thunderworms', but surely our creature was one and the same. Spooky or what!

Anne & Simon Harrap

Woodland Trust Woods

Michael Ryder, the new manager for all the Woodland Trust woods in Norfolk would be interested to know of any records that naturalists may have made in any of their woods, including a visit, earlier this year, to look for bryophytes in Tyrell's Wood.

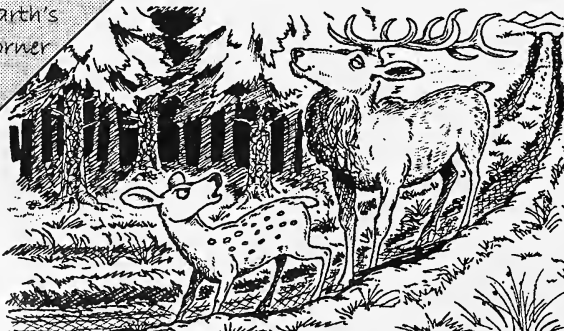
If anyone has records for Woodland Trust sites and would like to send them onto Michael he can be contacted at the following e-mail or postal address:

Michaelryder@woodland-trust.org.uk

Michael Ryder, The Woodland Trust,
15 Market Place, Loddon, Norfolk. Tel: 01508 528676



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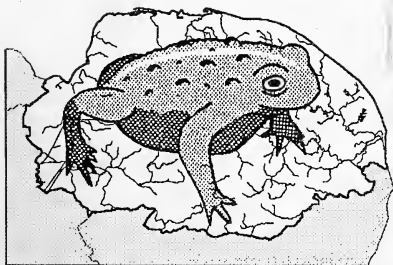
Proprietors: J Clifton & A Wander

Would all contributors
please send your notes etc.
to the editor as soon as possible
by **October 1st, 2003** to the
following address: Francis Farrow,
'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road,
Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8QD
or by e-mail to:
francis.f@virgin.net



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The Norfolk **NATTERJACK**

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 83
November 2003

Toad-in-the-hole....

Season's greetings to all members. As we now pass into the winter months we can look back at some of our excursions and see what a varied amount of natural history was observed throughout the county. We also say farewell to our past president Reg Jones who will be remembered by many for his wonderful photographs. I am, however, also looking forward to next year and to receiving your notes and views on nature in these changing times! Speaking of changes more 'stoats in ermine' observations are included in this issue. If anyone is lucky enough to see one this winter perhaps you could let me know. My thanks to all contributors and if anyone would like to send in line drawings of natural history subjects for possible inclusion, please do. **FF**

REG JONES: TEACHER, MUSICIAN, NATURALIST, PHOTOGRAPHER

As members will know from the slip enclosed with the last issue of *Natterjack*, vice-president Reg Jones died on July 29th at the age of 88. He was, we think, our second oldest member after Ernest Daniels.

Reg was born at Hunslet, Leeds, gained a science degree at Leeds University, and was an outstanding musician. He played the Mozart clarinet concerto in public on several occasions and it was most appropriate that a recording of the concerto was played during the funeral service on August 8th at which the Society was well represented.

Reg came to Norwich in 1945 to teach science at City College Norwich, became head of science in 1950 and vice-principal in 1963. He retired in 1976. His love of natural history had been growing over the years and, when he had to put aside his clarinet because evening classes clashed with orchestra rehearsal nights, he took up nature photography, soon realising that Norfolk offered unique habitats, especially for birds.

"Thus began his love of Norfolk natural history and the enjoyment of achieving a good quality photograph," said his daughter Dilys in her funeral eulogy. "He was using cumbersome equipment, and it seems to me that his early shots of birds in the 1950s were pretty special. Somehow Mum used to keep very calm when he was 100 feet plus up a tree in a very home-made hide taking photographs of a heron on its nest.

"As Reg became less agile he found it necessary to concentrate on flower photography, and his fellow photographers will no doubt remember in particular his slides of Mediterranean orchids. It is pleasing that he wrote several of the Jarrold Area Guides in the 70s and that his photographs were used to illustrate many more. In the last few years he was always happy when he was composing captions for the Jarrold wildlife calendars."

Reg's son Martin read one of the last captions he wrote, an evocative description of Cley-next-the-Sea, which was found on his desk.

Dilys said Reg had derived pleasure from all the contacts he had with members of the Society, of which he was a member for over 50 years and president in 1955-6. "His family knew him as a modest man, but he was not always meek. What he had to say at meetings was sometimes controversial but always thought-provoking. The same applied to his teaching career. He had a reputation for speaking up for education in this city."

The family very generously asked that, instead of sending flowers, those who wished to acknowledge Reg's life and work should make donations to the Society. I have since received a cheque for £235.00 for which we are very grateful.

David Paull, Chairman

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The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society
Founded 1869

Registered Charity No. 291664

An Unusual Host

During the afternoon of the Natural History day at Wheatfen (10th Aug.), I was walking with The Lowestoft Field Club through Surlingham Wood when I came across a single bracket of *Fistulina hepatica*. Not in itself unusual but it was growing low down on the trunk of a rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*).

A look through the British Mycological Society database for fungi and hosts *F. hepatica* is not, surprisingly recorded on *S. aucuparia*.

If anyone has recorded it on this tree I would appreciate some confirmation, just to prove the heat had not caused me to hallucinate.

Links:

<http://194.203.77.69/fieldmycology/BMSFRD/assoc.asp>

Colin A Jacobs

Another Emperor Death

In the Vol. 36 of the 2003 NNNS Transactions, Francis Farrow describes the death of an emperor dragonfly (*Anax imperator*) through being caught and eaten by a moorhen. I have witnessed this only once during my many birdwatching trips in Norfolk and Suffolk.

On 25th September 1994 at the RSPB Minsmere reserve a moorhen was seen to catch a male emperor from a water-filled ditch and consume it on the spot.

The Birds of the Western Palearctic Concise edition Snow & Perrins, states moorhens eat insects, but no mention of Odonata. I expect it is a popular food source particularly when feeding young but few observers are privileged to see it in the field.

Colin A Jacobs.



They do say lightning does not strike twice!

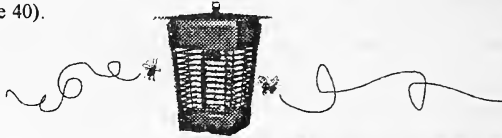
Another lucky find turned up this year when National Trust warden, Keith Zealand, presented me with a large bag of insect victims from the ultraviolet fly trap situated in the car park café at Sheringham Hall.

Although at least 80% of the specimens were the common wasp *Vespa vulgaris*, I did manage to produce a list of 41 various insects.

Amongst them, I was overjoyed to find, was the body (minus wings) of an extremely rare Xylotine hoverfly, *Brachypalpoidea lenta* Mg. The 2nd and 3rd abdominal segments are blood red and all the legs are black. It is extremely local and scarce in southern forests with odd records as far as the Scottish highlands. This is possibly the first Norfolk record.

In 2001 another such find from the same source produced a near relative *Brachypalpus laphriformis* Fln., which is also a rarity, what a coincidence. (See 'Natterjack' no. 75, page 2 or *Transactions* Vol. 35 Part 1, July 2002, page 40).

Ken Durrant



MORE WHITE STOATS

John Hampshire of Lessingham writes that he too saw a stoat in ermine at Hickling Broad on February 14. It was in full ermine without a fleck of brown on it. He has also seen a stoat in partial ermine at Catfield Fen a few winters ago.

"Someone I know who works for the Broads Authority tells me that he has had several sightings of white stoats over the years so perhaps they are not quite as rare in Norfolk as I had thought.

"The animal that I saw at Hickling stuck out like a sore thumb and must have been vulnerable to predation (if indeed they are preyed by foxes or marsh harriers). This must keep the number of white stoats down, especially as we have so little snow in Norfolk these days. It would be interesting to know more about the status of stoats in ermine in the county and if their numbers are declining as the number of winter days with snow cover continues to decrease."

David Paull

40 Years Ago

In keeping with the correspondence on ermine in Norfolk the following is an extract from the *Bird and Mammal Report* 1963.

All over the county, following the hard winter of 1963, stoats in ermine were very much more frequently observed. One was seen at Attlebridge on January 18th, and others were reported from Thetford Chase on 21st and at Aylsham on 22nd. In February, one was shot at Wrampingham, another at Swannington, and one was hunting rats near Had-discoc station (EAE). An almost completely white one, save for brown markings on the head and along the mid-dorsal line was brought in from Erpingham on February 25th (NCM) and two others in full ermine on the 27th. Similar reports came from Watton (GJ) and Bungay (WS). The number of these reports is quite exceptional.

Contributors:

EAE - E.A. Ellis
NCM - Norwich Castle Museum
GJ - G. Jessop
WS - Miss W. Simpson



CORNCRAKE

In June of this year Wendy and I were on the Isle of Iona, and for the first time ever I was able to listen to comcrakes calling. There were at times several birds "singing" their monotonous song from grass fields all round the Abbey, but seeing them was another matter. I tried hard to spot one in areas where the vegetation seemed less tall and dense, but no luck came my way.

They are very elusive birds, and are masters at keeping them selves hidden. These Western Isles are now the last refuge of this mysterious member of the Rallidae family.

This was brought to mind this week by an article in the paper, comcrakes have been captive bred at Whip-snade Park in Bedfordshire, and released at the Nene Washes near Peterborough. This is a joint venture by the RSPB, English Nature, and the Zoological Society of London, it is hoped that about one hundred youngsters can be released in each of the next five years.

Hopefully, this might establish a new English comcrake population, so fingers crossed, our Norfolk hay meadows may yet again be a summer home to this elusive bird, and we can marvel at its song as it calls its own Latin name "*Crex, Crex*" both day and night among the grasses.

It states in one of my books, printed in 1935, that "*The comcrake is a summer resident in most parts of the British Isles, though now scarce in South-East England*".

The last confirmed breeding record for the county (*The Birds of Norfolk*, 1999) was at Wramplingham in 1965, when an adult and seven chicks were seen.

Tony Howes

Woodpigeons

Our garden in Wells has been taken over by woodpigeons. It used to be collared doves, but these are now in the minority. The invasion seems to date from the pigeons' decision to nest in, of all places, the upper part of the "*Zepherine Drouhin*" rose which rises the full height of our tall Victorian house, but stands only 18" or so proud of the wall. There they have raised two broods, while many others from nearby come visiting.

They seem quite unworried by us sitting in the garden near the pond. An individual will land on the lawn, and nonchalantly wander about, gradually getting nearer to the water. They know the point where they can wade in, using stems of bogbean for support, and finally submerge most of the head, pigeons being one of the few bird families which can swallow with their head down. Meanwhile, others line up on the fence, waiting their turn, billing, cooing and unashamedly doing what comes naturally.

Speaking of cooing, the five-part call of the woodpigeon (or "dow", as my father used to call them) could be represented by the sentence: "*We do like ivy*". However, woodpigeons, while having a good grasp of rhythm, have none of metre, so that, nine times out of ten, the call comes out as "*do like ivy, We*", which always seems uncomfortable to me.

I am amazed that such a large bird should fall prey to sparrow-hawks, but we have found the feathers of two that must have been carried off for consumption elsewhere. We are certainly within the hunting area of a pair of hawks, which sometimes shoot into the garden over the wall and scare the living daylight out of our healthy population of sparrows. Though I have never seen one take a woodpigeon I have been assured by others that the female sparrow-hawk, being bigger than the male, can do so. She would be welcome to a few more of ours!

Paul Banham

South Stack

Last July the family managed a few days on Anglesey, swapping the heat of Norfolk for the fresher climes of North Wales. One visit was to South Stack - a contorted coast of Precambrian turbidite sandstones and interbedded shales on the north western side of the island. The top of the cliff was a mass of pink and purple from heather and thrift, but it was the birds we had really come to see. There were guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes and fulmars all vying for a place on the precipitous rocky ledges. More interesting, however, were the puffins, ravens and choughs that were also present. We were also told that a peregrine had recently occupied a nest site on the cliffs.

The noise of a seabird colony is always one of those special sounds that nature gives us and on the way down the *many* steps to the light-house we were treated to the full cacophony. This made it a truly memorable day out.

Francis Farrow

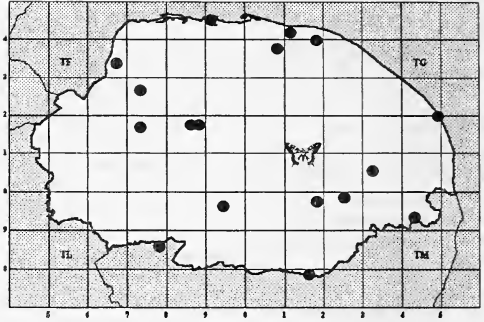


Excursion Reports

Featuring:

Thompson Common
Winterton Dunes
Billingford Common
Wheatfen Reserve
Stanley Carrs

● 2003-04 Field Meeting location
Easton College
Indoor meetings



Wildflowers Revealed no. 8 Thompson Common

Sunday 6th June, 2003

Leaders: Bob Ellis & Bob Leaney

The first of this year's 'Wild flowers revealed' meetings attracted about 20 people, mostly current members including several experienced botanists and others wanting to brush up on their botanical skills.

After meeting in the N.W.T. car park at Stow Bedon we set off through the wood looking at woodland species such as the three-nerved sandwort (*Moheringia trinerva*), sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), common tway-blade (*Listera ovata*) and bird cherry (*Prunus padus*). There wasn't much inclination to linger in the wood due to the persistence and size of the mosquitoes! The last person in the party saw a roe deer move off, unnoticed by the rest of us.

Our attention was soon held by the plants in the pingoes which included: bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*), greater bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris*), greater spearwort (*Ranunculus lingua*), greater yellow-cress (*Rorippa amphibia*), lesser water-parsnip (*Berula erecta*), tubular water dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*) and water violet (*Hottonia palustris*). While dipping in one of the pingoes a water scorpion was seen.

In the marshy areas 11 species of sedge were noted including: brown sedge (*Carex disticha*), tufted sedge (*Carex elata*), greater tussock-sedge

(*Carex paniculata*), and pill sedge (*Carex pilulifera*). Other plants of interest seen include: brookweed (*Samolus valerandi*), fairy flax (*Linum catharticum*), marsh cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), marsh stitchwort (*Stellaria palustris*), bog stitchwort (*Stellaria uliginosa*) and the nationally scarce marsh fern (*Thelypteris palustris*).

Lunch was taken on a raised dry area at the far end of the common overlooking a patch of common cotton-grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), in other areas of the country where it is more plentiful it was gathered in sufficient quantities for stuffing pillows and mattresses, but locally it was probably only abundant enough to make candle wicks, its other possible use.

Not long after we had got started again a sudden downpour sent us hurrying for the shelter of some trees, but this was short lived and failed to 'dampen' our enthusiasm as our attention turned to the grasses and with not a little help from the leaders quite a number of species were identified including: early hair-grass (*Aira praecox*), quaking grass (*Briza media*), purple small-reed (*Calamagrostis canescens*), wood small-reed (*Calamagrostis epigejos*), tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), wavy hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), floating sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), plicate sweet-grass (*Glyceria notata*) and downy oat-grass (*Helictotrichon pubescens*).

Due to the overcast conditions, few dragonflies were on the wing with just azure and large red damselflies being

noted, the same with butterflies with only painted ladies and brimstones about and David Lester pointed out a brimstone caterpillar feeding on purging buckthorn (*Rhamnus carthartica*).

We were fortunate to have Liz Hammler present to help with the identification of a first instar oak bush cricket, a third instar meadow grasshopper and a common green grasshopper. Also noted were a common lizard and a brown-lipped snail.

Among the birds seen and heard were: reed and garden warbler, reed bunting, goldcrest, green woodpecker and a kestrel, but as we started back a hobby was seen hawking along the trees at the edge of the common. The hobby is one of our local success stories with successful fledging of young in Norfolk over the last ten years.

Although the main theme of the 'Wild Flowers Revealed' meetings is identification of species, we also keep a record of what is seen on the day and in this instance we recorded 189 species of plants, so as well as hopefully encouraging people to learn more about our local flora we are also keeping tabs on what is to be found in the places we visit.

Bill Mitchell



Wildflowers revealed no 9 Winterton Dunes

Sunday 20th July, 2003

Leader: Bob Leaney

Despite a busy car park full of holiday makers eager to get on the beach, about twenty people managed to assemble for the second of this year's 'Wild Flowers Revealed' meetings. Bob gave an introductory talk on the area we would be looking at and warned us of the adders which are particularly abundant this year.

Just a few steps from the car park we stopped to look at the first interesting plant of the day, this was perennial wall rocket (*Diplotaxis tenuifolia*), its name is a bit of a misnomer as it is rarely found on walls and with us it is mainly confined to East Norfolk, especially near the coast. The next plant of interest was sheep's bit, which looks like a small scabious but is a member of the bellflower family, the 'bit' refers to the way it is 'bit' or cropped by sheep. Another bellflower was growing nearby, a much taller one, this was peach-leaved bellflower (*Campanula persicifolia*), probably a remnant from garden refuse.

Other plants of interest seen in the dune area were: lesser hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*), mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), hare's-foot clover (*Trifolium arvense*), early hair-grass (*Aira praecox*) and the nationally scarce grey hair-grass (*Corynephorus canescens*) which although it is found in Suffolk Breckland, in Norfolk it is only found on the coast, mainly on the acid dunes such as those at Winterton

On reaching the area of heath at the rear of the dunes many different plants were seen, including all three species of heather to be found in Norfolk: heather or ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) and cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*). Due to the closeness of the turf it was necessary to get on ones knees to pick out the smaller plants and one small one indeed was found, this was allseed (*Radiola linoides*), which is now only to be found in one other

location in Norfolk; in the same area we found matgrass (*Nardus stricta*), and Mary Ghullam's ever-sharp eyes picked out bird's-foot clover (*Trifolium ornithopodioides*), while in the damper areas we found heath rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and heath woodrush (*Luzula multiflora* ssp. *congesta*).

At this point we were all ready for lunch and it was pleasant to sit in the warm sunshine pondering the contents of our sandwiches instead of trying to distinguish between closely related composites or sedges. But all too soon we were back on our feet as once again we had to try and take in yet more species, this time around the natterjack ponds. A pondweed in one of the ponds kept us guessing until Bob Ellis enlightened us, this turned out to be bog pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*) while on the mud around the pools we found water purselane (*Lythrum portula*), pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) and short-fruited willowherb (*Epilobium obscurum*); while not far away we were shown a patch of marsh violet (*Viola palustris*) a scarce plant of marshy acid sites, and milk parsley (*Peucedanum palustre*) another nationally scarce species.

With all this to take in, our leader then led us to yet another location, this time the beach between the dunes and the little tern colony. We walked along the high tide drift line looking for the species to be found there and soon found saltwort (*Salsola kali*), sea rocket (*Cakile maritima*), sea holly (*Eryngium maritimum*), sea sandwort (*Honckenya peploides*), frosted orache (*Atriplex lacinata*) and a single plant of lyme grass (*Leymus arenaria*).

The little terns have moved their, nesting colony back to Winterton after the disturbance at Yarmouth last year and have had a successful season. One of our party was a volunteer warden of the little tern colony who informed us that the colony had successfully fledged over four hundred young.

Some keen eyes in the party picked out an arctic skua and a black tern out at sea, and earlier in the day we saw a pair of stonechats, a pair of curlews, a kestrel and a marsh harrier.

The fine weather we were enjoying had also encouraged the insects out with a good number of butterflies including: meadow brown, grayling, small heath, small copper, ringlet, dark green fritillary, gatekeeper and painted lady. There were a number of six-spot burnet moths in the dunes and their boat-shaped pupal cases complete with exuviae were noticeable on plant stems. We also observed a sand wasp (*Ammophila sabulosa*) bring its caterpillar prey back to its burrow.

A number of dragonflies were seen during the day and once again I am grateful to David Lester and others for their help in identifying those seen; the following were seen mainly in the area of the natterjack ponds: emerald damselfly, azure damselfly, blue-tailed damselfly, ruddy darter, common darter, four-spotted chaser, broad-bodied chaser, brown hawker, southern hawker and emperor dragonfly.

As can be seen from the above, more than just flowers were 'revealed' on a very pleasant, interesting and informative day.

Bill Mitchell

Diary Dates

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

'Half a century of conservation'
Lord Walpole
Tuesday November 18th, 2003

'SHOW YOUR OWN'
Member's photographs/slides
Monday November 4th, 2003

'Wildlife of Beeston Common'
Ken Durrant
Tuesday December 16th, 2003
With festive refreshments

'Coping with change on the
Norfolk coast'
Peter Lambley
Tuesday January 20th, 2004

Please check Room No. on arrival

All start at 7.30pm,

Easton College Conference Centre



Billingsford Common, Diss and Langmere Green, Dickleburgh

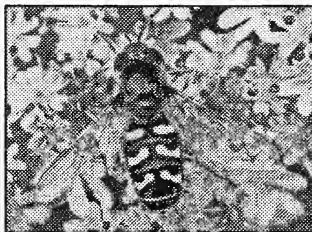
Sunday 27th July, 2003

Of the seven members of the Society who met near the mill on Billingsford Common only three had actually been on this 12 acre site before although most were aware of the tower mill when passing on the A143 in this part of the Waveney valley. After the variety of habitats to be found in such a comparatively small area had been outlined together with a brief history of the use of the drier part for crop production during the second world war (not particularly effectively) the party split and went in search of individual specialities and interests.

Rex and Barbara Hancy, who had previously visited the site in September 1996, went in search of galls wanting to compare their current finds with those of seven years ago. They added fifteen species to their earlier list, two of which are new county records: a gall on the lower leaf surface of a domestic apple caused by the mite (*Phyllocoptes malinus*) and a gall swelling the base of the flower head on ragwort caused by the Tephritid fly (*Sphenella marginata*). Rex commented that the gall on apple probably reflected the fact that Billingsford Common has one of the best stands of domestic apple in several forms growing in a natural state to be found locally. Although both visits produced almost the same number of gall records, 33 in 1996 and 32 in 2003, the combined total of 48 shows the value of regular, if somewhat sporadic, visits to a site and the changes due to season and time.

The rest of the party moved off in a "ragged" group, recording plants and a few of the insects associated with them. Stephen Martin nobly acted as "scribe" after having been volunteered for the job. Although we by no means covered all of the common and not really much of the wetter area, more than 100 species of plants were recorded in just over two hours. One of the more interesting was the large-flowered hemp-nettle

(*Galeopsis speciosa*), especially as it was in close proximity to the common hemp-nettle (*G. tetrahit*), which allowed comparative photographs to be taken. It was on *G. speciosa* that adults of the little red and green leaf beetle (*Chrysolina fastuosa*), were seen and leaves of the common hemp-nettle were mined by the Agromyzid fly (*Liriomyza strigata*). The upright flower stalks of angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), standing proudly above the surrounding vegetation attracted many hoverflies and other insects. Both *Episyrphus balteatus* and *Scaeva pyrastris*, two migrant hoverflies, were much in evidence, vying with three species of *Eristalis* and *Syrphus ribesii* for nectar. These hoverflies were joined by both sawflies (*Allantus cinctus* and *Athalia cordata*), a digger wasp (*Ectemnius cavifrons*) and the much larger bumble-bees (*Bombus lapidarius* and *Bombus lucorum*). The leaves of the angelica were also extensively mined by the larvae of the common Agromyzid (*Phytomyza angelicae*).



Hoverfly: *Scaeva pyrastris*

Mines caused by a moth larva (*Mompha raschkiella*), were noted on the leaves of rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*), which occurs widely on the drier areas of the common whilst stands of the great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), are tangled with meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), and patches of common meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*), over much of the damper parts. As would be expected from land that had been cultivated there were also several patches of perennial nettle (*Urtica dioica*), and it was interesting to see the different strategies adopted by the caterpillars of related butterfly species. A mature caterpillar of the red admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), was found concealed in its protective leaf

tent whilst almost next door several mature larvae of the small tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*), were feeding completed exposed on nettle leaves. Altogether 13 species of adult butterfly were recorded with the commonest being the migrant painted lady (*Vanessa cardui*). Several species of moths were also seen, ranging from the very common mother-of-pearl (*Pleuroptera ruralis*), a Pyralid with larvae feeding on nettle, to the scarce reed dagger (*Simyra albovenosa*), which is restricted to reed beds - there is quite an extensive area of common reed (*Phragmites australis*), the larval foodplant, towards the river end of the site. It was on the river bank, by the disused ford, that we were delighted with the activities of many banded demoiselles (*Calopteryx splendens*), and several common blue damselflies (*Enallagma cyathigerum*). We also saw both southern hawkers (*Aeshna cyanea*), and brown hawkers (*Aeshna grandis*), patrolling much of the common. By lunch time over 50 species of insects, from several different orders, had been recorded.

In the afternoon we moved a couple of miles further north to an even smaller piece of common land - Langmere Green. This was another site that was new to virtually everyone present. With hindsight we would probably have been better employed on the rest of Billingsford Common but nevertheless this basically grassland area with an elongate, overgrown pond rewarded our endeavours with 80 species of plants, eight butterflies and three moths, four bumble-bees, a couple of hoverflies and a couple of leaf mines. Unfortunately Rex and Barbara could not stay so we noted only one plant gall, the large ovoid swelling on the stem of creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), caused by another Tephritid fly (*Urophora cardui*) which was also noted at Billingsford.

Despite a somewhat less diverse flora and fauna, due at least in part to the fact that Langmere Green had been regularly cut for hay until the last couple of years, than that found in the morning at Billingsford Common all agreed it had been worthwhile to see the second site.

Mike Hall



A Walk around Stanley Carrs

Sunday 31st August, 2003

A small but happy party of 6 adults and 2 children turned out for this joint meeting with the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society. Robert Hunt and Juliet Bews from Yarmouth kindly guided us round.

We did not enter the Otter Trust reserve of Stanley Carrs but walked down through some heath, set-a-side and an old quarry before getting onto a good track leading down to the River Waveney, between Stanley Carrs and Alder Carrs. At the end of the track was an old pumping station, perhaps the reason for the track, but now used mainly by fishermen.

The set-a-side consisted mainly of a monoculture of ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) with some viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) and weld (*Reseda luteola*).

At the bottom of this area we turned right along the edge of the carr where we found corn mint (*Mentha arvensis*).

We had a look in the old sand quarry but it was rather too dry for anything to grow except a little moss, *Polytrichum juniperinum*, with orange tips to its leaves.

After walking past some pheasant rearing feeders we turned down the track to the river. The track had been built up to raise it above the water level, because both these carrs are tidal and flood twice a day. Plants we saw along here were enchanter's nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), small balsam (*Impatiens parviflora*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), hemp agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), marsh woundwort (*Stachys palustris*), marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), wild angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), great willowherb, Canadian fleabane (*Conyza canadensis*) common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*).

When we arrived at the river's edge we stopped for lunch. Here we saw several southern hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*) dragonflies patrolling the edge of our picnic area. The water level was about six inches below the concrete quay, but when we returned later in the afternoon it had covered all the concrete area.

After lunch, with a reduced party, we walked along down stream, the path being several inches under water most of the way. Here we found yellow water lily (*Nuphar lutea*) growing in the river, agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), water chickweed (*Myosoton aquaticum*), dewberry (*Rubus caesius*), water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*), frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*), lesser water parsnip (*Berula erecta*), hop (*Humulus lupulus*), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*), orange balsam (*Impatiens capensis*), marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), marsh sow thistle (*Sonchus palustris*), water figwort (*Scrophularia auriculata*), hemp agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*), perennial sow thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*), meadow rue (*Thalictrum flavum*), brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*).

Martin Collier recorded 25 beetle species during the morning, most of which are common and widespread in the county. One species is, however, of particular interest – *Melanapion minimum*. This small black weevil occurs on various *Salix* spp., where its larvae are inquilines in the galls of *Pontania* spp. (Hymenoptera: Tenthredinidae). It has Red Data Book 3 (Rare) status nationally and is a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) "priority species", although it has a widespread distribution in Norfolk and can be locally common in the Broads.

Stephen Livermore & John Mott



Pontania gall on willow

Wheatfen Natural History Day Sunday 10th August, 2003

On a day when the temperatures reached 100°F in parts of the UK. (95°F at Wheatfen) The Natural History Day was very well attended, by members and the general public. We were also joined this year by the Lowestoft Field Club.

David Lester looked after the Dragonfly stand, Rex and Barbara Hancy the Plant Galls, with Robert Maidstone on Bees and Wasps, Derek Howlett on Moths, Trevor Dove looked after the Fungi table and Keith Clarke looked after the "Little Things" Of particular interest this year was the Boletes found growing under oaks along the entrance road to the car park. David Nobbs had walked along here this morning and collected *Boletus satanoides*, *B. badius*, *B. luridus* and *B. radicans* considering the dry spell this was a good collection. In fact by the afternoon Trevor and myself had added 12 species to the table. One of the surprises for me was a young *Fistulina hepatica* growing not on oak but mountain ash! In the wood behind the car park .

Elsewhere two swallowtails were present along Crakes Marsh but eluded many observers. In the plant line one of Ted's introductions the broad-leaved ragwort (*Senecio fluviatilis*) was very abundant in the reedbed this year, and a single broad leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) was seen alongside Surlingham Wood.

It was nice to catch up with many of the members and council members alike and catch up on all the gossip. The annual open day here is a great place to learn from everyone and discuss any recent finds.

We have experienced many weather patterns over the years during these Natural History days but 2003 will be memorable due to the excessive heat.

A big thank you to David Nobbs and Phyllis Ellis for making it a fantastic day out and of course to all the other organizers and those that manned the exhibits.

Colin Jacobs



Norfolk & Suffolk Bryological Excursions 2003 – 2004

The following excursions are planned for the Autumn & Spring of 2003-2004. Beginners will be most welcome; the only equipment needed is a hand lens (x10 or x20), and some paper packets for collecting into. Meetings will only be cancelled if it snows or there is a hard frost. All meetings will start at 10.30 am, unless otherwise stated. For further information contact one of the names below.

As part of a national survey by the British Bryological Society studying mosses of arable fields we shall be spending part of each day in stubble fields or set-aside. If you have any farmer contacts near any of the sites below, please let John Mott know. These mosses are ephemerals and mostly exist in the soil between crops by growing tubers, in the same way as potatoes. We have some identification charts which will be distributed at meetings.

Saturday 18 October 2003 Stanley Carr Nature Reserve, North bank of R. Waveney, Otter Trust & Broads Authority. Meet in small car park on right just after turning to left., TM 433 932.

Sunday 2 November 2003 Honing Common for *Cryptothallus mirabilis*, found recently at the Spring BBS Meeting at Fen Covert NNR TM 450 725. This is a parasitic liverwort of wet acid peat, growing a few cm below the soil surface, under Sphagnum near Birch trees. Last found near King's Lynn in 1967, but not since. Meet on triangle of grass at TG 328 274.

Saturday 15 November 2003 Soft Cliffs, between Sidestrand & Trimmingham. Meet at east end of long layby, west of Trimmingham, TG 274 388. There is a bridgeway leading to the beach. If the weather has been very wet we may have to divert to another site.

Sunday 30 November 2003 Lion Wood, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich. Meet opposite the Thorpe Hamlet First School in Telegraph Lane, TG 245 086. Followed by Poringland Wood. Meet in reserve car park at TG 261 035. This is on the B1332, just after the 30 mph sign as you approach Poringland.

Sunday 14 December 2003 Hempstead Wood, Forest Enterprise. Enter wood opposite Selbrigg Lake, TG 106 390, and park about 300 m along track at junction of tracks. John Mott will have key for gate.

Sunday 4 January 2004 Deadman's Grave, chalk grassland. Elveden Farms Ltd. Meet at start of bridgeway just east of junction of A1101 and B1112 in Icklingham at TL 969 734. Site at TL 776 743. Later we shall move to Ramparts Field car park at TL 789 716.

Saturday 17 January 2004 Kelling Heath Park, Blue Sky Leisure. Meet in car park, TG 110 415. We will be joined by Robert Goodliffe, Countryside Manager.

Sunday 8 February 2004 Barnham Heath, Euston Estates, an area of old gravel pits, heath & carr. Meet at TL 886 791. There is a locked gate for which Richard Fisk should hopefully have a key.

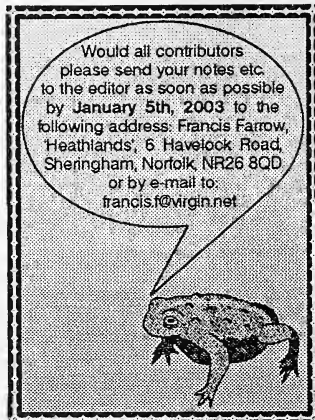
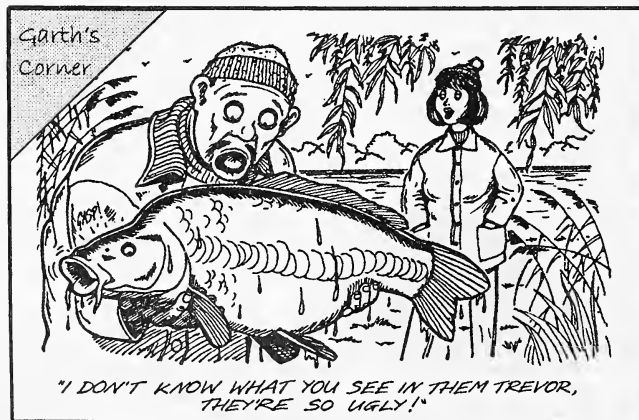
Sunday 15 February 2004 NNNS meeting, 11.00 am, Gun Hill Dunes for lichens. Meet at The Hard, Burnham Overy Staithes, TF 846 443. Leader: Peter Lambley.

Saturday 21 February 2004 Sculthorpe Moor, Hawk & Owl Trust. Enter from Fakenham-King's Lynn road A148 at TF 900 308, second left turning from Fakenham roundabout.

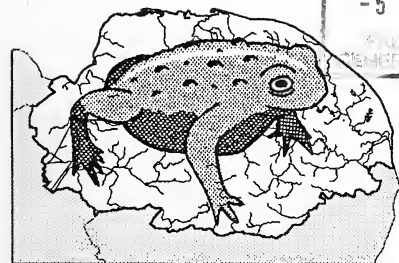
Sunday 7 March 2004 NNNS meeting, 11.00 am. Litcham Common LNR for mosses & liverworts. Meet at reserve car park, Dunham Road, TF 886 173. Leader: Robin Stevenson.

Saturday 20 March 2004 Roydon Fen, Diss to look for *Orthotrichum tenellum*, found by the BBS Spring Meeting, but no voucher taken to prove VCR. Meet on wide road by reserve entrance, TM 105 798.

Robin Stevenson, 111 Wootton Road, King's Lynn, PE30 4DJ. Tel: (01553) 766788. Email: crs1942@tiscali.co.uk
Richard Fisk, 1 Paradise Row, Ringsfield, Beccles, NR34 8LQ. Tel: (01502) 714968. Email: richard.fisk@btclick.com
John Mott, 62 Great Melton Road, Hethersett, Norwich, NR9 3HA. Tel: (01603) 810442. Email: jmott@lineone.net



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The Norfolk **NATTERJACK**

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 84
February 2004

Toad-in-the-hole....

Whether you are an active naturalist champing at the bit to get out and survey an area or an armchair one content to read others exploits, *Natterjack*, has something for you.

Thanks to all contributors and may 2004 be a great year for all NNNS members.

FF

Congratulations

In the February 2002 issue (No. 76) I congratulated Ernest Daniels who had celebrated his ninetieth birthday during the previous November. I mentioned that he was our longest serving member having joined the Society in 1928.

This means, of course, that at some time during 2003, Ernest completed an unbroken seventy-five years membership of the Society. This record is believed to be unique in our history. I am sure that I speak for all members once again in sending him our congratulations and Best Wishes on this achievement.

David Paul, Chairman

NATIONAL BREEDING NIGHTJAR SURVEY 2004

The next 10 year national survey is scheduled for 2004, having been postponed from 2002. The previous survey, in 1992, estimated 3,400 males, representing an increase of 50% since the 1981. This sizeable increase represented a partial recovery following a long period of decline in breeding range, which qualifies the nightjar as a red-listed species of conservation concern.

The nightjar is a breeding visitor to the UK, wintering in Africa. In the UK, their historical distribution extended across the whole of mainland Britain, although it was most numerous in southern England, Wales and the Marches (Holloway 1996). It underwent a substantial decline during most of the twentieth century. Similar declines occurred across much of Europe.

There were estimated to be 3400 churring males in 1992, a substantial increase compared with the estimated 2100 males in 1981 (Morris *et al.* 1994). Whilst 38% of churring males were associated with lowland heathland, especially dry heath; 54% were recorded in forestry plantations. Much of the recovery to date has been attributed to afforested heaths in young plantations 15 years, although breeding densities tend to peak 1-4

years after planting and 3-5 year restocks are often used for foraging. However, they will forage up to several kilometres from the nest, including over farmland.

Since 1992, there have been continued regional and local surveys of nightjars on a regular basis, which indicate further increases in numbers and range expansion, at least in southern England.

Volunteers are required to help with the survey. The survey will involve two evening visits to record churring males in the period end of May to mid July in calm and warm weather conditions. Survey areas will be identified by the BTO and recording cards produced for each survey site. Additional survey data will include some habitat data for sites. Full details of the survey methods will be with the survey card.

Apart from the chance to watch nightjars it is a good excuse to get out in the countryside at an unusual time for most people and to see all those other interesting things that appear at dusk (or dawn for the really keen!) such as woodcock.

Anyone interested should contact: Ian Henderson or Greg Conway at the BTO on 01842-750050 or Nick Gibbons at the Forestry Commission on 01842-816019.

Nick Gibbons

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The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society
Founded 1859

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Wymondham Nature Reserve

Construction of the A11 Wymondham Bypass resulted in the reduction and loss of habitat for the protected Great Crested Newt. To compensate for this, Wymondham Nature Reserve was created and the Newts relocated "across the road" in a newly adapted environment, where they are continuing to thrive along with the Smooth Newt, and other species of "Wildlife" including birds, butterflies, dragonflies & damselflies, other insects and mammals etc.

With the imminent rapid expansion of Wymondham and the subsequent pressures being placed on all its "wild" areas, some degree of recognition and protection is necessary to prevent these areas being overwhelmed by human habitation.

To this end, and to assist Norfolk County Council in managing this

reserve for as wide a diverse number of species as possible, the newly formed Wymondham Reserve Environment Group (WREG) is co-ordinating a full survey of all the species present within the Reserve.

It is envisaged the survey will take three forms:-

- 1) Volunteers who periodically (e.g. once a month or quarter) walk a specified route around the whole of the Reserve, noting anything they see and can positively identify, thereby creating an overview, but not necessarily needing an in-depth level of knowledge and expertise.
- 2) Volunteers with a greater depth of knowledge over a fairly broad spectrum of species who would be willing to survey each separate area, recording all they can recognise.
- 3) The "Experts" who can identify and advise on the needs of their

specialised subjects and species, hopefully recording seasonal changes and differences.

To achieve this, it requires organisations and/or individuals willing to plan and give some of their time, after all the more there are, the less pressure there is on any individual. It could also provide an opportunity for those wishing to increase their awareness and experience, by accompanying others with that knowledge.

Therefore please help us and give your support to this venture, contact Eunice Phipps (01953 605273) or E-mail: eunice.phipps@macunlimited.net

Under the terms of Norfolk County Council's Insurance cover, all survey work should only be carried out with the knowledge and awareness of WREG.

Eunice Phipps

NORFOLK BIRD ATLAS

By the time you read this, the fifth winter of fieldwork for the Norfolk Bird Atlas will be well underway. Indeed some of the tetrads will have already had the two required set visits this winter and the counts will have been entered on the database.

In early January 2004, a significant milestone was passed when the 100,000th record for the current Atlas was entered onto the computer. This figure includes both winter and summer counts, but compares very favourably with the 61,000 records that were submitted in total for Geoffrey Kelly's Norfolk breeding atlas covering the years 1980 to 1985, and published by the NNS in 1986.

By the end of four years of fieldwork, completed recording forms had been received from almost 50% of the Norfolk tetrads for the winter period and 40% for the breeding season. This has only been achieved by many thousands of hours of fieldwork, undertaken by almost 300 observers. As a means of expressing our gratitude and in the hope of encouraging more participants, the Atlas Working Group has decided to offer a complimentary copy of the new Norfolk Bird Atlas, based on the current project, to the ten observers (excluding members of the Working Group), who have carried out the most set visits by the time that all the fieldwork has been completed.

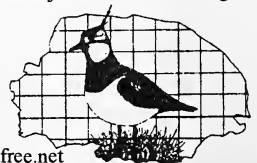
As the project is expected to run for at least another 3-4 years, there is still plenty of time for new observers to finish up in the 'Top Ten'. Perhaps surprisingly, it has proved more difficult to obtain adequate coverage during the summer months, and I would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to get involved this summer. Fieldwork for the breeding season runs from the beginning of April to the end of June, and observers are requested to visit their allocated tetrads on just two occasions, counting all the breeding pairs that they encounter on their visits.

For administrative purposes the county is divided into five main sections and anyone offering help would be put in touch with the appropriate local organiser.

We are particularly looking for additional help in the south and west of Norfolk, as well as in the central swathe running north-west to south-east across the county.

Do please get in touch with me if you would like to become involved in Norfolk's major current ornithological project.

Moss Taylor,
4 Heath Road,
Sheingham, NR26 8JN,
tel: 01263-823637,
email: mosstaylor@care4free.net



Living Fossils

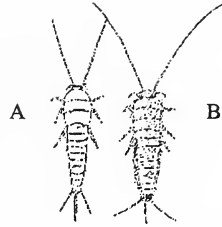
Most people who have reason to visit their pantries in the early hours of the "mornin" I should imagine very rarely take a look on the floor, but this is just what a recent caller had done and this brought him, hot foot, to my door on January 1st. On answering the door there he stood with a small bottle in his hand which he thrust towards me enquiring "What are these?" Then in good old Norfolk said. "I never sin the like on em before, they don't arf shift whooly quick they do, there were dozens on em." He had returned home in the early hours and, switching oil the kitchen light, saw a host of silvery white creatures fleeing in all directions across the pantry floor. He took quite a time to catch the three he had in the bottle, I have no doubt that the liquid part of his festivities and the creatures considerably small size had not given him any assistance.

I jokingly told him that they were his unpaid night staff clearing up his pantry floor for him. They were, in fact, members of an extremely primitive order of wingless insect whose bodies are covered with minute scales. The order is known as Thysanura (three pronged bristle tails). There are 23 species in this country and many more abroad. Fossils prove them to be the most primitive of all insects surviving today. In the upper Devonian period, some 350 million years ago, there were very similar species on the land when the first fishes crawled out of the water. They certainly crawled around the legs of the dinosaurs and they have remained practically unchanged. They are in fact living fossils. They are just as common today as they were all those aeons ago yet, for most of them, we know very little regarding their lives, they are all nocturnal.

Two species are to found in our homes, the most common of which is the silver fish *Lepismar saccharina* (fig A): These were my caller's specimens. They are harmless and feed on minute particles of starchy food such as flour, bread or cake that the vacuum cleaner has failed to find. They can digest cellulose and will attack paper if it is left in a damp situation (hence the need to keep books and stamp collections in dry areas). They will also eat up their own dead and, as in my case, if precautions are not taken will devour dry preserved insects in collections.

Rarely seen during daylight hours, they are sometimes found in wash basins or baths where they have slipped during their nocturnal wanderings in search of water. I recently found one in a plastic bucket that I had used to carry some carrots indoors from the garden; their dampness had apparently attracted it. Silver fish can live for at least five years, but the females will only produce about twenty eggs during her lifetime. There are no different stages between this newly hatched young and the adult, no metamorphosis; the young are minute replicas of their parents who are themselves only 8 - 10mm in length. They are covered in minute silvery scales like a fish. The two antennae are shorter than the body length, the central tail is longer than those of either side.

The other species is the Fire-Brat *Thermobia domestica* (fig B). These are often found in the older bakeries or restaurant kitchens, especially near the ovens. Unlike the silver fish, they can survive in extremely dry conditions and prefer it hot, up to 37°C. They are covered in brownish scales and are also



hairier. They are approximately 12mm in length with two long antennae, much longer than the body length, and have three tails of equal length. They do not live as long as silver fish however.

Most of the remaining species exist in moss on moors or stone walls or behind the bark of trees and have rarely been studied. The two species found in homes where they are sometimes as common as those of my caller and yet are seldom seen can be kept in check with a squirt of insecticide along the base of the skirting boards or on the back of the shelving. But, believe me, having survived until now they are not going to disappear without a fight, despite their size.

Living in my early years beside a bakery, I was familiar with both of these species and made some of my first microscope slides of their scales.

Ken Durrant

Please note:

The NNNS
Annual General Meeting
will be held on
Tuesday March 16th
at 7.30pm, Room 7, Easton
College Conference Centre.

The meeting will be followed
by
'Half a century of France'
an illustrated talk by
Paul Banham

JEWEL WASPS

Last June, I was staying in Pembrokeshire in a friends farm cottage, and with very sunny weather all week, found Ruby-tailed Wasps (*Chrysis ignita*), sometimes called Jewel Wasps, very common on the stone walls of the cottage that we were staying in. My previous encounters with this fabulous little insect have always been with single insects, but here I was able to see and watch six or seven at any time, darting about on the sunlit walls. Watching them and trying to photograph them became a daily pursuit, and it became apparent that these little fragile looking insects were in fact, far from fragile.

As they ran about looking for holes in which solitary bees or wasps were nesting, they frequently encountered spider webs, which caused them to stop and clean the webs from antennae, legs etc. This pause in their activity allowed close-up photography, and more importantly very close observation of a very magnified insect in the cameras viewfinder. The magnified view also allowed me to see just how many strands of spiders web cluttered the surface of the stonework, making the rapid progress of the Ruby-tails that much more amazing. In fact, on five occasions Ruby-tails became completely entangled in webs, and on each occasion spiders rushed out of their holes in the mortar, appeared to touch the Ruby-tail and retreated back into their holes. After only a few seconds, during which time the Ruby-tail appeared to shake rapidly, it would break free of the web and calmly clean itself, before carrying on with its search of the wall. My magnified view revealed that the webs did not appear to stick to the insect as well as I would have expected. A search of webs on the walls revealed the remains of a number of insects both larger and smaller than the Ruby-tails that had been less fortunate, but no sign of any Ruby-tail that had fallen prey to the spiders.

I am told, by those much more knowledgeable than myself, that Ruby-tailed Wasps possess an extra thick cuticle that enables them to pursue, what would otherwise be a very hazardous lifestyle, safe from the stings of solitary bees and wasps whose nest chambers they invade, and the bites of spiders whose webs they may get caught in. Watching these lovely little insects, I could not help thinking that here is nature's answer to Teflon armour-plate.

Hans Watson

WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

I had been sitting in the tower hide at Strumphaw Fen, watching, and trying to catch on film some of the many birds there, it had been very enjoyable. As I walked back along the river wall I passed two anglers fishing for pike from a small boat, they did not seem to be having much sport, as I heard one say to the other as I passed by, "What a *!#!**+!* waste of time this is".

This remark made me consider my own interests, especially natural history over the years, and I cannot recall a single instance when I was bored, and considered it all a waste of time, I think the over riding sense of pleasure is from just being out there, looking, listening, and learning. There is always so much going on, every day is an Aladdin's cave of new experiences, no two days are the same.

It brings to mind some thing I read recently, written by a native American,

*"The birds of the air are my brothers,
all flowers are my sisters,
the trees are my friends,
all living creatures, mountains
and streams I take into my care,
for this green earth is our mother,
I share one life with all that are here,
to every one, and every creature
I give my love"*

Sums it up nicely I think.

Tony Howes

MARSH WATCHING

As I have had to give up cycling (I hope only temporarily) I have had to look out for places which I can get close to by car, and which afford a worthwhile view. One of the best has turned out to be quite close to home: the beginning of the coast path just east of Wells, where it follows the top of the sea wall. One of the many memorial seats which we now have (an excellent idea) has been placed there, looking north across the salt marsh and its associated creeks.

At low tide a lot of mud is exposed in Stonemeal Creek alongside the wall, where I have regularly in winter seen nine species of wader, sometimes at the same time: Oyster Catcher, Curlew, Redshank, Dunlin, Grey Plover, Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ringed Plover and Knot. To these can be added Greenshank, on migration.

Not far away on the marsh there will be Shelduck and Brent Geese, the latter often in family parties, the birds of the year recognisable by their stripy backs. Large flocks of Lapwing and Golden Plover will often rise up in the distance, especially when disturbed by low-flying jets. Early and late in the day incredibly large numbers of Pink-footed Geese fly over, on their way to and from their roosting and feeding areas.

At high tide the whole area is sometimes completely submerged, but more often the sea fills the creeks, leaving the marsh surface above water. This is the best time to see our latest addition to the regular bird-list: the Little Egret. At low tide they are mainly invisible as they prowl along the smaller creeks. I have seen as many as six at the same time, though they don't seem to appreciate company, and feed singly. Each will be a highly recognisable pure white dot to the naked eye, even when half a mile or more away. When flying close to, their unique legs show up: black, except the feet and the lower few inches, which look as if they have been standing in a pot of yellow paint!

Paul Banham



THE WILD GOOSE CHASE

The last day of 2003 dawned cold but sunny, ice covered the puddles as I went down the track to the Hall Farm at Postwick. I had come this way two days previous to do my annual bird count on the farm, and had seen a leukistic grey lag goose, this bird has been around this area of the Yare valley for a few years now, but like all geese it prefers being right out in the open, making it difficult for a close approach, and hopefully a photograph or two. On this occasion it had been near the river wall, very close to some farm buildings, among about three hundred of its normal coloured brethren.

I hoped to find them in the same general area today, I parked the car and walked the last half mile to the river, and there they were. I had to do a detour to get the sun behind me, but all went well, and after a stealthy approach I was close enough to take a few shots of the white bird. By this time all the geese were on the alert, with heads up, and a nervous murmuring going through their ranks, then, like an explosion, they were up and away in a crescendo of sound that only grey lags are capable of. I stayed crouched in the reeds hoping that they would wheel around the marsh before heading further along the valley, this they fortunately did, giving me the opportunity of a couple of shots as they passed close by. An azure sky behind them with a nice white cloud or two, I hope there is a perfect end to this tale, I think I had some film in the camera.(?)

As the fine weather was holding I continued on across the marshes to see what else was about, in the summer months cattle would be out here, now all was still and quiet, just the odd lapwing calling, but all is not as it seems. Many water deer live out here, and in the next three hours or so several are seen as they go bounding off ahead of me, taking seven foot dykes in their stride, a sight marvelous to behold. Three foxes were put up from some rough sedge, a barn owl was out hunting in the bright sun light, and both marsh

and hen harriers were seen over by the river wall.

At the far end of Hall Farm land I turned and came back along the tree line that separates the marshes from the arable, it was then that I first heard, then saw, a large v formation of Bewick's swans, very high, and heading west, their calling is to me one of the most evocative sounds of the natural world, I stood in awe as they passed over.



By now, early afternoon, the light was beginning to go, the brilliance of the morning had been replaced by lead coloured clouds, but I had enjoyed the last few hours, a walk through these marshes is always interesting. Back in the 1960 period when I first knew them, coypu were the dominant mammal, we never saw water deer then. Neither were barn owls seen, now, with several nest boxes put up for them they are doing well, five more youngsters this year alone, but our world is always changing, who knows what will be here in another forty years.

Tony Howes

A charm of goldfinches

Over the last few years there has been an increase of goldfinches coming to the feeders in my suburban garden. Particularly popular are nijer seed and sunflower hearts.

Originally appearing for the winter months, some now remain in the area and bring their young to the feeders.

In 2002 a holly tree in my garden was chosen for a winter roost of upwards of 40 goldfinches accompanied by a few chaffinches. At dusk they homed in from all points of the compass. They remained until the breeding season when they dispersed.

In late November 2003 some returned and by December there

Tetrad Surprise

At the start of any New Year you wonder what will come your way, what 'new' record or sighting will be observed. Anyway, usually with the natural world things happen, which are not consciously thought about.

Take my first visit to my 2004 tetrad area for the Norfolk Bird Atlas survey near Worstead in early January. The area was mostly open fields and I finished with the expected total of 30 odd species. As my second tetrad was adjacent to the one I had just walked I decided to drive around it to check out the area. Just as I had almost completed the tour I noticed a large bird of prey heading west over a field. I stopped and checked it out through the binoculars. Too my surprise and delight I saw it had a long forked tail and was of course a Red Kite. It crossed the field and disappeared behind a wood - a few seconds latter and I would not have seen this magnificent bird. A great start to the New Year. I wonder also what other tetrad surprises are in store?

Francis Farrow

were, again, similar numbers to the previous winter. I am surprised at their chosen tree as it is within a few yards of my neighbour's house and close to my own - there are, to my mind, more suitable trees in the area.



Since losing all house sparrows and starlings over a decade ago, the gap appears to have been filled by chaffinches and goldfinches. At one time I would have been delighted to see the occasional goldfinch; now I long to see the humble sparrow.

Janet E. Smith



A PHEASANT VALLEY MONDAY

It was one of those dark November days that did not really get properly light but I thought I would have walk around one the RSPB's quieter reserves in the Yare Valley at Strumpshaw in Norfolk. It is a very rich reserve with much to occupy the naturalist. I just took my time and recorded anything that came to my notice and by diligently searching I had a very good day indeed.

I had not even left the car park before I heard the familiar call of Siskin. There right above me was a good eight birds, foraging in the Alders. Back on the ground I saw a melanistic male pheasant in the horse field. There seemed to be a lot of pheasants about today. I then passed by the two gates by the railway and was immediately greeted by the shocking pink fruit of the Spindle tree, this certainly brightened up the day. First stop was as usual the brick hide, the view from here was very winter like with volunteers tending a smoky bonfire of reeds and scrub to my right and over a hundred Coot were observed taking it in turns to dive under the water surface. This species seems to have the monopoly of this pool, as I could not locate anything else. Up in the dead trees the regular Cormorants were there. One was seen in the characteristic wings open pose. Suddenly out of the gloom a fine female Marsh Harrier came towards me, hardly daring to take another sip of my Bovril as the bird passed in front of the hide.

As I entered the wood I waited patiently for the Goldcrests to appear from the Pines but they were so well hidden I had to be satisfied with just hearing them. The familiar "kick, kick" call of the Greater Spotted Woodpecker alerted me to a male bird high up in a beech tree as I continued into the wood. By now Pheasants were all over the place with both sexes either feeding or

running around the floor. I passed some shooting markers just outside the boundary of the reserve so it looks like a large release has been made for that very purpose. As I went deeper into the wood I was joined by a small flock of Long-tailed Tits and the odd Robin and Wren were heard to sing along too.

Once out again and onto the path to the pump house I stopped to look at a very bright Hawthorn adorned with so much fruit there had to something feeding in there. I raised my bins to see mostly Blackbirds and a single Redwing, but to my right I could see various birds commuting between a copse and the Hawthorn. By looking at the copse I could see that there were a few Redwings and Fieldfares along with some dark billed continental Blackbirds. It seemed that they were taking the haws from the tree and flying back to the safety of the copse to eat them. I must admit the Hawthorn was rather exposed to predators. Anyway I ambled on in the mild but overcast conditions until I arrived on the banks of the River Yare. I stopped here for a while to have some more Bovril from my flask and sat quiet and listened to the life of the reserve. As a party of Mallard squabbled up stream, small flocks of Redwings passed overhead calling as if to greet me as they carried on toward Buckenham, save for the call of the Pheasants and the distant song of the Cetti's Warbler it was a peaceful still day which just had to be appreciated to its full. As I walked parallel to the river four Great Crested Grebes swam past and Two fisherman in boats bid me good morning as we passed each other in the distance I could see the rich red berries of the Guelder Rose and yet more Spindle which lifted the spirits yet again. Small tit flocks were starting to appear now and each one would hold different species Blue Tits, Great Tits, a Marsh Tit and a Robin were in this one feeding around some Privet berries and on the twigs and grounded branches. The next would yield Long-tailed

Tits, a Wren, Blue Tits and a Duncock or two.

The walk to the tower hide was long but unfruitful save for the berry bearing bushes. Once in the hide I was pleased to see a variety of water levels leaving some great expanses of mud. Four green Sandpipers were a wonderful surprise, one that I shall remember for a long time. Eight Snipe, 108 Teal, a few Shoveler and a family group of three Grey Herons were of note. In the distance a pair of Marsh Harriers tumbled down to the reedbeds. I spent a good hour in here and although the birding was not brilliant the views from here are outstanding. On leaving the hide I turned back towards the railway line passing a long line of Guelder Rose bushes again heavily adorned with berries. I found five Bullfinches in one of the trees and great views were obtained. These again brightened the day with their pink plumage. The last tit flock of the day produced a Treecreeper.

I had the most wonderful winters birdwatching and cannot wait to return.

I also recorded 15 plants in flower and 12 species of fungi.

Colin Jacobs

SMALL REDS

In the last *Transactions* (Vol. 36 - Part 1, page 75) Geoff Nobes talks about small red damselfly records at Scarning. I visited Scarning on 8th July last year at 5 pm and within five minutes had recorded a male small red damselfly. It was the first damselfly I saw and as conditions were overcast it allowed an extremely close approach (5cm!). It showed a bright red abdomen but less bright red legs perhaps indicating it had only just left the teneral stage.

I did no further searching but the rapidly with which I saw the first might indicate that many adults were present on that day.

Dougal McNeill



The absence of Bleached Pug from Norfolk

The Bleached pug, *Eupithecia expallidata* Doubleday is a moth found in many of the counties in southern and eastern England (and north and south Wales) but traditionally it has not been recorded in Norfolk. However, in 2000 a specimen was captured at Holme which some thought could be a Bleached pug and in 2002 another example at North Walsham gave cause for similar speculation. After much deliberation both were identified by Gerry Hagggett, from excellent digital photos, as the similar Wormwood pug, *Eupithecia absinthiata* which is found across Norfolk. The only known larval foodplant in the wild for the Bleached pug is the wild Golden rod, *Solidago virgaurea*, and to find its larvae would be a much more positive way of confirming the presence of the moth.

Gerry and Mike Hall were anxious to know the up-to-date presence of wild Golden rod, *Solidago virgaurea*, in Norfolk. So Mike asked Bob Ellis if the Norfolk Flora Recording Group could make this one of its survey priorities for 2003.

Bob Leaney led the team that carried out the survey and co-ordinated the fieldwork and correlated the results ensuring many sites of the older records were covered.

Bob Leaney's summary based on 53 records since 1780 reads:

17 records erroneous
15 locations found at 8 sites.

Bob's list of current locations is shown below:

15 locations no plant found
13 locations not surveyed being unlikely survivors

Sheringham Common	336 plants
Beeston Common (3 locations)	277 plants
Sheringwood Green Lane	10 plants

Holt Lowes Country Park (5 locations)	65 plants
Holt	8 plants
Hunworth (2 locations)	64 plants
Briston	4 plants
Hainford	29 plants

These eight sites for *Solidago virgaurea* were thus confined to the area of Holt-Briston-Beeston plus the outlier at Hainford. The relevance of the survey for Bleached pug is that only the Sheringham/Beeston site would be likely to support a continuously resident population of the moth, with Hainford as an outside possibility.

Mike therefore arranged with Ken Durrant for himself, Gerry and Stephen Ward to collect samples of flowering and seeded heads of *S. virgaurea* from that location on 25th September. The plants were at the perfect stage for larvae and were just as Gerry had seen them in cleared broad-leaved woodlands in Kent and Sussex in 1950s and 1960s where the larvae were abundant, so we had high hopes of finding Norfolk specimens. Alas within a week the only larvae to appear were a couple of *absinthiata* and one Double-striped pug, *Gymnoscelis rufifasciata*; (*expallidata*, like most larvae enclosed on host plants in a suspended linen bag, would start to sit on the sides of their bag from the second day).

This survey, both of plant and its negative samples of flowering heads, supports the view that Bleached pug is not resident at the current time in Norfolk. But locations of the plant at Holt Lowes, Hunworth and Hainford might still be worth checking for larvae.

We are grateful to Bob Ellis, Bob Leaney and the Norfolk Flora Group for their records and field work and Ken Durrant for guiding us round Sheringham & Beeston Common.

Mike Hall and Gerry Hagggett

A FINAL (?) WORD ON STOATS IN ERMINE

So, stoats in white winter overcoats are not so uncommon in Norfolk after all. A trawl by John Goldsmith through the Norfolk Biological Records Centre database has produced 58 records of ermine among the 2306 sightings listed.

The books tell us that it is temperature which determines whether a stoat's winter coat will be brown or white. The next step was to take a random dip into the records and compare them with the weather reports in the Norfolk Bird and Mammal Report (BMR). Is there a consistent correlation? Very definitely not!

Take February 1979: severe weather, reported the BMR, and an ermine sighting at Culton. Yet January 1981 was the wettest for two decades and mild, but there were sightings at Roydon Common and Carbrooke. Severe weather in January 1982 produced a record from Gooderstone yet by the time another ermine was spotted at Ovington in February the weather was much milder.

"The extremest of weather" was recorded in January and February 1985, with sightings at Cranwich Heath, Ringstead Downs, and Hilborough. By contrast, the first three months of 1986 had a mixture of weather. January was predominantly mild and wet, with cold snaps, but ermine was seen at West Harling Heath. February - "the coldest

since 1963", reported the BMR - brought a sighting at North Creake. The legacy of that bitter weather possibly accounted for sightings at Strumpshaw and Cockley Cley.

Not surprisingly, the severe weather with heavy snowfalls in January 1987 brought records from Hockham, Wood Rising and Bradenham, yet January and February 1989 were mostly mild but produced a crop of sightings from various parts of the county.

One record left me puzzled: 1998, Lady Anne's Drive, Holkham: "One male in half-ermine fighting another with a normal coat." Who started it, I wondered, and why?

David Paull

Sea-flying Seed

While out at sea many of us have enjoyed the effortless planing of shearwaters as they skim the waves. I was enjoying just such a sight this August off Mull on board my parents' boat, sailed up from Breydon some weeks before, when I saw something else flying just above the waves.

It was a seed - or, more accurately - a pappus, the 'parachute' of *Cirsium vulgare*, the spear thistle.

The sea wasn't big: the waves were only a couple of feet high, but they were enough to give the seed a rollercoaster ride; up one wave front, tumbling through the air over the crest to the next front, always just an inch or two above the surface, and away to sea.

As my father - a former RAF pilot - observed, the air just above the waves provides considerable lift. We watched the shearwaters fly at a small angle to the swell; they stay as

long as they can in the air being pushed up by the wave, then curve away, amazingly never wetting a wingtip or catastrophically cartwheeling into the water as many an aircraft has done when turning steeply at low level over the sea.

The seed wasn't using such elegant aerodynamics, just getting enough lift to speed along, unwetted, to its unknown destination.

The seeds of most plants, even wind-distributed ones, fall almost entirely very close to the parent. It is the odd escapee that gets carried away, potentially to start a whole new colony - an excellent strategy in self-fertile, colonising 'weeds'. How far might this sea-going seed travel?

And how did it get out to sea? Its journey may have begun in a thermal, taking it up several hundred feet. Perhaps it was blown out to sea when the katabatic wind (the land-breeze) started up, and gradually lost height until its whiskers touched the water. Surface tension prevented it being taken in, and it bounced off.

Now the wind gets up and turbulence lifts the seed again, tumbling it, snagging a whisker and rolling it until it bounces up again. Rain's coming. Will this force it down? Will waves break and catch it in their spray? Or will it travel on to another shore?

It made me wonder how many sea-side plants might get around this way. We are used to thinking about those with floating seeds making their way along shores and across oceans, but what about the wind-borne ones?

There is one possible problem here: the pappus may not have actually borne a seed. I couldn't tell for certain through the binoculars. Quite a few of the 'seeds' blowing around a thistly field in late summer are in fact just parachutes, I have found.

But that caveat was not on my mind as I watched the sea-going seed whirl and skate away among the shearwaters. I wonder where it is today?

Wanderer

100 Years ago from NNNS Transactions (Volume VII. 1899-1904)

METEOROLOGICAL NOTES (From observations taken at Bradstone House, Brundall, Norfolk.)
by Arthur W. Preston F. R. Met.

Read 23rd February, 1904

JANUARY

The year entered with a continuance of the mild weather which had characterised the latter part of the previous December. On the 3rd there were heavy hailstorms ill accompanied by thunder and on the 5th and 6th maxima of 53.4 and 52.5 were attained by the thermometer. On the 12th a drop occurred in the temperature, and a week's somewhat wintery weather ensued, with a little snow, but the frost was at no time severe and on the 20th milder weather again set in, and continued till the end of the month, the thermometer reaching 54.8 on the 26th. On the mean the temperature for the month was 3.3 above the average, and much the same as that of the previous January. The rainfall was .21 ins, deficient and the prevailing direction of the wind was from westerly quarters. It blew strongly on many days. Owing to the continued mildness some of the earlier spring flowers, such

as violets, primroses, aconites and snowdrops came into bloom early in the month.

FEBRUARY

Great mildness prevailed throughout the month maxima of 57 degrees being recorded on the 8th, 20th and 21st and on the 9th the thermometer touched 58.6. There were but few frosts, and on the mean the temperature of the month was 6.1 degrees above the average. It was a very dry month, only 34ins of rain being recorded, and the first three weeks were practically rainless. There was no snow whatever, and by the close of the month vegetation was forwarder than in any year since 1882. Early wall fruit, such as apricots, began to blossom before the close of the month, and the whitethorn commenced to leaf at an unusually early date. Going back 130 years it would seem that February was warmer only four times, viz., in 1869, 1850, 1794 and 1779, but in 1846 it was about as mild. The wind was almost continuously from the west, and blew hard at times, particularly between the 19th and 27th.

It seems that winters years ago were not all hard after all and the signs of spring were early even then as shown by this except from 1903. FF

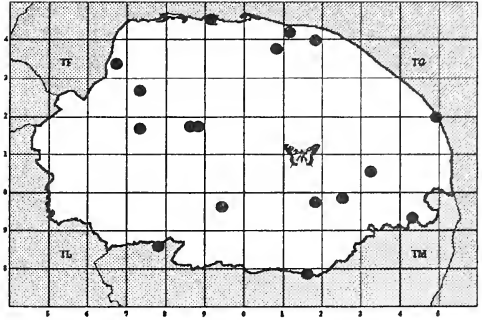


Excursion Reports

Featuring:

East Walton Common

● 2003-04 Field Meeting location
Easton College
Indoor meetings



Joint NNNS / Norfolk Fungus Study Group Foray to East Walton Common

Sunday, October 12th 2003.

In common with every other Fungus Foray during this very dry autumn, Fungi were very much at a premium. In fact, the meeting had been designed to coincide with the emergence of the many species of *Hygrocybe* and other grassland fungi, but not a single specimen was found on the open grassland. The party made its way to the wet woodland and clumps of scattered trees along the south west side of the open grassland, and spent the morning searching this area. Lunch was taken on the leeward side of one of the chalk ridges, and afterwards, we went to the north side of the common and examined that part of the common on either side of the stream through which the permissive footpath leads to the East Winch road. Though most finds were of common species, we did find one or two rather special fungi. In the morning, whilst working alongside one of the pingoes which was partly under the alders, a small knoll, almost an island of slightly higher ground was found to be covered with a mixture of mosses and the fairly thickly scattered fronds of Marsh Fern, *Thelypteris palustris*, and amongst the fern were possibly a dozen caps of a bright yellow *Hygrocybe* which was found to be slimy on both cap and stipe. One or two caps were taken home

by two of our number, and both commented that by the time they came to examine the specimens that evening, the fungi had gone completely and startlingly white, apart from the gills, which stayed yellow. Using David Boertmann's monograph of the genus, we were able to identify this as *Hygrocybe vitellina*, thought by Boertmann to be rare in Europe, with the proviso that this was not entirely clear due to different interpretations of the species by different authorities. In Denmark it grows in grasslands and fixed dunes, almost always with Juniper-which we do not have. However, a single Danish collection was from a *Carex* (Sedge) marsh and in association with *Dryopteris* (Male or Buckler Ferns.) Our specimens were from the latter habitat-more or less!

One of our number found some Inkcap shaped caps which gave the appearance of being covered with dark brown velvet, the lower part of the stipe being the same. We were baffled at the time, but the penny dropped later when it was remembered that the outer rim of the cap was dripping with moisture which had presumably run down to the edge of the cap from the gills. These were two young and unexpanded caps of *Pleuteus umbrosus*.

Highlights of the afternoon session near the stream involved one or two patches of bare mud under trees with good numbers of the little cup fungus, *Tarzetta cupularis*, and amongst one of these groups, Trevor spotted the uncommon *Helvella macropus*

which the Fungus Study Group members saw in a similar situation in 2002 at Sculthorpe Moor. Among less often noted fungi seen we identified *Melanoleuca excissa*, a very pale member of this genus, a trio of *Tricholoma* species in *T. lascivum*, *T. scalpturatum* and *T. fulvum*, *Leccinum varicolor* with the flesh in the stipe blueing on exposure to the air whilst the flesh in the cap went pink, as well as *L. scabrum* with unchanging flesh.

Although we were not overwhelmed with fungi to be looked at when we got home, it was felt that we had quite a good day given the dry conditions, with a final list of 47 species.



Alec Bull

Bless my cotton socks!

I was interested to read in Bill Mitchell's account of the excursion at Thompson Common (*The Natterjack* page 4, no. 83, Nov. 2003) that in parts of the country, bog cotton was used for stuffing pillows and making candle wicks.

The Orkney Museum in Kirkwall has a display of delicate socks woven from bog cotton. This was traditionally done by a bride for the socks to be worn on their wedding day.

Peter Burston



Books: Reviews & Sales

ANY OFFERS?

Bringing the outdoors indoors

I am sure that many of you, like me, enjoy the regular nature column in the *Eastern Daily Press*, which carries on a great tradition started by the late Ted Ellis. One of the present correspondents, Moss Taylor, has produced a book of his writings first published in the EDP between 1999 and 2001. Called *'In the Countryside'* the 120 page book contains a wealth of interesting and diverse subjects regarding the natural history of Norfolk and beyond.



The book has an attractive cover by Robert Gilmore and contains a selection of coloured photographs taken by Moss. I find the one of a North Sea gale at Weybourne particularly striking.

It is book that you can dip into at a moments notice, especially during the winter months. You can be transported from your armchair to any season as the book is conveniently divided into writings that are associated with particular times of the year. If your wish, however, is to escape from these shores Moss has included some excerpts from his travels and North America, the Caribbean, South America and Ireland are all visited.

It is a collection of writings that should give pleasure to naturalists and country-lovers alike. One piece I liked sums up the descriptive and at times evocative writing *'Delights*

along the coastal footpath'. I can feel the wind, smell the gorse and hear the redshanks!

'In the Countryside' is published by Wren publishing (ISBN 0-95425445-1-1) and is available from Moss at 4 Heath Road, Sheringham, NR26 8JN. Price: £9.95(+£1 p&p).

Francis Farrow

Flying off the page

The arrival of Douglas Hammersley's *"A Butterfly Notebook"* was a rare treat. This is a book of pure pleasure, a true reflection of the author/illustrator's love of his subject. How lucky we were to have this retired medical illustrator and animation artist decide to settle here in Norfolk! Why did he come? Simply, for the easy access his home in East Harling gave to so many prime butterfly sites.

The main joy lies in the paintings. All of our species, plus a few from the Continent, are included. All are shown in several attitudes to give an "all-round" view. And there is not a laid out museum type picture in sight! In fact, you feel you must be careful not disturb a single one in case they all lift off from the page. High grade paper and superb colour reproduction of the originals make this possible.

Each page of illustrations is given a facing page of text. Here Douglas gives us basic information about the butterflies, together with anecdotes about his quests over this country and parts of Europe over a period of years to track down and record the more elusive species. His enthusiasm and pleasure burst through and we cannot help but share with him.

A Butterfly Notebook is published by The Book Guild Ltd. ISBN 1 85776 722 5. Price: £25.

Rex Hancy

For sale: a copy of *'The Flora of Norfolk'* by Petch and Swann 1968, published by Jarrolds, in good condition with a complete dust cover. We would be happy to receive offers for this book, either by telephone on 01245 471463 or by email to:

danglading@aaug.net

Proceeds from the sale will go towards the cost of flowers in Chelmsford Cathedral.

Dan and Jean Glading, Great Baddow, Essex.

For Sale:

Arthur H. Paterson

'Nature in Eastern Norfolk' 1905.

Illustrated by Frank Southgate

'A Norfolk Naturalist' 1930.

Illustrated by the author

Ex-library bound copies.

£15.00 each.

'Notes of an East Coast Naturalist'

1904. Illustrated by Frank Southgate

£30.00

Oliver G. Ready

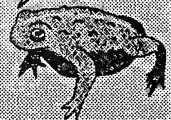
'Life and sport on the Norfolk Broads in the golden days' 1910.

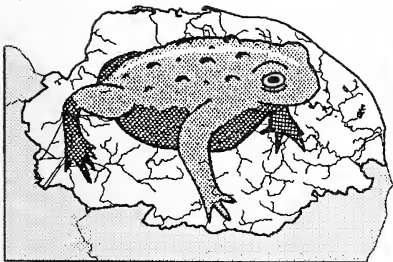
Ex-library bound copy. £15.00

Please contact:

Janet E. Smith (01603-433919)

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by April 1st, 2004 to the following address: Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by e-mail to: francis@virgin.net





EXCHANGED GENERAL LIBRARY

7 MAY 2004

The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 85
May 2004

Toad-in-the-hole....

Welcome to the 2004 spring edition of *The Norfolk Natterjack*.

Again my thanks to all contributors for such a varied collection. For those of you who are active and out and about the County further surveys are detailed within requiring your participation.

If you haven't sent anything into *Natterjack* before please do not hesitate - all notes and observations are welcome - particularly short pieces. Also if you know any young people (under 16) who can write show them the back page of this edition.

FF

URGENT APPEAL

David and Iris Paull took over the distribution and sale of the Society's Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report from the 1997 issue and had hoped to continue for one more issue - their eighth. But, after a "rather scary encounter" with deep vein thrombosis over Christmas (and "celebrating" the New Year in hospital), David is now under orders to take things easier for some time and has decided that he must therefore "retire" before the publication of the 2003 Report in the early autumn. So, is there a volunteer out there to take on this valuable service to Society members and the hundreds of birders who buy the Report every year? David and Iris will be very happy to act as "consultants" to try to ensure a smooth handover.

What are the basic job requirements? A computer and some storage space.

If you feel you could take it on, please phone David on 01603 457270 for a full job description.

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HONOUR FOR LIL

My last - and very pleasant - task before I ceased to be chairman at the annual meeting on March 16 was to propose that Lil Evans should be made an Honorary Life Member of the Society "in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the study of natural history in Norfolk and her constant readiness to share her knowledge with other naturalists". Reg and Lil Evans were an amazing partnership but, of course, Lil is a considerable expert in her own right. Not only does she have an encyclopaedic knowledge of fungi in general - and an astonishingly retentive memory for all those Latin names - but she is an expert in one of the more obscure specialisms in this field, the Myxomycetes - the slime moulds. She is responsible for 1,817 of 1,972 modern records for myxomycetes in the Norfolk Mycota database, which will form the basis for the forthcoming book on the county's fungi. And her expertise is not just in fungi. Back in 1991 she wrote a book on "Some Norfolk Plant Galls". Her name appears in the list of contributors to the Millennium Atlas of Norfolk Butterflies. And she has a wide knowledge of wildflowers.

Society Council unanimously recommended that Lil should be made an honorary life member - and, not surprisingly, the proposal was approved by the annual meeting - with acclamation!



The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society
Founded 1859

Registered Charity No. 291604

David Paull

HORNETS

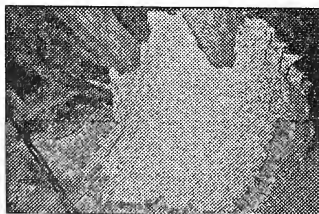
Over the years, I have had quite a few opportunities to get acquainted with Hornets, and have learned that they have been victims of much bad press and false rumour. They are probably the most tolerant to human presence near to their nest, of all the wasp family, provided that they are shown respect.

I have photographed Hornets at close range on a number of occasions, but always away from the nest, and although I have found a number of nests in the past, they have either been in hollow trees, or other inaccessible places such as a church roof. In September 2003, I was privileged to be shown a nest in the roof of a shed only 8 feet from the ground. The nest had been started in the second week of August (which I would have thought was somewhat late in the year), and was about half completed, so I was able to photo-

More Hornets....

Last year my mother-in-law rang me to say she had found something strange in the loft of her house near Cromer. I duly went over to investigate - below is a picture of what I found - a large Hornets nest filling one corner of the loft space. This was March 2003 and both she and her husband had not any idea that it was there. They had noticed a few 'large wasps' about during the previous summer but the extent of the nest must have housed a good few thousand individuals. This just shows that if you leave them alone they will not bother you.

Francis Farrow



graph the insects busily constructing the nest, and preparing brood cells.

The most surprising part of this experience, and what will probably be the most lasting memory, was the loud crackling/rustling noise coming from the nest. On the first occasion that I saw the nest, it was late evening, and as it got dark the noise could be heard from at least 6 yards away. In the darkness this noise seemed almost sinister.

On the second occasion I photographed the nest at a distance of less than one foot, the insects completely ignored both me, camera, and flash-guns. Sometimes a Hornet would land on me, probably using me as a landing stage on its way to the nest, but never did I feel in any way threatened. The local insect population probably felt differently judging by the Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral wings found discarded on the ground nearby. On one occasion, I saw the headless and wingless body of a Migrant Hawker dragonfly

taken into the nest. Common Wasps were very frequent items of prey.

About 50 yards from the nest was a pear tree, with many windfall pears beneath it. These were a great attraction for numerous insects including the Hornets. It was with some surprise that whilst taking close-up photos of the Hornets catching and overpowering Common Wasps that on no occasion did a Hornet use its sting to subdue the wasp, but simply grasped the wasp with their legs and used their jaws to great effect. Most attacks lasted from one to four seconds, from beginning, to carrying the prey item off to the nest. Wasps were frequently decapitated. I was also surprised at the considerable amount of pear that was carried off to the nest in the form of pellets that the Hornets cut from the fallen pears with those formidable jaws. Very impressive insects indeed.

Hans Watson

Barbastelle bats at Paston Great Barn – an update

As members will know, Paston Great Barn, as well as being a Scheduled Ancient Monument and listed building, is an internationally important site for barbastelle bats, and as such is designated under both national and European nature conservation legislation. Over the past few years it was something of a controversial site, a situation which culminated in English Nature taking on a 50 year lease in 2002. A view of those events can found in the 2001 Norfolk Bird and Mammal report, p288-297.

As part of English Nature's work we have commissioned the Bat Conservation Trust to undertake a three year monitoring programme, looking at the population of barbastelle bats, and building on the earlier work carried out by others, including the Norfolk Bat Group. The first year's results are now in and members may be interested to know that in 2003 the numbers of barbastelles recorded exceeded all previous counts, with 36 adults counted in June, and a maximum of 56 adults and young counted in July/August. The previous highest count was in 1998 when 30 adults were recorded, and the lowest in 2001 when approximately 22 adults were recorded. Barbastelle bat populations may of course fluctuate for many reasons, some of which could be unrelated to conditions at Paston Great Barn. (It would be good to link the here to work elsewhere on this species.) It is, however, evident that Paston Great Barn remains an internationally important site for barbastelle bats.

Should members wish to see a full copy of this monitoring report please contact me at English Nature, 60 Bracondale, Norwich, NR1 2BE.

Rob Cooke



Holkham Park

One of the advantages of living on the North Norfolk Coast is that there is a wide choice of often contrasting environments to visit, some natural, like the beaches and saltmarshes, and some man-made (or at least man-highly-influenced) like Felbrigg and Holkham Parks. The latter is just next door to me, so it is not surprising that I have got to know it pretty well over the last 35 years.

The central part of the estate: the Hall, its surrounding deer park, the lake and quite a bit of agricultural land, is enclosed not only by the famous 9-mile long wall, but perhaps more significantly by continuous woodland, while other large and small plantations are scattered around (I believe we have "Capability" Brown to thank for this). The park is, I am glad to say, open to the public, most of whom, especially in summer, gravitate towards the Hall and the mile-long lake. The latter attracts bird-watchers, and is well worth a look in winter for the large numbers of waterfowl - including, at the time of writing in late February, the biggest gathering of Shoveler (100+) that I have ever seen.

It is the woodland that particularly attracts me, however. The old-established plantations are easily recognised not only by the height of the trees but, in early spring, by the fresh green carpet of Dog's Mercury. I can forgive this

otherwise rather boring species much for this early splash of colour! Along the rides there are occasional botanical surprises: Creeping Bell-flower and Sanicle in one, Clustered Bell-flower in another. Sweet Violet, in both its blue and white forms, puts in an early appearance by one of the tracks.

I have occasionally called my wife on my mobile to let her hear a Cuckoo (pretty scarce round here now), or once, a Nightingale (unprecedented), but one day I called her to listen to the silence! What a rare thing! I was in one of the Holkham plantations, and realised that I could hear nothing at all - no traffic, no aircraft, not even the distant roar of the sea, it having been calm for several days.

There is a six-foot high fence around the deer-park, which is occasionally damaged by falling trees. One then comes across small groups of Fallow Deer, with a rather guilty look about them, outside their normal domain, but generally still inside the wall. In recent years, however, I have seen the occasional Muntjac, outside the deer-park, but sometimes so near the fence that they give the impression that they would like to be inside! I don't know how welcome they would be, either by the staff or the resident deer.

Footnote: If you have been puzzled by a signpost to "N. Holkham", due south of Holkham village, the "N" stands for "New"!

Paul Banham

RICHMOND PARK

Walking round Richmond Park earlier this week gave me an opportunity to observe some of the wildlife found there. This is a large Park, eleven miles round, the same as the Norwich ring road, it is undulating and very picturesque, with many ancient and gnarled oaks in the well wooded landscape.

These venerable old trees, with many holes, cracks and fissures are proving a great attraction to large numbers of ring necked parakeets (*psittacula krameri*). Their shrill calls are very evident all over the park, and with their slim, long tailed silhouettes are unmistakable in flight. These are very beautiful birds, bright green with scarlet bills, and very acrobatic.

Despite their good looks they have a bad reputation, and many people frown on them, they have a penchant for getting into trouble, and can cause much damage to buildings, bird tables etc. They seem to be on the increase, I have heard of one night time roost where an estimated eight thousand birds congregate in the winter months. Our mild climate over the last few years has obviously been kind to this species, originating from Asia and Africa, they came here as cage birds, and with

the inevitable escapes have now got a strong foot hold in southern England.

The deer in the park however are the main feature, two species are to be seen, fallow and red, all together numbering about six hundred animals. These were the reason for our being there, a friend and I had arrived early to try and photograph these majestic beasts, several of the red deer stags have twelve points or more on their antlers, these massive bony structures will be dropped over the next few weeks, but at the moment they are looking very macho indeed.

Tony Howes



WHITE GHOSTS

Barn owls have always been one of my favourite birds, they have a special magic all of their own and I am always thrilled when I see one in the countryside. In recent years I have become rather more involved with this charismatic bird with a programme of making and erecting nest boxes for them, mainly on farms in the Yare valley.

Checking these boxes out in spring is always interesting. Some have pellets in them showing that the owls are happy with the situation and are using them for roosting sites. The biggest thrill however comes from finding a clutch of pure white eggs, it's then that all the hard work seems worthwhile and I know that given a bit of luck, and a good vole year, there will be another barn owl family hunting the grazing marshes by the years end.

Recently I was shown an area on the upper Bure at Buxton that seems ideal for photographing these lovely birds. The Wroxham/Aylsham light railway line runs through rough grass fields at this point and by standing on the elevated footpath bordering the line you have good views of any owl hunting the rough ground below you. Barn owls are quite happy to hunt during the daylight hours, even in bright sunny conditions and so it proved with these Buxton birds. They could be observed flying up and down the marshy ground in a very random way, often hovering over possible vole holding spots, or spending long periods perched on marsh fence posts inspecting the grass all around with their penetrating dark eyes. On one occasion in early March there were four different owls in flight all at the same time, unusual in my experience but a lovely unforgettable sight. These "White Ghosts" must capture the hearts of all who know them.

Tony Howes

Where do Harvest Mice go in Winter?

When I want to find out anything about the lives and habits of our mammals, I turn, not to the latest work on the subject (if there is one which does not deal superficially with all the mammals in Europe, rather than just Great Britain and Ireland), but to a three volume work published in 1912 and called simply 'The Nature Book'. More than 1200 pages of information on every subject under the sun relating to British wildlife, and superbly illustrated with black and white photographs. The articles on mammals are by a gentleman called Douglas English who seems to have studied our mammals at first hand, and in many cases, has bred them in captivity so that he could write about them. Thus, I find that Harvest Mice spend the winter in the corn stacks, occupying the highest level in the stack with the House Mice lower down-providing there were no rats which would, of course, eat both.

Now, there are no corn stacks, so where do the Harvest Mice spend the winter? Come to that, where do they spend the summer in todays intensive world? English gives their breeding season as July/August, with the young mobile three weeks after birth, in other words from late July into September. With their nests among the corn stalks, many of them were carted to the corn stacks within the sheaves, though some would no doubt have had to run for it. The fate of any corn dwelling Harvest Mice today, with combine harvesters moving through the corn faster than a man can walk is best left to the imagination. From this, it would appear that the species must now be largely confined to marshes where they can nest undisturbed in the reed beds and other tall vegetation.

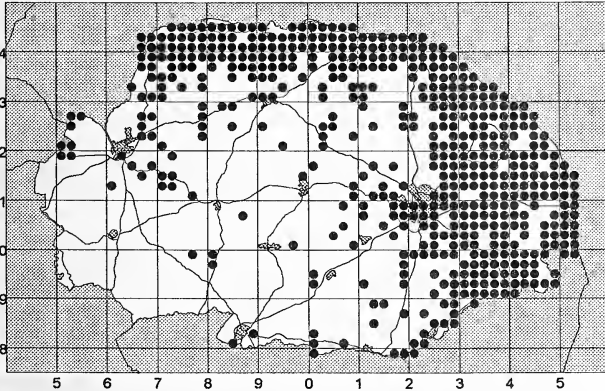
There is a rough marsh below our property which probably serves as home to a population of these endearing little creatures, and, from time to time they are encountered on the property. A year or two ago, we even had a nest in some tall grass at the end of a piece of cultivated ground. They also appear-brief flashes of sandy and white diving for cover-where hay is stored in an out-building. This winter, however, one took up residence and was first seen on Dec. 17th in the sheep's 'hayrack', an old bedspring with some of the wires removed with wall. behind it and roofed over with a removable corrugated iron lid. It has not been seen every day, but perhaps, two or three times in a week, quietly dodging over the top of the wall by way of a convenient bramble, or scuttling out of the rack to hide in loose hay which had fallen out of the end. On March 11th, there were two and the pair were seen again on March 31st, so hopefully we still have a viable breeding population in this part of the River Tud valley. Incidentally, English states that the national distribution of Harvest Mice is governed by the July/August mean rainfall/ and that they are not likely to occur where this exceeds 4 inches over the two months. He sites Leicestershire as the likely northern limit for the species. Perhaps global warming will help the Harvest Mouse move further north.

Alec Bull



Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*) Survey.

There is a general feeling that alexanders is extending its range in Norfolk and is becoming a problem in some places by out-competing less robust species. With the tetrad maps published in the Flora five years ago, we have a good opportunity to gather some hard evidence about its alleged expansion. To this end, the Norfolk Flora Group is planning to survey alexanders this spring and to provide a base line for future surveys, it would be ideal (though not essential) to have records based on 1km squares. We are particularly keen to cover tetrads adjacent to those where alexanders occurred in the Flora as shown by the map.



We would be grateful if members of the society would take part. To do so simply note the 1km squares where you see plants or even better, have a black and white copy of part of the Landranger (1:50 000) O.S. map of your chosen area (copies are allowable for scientific purposes) and colour in either the 1km squares where you see plants, or all the roads which have alexanders along their verges.

Records should be sent to Gillian Beckett, Bramley Cottage, Docking Road, Stanhoe, Norfolk, PE31 8QF.

County Flower

On May 5th, the wild plant charity, *Plantlife*, will announce the winners of the County Flower millennium project. Each county in the United Kingdom will be represented by a flower that has received the most votes from the public.

The floral finalists include, for example, Hop and Lady orchid in Kent. Snowdon lily and Welsh poppy in Caernarvonshire, Bearberry and Harebell in Aberdeenshire. The Harebell, also known as the Scottish Bluebell has also won over voters in eight other counties. The Cowslip is another favourite, being on the list for Cambridgeshire, East Lothian/Haddingtonshire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Rutland, Somerset, Surrey and Worcestershire. Norfolk, I believe has Corn Poppy and the subject of the survey above - Alexanders. Personally I would liked to have seen Norfolk Reed among the finalists as it is something the public can identify with from the Broads to the coastal marshes.

Francis Farrow

Greater water-parsnip Species Action Plan

Greater water-parsnip *Sium latifolium* is a Nationally Scarce plant found in 62 10km squares in Britain during the latest Atlas recording period of 1987-1999. Its distribution has declined substantially since 1945. Norfolk remains one of the plants' strongholds although there is evidence of a long-standing decline here too - Ted Ellis in his *New Naturalists'* book on *The Broads* (1965) referred to it as "a rare and disappearing species."

In Norfolk the main populations are found in fen habitat in Broadland although the plant also occurs along some grazing mash dykes, notably in the Halvergate - Wickhampton area. There are few recent or historical records for the west with the Ouse Washes representing the main site.

As part of the Norfolk Species Action Plan for *Sium* help is required with the following:

- collation of historical records
- field survey to assess current distribution and status
- field survey to monitor key populations and gather ecological data
- collection of seeds to deposit in the Millennium Seed Bank (Wakehurst Place)

If anyone is willing to help with any of the above activities or can submit any recent (post-1995) records I would be pleased to hear from them. I can provide details of records currently held on the Norfolk database and could also help with gaining access permission to private land.

Jeremy Halls,
2 West End Avenue, Brundall,
Norwich, NR13 5RF
Tel 01603 716710
e-mail jm.halls@virgin.net

NB
all maps shown in
this Bulletin are
produced via
DMAP



Gaps in butterfly recording, 2000-2004

'Butterflies for the New Millennium' is the national recording scheme, launched in 1995 by Butterfly Conservation and the Biological Records Centre. Its first milestone was the beautiful hardback book *The Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland*, covering 1995-99. The maps were based on the 10-km squares of the National Grid as marked on all O.S. maps and many road atlases. You'll also see these squares on all the maps in our local book *Millennium Atlas of Norfolk Butterflies*.

Recording continues, with distributions evolving rapidly with urbanisation, farming and climate changes. Records from 2000-04 will be used to compile a new book to be published in 2005 as a glossy, attractive and informative report.

So this will be the *final year* of the new five-year period. Here in Norfolk there are several blank 10-km squares. A 10-km square is a large area (38 square miles!) and I believe that every Norfolk square should hold at least 15 species, even if most of it seems like an 'arable desert'.

Very few species have been recorded in the following squares, so virtually any butterflies seen there will be new for this survey:

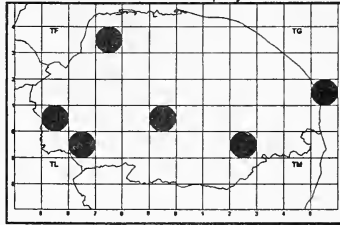
TF50 Fenland west of Downham Market
TL69 Hilgay, Southery, Methwold Fens
TF73 Docking, Sedgeford, Great Bircham
TF90 Watton, Shipdham, Bradenham
TM29 Newton Flotman, Brooke, Woodton, Hemphall
TG51 Caister-on-Sea

If you live in or visit any of these areas, I'd really welcome any records you have from 2000-03 and/or 2004. Dates are not essential, but location is important. The basis of recording is the maximum number of each species seen in the same place on any one day. You can approximate numbers using the codes A (= 1 individual), B (2-9), C (10-30), D (31-100) and E (100+), or you can state the actual number counted.

We really need to get these squares up to the magic 15 this year. This doesn't mean slogging all over the 38 square miles! All you need to do is get out your O.S. map and find a couple of biggish villages you can walk around and an accessible bit of woodland and field edge, then make one visit in May and another in July or early August, choosing as perfect weather as you can. You'll be surprised how quickly you reach that magic 15 - it's just a matter of spending a little time there.

We have our standard recording sheets which I can send you on request, or you could use the Wildlife 2000 forms, or just list the records. If you need clarification on what and how to record, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

It's always fun filling in the gaps, knowing that every sighting counts! Let's try to get Norfolk really well covered for this worthwhile project.



Patrick Bonham,
(BC county recorder),
Woodland View,
Dixon Road,
North Walsham
NR28 9EA

(tel. 01692 403917,
e-mail wv@lineone.net)

NORFOLK SPOTTED FLYCATCHER PROJECT 2004

The Spotted Flycatcher, an attractive summer visitor, is the subject of a study by Norfolk ringers which commenced in 2003. The population of this delightful species in the UK declined by 78% between 1972 and 1996. It is therefore a species of high conservation concern, and is listed as a red data species. It nests in scattered locations across Norfolk, and there are probably no more than 600 breeding pairs in the county.

The aims of this study are to learn more about the breeding biology of the Spotted Flycatcher, and to determine their preferred habitat and site fidelity. In 2003, we invited members of the public to report sightings of nesting flycatchers to us, and made arrangements to ring the nestlings. In all, 22 pairs of flycatchers

were monitored and 54 nestlings were ringed. This year our aim is both to determine whether or not 2003's nestlings will return to their natal sites, and also to expand the study to include new sites. In order to collect more information in 2004, we are hoping that both birdwatchers and non-birdwatchers (whether they participated in 2003 or not) will report any breeding pairs that they come across.

We also complete a "Nest Record Card" for the British Trust for Ornithology for each nest. This contributes valuable information to a national database used for analysis of breeding biology. If sufficient data is collected, we would be able to determine whether changes in breeding success are contributing to the population decline, and, if birds prove to be site-faithful, whether over-winter survival is declining. If the owner of the land on which they are nesting is happy for us to do so,

we shall arrange for a local bird ringer to visit the site to ring the nestlings with a colour ring and a metal BTO ring. In this way it will be possible to monitor if the same birds return to the site in a subsequent summer. Birds will only be ringed if the landowners give their consent.

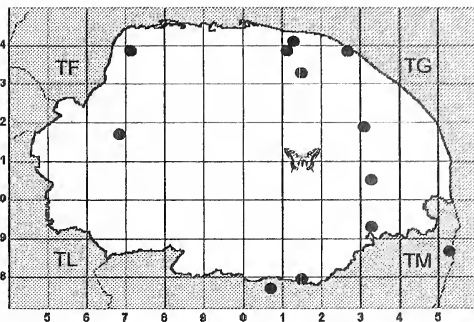
If you find a Spotted Flycatcher nesting in Norfolk, or the birds appear to have set up territory in your area, please contact the project organiser, Rachel Warren at rfwarr@care4free.net or telephone 01603 593912 during the day/early evening and leave a message if necessary. Rachel will send out a simple form on which you can record your flycatchers' breeding activity. This will enable her to complete a "Nest Record Card" for the BTO. She will also provide an opportunity for a local ringer to visit you.

Moss Taylor



Excursion Reports

● 2004-05 Field Meeting location
 Easton College
 Indoor meetings



With this edition of 'The Norfolk Natterjack' you will have received the new programme card. The excursions aim to cover Norfolk's rich and varied landscapes and enable the study of different aspects of natural history. The map above shows the extent of the field meetings throughout Norfolk this coming year. For two

of the meetings it looks like passports will be required as we pass over the border into Suffolk. I hope members will be able to support the events as much as possible. Please note some excursions require advance booking.

The last field meetings of the 2003-2004 programme were to Gun Hill

Dunes for lichens (15/02/04) and Litcham Common for mosses and liverworts (07/03/04). Unfortunately no reports of these excursions were received prior to publication. Could leaders please arrange short reports to be sent on the days events early if possible, as this will be very helpful.

FF-Editor

REG EVANS 1915 - 2004

When, as a diffident schoolboy, I joined the Birmingham Natural History Society, it was Reg and Lil Evans who came to my rescue. I was fascinated by the lectures but daunted by the formality and the fact that none of the other members seemed to be less than three times my age. Reg and Lil quickly ensured that I was greeted and befriended. On one of the few field meetings I attended, I remember Reg picking up a dead branch and, lens to his eye, reeling off the names of the microfungi growing on it as if he were reading a page of a book, with Lil writing it all down (and querying the occasional identification). I had not even heard of any of the names.

Fifteen years later I found myself in Norfolk and met up once again with Reg who, after spending most of his working life as a pharmacist in Stratford-upon-Avon, had retired to his natal county. When we established the Norfolk Fungus Study Group in 2001 it transpired that all the founding members had similar stories of the help that they had been given by this remarkable couple. Reg worried that his unwillingness to accept records from those not known to him might discourage nascent mycologists but nothing could have been further from the truth; he encouraged our critical approach and any improvement on our part gave him much pleasure.

Before leaving Warwickshire, Reg and Lil played a major part in the production of the Fungus Flora of Warwickshire, the first county mycota and still a model of its kind. Since 1976 they have recorded Norfolk fungi equally assiduously and Reg is currently responsible for more records on the British Foray Record Database than anyone else in the country. He has recorded at least seven fungi as new to Britain and one species new to science, *Rosellinia evansii*, a small pyrenomycete named in his honour. In 1994 he was awarded the British Mycological Society Benefactors' Medal and his extensive fungus herbarium has been donated to Kew.

His interests in natural history were wide, with spiders, galls, flies (especially those feeding on fungi) and parasitic hymenopterans receiving his meticulous attention. Indeed, he probably published as many notes and papers in entomological journals as he did in mycological publications. He was an accomplished illustrator, too.

Reg led 46 field meetings for the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society and was made a Vice President but sadly never found us as congenial as the Birmingham Natural History Society. His many friends will remember him for his ready wit and cheeky sense of humour which he maintained until his death on 19th January.

Tony Leech

YOUNG NATURE WRITER AWARDS

Top prize in the Young Norfolk Nature Writer Award, established in memory of that doyen of nature writers, Michael Seago, has gone not to an individual but to a year group at a school. Year 8 at Taverham High School were set the challenge of producing nature articles or diaries as a geography project by teacher Nathalie Kausch, who is a Watch leader and former Norfolk Wildlife Trust education co-ordinator. Scores of projects were produced and about 20 of the best were submitted for the competition.

A difficult task for the judges, Sylvia Seago, Don Dorling representing the Trust, and David Paull for the Society. So difficult, in fact, that it would have been invidious to single out the work of any individual pupil, so it was decided that the fairest outcome would be to award the £75 cheque to the year group to buy educational material.

The cheque and the winner's plaque were received from Sylvia Seago by three of the pupils on behalf of the year, Ben Gray, Abigail Lec and Sam Foot, who were accompanied by Nathalie Kausch and deputy year tutor Peter Orr. Second prize of £25 went to last year's outright winner, Holly Hancock.



Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year Award 2004

Closing date: September 30th

Do you fancy yourself as a nature writer? Do you take note of what you see in the local countryside? Do you keep a record of the birds and butterflies that come into your garden? Do you take a close look at what goes on in your school or village pond?

Why not try your hand at writing an article or illustrated diary of not more than 800 words about your observations of nature in Norfolk?

You could win a prize in the Young Norfolk Nature Writer competition 2004. Entries will be judged in two categories: Up to 11 years and 11-15 years. There will be a prize of £50 and a trophy in each category.

The prizes and trophies are being generously donated by Mrs Sylvia Seago in memory of her late husband Michael who devoted 60 years to studying and writing about Norfolk's birds and other wildlife.

Entries should be submitted by September 30th, 2004, to: Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Bewick House, 22 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY.



WATSONIA

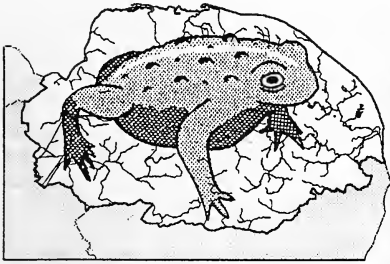
If any member is interested in the following BSBI publications could they please contact me:

- Watsonia Vol 9 (1972)
- supplement
- Watsonia Vol 14 (4) (1983)
- Watsonia Vol 16 (2) (1986)
- Watsonia Vol 16 (3) (1987)
- Watsonia Vol 16 (4) (1987)
- Watsonia Vol 17 (1) (1988)
- Watsonia Vol 17 (2) (1988)
- 2 copies
- Watsonia Vol 17 (3) (1989)
- 2 copies
- Watsonia Vol 17 (4) (1989)
- 2 copies
- Watsonia Vol 18 (1) (1990)
- 2 copies
- Watsonia Vol 18 (2) (1990)
- 2 copies
- Watsonia Vol 18 (3) (1991)
- Watsonia Vol 20 (1) (1994)
- Watsonia Vol 20 (2) (1994)
- Watsonia Vol 20 (3) (1995)
- Watsonia Vol 20 (4) (1995)

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e-mail:
contact@EcologicalAssociates.
fsworld.co.uk

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by **July 1st, 2004** to the following address: Francis Farrow, Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net





THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

10 AUG 2004

EXCHANGED GENERAL LIBRARY

The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 86
August 2004

Toad-in-the-hole....

Welcome to this edition of 'The Norfolk Natterjack'. It is a mixture of requests for information - water shrews and harebells - and further information on past subjects - fungi and harvest mice. There are also some recent observations and some from past 'Transactions'. Reports of 2004 excursions and the Royal Norfolk Show are also included. We say an initial farewell to two of Norfolk's older natural historians and look forward to coming events.

My thanks to all contributors and please keep sending in your notes etc., - anytime before the deadline!

FF

HELP!!

So far, no one has volunteered to take over the sale and distribution of our Norfolk Bird and Mammal Report from David Paull, who is having to give up on health grounds. The appointment of a successor is now matter of urgency because the 2003 Report is due to be published in September.

If you think you could help, please phone David on 01603 457270.



Respect - Protect - Enjoy

See page 5 for details of new
Countryside Code

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page 1	Toad-in-the-hole... Help! (Report distributor wanted). Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year Award 2004 (Competition rules)
page 2	'The ayke ran with blood' (Saxerial). Small Tortoiseshell. Further note on a fungus <i>Sclerotinia tubrosa</i> in Norfolk. Another update on a fungus (<i>Gymnopilus dilepis</i>).
page 3	The Lizards (Common Lizard). A small snack! (Grey Heron). Wells sea wall.
page 4	NBA - A personal plea. Water Shrew Survey Where do Harvest Mice go in Summer?
page 5	Excursion Reports. Kelling Heath Holiday Park. New Country Code.
page 6	Hempstead Woods. Royal Norfolk Show 70 Years Ago (Notes from Transactions).
page 7	Hairbell. Phyllis Ellis. Ernest Daniels.
page 8	Norfolk Bird Records. For beginners (NWT workshops). County Flower A white flower (Greater knapweed!).



Bored with school holidays - nothing to do? If you are a parent/ grandparent why not suggest the following to the 'little darlings':

Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year Award 2004

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You could win a prize in the Young Norfolk Nature Writer competition 2004. Entries will be judged in two categories: Up to 11 years and 11-15 years. There will be a prize of £50 and a trophy in each category.

The prizes and trophies are being generously donated by Mrs Sylvia Seago in memory of her late husband Michael who devoted 60 years to studying and writing about Norfolk's birds and other wildlife.

Entries should be submitted by September 30th, 2004, to: Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Bewick House, 22 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY.



The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society
Founded 1869

Registered Charity No 291604

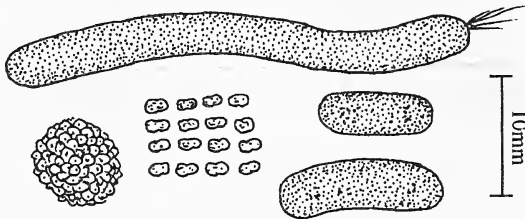
© Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

"The dyke ran with blood"

Recently I received a sample from Keith Clarke which had been collected by the Environmental Agency from the Swan Pit in the grounds of the Great Hospital almshouses in Norwich. At the bottom of the tube was some purple flocculent material, which turned out to be a mixture of several kinds of purple sulphur bacteria, harmless and helpful creatures which use their own kind of photosynthesis to convert malodorous and poisonous hydrogen sulphide to innocuous sulphur or sulphates, thereby deriving energy. They live where the oxygen is low, often because of the presence of rotting leaves.

In 1998 police were alerted when there appeared to be blood in a drainage ditch at Beccles, just over the Suffolk border, and there were photographs in the local paper. Early this year a pond at Fleggburgh was thought to have red diesel fuel in it, and both these occurrences were due to purple sulphur bacteria. In 1640 the River Cam at Cambridge ran as red as blood, thought to be a presage of the Civil War, and no doubt this and many other alarming signs have been caused by these little creatures. In the drawing the short sausages are *Chromatium okenii*, the long one *Thiospirillum jenense*, the rectangular colony *Thiopedia rosea*, and the irregular clusters *Lamprocystis roseopersicina*. All but *Thiopedia rosea* can swim rather slowly, and all are bright pink under the microscope.

Hilary Belcher



Small Tortoiseshell

Small Tortoiseshell numbers have been poor here in recent years but it is always pleasing to see one or two surviving the winter. The first one seen in my garden this year was on 1st March.



Attending a funeral service at Saxthorpe Church on 11th April and with the rendering of the last hymn 'How great Thou art' many small tortoiseshells were flying near the congregation and onto the windows. After the service 4

were caught and put outside and because of the height of the windows I went home for a long handled net. Another 10 plus 1 peacock were released outside. Some were still out of reach, others were dead on the floor. Apparently at the church service the previous week about 9 were caught and put outside and I was told they only fly when the heat is on!

Anne Brewster

Further note on fungus *Sclerotinia tubrosa* in Norfolk.

Last Autumn Alec Bull wrote about the Anemone Cup fungus *Sclerotinia tubrosa* associated with the wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and I made a diary note to look for this fungus in Wayland Wood in April 2004.

My wife and I did not have to search for long before we started to find the cups among anemones growing in damp soil between coppiced hazels. Having "got our eyes in" we found the cups over a widespread area, growing on patches of bare soil between the Anemones. I carefully collected two of the fruit bodies to examine under the microscope, when reaching home these specimens were kept moist on wet tissue paper in a plastic tub. The next day when I lifted the lid of the tub there occurred a spontaneous mass discharge of spores which appeared like a puff of smoke.

Looking at a small part of the fertile layer inside the cup at X400 magnification, the asci are surprisingly long (170 micro-metre), densely packed in a jelly. The spores are elliptical and have a small oil drop clearly visible at each end.

Tom Pallister

Another update on a fungus

In the February 2002 edition of 'Natterjack' (no. 76) Tony Leech and I described the finding and identification of *Gymnopilus dilepis* (Berk. & Broome) Singer. Since then an Australian researcher, B.J. Rees and her colleagues have carried out DNA tests on samples of the fungus from Beeston Common and Holt Lowes. The conclusion being that although there is a slight difference genetically between the fungi from the two locations they are essentially the same species to those found in Australia and SE Asia!

Francis Farrow



The Lizards

There is a certain post at Strumpshaw Fen which I always have a look at as I enter the reserve. It's entirely covered with ivy except the extreme top which I (and probably other people as well) keep clear because it is a favourite basking place for several common lizards *lacerta vivipara*. I have seen as many as four together, but one or two are the norm, sometimes all adult or sometimes adult and young together. There is no doubt that there are many individuals that use this sun trap.

To get to this vantage point means a scramble up through ivy stems of about four feet, it must be like a maze in there. The top of the post is in bright light from about mid morning until 2 pm in summer. The nearby gate to the rail crossing is being slammed many times each day and a distinct tremor can be felt in the ground as a train hurtles past, but the lizards don't seem to mind, they just continue lazing in the sun – lucky them.



Tony Howes

Wells Sea Wall

In the 1850's the drainage of the saltmarshes west of Wells was completed by building the one-mile-long wall north from the Quay, joining the dunes just west of the present lifeboat house. It was breached by storm tides in 1953 and again in 1978, after which it was completely rebuilt to a height 1.5 metres more than before (making it some 6.5 metres above sea level), and faced with interlocking concrete slabs on the seaward side.

It has always been interesting botanically, with a good variety of plants that you would expect, plus a few that you wouldn't. Of the latter I would single out the pale flax, *Linum bienne*, which is otherwise very scarce in the county. It was certainly there before the 1978 flood, and when the wall was rebuilt we thought we had lost it. However, after a few years it reappeared. How? I suppose it could only be from buried seed. A couple of patches of meadow saxifrage also turned up again.

Quite a lot of soil was imported for the post-1978 rebuilding, and with it came weld (a bit boring) and viper's bugloss, very colourful. I suspect that the soil must have come from the Breckland area, where both species occur. From somewhere there also appeared a single clump of nodding star of Bethlehem, *Ornithogalum nutans*.

Below the level of the footpath the concrete-covered bank slopes down at something less than 20 degrees, shallow enough to absorb most of the wave energy, which of course is considerable in storms. At the base there are lumps of imported rock, to which a number of seaweed species attach their holdfasts, including the channelled wrack, *Pelvetia canaliculata* which elsewhere in Norfolk saltmarshes, notably at Blakeney Point, occurs in its unattached form.

It's strange to be able to admire typical inland plants at one moment, out of sight of the sea, and then with a few strides to be in a marine environment, with crabs and other invertebrates scuttling or crawling through the mud and seaweeds. Nearby there may be common and little terns in summer, while in winter there could be a grey plover calling its plaintive cry, and numbers of brent geese grunting not far away.

Paul Banham

A Small Snack!

Watching from the fen hide at Strumpshaw recently I had a fine view of a heron having a midday snack. It had flown into the pool in front of the hide with something round and dark in its bill, which it then dunked several times in the water. Eventually I was able to make out the form of a young coot, still covered in black fluff and with red threads on its head. After several attempts to get it in the right position the heron began gulping it an

inch or two at a time until just the coot's legs were left dangling, then they too were gone. The bird remained standing for some time and the bulge in its neck was clearly visible, after some ten minutes it decided on a change of scenery and off it flew towards the river.

Tony Howes



Norfolk Bird Atlas - A Personal Plea

It was seven years ago, in 1997, that the first trials were carried out to assess the possibility of undertaking fieldwork for a new Norfolk bird atlas. At that time, a small team of observers visited various parts of the county to see if it was feasible to record the abundance, as well as the distribution, of each species present. The pilot study was successful, and as a result a meeting was held in Norwich in May 1998 to which representatives of the main ornithological, conservation and land-owning bodies in the county were invited. Following this, a working group was set up, further trials of field methods were undertaken, funds were raised and a team of potential observers was contacted. At last in December 1999 fieldwork commenced, with the initial intention of covering the whole county within three to five years.

If this target had been reached, the survey would be nearing completion by now, and we would be preparing the final maps and writing the species texts for the new book. Perhaps we were over ambitious at the start of the project. After all, finding observers to visit all of the 1455 tetrads in the county on four occasions is a mammoth task, although considering the number of birdwatchers in Norfolk, it should not have been impossible. However, at the time of writing, only 63% of the county has been covered in winter, and by the end of this summer, just over 50% during the breeding season. I say 'only', but it is still a remarkable achievement, as it represents about 12,000 hours spent in the field by over 300 observers, and the atlas database currently holds in excess of 115,000 records.

Having been personally involved since the start of the project, and with every hope of seeing it through to the end, I would like to believe that the remaining tetrads can be completely covered within the next three years. The great value of the baseline data that we are gathering decrease the longer the project runs, and so it is

really important to complete it as soon as possible.

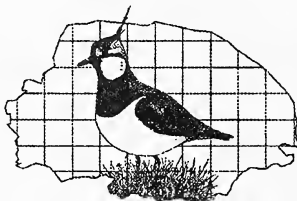
As far as the winter survey is concerned, continuing at the current rate of annual coverage will mean that this should be attainable. However, to achieve this during the breeding season, extra fieldworkers are needed and those already involved will need to take on additional tetrads. It may also mean that the fieldwork protocol during the summer months will have to be amended to ensure that the remaining 50% of Norfolk has been covered by the end of the 2007 breeding season. This will be one of the topics considered at the annual meeting of the Working Group in August.

In the meantime, I would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to become involved next winter (December to February) and/or next summer (April to June). We particularly need help in central, southern and western Norfolk. I have personally carried out counts in almost 70 tetrads in various parts of the county, and have thoroughly enjoyed the fieldwork as it has taken me to parts of Norfolk that I otherwise would not have visited.

Please do help us to complete the project within the next three years by contacting me at:

4 Heath Road, Sheringham,
NR26 8JH, or on 01263-823637
or at mosstaylor@care4free.net

Moss Taylor



Water Shrew Survey

I should like to draw to the attention of members, a new survey on water shrews. Members of the Mammal Society will already be aware of the survey, because it is being organised by that society. Some of us will no doubt have taken part in the preliminary trial.

The survey involves placing baited tubes in potential water shrew habitats and then inspecting them two weeks later for the presence of water shrew faeces. The droppings can be differentiated from those of other shrews, because they contain the remains of aquatic invertebrates. The main survey is due to start on 1st July 2004 and last until 30th September. The winter survey will run from 1st November '04 to 30th April 05.

Anyone interested in taking part should get in touch with:

Phoebe Carter,
Surveys Officer,
2B Inworth Street, London,
SW11 3EP

or e-mail
pcarter@mammal.org.uk

Ian Keymer

Where do Harvest Mice go in Summer?

Note in reply to Alec Bull's article in Natterjack no 85, May 2004

Well at Felbrigg Hall (NT), they nest in the tubes around young trees. However a search of likely spots among cock's-foot tussocks and other grasses this winter revealed no old nests!

Given the number of tree tubes dotting the countryside, and especially along new roads, perhaps harvest mice have learnt a thing or two!

Mary Ghullam



Excursion Reports

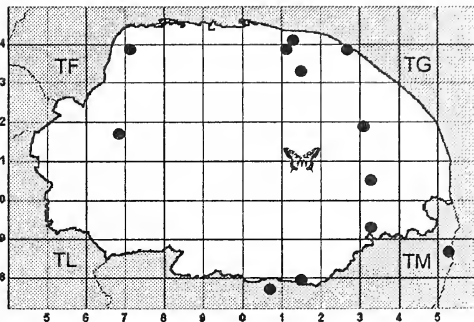
Featuring:

Kelling Heath Holiday Park

Hempstead Woods

Royal Norfolk Show

● 2004-05 Field Meeting location
 Easton College
 indoor meetings



Kelling Heath Holiday Park

Sunday, 25th April 2004

On a pleasant spring morning around 16 adults and 1 child met up with Kevin Hart and 2 other members of the 5 strong countryside team, for a gentle stroll around Kelling Heath Holiday Park. First stop was the red squirrel enclosure, where Kevin told us about the successful captive-breeding programme, which had supplied squirrels to such places as the Isle of Wight. One red squirrel was hiding in the roof of the enclosure, while the two barn owls next door, studiously ignored us. The party then moved off through woodland, glimpsing a speckled wood butterfly and admiring the delicate flowers of wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* on the way to the recently scraped, spring-fed Bottom pond. Here Stephen Livermore found a *Rubus* stem, bearing the tiny white ascomyete, *Dasyascyphus virgineus*. While some members watched a larged damselfly, others were fortunate to catch sight of a grass snake. Bob Ellis drew our attention to wood speedwell *Veronica montana*, with its distinctive lavender flowers, growing in a damp area of woodland with moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, and a clump of ramsons *Allium ursinum* near the North Norfolk Steam Railway line.

We then moved onto an area of restored heathland, which had been grazed by Hebridean sheep and currently sported an interesting spiral sculpture of red tree tubes. Cuttings of ling *Calluna vulgaris*, taken in October from adjacent area, had

been successfully scattered and produced good new growth. Some discussion occurred about the best way of gathering Ling seed for regeneration, as after cutting the original plants had died. Robert Maidstone suggested the use of a Billy Goat – the mechanical variety! On the way to another area of heathland, managed by rotation cut for silver-studded blue butterflies in conjunction with English Nature, keen eyes spotted the cobwebbed 'nests' of gorse mites, *Tetranychus lintearius*. Some of the group split off, while most walked back to the car park and lunch, enjoying the sounds and sights of Spring migrants such as wood lark, willow warbler and blackcap.

After lunch a much-depleted group decided to walk through the Park to Weybourne Springs. Robert Maidstone immediately pointed out *Andricus quercus corticis*, a wasp gall on Oak, while at the pond we watched a female crane fly *Tipula maxima* ovipositing in the mud at the pond's edge. Alongside the railway line the path was edged with meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, just about to come into flower. We admired the views across the valley to the coast and Weybourne Church, framed intriguingly through holes drilled in wooden posts by the Railway line. At a rather gloomy Weybourne Springs we found a solitary spike of great horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* with yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*. Just outside the Park, on the edge of the footpath grew one spike of common twayblade *Listera ovata*.

On the way back a rust, probably the newly arrived *Puccinia distincta*, was

spotted on a daisy leaf *Bellis perennis*) and Robert Maidstone's sharp eyes found a gnat gall, *Asphondylia sarothamni*, on a Broom, planted near the car park.

In all almost 150 species of vascular plants, 4 butterfly and 12 bird species and various molluscs, galls, and insects were seen on a very enjoyable spring day.

Mary Ghillum

New Countryside Code

A new Countryside Code to update the original 1950s' country code for England and help prepare for the introduction of the public's new right of access to the countryside was launched by the Countryside Agency last July.

For the first time the Countryside Code includes a special section for land managers as well as messages for the public including:

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people



HEMPSTEAD WOODS

Sunday, 23rd May 2004

Advertised as a 'nature walk with experts', the joint excursion with the Gresham's School Natural History Society to Hempstead Woods, 2km east of Holt, provided something of interest for everyone in the early summer sunshine. Landowners Mr and Mrs John Watson had kindly given permission for the societies to visit these private woods and we were fortunate in having Peter Smith, a local naturalist with an intimate knowledge of the site, as guide. He took us first to the Duck Decoy pond where about ten years ago he had found the marsh violet. At around the same time a sketch map of the site, drawn in 1928, was found in a notebook at Gresham's School marking the exact spot where the plant occurred; it is still there. Another plant marked on the map, hard fern, is no longer at its former site but was recently found about one kilometre away by Bob Ellis who later showed us the plant.

While committed botanists gazed downwards at the marshy perimeter of the pond, a roving pair of eyes caught sight of a common buzzard soaring above, almost certainly one of the pair which has nested in these woods for the past few years.

The Decoy pond is something of an oasis in a plantation of conifers set on former heathland in the 1960s. Sadly the water meadows of the River Glaven, which flows through the woods, were also planted with conifers. Not surprisingly the trees failed to thrive and in these more enlightened times the Forestry Commission has felled them to restore the wet valley. The Watsons have created a large pond a little way from the river which provided us with several of the six species of dragonflies and damselflies seen during the excursion, including large red damselfly, azure damselfly and broad-bodied chaser.

The broad rides through the woods help to maintain biodiversity and gave us good views of tiger beetles flying in the sun, a pair of green hairstreak butterflies, a slow-worm and a somewhat off-habitat brown hare. Indeed, something for everyone.

Tony Leech

Royal Norfolk Show

Wednesday, 30th June

Thursday, 1st July 2004

The Society was again at the Royal Norfolk Show this year, and the theme was 'The Beetles of Norfolk'. Specimens, photographs and text were supplied by Martin Collier, additional specimens by Ken Durrant, plus photographs and text of water beetles by Geoff Nobes. David Nobbs also presented a display of live beetles from Wheatfen, where in particular, the rare musk beetle (longhorn) gave much interest to the public. The stag beetles from Martin and Kens collection also aroused much interest. Geoff Nobes highlighted the rare water beetles, which Norfolk has quite a number. Robert Maidstone brought along a cow pat, to show off dung beetles, and also mealworm beetles. The lily beetle also caused a bit of interest, as recent newspaper articles have highlighted its potential destructive nature as a garden pest.

In all a super display plus Brian Mcfarlane promoted the Photographic group with some great photos. We also had a visit by the show vice-president on the first day.

Thanks to all who provided display material and to those members who came to man the stand over the two days of the show.

David Nobbs



70 Years Ago

Notes from the 1934
Transactions (Vol. XIII)

- editor E.A. Ellis

CEPHALOPODA - the small squid *Alloteuthis media* (L.) Walker was taken from the dreg-netter's refuse on Yarmouth beach, 22-4-1934. The mantle was 2½ inches long, the head with short tentacles 1 inch and the pair of long tentacles 2½ inches (P. A. Rumbelow).

GASTROPODA - *Assiminea grayana* (Leach) Flemming was abundant on salt-marsh "rond" by the river at King's Lynn, the mouth of the Bure at Gt. Yarmouth, and the Norfolk bank of the Waveney at St. Olave's Bridge in the Spring of 1929; in May, 1934, several of these molluscs were seen in the Cackle Bight and Great Aster Marsh on Scalt Head.

LEPIDOPTERA - *Vanessa antipopa* L. : a Camberwell beauty in fresh condition was seen to alight on the road at Dene Side, near St. Georges's Park, Great Yarmouth, at 2.30 p.m., 18-8-1934. Mr. P. E. Rumbelow and several other persons had a clear view of it; two men captured it, but happily it escaped and was last noticed flying over a house-top. Another rested on Corton lightship, August 21st. (S. G. Sharman).



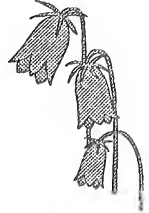
Harebell - *Campanula rotundifolia*.

According to floras, the harebell is quite common, but when Gillian Beckett checked its occurrence in some areas where she recorded it for the *Flora*, it was no longer to be found. This is typical of the fate of many of the smaller, easily smothered species and we feel it would be useful to know where they survive. Members are encouraged to submit records of any finds of the harebell, ideally with a grid reference and a note on the number of plants present (or the area they cover if they are abundant). Records to Flora Recorders please - see below.

FLORA RECORDERS:

East Norfolk: Bob Ellis, 11 Havelock Road, Norwich, NR2 3HQ.
Email: bob@clymus.demon.co.uk

West Norfolk: Gillian Beckett, Bramley Cottage, Stanhoe, King's Lynn, PE31 8QF.
Email: beckett28@tiscali.co.uk



Phyllis Ellis 1913-2004

The Society was represented at the funeral of Mrs. Phyllis Ellis M.B.E., who passed away peacefully on June 24th, a few days before her 91st birthday.

The funeral service took place at St. Mary's Church, Surlingham on July 1st 2004, a church where she used to play the organ. She was later laid to rest with Ted in the old churchyard of St. Saviours, Surlingham. During the ceremony a purple hairstreak butterfly was flitting above the small tree near the grave - a final farewell from nature to Phyllis.

Ken Durrant

Ernest Daniels 1911-2004

It is with great sadness that we record the death of the Society's longest-serving member, Ernest Daniels, who died on June 29th at the age of 91. Ernest joined the Society in 1928 and we recently congratulated him on the fact that he had been a member for 75 years, almost certainly a unique achievement and one that is unlikely ever to be surpassed. Ernest was honorary treasurer for 12 years. He was appointed a vice-president in 1970 and served as president for 1979-80. His contribution to natural history was immense and covered a wide range. He was a keen birdwatcher, joint entomological recorder for a time, and in more recent years his interest centred on botany.

A fuller tribute will appear in the next 'Natterjack' and an obituary will be published in the 2005 'Transactions'.

NORFOLK BIRD RECORDS

Please note change of e-mail address.

Any records/correspondence sent by e-mail should in future be addressed to:

giles.dunmore@tiscali.co.uk

Any photos or sketches should still be sent by post to:

Giles Dumore, 49 Nelson Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8DA.

FOR BEGINNERS

Norfolk Wildlife Trust is running a series of wildlife workshops from July to September, aimed mainly at those who want to make a start on a different natural history subject. The workshops, costing between £5 and £20, cover moths, butterflies, birds, bats, grasses, sedges and rushes, wildflowers, dragonflies and damselflies, and other invertebrates.

For further information, contact:
Gemma Walker at the Trust
(01603 625540).

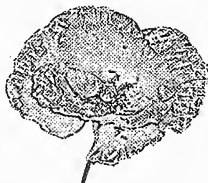


COUNTY FLOWER

Most people will know by now (thanks to the *'Eastern Daily Press'*) that the flower chosen to be Norfolk's emblem in the Plantlife Millennium project is no longer alexanders but the corn poppy.

Many people considered the choice of alexanders as a bad one and the EDP organised another poll with poppy gaining almost half the votes cast. Apparently Norfolk was the only County to reject their chosen flower and Plantlife agreed to the new choice after the EDP's campaign.

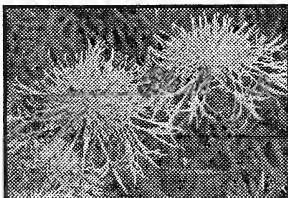
Another case of Norfolk dew different!



A white flower

On July 11th, while out with my daughter, Ellie, she drew my attention to a large white flower at the edge of a field near Sheringham. The plant turned out to be greater knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*. This is the first time that I have seen a white form. Later in the day I talked to various people on the Ringstead excursion and it seems that it is very uncommon. Although others had seen white flowered forms they were not in Norfolk. Maybe some of you have seen a similar plant at some time and can let me know.

Francis Farrow



Norfolk and Norwich
Naturalists' Society

Natural History Day at Wheatfen

Sunday 8th August
starting at 10.00 am

A series of short walks, talks and displays with a chance to meet some local naturalists

For further information contact:
David Nobbs (Warden)
01508 538036

WILD ABOUT NORFOLK

An exhibition featuring local
wildlife groups, slide shows
and children's activities

Saturday 9th October
10.00 am - 4.30 pm

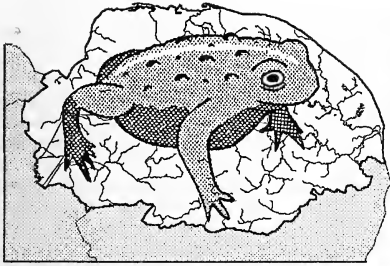
Broadland High School,
Tunstead Road,
Hoveton

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

(NNNS REPRESENTED)

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by **October 1st, 2004** to the following address: Francis Farrow, Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis@virgin.net





9 DEC 2004

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The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 87
November 2004

Toad-in-the-hole....

Welcome to the final edition of 'The Norfolk Natterjack' for 2004. The year has seen a few changes as we say final goodbyes to old friends and of course welcome new ones too! As we head into winter we can dream of next years outings and hope for new discoveries in a world that is at peace - merry Christmas and a happy new year.

FF

New Report Team

I am delighted (and relieved) to report that Rubyna Shiekh and Nick Elsey, who live at Stoke Holy Cross and joined the Society only last year, have taken over the distribution and sale of the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report. If you need to contact them, their phone number (evenings only) is 01508 494823. Iris and I will continue to hold the stock of back numbers and handle casual sales of other publications. Our number is 01603 457270.

David Paul

Buxton Heath - under new management!

At the end of May this year, something rather strange happened - after 12 years as Voluntary Warden of Buxton Heath, I left the country!

New management at Buxton Heath? Well, not exactly, as the new Voluntary Warden, Phil Davison, has been a member of Buxton Heath Wildlife Group for several years. Although Phil's main interest is ornithology, he has a good all-round knowledge of natural history, and has put in enough hours at the site to ably take over the conservation reins.

Supporting Phil in his endeavours will be Colin Thompson, another Buxton Heath regular for many years. Colin studies everything that moves, plus everything that doesn't, but perhaps his greatest passion is reserved for the Buxton Heath adders and grass snakes.

Other regulars assisting the dynamic duo will be David Ruthven, Paul Westley, Nathalie Kausch, Paul Woolnough, Liz Webb, and Rachel Hilsdon. Once again, the "regulars" will be joined by students from the University of East Anglia. For some students, the practical conservation work is helpful to their environmental studies. For others, it simply gets them away from the concrete of the campus. Whatever the reason for their presence, Buxton Heath benefits from the extra pairs of hands.

Buxton Heath Wildlife Group visits the site on the first and third Saturdays of each month, from 1015 until 1630.

And what of me in Hungary? Well, I've formed the Mátrafüred Wildlife Group, and I've been logging and photographing species since I arrived. It's "business as usual" really, but in a different country. I've also been on field trips with the Mátra Museum staff, insect experts from Budapest Natural History Museum, and Gyuri Csóka, the renowned gall expert.

I intend to write again with tales of exotic species. Until then, best wishes to you all,

Colin Penny, ex-Voluntary Warden of Buxton Heath.

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The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society
Founded 1869

Registered Charity No 291644

Not only moths come to light!

I have been trapping and recording moths in my garden for many years and have been intrigued by just how many other invertebrates are found in the moth traps in the morning. For some time I have been trying to identify the insects I see and a selection of those seen in the last few months are mentioned below.

At the moment, on most mornings I find burying beetles in the traps – not really welcome as they are known to attack moths and can cause quite serious damage if left confined too long. Frequently there is the all black *Nicrophorus humator* which can be distinguished from the similar *Nicrodes littoralis* by the orange clubs at the ends of its antennae. Usually, in the early autumn, there are also one or two of the orange and black banded *Nicrophorus* spp. which can be distinguished from each other by the shape and completeness of the orange bands across the elytra. In the middle of August I found a most unusual beetle in the trap. The elytra of *Metoecus paradoxus* are much reduced in width, a dull orange in the male, come to a rounded point and leave much of the wings uncovered. The antennae in the male are very heavily bipectinate, looking quite like black antlers. Not only does it look unusual but it has a somewhat unusual life history. The larva starts as an internal parasite of a wasp grub (once it has found the right wasps' nest) later becoming an external parasite and devouring the whole of its host. According to Linsenn (Beetles of the British Isles, Wayside and Woodland series) it must be an underground wasp nest and it seems it must be that of the common wasp *Vespula vulgaris*, apparently not being found in the nest of the German wasp *Vespula germanica*.

Both these species of wasps are regular visitors to the trap and during recent weeks, when they have been particularly numerous by day as well, large numbers have added another hazard to handling egg trays in the half-light of early morning. Mixed in with the wasps on the 13th August was a distinctive fly with dark, diagonally transverse lines running across the outer veins of the forewings and with the inner area darkly mottled. This was *Anomoia purmunda*, a member of the Tephritidae, the picture-wing flies.

Its larvae attack the fruits of hawthorn (and sometimes other Rosaceae) and Tony Irwin tells me the adult is so strongly attracted to white spirit that the species can be a problem when house painting. Perhaps this and other similar solvents could be a source of pheromone substitutes for biological recording!

As August progresses many of the moths of summer are coming to the end of their flight period and just for a while the numbers of moths are a bit in the doldrums. However, it is about this time that caddis begin to appear in some profusion. For some time the particularly large one, *Phryganea grandis* has made irregular appearances in the trap and still occurs now and again but others that I see sporadically through the summer are now in greater numbers. One very obvious caddis is *Glyptotaelius pelucius* which can be readily identified by the strongly notched outer margin of the forewing and a noticeably green abdomen which shows quite clearly through the wings. Another, equally numerous, that initially seems to have a similar notch is *Limnephilus lunatus* but closer examination shows this to be a pale crescent shaped marking on the outer margin of the normally rounded wing. As well as these and other larger caddis there are also several much smaller ones and the one I have seen most frequently in early September is *Mystacides azurea* which, as the name suggests, is blue/black all over the wings.

Not only do the numbers of caddis increase in August and September but so do the lacewings. For some time the golden-eyed green lacewings, *Chrysopa carnea* agg., have been present in the trap but now their increased numbers are joined by several of the much small brown lacewings. The two commonest in the traps at the moment are *Hemerobius lutescens* and *Hemerobius humulinus*. Although both are to be found flying from spring to autumn, in several overlapping broods, and both are insects of deciduous woods and hedgerows said to particularly favour hazel it is only at this time of year that I regularly see them in the moth traps.

It is also in the late summer/early autumn that various Hemipterans are apparently attracted to light. The distinctive shield-bug, *Pentatoma rufipes*, has put in several appearances and some of the more noticeable capsids have been recorded. Two that have been a little more numerous than most in late August

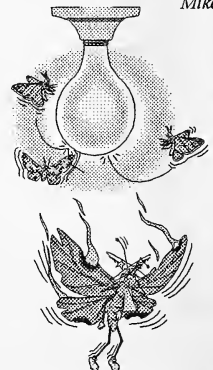
are *Oncotylus viridiflavus* and *Cyllecoris histrionicus*. The former is abundant on hardheads and although Southwood and Leston (Land and Water Bugs of the British Isles, Wayside and Woodland series) say it is confined to south of a line from Suffolk to the Bristol Channel this was in 1959 and in his recent paper in the Transactions Ken Durrant tells us it is found in both Norfolk vice counties. *Cyllecoris histrionicus* is usually found in June but occasional specimens survive until September and although both larvae and adults feed on oak (particularly the catkins), in later life the adults are predacious.

Hoverflies are also regular visitors to the light traps, particularly *Episyrphus balteatus* when there has been a large influx of migrants. A less common hoverfly, *Eupeodes latifasciatus* was in the trap on the 30th August and this is species I have seen only once before, in 1998 and that was also in the moth trap. Numbers are said to fluctuate considerably from year to year so perhaps when it is fairly common there is more night flying!

Many other species, from a range of orders, also find their way into the moth traps and I do wonder whether they are just attracted by the light or, as a significant proportion are predatory insects in one way or another, the presence of potential food is also a factor. Perhaps I should not have painted the traps with a white spirit based paint some fifteen years ago!

I am most grateful to all my friends within the Society who have help with determinations and confirmation of some of my identifications.

Mike Hall.



The aquatic soldierfly *Stratiomys potamida* in Norwich Cemetery

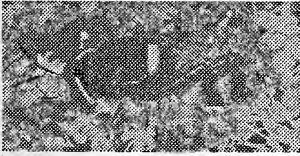
In the opening weeks of August 2004, flowers of a large evergreen spindle *Euonymus japonicus* in the old wooded part of Norwich Cemetery were attracting hundreds of insects with hoverflies predominant.

There were huge numbers of migrants : *Episyrphus balteatus*, *Syrphus* and *Euxpeodes* species making up the bulk of the assembly. A wren was present to take advantage of the situation, frequently snatching insects off the flowers to feed to a youngster in an overhead tree.

Aside from hoverflies there were many other flies including the Tachinid *Phasia hemiptera*, both the large distinctive males and smaller females. But by far the most unexpected sighting came on August 7th when a female of the aquatic soldierfly *Stratiomys potamida* was discovered , dwarfing all else as it moved awkwardly about the flowers.

Stubbs and Drake (British Soldierflies and their allies) say the adults of this striking species are nearly always found close to wet places where the larvae live but this was evidently a wanderer and the most likely source is the Wensum marshes about 1 km north of the Cemetery location. Tony Irwin tells me that the larvae can be readily found at certain Norfolk sites but sightings of adults are infrequent..

Stuart Paston.



Stratiomys potamida
photographed on Beeston
Common 15 Aug. 2004 -
Francis Farrow

A Day on Mousehold Heath

Tuesday September 21st was fine enough to tempt me out with the camera, I decided to take a stroll over Mousehold heath and search for fungi, but during the day I came upon a sheltered dell out of the rather strong wind, but catching the sun. I noticed many butterflies, some feeding from the last of the bramble flowers, others just basking on various bushes scattered about the area.

There were up to a dozen speckled woods, most looking rather tatty and near the end of their allotted life span, several large whites, a few green veined whites, one or two peacocks and red admirals. Also just one specimen of a lovely pristine comma, this was the rich golden form (Hutchinsoni) these are normally associated with the first broods in spring when the caterpillars are feeding during lengthening daylight hours, second broods, where the caterpillars are feeding during shortening daylight, usually produce the normal dark form which hibernate, (the butterflies of Britain and Ireland. -Thomas and Lewington).

Photographically all these butterflies were fairly easy to get close to, unlike high summer when they tend to be very lively in the warmer conditions, and are more inclined to fly early as you approach them. The speckled wood males were, as usual, very territorial, and would fly up and investigate any insect that flew into their patch. I spent several hours in this sunny glade, enjoying, like the butterflies, the last of the summer, - I never did find those fungi.

Tony Howes

Holkham Lake

Walkers in Holkham Park generally make their way to the mile-long lake, which occupies a North/South depression N.W. of the Hall, dammed at the North end near the coast road. Bird watchers often head for this end, where the dam itself makes a good viewing point for e.g. the black-necked Grebe which turned up for two consecutive winters, staying long enough to moul into its spectacular breeding plumage. The other end becomes the winter home for hundreds (literally!) of coot and varying numbers of several duck species.

It is not particularly deep. In 2003 the summer was unusually dry, so much so that trips in the electric boat had to be suspended because it was constantly running aground, after the water-level dropped by nearly a foot. In normally wet conditions the lake is fed by a number of springs at the south end, one of which can be seen swirling into the water quite close to the road which runs past the Hall towards the ice-house.

Boat trips on the lake, wonderfully quiet because of the electric motor propulsion, reveal a number of things which cannot really be appreciated any other way. The two islands can be seen from the "other" side; both are used for nesting, by mallard, tufted duck and grey-lag geese. The ubiquitous Egyptian geese may be here, but as they nest in holes in trees they could be anywhere in the Park. In warm weather some of the increasingly large carp may be seen leaping from the water like miniature dolphins. Dolphins could at least take a gulp of air while airborne, but why do carp do it?

In places the banks are very steep, rising a good fifty feet above the water. Some of the beeches growing here show that unusual phenomenon of having branches growing lower than the roots! I'm not kidding you - have a look some time!



This steep section also conceals an underground boat-house, accessible through a stepped gully cut into the bank.

Over the years, especially at the Spring migration time, I have regularly seen common sandpipers flitting over the water and feeding on the narrow strip of gravel and mud round the edges of the lake. Other occasional sightings have been osprey and black terns and, mixed in with the large numbers of common and black-headed gulls in winter, up to three Mediterranean gulls.

Paul Banham

BADGERS ON THE DOORSTEP

Up until recently I had not seen a live, wild badger, so when I learnt that the Pembrokeshire cottage that Wendy and I were staying in had regular visits from badgers I was very pleased, I thought maybe, with some luck, we might get a fleeting glimpse of one as it wandered through the garden. Then we were informed that the owner of the cottage would put food down each evening right outside the back window, and that the outside light left on would not affect them in any way. It sounded too good to be true.

The first evening we sat inside by the window, full of expectancy, the food, a mixture of peanuts and cat biscuits, was placed in an old baking tin within six feet of our vantage point. After a while the first visitors arrived - field mice - lots of them, they soon got the hang of pinching peanuts, picking one up and scampering back into the undergrowth, very entertaining to watch, but not what we were hoping for. Then just before 10pm a black and white head emerged from the bushes, our first badger had arrived, then a second one, they came straight to the tin and with loud snuffling and slurping noises, tucked in - we sat spellbound.

Another world?

Slow-winding channels between high vegetation. A light breeze swishing the leaves, a small boat, a blue sky. The Norfolk Broads? No: a national park in northern Senegal.

It reminded me of my childhood, though: those occasional days with family or other young naturalists, messing about on the rivers in Norfolk.

Verging the channel were not Norfolk reeds but dark, silent tropical mangroves. We drifted in amongst them, came alongside a boat gently knocking against the thin trunks. In it, under a cloth, was a harvest of oysters. The gatherer was away, taking more shells from the tide-exposed bark.

We emerged back into the light. An African fish eagle flapped away from a roost above us, and around the corner there was the roaring din of a pelican colony, youngsters with their heads down parents' necks, chasing their food. Birds, noise and guano were everywhere. The place smelt like a serious incident at an anchovy factory.

The guides had a story for every character we met, including the solitary grey heron standing in the shade in the shallows.

"His wife tell him: 'Go get fish!'

"He have to catch some and bring back to his family.

"But he prefer to mind his own business. Just sit by the river and have a very quiet fishing."

Suddenly it didn't seem so different from the Broads. Not for old harnser, anyway.

Wanderer

The rest of the week, as night closed in, I sat on a bench outside in the garden, camera and flash-gun on a tripod, the badgers took little notice of me provided I remained very still, the first two or three flashes made them nervous, then they were fine. It was noticeable that the mice stayed away while the badgers were feeding.

For better pictures I needed their heads up, so tried gentle whistles to attract their attention, to no avail, I tried tongue clicking, whistling loudly, even shouting at them, they just carried on eating, and only lifted their heads when it suited them. I had dispensed with the tin and was putting the food on and under the

gravel, this made it look more natural and also kept them feeding longer, they would stay about fifteen minutes, then just melt away as shadowy figures into the dark night.

Wendy and I both agreed, the badgers had made our Welsh holiday doubly enjoyable by their presence and acceptance of us, a lovely experience indeed.

Tony Howes

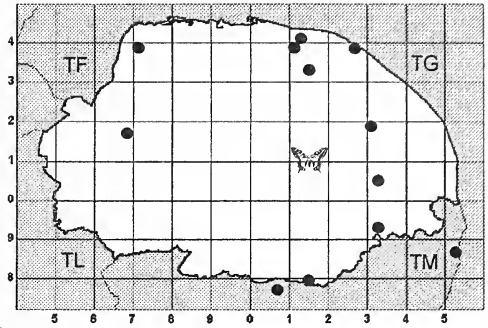


Excursion Reports

Featuring:

Belaugh & Horstead
Ringstead Downs
Moth night at Scol
Natural History Day
Kessingland Beach

● 2004-05 Field Meeting location
Easton College
Indoor meetings



'Wildflowers Revealed' no.10:

Belaugh & Horstead churchyards and a riverside & railway circular walk.

Saturday June 12th, 2004

Some eighteen members and guests met at Belaugh Church on a morning initially rather dark and threatening, but which very soon improved to pleasant sunshine. Our leader, Bob Leaney, set the scene by describing the Norfolk Churchyard Conservation Scheme and its aims, and growing at our feet were some of the plants for which churchyards are now important refuges, including oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*). The churchyard also supports common calamint (*Clinopodium ascendens*) and mouse-ear-hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), as well as one or two species of probable garden origin such as stinking hellebore (*Helleborus foetidus*). The church tower and walls were rich in species, including good colonies of black spleenwort (*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*), some hart's-tongue (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*) and wallflower (*Erysimum cheiri*) with, on the churchyard wall, male-fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*), a plant of traveller's-joy (*Clematis vitalba*) - presumably reliant on the lime mortar - and masses of the alien Mexican fleabane (*Erigeron karvinskianus*) and yellow corydalis (*Pseudofumaria lutea*). Joyce Jones, who manages the yard for conservation purposes, was very kindly on hand to welcome us and

show us an informative display of plant photographs and interpretative material inside the church. She made a heartfelt plea that non-churchgoing naturalists and others keen for their local churchyard to be conserved should, in these times of aging, dwindling congregations and reducing church incomes, volunteer to manage conservation areas themselves.

Bob Leaney himself undertakes grassland management up the road at Horstead churchyard, our next port of call, where the oxeye daisies were again splendidly plentiful. Much of our time here was spent identifying grasses and learning to distinguish the various yellow-flowered composites and speedwells in flower.

Previous meetings in the popular 'Wild Flowers Revealed' series have tended to concentrate on a single habitat-type, but this outing was more varied in that we next took a riverside walk along the east bank of the Bure from the road bridge at Coltishall upstream to Little Hautbois - the latter name prompting almost as much discussion as to its 'correct' Norfolk pronunciation as had been expended earlier on identifying the hawkbits and hawkbeards. A riverside dyke obligingly provided specimens of aquatic aliens from the Americas growing in close proximity: a sheet of the invasive water-fern (*Azolla filiculoides*) and a patch of the pale green least duckweed (*Lemna minuta*), with one or two darker-green, shinier fronds of the native common duckweed (*Lemna minor*) conveniently intermingled to make appreciation of some of the differences between the two diminutive duckweed species easy. Also present, rather surprisingly, was

a plant of greater spearwort (*Ranunculus lingua*). In fact, yellow was rather the flower colour of the month along the river, with plentiful yellow water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*), magnificent stands of yellow flag (*Iris pseudocorus*) and the occasional bright monkey flower (*Mimulus guttatus*). We picked on the bank under trees, watching passing canoes, after which the business of the day was resumed with renewed vigour as willows were identified and their 'taxonomically taxing' hybrids indicated. Those with an interest in more than the flora pointed out banded demoiselles and large red, blue-tailed and azure damselflies.

At Little Hautbois, we joined the path alongside the Bure Valley Railway south towards Coltishall Station, where orange-tip, red admiral and a couple of painted lady butterflies were flying. The gravelly and sandy trackbed and pathway supported an entirely different suite of plants of dry and barish ground, though some once-fine specimens of a Norfolk speciality, the nationally-scarce hoary mullein (*Verbascum pulverulentum*) - and possibly other mulleins - had unfortunately been chopped off just above their basal leaf rosettes during grass-cutting operations. In the end however, a specimen spared decapitation was seen. At the foot of the wire fence Alec Bull found a plant of knotted clover (*Trifolium striatum*) next to the attractive silver hair-grass (*Aira caryophyllea*) and near more plentiful hare's-foot clover (*Trifolium arvense*).

At Coltishall Station we identified our last umbellifer of the day, wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*). Thanks are due to those Society botanists who gave generously of their time to prove once



more that enjoyment can be combined with instruction in learning more about our flora, especially Bob Leaney whose indefatigable enthusiasm and patience meant that wild plants were still being asked about and identified at the roadside and over garden walls as we walked back to our parked cars at Horstead after a long and satisfying day.

Stephen Martin

'Wildflowers Revealed' no. 11 Ringstead Downs

Sunday 11th July, 2004

It was very encouraging to find that 27 people had turned up for this meeting, many traveling from 'the East', and all ages were represented from 10 upwards. The weather forecast was not terribly encouraging but in the event the morning was dry and the on-and-off 'soft weather' didn't start until the afternoon.

The great attraction here is that Ringstead is one of the few areas of unimproved chalk grassland in the county. It consists of a dry valley cut through the chalk strata by glacial meltwaters, and the south-facing slopes support a rich variety of plants. The area is managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the presence of the Flying Flock, together with a considerable amount of clearing has improved the area in recent years. En route to the 'best bit' many common flowers and grasses were noted such as ragwort, *Senecio jacobaea*, festooned with cinnebar moth caterpillars, germander speedwell, *Veronica chamaedrys*, many of the terminal leaves galled by the midge *Jaapiella veronicae*, and the attractive yellow oat-grass, *Trisetum flavescens*.

When we reached the slopes the appeal of the chalk flora was revealed. Long-stalked cranesbill, *Geranium columbinum* with its dainty purplish-pink flowers in pairs on long stalks was abundant. There are scattered records for this plant elsewhere in Norfolk, but it is mostly found only in small numbers on chalky soils. Rock-rose, *Helianthemum nummularium* was common and the strong-smelling greater wild thyme, *Thymus pulegioides* occurred in bright patches on both the south-facing and the north-

facing slopes. Squinancywort, *Asperula cynanchica* was still well in flower, sometimes looking pinkish, sometimes white, as the corolla is white on the inside and pale pinkish-lilac on the outside and close by, another member of the bedstraw family, field madder, *Sherardia arvensis*. Bob pointed out that the explanation of the name common gromwell, *Lithospermum officinale* lay in the hard, shiny white seeds, literally 'stone-seeded'. Ploughman's spikenard, *Inula cynariza* whose basal rosettes so much resemble those of the foxglove, was obviously much favoured by the sheep. Dropwort, *Filipendula vulgaris*, which this year has made a tremendous show, not just here but also on the road verges in the area, was also much chewed. Other chalk-favouring plants were catmint, *Nepeta cataria*, salad burnet, *Sanguisorba minor*, and burnet saxifrage, *Pimpinella saxifraga* not yet fully in bloom, eye-bright, *Euphrasia officinalis* agg, and dwarf thistle, *Cirsium acaule*. The 'star' plant, a single specimen of white horehound, *Marrubium vulgare*, was much photographed if not admired as it was well past its best. There were 9 plants here in 1995, perhaps its only native site in Norfolk. Knotted hedgeparsley, *Torilis nodosa*, was new - not recorded for the site in the Flora, and we found that some of the patches of basil thyme, *Clinopodium acinos*, had violet flowers and some white.

Paul Westley found a white-letter hairstreak, *Strymonidia w-album*, which was presumably breeding in the elms, nectaring on ragwort, *Senecio jacobaea*, and was a new record for the site. Other more common species included numbers of grasshoppers, both common field, *Chorthippus brunneus*, and meadow, *C. parallelus*. A humming-bird hawkmoth *Macroglossum stellatarum* was active despite the overcast skies as were several of the commoner butterflies including both small and Essex skippers, *Thymelicus flavus* and *T. lineola*.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable day out in good company: my thanks to Bill Mitchell (and to all who contributed) for doing the plant card which produced a list of 185 species, to Francis Farrow for producing a list of the fauna and to Robert Maidstone for his list of galls and other taxa.

Frances Schumann

Scole Moth Evening

Saturday 17th July, 2004

A small but select group of members gathered at Scole just as the heaviest rain shower of the day was finishing. The prospects for a good moth evening were really quite poor as rain for much of the day had cooled the atmosphere and made conditions less than ideal for moth flight. Nevertheless, after replacing wet sheets and uncovering lamps we lit up and waited more in hope than expectation.

We were fortunate in that it did not rain again and eventually there was a sporadic stream of moths to be seen. Species ranged in size from quite tiny Pyralids and Tortricids to the impressive Privet Hawk-moth, *Sphinx ligustri* which had the largest wingspan of any of the moths recorded. We also saw both Elephant Hawk-moth, *Deilephila elpenor* and Poplar Hawk-moth, *Laothoe populi* but equally impressive were the two female Oak Eggars, *Lasiocampa quercus* which settled immediately after arrival and did not move again.

The busy, blustering Large Yellow Underwings, *Noctua pronuba* soon made their presence felt and they were quickly joined by several relatives, Lesser Yellow Underwing, *Noctua comes* and Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing, *Noctua janthe*. The yellow flash from their hindwings contrasted quite attractively with the velvety red of the Ruby Tiger, *Phragmatobia fuliginosa* and the camouflage, when at rest, of the Chinese Character, *Cilix glaucata* impressed all present. This comparatively small moth looks exactly like a bird dropping when it settles but the name describes the grey/black marking on a basically white forewing which can only really be seen in set specimens. However, on a number of the other moths that came to the light it was possible to see the features that had given rise to their vernacular names. The black and white speckling on the wings of the typical form of the Peppered Moth, *Biston betularia*; the very noticeable white stigma on an otherwise black forewing of the Dot Moth, *Melanchnra persicariae*; the two circular thoracic tufts looking like glasses when the



moth is viewed head-on, of the Spec-tacle, *Abrostola tripartita* and the appropriately positioned brown lines and pale stigma of the Bright-line Brown-eye, *Lacanobia oleracea* together with the confusingly similarly named Brown-line Bright-eye, *Mythimna conigera* are all admirably described in the names given to these species more than a century ago. The Bright-line Brown-eye also has another name, the Tomato Moth, which it has gained from the habit of the larvae feeding on and in ripening tomatoes. We also saw a Varied Coronet, *Hadena compta* which is another species very much associated with the activities of man. This species was first recorded in Britain, southeast Kent, in 1948 since when it has spread rapidly through south eastern England with the larvae feeding on the ripening seeds of sweet william and occasionally bladder campion.

Among the many Yellow-tails, *Euproctis similis* (another very aptly named white moth with a golden yellow tuft at the end of its abdomen) whose larvae feed on hawthorn, blackthorn, oak, willows and many other trees we saw a single Brown-tail, *Euproctis chrysothoea*. This is a moth that used to be regarded as a coastal species outside the south eastern counties of England and then only as far north as Yorkshire. At times it is now much more widespread in Suffolk and Norfolk but this is the first record for Scole. It has an even wider range of larval foodplants than the Yellow-tail, can reach pest proportions in some urban areas and with the larval hairs causing severe skin irritation it is a species to treat with some caution. Another newcomer to the site was the yellow form of the Dingy Footman, *Eilema griseola* ab *stramineola* although the typical form has been recorded for many years. Perhaps the most interesting moth of the evening was a Pyralid which was not identified at the time. However in daylight the next morning it was immediately recognisable as *Calamotropha paludella* which is described as occurring very locally in large wet fens and marshes and on the margins of flooded gravel-pits and broads with the larvae feeding in mines principally in the leaves of reedmace, *Typha latifolia*. This is a

plant that has swamped a pond at Scole and the moth has been recorded at the site once before. (Subsequently in 2004 it has come to light on a number of occasions) The authorities do say it is probably overlooked elsewhere.

During the three hours the lights were on we recorded more than 50 species, which is a reasonable total when the cooling effect of almost a day's rain is considered. Although not an extensive list most of the families of the larger moths were represented and those present were impressed with the variety and beauty of many of the species seen. I am grateful to all those who came to the evening, for their help in replacing wet sheets at the start and for packing up at the end and particularly to John Sutton for recording the species we saw.

Mike Hall.

The Natural History Day Wheatfen

Sunday 8th August 2004

This year we were again blessed by the good weather. The thermometer in the car park read 120°F! but a more accurate reading by the cottage repeated last years 93°F. There were many exhibits on display including a fine dragonfly and other insects display by Ken Durrant. Francis Farrow showed a large variety of hoverfly photographs and Martin Collier had a good collection of beetles with some great literature to go with it. This year as usual Robert Maidstone came up with a great display of deer pelts, skulls, wasp nests and all the "Dirty Nature" like creatures found in decaying animals etc. The display of his study of Wacton was most inspiring especially as he had named the site or road that each plant or creature was recorded. I certainly learnt a lot about that and will copy his recording plan for my own means at Lowestoft. There were many children this year which will in time become future Naturalists and I was adopted by one of them, a young girl called Katie Bussey. Alec Bull and I were tasked to do the fungi this year, in which, we were ably assisted by Katie, who after helping us with the labeling of our collection proceeded

to match the agarics with the colourful poster behind us and remembered the names The Foray produced 26 species of fungi including death cap and a diminutive fungus on holly leaves called *Trochillia iici*.

The Wildflower Society were with us this year and no doubt found the reserve much to their liking. As always it gets the public and members alike together. I for one enjoyed meeting Ken Durrant.

Lets look forward to another year in 2005 and hope we are again blessed with such fine weather. Our thanks also to Wheatfen warden, David Nobbs for organising the event.

Colin A Jacobs.

Joint NNNS/ Great Yarmouth Naturalists Society Shingle Flora visit to Kessingland Beach.

Sunday 29th August 2004.

Shingle is one of the harshest environments on earth. Shingle in Suffolk might be a storm beach ridge like those at Thorpeness. Or semi-permanent beaches such as Kessingland. In Suffolk there are 859 hectares of vegetated shingle, which represents 20% of natural resource. Kessingland Beach is a bit like Winterton Dunes, Thorpeness Beach and Langard Point but has no protection from any ecological groups.

Five Great Yarmouth Naturalists, Two Lowestoft Field Club and four Norfolk Naturalists Including myself spent the day exploring the southern Tetrad TM5284 at Kessingland Beach in Suffolk. We were lucky enough to have some eminent botanists with us who added many records to my 76 recorded here already. On the semi permanent shingle. specialties like yellow horned poppy *Glaucium flavum*, sea kale *Crambe maritima* sea pea *Lathyrus japonicas* (which were eaten by the group soon after I announced they were delicious) and a few scattered sea holly plants *Eryngium maritimum*.

Jo Parmenter found two good clumps of rock samphire *Crithmum maritimum*. and David Lester found lesser



hawkbit *Leontodon saxatilis*. On the dryer parts of the shingle there was great stands of rosebay Willowherb *Chaemerion angustifolium* and well over, biting stonecrop *Sedum acre*. As we walked southwards to the River Hundred for lunch a painted lady butterfly and a couple of red admirals arrived in from the sea.

As we crossed to the dunes several interesting plants were found including plenty of sheeps bit *Jasiona montana* a good stand of polypody fern *Polypodium vulgare* agg. and narrow-leaved hawkweed *Hieracium umbellatum*. During lunch along the River Hundred we found rough clover *Trifolium scabrum* and the diminutive Jo Parmenter found a close to pupating elephant hawkmoth larvae on its food plant rosebay willowherb. Apparently small size is a basic requirement for finding these creatures! With Bob Ellis's hooked pole? He produced bladderwort *Utricularia australis* form the centre of the river. Also along this bank was false fox sedge *Carex otrubae* water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* water cress *Rorippia* agg. marsh woundwort *Stachys palustris* and brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*. As we reached a patch of recently disturbed soil by the Sluice we recorded several interesting plants such as musk mallow *Malva moschata*, milk thistle *Silybum marianum* coastal fiddle-neck *Amsinckia macrantha*, green nightshade *Solanum physalifolium* and a single plant of the apple of Peru *Nicandra physalodes*.

On the way back we passed a strip of sandy verge where we found a red fescue *Festuca rubra* agg. We made a probable identification of sub species *litoralis*. Finally along a bank below the caravan park we found long headed poppy *Papaver dubium* and Duke of Argylls tea tree *Lycium barbarum* which was particularly abundant. The total taxa recorded were 112.

Finally we found several common field grasshoppers *Chorthippus brunneus* and mottled grasshopper *Myrmeleotettix maculatus*.

This area has been my patch since I was ten and it was an honour to play host to both societies and to produce such a good list. This tetrad creeps into Benacre NNR so I expect the list will increase a lot more. The day after our visit I went to photograph the rock samphire and was passed by a clouded yellow butterfly as it arrived in from the sea!

In 2006 I have planned a visit to Herringfleet Hills which has recently been opened to the public by the Broads Authority.

Colin A Jacobs.

Norfolk & Suffolk Bryological Excursions 2004 - 2005

The following excursions are planned for the Autumn & Spring of 2004-2005. Beginners will be most welcome; the only equipment needed is a hand lens (x 10 or x 20), and some paper packets for collecting into. Meetings will only be cancelled if it snows, or there is hard frost. All meetings will start at 10.30 am, unless otherwise stated. For further information, contact one of the names below.

Saturday 6 November 2004 Swangey Fen, Attleborough, The Otter Trust. Very wet fen and carr. Turn west off the A11 at TM 026 934 onto road to Great Ellingham and then immediately turn left onto road to Fen Farm. We will collect here as the reserve car park only holds about four cars and we may need to bunch up. The Warden, Richard Shuter, hopes to join us.

Sunday 21 November 2004 Burnt Fen Broad & Marshes by permission of Mr William Nickerson. Turn north off the A1062 road in Horning into Letheringtons Lane, then right into Burnt Fen Road. Park at Burntfen, TG 339 184.

Saturday 4 December 2004 Royal Orchards, Flitcham. A site rich in epiphytes. Would be interesting to see if different varieties of apple are hosts to different epiphytes. Meet at TF 719 283 and park in the field next to the orchard.

Sunday 19 December 2004 Sea Mere Study Centre, Hingham, by permission of Mrs Judy Watson. A 20 acre circular lake formed by glacial action, 50 acres of deciduous woodland, of which 35 acres is an SSSI, Turl Meadows, a marshy, species rich area of 35 acres. Meet at Sea Mere Study Centre, TG 039 014.

Saturday 1 January 2005 Whitwell Hall Country Centre & Whitwell Common. Park at Whitwell Hall Country Centre, TG 087 215. The Warden, Mr Kevin Hart, hopes to join us in the afternoon.

Sunday 16 January 2005 Hills & Holes, Great Hockham, Forest Enterprise. Park on lane just south of Great Hockham at TL 952 916. Retired forester Eric Rogers hopes to join us.

Saturday 5 February 2005 Sennowe Park, Guist, by permission of Mr T R Cook. Enter Lodge Gates just north west of Guist and go along the Norwich Drive and park at TG 986 254.

Sunday 20 February 2005 Honeypot Wood, East Dereham, NWT Reserve. Park inside the wood at TF 934 143. The barrier will be opened at 10.00 am.

Saturday 5 March 2005 Captain's Pond, Westwick by permission of Mr John Alexander. We should find *Riccia fluitans* in this eutrophic water. Meet at the side of the road where fishermen usually park at TG 276 271. Space is limited so please join up in cars.

Sunday 13 March 2005, East Winch Common, NWT Reserve, for mosses and liverworts, NNNS meeting led by Robin Stevenson. Meet at 11.00 am in reserve car park on by-road south of A47 at TF 698 162. Beginners welcome.

Sunday 20 March 2005 Antingham Ponds, Antingham by permission of Mr P Gray of Antingham Lodge and Mr Alan Davison of Roughton Service Station. Park in Lodge Drive at TG 265 325.

Robin Stevenson, 111 Wootton Road, King's Lynn, PE30 4DJ. Tel: (01553) 766786
Email: crs1942@tiscali.co.uk

Richard Fisk, 35 Fair Close, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 9QR. Tel: (01502) 714988.
Email: richardfisk@onetel.com

John Mott, 62 Great Melton Road, Helmersell, Norwich, NR9 3HA. Tel: (01603) 810442.
Email: jmott@lineone.net



"A compelling interest in the natural world"

Ernest Daniels, the Society's longest-serving member, who died on June 29th, had an abiding passion for the study of natural history in almost all its forms, said his younger son Tim at the funeral service on July 7th.

Born in Norwich, his home all his life, on the 11th day of the 11th month in 1911, Ernest could hear the rumble of the guns on the Western Front, before they fell silent on his seventh birthday. He went to the City of Norwich School, where he excelled academically. Like most working class boys of that era, he was not able to go to university but instead he put his intelligence and skills in languages (and, surprisingly, shorthand) to good use with the Norwich Union, rising to be a senior investment supervisor, until his retirement in 1971, with one big gap for WW2.

If routine was to characterize Ernest's working life it certainly did not apply to how he spent his leisure time. From his early youth he had a compelling interest in the natural world. In the 30s he was part-owner of a gun-punt in which he explored the Broads while they were yet a tranquil haven for wildlife. He took mountain climbing holidays in Europe at a time when this was something of an exotic pastime.

In 1941 he was called up into the Army, joining an armoured reconnaissance regiment, leaving behind his young wife Bessie and year-old son Mike. He saw active service in North Africa and Italy and would not return home until late 1945. "There is no doubt the war changed Ernest," said Tim. "He saw too much of man's inhumanity to man. He felt he had lost what should have been the 'best days of his life'. War made him in some ways a harder, less patient, man. But what did not change was his love and devotion to Bessie and to us children, and his commitment to their parents."

But there was fun as well! Tim recalled happy days on the North Norfolk coast, full of simple pleasures, much of which revolved around "mucking about in boats"... and nature. The pursuit of rare migrants was an adventure, well before it degenerated into the "twitching" of the current day. The first recorded rustic bunting since 1904, all the way from Siberia, spotting one of the first arrivals of the collared dove and a remarkably tame hoopoe remained vivid memories to this day.

Ernest was "not really a man of his time", said Tim. "I always felt he would have been better suited to the role of a Victorian gifted amateur. Here was a man of considerable talents. Acute observation, an expressive turn of phrase, a sharp and inquisitive mind, he was also no mean sketcher (as shown in his little cameos of places in Italy during the war). Even in his 80s, he was capable of reading a French botanical work in that language.

"Ernest's abiding passion was his study (and I do mean study) of natural history in almost all its forms: mysteriously, only fungi seemed to elude him. He was one of the first members of the first 'conservation' organisation in the country, the Norfolk Naturalists Trust, while the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society admitted him to membership at the earliest allowable age of 16. Ernest was an energetic member and office holder with the Society and he lived to complete a record-breaking 76 years of membership just three months ago."

His early love was birds and insects, particularly caddis flies and water beetles, but as these all succumbed to the depredations of agro-industry and development after the war, Ernest shifted his focus and developed a deep interest in botany. His ambition in retirement was to see every single British wild plant in its natural habitat. He and Bessie managed well over 90% and saw most of the UK in the process. Among the other projects of his retirement was a systematic survey of the ferns growing in every Norfolk churchyard: he was also a major contributor of data to A Flora of Norfolk.

"I and my children recall that a country stroll with him was always a voyage of exploration and unexpected discoveries. My daughter recalls a feature of these walks as 'his posterior protruding from hedgerows 50 metres behind the main party, complete with flat cap and walking stick' as he explored something which had caught his eagle eye. She adds that 'his general appreciation of the whole natural world, from tiniest plant upwards will stay with me forever, and I'll endeavour to pass it on to future generations.' A tribute Ernest would surely be delighted with."



Leonard Wise 1929 - 2004

It is with great sadness that we report the death, on 10th February 2004, of Leonard Wise, known to all simply as "Len", who was a founder-member of Buxton Heath Wildlife Group.

Len was born in Hackney and lived in London throughout the war and the blitz. He joined the Post Office Telephones Test Section (research and development) at age 16, and later did National Service in the Canal Zone and Cyprus. Once back in civilian life, Len returned to his former work, eventually transferring to the International Office. He married Betty in 1955, and soon after, accepted a transfer to Norwich in order to provide a better environment for family life.

Len retired from British Telecom in 1989. His interests included first-aiding, pistol and rifle shooting, classical music, natural history and conservation, local history and archaeology, and astronomy.

I first met Len on a conservation task with the Sunday group NEWS (Norwich Environmental Weekenders) in 1990. Soon after, we visited Buxton Heath together, and I suggested we start a group to care for this site on a regular basis. Typical of Len, he thought this a "cracking idea", and so the BHWG was formed.

During the early years of the Group, Len used to dash about the site, seemingly doing the work of two men, but gradually, worsening arthritic joints slowed him down. Even so, he hardly ever missed a Saturday visit on the grounds of ill health. Sometimes, he really wasn't well enough to be there, but he would never, as he put it, "let us down".

In the last two years before his death, Len found the Buxton Heath terrain very difficult to traverse, and instead, spent most of his time keeping the pathways clear for visitors. What we call the Western Track will always be known unofficially as "Len's Track" - he spent so many hours working there.

I will always remember Len as a real gentleman, who gave a cheery welcome to all, whether Norfolk-born or students from far away countries.

Colin Penny

BOOKS FOR SALE

A Text Book Of Botany Lowson Revised by Howarth & Warne 1962.

A Manual of Zoology Borradaile 6th edition revised 1930.

Practical Zoology Marshall & Hurst Revised edition 1924.

Agricultural Zoology Theobald 1913.

A Laboratory Guide to Vertebrate Dissection Appleton 1929

Elementary Botany W. Watson 1926.

Elements of General Zoology W.J. Dakin. 1928.

Life of the Wayside & Woodland By T.A. Coward Colour photograph of Tiger beetle on book cover 1923. Has original dust jacket. Excellent condition

Common Weeds of the Farm & Garden Harold G Long
Signed copy 1910.

The Life of Vertebrates Young 1955. 767 pages.

Insects of British Woodlands R. Neil Chrystal 1937 with dust jacket.

Flowers of the Fields Rev C.A. Johns 1948.

I am open to offers on the above. All are in good condition.
Please telephone (01502) 569136.

Colin A Jacobs

Date for the diary:

Tuesday 21st December - 1930hrs

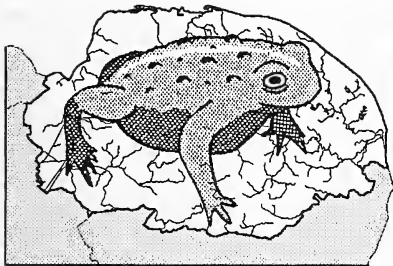
A PRESENTATION BY THE
NORFOLK FLORA GROUP
With festive refreshments

Easton College Conference Centre

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by January 7th, 2005 to the following address: Francis Farrow, Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net



-4 FEB 2005

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The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 88
February 2005

Toad-in-the-hole....

Another new year and the first edition of *'The Norfolk Natterjack'* for 2005. I trust this new year has started well for you all. On 6th January there were two bumblebees foraging in the garden and on 9th January a Peacock butterfly was spotted also in the garden. I'm sure these mild winters will spell disaster for many insects if they emerge too early.

Throughout the year I will be pleased to receive your comments and natural history notes for *'Natterjack'* and if you are leading an excursion please arrange for a short account of the day to be passed on to me. Many new and exciting discoveries are waiting to be found. Good hunting. FF

100 years ago

Late in March [1905] a southward migration of Cetacea was observed off the Norfolk coast. They were "Scouters" (White-beaked Dolphins), Grampuses or Porpoises. Mr Lowne, of Fuller's Hill, saw the shoal passing Yarmouth (on the 19th), their "ranks" extending, he stated, from the Wellington Pier to the St. Nicholas Lightship. Three or four at a time sprang from the water, and all were merrily making south. He thought they seemed about 6 feet each in length, and were, in his estimation, Porpoises. They must have mustered two or three hundred.

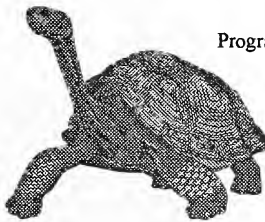
From *'Natural History Notes from Yarmouth'* by AH Patterson - NNNS Transactions Vol. VIII - page 315.

Programme Change

The subject of Mark Cocker's illustrated talk to the Society on Tuesday, 19th April, 2005 at 7.30p.m. has been changed to 'The Galapagos Islands'. The venue remains the John Innes Centre.

Mark's talk on 'Bird's Britannica' previously scheduled for the April meeting has had to be postponed until October due to a delay in the anticipated publication date of his book of the same title co-authored with Richard Mabey. Apologies to members for this change, but we look forward to the bonus of an evening devoted to the fascinating natural history of the Galapagos.

Stephen Martin
Programme Committee



Grovel time!

In my haste to let members know that Rubyna Sheikh and Nick Elsey were taking over the distribution and sale of the Bird and Mammal Report, I committed the cardinal sin (for a journalist, albeit retired) of misspelling Rubyna's name. It is "Sheikh", not "Shiekh". Mind you, somewhere down the line the final "I" disappeared from my name. These things happen!

David Paul

My apologies to David for dropping the last 'l' from his name. For some reason the DTP programme didn't print exactly what it showed on screen, possibly it was just outside the text frame limit. - Ed.

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HOME BIRDS 2004

Readers may recall that a list of birds recorded on, over or from from home at Frettenham (TG240171) during 1998, 2000 and 2002, appeared in *The Norfolk Natterjack* nos. 64, 72 and 80. During 2004 (a leap year), I again maintained a daily list, this time on 350 days (compared with 343, 343 and 352 in the earlier years). Blank days were as follows: one each in January, February and March, three in May, two in July, one in August, two in October, and five in December; there were no blank days in April, June, September and November.

In general, daily observations were gathered over periods of between one and six hours; two hours having been the average. The 2004 daily average was 22.2 species (compared with 20.2, 22.7 and 21.6 in the earlier years). In all, 72 species were noted in 2004 (likewise compared with 75, 75 and 69).

Twenty-eight species were observed in each month. Four more species, Sparrowhawk, Goldfinch, Lapwing and Mallard, 'missed-out' only in February, February again, August and December, 2004, respectively.

Habitats visible from my vantage point include gardens, a small fish-pond, rough pasture, species-rich hedges, arable farmland, a mostly wooded, worked-out chalk pit, and the Stone Beck valley, dividing

Frettenham from Spixworth and Crostwick parishes.

The list provided is in rank, name and number of days recorded – the suffix M meaning recorded in each month.

- 1= Wood Pigeon 350M
- 1= Starling 350M
- 3 Collared Dove 349M
- 4 Blackbird 345M
- 5 Chaffinch 337M
- 6 Stock Dove 328M
- 7 Blue Tit 326M
- 8 Carrion Crow 324M
- 9 Greenfinch 319M
- 10 Magpie 313M
- 11 Great Tit 300M
- 12 Rook 288M
- 13 House Sparrow 239M
- 14 Dunnock 238M
- 15 Black-headed Gull 229M
- 16 Mistle Thrush 225M
- 17 Robin 213M
- 18 Jackdaw 199M
- 19 Pied Wagtail 191M
- 20 Lesser Black-backed Gull 173M
- 21 Common Gull 170
- 22 Kestrel 141M
- 23 Great Black-backed Gull 136M
- 24 Jay 133M
- 25 Swallow 125
- 26 Song Thrush 121M
- 27 Great Spotted Woodpecker 120M
- 28 House Martin 115
- 29 Swift 99
- 30 Lapwing 84
- 31 Mallard 71
- 32 Redwing 66

- 33 Herring Gull 63
- 34 Cormorant 62M
- 35 Turtle Dove 58
- 36 Wren 57M
- 37 Sparrowhawk 56
- 38 Green Woodpecker 53M
- 39 Goldfinch 49
- 40 Fieldfare 41
- 41 Grey Heron 40
- 42 Pheasant 36
- 43 Coal Tit 35
- 44 Long-tailed Tit 31
- 45= Red-legged Partridge 30
- 45= Skylark 30
- 47 Goldcrest 20
- 48 Whitethroat 11
- 49 Teal 9
- 50= Willow Warbler 7
- 50= Linnet 7
- 52= Greylag Goose 5
- 52= Yellowhammer 5
- 54= Mute Swan 4
- 54= Hobby 4
- 54= Cuckoo 4
- 54= Sand Martin 4
- 58= Blackcap 3
- 58= Spotted Flycatcher 3
- 60= Shoveler 2
- 60= Marsh Harrier 2
- 62= Bewick's Swan 1
- 62= Pink-footed Goose 1
- 62= Canada Goose 1
- 62= Egyptian Goose 1
- 62= Shelduck 1
- 62= Oystercatcher 1
- 62= Lesser Spotted Woodpecker 1
- 62= Garden Warbler 1
- 62= Siskin 1
- 62= Bullfinch 1
- 62= Reed Bunting 1

Geoffrey Kelly

NOISOME FERMENT OF THE EARTH

During the last few months I have concentrated my photography outings mainly to the subject of fungi, the attraction for me is their diverse range, so many shapes, colours, and sizes. The great advantage of course is that what ever you do they are not going to run or fly away, always a problem with birds and mammals. So you can take your time, and compose an attractive photograph, taking out the odd leaf or blade of grass, even adding vegetation if deemed desirable.

The object for me, and it is a very personal thing, is to create an attractive picture out of the materials at hand, but to have the finished result as natural as

possible. The nature of fungi very often is to grow in rather shaded conditions, with the natural light limited, so I find it an advantage to use flash, especially for those that grow in woodland. I always use a tripod, this particular piece of equipment allows me to get the camera right down on the ground, giving an earth worms view of the subject.

By using a wide-angle lens it is possible to have the fungi well shown, but with the natural terrain also showing in the background, be this woodland, grass meadow, or what ever. I have had much enjoyment and pleasure over the last few months finding and photographing these superb creations of nature. Putting names to them is a different matter, many do not have common names, and as I don't class myself

as a mycologist, am not into spore counts etc:- therefore I often have difficulty identifying them.

A good friend, George McCarthy, has been an inspiration. In 2001 he published a book 'Photographing Fungi In The Field' it's full of beautiful photographs, each one a work of art. It is not a technical book, just a celebration of these enchantingly beautiful manifestations of the natural world.

Fungi have not always been looked upon with favour, in 185 BC the physician Nicander

referred to them as 'The evil ferment of the earth'. In the 17th century Gerard had this to say, 'Some are venomous, others not so noisome, and neither of them very wholesome meat' He also talks about the country practice of burning 'Fusse Balls (puff balls) 'To kill or smother bees, for which purpose they fitly serveth'.

Collecting fungi for the table is considered by many to be a worthy practice, but unless the poisonous varieties are well known it is probably best left to the experts, it would be so easy to become unwell, or worse.

Tony Howes

Wells East Bank

It's the end of October, and starting to feel like winter. That means that my favourite bird-watching perch, on top of Wells East Bank, is getting interesting again. The Brents are around, croaking away, and there seem to be a good scattering of young ones this year. A few weeks ago a single Greenshank turned up, feeding in its frenzied fashion, so different from the resident Redshanks. They just walk about, prodding in the mud here and there, while the Greenshank charged around in shallow water, its beak stretched out, no doubt catching Gobies or shrimps.

The winter population of Grey Plovers is back. They call out plaintively to each other, and always look thoroughly fed up to me, hunched up as if they are feeling the cold, which they must surely be used to, nesting in the far north. They go around singly, unlike their cousins the Golden Plovers, which fly in large flocks, often with Lapwings. A couple of Bar-tailed Godwits have adopted the area, perhaps for their winter quarters. Their beaks being straight, they can "walk around their own heads" while the beak is plunged into the mud; Curlews can't do that!

A couple of weeks ago I was doing my usual check on Egrets, of which half-a-dozen can sometimes be seen from that spot, scattered over the marsh. Two, apparently in company (which is unusual), through the binoculars resolved into an Egret and a Spoonbill. Previously I have only seen Spoonbills on Holkham fresh marshes, in spring. It seemed that there was some sort of "love/hate" relationship between the two; the Egret would occasionally lunge at the Spoonbill, even though the latter was distinctly bulkier. The Spoonbill would then fly off for a few yards, and both would begin feeding again, the Egret spearing its prey, and the Spoonbill sifting with a side-to-side movement. They were there again the following day, but I haven't seen the Spoonbill since then.

The numbers of Pink-feet passing over the town have been quite incredible, their long skeins filling the sky as they commute between their roosting and feeding areas. These lines of geese are featured, by the way, on the new fence either side of the equally new gates of my old stamping-ground, Wells Field Study Centre. The gates themselves are even more impressive, featuring schools of fish and very realistic kelp - all the work of a black-smith artist!

Paul Banham

"A long way from home"

In August 2004, my stepson Clive and his family spent a few days camping in the New Forest. The weather was rather mixed, including several very wet days.

As is often the case with camping, it rained on the last day, so they were unable to travel home with a dry tent. The rain was so heavy that all they could do was quickly pack things into the car and make a quick escape.

Back in Norfolk about ten days later, it was a lovely sunny day, and the family decided to go to Eccles beach, near Happisburgh.

Once on the beach, Clive tipped the windbreaks out of their bag, and was taken aback when a 9" Adder dropped out as well!

The young reptile must have sought shelter in the bag from the New Forest "monsoons". It had somehow remained uninjured when the windbreaks were stored in the bag, and then survived for over a week in the boot of Clive's car.

Clive managed to get the small Adder into a bucket and then released it in the Eccles dunes. Being slightly biased, I would have preferred its new home to have been Buxton Heath, but, given the unusual circumstances, and armed with no proper collecting equipment, I think Clive did an admirable job.

So, if you're wandering through the Eccles dunes next summer, and you see a nice little Adder, just remember, it may be the "New Forest Adder", a long way from home.

Colin Penny,
Mátrafüred, Hungary.



Not only moths come to light ! (2)

Even some wingless arthropods have been found in my moth traps and some of the most regular are harvestmen like *Oligolophus tridens*, which found its way in on the 20th September 2004. This is one of the commoner ground living species, which is said to favour "open woodland". It does climb quite commonly at night and may have "drifted" into the trap from the trees that are close-by.

Earlier in the month, on the 5th, I was a little surprised to find a whirligig beetle scuttling around the bottom of the trap. It was a shining black with a brassy lustre and was identified by Martin Collier as the common *Gyrinus substriatus*. This is a common species found in still or stagnant water, an apt description of the adjacent pond in which I have not seen whirligig beetles for several years but presumably they are still there. A couple of days later the delightful two-tailed mayfly *Cloeon dipterum* was in the same trap. This again is an inhabitant of still water with emergence from late April to early November. The sub-imago, or dun, is the Pond Olive or Lake Olive of the fly fisherman, which name is also given to the male imago, or spinner, but the fishermen know the female, which this specimen was, as the Apricot Spinner.

On the 10th September one of the caddis flies in the trap was a comparatively small, banded one which is not unlike the migrant moth, *Nomophila noctuella* the Ruch Veneer, when seen through ageing eyes and the wrong glasses. It was *Mystacides longicornis*, which is common in ponds and lakes and known to fly fishermen as the Grouse Wing. A larger caddis, *Halesus digitatus*, an autumn flying species was present in the traps for much of September.

Also through most of September I saw the crane-fly *Tipula paludosa* which although on the wing from April to October is most abundant in the autumn. On the 30th September they were joined by just one *Tipula oleracea* another of the more undistinguished species of crane-fly which has the same overall flight period but is most frequently seen in May and June. I have always thought it a little confusing for non-specialists and particularly children that both crane-flies and harvestmen are known as daddy-longlegs.

On the 18th October I noted a broad-nosed weevil in the trap that caught my eye because its elytra were covered with pubescent scales. It was *Barynotus obscurus*, a common and widely distributed species in open grassy and herbaceous areas. It is polyphagous, probably parthenogenetic as no British males are known, and is also wingless which makes its presence in the trap quite intriguing. About the same time, on the 25th October, I found the most attractive soldier fly *Sargus bipunctatus*

in one of the traps. This is a really handsome insect with green thorax, black abdomen with, in the female, a pair of conspicuous orange-red side patches. It is an autumnal species with larvae known from cow dung, compost heaps and from the rotting fruiting bodies of the bracket fungus *Polyporus squamosus*. Interestingly the only other specimen I have seen was a year earlier in September 2003, also in the light trap.

At the end of October, on the 29th, I found a leaf beetle in the trap, which I thought was *Chrysolina oricalcia* (confirmed by Martin Collier). This is uncommon (Notable B status) with larvae feeding on various umbellifers and whilst the regularly recognised foodplants are cow parsley and upright hedge-parsley it also feeds on hemlock, which grows in some profusion in and around the garden.

Continuing the theme of flightless species, on the 23rd November I found a micropterous female Tree Damsel Fly, *Himacerus apterus* in the trap. This is a predatory tree-dwelling bug, which again may have "drifted" into the trap from surrounding trees. However I do find it somewhat difficult to explain flightless arthropods regularly coming to light.

My thanks to Martin Collier for identifying the whirligig beetle and confirming the identity of others.

Mike Hall

Another record of *Stratiomys potamida* in Norwich

I was intrigued to read of Stuart Pastons' recent "unexpected sighting" (*Natterjack* 87) because I too saw a female Banded General *Stratiomys potamida* in Norwich in early August, on the 6th to be precise.

However, you could describe my sighting as even more unexpected because I found the insect at my place of work, sitting quietly on the third-floor windowsill in the main Norwich Union office block in Surrey Street!

Realising it was slightly off course, and wanting to confirm its identification (this was the first example I had seen), I potted it and took it home. Having consulted Stubbs and Drake (*British Soldierflies and their allies*), I released it next morning in more suitable habitat near Catfield Fen.

Andy Beaumont





2004 YOUNG NORFOLK NATURE WRITER AWARD

The prizes in the 2004 Young Norfolk Nature Writer Award, set up in memory of Michael Seago, were won by two of the youngest entrants. Seven-year-old Emily McLaren won the up-to-11 age group with her diary of her visits to Sheringham and Beeston Regis Commons, and James Goldsmith, 11, won the 11-15 group with his essay on "A Year in Colby", in the style of the Eastern Daily Press. In the Countryside columns that Michael Seago wrote for many years. They received their engraved plaques and £50 cheques from Mrs Sylvia Seago at a ceremony at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Hickling Broad reserve. The award is jointly organised by the Trust and the Society.

Emily's diary included a map of the commons with specific areas neatly coloured. She included a description, with her own drawings, of the life cycle of the frog and other notes on lizards, slow worms, ramshorn snails and hedgehogs. What the judges liked was the inclusion of lists of species that Emily had noted on her visits. A recorder for the future?

What particularly impressed the judges about James's essay was his description of what he did after he found a hedgehog that had been injured by a garden trimmer – as you can read in the extracts that follow:

"Who says the countryside is a boring place for children to live. I have lived in Colby with my family for a year now and every day is a new chance to spot wildlife of every kind, from butterflies to deers, hares to hornets.

"The year started for me in the autumn. The first thing I noticed was the barn owls screeching in our copper beech tree at night keeping me awake, closely followed by its hooting cousin the tawny ... After the cornfields were cut there was a twitching sea of ears from hares that were foraging in among the stubble.

"As we moved into winter a family of pheasants decided to set up home on our compost heap ... Early one snowy morning I was greeted by a fox who darted off like a rocket when he noticed me coming. I was concerned that he may have attacked the pheasants but they all survived and remain regular visitors to our garden. After I saw the fox I made sure that my pet rabbit was extra secure.

"The best sighting of the winter was the wonderful barn owl, gliding across a local meadow. We saw this magical bird of prey several times over a period of two or three weeks. I loved watching its graceful beauty as it scanned the meadow for rodents.

"As the weather began to warm up there was a flurry of activity among the garden birds, with nests being built all around the garden including wrens, blackbirds, chaffinch and robin. The male pheasant was kept busy keeping an eye on the four females, flapping his wings and screeching like an old car horn.

"I think that blackbirds make clumsy parents as their babies all fell out of the nest while they still had very little in the way of feathers. Unfortunately they all died apart from one who could be heard cheeping all around the garden for weeks as his worn-out parents kept up a continuous stream of food. Amazingly we think he survived. He could certainly fly last time we saw him.

"While passing a nearby field I noticed some hares. To my amazement two got on their hind legs and began boxing. This went on for a few seconds before they chased off. This for me was the highlight of the year.

"The most unfortunate find of the year was a hedgehog which I named 'Bertie'. He was wandering in the road injured by a garden trimmer. I took him to the local hedgehog rescue but he was too badly injured and he died a few days later. The lady at the hedgehog rescue told me that this happened a lot in our area. This sad incident has prompted me to do a leaflet drop in my local area, asking people to check for wildlife before they use trimmers."



'Millennium Atlas + 5' – nearly there!

Back in May's *Natterjack* I published an article explaining the new 5-year national mapping project for butterflies. At that time several of Norfolk's 10-km squares had virtually no species recorded during 2000–2004. Well, it hasn't been a great summer for filling in those gaps – not like last year. But you've certainly been trying! To all those who've contacted me and sent records, very many thanks. The 65 squares wholly or mainly in Norfolk now have an average of about 23 species per square, with a minimum of 13 and a maximum of 31. I've scoured some of the 'teen' squares to find extra species and it can be a struggle, since most lack nature reserves or other non-agricultural habitats. Some of the more localised species may be genuinely absent.

Of course, there are still a lot of silly gaps, and I would really appreciate it if any members living in or near the following places would let me know at least what they've seen in their gardens over the last five years:

Alburgh, Anmer, Binham, Brooke, Broome, Burgh St Peter, Caister, Chedgrave, Ditchingham, East and West Winch, Fakenham, Freethorpe, Gillingham, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, Grimston, Haddiscoe, Halvergate, Harleston, Harpley, Hempnall, Hemsby, Hilgay, Hindringham, Hockwold, Kettlestone, King's Lynn, Kirby Row, Loddon, Massingham, Newton Flotman, Pulham, Raynham, Reedham, Rougham, Roydon, Rudham, Saxlingham Nethergate, Scrabby, Seething, Shotesham, Snoring, Southery, Tasburgh, Terrington, Thurlton, Walsingham, Watlington, Weasenhams, Weeting, Wighton, Woodton, Wootton

Dates aren't essential – the only important things are the place and year, and some idea of numbers if possible. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Patrick Bonham (Butterfly Conservation county recorder)
Woodland View, Dixon Road, North Walsham NR26 9EA
(tel. 01692 403917, email wv@lineone.net)

Predator / prey relationships

On the 24th July 2004 I was in my garden looking at a crab spider, *Misumena vatia*, on sea holly. It had caught what looked like and could have been the hoverfly *Eristalis tenax* and was duly extracting its nourishment. Suddenly a common wasp, *Vespa vulgaris*, flew in and set about attacking the prey very vigorously. In a short time it had cut

off the hoverfly's abdomen and flown off with it.

After a short while the wasp returned and attacked the remainder of the hoverfly, showing no fear of the spider and eventually wresting the prey away and flying off with it.

The spider retreated without showing any sign of attacking the wasp.

Roland Rogers

New ladybird arrives in Britain

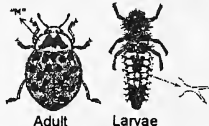
Harmonia axyridis, which is variously called the harlequin ladybird or the multi-coloured ladybug, is a deadly threat to many insects, including other ladybirds.

Introduced from Asia into North America for bio-control of aphids, the harlequin has swept across the States. In the last decade its catastrophic increase in numbers has threatened endemic North American ladybirds and other aphid predators. Harlequin ladybirds are still sold in continental Europe by bio-control companies, and it now roams across France, Belgium and Holland, with numbers soaring annually.

Now, it is in Britain. On 19 September 2004 an 'odd' ladybird was found in a garden in Essex. The ladybird was identified by Dr Michael Majerus of

the Genetics Department, Cambridge University. Dr Majerus said, "This is without doubt the ladybird I have least wanted to see here. Now many of our ladybirds will be in direct competition with this aggressively invasive species, and some will simply not cope".

Michael Majerus can be contacted at the Dept. of Genetics, University of Cambridge CB2 3EH; e-mail: m.majerus@gen.cam.ac.uk If anyone finds these ladybirds please also let our insect recorders know; Tony Irwin, Castle Museum, Norwich and Ken Durrant, 18 The Avenue, Sheringham, NR26 8DG. Ken is writing an account of the first Norfolk records for the 2005 'Transactions'.



Adult

Larvae

New Warden

I am now the Wildlife Warden for Hales Green in South Norfolk. Any records from this site will be gratefully received for inclusion into an annual report. For those who have not visited the site it is situated off the A146 Beccles - Norwich Road at TG375965.

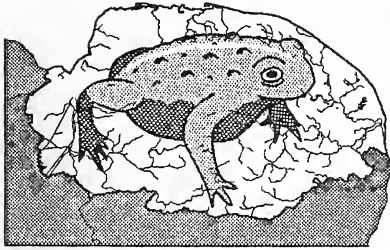
Any records or for further information please contact me on (01502) 569136, Mobile: 0781 0576427 or by email: colin.jacobs@tesco.net

Colin Jacobs

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by April 1st, 2005 to the following address: Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net



29 APR 2005

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Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 89
May 2005

Toad-in-the-hole....

Again my thanks to all contributors. Mike Hall continues delving into his moth trap for other insects and there is also an update on tree aphids. We have requests for information on wood ants, spotted flycatchers and anything from the Blakeney area and Colney Wood near Norwich. For a more light-hearted moment check out the articles under the 'What's in a name' banner. There is also a chance to test your knowledge of 19th century south Norfolk local names for birds.

FF

NORFOLK SPOTTED FLYCATCHER PROJECT 2005

The Spotted Flycatcher, an attractive summer visitor, is the subject of a study by Norfolk ringers which commenced in 2003. The population of this delightful species in the UK declined by 78% between 1972 and 1996. It is therefore a species of high conservation concern, and is listed as a red data species. It nests in scattered locations across Norfolk, and there are probably no more than 600 breeding pairs in the county.

The aims of this study are to determine the preferred habitat and site fidelity of the Spotted Flycatcher in Norfolk, and to monitor their breeding success and over-winter survival. In 2003 and 2004, we invited members of the public to report sightings of nesting flycatchers to us, and made arrangements to ring the nestlings. In all, 22 pairs of flycatchers were monitored and 54 nestlings were ringed in 2003, and 29 pairs and 20 nestlings in 2004, a less successful nesting season. In 2005 our aim is both to determine whether or not 2003/2004's nestlings will return to their natal sites, and also to expand the study to include new sites. In order to collect more information in 2004, we are hoping that both birdwatchers and non-birdwatchers (whether they participated in 2003 or not) will report any breeding pairs that they come across.

We also complete a "Nest Record Card" for the British Trust for Ornithology for each

nest. This contributes valuable information to a national database used for analysis of breeding biology. If sufficient data is collected, we would be able to determine whether changes in breeding success are contributing to the population decline, and, if birds prove to be site-faithful, whether over-winter survival is declining. If the owner of the land on which they are nesting is happy for us to do so, we shall arrange for a local bird ringer to visit the site to ring the nestlings with a colour ring and a metal BTO ring. In this way it will be possible to monitor if the same birds return to the site in a subsequent summer. Birds will only be ringed if the landowners give their consent.

If you find a Spotted Flycatcher nesting in Norfolk, or the birds appear to have set up territory in your area, please contact me during the day/early evening and leave a message if necessary. I will send you a simple form on which you can record your flycatchers' breeding activity. If you would like to help with the project but have no flycatchers nesting close by, you can volunteer to help monitor the sites so that nest record cards can be completed to determine hatching and fledging success or failure, and to look for colour ringed birds from the 2003 and 2004 seasons.

Rachel Warren
SPOFL Project Organiser
rfwarr@care4free.net or
telephone 01603 593912

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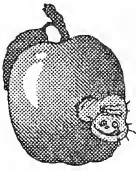
The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society

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What's in a name?

The following three articles were sent in independent of each other yet they all deal with the naming of species, whether it is scientific, local or foreign - Ed.



Are they serious?

Scientists take their jobs very seriously. But sometimes, just sometimes, they let the mask slip. Here is a list of Latin names given to creatures whose discoverers were in a more flippant mood than usual at the time:

- Agra cadabra*..... a carabid
 - Apopyllus now* a spider
 - Ba humbugi* a Fijian snail
 - Cyclocephala nodanotherwon*..... a scarab beetle
 - Dissup irae*..... fossil fly, very hard to see
 - Eubetia bigalae*..... a moth, yes it is, you betcha by golly
 - Ittibittium* a tiny mollusc
 - Heerz lukenatcha* a braconid
 - Kamera lens* a protist
 - La cucaracha* a pyralid
 - Notnops, Taintnops, Tisentnops*..... spiders
- They were originally in the genus *Nops*, but were separated out into these new genera in 1994
- Pieza kake*..... a fly
 - Ptomaspis, Dikenaspis, Ariaspis*..... types of fish
- Remove the '-aspis' to get it
- Tabanus rhizonshine*..... a horse fly
 - Verae peculya*..... a braconid
 - Yini vidivici* a parrot
 - Ytu brutus*..... a water beetle

Other unbelievable names can be found on the following website:
Curiosities of Biological Nomenclature -
<http://home.earthlink.net/~misaak/taxonomy>

Submitted by
Hans Watson

LOCAL BIRD NAMES

- from the Rev. Gilpin's "The Flowering Plants and Birds of Harleston in Norfolk (1888)

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Blackcap | Reed Bunting |
| Blood Olph | Bullfinch |
| Brown, Grey or Red Linnet | Linnet |
| Butcher Bird | Red-backed Shrike |
| Cuckoo's Mate | Wryneck |
| Devil or Deviling | Swift |
| Dow-fulfer | Mistle Thrush |
| Dobchick | Little Grebe |
| Fulfer | Fieldfare |
| Fulfer | Mistle Thrush |
| Green Linnet | Greenfinch |
| Ground-oven | Willow Wren (Willow Warbler) |
| Half Snipe | Jack Snipe |
| Hamser | Heron |
| Kentish Crow | Hooded Crow |
| King Harry | Goldfinch |
| Mavis | Song Thrush |
| Nutcracker | Nuthatch |
| Peewit | Lapwing |
| Penny Wagtail | Pied Wagtail |
| Reed-bird | Reed Warbler |
| Spink | Chaffinch |
| Titlark | Meadow Pipit |



Test your knowledge?

The following five birds were also in the Rev. Gilpin's list. Can you give them their usual English name?

1. Cadder
2. Capering Longtail
3. Hayjack
4. Puddingpoke
5. Smee Duck

Answers on page 8

Submitted by Mike Hall



The Boreal Gossip

Older members may recall that in earlier times (before Wells) I used to teach French. I still keep in touch, with trips to France when possible, and regularly by listening to French radio news before getting up. In mid-February there was mention of an incursion of Waxwings into Eastern France, so later that morning I "googled" the French for Waxwing: *Le Jaseur Boreale*, and found a good web-site, one of a series covering all French birds.

I noticed that Google offered a translation, so, in a spirit of mischief, I called it up. It began with the English for Waxwing, which you will see as the heading for this piece. Under "nesting" it states: "It builds its nest in a shrub starting from vegetable elements, and papers the bottom of sleeping bags and hairs." ("Duvet" can mean sleeping-bag or down.)

I tried "Song Thrush", and found: "the grive musician often does not come on the manger, however, she visits the surfaces of nourissage discreetly." You will have realised by now that, if they can't find the English word they will stick in the French (*grive musicienne*) hoping that no-one will notice!

Under "Starling": "Young people: because of their grey plumage mice and of their dark nozzle, the young people are often confused with other species." (here, "young people" = juvenile). Or how about the Black-headed Gull: "In winter, it has a task sinks behind of the eye"? This perhaps needs an explanation: "tache" can mean "task" or "patch". "Sombre" means "dark", but it is also part of the verb "to sink" (as of a ship). Oh, the perils of machine translation!

Paul Banham

Illegal immigrants from West Africa

The amusing account of an Adder that was smuggled back to Norfolk from Hampshire, brought to mind an incident after one of the birding trips that I led to The Gambia in the early 1990s.

On the night before we were due to fly home, I left my trainers outside on the veranda, in order for them to dry out before I packed them in my luggage the following morning. As is my usual habit when packing, the next day I stuffed them with dirty socks and other items needing to be washed and deposited them in my suitcase.

A couple of days after returning home, I decided to give them a clean and took them into the garden to shake out any sand and other debris, and to my surprise two West African Toads fell out!

Not being sure what the position was regarding their importation, I phoned Norwich airport and was told that quarantine was not necessary and that I had probably not broken any laws. The problem then was what to do with them! With his veterinary knowledge and contacts at London Zoo, Ian Keymer was the obvious person to contact and he duly rang up one of the curators at the zoo. Although they had no West African Toads, financial restraints prevented the addition of any more animals to their collection. Janet Keymer came to the rescue and the toads became part of the menagerie at Gresham's Prep School.

The moral of the story is always check your shoes in the morning before putting them. After all they could have been scorpions!

Moss Taylor

A frog or two for lunch

I had the dubious pleasure of watching a heron eating its lunch recently. The bird had flown into the open water in front of the fen hide at Strumpshaw, it landed in the middle after a long, shallow glide from the direction of the river. After a good look round to make sure the coast was clear it waded across to the shallows at the left of the hide. Peering intently into the water it moved slowly along the reed margin, then out shot its long sinuous neck and a frog was dangling from the tip of its bill.

Within minutes another frog had met the same fate, and yet another, in the half hour or so that the bird stayed in the pool it had eaten six. It now very slowly waded back to the centre of the water and just stood for several minutes on one leg resting from its labours before flying off, much heavier and less hungry,

Each frog was dunked in the water several times, and manoeuvred around in the bill before being swallowed, a distinct bulge in the herons neck could be seen as the poor old frog went down, still alive and kicking. My sandwiches didn't seem to have their normal appeal somehow.

Tony Howes



Not Even Moths Come To Light (3) (when the ground is frozen and it is snowing)

Just as it seemed that winter was finally retreating and one or two of the early season moths were coming to the traps we were treated to the cold snap of weather at the end of February. I had seen two or three beetles in December and early January – the small plant-climbing ground beetle *Demetrias atricapillus* with a yellowish red body and black head on the 13th December, the flea beetle *Psylliodes chrysocephala* which can be a serious pest on oil-seed rape and turnip crops on the 23rd December, the little pill beetle *Simplocaria semistriata*, which is found everywhere and often in large numbers, on the 6th January – but with the appearance of *Ophion luteus*, one of the larger and more obvious ichneumon wasps, on the 1st February and the ground beetle *Trechus quadristriatus*, which is widespread and a regular visitor to the traps, on the 11th I thought the “season has started”.

Then the weather changed, the snow fell and the traps were turned off as blowing snow and hot lamps do not mix very well. When the worst of the wintery weather was over, by the end of the first week in March, everywhere was thoroughly chilled and even though moths did start to appear again there was nothing like the number or variety expected during March. It would be very wrong to assume that this means a decline in either numbers or species as I am sure they were still about but not bothering to fly much let alone visit lamps. Pheromones would still attract male to female and when mating has taken place there is no need for any further activity other than egg laying which rarely necessitates flying – many spring species have wingless females anyway.

By the middle of March I had seen a few moths, a number of earwigs and on the 10th the ground beetle *Amara aenea* so I shall be very surprised if I do not see just as much variety in the traps as last year and the early season species in their usual numbers next year.

Mike Hall

The hoverfly *Criorhina ranunculi* in west Norwich

The most spectacular fly to be found in the early spring is the large, furry, mainly black-haired hoverfly *Criorhina ranunculi*, which has two forms, red-tailed and white-tailed, and thus resembles a queen bumble bee.

On the early afternoon of 5 April I was fortunate to find one, a red-tailed form, resting on foliage of cherry laurel in my rear garden in west Norwich. This was my first ever sighting of the species and a welcome addition to the garden list. It's presence was almost certainly due to the blossoming plum trees a few feet away. In addition I have a sallow in my front garden whose blossom would also be a lure.

C. ranunculi is mainly a southern species-it occurs in Norfolk but is almost certainly under-recorded owing to its early appearance (peaking in late April) and its habit of frequenting the tops of flowering shrubs when it is difficult to distinguish it from bumble bees.

It's certainly an insect to look out for in areas where there are early flowering trees and shrubs and the illustration in *British Hoverflies* by Stubbs and Falk will aid identification if one is seen close enough for scrutiny.

Stuart Paston

Invading aphids

Twice in 2004 we found aphids we didn't recognise on exotic trees in Norwich city centre, and with it the prospect of a 'new to Britain' tag. Twice we contacted Rothamsted Research Centre to find out if they'd been recorded by their monitoring network of aphid traps. After being assured on both occasions that our finds were old news we asked Rothamsted for the list of tree-feeding species that are currently invading the U.K.

So, of the recent colonists, in the city centre we've found:

- *Crypturaphis grassii* – a Mediterranean species widespread on Italian alder *Alnus cordata*
- *Appendisetia robinia* – an American species occasionally on false acacia *Robinia pseudacacia*
- *Tinocallis nevskyi* – an Oriental species that is widespread in Norfolk on various British elms *Ulmus* spp. first found in the UK in Great Yarmouth in 1996

We're also on the look-out for:

- *Tinocallis takachihoensis* – on elms, very similar to *T. nevskyi* but with a black head and thorax
- *Hoplocallis pictus* – another Mediterranean species on British and exotic oaks, similar to several native oak aphids but with banded antennae and black markings on dorsal surface

The good news is that these species seem to be at low densities on individual trees and they aren't known to carry plant viruses. We would be keen to know of any sightings and Graham is happy to confirm specimens sent in alcohol.

Jit Thacker

(jit@astridhouse.fsnet.co.uk) and
Graham Hopkins
(15 Matlock Road,
Norwich, NR1 1TL)



"Wood Ants" in East Anglia?

This note is a request for records of *Formica rufa* L. in East Anglia.

The "wood ants" of the *Formica rufa* group are the most spectacular British ants, well known for building large nest-mounds from vegetable debris, usually in open woodland. The workers range in size from 4-9mm and are bicoloured, the black abdomen contrasting with the head and thorax, which are reddish-brown with black patches. Foraging trails from a large nest may extend over 100m to aphid-bearing trees, but insect prey is also taken, both from trees and the forest floor. The workers are aggressively territorial, and readily bite and spray formic acid.

Of the four British species in the group, only *Formica rufa* is likely to occur naturally in East Anglia. Identification details can be obtained from a number of references [Collingwood and Barrett, 1964; Bolton and Collingwood, 1975; Collingwood, 1979]. Our region contains plenty of habitat that would appear suitable, as does the climate, yet there are few records of *F. rufa*, none of them recent. The reasons for this are unclear, and are presumably historic. East Anglia must have been largely covered in forest in prehistoric times, and partial clearance by man should have benefitted wood ants. The Breckland and Sandlings heaths may have become too barren for *F. rufa*, yet the general absence of the species is still a biogeographical puzzle. Small, local populations may have been introduced to estates as the pupae ("ants' eggs") have been used as food for pheasants. If these or isolated natural populations die out, for whatever reason, recolonisation from distant inhabited sites across large tracts of East Anglian arable land would be unlikely.

There are confirmed records from the extreme south of Suffolk, from "Bentley Wood", and Holbrook Park immediately to the south of Ipswich, and Assington Thicks about 12 miles (20km) further west [Yarrow, 1955; Barrett, 1968]. In Bentley Wood, renowned Suffolk entomologist Claude Morley observed "a very strong colony" of *F. rufa* for at least five years at the end of the 19th century. Others were stated to be present in the same wood [Morley, 1899]. Nelmes [1938] noted that *F. rufa* had been "fairly numerous" at Bentley but listed the site amongst several extinguished by fire at the time of writing. The woodlands around Bentley were also once notable for their butterfly fauna, including the "UK endangered" heath fritillary (*Meliticta athalia* Rott.) and a number of other rare species, most now extinct in Suffolk. It is clear that much good habitat has been lost or degraded in that area. Few published details exist of the Holbrook Park site, other than that the first record of wood ants appears to date from May, 1894 [Morley, 1899]. At Assington Thicks, apparently first recorded by Harwood in 1920, [Morley, 1935], Nelmes [*op. cit.*] noted only two nests. More recently, gamekeepers knew nothing of the ant, which must have been long extinct (Barrett, 1975, personal communication). Nelmes [*op. cit.*] is contradictory about East Anglia - whilst listing the

Suffolk records, she states in the text that there are no records from the region, except to record (p.83) that "Between Cambridge and Bury St. Edmunds there is a large patch of coarse sands on which wood ants are said to occur, but the record is unconfirmed". Barrett [1965] failed to find wood ants at any of the Suffolk sites, whilst doing field work for his national survey of *Formica rufa* [Barrett, 1968].

The situation in Norfolk is mysterious. Barrett [1979] shows an old record north-west of Norwich in grid square TG11, which is presumably the same as one noted by Yarrow [1955], "Edwards' MS., 1911, locality unknown". Elsewhere in Norfolk, Breckland can claim one or two anecdotal records. Perhaps the most reliable is the report by the late, renowned, travel writer (and Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society) John Hillaby, who, during wartime army service stationed near Mundford, described pulling a wood ant nest apart with bare arms, in search of myrmecophilous beetles. As anyone who has done likewise could testify, this is not an action easily forgotten. The site was on the edge of a pine wood in the grounds of the now-demolished Didlington Hall (ca. TL7797). Mr Hillaby had no doubts of the ants' identity, recalling how the event had much amused his fellow soldiers [Hillaby, 1982, New Scientist column and personal communication!]. An unconventional, but more recent "record" featured in an episode of the TV comedy series "Dad's Army", screened around 1970. The location shots for the series were filmed near Thetford (so could also have been in Suffolk) and in the episode concerned, "Corporal Jones" accidentally put his foot in what was clearly a wood ant nest, or part of one, with predictably comic results. A surviving cast member, when asked later about this scene, could not recall whether the ants were found locally and used opportunistically, or intentionally brought in as a "prop" from elsewhere. As the nearest known inhabited sites are in Essex and near Peterborough, a local origin is perhaps the more likely, unless there was an alternative "theatrical" source of supply.



Just beyond the borders of East Anglia proper, to the south is a small cluster of records in Essex, most still with thriving populations [Harvey, 1998]. To the west and north is only a thin scatter of sites in Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire. There is one long-extinct site on the Greensand at Gamlingay, south-west of Cambridge [Barrett, 1968] (but no records at all from this geological formation in West Norfolk). In the 1930's, Wragge Morley introduced several colonies to land adjoining the orchards of Messrs. Chivers and Co., the jam manufacturers, at Histon, just north of Cambridge. These survived for at least a few years [Wragge Morley, 1953].



Therefore, the authors would be grateful for records of wood ants from anywhere in the East Anglian region - although sightings from Norfolk and Suffolk would be of particular interest, reports from adjacent counties will also be welcome, as *F. rufa* is of conservation significance and is generally declining. Information on historic records, even where the species is no longer present, would also be useful.

N.C.Blacker (c/o 1, Lowry Way, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 4LW. Email: ncb12_12@yahoo.com) and P.J.Attewell (69, Thornbury Gardens, Boreham Wood, Herts., WD6 1RD. Email: philattewell@aol.com)

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Woodpeckers

While working in the garden this afternoon my attention was drawn to the sound of greater spotted woodpeckers calling from the woods nearby. I went indoors for the binoculars and was then able to see two of these charismatic birds chasing one another through the trees, all the time calling. I could see them flaring their tails and spreading their wings in a courtship display.

Most years I find a nest, usually by listening for the continuous clamour of the young as I walk through the woods during early summer, silver birch seems the most favoured tree for the nest hole, live or dead, preferably the latter. It's at this time of the year that they often visit the bird table in the garden, and take beakfuls of suet back to the youngsters. The adults tend to get quite scruffy at this stage, with feathers worn and a 'well used' look about them.

Its very unusual to see lesser spotted woodpeckers now in these woods, they have always been the rarer of the two species, but in past years I saw them more frequently than I do now. They are mainly birds of the woodland canopy, this alone makes them less

likely to be seen. It was therefore a pleasure to see two of these robin sized woodpeckers at Strumpshaw during a walk through the woods there earlier this week.

Tony Howes

Mystery Tree

If you go onto Holkham Bay via the board-walk at the north end of Lady Anne's Road, take a look at the Pine plantation on the right. The trees are in straight lines, having been planted in (I think) 1956, with a few in-filling replacements subsequently. Every now and then you will come across one with a trunk at least twice as thick as its neighbours. However, this is not the mystery. Look up the tree, and you will see that the cones are much bigger than those on the Corsican Pines alongside, and appear at regular intervals along the branches. They are Monterey Pines, which grow much faster than Corsicans, and were not among the few species chosen for planting in the 19th century.

For the mystery you will have to turn left when you get to the end, and follow the edge of the bay north- westward. What was a sandy beach only a few decades ago is now incipient saltmarsh, mainly Samphire and Annual Seablite,

with a scattering of Shrubby Seablite at the very edge, where the dunes begin, which here are planted with Pines and Holm Oaks. A quarter mile or so from the boardwalk is a rather stunted deciduous tree, which for years we saw only in winter, when parking in L. A. R. was free (mean? what do you mean, mean?).

Its buds were rather lumpish, brown and alternate, and didn't seem right for any sort of Willow, which, along with Birches, grow amongst the Pines at the Wells end a mile or so away. Furthermore, it is within a couple of yards of the highest tide-mark, and must surely be at least splashed with salt water during northerly storms. When at last I finally saw it in early summer two years ago it was covered in blossom: white, and pretty obviously a pear! What an unlikely place to find a fruit-tree. I went back later in the year hoping to pick-my-own pears, but there were only leaves. Perhaps the salt-laden air inhibits development. How did it get there? I suppose it must have been from a core thrown away at a picnic. There are good-quality apples to be found on the landward side of the dunes near Wells beach car-park which I assume got there that way, but they are not so close to the sea.


Paul Banham

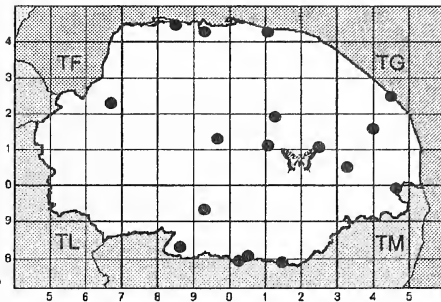


Excursion Reports

Featuring:

East Winch Common

● 2005-06 Field Meeting location
 John Innes Centre
 Indoor meetings



EAST WINCH COMMON Sunday 13TH March, 2005

A small but select group of experienced bryologists met in the reserve Car Park, and – in the absence of any beginners to be induced into the delights of moss hunting – decided to concentrate on recording the site as thoroughly as possible. The site is spread over four 10km grid squares, however, the northern two only include small areas on the fringe of the reserve, so they were ignored, and recording effort concentrated on the two larger portions of the site, which is divided into eastern and western ‘halves’ by grid Easting 70.

The site has had a lot of management work done on it recently, which had cleared away a lot of acidic scrubby woodland, though it will be some time before this recovers into heathland. However, the ponds and damp areas, which were cleared several years ago, were in good condition and quickly yielded six species of Bog-moss or *Sphagnum*. However, several other species proved elusive, though there is no real reason to fear that they have been lost. The only exception to this may be *Sphagnum molle*, which has not been seen for many years.

After a pleasant lunch, taken in the sun, the party looked at the woodlands remaining on the eastern fringe, before crossing back into the western part of the reserve. Species which seemed to be

confined to the eastern part of the reserve included the liverworts *Cephalozia connivens*, *Gynocolea inflata*, and two species of *Pellia* – *Pellia endiviifolia* and *Pellia epiphylla*. A disturbing discovery (by Mary Ghullam), was a small colony of the alien liverwort *Lophocolea semiteres*, found on a path. This seems to be spreading and, because it is such an efficient competitor, may be having an adverse effect on smaller liverwort species. However, in this instance the colony was not in a position to affect anything more interesting.

A few mosses, such as *Fissidens incurvus* and *Didymodon insulanus* were added to the eastern site list, whilst the most notable absentee seeming to be *Leucobryum glaucum* which had been found on the last visit by the NNNS.

The western part of the reserve contained many of the same species encountered in the morning, though with notably fewer species of *Sphagnum*. However, a group of shallows growing near some shallow pools, produced a nice crop of epiphytic species, including *Cryphaea heteromalla* and *Orthotrichum pulchellum* – a species which seems to be becoming much commoner. The two thallose epiphytic liverworts, *Metzgeria furcata* and *Metzgeria fruticulosa*, were also found.

Tired, mossed-out, but happy, the group left the site in the late after-

noon, after recording some 60 species, and headed towards the flesh pots of King's Lynn where tea and cake were waiting.

Robin Stevenson

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

After a certain amount of turmoil, I have taken on the chairmanship of this committee for an initial period of a year to see if it can be made something of rather than allowing it to fall by the wayside. I have been in touch with John Sizer who is Overall Warden for the National Trust in North Norfolk and he tells me that they would like to update their records for several properties in the Blakeney Point complex such as Blakeney Freshes as well as the Point itself. With regards the latter, not bird records from the Point itself as someone has recently been writing these up. Any other records, especially for invertebrates etc., please send either to me, or to Janet (Research Committee Secretary) whose addresses will be found in the new programme. If you work by Email, it will have to be Janet! Other projects are being investigated, but nothing has been confirmed at the time of writing.

Alec Bull



COLNEY WOOD

Colney Wood is a burial park set in twelve acres of mature woodland located on the edge of Norwich overlooking the Yare Valley. After extensive research and consultation with landscape and wildlife experts, funeral directors and bereaved families, Colney Woodland Burial Park opened its doors in 1999.

The Park enjoys a distinctive landscape of low-lying valleys alongside an unusual escarpment. Gentle paths lead through areas naturally enhanced by the beauty of silver birch, oak, beech, sweet chestnut, pine and ash trees. According to season, there is a profusion of bluebells, foxgloves and many other varieties of wildflower.

Colney Wood has been established with the prime aim of offering an appealing and meaningful alternative to conventional burial and cremation choices. It seeks to provide a natural choice both for the bereaved and those who wish to plan for the future during their own lifetime. The Park offers a perfect environment for quiet contemplation and remembrance.

Colney Wood is a haven for wildlife and natural plant growth, reinforcing the concept of the Renewal of Life. This can be especially meaningful for those having to face either their own mortality or the permanent nature of the loss that they have experienced.

Education is important to us at Colney Wood and we have a policy of education to all age groups in order to further the understanding of good woodland and wildlife management. We have carried out much research into the bird life at Colney Wood and have developed our own "bird book." We are keen to extend this book to include information about the host of other wildlife that the woodland supports - wild animals, butterflies, insects, wild flowers, fungi and bats. Increasingly we realise how much this matters. Mankind has relied upon woodland to provide for all his needs. What more suitable place then for us to be buried here - at one with our ancestors and nature and yet providing hope and beauty for future generations to enjoy.

Any help that the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists can provide to help us with this task would be gratefully appreciated. The woodland is open 7 days a week and all are welcome to visit and walk through the woods. On the last Sunday in the month there is a tea shop open serving hot drinks and refreshments and we are currently hosting a photographic exhibition in the woodland shelter by two members of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Photographic group, Brian Macfarlane and Tony Howes.

Colney Wood Burial Park, Watton Road, Colney, Norwich, Norfolk

Answers to local bird name quiz

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Cadder | Jackdaw |
| 2. Capering Longtail | Yellow Wagtail |
| 3. Hayjack | Common Whitethroat |
| 4. Puddingpoke | Long-tailed Tit |
| 5. Smee Duck | Wigeon |

BSBI Bramble Meeting (North Norfolk)

Friday evening July 15th to
Sunday July 17th, 2005

We shall be meeting first at Greshams School, Holt on the Friday evening followed by a visit to Salthouse Heath as a 'taster'.

On Saturday we start at Fulmodeston Severalls and go on from there to Sheringham Park and Pretty Corner and end the day at Felbrigg.

On Sunday we meet in the car park at Bacton Woods where there is a wide range of species. We shall probably not be able to go into the woods themselves due to tree felling operations, but will go on, first to Crostwight Common in a reduced number of cars, then back to Bacton for remaining cars and on to Bryant's Heath, Felmingham and with a final stop at Westwick. The exact location for the last call has yet to be made as it has been arranged recently to compensate for a shorter visit than hoped for at Bacton.

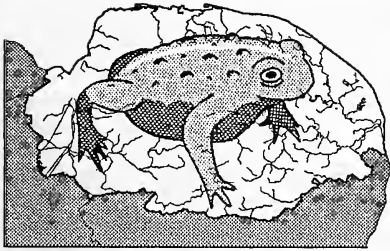
If any Society members would like to learn more about this intriguing group of plants they will be most welcome, and don't forget, I shall not always be around either to do the brambles for you or to give you instruction on some occasion in the distant future so, send me an s.a.e. for a full itinerary which will enable me to book your names in either for the weekend, or for either of the days. Before the end of May please.

Alec Bul

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by July 1st, 2005 to the following address: Francis Farrow, Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net



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The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 90
August 2005

Toad-in-the-hole....

My thanks for all the contributions and my apologies if your article is not in this issue as unfortunately we have had to bid farewell to no fewer than four prominent members of the Society. Have a good summer and send in your observations. **FF**

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

The Research Committee are currently carrying out two surveys which it is hoped will lead to management plans, and a dissemination of results in future issues of Transactions and further records are invited from visitors to either site to be incorporated in our results.

Hapton Common is an important site in the Tas valley. It is served by a public footpath and in any case, is open access. The owner is anxious to have a management plan for the site, which lies beside the minor road towards Hapton from the B1113 about half a mile from Rattes corner. There is a small car park at the entrance, which is clearly signed.

Catfield Hall Fen is being resurveyed, (last done in 2000) following some changes in management. The owners welcome genuine naturalists with the proviso that they would like a 'phone call first so that they know who is on site. For the telephone number, please contact Alec Bull on 01603-880278. Records may be sent either to Alec, or our secretary, Janet Negal. Details for both are on the current programme.

Just the thing for the young'uns during those long days of the summer holidays!

Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year Competition 2005

Closing date: September 30th

Could you see yourself as a nature writer? Do you take an interest in what you see in the Norfolk countryside? Do you keep a record of the birds and butterflies that come into your garden? Do you take a close look at what goes on in your school or village pond?

If so, why not have a go at writing a short article or producing an illustrated diary about any aspect of nature in Norfolk.

You could win a £50 prize and a trophy. Entries will be judged in two categories: Up to 11 years and 11-15 years. Entries must be no longer than 800 words.


The prizes and trophies are being generously donated by Mrs Sylvia Seago in memory of her late husband Michael who devoted 60 years to studying and writing about Norfolk's birds and other wildlife.

Entries should be submitted by:
September 30th, 2005,
to the following address:

Young Norfolk Nature Writer of the Year,
Norfolk Wildlife Trust,
Bewick House,
22 Thorpe Road,
Norwich NR1 1RY.

If you have any questions, please telephone -
01603 625540.

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Dr. Joyce Lambert.



The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society
Founded 1869

Registered Charity No. 291604

Invertebrates of maritime soft rock cliffs

Coastal soft rock cliffs are a much neglected habitat that provides the ideal habitat conditions for many rare insects, spiders and other invertebrates. Many of these species are only found on soft rock cliffs in the UK and so the protection and sensitive management of these areas is vital to their survival. Information on these habitats is limited; however, the current available data would suggest that the soft rock cliffs of the UK are some of the most important in Europe.

Local importance

With an estimated 12.7km of soft cliffs Norfolk has a significant proportion of the UK resource. The importance of local soft cliffs for invertebrates has been recognised through the notification of SSSIs at Overstrand and Sidestrand-Trimmingham, noting outstanding invertebrate assemblages at the sites. Sites which experience very rapid rates of erosion or which are inherently unstable are often of more limited invertebrate interest, as they lack the continuity and range of required microhabitats. Nevertheless, some species are restricted to such sites, Norfolk specialities being the rove beetle *Bledius filipes* and the ground beetle *Nebria livida* (also found on the Yorkshire coast), both of which are found at the base of cliffs.

What are Buglife doing?

Buglife have been awarded funding by the Esmée Fairburn Foundation for a three year project to study and promote the invertebrate biodiversity of soft rock cliffs in the UK.

The project aims to:

- * Increase our knowledge of soft rock cliffs and the invertebrates that inhabit them.
- * Identify the most important areas of soft rock cliff in the UK for biodiversity.
- * Ensure that these species and habitats are protected for the future.

The information produced by this project will provide an essential resource for the future sustainable management of soft rock cliffs and their immediate surroundings in the UK.

A request

The early stages of this project are concerned with the collation of existing data. If you have any records of invertebrates from Norfolk's soft rock cliffs, or any information on the past management of the cliff slopes and cliff tops then please contact me. Also, if you are interested in collecting new records during the 2005 field season then I would be very interested to hear from you.

Please visit our website www.buglife.org.uk for more information.



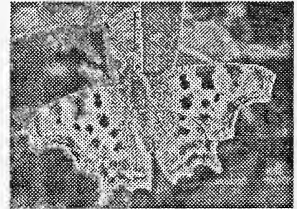
Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
170A Park Road
Peterborough
PE1 2UF

Telephone: 01733 201210

Observations of nectaring insects on Alexanders

I am employed as a gardener at Hopton Holiday Village four miles south of Great Yarmouth. The Park won the David Bellamy Gold Award for conservation in 2004 and this year I have been tasked with recording the wildlife on the site and producing a report at the end of the year.

Warren Road is situated to the north of Hopton Holiday Village and passes through Gorleston Golf Course onto Links Road in the town. (TG530010) At the point where the cottages are situated it becomes Warren Lane and it is here that many observations have been made during my lunch hour. The lane has a Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* hedge-row along its boundaries and there is an over abundance of Alexanders *Smyrnium olustratum*. This plant has been in flower since the 18th March and all blooms were out on the 14th April. On this day there were literally hundreds of Drone Flies *Eristalis tenax* nectaring on the blooms.



On the sunny day of the 16th April I observed a Comma *Polygonum c-album*, a queen wasp *Vespa vulgaris*, Several Yellow Dung Flies *Scathophaga stercoraria* nectaring from this crop. There was nothing else in flower along this lane except for Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*. Nothing was nectaring from this and I assume the strong scent of the Alexanders was masking this. I am sure that all the species mentioned nectar from Alexanders and would be pleased to hear from anyone who has recorded any other insects on this pernicious weed.

Colin A. Jacobs



Not Only Moths Come To Light (4)

March saw very little activity in the moth traps, either moths or anything else, until the last week in the month and then very little other than moths. Burying beetles and in particular *Nicrophorus humator*, were much in evidence for several days after the 25th March and several green lacewings *Chrysopa cornea* agg. which had overwintered successfully, started to arrive from the 22nd onwards but then it was the dolebugs again until nearly the end of April with just a single 2-spot ladybird on the 25th of March.

Between the 28th April and the 3rd of May there were numerous St. Mark's Flies, *Bibio marci*, in the traps but as soon as the night time temperatures dropped a little they disappeared. On the 29th April I was perplexed by a small winged insect that was like no moth I recognised. It was only when I looked at it in good light and with a decent pair of glasses (then with a microscope) that I realised it was a moth-fly. The Psychodidae are small flies thickly clothed with hairs and scales (hence the common name) and this one was the cosmopolitan *Psychoda alternata*. With larvae feeding in decaying organic matter it is common and wide-

spread. Yet again a cooler period for the first part of May meant that it was not until the 19th that I saw the soldier beetle, *Cantharis nigricans* which has black elytra that are heavily clothed with a grey pubescence giving them a superficial grey appearance and a week later saw the first of several of the orange/yellow soldier beetle, *Cantharis rufa* which does not have the same covering. In the same week, on the 23rd May, cockchafer, *Melolontha melolontha*, started to appear in the traps and still do in the middle of June. The water beetle *Ilybius fuliginosus* on the 25th May with the large caddis fly *Phryganea grandis* and the 14-spot ladybird, *Calvia 14-guttata* on the 27th were all of note until the cold snap during the first week in June meant virtually nothing again.

As the nights now start to become a little warmer it will be few days 'lag' before moths and other insects 'catch up' so hopefully the next two or three months will be more interesting.

Mike Hall

A Day with the Owls

One beautiful May morning a friend visiting us for the day, and myself decided to check some of the nest boxes along the Yare valley. These large boxes have been put up mainly for the use of barn owls, but other species use them as well. This short resume tells of what we found.

The first farm at Postwick has five boxes, the first erected (1999) has now been in use for four years and sixteen young barn owls have flown from it. But this time it was empty, the owls had moved three hundred yards to a box set up in some old stables. There we found two youngsters alive and well also one dead and partially eaten chick and two infertile eggs. We disposed of the dead youngster and the eggs. Last year this box had been home to a family of stock doves.

The third box to be looked at was about half a mile away along the valley, this also had young barn owls, all healthy and well. The hen bird had flown from the box as we neared the oak in which it was placed, she went less than fifty yards

into a belt of conifers. We had a good view as she jinked between the trees, then a sparrow-hawk, probably with a nest in the wood, saw her and gave her a hard couple of minutes as the owl perched in a tree. The last two boxes were both empty, just a few pellets showing that owls were using them now and again.



We went onto Buckenham where we had two sites to look at, the first had a family of jackdaws in residence. The youngsters were just getting their feathers coming through, they certainly wouldn't win prizes in a beauty competition, all scrawny and pink, quite ugly. The second box looked more promising as two adult barn owls left the box and flew down towards trees on the edge of the fen. Unfortunately we found that our ladder was too short to have a look in, but I would think it was being used for nesting.

Two more sites were visited totaling four boxes, no more were found occupied but it had been an interesting day. It does help to have a pair of binoculars with you, as a close scan of the entrance hole can often give clues as to whether the box is being used. All boxes when made are treated with a wood preservative, brownish green in colour. When there are owls in residence a pale line is quite discernible just below the entrance hole where the claws mark the wood, also lack of spider webs and general debris give the game away.

Tony Howes



Paston Great Barn – Background and barbastelle bat update.

Dating from 1581, Paston Great Barn is of exceptional cultural, biological and architectural importance. As well as being an outstanding example of one of the few remaining Great Barns in the region, the barn also supports nationally and internationally important populations of bats. The site is owned by the North Norfolk Historic Buildings Trust and managed by English Nature for its wildlife.

Paston Great Barn provides a home for a range of wildlife, including one of the UK's rarest mammals, the barbastelle bat. The barbastelle is a rare and threatened species throughout its range in Europe and Paston Great Barn supports one of the few known maternity roosts in the UK. Barbastelle bats were first discovered at Paston in August 1996 by the Norfolk Bat Group as part of an ongoing programme of identifying summer and winter bat sites in the county. The discovery of the barbastelle bat colony at Paston Great Barn presented a unique opportunity to discover more about the requirements of this elusive species and in 1999 English Nature commissioned the Bat Conservation Trust to carry out research and monitoring work on the colony. This work has since continued annually and has provided a wealth of information about roost sites within the barn, the size and behaviour of the colony and their foraging activity in the surrounding area.

Monitoring work has also illustrated the importance of the countryside surrounding the barn and radio-tagging studies have shown the barbastelles to feed along Bacton cliffs and even along the strandline on the beach!

In total, seven species of bat have been discovered using the site: soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle, Nathusius' pipistrelle, brown long-eared, noctule, Natterer's and barbastelle bat. Some species, such as the Natterer's bat typically utilise a range of roost sites throughout the breeding season. Large barns with a variety of suitable roost locations can therefore provide important breeding sites for these species. The most recent species of bat discovered using Paston Great Barn is Nathusius' pipistrelle – a rare species in the UK with just a handful of known breeding localities.

The current monitoring programme at Paston aims to provide the following information:

- * Counts of adults and young throughout the breeding season
- * Dates and duration of site occupation
- * Roost locations in the barn throughout the year
- * Impact of temperatures/humidity levels on bats inside the barn.



The Bat Conservation Trust has recently produced its second annual monitoring report, covering the period February 2004 to February 2005, entitled 'A behavioural study of barbastelle bats (*Barbastella barbastellus*) at Paston Great Barn'. The results presented in this report show that, despite population numbers in the barbastelle breeding colony been slightly lower than in 2003, they were still higher than during the previous four years. The maximum pre-parturition count was 35 in 2004 (compared to 36 in 2003), whereas the maximum post-parturition count (adults and young) was 50 in 2004 (compared to 55 in 2003). The continued success of this colony is testimony to the careful planning and execution of the repair works which are required to ensure the barn continues to provide suitable conditions for bats into the future.

If you would like to obtain a copy of this report or would like to more about Paston Great Barn, please contact me at: English Nature Offices, The Smithy Workshops, Wolferton, King's Lynn, Norfolk. PE31 6HA or telephone 01485 543044.

Ash Murray-Site Manager, English Nature

The Maddest March Hare Story Ever?

It was eight o'clock on a March morning when my breakfast coffee was interrupted by a loud crash on the cottage roof and the sight of a furry brown body hurtling past the window. I rushed to look out and to my astonishment saw a hare tentatively shake each leg, then its head, before it ambled slowly away across the garden.

What could be the explanation of this hare-raising leap from space? I can think of only one. Saxlingham, near Blakeney, is surrounded by arable farmland where buzzards have become increasingly common in the last few years. Perhaps one over-estimated its ability to lift the hare, failed to maintain its grip and let go immediately above my pantries? I am delighted that it survived and will always remember the hare that paid me a flying visit.

June Hulbert

A Trap By Any Other Name

During the spring this year my wife was having problems with mice, or a mouse, eating off seedlings in the greenhouse and the offending rodent seemed oblivious to the live traps set all around. As a final measure she brought in a snap trap - 'The Better Mousetrap' - and baited it with peanut butter.

The next day the mouse was caught, unfortunately a wood mouse, and the trap re-set. A couple of days later a mature garden snail was firmly imprisoned but undamaged in the trap. Subsequently three more snails were similarly caught, all initially unharmed, and in all cases gardening instincts overcame natural history ideals with the snails being released and then stood on - but they were left out for birds who subsequently ate them. The moral from this tale is that snails go well with peanut butter - perhaps in more ways than one!

Mike Hall



Rusty Groundsel

To the Botanist and the non - botanist the common weed of gardens and disturbed ground, Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris* agg., is never worth a second glance. A closer look on the other hand may find you looking at the Rust *Puccinia lagenophorae* Cooke. This modern rust fungus is said to have come from Australia and was first recorded in the UK in 1961. At Hopton Holiday Village where I am gardener, this rust has decimated one stretch of pathway and all plants of the Groundsel are severely affected. Other plants on the site are unaffected. On looking through a binocular microscope the fruiting bodies are very beautiful indeed. They have orange circular discs with a buff edging and are uniform in size. In some cases the whole stem may be affected or just the leaves. In Darlington (1968) an illustration of *Coleosporium senecionus* looks to be very similar at this stage to *P. Lagenophorae*.

In the British Mycological Society database there are two records for East Suffolk. It is also recorded in Fungi and Slime Moulds in Suffolk

I have also recently found the Daisy *Bellis perennis* rust *Puccinia distincta* McAlpine on site, which is my only Suffolk record although for recording purposes can be counted for Norfolk. My other Norfolk record comes from Wacton near Long Stratton. This rust can decimate the daisy population, and according to your point of view is either a good or bad sign. This species was first recorded in 1997 after occurring on cultivated forms for many years. Yellowing leaves with wavy edges and raised areas are diagnostic; the plants are normally more erect than usual.

Please look out for either of these rusts. I would welcome any material for examination especially the Daisy Rust. These can be sent in empty film canisters with a note of how many plants are affected and the site / soil details, with the normal six figure grid reference to 22 Oxford Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR321TW.

References:

- Redfern M. Shirley P, Aidgap British Plant Galls Field Studies Council
Darlington A (1968) The Pocket Encyclopedia of Plant Galls Blandford Press London.
Ellis M.B. & Ellis JP (1985) Micro Fungi on Land Plants Croom Helm.
Wurzell B. BSBI News no 80 Jan 1999 p. 20 Common Daises under threat.

Acknowledgements:

- Mrs J.P. Ellis for confirming the rusts and proof reading the article.
Mr. R. Maidstone for an update on the status of the Daisy rust at Wacton in Norfolk

Exchange Journals

1. British Journal of Entomology and Natural History (from the British Entomological and Natural History Society)
2. Systematics and Biodiversity (from the Natural History Museum)
3. Essex Naturalist (from the Essex Field Club)
4. Suffolk Natural History (from Suffolk Naturalists Society)
5. Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia
6. Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria

As always, copies of these and other journals to which the Museum and Museum staff subscribe are available to Society members when visiting the Shirehall. Please note all members can consult the books within the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society library by appointment. Please give me a call on 01603 493636

Tony Irwin - Curator of Natural History
Norwich Castle Museum

Royal Norfolk Show

June 29th/30th 2005

This was our fourth appearance at the show, and what a success it was, being runner up, in the 'Best Rural Educational Stand' section, for which we were awarded a certificate and £200.

The success was down to the spiders! This was our main theme this year, along with the photographic gallery and the 'Notable Trees of Norwich' display.

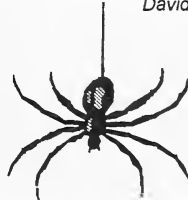
The 'Spiders of Norfolk', with live specimens proved very successful with the children and adults alike. Thanks must go to Peter Nicholson and Robert Maidstone for all the hard work involved in putting it together. The photographs, text and specimens from Peter were superb. The star of the show, however, was the Cave Spider (*Meta menardi*) collected and shown in an original drainpipe by Robert. To view the spider the drain cover had to be lifted - a test not for the faint-hearted!

Brian McFarlane's photographs, particularly his sequence of Barn Owl and Kestrel clashing in a mid-air tussle over a food catch, was stunning and caused much interest.

Rex Hancy's display of collected leaves and wood cross-sections from various tree species for people to identify also found much interest. This was the backdrop for Rex's book, 'Notable Trees of Norwich', just published by the Society in time for the Show. A good number were sold to the public, which were signed by the author.

Thanks must also go to those who helped on the stand over the two days. The question is, since we have set such a very high standard can we better this in 2006?

David Nobbs



Excursion Reports


Featuring:

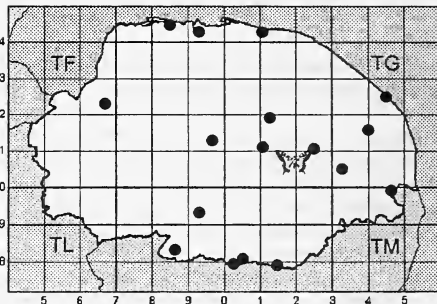
Gittin & Stubbin's Wood

Warren Farm : Warham

and Horsey Dunes

Great Hockham

● 2005-06 Field Meeting location
 John Innes Centre Indoor meetings



Gittin & Stubbin's Woods

Sunday 10th April 2005

A party of 20 or so members and others gathered in a layby on the A143 between Wortham and Botesdale on a pleasant April morning prior to moving off to see the rare unspotted or Suffolk lungwort. Such is the allure to botanists of this nationally-rare 'red data' woodland perennial herb of poorly drained, fertile soils, that one of the party had driven south from Yorkshire for the day to see it. *Pulmonaria obscura* is thought to grow wild in Britain currently at only three clustered Suffolk sites, namely Burgate, Gittin ('Gittin's' to the locals) and Stubbin's Woods. Access to these privately-owned ancient woods on the boulder clay, devoted now mainly to shooting, is very rarely permitted - apart from guided-tours on an open day on or about May Day, by which time other plants in flower perhaps outshine the lungwort - so special thanks are due to Mr. D. Laughlan for kindly allowing us to visit and explore freely the two latter of these ancient woods of the Suffolk boulder clay.

We were fortunate to have for our leader Martin Sanford, the BSBI Suffolk Plant Recorder, who has studied and written about the lungwort. In addition, David Orr, a local resident but long-time member of the Society despite living in 'foreign parts' south of the Waveney, was on hand to enrich the visit with his detailed local knowledge, current and historical. The woods, though once long ago essentially a single complex, are now

distinct and crown low hills because the flat hilltops were too wet to be economically cleared for agriculture whereas the hillsides could more easily be drained and eventually used for arable. Even the recorded ownership of the woods stretches back all of 1000 years.

We first visited Gittin Wood, containing much ash, field maple and hazel, and an impressively rich ground flora, not only in terms of number of species present, which include most of the 'usual' plants of the woodland floor that one can think of - wood anemone, bugle, wood dog-violet, sanicle, bluebell, herb bennet, moschatel, ransoms, yellow archangel etc., but also considerable *spreads* of some of these and, amazingly, of herb paris and purple-spotted orchid. Also present much less densely was twayblade, but this wood is unfortunately not in the Suffolk oxlip belt. Bee-flies were observed making the most of this floral variety, and the birders in the party were pleased to hear a lesser-spotted woodpecker.

We had entered Gittin from the south by way of its central ride, whereupon occasional plants of unspotted lungwort were immediately apparent at the wood edge with the flowers at different stages of maturity, thus ranging in colour from some pinkish to mostly bluish-violet shades. Though the Lungwort has been known to grow in these woods for at least 165 years, its identity was firmly determined rather more recently, especially once chromosome counts could be made. Most of us have to be content to differentiate Suffolk Lungwort principally by its unspotted, rather dark-green leaves, which are

lost in winter. The leaves of the one other native species of lungwort (*Pulmonaria longifolia*) are normally white-spotted and this plant is in any case native only to a small coastal area of central southern England. But unfortunately, the leaves of introduced species and of selections and hybrids which have long grown in and escaped from gardens in our region, though usually strongly white-spotted are not invariably so - and Suffolk lungwort itself can occasionally show faint pale-green spotting!

Martin pointed out that unspotted lungwort is now presumed to be native at its Suffolk stations because it has been rarely cultivated in Britain, it grows in semi-natural ancient woodland rather than being restricted to thoroughgoing man-made habitats, and it is recognised as native in neighbouring countries in comparable habitat-types and plant communities (albeit no nearer than 400km away in the Belgian Ardennes!). It's true that it was not first recorded at a really early date here (1842), but then it is rare and easily overlooked. In Gitting, the argument for its being native seemed persuasive to a number of members, for though many clumps grow near the principal rides, they are well distributed along them, and some plants can be found deep in the woodland interior. Like primroses, lungwort flowers are heterostylous, their styles being either thrum- or pin-eyed to promote cross-pollination, and production of seedlings is good. In Stubbin's (which we visited in the afternoon after lunch back at the cars), the lungwort is much more localised, growing mainly in a large and luxuriant patch in the sunny and



grassy rectangular clearing that almost splits the wood into east and west parts. The woodland ground flora generally was much less rich in Stubbin's (a wetter wood than Gittin) with plentiful perennial mercury, but the expanse of primroses which thickly carpeted this wide central clearing was magnificent - surely there can be no greater profusion anywhere in the county. The wood itself is notable for its hornbeam.

For Martin Sanford's full account (with C R Birkinshaw) of Suffolk lungwort., BSBI members can consult *Watsonia*, volume 21 part 2 (September 1996), pp.169-178. Many thanks to Mike Hall for securing access to the Woods, organising the visit, and taking bookings.

Stephen Martin

Warren Farm: Waxham – Horsey Dunes

Sunday, 15th May, 2005

It was a little after 11.00am that the group, who had gathered at the barrier on the roadway to the farm, set off towards the dunes. Almost immediately Marilyn Abdullah commented on the songs of Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and Stonechat coming from the scrubby woodland to the north of the road and at the same time Janet Negal pointed out a Marsh Harrier above the grazing marshes to the south. This was a good start to the day, which was bettered almost as soon as we got on to the dunes. Whilst still on the path into the dunes Bob Leaney pointed out what he thought would be the plant of the day – Dune Fescue, *Vulpia fasciculata* – which was in some profusion for several yards where the sand was somewhat compacted. This is only the third Norfolk record for this nationally scarce species, having been previously recorded from Holme and Yarmouth North Denes. We then divided into two groups, one going to the north towards Poplar Farm with Bob Leaney and Mary Ghullam and the other to the south towards Horsey Gap with Laurie Hall and Janet Negal.

Soon after moving into the dunes we were joined by two more members of

the Society, which brought our number to 13. It was immediately obvious just how widespread and prolific were the plants of Heath Dog Violet, *Viola canina* ssp. *canina*, which was one of the species we had come to see. The brilliantly blue flowers were outstanding but the leaves were more difficult to see and in some cases seemed non-existent. However, damaged leaves were noted and both Mary Ghullam and Hattie Aldridge found leaves that showed the distinctive damage caused by the caterpillars of the Dark Green Frillillary butterfly, with either just the mid-rib left or the petiole without any blade at all. Many leaves were untouched which is supposed to indicate a sparse population of the larvae but a little later in the morning Francis Farrow found a well grown caterpillar sunning itself but not on a violet leaf. This definitely proved the presence of the butterfly in this part of the east coast dune system and was the second of the species we had hoped to see.



When Margaret How pointed out an old nest with 14 pheasant eggshells this was thought to be a possible reason for the local sparseness of the caterpillars as they were likely to have been food for the chicks.

We were also hoping to determine the distribution in these dunes of Grey Hair Grass, *Corynephorus canescens*, another nationally scarce species known to the south of Horsey Gap. It was found to be widespread and Laurie Hall pointed out three dune hollows where it was particularly prolific, being the dominant species over several dozen square yards in each case. Early Hair Grass, *Airia praecox* was also noted within the dunes as were Lesser Chickweed, *Stellaria pallida*, Sea Bindweed, *Convolvulus soldanella* and Prickly Lettuce, *Lactuca serriola*, (common along the dunes on the north Norfolk coast) which was recorded from the east coast dunes for the first time. Scattered throughout the various dune grasses were

clumps of grey lichen, which Pat Negal pointed out and identified as *Cladonia rangiformis*. Mixed with the grasses were plants of Hawkweed, *Hieracium umbellatum*, with upstanding old stems and Robert Maidstone pointed out galls on these stems, which had been triggered by the gall wasp *Aulacidea hieracii*. Four Mouse-ears were found within the dunes; Sea Mouse-ear *Cerastium diffusum*, Little Mouse-ear *C. semidecandrum*, Sticky Mouse-ear *C. glomeratum* and Common Mouse-ear *C. fontanum*. On the Common Mouse-ear Robert spotted galled leaves caused by the aphid *Brachycolus cerastii*. The larvae of the fly *Phytomyza horticola* had also mined some of the leaves.

The particularly small vetch with bright pink/purple flowers which it was thought might be Spring Vetch *Vicia lathyroides* (described as having dull purple flowers) on closer inspection later was found to be a subspecies of the Common Vetch *Vicia sativa* ssp. *nigra* which is also known from maritime sand habitats.

Almost everywhere we walked we disturbed a small, drab moth *Glyphipterix fuscoviridella* whose larvae feed in the rootstock of Field Wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, which is widespread throughout the area. As the Clustered Heath Wood-rush *Luzula multiflora* ssp. *congesta* was unusually common this may well also be the larval foodplant. Robert found the day flying long-horned moth *Adela reaumurella* and the distinctive Lime-speck Pug, *Eupithecia centaureata*, with the tortrix *Cydia succedana* being seen around the Gorse. Several members of the group spotted both Small Copper and Speckled Wood butterflies and among other insects seen the Slender Ground Hopper, *Tetrix subulata*, the sand weevil *Philopodon plagiatus* and the largish ant *Formica fusca* were all found on bare sand. In the debris at the base of the vegetation Robert found some small snails which "smelt a little of garlic when rubbed" and were species of *Oxychilus* probably *O. helveticus*. A caterpillar of the Oak Eggar Moth was noted by Nick Elsley, that of the Smoky Wainscot was seen low in the grasses and leaf mines of the micro-

moth *Stigmella aurella* were spotted in several bramble leaves.

An area with oaks (some of which were well infested with oak marble galls), shallows and some gorse at the back of the dunes, towards Horsey Gap, was where we saw the Large Red Damselfly, the Hairy Aeshna Dragonfly; a couple of weevils, *Phyllobius argentatus* and *P. pyri*, one with a green and the other with a bronze sheen; the gorse shield-bug *Piezodorus lituratus* and the green shield-bug *Palomena prasina*. Almost as soon as the call of the Whimbrel was heard Nick Elsey pointed out a flight of eight with another group of four seen a little later (possibly four of the first eight).

Near the Poplar Farm camp site at the back of the dunes was a damp area where Bob and Mary found the very rare Divided Sedge, *Carex divisa* which is more usually found in estuarine marshes. This was the first coastal record for East Norfolk. Blinks *Montia fontana* was abundant at this site and Marsh Foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus* was also well represented here. Close by the dyke Rubyna Sheikh commented on the large number of froglets – almost underfoot. We saw a Common Lizard scurrying away from our footfall; the evidence of both hare and rabbit with their droppings among the dunes together with a couple of rabbit burrows and a Muntjac, seen by Francis near the coast road.

Having had a really rewarding day in glorious sunshine, which was nicely tempered by a pleasant on-shore breeze, seeing a somewhat tired looking Small Tortoiseshell "cruising" beside us as we walked back to the cars probably summed up the delights of the day. We had recorded more than 90 species of plants and over 50 species of animals and the day was greatly enjoyed by everyone present. We all extend our thanks to Bill Mitchell who suggested the venue and made the initial arrangements but unfortunately could not be with us. I also thank Martin Collier for help with identification of the beetles and comments on some of them and Derek Howlett for comments on the snails seen.

Mike Hall

Great Hockham

Sunday 12th June, 2005

A small party met on a rather chilly morning after rain at Hockham Picnic Place off the A1075 road, to explore the adjacent forest. We were greeted by the sounds of a 'rave' deep in the woods to one side and motorcycle sports to another, but, infinitely more pleasingly, by our leader for the day, Eric Rogers, who had thoughtfully gathered a selection of leafy twigs from some of the trees that we would see on our walk, which he showed us beforehand to aid identification.

As a retired forester, responsible for the planting of some of the stands we saw, Eric was able to add interesting information on the history of the forest and the nature of the trees from a timber-producing as well as a purely botanical point of view. Of the conifers, the Scots Pine was originally the preferred species but has been greatly supplanted by Corsican Pine since forms of the latter yielding much better timber became available later in the twentieth century. Also occasionally present is Western Red Cedar and some Lawson's Cypress, though *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*, with its striking red pollen, is not a good grower here, finding conditions too dry. There is very little Noble Fir in the forest, but rather more Silver Fir, from which comes the Canada Balsam used in preparing microscope slides. Of the deciduous trees, the Silver or Warty Birch (*Betula pendula*) is the one preferring the drier parts, whereas the Downy species (*B. pubescens*) tends to replace it in the wet. The Pedunculate Oak and the Sessile - the latter a lover of shallow, sandy, acid soils - are both to be found and there are some Turkey Oaks from southern Europe which are also fond of acid sands and therefore thrive, but unfortunately don't produce good timber. New plantings of Larch are normally of the hybrid, *Larix x marschlinii* (first noticed growing in Perthshire in 1904), rather than the European Larch with its yellowish twigs and the Japanese Larch with its red. Of the poplars, the Grey (a hybrid of the Aspen and the White Poplar but at least as old as the Bronze Age), is

the one usually found, but is not planted. The White Poplar is also not planted, as it grows poorly in Breckland conditions. The number of other tree and shrub species seen on our walk was surprisingly high and included Bird Cherry, Sweet Chestnut, Purging Buckthorn, Wych and hybrid Elm, Goat Willow, Wild Cherry, Holly, Ash, Elder, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Gorse and Privet. Particularly fine this year on many a tree at the margins or in open woodland were towering columns of Honey-suckle in full bloom. White Admirals are apparently seen thereabouts, but the few, brief sunny intervals were too wan to tempt them out. We did, however, see one or two other butterflies, including a Speckled Wood. Eric pointed out a good number of trees damaged either by animals or fungal disease, including sycamores ring-barked spectacularly toward the top by Grey Squirrels for their sap. Good sycamore timber now fetches more than oak.

Not only the trees provided interest. The Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Chiffchaff, Whithroat, Blackcap, Wren, Tree Pipit and Pheasant were all heard and some seen, and a Sparrow Hawk hung in the sky above our pleasant lunchtime picnic site. We were pleased to see bright red plants of nationally-scarce Mossy Stone-crop fairly plentifully along one track (surely now locally common on suitably dry, sandy, gravelly Breckland forest tracks which are well-trodden and often driven over). We were also lucky to have Robert Maidstone and Stephen Livermore with us so that the often-diminutive fauna associated with the trees and ground vegetation we passed was continuously spotted and examined. At one point a small cloud of *Nemophora degeerella* enabled Stephen to point out that the male has the longest antennae of any British moth.

Thanks are due to Eric for organising such an enjoyable and rewarding day.

Stephen Martin.



George Garrard 1919 – 2005

Time rushes on and it comes as something of a shock to note that George Garrard's masterly paper on Ringmere was published thirty-five years ago in *The Transactions of The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society* Volume 22 Part 2.

Did his music pupils at the school in which he served have any awareness of the dedication and time involved in what to them would have been a strange project? The biology students may have had some inkling of the ongoing, meticulous study but almost certainly had no comprehension of the importance of the results.

Ringmere and its surroundings have long been associated with mysterious changes in water level and consequently the nature of the adjacent vegetation. The whole of Breckland was at the time of publication in the middle of a fundamental transformation. For some years it was still possible to spend all day in recording the flora and fauna without seeing another human. Before that, during the long period of George's record taking at Ringmere, the isolation could be all the more marked.

That period of study included the years of the near elimination of the rabbit which previously had a profound effect upon Breckland scene. The paper provides an invaluable insight into the influence of the once ubiquitous rodent and the consequences of its removal as well as the rise and fall of the waters.

Mention George Garrard to inhabitants of Drayton and Taverham with any duration of residence and they immediately recall his services to Drayton as choir-master and organist. Like the pupils, few knew of his contributions to our botanical knowledge.

Some of his near neighbours knew him rather better and were used to seeing him exploring the impoverished fields behind his bungalow and the damp wood between the road and the railway track which was a keen naturalist's delight. Recently, a story recently told to me told how a neighbour took him to see what was probably the last plover's nest ever found on the rough ground before masses of houses filled in the area and the wood was decimated by the builders in the cause of "tidiness". George carefully marked the site and returned with his camera to begin a photographic record of the nest and its family, which was added to his considerable collection of slides. Pictures, however good, are second-hand experience and the loss of explorable habitat was a sad loss to such a practical naturalist. I felt a mutual friend summed up George most neatly and concisely. She said, "He was an interesting and an interested man." May we all be so remembered.

Rex Hancy

Dr. Robert Jones 1919 -2005

Dr Robert Jones – 'Bob', was born in Cheshire in February 1919, one of three children. He joined the Royal Airforce as an airman in 1939 and served in various theatres, being elevated to Pilot Officer in Bomber Command for the entire duration of the war. Those close to him knew that he endured many fearsome experiences (over Germany and later in North Africa and the Far East) but was unstinting in his duty.

Near the end of the war he was posted to the Nutt's Corner airfield, near Belfast, for a much deserved 'rest'. Here, he met his wife to be of 59 years, Betty, whom he married in 1946.

In the same year Bob started a degree course in Biology at Queens University in Belfast. With family help the couple bought and managed a traditional corner shop (in what were peaceful times in Belfast and elsewhere) which they lived over to earn a living while Bob completed his degree course.

In 1951, pursuing his ambition to teach, the couple moved to Essex and later Nottinghamshire. Bob later accepted a position as lecturer at Strathclyde University where he achieved a PHD in 1968. The couple lived in Cardross, near Glasgow, during this period before retiring to Norfolk in 1980. He died on 4 January 2005.

Dr Jones is survived by his wife Betty who lives in Potter Heigham. He is fondly remembered by his beloved wife and caring relatives in Northern Ireland and Australia.

Roy Baker recalls "Bob Jones became a familiar sight at the Ted Ellis Trust reserve at Wheatfen in the 1990s. With his collecting bag, fine mesh net, small glass pipettes and collecting bottles he would wander off into the fens looking for water mites. When he first came to Wheatfen only one species of water mite had been identified and in a short time he had increased the records to 24 species from nine families. These included a species new to Norfolk. He would ask Derek Hewlett and I to gather freshwater mussels for him and we would take them to his bungalow in Potter Heigham where they were kept alive in aquaria until he was ready to examine them for water mites. He made some very interesting discoveries of mites in these freshwater mussels. Bob Jones was a national expert on water mites and was much admired in his chosen field of study. He will be sadly missed by his friends in Norfolk who used his freely given expertise in freshwater microscopy."

Tony Irwin recalls "He was very much one of the "old school" of naturalists - passionate about his chosen field and modestly knowledgeable about others. He published a number of papers on the Norfolk hydrachnid fauna."

Selected Bibliography of R.K.H. Jones

1985 *Lebertia sefvei* Walter, a most unusual water mite from Holt Lowes. *TNNNS* 27(1):66

1987 Interesting water mites (*Hydracarina*) from Breckland. *TNNNS* 27(5):374

1991 A check list of Norfolk water mites (*Hydracarina*) *TNNNS* 29(1):27-31

2000 Water mite information. *TNNNS* 30(1):28-29

Stephen Livermore

Dr. Geoffrey Watts 1927-2005

Geoffrey Watts, who passed away recently after a long illness, was a member of this Society for over forty years. Since the early 1960s he lectured in biology to trainee teachers at Keswick Hall College of Education where his extensive knowledge and drive enthused many students to take up natural history as a focus of their lives. On the annual marine field studies trips in March to North Devon and the Gower Peninsular in Wales he developed, and passed onto students, his wide expertise in identifying seaweeds and relating their form and structure to their ecological needs. Many specimens he mounted onto cards for ease of identification. Later he extended this work to studies of our native grasses. Many members will remember his beautifully exhibited mounts which he showed to the Society on a number of occasions. His collection is now housed at the Gressinghall Museum. This love of grasses included one famous trip across America by Greyhound bus where at every stop he would dash out to collect grasses for his collection. The Americans saw him as an eccentric Englishman and he laughingly agreed with this description.

In 1974 he completed his doctoral thesis at the University of East Anglia on the allocation of resources in perennial plants. This involved him sampling vegetation at Holkham and Walberswick Nature Reserves and growing experimental plots of grasses, plantain and clover.

Geoffrey developed an interest in natural history photography where his eye for a good photograph came to the fore. In 1948 he was the photo editor of the Cambridge University Varsity magazine. This interest led him, with Bob Robinson, to initiate the photographic group within the Society so that colleagues could share technical knowledge and enjoy/criticise each others work. This group remains very active to this day and is a tribute to these two pioneers within the Society.

Geoffrey was also the driving force behind the Society's detailed survey of the Yare river valley through Norwich. He organised groups of experts week by week to visit parts of the valley and he brought the whole together in a report published in the *Transactions* which was used to guide both Norwich and Norfolk Councils on conservation and management of the valley. This organisational ability was used over twenty years ago to reorganize the constitution of the Society and give it a management structure of a Council and Sub-committees. Geoffrey became the first Chairman of Council and guided it through its first three years.

Geoffrey sang with various choirs including the Keswick Hall Choir, Melody, Acapella, Wymondham Choral Society and he founded the South Norfolk Singers.

On retirement Geoffrey and his wife Elizabeth planted and developed a 5 acre woodland near their home in South Norfolk. This remains a legacy to his love of the countryside and nature which formed so much of his life. In July the family will be holding a memorial service to be followed by a walk around this wood so lovingly created by Geoffrey.

Roy Baker

THE SECRET OF THE BROADS

Dr. Joyce Lambert 1917-2005

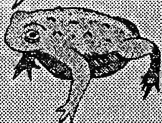
Dr Joyce Lambert, one of the Society's most distinguished members, died on May 4th at the age of 88. Dr Lambert was, as the Daily Telegraph obituary summed it up, "the botanist whose research revealed that the Norfolk Broads were created not by nature but by man". Her theory, initially greeted with scepticism but soon proved to be correct, was presented in her presidential address to the Society in April 1952 and published, updated with significant new data, in the *Transactions* for that year (Vol. XVII Part IV).

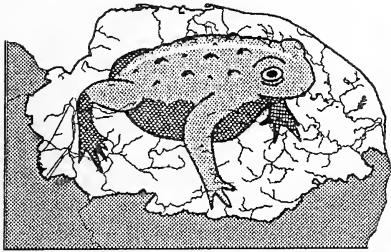
Dr Lambert, who for 18 years was lecturer in botany at Southampton University, returned to Norfolk on her retirement in 1979 to live in the house in Brundall that her grandfather had built. Bedridden but retaining all her mental capacity, she spent her final years at Oakwood House nursing home at Colney near Norwich.

It is hoped that a full obituary, recalling her Broads studies, will appear in the 2006 *Transactions*.



Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by October 1st, 2005 to the following address: Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net





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NATTERJACK

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 91
November 2005

Toad-in-the-hole....

My thanks for all the contributions - another packed edition. Check out Nats' Gallery for an important and very exciting announcement. Relive the heady days of summer(?) with the excellent excursion reports and read some interesting observations such as the drunken frog - funny I thought other amphibians were the alcoholics! Season's greetings to all NNNs members.

FF

NATS' GALLERY

The times they are a-changing, 'Natterjack' is poised to burst into the New Year with a difference - an exciting difference - a metamorphosis - to emerge with added colour! Colour to brighten up the dullest days of winter and to compliment the sun-drenched days of summer. A new look 'Natterjack', which with your help, will become a colourful edition to the Society's publications. A colour supplement of Norfolk's natural history is to be added, which will feature your photos of the rare, the beautiful, the not-so-beautiful, the unusual and the plain ordinary that you have snapped. Whether it is a new county record or a common species - if it is interesting send it in. It will also be an opportunity for contributors of articles to illustrate their subject. Pictures from digital cameras are ideal, however, if you are not a digital user no worries, it will also be possible to scan slides or prints so everyone can join the colour revolution!

The first supplement will be in the February edition (deadline January 6, 2006). Digital pictures should be in a suitable format such as a jpeg or tiff file and although the larger the size the better the reproduction small size files can also be submitted. Please include a brief description of the photographs, which should be named, dated and have location details if relevant. Digital photos can be sent on floppy disc, CDrom or preferably as an attachment by email (or slides/prints by post) to 'The Norfolk Natterjack' editor (address on back page).

May all Society members look forward to a very happy and colourful New Year.

A Date for the Diary.....

Tuesday 20th December - 1930 hrs

FESTIVE REFRESHMENTS

Following a presentation by the Norfolk Moth Survey at the John Innes Centre (G34/5)

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page 7	Roydon Common.
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page 9	Scale.
page 10	Byrigological meetings (2005-2006 programme). Obituaries: Roy Smith.



CAR STICKERS

We have a new supply of Society car stickers. As before, they are bright yellow and bear the name of the Society and the swallowtail butterfly. But, unlike the previous sticky version which could not be removed in one piece, these are self-cling and can be peeled off if necessary.

They are £1.00 each (£1.20 with postage) and can be obtained at all Society meetings or from David Paull, 8 Lindford Drive, Eaton, Norwich NR4 6LT



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A Day at Minsmere

The Island Mere hide at Minsmere is very good for watching the local birdlife from but photographically has much against it. For most of the day you are facing into the light, therefore the subjects are often in silhouette or at best show very little in the way of detail, but despite the problems a friend and I had hopes of getting a flying shot of bittern there. We knew there was a nest close to the hide and that feeding flights were taking place every so often. We did have several chances during the time we spent there and hopefully a few decent exposures will result. It's strange that such a large bird can merge so well into the landscape even in flights, the slow wing beats seem to harmonise so well with the gently swaying reed and sedge beds. Some times the bird would be almost upon us before it was spotted, there is no doubt that two pairs of eyes are better for this kind of project.

Notes on the Eurasian Jay – *Garrulus glandarius*

Whilst conducting a common bird census of Ken Hill Woods during 2003, I heard a pure fluting bird song, slightly reminiscent of the golden oriole. Assuming the songster to be an exotic escapee, I made my way quietly through the pine plantation in an attempt to gain a view of the bird. Upon approaching the source of the sound I saw a tight gathering of 15 jays sitting quietly, attentively listening to another jay in the middle of the group which was producing the 'song' I could hear.

As I moved closer to get a better view the birds became agitated, giving alarm calls before moving off to a position 50 yards behind me before resuming their 'meeting'. In his book entitled 'The Crows', Franklin Coombs notes that such 'meetings' can consist of up to 30 individuals and cites Goodwin (1952) as stating that in such situations jays may issue a low warbling song considered to be mostly composed of mimicking sounds. I have heard jay mimic the songs of other species on a number of occasions but the resulting 'song' is usually coarse and often degenerates into a series of hoarse rasping notes. On this particular occasion the song produced by the jay at Ken Hill Woods was pure and consisted of long unbroken phrases.

Incidentally, shortly after this I was in the same vicinity one morning just before dawn and heard a tawny owl. Instead of the typical gap between repeat calls it blended them into one long call. I assumed this to be coming from a young, inexperienced bird and called back. Almost immediately I saw the silhouette of a bird as it flew into a tree above me. From its silhouette I could just make out that the bird was a jay as it continued to mimic the call of a tawny owl.

At Dersingham Bog this year, I witnessed a similar gathering to the one I had seen in Ken Hill woods, on this occasion consisting of five jays gathered around a single singing bird in the middle. This time, the song was more 'scratchy', resembling a loud Bullfinch.

On each of these occasions, the attendant birds seemed very preoccupied and did not flush until I was very close and even then only flew a few yards further away before reconvening. I would be interested to read whether others have experienced gathering of Jays and whether these were accompanied by such a 'song'.

Ash Murray

At the moment there are several young marsh harriers just learning the ropes of flying. Three youngsters are very unusual in their colouration, the upper wings and back are white with a few darker bars showing through, they are at the moment very distinctive and can be picked out a long way off. Both adults are normal colouring, if these unusual markings remain after the moult they will be spectacular birds indeed.

We also had the company of three hobbies during the day, as usual they enchanted all in the hide with their spectacular flying displays. Despite the strong breeze they were catching dragonflies easily enough, they must have amazing eyesight and reflexes to catch such agile prey at great speed, wonderful to see. Little egret and bearded tits also made an appearance during our stay in the hide, a very enjoyable day.

Tony Howes

AND THEN IT WAS BROWN!

We have had some unusual visitors to our tiny back garden in Norwich: weasel, bank vole, wood mouse, fox. But on July 3 there among the 20-30 sparrows which daily raid our bird table was a pure white youngster. Not albino - there was not a hint of pink. Nor, as it turned out later, leucistic.

One hears of oddities being attacked and driven off by "normal" members of the tribe. But our white sparrow seemed to be entirely accepted among its peers. Initially, on its daily visits, it was fed by both its parents. Gradually it learnt to feed itself - but it never, unlike almost all the other sparrows, mastered the art of clinging to the seed feeders and settled for foraging, with the dunnocks, robins and blackbirds, on the seed dropped by the messy eaters above. If danger - invariably imagined rather than real - threatened, the bird seldom flew off with all the others but scuttled under plants in the adjacent flower bed.

Then, early in August, we noticed that the youngster was beginning to show brown streaks among its feathers. By the end of the month it was almost completely brown, apart from white feathers in its tail, and by the second week of September the only evidence that it had once "done different" was some white in its primary wing feathers. And by then, because it did not have a black "bib", we knew that "it" was in fact "she".

David Paull



Not Only Moths Come To Light (5)

As summer approached I had high hopes of an improvement in the number and variety of insects found in the light traps. However repeated cold spells, particularly at night, meant I was a little disappointed. There were more moths but nothing to compare with the previous couple of years and although the range of other insects also increased virtually all were species that I had mentioned a year ago.

The one outstanding species was a beetle that came to light on the night of the 16th June. Of medium size, some 10 mm long, it was the conspicuous segmentation of its antennae and the dark yellowish elytra that caught my eye. Closer inspection showed it had a fine silky down and my hesitant identification as the darkling beetle, *Pseudocistela ceram-*

boides (L.) was confirmed by Martin Collier (thank you Martin) who told me this was just the second Norfolk record for this Notable B species. The other record also being at mercury vapour light. It is a species of ancient broad-leaved and pasture-woodland where the larvae develop in dead wood. It is a local and wide-spread species throughout the southern half of England and is known to be attracted to mercury vapour light. Martin Collier is sure it is to be found elsewhere in the county and looks forward to more records - no necessarily from light traps.

Hopefully the dearth of insects (also reported by Rex Hancy in his EPD column) this year is just a "blip" and not a sign of things to come.

Mike Hall

Mini Monsters

One of my happy memories of childhood are the Sunday afternoon walks that took place if conditions outside were suitable. The various lanes in the Wymondham area were very quiet, very little road traffic about in those days, you might have to step up onto the verge every now and again, to let a car go by, otherwise you had those glorious country lanes to yourself.

As the adults chattered away about 'grownup things' us youngsters would entertain ourselves by, among other things, counting the lizards we saw on the grass verges. They were more often than not sunning themselves on areas of rough ground or perched on the mounds of cut grass that were left after the verges were cut. I remember the numbers running into dozens during the course of these walks, if you tried to look closely they would invariably scuttle away into the surrounding herbage.

Then there seems to be a blank between those days in the 1930's and the present time. I did see the odd lizard, but never in the numbers

of those far off days, until recently. The 'half moon' boardwalk at Strumpshaw Fen has a thriving population of these charming little reptiles. On warm days they hunt insects and bask in the sun all along the boardwalk, as always scuttling to cover if they feel threatened, but soon back if you keep still. At the moment (August) there are as many young ones as adults, these young are very dark in colour, almost black. Like most of their kind these viviparous lizards have the ability to shed their tails if attacked or threatened, several in this colony have at some point lost theirs and are now growing new ones. Colours vary, some of the adults look very gaudy, with pale stripes running the length of their bodies, or dark blotches on a paler background.

It certainly brought back pleasant memories of my childhood while watching these enchanting little lizards, they obviously thrive in the damp conditions, all around is a watery wilderness, one wonders where they go during the winter months - *Thas a rumun' bor.*

Tony Howes

Spring in hospital

It was sad to see four obituaries in the last "Natterjack", but it could so easily have been five. Without for the supreme surgical skills and dedicated nursing available at Papworth it would have been. However, I am now (incredibly) fully restored to health, and am even cycling again.

It is particularly galling for a naturalist to be confined to a hospital bed throughout the best part of spring. One which I occupied longest looked out on to a corner of woodland, which you might think promising. However, all I saw was the winter branches producing their spring leaves - oh, and a ten second visit by a Nuthatch.

The highlight of my stay there was when they had to take me on a day-trip to Hinchinbrook, for a "procedure" which could not be done at Papworth. I went by ambulance, but was able to sit up. You just could not believe how delightful it was to see the Cambridgeshire countryside in the glorious spring sunshine, beginning with the red-flowered Horse Chestnuts on the village green. Even the not-quite-Fen farmland looked attractive, with odd bits of woodland and nice roadside verges, and we went across that unusual long bridge at St. Ives. I've seen spring in France, and spring in the U.S.A, but it would take a lot to beat our English one!

Paul Banham



THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

24 NOV 2005

GENERAL



Obliging Dragons

During the summer months it's very enjoyable to take the camera and spend a few hours in pursuit of our glorious dragonflies. These colourful insects are best photographed when they are perched, either resting from flying or waiting for prey to come close. The different species each have their own way of catching prey and it certainly helps to have an understanding of this before attempting photography.

Some are more difficult than others and spend ages in flight before landing for a rest, this applies mainly to the large hawkers. Some species are relatively easy to approach and photograph, one that falls in this category is the four spot chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*), they tend to hunt from a prominent perch and from there make sorties after passing insect prey. They are very tolerant of us and will allow the photographer to approach closely if care is taken.

It's very easy to put a perch of your own choice in place removing all the others and having a good background to set the insect off, with not too much foliage to distract your eye. Ideally a plain colour will look good with, for example, out of focus greenery or brown dead reed. A few hours on a warm, windless day, spent in pursuit of dragonflies is very pleasing, with the possibility of some good photographs at the end for good measure.



Tony Howes

Believe it or Not

Whilst clearing fallen fruit one evening, prior to mowing under apple and plum trees the next day, I was somewhat startled when something hopped away in front of me. It was a full grown frog and did not go very far. I left the plums in that area and particularly a ripe one where the skin was off and the flesh looked to have been partially eaten. As I continued to pick up the fruit, a little away from the "object plum", keeping an eye on it, the frog came back after a couple of minutes and started to eat/suck/nibble the flesh. I watched for several minutes until it had apparently had its fill – about three-quarters of an average sized Victoria plum – and then hopped away. This happened on 1st September towards the end of the hot dry spell at the end of August and I wonder whether the frog was after moisture rather than attracted by the sweetness of the plum. Has anyone else seen anything similar or can explain what the frog was after?

Mike Hall

A change in the law

The provisions of the Drugs Act 2005 came into force on the 18th July 2005. In a nutshell it creates an ARRESTABLE OFFENCE for the POSSESSION, POSSESSION WITH INTENT TO SUPPLY, SUPPLY, PRODUCTION, SALE, IMPORT & EXPORT of ANY FUNGUS containing PSilocin or PSilocybin, in ANY form (fresh or prepared in any way.) The fungi and the chemicals themselves are CLASS A Drugs due to the Legislator's belief that their hallucinogenic properties, which are sought after by drug users, are harmful, particularly to users who suffer from mental illness. Previous to 18 July one could lawfully possess fresh fungi of this type. They only became unlawful once prepared for ingestion.

The effects of this change in the Law are that market stalls and other retail outlets that sold fresh fungi, can no longer do so lawfully. Producers / growers can no longer carry on their business and "Psychonauts", the users, cannot get their supplies and will likely go looking for fungi in the Countryside. The Liberty Cap, *Psilocybe semilanceata* is the principle British species used.

Clearly this leaves the scientific collector of fungi in an awkward position. There are statutory defences and Exceptions to the above offences. I believe only two are relevant to Fungi foragers. The first is that a defendant would have to prove to the Court that they "neither

believed nor suspected nor had reason to suspect that the fungi in question were a controlled drug." The second is that the Secretary of State may issue a Licence in order to allow possession for research purposes.

One would hope that Police Officers would use their discretion and investigative powers to establish from the circumstances whether they were dealing with genuine people or misusers of psychoactive chemicals. But the fact remains that once you have picked a Liberty Cap you commit an offence and are liable to arrest.

Under these circumstances, as a Police Officer, I can only advise that you familiarise yourselves, from books, with the Liberty Cap and avoid possessing it. There are several "Psilocybes" that occur in Britain but they are not potent enough to be used for gaining hallucinations even though their possession would be illegal. Fungi experts within the Society may be able to assist you in avoiding *Psilocybe* species.

As a Naturalist I feel aggrieved that the scientific study of Fungi should cause anxiety because of this change in the Law. The reality of the situation is that it is highly unlikely that a "Fungus Foray" would be raided by the Drug Squad or a genuine student be dragged kicking and screaming before the Magistrates! But be aware that users may try to use the same genuine excuses for possession as you would use!

Garth Coupland



The Crabbes Tale

(Eleanor and Clare found an edible crab lodges under the hedge by our car-space in High Street, Wells)

A crab there was that Crawlle hight by name
Who dwelt hard by the quay in Wells, of fame
That felt a yearning quite uncrabbe-like, I wean
To fishes of that kinde (well, I mean!)

When that Aprille, with her weather drabbe
With constant rain had soaked our poor crabbe,
And flooded both the Quay and nearby roade
(That part of Wells where dwelt our decapode),

Our Crawlle, to the backe teeth fed uppe,
Made sure, as far as any kit or puppe
Could reason in the filthy Wells environ
That he would better off be with attire on.

Such garment groweth not, as alle knowe
Upon a tree. What could he then bestowe
Aparte from his owne shell? Oh Helle!
For he was sick at heart, and bored as welle!

Around the corner, where the Beache roade
To beaches leadeth, there the gillies rode
Upon each other's backe, ever angled
To take such bait as screaming children dangled.

"I've had enow!", said Crawlle, "Let us scarper
Away from the Quay, and nearby harbour!"
To south, where no marsh lay, up several feete,
Our clever crabbe knew, was Staithe Streete.

There was his way, his end, his primal reason
To live beyond a normal crabbe's season.
And quicke as a flash, would you believe it,
He crawled faster than one could conceive it.

Within an hour (or two) at last he staggered
(As much as crabbes can), dead tired and haggard
Across both Station Road and Mille Roade
Where they conjoin, as flakers as a toade.

Before him, in its well acknowledged beauty,
Lay High Street, where his sense of crab-like duty
Requir'd him to remain, for ne'er crustacean
Had lived there before - enough relation!

Author's note: Students of Chaucer will know that, to bring out the full beauty of his Iambic pentameters ("tetum, tetum, tetum, tetum, tetum") it is necessary to ensure that every "E" at the end of a word is pronounced as a syllable. They may also recall that "Bawdeswelle" is the only Norfolk place-name cited in the Canterbury Tales

Paul Banham

Sightings in the Garden

Most mornings the bird feeders are topped up and a few handfuls of mixed seed are thrown onto the lawn before Wendy and I sit down for breakfast. We overlook the garden and have good views of what is going on and who is visiting.

Yesterday the two regular stock-doves were joined by a third bird, it looked paler overall and is probably one of this years young. The two originals have been coming now for about one year, might finish up with a whole flock of them.

We have many blackbirds that visit the garden and you tend to assume they are resident birds, but yesterday a new one turned up, quite distinctive with just one pure white feather in it's tail. I hadn't seen it before and have not seen it since. I had a similar incident last year, I was working in the shed when I saw water droplets being thrown up from the pond just outside. There was a blackbird sitting on the edge of the waterfall having a really good splash and he had an almost white head, just a few flecks of black in it. Again I had never seen it before or since.

This years starling broods are now looking very smart, the juvenile plumage is now changing to the adult, the heads and necks are very dark, with patches glinting purple and green on the wings. Strange birds, they will descend in numbers on to the lawn, where there is plenty of food, they strut about squabbling among themselves for just a few seconds then they are off again to pastures new.

Tony Howes



Excursion Reports

Featuring:

Weybourne

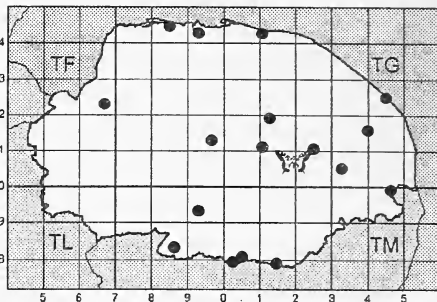
Roydon Common

Wheatfen

Herringfleet | Waveney

Scale

● 2005-06 Field Meeting location
 John Innes Centre
 Indoor meetings



Wildflowers Revealed at Weybourne

Sunday 29th May, 2005

Around twenty people gathered in the car park at Weybourne on a pleasant May Bank Holiday Sunday, under the leadership of Dr. Bob Leaney. A small breakaway group, eager to get on, spotted Bee Orchid, *Ophrys apifera*, flowering by the ditch leading to the car park. The party soon moved off along the cliff top towards Sheringham, having established the first rule of fieldwork – where lunch would be held! First point of interest was whether the small, whitish clover, covering much of the cliff top, was, in fact, Rough Clover, *Trifolium scabrum*, or Clustered Clover, *T. glomeratum*. Leaves were examined and Floras brought out until it was decided, given the way the veins arched back at the edge of the leaf, that it was Rough Clover. Bob Leaney removed Rich and Jermy's Plant Crib 1998 from his cavernous bag, recommending its key to non-flowering clovers, where differences in stipules and hairs on the leaf between the two species, are illustrated. The hunt was on for other small clovers. Hare'sfoot Clover, *T. arvense*, was abundant. Lesser and Hop Trefoil, *T. dubium* and *campestre* respectively, were found conveniently growing together, showing the clear difference in flowers. The smaller flowered Slender Trefoil, *T. micranthum*, was also nearby, to complete the picture. The final small clover of the day, however, had to wait until after lunch.

Another puzzle was the largish Hawkbit, flowering near the cliff edge. Its size suggested Rough Hawkbit, but after much discussion and dis-

section of the flower head to reveal the outer achenes, Bob Ellis demonstrated that it was Lesser Hawkbit, *Leontodon saxatilis*. Three species of Mouse-ear were also found, allowing comparison of hairs and bracts to identify Common, Sea and Little Mouse-ear, *Cerastium fontanum*, *diffusum* and *semi-decandrum*. Bill Mitchell was kept busy recording the growing list of species, including various birds and insects, while the party enjoyed the eye-catching display of yellow Common Bird'sfoot Trefoil, *Lotus corniculatus*, and the odd Kidney Vetch, *Anthyllis vulneraria*.

As the leading group reached the coastguard cottages, perched precariously on the cliff edge, they were welcomed by the sight and sound of a Corn Bunting, *Emberiza calandra*. Here Bob Leaney pointed out how to distinguish between the grass Great Brome, *Anisantha diandra*, and the smaller Sterile Brome, *A. sterilis*. Passing the cottages, noting the Alexanders, *Smyrnium olusatrum*, and the garden escapes, Bob's keen eye singled out a blue leaved Fescue. He thought it might be Hard Fescue, *Festuca brevipila*, increasingly sown along road verges, but Arthur Copping later identified it as a Red Fescue, *Festuca rubra* ssp. *juncea*. Finding it was almost lunchtime, it was decided to forgo a visit to the Wild Liquorice, *Astragalus glycyphyllos*, growing by the N. Norfolk Railway and return to the car park. Lunch was enjoyed, looking out to sea, watching various seabirds, such as Fulmar, *Fulmarus glacialis*, and Terns perform.

After lunch the group turned up the coast towards Kelling Hard, where some of the seaside specialities were

soon met with, such as Yellow Horned-Poppy, *Glaucium flavum*, a few in bloom, and a substantial patch of the delightful Sea Milkwort, *Glaux maritima*. Skirting the fenced-off area of the Muckleburgh Collection, where the party was assaulted by sight and sound of military vehicles, various ruderal species, such as Bristly Ox-tongue, *Picris echioides*, and assorted Docks were picked up. Early Forget-me-not, *Myosotis ramossissima*, was still just in flower, while one of the Docks, turned out to be the coastal subspecies, Shore Dock, *Rumex crispus*, ssp. *litoreus*. Wet-loving plants, such as False Fox Sedge, *Carex otrubae*, Branch Bur-reed, *Sparganium erectum*, and Sea Club-rush, *Bolboschoenus maritimus*, were growing in the ditch.

Climbing up a small incline, passed a low sand cliff, riddled with Bee holes, the leading group, at last, found Subterranean Clover, *T. subterraneum*. It was duly admired on hands and knees and its white and its sterile flowers photographed. On the way to a wet area, where Sea Arrow-grass, *Triglochin maritimum*, one of the species of Sea Lavender and a rush, probably Saltmarsh Rush, *Juncus gerardii*, were growing, Francis Farrow spotted a couple of moths – White Ermine, *Spilosoma lubricipeda* and the less common, Yellow Bell, *Semiaspilates ochreaia*.

A bit further on both Sea Spurreys were flowering, displaying the difference in flower size between *Spergularia marina*, Lesser and Greater, *S. media*. Here a tiny Pearlwort was found nestling by the fence. Floras were again removed and it was keyed out to be Sea Pearlwort, *Sagina maritima*. Returning, some members climbed the shingle bank,



where much more Sea Pearlwort was growing with Sea Fern-grass, *Catapodium marinum*.

In all, over 120 species of vascular plants were noted, as well as 12 species of bird and 18 of invertebrates. Thanks should be given to all who made it such an enjoyable day!

Mary Ghullam

Roydon Common

Sunday July 24th 2005

Leaders: Gillian Beckett and Robin Stevenson

We were back in the west of the county for the latest of the 'Wild flowers revealed' meetings, to have a look at the plants of Roydon Common.

Roydon Common, a Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve, consists of 190 ha of dry and wet heath, fen and bog, acid grassland, carr and woodland, and according to my NWT Nature Reserves Handbook is the largest remaining heath in West Norfolk and in the past the eastern section was vulnerable to outbreaks of fire caused by sparks from passing steam trains before the railway running across the heath was dismantled.

Those of us who arrived early were greeted by the sight and sound of about ten skylarks hovering low and singing over an adjacent field. I don't know how many are needed for an 'exaltation,' but it was an uplifting start to the day none the less.

After an introductory talk by Robin, we split into two groups. Robin led a group of the more robust of us to an area he had in mind which could be unpredictable underfoot, while Gillian led a group of the not-quite-so-robust members of the party to slightly easier terrain. We wouldn't usually split into definite groups at this type of meeting, but as we were a little short of new faces it seemed a logical plan. Perhaps the forecast for the day had deterred people from coming along, but we still had about 15 members in the party.

We were fortunate to have the company of Arthur Copping, so we could be hopeful of seeing some interesting

grasses. Not long after we had set off, Arthur showed us Brown Bent (*Agrostis vinealis*) and a little further on Silver Hair-grass (*Aira caryophyllae*), Early Hair-grass (*Aira praecox*), Wavy Hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) and Sheep's Fescue (*Festuca ovina*).

As we moved into the wetter areas, Arthur and Bob Ellis pointed out the various sedges to be found there including: Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*) a scarce plant of bogs and acid marshes, formerly more wide-spread, Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*) another sedge usually found on acid soils, Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Pill Sedge (*Carex pilulifera*), Flea Sedge (*Carex pulicaris*) another scarce plant of bogs and fens which are irrigated by calcareous water, and Yellow Sedge (*Carex viridula* ssp *brachyrhyncha*) which was described as common in 1968 but this is no longer the case. Another scarce sedge was found by Mary Ghullam, this was Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*) common in northern Britain, but scarce locally.

While we were looking at the various sedges we also noted quite plentiful quantities of Marsh St John's-wort (*Hypericum elodes*) another plant which is rare in eastern England but commoner in northern and western areas, particularly acid hilly districts. Although three species of sundew are to be found at Roydon, we only noted Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) which was quite abundant, particularly on the Sphagnum mosses. A single sundew plant can catch as many as 2000 insects in a summer. The Sundew is so named because early observers mistook the fly-catching droplets for dew and thought the plant was capable of retaining the dew in full sunlight. The 'dew' was much esteemed by medieval alchemists and herbalists, who claimed that it would burn off warts and excite lust in cattle!

The seed heads of Common Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) could be seen standing above the surrounding vegetation, but a closer look revealed some of them to be Hare's-tail Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) though common on the northern moors it is rare in the lowlands, and only found in two other

sites in Norfolk, both in the west of the county.

Close by, the rushes were well represented including: Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*), Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Compact Rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*), Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*).

Two species of Spike-rush were also noted, these were: Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) and Many-stalked Spike-rush (*Eleocharis multicaulis*) another chiefly western species which in the 1960s was known from 14 sites in the county but is now much scarcer, especially in the west of the county. Another rush-like plant seen in the bog area was Deer-grass (*Trichophorum cespitosum*) yet another common upland species, scarce in the lowlands.

Robin drew our attention to a single specimen of Lesser Butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*) which is found at three sites in Norfolk, but only at Roydon in the west. Close by were two other species of orchid: Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) and Southern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) both with few, but white flowers. In the same area there were quite a few plants of Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) which is now very rare in south and east England. The name 'Cranberry' possibly comes from the form of the unopened flower on a long slender stalk resembling a crane's head and neck.

We had lunch sitting on a patch of heather, with a green woodpecker 'yaffling' in the background. Besides Common Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) we also found Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), the genus name 'Erica' comes directly from the Greek *ereike*, which means 'heath' or 'heather'.

We made our way back shortly after lunch as the forecasters were fairly certain of heavy showers in the afternoon, but we found some more interesting plants as we returned, including: Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) in fairly abundant quantities. The generic name *Anagallis* is from a Greek word that can be translated as



'delightful', which it is. Another 'delightful' find was Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) the seeds of which have a long tail at each end which helps them to float during periods of flooding. As we passed over an area of dry heath, a lone plant of Common Dodder (*Cuscuta epithymum*) was pointed out. The specific name 'epithymum' is derived from two Greek words meaning 'upon thyme' referring to one of its hosts.

Despite seeing several locally rare or decreasing plants, only one nationally scarce species was seen when Bob Leaney identified Smooth Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris glabra*) which although generally decreasing is still quite frequent in Breckland.

Setting off again we disturbed a Short-eared Owl which rose slowly and silently to fly nonchalantly away.

The pace returning to the cars quickened as the rain fell harder, but we stopped to have a look at Small Cudweed (*Filago minima*) growing on the track near the cars. The genus name 'Filago' comes from the Latin *filium*, 'a thread' referring to the plant's hairy covering.

Besides keeping a list of the plants seen on the day, we also make note of other species identified by members of the party with various skills, but I cannot recall seeing any more birds than the three already mentioned; nor any butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies or other insects, which seems unusual for a site such as Roydon, so they must have known what weather to expect!

We arrived back at the cars at the same time as the other party, but we were not inclined to stand around discussing the days finds in the now persistent rain.

My thanks go to Gillian for amalgamating our respective lists and forwarding them to me resulting in a tally of over 160 species seen on the day.

Bill Mitchell



The Natural History Day Wheatfen Sunday 7th August 2005

Well another change in the weather. For the last two years we had very high temperatures whilst this year we had a high of 68°F. My Fungi stall was situated under the shade of a large oak tree and to be honest it was freezing.

As usual we received a good number of visitors and we were pleased to have the Great Yarmouth Naturalist Society with us. Arthur Copping brought along a Polish botanist and her Daughter, so there was a wide range of visitors.

Peter Nicholson had a most interesting display which by all accounts was popular with naturalists and the public alike. Robert Maidstone had his Bees & Wasps nests and was often seen around the garden with something alive in the palm of his hand. Rex and Barbara Hancy brought along some very nice tree books and samples of leaves to promote Rex's new book on Notable Trees. Francis Farrow displayed some photographic examples of Beeston Common records, some good microscopic displays were arranged by Ken Clarke and Trevor Dove and I had our regular Fungi display.

In the cool often-cold wind several butterflies were seen including a tatty White Admiral by the Cottage, which had many clamouring for a photograph, a Comma, Holly Blue, Small White, Large White, Meadow Browns and Green, veined Whites were seen in the garden. Also here were Speckled and Dark Bush Crickets of both sexes.

There were not many visitors but for many of us it is an annual chitchat opportunity as we are all out doing our own thing throughout the year and it is during this day that ideas are bandied about. Robert Maidstone mooted the idea of a list of those who do illustrated talks so that when requests come in a central body would be able to recommend someone nearby. Also to have a list of those experts in their field who could help with identification and be able to

publicise their work to make the public aware of the importance of studying Natural History.

Finally it was a great day out and much was learnt. Roll on next year and no doubt my first sentence will announce the return of warmer weather.

Colin Jacobs

Herringfleet Hills & Waveney Forest Joint meeting with the Great Yarmouth Naturalists Society Sunday 28th August 2005

A dozen members met at Herringfleet Hills car park at 11am and as is usual with meetings there was much to see in this micro-climate. Several adult and young Common Lizards *Lacterta vivipara* were basking on the wooden fence rails and Common Wasps *Vespula vulgaris* were taking wood from these same rails. Of the plant galls, the Knopper Gall *Andricus quercuscalicis* was common along with *Hayhurstia atriplicis* the aphid gall on Common Crache *Atriplex patula* Also in vegetation around the car park there were several Dark Bush Crickets *Pholidoptera griseoptera* of both sexes and we really had to try hard to leave this rich area. However we did and continued across the grassland towards the woodland where we found a fine Slowworm *Anguis fragilis* basking on the sunlit bank. Down onto one of the paths leading from the school house we found an old Oak *Quercus rober* where along with Smooth Spangle Gall *Neuroterus albipes* Common Spangle Gall *N. quercusbaccarum* and Cherry Gall *Cynips quercusfolii* we also found the Ramshorn Gall *Andricus aries* I believe this is the first record to come from the 10km square TM59.

Well, after that find we were sure that another great find would be out of the question but during lunch we did. Our next stop was the grazing marshes where in one ditch we found Water Soldier *Stratiotes aloides* Lesser Water Parsnip *Berula erecta* Fools Water Cress *Apium nodiflorum* Frogbit *Hydrocharis morus-ranae* Lesser Duckweed *Lemma minuta* Common Duckweed *L. minor*, Ivy-leaved Duckweed. *L. trisulca* and on the



bank Hairy Buttercup *Ranunculus sardous*. Whilst collecting aquatic plants Robert Maidstone produced a steely blue coloured American Fresh-water Shrimp. This area produced many finds and it is here that we lingered longer than anywhere else.

At lunch we sat under the shade of a Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* ssp *scotica* and it is here I found the gall of the beetle *Apion rubiginosum* on Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella* which Robert Maidstone had hunted for at the beginning of the walk! Then we found a female Wasp Spider *Argiope bruennichi* on her web! It was a gravid specimen and the stabilimentum in the web confirmed it. Janet Negal and Robert Maidstone photographed the spider and later it caused quite a stir as one or two spider recorders were claiming it as a first for Norfolk but the Norfolk border was 12 metres away from the site!

At 2pm we moved onto Waveney Forest where Dwarf Mallow *Malva neglecta* was noted by the car park. Early fungi included Yellow Russula *Russula ochroleuca*, Earth Balls *Scioderma citrinum*, The Deciever *Laccaria laccata* Shaggy Pholiota *Pholiota squarrosa*, Plumbs and Custard *Tricholoma rutilans* Brown Roll Rim *Paxillus involutus* and Common White Helvella *Helvella crispa* There were great swarms of Common Darters *Sympetrum striolatum* mixed in with Migrant Hawkers *Aeshna mixta*.

The nationally scarce Marsh Sow Thistle *Sonchus palustris* was particularly abundant as was Marsh Mallow *Althea officinalis* on the dead stems of this plant the rare *Pluteus thomsonii* found here in 2000 was searched for but to no avail. Two plants probably hybrids have been sent to botanical referees. The first seemed to be a hybrid between American Willowherb *Epilobium ciliatum* and Broad Leaved Willowherb *E. montanum* and the second Sweetbriar *Rosa rubiginosa* and Dog Rose *Rosa canina*. Common Lizards were seen here too and on the stems of Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* we found one or two long dead Grasshoppers. There was a hole in the side of the thorax but no sign of the fungus *Entomorphae muscae* In conclusion everyone present really enjoyed the

walk through two very different habitats and the amount of new finds were for many a great part of the day.

Colin Jacobs.

Scole Moth Evening

Saturday 3rd September, 2005

The second moth evening to be held for the Society at Scole was a couple of months later in the year in 2005 than the first in 2004 and the expectation for number and variety of moths was not so high. Nevertheless after a pleasantly warm day and with the temperature not falling below 14° C through the evening almost 50 species were recorded, some of which were in good numbers.

Perhaps the most notable was the White Point, *Mythimna albiguncta*. Usually regarded as an immigrant but now probably a colonist (records at Scole every day from the 17th August to the 11th September) the three we saw enhanced this view, at least locally. The most striking was the Red Underwing, *Catocala nupta*, which was spotted resting on a shed wall by Eunice Phipps. Unfortunately when I tried, gently, to disturb it to show the red hindwings to those new to the delights of moths I was not gentle enough and it flew off just giving a flash of its warning mechanism. Stephen Livermore found an equally charismatic but smaller species, the Black Arches *Lymantria monacha*, again away from the lights, which we were able to see in detail. This has been a relatively recent arrival at the site as has the Knot Grass, *Acronicta rumicis*, which was attracted to the lights.

The brightness of the Brimstone, *Opihostegrapis luteolata* and the Light Emerald, *Campaea margaritata* together with the sheen from a Burnished brass, *Diachrysis chrysitis* impressed all who had not seen them before. Equally the contrasting gold and maroon of the Centre-barred Sallow, *Atethmia centrago* was considered most attractive. The larvae of this species feed on the unopened buds and flowers of the ash and climb from the ground every night to feed, returning to rest in the soil litter by day. Large numbers of the Large Yellow Underwing, *Noctua pronuba*, many of them probably migrants,

made a bit of a nuisance of themselves as did Setaceous Hebrew Character, *Xestia c-nigrum*. Whether or not they were migrants is open to question. Equally numerous but less boisterous was the Square-spot Rustic, *Xestia xanthographa*, a typical and ubiquitous autumn species. The delightful patterning of the Angle Shades, *Phlogophora meticulosa*, typically an autumn species but one that is also recorded sparingly in most months of the year, also impressed those present. Both Chinese Character, *Clix glaucata* and Lime-speck Pug, *Eupithecia centaureata* were present and we could see two different ways in which camouflage as a bird dropping had been achieved. Some surprise was expressed that Mother-of-Pearl, *Pleuroptya ruralis* and Garden Pebble, *Evergestis forficalis* were both regarded as "micros" whereas the Straw Dot, *Rivula senecialis*, the same size as the Garden Pebble, is a "macro".

Probably the commonest insect to come to the lights was the Autumn Crane-fly, *Tipula paludosa* with many of those seen as pairs in cop. We also saw several different species of caddisfly, the commonest being *Limnephilus lunatus* and there were several green lacewings, *Crysopa carnea* agg. There were two species of shieldbug, the Hawthorn Shieldbug *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale* and the red-legged or Forest Shieldbug, *Pentatoma rufipes*, an ichneumon *Ophion luteus* and, for me as it is new for the site, an exciting record of the Common Groundhopper *Tetrix undulata*.

Everyone present had a pleasant evening as it was not too cold and nor did it rain. I extend my sincere thanks to John Sutton for ably noting all species recorded (and then sending me a complete list for the evening) which made it so much easier to concentrate on the moths themselves.

Mike Hall



Norfolk & Suffolk Bryological Excursions 2005 - 2006

The following excursions are planned for the Autumn & Spring of 2005-2006. Beginners will be most welcome; the only equipment needed is a hand lens (x 10 or x 20), and some paper packets for collecting into. Meetings will only be cancelled if it snows, or there is hard frost. All meetings will start at 10.30 am, unless otherwise stated. For further information, contact one of the names below.

Sunday 23 October 2005 Thetford Heath NNR. Managed by Norfolk Wildlife Trust. Calcareous grassland. Park in wide entrance road to Gorse Industrial Estate at TL 849 795.

Saturday 5 November 2005 Southrepps Common, by permission of the Southrepps Commons Trust. Valley fen, reed bed, woodland and grassland, part of which is an SSSI. Fox's Beck flows through the common. Park in car park opposite Southrepps Social Club in Lower Street at TG 261 352.

Sunday 20 November 2005 West Hall Wood and Meadow, Suffolk, an SSSI, by permission of Mr David Pettitt. Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland. Meet in the farmyard at West Hall, TM 029 735.

Saturday 3 December 2005 Mossymere Wood, Mannington Hall Estate, by permission of Lord & Lady Walpole. Turn south off The Avenues into Keeper's Lane. Park on grass verge by Keeper's House, TG 134 314. Parking limited.

Sunday 18 December 2005 Calthorpe Broad, Stalham, an SSSI, TG 412 258. Please ring John Mott for details of meeting point.

Saturday 7 January 2006 Hapton Common and Smockmill Common. Park at Pat Negal's bungalow (iron gates at entrance, caravan in the drive), Inishmore, Greenways. Newton Flotman, TM 198 979. Hapton Common by permission of Mr David Turner, Wymondham Railway Station; Woodland adjacent to Common by permission of Mr D. Thompson, Elm Farm, Ashwellthorpe; Smockmill Common, Saxlingham Thorpe owned by Shotesham Estate but has Access Agreement with South Norfolk District Council.

Sunday 22 January 2006 Oxborough Hythe (am) Nature Reserve by permission of Josephine Brearley. About 1km west of Oxborough church, turn south into Ferry Road. This is tarmac, but then turns into a cinder track. Carry on for about 1.2km until you come to 2 cottages on the right hand side. Park near these at TL 732 998. We are not going to the Hythe itself, but to a parcel of land near the cottages. Foulden Common (pm) Park at TF 764 000, on south side of road.

Saturday 4 February 2006 Poor Fen, Glebe Farm, Low Road, Carlton Forehoe, by permission of Mr John Stapleton. An area of very wet carr with a tufta spring. Park in farmyard at TG 096 063 (TG0905, TG0906, TG1005)

Sunday 19 February 2006 Bio Norton Fen and other parts of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project. Park on the concrete standing opposite the entrance to the west end of The Frith, TM 035 794.

Saturday 4 March 2006 Raveningham Hall Estate by permission of Sir Nicholas Bacon. Semi ancient wood, arable, shooting, grey partridge, set-aside strips. Derek Howlett has agreed to lead. Park in car park of village hall at TM 394 971, SE corner of crossroads. Wind generator behind hall.

Sunday 19 March 2006 Alderford Common. Chalk grassland. NNNS meeting. Beginners welcome. Leader John Mott. Meet at 11.00 am in reserve car park TG 126 186.

Saturday 1 April 2006 Westwick, Captain's Pond, by permission of Mr John Alexander. We should find *Riccia fluitans* in this eutrophic water. Meet at the side of the road where fishermen usually park at TG 278 271. Space is limited so please join up in cars.

Saturday 29 April 2006 Gressenhall Old Carr, by permission of Mr & Mrs J Bullard. NNNS meeting. Meet at 11.00 am at Hill Farm, Gressenhall, TF 969 139, via Rush Meadow Road, Scarning.

Robin Stevenson, 111 Wootton Road, King's Lynn, PE30 4DJ, Tel: (01553) 766788. Email: crs1942@tiscali.co.uk

Richard Fisk, 35 Fair Close, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 9QR. Tel: (01502) 714968. Email: richardfisk@onetel.com

John Mott, 62 Great Melton Road, Hethersett, Norwich, NR9 3HA. Tel: (01603) 810442. Email: jmott@lineone.net

Roy Smith (1932-2005)

Roy Smith of Toftwood, Dereham, a member of the Society for many years, though better known perhaps in Norfolk Wildlife Trust circles having been Chairman of the Mid-Norfolk Group for a number of years, died on August 29th following a long and painful illness, just a week before his 73rd birthday.

Roy became Biology Master at East Dereham High School, later the Neatherd High School at about the same time as our daughter Rachel started at the school, and, in turn he also taught Biology to our daughters Sally and Christine.

From time to time I received requests by way of one or other of the girls such as "Can you tell me a good site for *Pellia epiphylla*" - a thallose liverwort much used as a teaching aid by Biology masters. Later, he became a Deputy Headmaster.

More recently and the last time I received a request from Roy - could I go round the Old Carr at Gressenhall with him to point out a few of the less common plants as he was leading a walk there for his Trust Group. This meeting introduced me both to the site, and to Mr and Mrs Bullard, the owners and an on going study of the Old Carr which was featured in the 2004 Transactions.

Roy's chief wildlife interest was, however, in birds, and he would often recount some trip to the coast where he and one of his sons had encountered some rarity. Always quiet and self effacing, Roy will nevertheless be much missed in the mid-Norfolk area.

Alec Bull

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by January 6th, 2006 to the following address: Francis Farrow, Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net

