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The Norfolk



Natterjack

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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

27 FEB 2007

Toad-in-the-hole....

The general theme to many of the articles in this, the first edition of 2007, is the home patch with fungi, birds, spiders and mammals all being observed around the home or office area. It shows that natural history interest doesn't involve treks to distant parts. My thanks to all the contributors and please keep sending in your observations and notes. We live in changing times and the natural world is responding with more unusual events and species turning up in the country. Our county has also seen increased activity with many species observed for the first time or in places that they are not usually associated with. We are also losing species and it is important to document those species that were once common.

FF**Exciting Records from the Records Centre***by Tony Leech*

Wildlife recorders from the county send their records to the Norfolk Biological Records Centre (NBRC) but in 2006 the Centre generated its own. In October, Pat Lorber, who manages the NBRC, sent me a photograph of a group of large and striking fungi which she had found on a pile of woodchips at the Gressenhall Rural Life Museum, where the NBRC is located. It took me a while to realise that the toadstool, with its distinctively furrowed cap, was *Agrocybe rivulosa*, a species only described (from The Netherlands) in 2003. Since then it has been recorded from sites across Belgium and Luxembourg and in 2005 made its first recorded appearance in Britain, in Staffordshire. By spring 2006 it had been found at two sites near London and in Somerset, so very much a fungus on the move.

Agrocybe rivulosa is the latest of a growing list of 'woodchip aliens', large fungi which appear prolifically on woodchips but have not hitherto been recorded from Britain (although they are often known from the tropics or southern hemisphere). The woodchips on which they appear have usually been produced locally so the fungi are unlikely to have been introduced with them. It would appear that woodchips provide an ideal substrate for colonisation by wood-decomposing fungi and that the spores blow in from around the globe.

Also on the same pile of woodchips, although growing less conspicuously, was *Clitopilus passeckerianus*, a pink-gilled fungus which lacks a stem, and resembles a small oyster fungus. This, too, was new to Norfolk and is beginning to appear on woodchips although more usually found on commercial mushroom beds



Bearded tooth fungus



by Tony Howes

When walking in Whitlingham woods on October 4th last year my attention was drawn by a patch of white, in the bottom of a wooded dell. As I approached closer I could see it was a fungus, one that was unfamiliar to me, growing out of the sawn end of a felled beech tree. It resembled a white hedgehog on it's back with the spines hanging down. As it was only two feet or so above the ground it was not difficult to photograph, but I had to wait until I got back home, and got the books out, before I could put a name to it. I took the precaution of covering it with a piece of broken plastic bucket to help protect it from the elements.

Two weeks later I went back with a friend and found that it had grown in that time, the spines had grown longer, and it was now the size of a small plate, the colour had also changed to a pale brown, I took a few more photographs then we left it in peace,

I had one last visit about a week later, by now it was looking decidedly the worse for wear, something had been eating it, probably a mouse or a vole,

This unusual fungus turned out to be the first recorded in Norfolk.

Hericium erinaceus [Bearded tooth fungus]

An unusual and beautiful creation of Nature.

WILD FLOWERS IN ROADSIDE VERGES WITHIN THE PARISH OF ROCKLANDS



by Bob Blandford

My wife Allyson and I enjoy observing wildflowers and since we live in an area that is largely mile after mile of intensive farming, we rely mostly on roadside verges for our everyday observations. We are lucky that within the Parish of Rocklands, where we live, the road system has a good proportion of quiet lanes. As an indication of how quiet these lanes are, regular horse riders are confident enough to ride two abreast and by the same token, we are able to take photographs of the wildflowers growing in roadside verges without feeling



uncomfortable about it. At Cranworth village, about six miles away, they have a roadside verge, which has been designated as a Nature Reserve. But because of the fast and furious traffic going by it, we felt far from comfortable when we took a look there two years ago. When you look for Cranworth on the O.S. map you would expect something at least approaching a quiet lane because it is marked up in yellow. It has probably become a shortcut to Dereham. The lane system in the Parish of Rocklands is very much more of a backwater than a specific route to somewhere. Where the roadside verges are big enough for it, some vegetation is left uncut for conservation and this is very heartening to see. Our District Councillor, Bill Smith, tells me that it is the responsibility of Norfolk County Council to cut the verge vegetation in the Parish of Rocklands. In the Norfolk County Council's website, there is an interesting page about the grass cutting that they do on roadside verges. After dialling in Norfolk County Council to bring up their website, you continue: Home/Transport and streets/Road and pathway maintenance/Verges

Ted's "special beetle" question finally answered: *Velleius dilatatus* in Norfolk

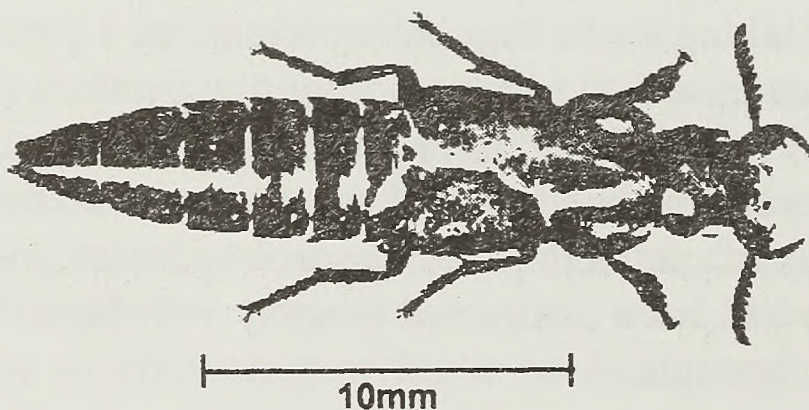
by Martin Collier

In one of his many natural history newspaper notes (Hunting for a special beetle. Down Nature's Byways by E.A.E. 2nd November 1985, *Eastern Daily Press*), Ted Ellis noted that hornets had become much more common in East Anglia in recent years. In his note Ted summarised the habits of the large rove beetle *Velleius dilatatus*, detailing its unusual association with hornets' nests and suggesting that entomologists keep a look out for it in Norfolk, to see if the beetle's distribution was increasing with that of its host. Ted also included one of his sketches, characteristically simple but effectively showing all the main diagnostic features, and finished his note with the words "*I wonder who will be the first to find it!*" As an enthusiastic but inexperienced amateur coleopterist at the time, I remember taking Ted's concluding remark as a personal challenge, although I had no idea how to go about finding the beetle. I certainly didn't relish the prospect of rummaging around in an active hornets' nest but the chances of coming across the beetle in any other way seemed very slim. I did have vague intentions of contacting pest control agencies, to see if I could access any nests they had been contracted to spray with insecticide, but these were never followed through.



Many other beetle recording projects have been enjoyed since Ted's note in 1985 but the thought of one day finding *Velleius* has always been at the back of my mind, should the opportunity ever arise to safely examine a hornets' nest in an old hollow tree (apparently a particularly favoured habitat for both hornet and beetle). Over twenty years later, an almost chance remark from a friend at work, Belinda Stow, gave me just such an opportunity less than a mile from my own home. A hornets' nest in the stump of a long dead crack willow in Brockdish (TM215798) had been sprayed with insecticide by the council on 10 Aug 2006 and three days later I was able to easily break into the stump and remove the nest and associated debris. No beetles were present in the nest itself but I was delighted to find three specimens of *Velleius*, dead and somewhat disfigured by white deposit from the insecticide, by carefully sieving the rotten wood and debris from below the nest. Although my long search for this beetle was finally over, I must admit that I was not in fact Ted's "... first to find it ..." in the county. This honour had already fallen to Michael Kirby a few years previously, when he trapped a single specimen in Felbrigg Park during an impressively productive survey for the National Trust in 2003.

Velleius dilatatus was given Red Data Book 1 (Endangered) status but this is now an over-estimate of its rarity as it has certainly been recorded more frequently in recent years. Up until the late 1800s the beetle was more or less restricted to the New Forest area but it has now been recorded in several southern counties, usually from high quality woodland sites with veteran trees. The Brockdish record shows that the beetle is not restricted to such woodland sites (the willow stump is between a grazing marsh and a garden, well away from any woodland) and it may be that *Velleius* is much more widespread than the records suggest; indeed its distribution could well match that of the hornet itself. It was thought the beetle or its larvae fed directly on the larvae of the hornets (Ted's note repeats this belief) but apparently this is not the case. In fact the beetle larvae have been shown to feed on Diptera larvae that are also present in the nest. Perhaps this is why the beetles and their larvae appear to be tolerated by the hornets.



Buckenham Marshes

by Brian Macfarland



From late October until mid March the marshes become alive the sheer numbers of ducks, geese, and some waders, who come to overwinter feeding on the lush grass. It produces a wonderful spectacle of evocative sounds and movement, which only the natural world can show us. The incessant whistle of thousands of wigeon continually eating grass, and slowly walking like a shimmering carpet of colour, to the swirling masses of green, and golden plovers, starlings, and wigeon filling the air like shoals of fish.

At this time of the year on an early sunny morning the light across the marshes looks really beautiful. This is my best time of day winter or summer. The birds usually feed contentedly for a while then they start flying across the footpath in small numbers to the greener grass on the other side; or is it really? Of course if a predator flies over then everything takes off, and the air is filled with a cacophony of sound. It is over very quickly, and they settle down to eat once again.

There are other birds that can be seen in much smaller numbers, like stonechats, goldfinches, pied wagtails, a kestrel, barnacle geese, and a few bean geese. The marsh harrier, and peregrine make their presence felt from time to time, which always causes mayhem.



The other big player is the huge rookery, second largest in England, which is a special spectacle not to be missed as dusk approaches. The birds gather in their thousands, usually building up their numbers on the surrounding fields and trees. As darkness settles the birds retreat to the woods to roost.

On one occasion at sunset they flew across the river and sat on the powerlines, but I have not witnessed it since. CAW !!!



Cetti's Warbler

by Hans Watson



I first developed a fondness for Cetti's warblers as a teenager in the late 1950's - long before they became a British breeding species, and looking back I now realise that it was a typical teenager love of things that do not conform, or things that are different. And Cetti's warbler is certainly different to all the other British warblers in many respects. Whereas other warblers have twelve tail feathers, Cetti's has only ten. Cetti's warbler also exhibits clear sexual size dimorphism to a greater extent than all other European songbirds, with males averaging 12% longer wings and weighing 30% more than females.

Cetti's warbler is a member of a small genus of a dozen or so bush warblers, and is the only representative of the genus in Europe, and is resident throughout its range. Its resident status is, of course shared with the Dartford warbler, as is its vulnerability to the effects of severe winters.

Studies in the 1980's revealed that Cetti's warblers are polygynous, with males mating with several females, but females only mating with the one male. This is no doubt connected to the fact that there is an unequal sex ratio, with females being more numerous than males. Any census of this species is therefore very difficult, as counting singing males (the usual procedure) cannot give a true picture. There could for instance, be three or four times as many females/nests, as singing males.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Cetti's warbler, is the colour of its eggs. These are a bright brick red colour, with little variation, although I recall seeing a nest containing eggs of a lovely dark rose pink colour, many years ago.

Many bird watchers know Cetti's warbler only by its remarkably loud song, delivered from deep cover. It also has a number of call notes that express alarm, anxiety, anger etc. To me, some of these recall similar notes of wren, mistle thrush, and even hawfinch. Cetti's warbler is rather like the grasshopper warbler in its skulking habits, spending much of its time in cover, and as a result, the most frequent views are of a small chestnut brown bird flitting across a gap in the tangled marsh vegetation that they love. When seen more clearly (usually for no more than a few seconds), this neat little bird with constantly flicking



broad tail, has greyish white underparts, a short greyish supercilium, and almost wren-like chestnut brown to rufous back, mantle, head, rump and tail coverts. The wings and tail feathers are also chestnut brown, but to me always appear much darker when seen in the fresh plumage following the post breeding moult in July/August, than when seen in the period March to June. Most observers regard the first few hours of daylight as the best time for seeing Cetti's warblers, and I have to agree that most of my best views, and the photographs that I have managed to obtain, have been within the two hours after sunrise.

Headhunters

by Adrian Martin

I read with interest John Hampshire's article about 'Missing Body Parts' in the last edition of the Norfolk Natterjack (page 9). I thought that the following short article I wrote and previously published in the Hampshire Ornithological Society Newsletter might shed some light on the question John finishes with...

Although sightings of peregrines are becoming increasingly frequent in Hampshire it is not often that you get to see one tucking into some recently strafed prey. More often that tell-tale sign, the remains of their dinner are found. Colin Allen reports finding numerous such ex-pigeon dinners each with "a well picked-over breast". Curiously, perhaps, they have always been missing their head and neck. This gruesome oddity may be explained by an observation by Derek Wilson who was fortunate enough to come across a Hampshire peregrine engrossed in its victuals. Once again the neck and head were nowhere to be seen but "the peregrine, on flying away, looked as if it was carrying something small" and he suggests that it might have been the missing body parts. A possible explanation for this behaviour comes from Ralph Hollins. "Birds normally eat the breast meat at the kill site to avoid waste of energy in carrying excessive weight (I suspect that, like sparrowhawks, they will sometimes carry off the carcass if disturbed before their hunger has abated). Breast meat is good but the protein in a bird's brain is even better food, and the weight of the head alone is no bar to carrying it off to eat at leisure in a safe place. Could it be that peregrines, like song thrushes, have favourite 'anvils' where the task of cracking open the victim's skull is made easier?"



NORFOLK & NORWICH NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

USE OF COLOUR IN TRANSACTIONS

by Don Dorling



Today we take for granted the use of coloured illustrations in our publications. The first regular use of coloured photographs appeared in Volume 27 Part 6 [1986 Bird and Mammal Report]. An earlier example of the use of colour was Richard Richardson's painting of Collard Doves, which appeared as a frontispiece to Volume 18 Part 6 [1956 Bird Report].

However during a recent trawl through the early volumes I discovered what is certainly our earliest venture into colour printing. The frontispiece to Volume 3 [1884] depicted a "Moorhen *variety*" (see Nats' Gallery)

On 28th September 1883 J.H. Gurney, Junior, read a paper entitled "on the Hairy Moorhen (*Gallinula chleropus*)" and this was printed in Volume 3 pages 581-587 in which he described the appearance of a strange form of plumage in Moorhens, including "The whole of the plumage resembling rather hair than feathers owing to the absence of the barbules from the anterior portion of the vane of each feather." He listed twelve examples of this plumage aberration. The five from Norfolk were listed as --

Buckenham	November 1857	In Cambridge Museum, formerly in Professor Newton's possession.
Ludham	(no date given)	Norwich Museum
Yarmouth	(no date given)	Saffron Walden Museum
Norwich (female)	March 1863	
Norwich (male)	April 1883	Exhibited at the meeting of the Linnean Society, 6 th March 1884

It was the Buckenham example that was illustrated with the plate by a Mr Keulemans.

The next example that I came across was an engraving of a Pallas's Warbler that appeared opposite page 280 in Volume 6 (see Nats' Gallery).

This picture illustrated a paper read to the Society on 23rd February 1897 by H.E. Dresser, FLS, FZS entitled "*Notes on Pallas's Willow Warbler and some rare European Warblers*". It was published in Volume 6 pages 280 to 290.



NATS' GALLERY: February 2007



DÉJÀ VUE
Colour first appeared in *Transactions* in 1884, depicting a Moorhen variety: 'The whole of the plumage resembling rather hair than feathers owing to the absence of the barbules from the anterior portion of the vane of each feather' (see article). Colour plate by plate by J.G. Keulemans.

PALLAS'S WILLOW WARBLER

Phylloscopus proregulus (now simply Pallas's Warbler) figured in the next colour illustration in *Transactions*, in Volume 6. The first British record concerned a bird shot at Cley on 31 October 1896. There were just two more in Britain in the period up to 1958, but the species has now become a regular late autumn visitor, with the majority turning up from mid-October to mid-November. Indeed, Pallas's Warbler is no longer an official national 'rarity' and in 2004 at least 21 were recorded in Norfolk!





BUCKENHAM MARSHES

provide a home for a wealth of birds, including (above and right) many Wigeon (see article). Photos: *Brian Macfarlane.*



MUTE SWAN As well as being useful for swimming, large webbed feet make effective brakes!

Photos: *Tony Howes.*



CETTI'S WARBLER

Usually skulking and hard to see, this photo reveals the rich ruddy-brown colouration characteristic of the species. It is the sole European member of the genus *Cettia*, which has its headquarters in the Himalayas. All are relatively plain, but have loud, attention-grabbing songs (see article).

Photo: *Hans Watson*.



NEST and EGGS

of Cetti's Warbler. This species has remarkable bright brick-red eggs. Photo: *Hans Watson*.



EMERGING PARASITOID

Apanteles glomeratus is an ichneumon fly which parasitises caterpillars of the white butterflies. Numerous eggs must have been laid in the body of this Large White *Pieris brassicae* caterpillar and, having consumed it from within, a whole troop of larvae have deserted their host and formed a mass of cocoons. An adult ichneumon can be seen here emerging from its cocoon. Photo: *Tony Leech*.





WOODCHIP ALIEN A first appearance for *Agrocybe rivulosa* in Norfolk, found at Gressenhall by Pat Lorber. This is the latest of a series of fungi to appear on woodchips (see article). Photo: Tony Leech.



PLANTPOT DAPPERLING
Leucocoprinus birnbaumii (above)
A smart name for an attractive fungus but not entirely appropriate; its occurrence on woodchips on Holt Lowes was the second time it had been found outdoors in Britain. Photo: Simon Harrap/norfolknature.co.uk



GYMNOPIIUS DILEPIS
(right) on woodchips at Beeston Common: the exotic fungus that got the ball rolling for Norfolk mycologists. Photo: Tony Leech..



BEARDED TOOTH FUNGUS

Hericium erinaceus
Whitlingham Wood
October 2006 - the first record for Norfolk (see article).

Photo: Tony Howes.



EXCITING VISITORS to a garden in Scratby in 2006 included Wryneck (on 18 September, below left), Scarce Bordered Straw (below right, one of three caught on 5 September) and the migrant pyralid *Evergestis extimalis* (above right, 15 and 22 August). Photos: Diane & Colin Mussell.



HOVETON HALL

3 September 2006. Migrant Hawker (left) and a stunning shield bug nymph, *Troilus luridus* (right), were some of the delights of the Society's meeting. Photos: Janet Negal.





ON THE BEACH Two days at Donna Nook on the coast of north Lincolnshire revealed the lives and loves of Grey Seals in intimate detail - up to a 1,000 pups are born there in the late autumn. Overall, the UK holds around 40% of the total world population of this globally rare seal (recently estimated at 124,000 individuals at the start of the breeding season). See article. Photos: *Brian Macfarlane*





**QUIET ROADS AT
ROCKLANDS**

provide excellent
photographic
opportunities. Clock-
wise from top: White
Campion, Snowdrop,
Dark Mullein, Meadow
Saxifrage, Winter
Aconite (see article).
Photos: *Bob Blandford,*



HOME BIRDS 2006

by Geoffrey Kelly

Readers may recall that a list of birds recorded on, over or from my home at Frettenham (TG240171) during 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004, appeared in *The Norfolk Natterjack* nos. 64, 72, 80 and 88. During 2006, I again maintained a daily list, this time on 354 days (compared with 343, 343, 352 and 350 in the earlier years). Blank days were as follows: one in January, two in February, one in May, four in September and three in December; there were no blank days in March and April, June, July and August, and October and November.

In general, daily observations were gathered over periods of between one and six hours, two hours having been the average. The 2006 daily average was 22.4 species (compared with 20.2, 22.7, 21.6 and 22.2 in the early years). In all, 71 species were noted in 2006 (likewise compared with 75, 75, 69 and 72).

Twenty-seven species were observed in each month. One more species, lesser black-backed gull 'missed-out' only in February.

Habitats visible from my vantage point include gardens, 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 (on page 10) is in rank, name and number of days recorded – the prefix M meaning recorded in each month.



Home birds 2006 listing

- M1 Wood Pigeon 354
M2 Collared Dove 353
M3 Starling 351
M4 Magpie 347
M5= Stock Dove 344
M5= Blackbird 344
M7 Chaffinch 334
M8 Carrion Crow 330
M9 Blue Tit 326
M10 Greenfinch 324
M11 Great Tit 310
M12 Rook 298
M13 Pied Wagtail 255
M14 Robin 248
M15 Black-headed Gull 233
M16 Dunnock 226
M17 Jackdaw 215
M18 Mistle Thrush 203
M19 House Sparrow 198
 20 Common Gull 185
 21 Lesser Black-backed Gull 166
 22 Swallow 148
M23 Jay 132
M24 Mallard 128
M25 Kestrel 110
M26 Red-legged Partridge 108
 27 Swift 98
M28 Pheasant 97
 29 Coal Tit 95
 30 Great Black-backed Gull 83
 31 Linnet 80
 32 Goldfinch 79
 33 Fieldfare 74
M34 Wren 72
M35 Great Spotted Woodpecker 60
36 Long-tailed Tit 57
M37= Sparrowhawk 55
 37= Song Thrush 55
 39 House Martin 54
 40 Redwing 50
 41 Herring Gull 45
 42 Lapwing 44
 43 Grey Heron 39
 44= Cormorant 22
 44= Green Woodpecker 22
 46= Greylag Goose 11
 46= Skylark 11
 48 Mute Swan 9
 49= Hobby 6
 49= Little Owl 6
 51= Teal 5
 51= Yellowhammer 5
 53= Canada Goose 3
 53= Egyptian Goose 3
 53= Cuckoo 3
 53= Barn Owl 3
 53= Whitethroat 3
 53= Goldcrest 3
 59= Marsh Harrier 2
 59= Common Buzzard 2
 59= Goshawk 2
 59= Turtle Dove 2
 59= Black Redstart 2
 59= Blackcap 2
 59= Chiffchaff 2
 66= Pink-footed Goose 1
 66= Oystercatcher 1
 66= Golden Plover 1
 66= Woodcock 1
 66= Marsh Tit 1
 66= Bullfinch 1



Grey Seals

by Brian Macfarland



I spent two days in November photographing grey seals at Donna Nook on the Lincolnshire coast. The seals had been well advertised in magazines, and on television. So I was not too surprised to see lots of people. The first day started with rain until midday, but soon brightened up to give some sunshine. The seals were numerous, and 700 pups had already been born, plus another 200 at least to arrive in the season.

There was a fence along the edge of the dunes to prevent the seals straying on to the road, and keeping the public from being bitten by the females defending their pups. There seemed to be a lot of laying around sleeping, apart from the old bulls fighting half-heartedly.

I stayed at a very good B& B overnight, and woke the next morning to a beautiful sunny day. The owner took me to secluded part of the beach away from the maddening crowd, but a lot nearer the bombing range, with permission to go over the fence to get among the seals.

This gave me the opportunity to just sit and observe these creatures going about their daily lives. The females come on the beach to have their pups from October onwards, and usually leave by mid January.

I saw in front of me birth, suckling, mating, and death during the 6 hours of total fascination, and pure pleasure of the experience.

The massive bulls had some very strenuous fights, because the females become receptive again after only three weeks of giving birth. The courtship can be very gentle to start with, as the female slaps her flipper on the ground quite quickly to encourage the male to come alongside. At first he appears not to be interested, then suddenly he will hurl himself across the females body, and just lay there and appear to go to sleep. It looks as if he is crushing the wind out of her body. After a while he remembers why he is there and proceeds to mate with her. The female will probably stay another week to feed the pup before returning to the sea.

In all that time she has not fed, and lost about a third of her body weight. That is because the pup has been receiving the enriched milk from it's mother and grown very fat and heavy. The pup is ready to go to sea after five weeks, and has to learn how to feed itself without any help from it's parents. Nature is full of surprises, that's what makes it so fascinating.



Thas a rumun

by Tony Howes

From time to time some thing happens that makes you wonder, a strange thing that is out of the ordinary, something you observe that seems at odds with the orderly structure of our day to day knowledge, and it makes you ponder why this should be.

Such an event happened a few weeks ago, Wendy and I were having breakfast, and as we do every morning were watching the birds at the feeders. Suddenly a gorgeous fox walked out from behind the pond and sauntered across the lawn, up the path, and disappeared behind the garage. The garden is fenced in all round, and in the twenty four years we have lived here have never seen a fox in the garden before, nor any sign of them, and we haven't seen it since.

Several years ago I had another experience with foxes, I had at that time a hide erected in a friend's garden for the purpose of photographing them as they came to the food put out for them each evening. I was watching a fox from one of the side observation panels in the hide, it was approaching the feeding area along its well worn track from the dense woodland nearby, then it was joined by a second animal, a muntjac. They walked together for several yards before the deer chose to enter a patch of bramble, neither had shown any concern or intimidation at all. My friend's cat would also ignore the foxes, and has been known to join in when the food goes out, but not getting too close.

Incidentally, after the foxes had eaten and gone on their way, a lone carrion crow would often come down from the trees and pick about in the grass for any scraps that had been left, but he was too crafty to allow me to take his portrait, the slightest movement and he was gone, melting into the darkening wood like a black shadow.

NATURE BOOKS

A Society member who has been collecting natural history books for sometime has now turned his hobby into a small business. Michael Sweeney buys and sells wildlife books - all of them second-hand, out of print or collectable. He doesn't stock new titles. Members who might be interested in buying from or selling to him can contact him at 34 The Cornfield, Langham, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7DG; tel 01328 830068. email: mjs@akreiser.waitrose.com.



THE SPITTING SPIDER IN NORFOLK

by Dr. A.G. Irwin

Castle Museum, Norwich NR1 3JU

Scytodes thoracica Latreille is unique among spiders because it catches its prey by spitting at them. The quick-drying gum, which is squirted from its chelicerae, immobilizes the victim, so that it can be dealt with at leisure. To accommodate the 'gum glands', *Scytodes* has a characteristically large, humped cephalothorax, although the mouthparts are very small. This strangely shaped body is coloured yellow with a pattern of black spots so that *Scytodes* is almost the most easily recognised of British spiders.

It was a case of instant recognition when one fell on to my desk in the Castle Museum on 5 November 1980. The second specimen was even more of a surprise, because I found it on 10 July 1981 in the collecting tube of a Berlese funnel used for extracting invertebrates from leaf-litter. *Scytodes* is an inhabitant of buildings rather than leaf-litter, so I assume that the unfortunate spider had fallen into the tube while searching for prey in the museum.

At one time *Scytodes* was regarded as a very rare spider in Britain, but apparently the advent of central heating and the fact that furniture is easier to transport have resulted in its spread throughout most of Southern England (Bristowe, 1958). It has previously been recorded Cambridgeshire and Suffolk but I believe these are the first specimens found in Norfolk. This is the first (and probably the last) time I have collected a species new to the county without moving from my desk!

Reference

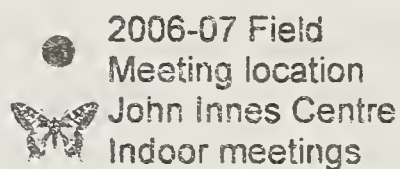
BRISTOWE, W. S., 1958. *The World of Spiders*. (p. 103) London: Collins.

MEMBERS HONOURED

Our warmest congratulations to two distinguished members of the Society who received awards in the New Year Honours List.

John Buxton was made an OBE for his many years of conservation work at Horsey Mere, notably in improving breeding conditions for European cranes, marsh harriers and bitterns. And **Peter Lambley**, Editor of the Society's Transactions and Vice-president of the British Lichen Society, was made an MBE following his retirement as a conservation officer with English Nature (now Natural England).





Hoveton Hall

Sunday, 3rd September 2006



It is unfortunate that attendance was very poor, those four individuals that did attend were given an excellent tour of the grounds and gardens at no extra expense by Stuart Wright the Head Gardener. Stuart is a very knowledgeable naturalist who keeps excellent records of a variety of species seen through out the year at Hoveton Hall. These records are worth viewing on visits to the gardens and can be seen, skillfully presented on a notice board in the enclosed refreshments area.

The visit on a fine and clear day took us to those areas that were generally never seen by visitors including the wooded areas around the estate which included a visit to an ice house and a walk along the whole length of the lake. This was followed by a tour of the formal gardens and grounds, ending in special request visits to areas of interest to those keen on beetles and spiders.

The day had a number of interesting highlights one in the form of a display of 10's of hawker dragonflies near St.Peters Church of which a substantial number were migrant hawkers *Aeshna mixta* (see Nats' Gallery). At the end of the lake nearest the Spider Gate we found clouds of rhododendron leafhopper - *Graphocephala fennahi* (= *G. coccinea*) a very attractive North American bug about 6 mm long, head and legs pale yellow-green, thorax and wings blue-green with bright red spots and banding. They sit on buds and leaves, jumping and flying briefly when disturbed, making a definite rustling noise. For more information and photo see: <http://www.kendall-bioresearch.co.uk/hemip1.htm#leaf>

In the formal gardens we came across "pruned" lavender bushes the result of the rosemary beetle (*Chrysolina americana*). This is again is an introduction but is an attractive 8mm long metallic green beetle with purple stripes. Despite its scientific name, it is a native of southern Europe that has recently become established in Britain, probably on imported with plants. Outside of the south east (i.e. London and Surrey), the beetle is established in Norwich and a few adult specimens have been found in other areas of the country including Leicestershire and south east Yorkshire. More information and photo can be found on



While on bugs, Janet Neagle managed to photograph a rather attractive shield bug in one of its nymphal stages, *Troilus luridus*, the bronse shieldbug (5th instar), see Nats' Gallery.

Following is an extract of notes made by Martin Collier on beetles found on the day.

"The best find by far was the ladybird *Nephus quadrimaculatus*, which came off the ivy on the trees beside the lane leading back to the road that we walked down. This is only the third record and site for Norfolk, although the species does seem to be spreading in southern England. It's classified as Red Data Book Category 2 (Vulnerable) but this is based on its status 15 years ago, before it started to spread, and it needs downgrading now - probably to nationally scarce/notable - so don't get too excited! Other things of interest were the dung beetle *Aphodius erraticus* in the sheep dung, which although common nationally seems to be quite scarce in Norfolk, and the rove beetle *Leptacinus intermedius* in the compost, which also seems scarce. In the list I've given the number of records and 10 km squares for each species, to give an idea of how common things are in the county. These figures are based mostly on modern records but are far from complete."

An excel sheet has been provided by Martin with a full list of detailed records and is available, those requiring a copy can contact me by email (petenich@btinternet.com).

Spiders (Peter Nicholson)

I found many of the common web spiders *Metellina mengei /segmentata* and *Zygiella X-notata* and of course the ubiquitous *Aranea diadematus*. I was pleased though to record a male of *A. diadematus*. On inspection of the ice house with the hope of a *Meta menardi*, I did find *Meta merianae* a species that frequents damp shaded sites often on the threshold of caves and other holes but is generally common. Sampling of holly bushes found *Theridion impressum* with only 6 records to its name at present all taken by Rex Hancy in the early 1990's. My final record of note was one female and three males of *Drapetisca socialis* on the bark of silver birch. This is a small attractive Linyphiidae (money spider). The records for this widespread species only amount to 24 records ranging from 1989 to 2006.

My thanks go to the Mr & Mrs Buxton in allowing the Society the privilege of visiting their estate and gardens and to Stuart Wright (Head Gardener) for his enthusiasm and support when asked to supply ladders and visits to the ice house and compost heaps for spiders and beetles.

Peter Nicholson

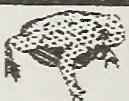


The Society's Presidents

I am updating a list of the Society's Presidents to include details of their Presidential Addresses. When complete it has been suggested that it should be included in the Society's Web site. Unfortunately there were a number of Addresses that were not published in Transactions and my Programme cards do not go back far enough to give either titles or the dates they were presented to the Society. I append below the section with most of the missing titles. I would be grateful if any member could help to fill any of the gaps.

1951-52	Dr J.M. Lambert, MA, FLS	
	<i>The Past, Present & Future of Norfolk Broads</i>	19.4.1952 Vol.17 Part 4 (April 1953) pp 223-258
1952-53	R.P. Bagnall-Oakeley	
	<i>Nature through the Camera</i>	14.3.1953 Vol. 17 Part 5 1954) pp 305-315
1953-54	E.A. Ellis	Not published in Transactions
1954-55	E.A. Ellis	Not published in Transactions
1955-56	R. Jones	Not published in Transactions
1956-57	E.L. Swann, FLS	Not published in Transactions
1957-58	E. Duffey, OBE, Ph.D	Not published in Transactions
1958-59	F.J. Taylor-Page	Not published in Transactions
1959-60	L.C. Johnson	Not published in Transactions
1960-61	K.C. Durrant, FRES, JP	
	<i>Norfolk Flies</i>	Not published in Transactions
1961-62	Dr J.M. Lambert, MA, PhD, FLS	
	<i>Pattern in Vegetation</i>	Not published in Transactions
1962-63	M.J. Seago	
	<i>Birds in Norfolk</i>	Not published in Transactions
1963-64	J. Buxton	
	<i>Commentary on some wildlife films</i>	Not published in Transactions
1964-65	Miss R.M. Barnes, AMA, FLS (Mrs R.M. Race)	
	<i>Plant and Animal changes in Norfolk</i>	Not published in Transactions
1965-66	T.A. Bennet-Clark	
	<i>Controlling Mechanisms in Nature</i>	Not published in Transactions
1966-67	B. Forman, PhD	
	<i>Conservation in Practice</i>	1.4.1967 Not published in Transactions

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RESEARCH

Round-up

SOUTHREPPS COMMON RECORDS WANTED

Does anyone have any records, past or present, of any species recorded on Southrepps Common (TG 262350) If so, could they please send them to me as I am trying to compile a comprehensive list of species for the Common:

Mary Ghullam, 5 Beech Drive, Cromer Road, North Walsham. NR28 0BZ.
Email: mylia@tiscali.co.uk

The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*'
will be May 2007.

Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by
April 1st 2007
to the following address:

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

Please send all photographic material to:

Simon Harrap, 1 Norwich Road, Edgefield, Melton Constable,
Norfolk, NR22 2RP
Email: harrap@onetel.net

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