



Number 61

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

THE NORFOLK
HISTORICAL MUSEUM
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May 1998

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

1998 PROGRAMME

With this issue of Natterjack you will receive the programme card for the following 12 months. We have started a month earlier than in the past to make it easier for the Norwich branch of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT), the RSPB and ourselves to prevent clashes of dates. The purpose of these notes is to expand the details of some of the meetings where lack of space precludes it on the card.

Sunday 17th May

Details in last Natterjack.

Wednesday 3rd June

Marston Marsh is a Norwich Local Nature Reserve in the River Yare valley, south of Norwich between the A140 and the A11. This marsh, with its network of dykes, is grazed by cattle during the summer. The car park is on Marston Lane off the A140 opposite the Post House Hotel. It is small so suggest sharing cars if possible. TG 217057.

Sunday 14th June

Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood is an NWT Reserve. It is ancient semi-natural woodland on boulder clay. Trees include alder, ash, oak, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, holly, elm, hawthorn and blackthorn. Shrubs include dogwood, guelder rose and spindle.

Parking is in the Warden's meadow, just past a wood yard in the middle of the village. Do not try to use the old entrance. TM 142977.

We plan to visit again in September and April to see the woods throughout the seasons.

Sunday 28th June

Hickling Broad is a National Nature Reserve as well as an NWT Reserve. It has a large broad, fen, dykes, scrape and grazing marsh. Good for swallowtail butterflies, dragonflies and a good range of plants and birds. Toilets available.

This is one of two meetings associated with Wildlife 2000. Several parties will head off in different directions. Come and see recorders in action and follow your own interests. It will be an enjoyable day.

Follow the brown tourist signs from Hickling. The reserve entrance is in 3 km. TG 428222.

Sunday 5th July

Buxton Heath Open Day, 1030 hrs to 1630 hrs. Everybody welcome. Car park at TG 173214, on Heath Road off B1149. Go down narrow track to left opposite first house.

Tuesday 21st July

This indoor meeting and the field meeting on 30th August are to introduce members to wading birds. You don't have to attend both but I think you would find it useful. This is an extra indoor meeting. We have been fortunate, due to some skilful negotiating by your Programme Secretary, in getting the Music Room at no extra cost, so come and see this magnificent room.



Sunday 26th July

Upton Fen is an NWT Reserve and is one of the finest open fens with dykes, pools and woodland in the county. Good for swallowtails, dragonflies, round leaved wintergreen, sedges and bryophytes. Upton Fen is 1.5 km east of South Walsham. Take minor road through Pilsen Green to Low Farm. Car park on right. TG 379137.

This is a joint meeting with our colleagues of the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society.

Sunday 16th August

Chippenham Fen is a National Nature Reserve. It is a Breckland valley fen just off the A11, just before it joins the A14 Newmarket by-pass, and includes old peat diggings, unimproved wet meadows and old planted woodlands. Meet at TL 652692. Leave A11 at junction with B 1085, signed Chippenham, just before the junction with the Newmarket bypass. This is the old A11 through Red Lodge which crosses over the A11 east of Chippenham. Turn left in Chippenham and at tee junction turn right into track. Park at side of track between Park Farm and reserve after Phantom Cottages.

Sunday 23rd August

Thompson Common, an NWT Reserve, consists of pingoes, grassland and woods.

This is one of two meetings associated with Wildlife 2000. Several parties will head off in different directions. Come and see recorders in action and follow your own interests. It will be an enjoyable day.

The car park is at TL 943967. Leave Watton on the A1075 Thetford road and travel for about 8 km. The car park is on the right behind a large lay-by on the line of an old railway. If you come to the village of Stow Bedon you have gone too far.

Sunday 30th August

Titchwell is an RSPB Reserve with a large car park for which there is a charge of £3 if you are not a member. This is a follow-on from the indoor meeting on 21st July. TF 750438. Toilets available.

John Mott

MAGPIES FEEDING ON MUNTJAC CORPSE

On Sunday 1st February 1998, whilst travelling to Wroxham along the A1062 through the village of Horning, I saw two Magpies *Pica pica*, fly away from a large mammal corpse in a winter wheat field three metres from the road edge. On stopping the car to investigate I was amazed to see that the Magpies were feeding on a dead Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjac*. The deer was lying on its right side and the magpies had eaten right through the left side exposing the deer's rib cage. The deer was obviously a road casualty and had either been hit as it ran across the road and then died, or was placed there by the person who had hit it. I somehow think it was the former as the deer was not badly damaged proving that it may have been hit by a glancing blow and then died of shock. The corpse was fresh, as there was no evidence of the mammal decomposing. Although I have seen Magpies feeding on carrion before I have never seen them eating a Muntjac. It was like Vultures at the corpse of an African Lion.

Colin Jacobs

CAT BASKET UNDER ATTACK

Getting our cane cat-basket (which we have had for at least ten years) out of a cupboard recently, I found it sitting in what looked like fine sand. Closer inspection showed this to be wood-dust, and we then realised that the cane was riddled with fairly substantial (2 mm diameter) holes. We had recourse to that invaluable book **Wildlife in House and Home** (Collins, 1977), and found details of a South-east Asian long horn beetle *Chlorophorus annularis*, notorious for damaging bamboo houses.

Imported canes can contain the larvae, whose development takes several years. In our case, there was no sign of the adult beetles, much to Ken Durrant's disappointment. They must have flown and, very fortunately for us, they will attack no other timber!

Paul Banham

FELIS CONCOLOR, A FIRST FOR NORFOLK?

New species to our county are regularly being found by naturalists and scientific surveys. The Wildlife 2000 initiative is now a driving force behind those seeking new records and an incentive to those who would not normally submit their records. Would it not be grand if out of all this Norfolk could be the first county in Britain to record *Felis concolor*, the Puma, as an addition to its wild fauna?

Examining this possibility creates many questions regarding the recording of species which I feel are worth considering.

There is much talk of recording for posterity, for the generations to come. I hope this means for the sake of the generations of the species recorded yet to come. Unless recording can help other species survive the onslaught of our own I would suggest that it is an activity designed for our own pleasure. This is not wrong, but like so many things we do for pleasure it could get out of hand and needs keeping a wary eye on. I cite the Victorian, personal, corpse collections as an example where the individual creature is no better than a coin or stamp.

The first and most sacred quality of any record is that it must be accurate. There is no place for only ninety nine per cent accuracy.

To achieve this level of integrity the individual submitting a record must have two qualities. They must be in possession of sure knowledge, either in what they know themselves or that contained in literature that they have access to. (I would suggest that both knowledge and literature need to be continually monitored and questioned for accuracy). However, the most important quality of a recorder is total honesty. He or she must be prepared to sacrifice a precious record for that honesty. The honesty needed to admit a lack of knowledge or a less than certain identification of even a common or well known species. The integrity of the record reflects that of its recorder.

So what would convince the mammal recorder for Norfolk that a record of a wild-living Puma is one hundred per cent certain?

Would it be the proven knowledge and integrity of the person submitting the record? Would that person have to have referees as to those qualities? Would it be necessary for the animal to be caught and the identification witnessed? Would a film of the animal suffice or casts of paw prints or still photographs? All these may seem on first consideration to be enough, but are they? They are all still very much open to question.

Why is the Norfolk Puma so different from any other species? Records of other species are accepted with less scrutiny than as applied above and yet the integrity of every record must remain the same. Dare I suggest that identifying a Puma would be somewhat easier for almost everyone than separating a Starling from a Blackbird!

We are still at the stage of examining witness reports rather than submitting records. This has not been helped by sensationalist media attention which has gained for the beast the status of mysterious legend rather than a genuine but as yet unrecorded wild member of our fauna.

As a Norfolk Constabulary Wildlife Liaison Officer I have had the opportunity of hearing about almost all the sightings reported to the police. I have interviewed, using the latest interrogation techniques, many witnesses and have visited the vicinities of many sightings. I have attended a conference called by the Chief Constable on the subject which had representatives of virtually every possible interested body attending. I feel therefore that I probably have a fairly rounded view of the situation concerning this "phenomena".

If one assumes that witnesses are not lying, they tell convincing stories. Almost all describe seeing a large cat-like animal, usually black or dark brown, its size approximating that of an Alsatian dog. They describe a long, upward curving tail and sometimes a bounding gait. My own experience at 23.30 hours, near Acle, was exactly as described above. Some witnesses go further and describe facial patterns, pricked, small ears and thin appearance when viewed from the front. Some say "I saw a Puma!". My enquiries into the feasibility of a Puma living as nature intended in Norfolk lead me to believe it is quite possible. It could even be possible for a small breeding population to survive without preying on livestock, I am informed.

If the evidence available were put before a court, the jury would easily find a verdict of, "yes there is a large cat living in Norfolk". I do not believe they could assign that cat to a species. A jury's verdict is enough to send a man to prison for life on far less evidence than is needed to create a record for Wildlife 2000!

Anyone can be genuine but mistaken but there are many reasons why people lie. They lie for a brief appearance in the media, for a "laugh", or just for the gratification of "having one over" on someone else. The more convincing the person, the better

the lie and once you have lied you can never, ever go back on it and so it grows and grows. I am sure many big-cat sighting are lies. It only needs one to be true however!

It is clear to me that if small, static, habitat dependant species living in well studied areas, like the spider *Araneus marmoreus* in Foxley Wood or the slug *Limax cinereoniger* at Swanton Novers, can go unnoticed, how much more difficult it will be to create a true record of a shy, elusive, mobile, well camouflaged, mainly nocturnal animal like the Puma.

The creation of a record is the result of knowledge of a fact, a truth in other words. There is a difference between "to know" and "to believe". One can believe in what a lie tells you. I must throw my cards upon the table and say therefore that I believe there is a Puma out there but I know not if that is the truth.

If anyone is interested in creating this record and finding the beast I shall be glad to assist with the information I have. As an appetizer though, I would suggest a dawn vigil from the top of Reedham or Wickhampton church towers with telescope, walkie-talkie and video camera and a partner, mobile on the ground. This way you may solve a mystery and record a fact.



THE INTEGRITY OF THE RECORD REFLECTS THAT OF ITS RECORDER!

Garth. M. Coupland

TO ALL LOCAL NATURALISTS

As some of you will be aware, I have for the last 11-12 years been archiving and databasing the many writings of Ted Ellis. A very interesting occupation and very informative. All information is available for a small fee to all interested parties. My main project for the next year or two is to obtain copies of nature observations at Wheatfen SINCE Ted died (22/7/86) and I invite you all to send me what you can. All submissions will be acknowledged and (one day!) released to you all in some form or other. I can handle all forms of computer records on disk. If in doubt-ring, or if preferred write by hand or use the old steam typewriter!!

Thankyou

Chris Blenkiron, 143, Norwich Road, New Costessey, Norwich, NR5 OLD. Telephone 01603 744109, evenings
e-mail 100117.1137@compuserve.com

website:http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/ellis_nature_wheatfen_fungus

WALL PLANTS IN WEST NORFOLK

Society member Ron Payne has published a paper on the flora of walls in west Norfolk. For seven years he has studied the flowering plants and ferns on almost one thousand walls throughout the west of the county and listed four hundred and eighteen different species. In this paper the data gathered is analysed in various ways and comparisons are made with earlier surveys in other parts of England.

The paper is available from Mr.R. M. Payne, Applegate, Thieves Bridge Road, Wattleton, King's Lynn, Norfolk. PE33 0HL. The price is £3, and all profits will go into the fund for publishing the new county flora now due to be published in 1999.

A BIRD CAKE WITH A DIFFERENCE

Have I made a breakthrough in the manufacture of Bird Cake?

Take 2 lb of pure lard (additive free). Dissolve it slowly over low heat. Add approximately the same weight of crushed oats or corn, (I use Haith's Song Bird Mix,) then add about 4oz of Gram Flour (a flour made from lentils). Mix well until stiff - adding more bulk to the fat if too loose-then fill 2 / 3 ins. basins with the mix and cool either in a cool spot or, if room in the fridge.

The cakes are proving extremely popular: apart from the regular customers - Starlings, Blackbirds, Tits of various types including the Long Tailed, Siskin, Greenfinch, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, I have actually enticed the Goldcrest from the nearby conifers to have a go. At first I was naturally a little concerned. However it came back for more two or three times over the next few days, so obviously it finds it palatable. Maybe the bird population have heard rumours of this "Indian food thing"!

Roger A. R. Clarke

I have heard of Bird Cake being put in a coconut half with a hole in the bottom with string knotted and threaded through so that it hangs upside down for Blue Tits. Colin

STRANGE BEHAVIOUR OF SISKINS

I am fortunate enough to have a small flock (12 approx) of Siskins feeding regularly on nuts and sunflower seeds, up to eight at any one time. Every so often all will stop feeding and freeze for periods of up to a minute whilst other birds present, Coal, Blue and Great Tits, Green Finches and House Sparrows will continue to feed quite normally. There are two multiple feeding areas out of sight of each other but in full view from where I sit and Siskins feeding in both areas will freeze simultaneously. I can only assume that there must be some sound that only they can hear.

A. P. Goodfellow February 1998

FEBRUARY 1998 SIGHTINGS

On 26th about 0830hrs I was walking through Stow Bedon and saw a Wood Mouse on the road edge. It looked in perfect condition but my gentle prodding failed to persuade it to move into the grass verge. Finally I scooped it up with my map case and deposited it onto the grass. It then crept under some leaves. Its deep brown eyes looked alert but I wondered if it had just woken up and wasn't quite "with us".

The same day I saw a flock of about 150 Chaffinches flitting around between Merton Wood and Lowster Hill in Peddars Way.

We live about a mile from Wayland Wood, and believe the Hawfinches which have visited our garden for 20 years come from there to feed off the nutlets under the Hornbeam. February's sightings were 2 males on 8th, 13th, 22nd and 1 female on 14th. Each visit was for water in the birdbath.

The most exciting February visitor was a male Sparrowhawk. We've never had one before and I couldn't believe my luck at seeing one so close. About mid-day on Friday 20th I heard a "thud" on the sitting room window. I crossed the room, looked

out and saw about a yard on the lawn a Sparrowhawk crouching over its victim. The Blackbird was on its back, the Sparrowhawk with its talons digging into its breast was bouncing up and down squeezing the life out of its victim. The Blackbird was making high pitched cries. When the Sparrowhawk started to pluck the breast feathers I tapped sharply on the window. It turned its head and stared at me, still keeping its wings arched over its prey. Then it returned to the plucking of the squeaking Blackbird. I went through 2 rooms, along the garden path and the hawk flew off low across the garden, skimming the fence with the hapless Blackbird in its talons. All that was left was a pile of soft black feathers.

Susan Pallister

MARRIOTT'S WAY - WEDNESDAY 25TH MARCH

On a wet, cool and windy morning I was delighted that six other members of the Society took the trouble to turn up. Fortunately the rain soon stopped and we enjoyed our two and a half hours meander along the old M.& G.N. railway line. This time we were not disturbed by a sponsored walk and met virtually nobody.

We identified 23 species of birds with perhaps the most surprising being a Woodcock . A singing Chiffchaff was a year tick for some of us, but we were unable to see it.

We meandered as far as the industrial complex where a lot of noise was emanating from what seems to be a car crushing plant. It was near here that we discovered what was for me the surprise of the morning, about 10 yards of the actual old track still in situ. This must be the only bit left!

This stretch of the track will be a good place for anybody interested in wild flowers, to walk in summer. Fourteen species were identified.

I have long been interested in Marriott's Way and frequently walk the Costessey stretch. I have some enthusiasm for steam trains and recall with affection, riding the line in my younger days. It is nearly 40 years since passenger traffic ceased. The County Council now wish to "improve" the track to encourage greater use and it is hoped that this will be done in a sensible manner to protect the wildlife.

I would like to add a postscript to my note in the last "Natterjack" in that Large White Butterfly caterpillars were on my Broccoli until 2nd February and one person reported having them on his, also in Costessey, on 8th February.

John Butcher

Please send items for August Natterjack before 1st July to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Members who pay by cheque are reminded that subscriptions fell due on 1st April, 1998. Current rates are £10 for ordinary and family members and £15 for affiliated groups. Please make cheques payable to Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society and send them to:

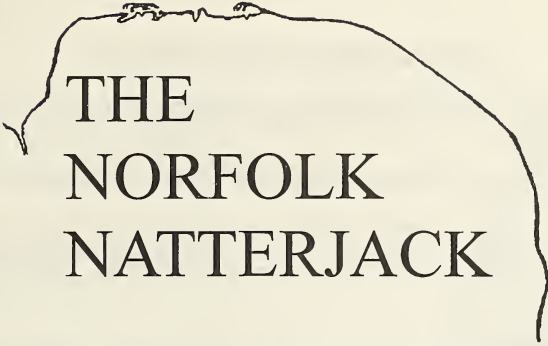
**D. I. Richmond
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PROGRAMME

Sunday 13 September

Holt Country Park is owned and managed by North Norfolk District Council and Holt Lowes is an NWT Reserve. Tony Leech, biology teacher from Greshams School, will lead the party around the site in the morning, mainly for fungi. In the afternoon there will be a chance to look at specific areas.

The car park is on the right of the Norwich to Holt road just south of Holt.
TG 081 375. Toilets available.

Tuesday 15 September

This talk continues our woodland theme.

Sunday 27 September

Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood is an NWT Reserve It is ancient semi-natural woodland on boulder clay. Trees include alder, ash, oak, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, holly, elm, hawthorn and blackthorn. Shrubs include dogwood, guelder rose and spindle.

Parking is in the Warden's meadow, just past a wood yard in the middle of the village. Do not try to use the old entrance. TM 142 977.

This is the second visit to this reserve looking at it through the seasons. We plan to visit again in April. We have no winter meeting but the warden advocates visiting the day after fresh snow has fallen, to see foot prints.

Sunday 11 October

Wheatfen is reached through Surlingham village. Passing the school and the village pond you will come to a fork. Take the left fork down 'The Green' and continue a quarter mile. Turn sharp right into 'The Covey' and continue for half a mile. The road becomes a rough track. Continue another 300 yards and you will find Wheatfen car park on your left. TG 325 056.

Thursday 19 November

Mariott's Way is a seven mile path from Hellesdon to Attlebridge along the old M. & G.N. railway. We meet in the old station car park at Hellesdon on Marlpit Lane off the A47. TG 197 100.

Sunday 22 November

Buxton Heath is managed by Buxton Heath Wildlife Group in conjunction with the NWT. The heath is on a basin of acid sand with a chalky stream flowing through the centre. This gives a mixture of dry and wet heath with a valley mire in the middle and some woodland around the perimeter. It is one of the best areas for Sphagna in Norfolk. Robin Stevenson is the bryophyte recorder for Norfolk.

Car park at TG 173 214, on Heath Road off B1149. Go down narrow track to left opposite first house.

John Mott

NORFOLK BIRD & MAMMAL REPORT

David and Iris Paull have taken over responsibility for the sale and distribution of the annual Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report from Mary and Don Dorling .

They can be contacted by post at 8 Lindford Drive, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6LT, or by telephone on 01603 457270.

Progress in producing the 1997 Report is on schedule. Publication is expected early in the Autumn and copies will be sent to all members of the Society and other regular subscribers as soon as they are available. Copies of the Reports for 1996 and many other prior years are still available. For details of price and availability, please contact David at the above address.

Don Dorling.

A NEW GALL FOR NORFOLK

At a meeting of the Wymondham WATCH group at New Buckenham Common I took a look at a lone alder tree planted next to the large pond in the centre of the common. It still had several of last year's seed cones hanging on some of the branches and on a few of the cones, stiff, curled, leaf-like appendages could be seen. These I recognised as being something I had seen a picture of in one of my books, so I collected a few and took them home.

From my book I identified them as a gall caused by the fungus *Exoascus alni-incanae* (Kuhn). Later that week I contacted Rex Hancy, on other matters, and mentioned what I had found – neither name or description rang any bells with him. So I took a sample to him.

His books, one in French and another in Dutch, gave the name as *Taphrina alni* (the new name for this species) and he confirmed it as a species new to Norfolk.

Two days later while talking to a neighbour in Wacton I saw several of these galls on a small lone alder planted by his gate! Since I have collected cones from this tree in previous years I am sure I have not overlooked these galls in the past.

Robert Maidstone



CHRISTMAS PRESENCE

Every now and again the everyday household chores are brightened up, particularly if the chore is washing up and the kitchen window overlooks the garden.

During such pre-Christmas activity (Dec. 21st 1997), while at home in Sheringham, Cherry noted a small bird on the neighbour's Silver Birch. Grabbing the binoculars for a closer look we were surprised to see that the bird was a Chiffchaff. The following day, whilst amongst the soap suds, I noted a "Starling" on a television aerial across the road. I looked again as the bird appeared to have a crest. Through the quickly focused binoculars the "Starling" revealed itself to be what I had subsequently suspected - a Waxwing. To have two such visitors when doing the chores almost makes such work worthwhile!

Francis and Cherry Farrow

A GAGGLE IN THE MIST

About 8.00am on the 29th December, 1997, while indoors at Sheringham, I became aware of the clamour of many geese overhead. The constant calling lasted a few minutes and was, I believe, that of Pinkfeet. Not one goose was to be seen, however, as the countryside was still bathed in thick fog. The geese, no doubt, were flying blind, although they seemed to be heading westwards. The number of geese involved must have been considerable from the amount of calling and I wonder if anyone spotted them.

Francis Farrow

I am sorry these two articles from Francis and Cherry are late. I mislaid them. They were meant for the February issue.

ARACHNOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

Whilst on night shift during May this year, I was admiring the superb specimens of *Larinioides sclopetarius* that spin their large, orb webs around the lights on the security building at the entrance to Cantley Sugar Factory. I marvelled at the way they had obviously chosen the light site because it attracted insects. Their webs were much cluttered with insect corpses of many and varied species.

However, alarm bells rang in my mind as I remembered that such assumptions about nature are usually made with a wondering human point of view and often very wrong. I decided I should investigate further.

Of course spiders build webs where there are no lights at all but this fact did not help prove or disprove my assumption.

I had concluded long ago that the main factor involved in "web sites" was the physical characteristics of the site itself. I had seen orb webs of the Garden Spider *Araneus diadematus* strung like flying buttresses all around the base of a circular garden conifer. I discovered over twenty webs, all in a line along the overhang at the top of a cricket score board belonging to *Zygiella x-notata*. These, and countless other sites could not possibly give any special advantage in the catching of flying insects. They were just convenient. I therefore wondered if the physical presence of the light fittings gave better conditions for stringing one's snare but I found webs close by, but unconnected to the light's housing. A careful check around the building confirmed that the webs were only on or near the lights, leaving yards of apparently quite suitable sites quite bare of webs. My original assumption was looking good! Or was it?

I then considered other theories that did not involve spider intelligence. Could it be that spiders, like many insects, are also attracted to lights? This phenomenon is in itself intriguing. Or could I be observing a process of evolution? The spiders who build by lights would become more successful by way of better feeding.

This would possibly increase their size, metabolism and fertility. Their offspring would therefore be better equipped for survival and would carry the tendency to build webs near lights.

I fear the question remains unanswered and that my original assumption was flawed. The only conclusion I can reach is that I was correct in questioning my assumption in the first place!

I do not believe that a spider figures out in its mind that it will fare better if it builds its web near a light. I favour the theory that lights attract many creatures and therefore where they are present they will draw those creatures towards them.

I would be interested in the views of others on this subject as I can be sure there is some point I have missed or some theory I have failed to consider.

Garth M. Coupland

Please send items for November Natterjack before 1st October to Colin Dack 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ.



Larinioides sclopetarius
Cantley - May 1998

BOTANICAL MYSTERY IN WELLS!

In the 1970's, I photographed Pale Flax, *Linum bienne*, and Meadow Saxifrage, *Saxifraga granulata*, on the main sea wall in Wells. The former is quite rare in Norfolk, and the latter found in scattered localities, this being its only site in the Wells area. In 1978, after the February tidal surge and flood, the sea wall was completely rebuilt, using mainly local material from the harbour, with some imported topsoil. I suspect the latter included seeds of Viper's Bugloss, *Echium vulgare* and Weld, *Reseda luteola*, both of which appeared the following year, and have persisted ever since.

However, in the early 90's, the Pale Flax re-appeared, and now grows along both sides of the Beach Road, where its range has extended, the seed being perhaps carried along by car-produced eddies. This year, 1998, two separate colonies of Meadow Saxifrage are there as well – as far as I can recall, very near to where they used to grow 21 years ago! O.K., I agree that someone might have scattered seed, but who? – and why? And why just those two species, which had a foothold there in pre-flood days? My feeling is that they somehow survived, and have taken all this time to "work their way through". Any better ideas?

Paul Banham

A DEVICE TO ASSIST AN AILING MEMORY

As one gets older the memory tends to deteriorate and for some time I have been looking for some assistance. My interest is bryophytes which are not the easiest things to identify, being so small. I have always been interested in computers and so perhaps one of the small personal organisers would fill the bill. If one looks in the Argos catalogue there are so many different models that it is difficult to find out which would do the job.

What I wanted was a database with a record for each species of moss and liverwort. In Norfolk there are 260 mosses and 80 liverworts so I would need space for perhaps 500 records altogether to allow for those found elsewhere. For each record I needed 15 fields to enter information as follows: Species, Synonym, Type, Habitat, pH, County, Leaf, Nerve, Auricle, Cells, Stem, Capsule, Gemma, Colour and Notes. These were the fields for mosses; liverworts were slightly different.

The next thing to find out was the memory needed. Computer pundits in the society told me to multiply the number of records by the number of fields by the length of each field. The field size I did not know yet, so I estimated 100 characters. The calculation was therefore $500 \times 15 \times 100 = 750000$. This, theoretically, is the number of bytes of memory, or 3/4 of a megabyte.

In order to be able to retrieve information quickly, a search facility was required. It would be useful, for instance, to be able to search on the species first, but it would also be a help to be able to search on any field. If I found a moss with a hair point, to be able to display all the mosses with a hair point would be a help.

I started going round shops which sell these devices but could I find anyone who knew anything about them, not a hope. They are really sold to replace the great thick note books which high power executives carry around to remind them of appointments and to hold telephone numbers. Most of them have databases which are pre-programmed to contain: name, address, telephone, fax, etc., and these headings cannot be changed. Most do not have a search facility.

Then I went into Currys in Norwich and found a young lad to explain to me what they would all do and he took one out of a holster on his belt and explained that he had put every piece of kit in the shop on his and could recall the information on about four key taps. This organiser was called a Psion Series 1. He suggested that what would be best for me was a Psion Siena which was sold as a 512 kilobyte or a one megabyte; I therefore went for the latter.

One worry was batteries. It runs on two AAA batteries with a small watch battery as back-up. When you get low on power you are warned to fit new batteries. These last about 26 hours and you can check at any time how many hours have elapsed since the batteries were changed. The Siena switches off automatically after a pre-set time, which can be altered. When you switch on again, the computer is at the same point you left it; no loading up again as in a PC.

The second concern was back-up. With a PC you back-up your files onto floppy disks. Psion sell a cable to connect the Siena to your PC with software to make it work, which includes the database. This means that you can back-up onto the PC and even work on the databases on the PC and then copy them back to the Siena. It also gives you the facility of printing out the database or parts of it.

So far I have entered 365 mosses, 98 liverworts, 68 names and addresses with telephone numbers and 40 events in the diary and have only used about a third of the memory. It fits comfortably in a shirt pocket although I have bought a shoulder holster to keep it safe. It does exactly what I wanted.

John Mott

Wildlife Music. How about a Top Ten?

In the dim and distant past, the would be wildlife watcher went out into the field using his eyes and ears. A bird song or animal sound would be followed through the wood, or wherever, until the maker of the sound was discovered. The sound and appearance of the creature would be mentally filed, and, over a period of months and years, a personal memory bank of animals and birds would be built up until the person doing the study became part of the countryside in which they lived, its sights and sounds as much a part of life as eating and breathing.

Today, things have changed, with videos of the wildlife and CDs and tapes of all the sounds of the wild which make it possible for the observer to learn all these sights and sounds without even getting up from the fireside chair. With all these tapes and CDs perhaps it is time that we had a 'Top Ten' of wildlife music of all time. A combination of the music of our culture allied to the wildlife of the countryside? Here are a few suggestions.

"Nessun Dorma," (None shall sleep), from Turandot by Cy Fonaptera and the Bed Bugs.

"Little Boxes," by The Tit Family Singers.

"Bury Me Out on the Prairie," by Necro 4 Us and the Investigators.

"The Green Green Grass of Home," by Medd O'Brown and the Crambids.

"Something Tells Me I'm in to Somethin' Good," by Geo Troopies and the Dung Beetles.

"The Last Rose of Summer," by Avis Rosier.

"I dreamt that I dwelt in Marble Galls," by Andricus Kollari.

"The Humming Chorus," from Nabucco by Moss Keyteau and the Drones.

"They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree," by Cyrus Gigas and the Horntails.

"Speed the Plough," by the Vespas,

Alec Bull

DAMSELFLIES IN THE POND

I first noticed Large Red Damselflies emerging from our garden pond on 1st May. The pond in question is only one year old so I was rather surprised as the amount of detritus on the bottom must be very small and I would not have expected it to be suitable for them so early. But there they were, climbing up the iris stems as rather ugly little beasts and an hour later they had transformed into beautiful damselflies. One which I watched from the point of it starting to emerge, took just forty minutes until it flew. The wings when first meeting the light of day are very small but quickly reach their full size. The insect is very pale on first emerging, but as the wings gain length and strength so the rich colour is gained. Later in the day a pair were already egg laying on the surface plants. The wheel of life turned full circle yet again.

Tony Howes. June 1998

WOODPECKERS IN THE GARDEN

Recently we have had the pleasure of a Greater Spotted Woodpecker visiting the bird table in the garden. The blood red nape marks it as a male.

This is the first year that we have continued feeding through the spring and shredded suet has been the attraction for this particular visitor. It nearly always announces its arrival by a sharp, single call. Any other birds that are already on the table are bullied off by a threat display with wings spread. Even the wood pigeons give way to this aggression. He puts his head down sideways and using his beak almost like a shovel scoops as much suet as he can into his bill and then off he goes again.

I have followed the flight path back to the wood nearby and by this means found the nest which is in a dead silver birch tree, fifteen feet or so above the ground. The young could be heard chattering away inside. The distance in a straight line from nest to bird table would be about 400 yards.

I have, over the last week, managed to entice him down onto an old log drilled with a few holes to hold the suet. This was on the lawn in good light with a suitable background of conifers. With my hide erected 8 feet or so away, I managed to get what I hope will be some fine photographs of this colourful and welcome visitor.

Tony Howes. June 1998

LAPWING BREEDING NEAR NORWICH

While checking on great crested grebes on the river Yare at Whitlingham Lane near Norwich I came across some lapwing that were breeding on the marshes. Most of these marsh fields are now gravel workings and are already filling up with water but the one area left was being used by an estimated ten pairs of birds. In most cases the young were already wandering about on their own but with attentive parents close by. Any crows passing over the marsh would instantly be subjected to a 'sorting out' by several adults. I also saw a kestrel receive the same treatment.

The young from each nest could be seen from the car quite clearly. They kept roughly together but at times wandered some distance from each other. Through the binoculars they were small bundles of mottled fluff in shades of brown, cream and black. They had the same feeding manner as the parents - run a few steps, then stop, pick up an item of food, then run another few steps. Most pairs of adults seemed to have a full count of four chicks, so they were doing very well. Lapwings generally, like many of our birds these last few years, seem to be diminishing in number as a breeding species so it was pleasing to witness their success on this marsh.

In passing, it was interesting to note that at least eight little ringed plovers were displaying and flying around the newest of the gravel pits. The fact that heavy machinery is still being used, did not seem to alarm them at all. As there are plenty of shingle and sandy areas around the margins it's almost certainly going to be home for some more new babies in the near future.

Tony Howes. June 1998

CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE!

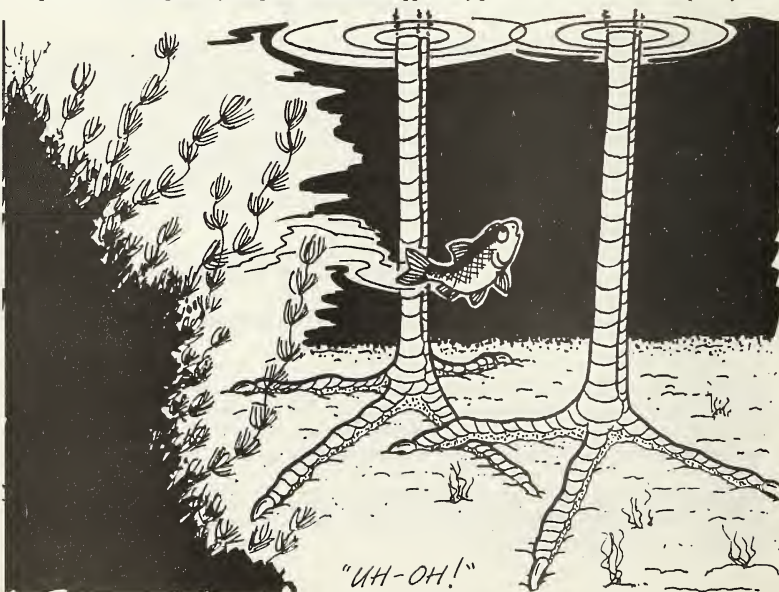
As everyone knows, Herons will rob you of the fish that you carefully nurture in the garden pond.

My pond, however, has never lost a fish although others around me regularly have early morning raids by Herons. I believe that garden centres will sell you a plastic Heron to place by the pond as the birds apparently prefer to feed alone. Consequently I also

believe that if you build your pond close to a large window, as I did, the Heron will see its own reflection as it lands and be on his way without further ado!

Possibly a large mirror, placed at dusk and removed the next morning would be a preferable alternative to unsightly netting for those whose ponds are away from large windows?

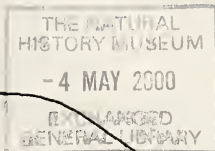
Garth M. Coupland



S.296A



Number 63



November 1998

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

Programme 1999

Sunday 17 January

Meet at Strumpshaw RSPB Reserve at 1030 hrs to consolidate into fewer cars. OS Grid Ref: TG 341 066.

First we go to the Cantley Sugar Factory to hear a short explanation about the ecology of the site, followed by a walk round the settling lagoons. The sugar factory uses water to wash the beet off lorries and then to transport it into the factory. This water then flows into settling lagoons before flowing back into the river.

Second we travel to Buckenham Marshes where car parking is limited.

We return to Strumpshaw for a packed lunch and toilets. In the afternoon Mike Poulton will take anyone interested round the reserve.

Sunday 18 April

Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood is an NWT Reserve. It is ancient semi-natural woodland on boulder clay. Trees include alder, ash, oak, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, holly, elm, hawthorn and blackthorn. Shrubs include dogwood, guelder rose and spindle.

Parking is in the Warden's meadow, just past a wood yard in the middle of the village. Do not try to use the old entrance. OS Grid Ref: TM 142 977.

This is the third visit to this reserve, looking at it through the seasons.

John Mott

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

GILES DUNMORE, County Bird Recorder for the Society has recently moved to:

49 Nelson Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8DA (Tel: 01263 822550)

Contributors to the BIRD REPORT are asked to send all records to him at the above address, preferably on a monthly basis so that work on the preparation of the classified list can be spread throughout the year.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Society's Council could find itself homeless early next year. For many years meetings have been held in the Norwich Castle Museum, the Society's "spiritual home", but that arrangement must come to an end with the start of the major refurbishment work that will in time give us a much improved museum but in the meantime will cause a great deal of disruption.

Several possibilities for a new venue are being explored by members of Council but if any other members of the Society have any suggestions or contacts that might help us find a suitable new home we would be glad to hear from you.

We need a room, preferably in the Norwich area, that will comfortably seat 30-35 Council members at five or six meetings a year. Needless to say, we are looking for somewhere that will not cost a fortune to hire. We do not need kitchen facilities - just chairs and tables.

David Paull, Chairman

MYSTERY SOLVED

A little learning is rapidly exposed. I bought a *Pieris* from a local supermarket and set about transferring it to a large terracotta pot. As I removed the plant from its plastic pot, I noticed among the roots what I was convinced were insect eggs. The plant was invested with them. Not wanting to breed something nasty in clean, new compost, I carefully teased out the roots and removed the offending eggs. I destroyed all but a few that I kept for identification. It was a bold Robert Maidstone who came up with the answer. He popped one and tasted it. It was a slow-release fertilizer capsule!

David Paull

MARSTON MARSH, EATON, NORWICH, JUNE 3rd. 1998

Without the slightest hint from the weather forecasters of what was in store for us, I led a small group of members out across my local "patch". Barely half an hour later, we abandoned Marston Marsh and fled as fast as our wellies would carry us. With lightning and thunder directly and alarmingly overhead, the heavens opened and we were bombarded with quarter-inch hailstones. When we escaped to the footpath and the road, we found drifts of hail an inch or more deep. And this was June 3rd!

Fortunately we had just long enough to see several of the "goodies" the marsh has to offer and to note how the state of the marsh flora was markedly different from the same time last year. The marsh, designated as a local nature reserve by Norwich City Council and forming part of the city boundary where it lies along side the River Yare, had been flooded during the winter, a common and welcome occurrence, but then there were the Easter floods and much of the marsh was again under a foot or more of water after the Yare topped its banks.

Probably as a result of this dousing very late in the season, the effect on the orchids was significant. Whereas a year earlier there had been relatively few Early Marsh Orchids *Dactylorhiza incarnata* but mostly full-sized, vigorous spikes, this year there were many more spikes but almost all of them were severely stunted. Similarly, although we were a little early for Southern Marsh Orchid *D. praetermissa*, those we found were also no more than a few inches high and seemingly unlikely to get much bigger. Last year, when I tried to photograph the orchids, I had to fight my way through dense swathes of Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*. This year it was a case of looking for them. Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* was also rather less evident. By contrast, Common Meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* seemed to be revelling in the wetter conditions and were rampant. Hardly surprising, the birds, butterflies and dragonflies had more sense than the naturalists and kept their heads down. But on a "rece" the previous afternoon - in hot sunshine! - I had noted some of the marsh's familiar clutch of warblers (Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Whitethroat, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler, but as yet no Sedge or Reed Warblers), six species of butterflies (Holly Blue, Common Blue, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Green-veined White and Small White), and Azure Damselflies *Coenagrion puella*. This may well have been the Society's shortest field trip on record, apart from those that have been rained off before they started. We must try again some time.

David Paull

GALL ON WELSH POPPY

It is not surprising that we have reared the gall wasps *Aylax papaveris* from the capsules of the garden Shirley Poppies. An examination of the capsules of the Welsh Poppy *Meconopsis cambrica* also revealed a swelling inside containing white grubs. They seemed to have affected the septa of the capsules and are, possibly, the work of *Aylax papaveris*.

The emergence of any gall wasps is not expected until next year. It was also noted that capsules collected and ripening after 3rd August had no galls, possibly the season was over for their production.

Reg Evans

KNOPPER GALL - CAUSERS, INQUILINES AND PARASITES

A collection of 39 fallen knopper galls was made in Hockering wood on the 18th. May, 1997. Emergence of the gall causer was not expected until the following year, however, during May and June of that year smaller blackish wasps emerged. These were the inquilines ('lodgers') which emerged through small holes scattered on the surface of the galls. They numbered 224 and belonged to the genus *Synergus* of which *S. umbraculus* is a species which we have reared from marble galls *Andricus kollari*.

On 12th. February, 1998, 24 gall causers *Andricus quercuscalicis* were noted. Dissection of the galls revealed that some had failed to emerge and were found dead inside the galls, perhaps conditions were too dry. A parasitic chalcid wasp, *Mesopolobus jucundus* (Pteromalidae) was present, a species which we have also recorded from oak pea galls *Cynips divisa*. The inquiline, *Synergus*, has yet to be determined.

Lilian Evans

MODERN MATERIAL MIMICRY MYSTIFIES MAYFLIES

When I received a 'phone call from David Fagg from Strumpshaw he told me that hundreds of flies appeared to be egg laying on his wet flat roof, "What were they?" The proverbial question came to mind, 'How long is a piece of string?' I suspected mayflies but told him to send some and I would name them for him.

They duly arrived and I was able to say they were mayflies of a specie *Cloeon dipterum* L. Some years ago at Ludham I had seen a number of mayfly bodies at the side of a large puddle on the side of the road where I presumed they had been blown by passing vehicles. I thought no more about the incident until I attended the Scout camp at Decoy Broad last year to visit the younger generation of my tribe. When I parked my car I noticed that many of the scout's cars that had been there all night were covered with small mayflies called *Caenis luctuosa* Burm. It had rained previously but the sun had dried out most of the vehicles by the time I arrived. On visiting the green mess marquee for a welcoming cup of smoky tea I noticed that the entire outside roof was also covered with thousands of their dried up bodies.

David Fagg has recently sent me a few pages from this summer's issues of "The New Scientist" in which the answer to this phenomenon has been solved in Hungary.

The family name for mayflies is Ephemeroptera which means "One day on the wing". Having spent an aquatic nymphal life in the water from a few months up to two years according to the specie, the final aquatic moult is fully winged and as such they leave the water and are capable of a short flight, in this stage their wings are dull and opaque and fishermen call them "Duns". After a short rest they moult again into the beautiful and graceful fully sexed insects that fishermen call "Spinners". The males gather in large swarms, rising and falling in their mating display, to attract the females. Mating takes place on the wing and the females have to find water and deposit their eggs before ending their short but hectic adult existence.

It is known that insects with aquatic larvae are attracted to water by the light reflected off the surface that is strongly polarised in the horizontal plane. The Hungarian scientists noticed that mayflies were laying eggs on the surface of wet asphalt roads, they also proved that the light reflected from such roads was also horizontally polarised. By experimenting with various coloured plastic sheets they found that black shiny plastic attracted the most insects, they also proved that smooth asphalt roads produced polarised light almost as good as the smooth black plastic and as the road area was far greater than that of the nearby stream it was more attractive to the insects.

Over the years when my car has been parked near an expanse of water in summer I have had the occasional water insect such as Corixid or Notonecta land with a plop on the bonnet or roof. Alan Stubbs, an entomologist, however writes that from 1972 in the Thames valley new cars stored near water prior to sale sustained paintwork damage in June when swarms of mayflies were attracted by polarised light reflections, then they were virtually fried alive on the hot metal surfaces, their body fluids often etched right through the paint film and left recognisable imprints of the insects.

Another writer from Little Dale in Yorkshire stated that after rain showers wagtails were to be found on the smooth asphalt road eating the many insects attracted there, but never on rough or coloured road surfaces. They had noticed that the flattened bodies of hedgehogs were more often found in such areas having been enticed by the increase in insect food and this had led to their demise.

It maybe that with the increase of smooth asphalt roads we may find a decrease in vulnerable mayfly species in certain areas if they continue to lay their eggs on roofs and roads.

Ken Durrant

A WOODLAND WALK IN MAY

Some years ago I found a dead chicken one morning which had 14 large burying beetles beneath it. They were all black except for the reddish antennal clubs. to my surprise they had all left the carcass by midday. Since then we have examined carrion for the presence of this and other red-banded species.

On this walk, Gordon Meek found a white wing lying in the wood, and no sign of the carcass (fox?). On moving the feathers, there were no less than five mating pairs of the Red-breasted Carrion Beetle *Oiceoptoma thoracicum*.

Since we are always looking beneath logs for fungi as well as carrion, it seems to us to be uncommon. We have only two previous records in Norfolk. Perhaps we have been unlucky.

Fungi were scarce but Christine Meek pointed out a little buff cup fungus about 2" x 2" and the red discs of a fungus *Scutellinia scutellata* which has black hairs around the edges of the disc and is sometimes called the 'eyelash fungus'.

A green shield bug *Palomena prasina* was seen, perhaps just emerged from hibernation - in which state it becomes brownish, regaining its colour on becoming active. It readily took to flight.

Reg & Lil Evans

A PIRATE SPIDER (ERO)

This small spider has a rounded abdomen bearing one or two pairs of humps. The legs are banded and with a lens the Genus can be identified (Ero).

Examination of an old birds' nest revealed a variety of small spiders, fly larvae and other invertebrates. A surprising find was a female pirate spider. This was caught and offered a swatted 'bluebottle'. According to the literature this should be unacceptable as other spiders are said to be its only prey. Our pirate spider moved closer to this freshly killed fly and was presumed to be resting upon it. By the evening it had moved to the other end and (with a lens) could be seen feeding. Two days later the spider accepted another dead 'bluebottle'.

It was thought that the pirate spider possibly after eating the owner of a web, becomes a scavenger for any remnants left by the victim.

The introduction of a few fruit flies (*Drosophila*) into the container had unexpected results. One fruit fly moving close to the spider was promptly seized and eaten. The attack was rapid and reminiscent of a crab spider.

Clearly this spider will eat both dead or live flies. It has put on weight during the last fortnight. The observation continues.

Reg Evans

THE BIG GREEN JOBS

I made a mental note based on an article in "Natterjack" last year by Garth Coupland, to get out to the village of Reedham this SUMMER (that's a laugh to start with) and try and photograph the Great Green Bush Cricket *Tettigonia viridissima*.

I had not seen this lovely, huge insect since I was a child and lived in Wymondham. According to Garth they were still found in Reedham village centre, enjoying hedges, rough areas etc., and were in fair numbers. I walked down lanes, up roads, through fields, over gates, under trees etc., for a long time listening for the 'song'. I had begun to have thoughts of this cricket being a mythical creature here in Reedham. I waded through grass and nettle patches, stepped over brambles, climbed over and through various tree limbs shed by the wind - nothing. I did come across fair numbers of what I took to be Dark Bush Crickets *Pholidoptera griseoptera* but these were not the quarry, they were but small fry to what I was hoping to find.

I had all but given up on the quest and was making my way back when suddenly I heard it, the loud continuous 'sewing machine-like' sound. My heart missed a beat, could this really be what I had come to see? I approached with great care as Garth had advised and when I got close to the sound I stared into the hawthorn hedge trying to spot the singer. Stand very still he had said, so I looked hard at the spot hoping to see a movement. It was uncanny, just like one of those 'Magic Eye' pictures from the magazines. My eyes were flicking all over a square foot of hedge and then suddenly, there it was right in front of me, this huge bright green 'grasshopper-like beast', in full view sitting on a hawthorn branch. What a moment, with 'haking hands I set the camera up - as I was getting a few photographs I heard another 'singer' just along the hedge. In all I found four along about fifty yards of hedgerow, all 'singing' males. Garth had said in his article that he had only ever found two females. I can understand this, because they don't 'sing' they would be impossible to find, so well do they merge with their surroundings.

Then with honour restored and a few photographs in the camera I wended my way back to the car. A happy man, privileged to see such a beautiful insect. It was also rather nostalgic because the last one I had seen was about fifty-five years ago - then, as now I marvelled at its size and colour.

Tony Howes

ANTICS IN THE POND

When conditions are suitable I like to take a cup of tea outside and sit by the pond for a while, it's a chance to 'catch up' with what's happening in that part of the garden. Yesterday (the last day of August) was one of the few this summer when conditions were reasonable enough to indulge in this activity.

As I watched the goldfish swimming around, an adult frog popped its head up out of the surface weed. There were many wasps flying in and out of the pond for a drink. They don't normally stay for many seconds and I watched one land on the weed close to the frog, which instantly lunged forward and grabbed the wasp, the eyes blinked and that was that, I saw the same thing happen several minutes later. This rather surprised me as I would have expected the frog to have been stung, if it was it didn't seem to have any effect on it. Later still I watched a wasp climbing up an iris stem in the water, the frog came from probably 18 inches away towards the movement and actually leapt from the water to attempt to catch it - we live and learn.

Tony Howes

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Following the untimely death of Colin Dack (see next page) a vacancy has arisen for the post of Membership Secretary. Any member of the Society interested in taking up this post please contact the Secretary of the Society, Dr. A. R. Leech at the following address: 3 Eccles Road, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6HJ before January 1st. 1999.

NATTERJACK EDITOR

Colin Dack was also the editor of the quarterly "Natterjack", a position he had held since February 1987 (Issue 16). This edition, therefore is understandably late, although the majority of it was put together by Colin before he became ill. As the new editor I have had to hold over an article or two until the February issue for obvious reasons. If any member wishes to share their thoughts or personal reflections regarding Colin I look forward to receiving them along with your natural history news and views in 1999.

Francis Farrow.

OBITUARY

COLIN DACK
(1940 - 1998)

It is with great sadness that we hear of the death of Colin Dack, on November 14th in Addenbrooks Hospital, Cambridge, following a cerebral haemorrhage.

Colin has been a valued member of Council and an enthusiastic worker behind the scenes for the Society for many years in the capacity of Membership Secretary and was one of the first members to advocate using computers for the Society's work.

After leaving school he was apprenticed at engineering, later being 'called up' in the R.A.F., where he saw service in Aden and the Far East as an armourer together with another of our late members, Philip Cambridge. Following his discharge, Colin returned home to Dereham to continue both his occupation as an engineer and his hobbies, being in the main, photography, natural history and geology. He was a regular attendant of our meetings, both indoor and field, and latterly had taken a specific interest in birds.

Following the death of his parents, Colin greatly appreciated his friends in the Society as his family. He undertook the production of the "Natterjack" diligently (this being his last - retrieved from the computer) and together with other duties often worked late into the night to get copy ready for the printers, and with a little help (usually demanded in his own inimitable way) prepared the Society's publications for dispatch.

The writer has known Colin since his school days and (like many other Society members) will miss those late night chats on the 'phone.

Ken Durrant

COLIN DACK - A personal tribute.

A complex man - there were times when he could exasperate one beyond measure; his interruptions at a Society meeting, his numerous telephone calls - usually at meal times, however, beneath that gruff exterior Colin had a heart of gold. His concern for people, his genuine interest in our families, coupled with his fund of general knowledge on many topics, freely given to young and old alike, will be remembered by many.

A lonely man, the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society became Colin's 'family' and from its members he had a circle of friends.

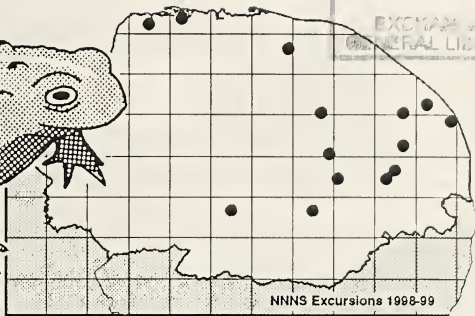
We shall miss him at indoor meetings and on field excursions, complete with telescope and tripod and on his shoulder his large camera bag containing an assortment of cameras and a selection of lenses.

May he rest in peace.

Mary Dorling

Please send items for February Natterjack before 1st January 1999 to:
Francis Farrow, "Heathlands", 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD.

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



NNS Excursions 1998-99

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

Welcome to the first bulletin of the new year. It comes to you with a *new* editor and a *new* look! This issue of *'The Norfolk Natterjack'* sports a bold *new* front page, featuring a *new* 'toad' by Tony Leech combined with a Norfolk DMAP of current excursion locations and an all *new* magazine-style format.

Presentation is very important and the Society, as you know, will be in the forefront of publishing over the next year or two with the numerous *'Wildlife 2000'* articles presently being written up. These papers will be of great value in the future.

Such is the significance of the *'Wildlife 2000'* project that the Society's lead should command a high profile and the new look of the *'Natterjack'* aims in part to promote this. In this issue you will note that members are being extremely observant and not only are they finding additional Norfolk records but new national ones too.

Now, as many of you will be venturing into the field as spring approaches, please send in your own observations and news items to the *'Natterjack'* then I won't have to fill *in-the-hole!*

'FF'

Colin's legacy

A meeting has been arranged for October 19th as a memorial to Colin Dack (former Membership Secretary and *'Natterjack'* editor). Colin enjoyed photography and has left his collection of almost 10,000 slides to the Society. He never showed his slides so after extensive sorting members will have an exclusive chance to view his work. As Colin was dyslexic the NNS Council agreed that at this special evening a collection could be made with donations going to a local dyslexia group in Colin's memory. Further details will be given when finalised by the Programme committee.

Field Meeting Reminders

Sunday 28th February Leader: Charles Neale
Morning walk at Burnham Norton for birds.
Meet 1030 hrs. in the car park at TF 828442

Sunday 18th April Leader: Barry Watkins (Warden)
Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood through the seasons : Spring.
All-day meeting from 1100 hrs. Park at the Old Post Office, TM 142977



N.B. Photographic Group members' evening: **Tuesday 22nd March**
and Photographic Group lecture *'This beautiful world of ours'*
Tuesday 20th April at 1930 hrs. in the Assembly House, Norwich.
(Pierce and Kent Rooms respectively)

Don't forget...

Annual
General Meeting
Tuesday 16th March, 1999
1930hrs
Kent Room, Assembly House,
Norwich

The AGM will be followed by
'The Upper Bure Valley'
an illustrated talk by
Anne Brewster

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



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Number 64
February 1999

THE WINGED BUCCANEER

I have a sneaking admiration for all raptors. They have always been to me the gallant swash-buckling, "Look out, here I come" members of our avian friends.

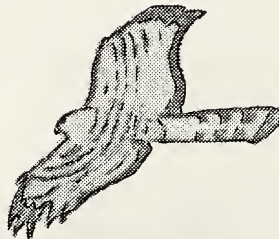
Here in Norfolk we are not over endowed with their ranks, therefore I was pleased when Sparrow-hawks began making a come back after the disastrous period of the 1950's. We began to see the odd one or two over my home village of Thorpe St. Andrew. Then about ten years ago I first noticed a display flight over our woodlands, (mainly thirty year old conifers), ideal nesting for this species. Each year since they have shown up during March and April, circling on the thermals, tails fanned and often going into long, steep glides with wings partly closed. At times you can hear the high pitched, mewing calls as they spiral way up above the trees. If I am working in the garden at this time of year I like to get the binoculars and scan the sky, I have found that warm sunny days, often with fleecy white clouds being gently pushed by a breeze are to their liking. It always gives me a thrill to pick out that unmistakable silhouette as it banks way above. Sometimes they climb so high that they are mere specks, even in the binoculars. Marsh Harriers will do the same. I am sure they just love being up there. It's fun - it's being alive!

We begin to see, in May and June, Sparrow-hawks returning to the woods with prey in their talons, even quite late in the evening they will pass over. Last year my next door neighbour told me of a strange bird they had seen in their garden (they are not birdy people) eating a Starling. When I went to look, there was the unmistakable circle of plucked feathers, and one leg. Then a few weeks later they had

the same thing happen again, only this time it was a young Blackbird. Now at this point one has to put things into perspective, my neighbour is not alone, this is happening in many gardens in villages and towns throughout the land. It must amount to many hundreds, even thousands of small birds per annum being killed for Sparrow-hawk families. There are many people I am sure who throw up their hands in horror at this thought but this is life in the raw, it has been going on for a long, long time. Sparrow-hawks, along with other raptors have been killing and eating small birds since time began. My own view is that Mother Nature sorts things out for the best in the long run, we will not lose all our songbirds to Sparrow-hawks, if it happens, it will be the result of our (*Homo sapiens*) own greed and thoughtlessness. All other creatures on this earth can and do live together without too much hassle, only we as a species have the ability to throw the proverbial spanner in the works.

So I say enjoy the gallant buccaneer with his break-neck dashes through the gardens and lanes, he came back from the brink, and I for one was very pleased at his return.

Tony Howes



AT LARGE IN NORFOLK

What sort of a year (1998) was it for four veterans of the Society? To go into Norfolk on field days with such characters as Ken Durrant, Keith Clarke and Derek Howlett is never dull. Something interesting always seems to be discovered or happens. One learns that Ken loves to eat whitebait with brown bread and butter washed down with a glass of ale, Derek falls onto steak and kidney pie and chips and Keith is a compulsive treacle tart and custard addict. In fact before planning any visit we have first to ascertain whether the local inn serves treacle pudding and/or even spotted dick and custard.

I have decided that I should have studied entomology. Ken never bends down. He uses his sweep net at waist height and I have learnt that anything living low down in the vegetation can be classified as being "common" and of no value!!! With molluscs one has to get down onto one's knees.

We soon learnt that by cutting a hole in Derek's rubber boots that he would be forced to wear waders. This has allowed us all to stay warm and dry as he uses his net in waters deeper than we are able to enter. I recommend this strategy to colleagues.

Being an algal expert also has its moments. One just needs a bottle to collect a sample of water quickly in the field before scurrying off to the warmth of the car prior to using the heated laboratory to identify the diatoms. Keith has worked out this effective method for study on winters days when the north wind cuts across Norfolk.

In April we returned to the River Nar to complete a survey started in the previous summer. For members who do not know this beautiful part of Norfolk we recommend that you park car near the Castle and walk down to the river. The site is alive with natural history interests. As you walk down you should see a pattern of ditches across the meadows. These are the remains of a once extensive floating water-meadows system constructed in 1810 for Thomas Purdey of Castle Acre. The work entailed building channels, sluices, carriers and drain-like tunnels to irrigate the meadows. The idea was to flood the meadows early in the spring and so encourage the grass to grow and then by repeating the process in the mid-summer to gain additional grazing feed. Sadly in Norfolk the cold climate caused the system to be less successful than in the West Country.

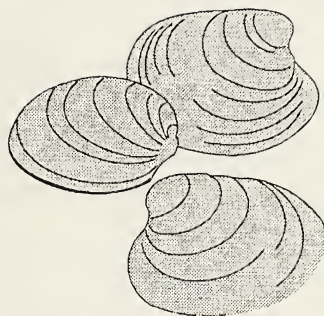
Diatoms require good eyesight, a knowledge of German and a strange self-fixation which grows with age!!! To get excited over the discovery at East Lexham of *Ellerbeckia arenaria* and at Castle Acre of *Aulacoseira coenulata* is my equivalent of supporting Norwich City football club.

In May we spent a few days at Seamere. Keith got very excited at the chance to obtain a core from the mere bottom to see the diatom succession and gain some insights into the history of the lake. With a group of students from the University he set out in two boats to take the core. From the bank one could see these "experts" in their two craft trying to steady the boats and hold them in position to get the muds up from the bottom. The imagery is embedded in the mind. And they called it scientific work!!

The River Stiffkey provided us with a number of pleasant days in the field. On 25th August 1998 we saw swarms of mayflies *Leptophlebia vespertina* (L.) rising from the river. Ken led us through the life stages and we were able to follow the mayflies making for some nearby hawthorn trees to settle. This noon swarming provided us with much to talk over as we descended upon plates of whitebait for lunch.

A survey for the rare snail *Vertigo angustior* led us along the Tas river valley. Flordon Common is the classic site for Norfolk, although in the late 1980's the beast was discovered on the edge of the Waveney Forest at Fritton. We have since found a new site at Saxlingham Thorpe. This snail is so small that one has to use creative imagination to see it in the field. It is known from only a few sites elsewhere in the U.K. so Norfolk has three for this extremely rare species.

In October we were returning from a trawling of mussels in the River Chet via the inn at Reedham Ferry when Derek begs us to let him have a dip into the waters with his hand net. At first we refused since it was getting dark and we all wanted to go home. In the end he prevailed. His first dip brought up a funny cockle-like bivalve. None of us had seen it before in Norfolk but Derek remembered from his extensive shell collection that it belonged to some species beginning with the letter "C". It turned out to be the asiatic clam *Corbicula fluminea* (Müller). This has been invading Europe from South China and the Philippines since the early 1980's. It is the first U.K. record for the



species. How it arrived in the River Chet from the Far East is anyone's guess. By boat? By koi carp importation? Who knows?

We have been monitoring and recording the molluscs, algae and diatoms of the meres, lakes and rivers of the Battle Area since early November for the army. On a freezing, wet cold day in late December we returned after treacle pudding and custard at the White Horse to look at West Mere, Nottingham. After years of drought the mere is now refilling from the underground waters. It is about 0.8m deep and already a pond weed, *Potamogeton gramineus*, is emerging. There are few mollusc species but it would be valuable to follow the changes and succession in the populations as the mere fills up and the aquatic vegetation changes. Sadly at our ages this will have to be left for others to study.

One strange creature that was present is a dark green ostracod with two spines protruding from its carapace. This turned out to be *Cypris bispinosa* the largest of the British ostracods. It is currently only known from two sites in the U.K., one in the Channel Islands and one in Cornwall. We now have a Norfolk record and the third for the U.K.

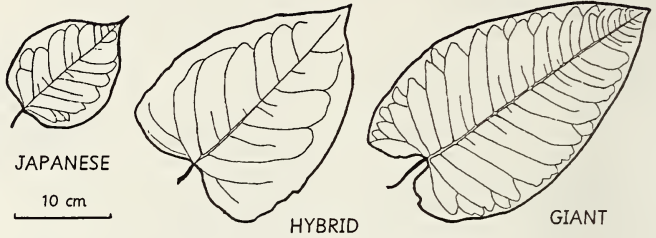
Roy Baker

HYBRID JAPANESE KNOTWEED

Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*, formerly known as *Polygonum cuspidatum*) is one of those all-too-numerous horticultural introductions which has escaped the confines of the garden. Although reasonably well-behaved in East Anglia, it has caused problems along river banks in Wales and in the south-east. Fortunately, the even larger Giant Knotweed (*Fallopia sachalinensis*) escapes more rarely and does not appear to cause any ecological problems. In Britain, all Japanese Knotweed plants are male-sterile and fail to produce pollen; some Giant Knotweed plants, however, do produce pollen and can fertilise the Japanese Knotweed. From seeds set in this way grows the Hybrid Knotweed (*Fallopia x bohemica*) which has also been cultivated.

My interest in these plants arose from meeting Catherine Pashley, a research student at the University of Leicester, who is studying the cytogenetics of the hybrid.

Figure 1: Knotweed leaves.



Within a couple of days of my hearing about this, friends John and Sue Thomson mentioned that in their garden at the Old Rectory, Hempstead, near Holt, they had two kinds of Japanese Knotweed. Armed with my newly acquired knowledge, I was delighted to find not only the two parent species but, some thirty yards away, a stand of the hybrid. This was subsequently confirmed by Catherine and her supervisor, Dr. John Bailey, when they visited the gardens.

Although known from over 100 sites around Britain, this is the first time that the hybrid has been recorded from East Anglia.

Furthermore, subject to their confirmation by DNA analysis, it appears to be only the second time that the hybrid has been found to have arisen naturally in Britain, the other being near Dolgellau.

The simplest way of identifying the hybrid is from the cuspidate base to the leaf (see figure 1, taken from the Knotweed Hybrid Survey Leaflet) and if anyone suspects that they have found a hybrid, or knows where the parents grow in proximity, I should be very pleased to pass the information on to Catherine.

Tony Leech

SOME STRUMPSHAW SIGHTINGS

As I sat in the marsh hide at Strumpshaw last January I watched a pair of Marsh Harriers displaying over the reedbeds. The day was sunny and very warm for the time of year with a gentle breeze. The birds were behaving as if it were April, calling and spiralling over the reeds, often at great heights. They would sometimes come together, one turning briefly on its back to reach out with its talons as they passed each other.

It was in this same hide during the summer of 1998 that I had watched up to four Hobbies at a time hunting dragonflies over the open water. The elegance of these falcons in flight is breathtaking, they powered just over the water taking the dragonflies with

ease. In the binoculars they could be seen eating them on the wing, holding the prey in their talons, lovely birds indeed.

Among the Grey-lag Geese that have been using the marshes of the Yare Valley for a few years there is now a bird that from a distance looks all white. I have often stalked this particular specimen trying to get close enough for a photograph, but so far in vain. I have been near enough recently to see that there is a lovely soft grey highlighting the white feathers, and the eye is dark not pink. The form and habit is certainly similar to the grey-lags, but whatever its parentage it is a very beautiful variant.

Tony Howes



If you have any line drawings of natural history subjects please send them to 'The Norfolk Natterjack'. They could be used to illustrate an article e.g. the Heron (p.5) by Society member Cherry Farrow or used as a vignette to fill a space.

Ed

HOME BIRDS

During 1998, I maintained a daily listing of bird species seen on, over or from my home at Frettenham (TG240171). I say daily, but in actual fact it was only possible to record on 343 out of the 365 days. The 'blanks' were as follows: January 2, 14, 15; May 16, 25; June 16, 27, 30; July 12, 18, 31; August 8, 9, 10, 24; September 6, 19, 20; October 8; November 27 and December 18, 24. There were no blank days in February, March and April. In general, daily observations were gathered over periods of between one and six hours; two hours having been the average (my workload not having permitted a more substantial input).

From my vantage point, particularly my first-floor dormer window, commanding a 180° viewpoint eastward of a north-

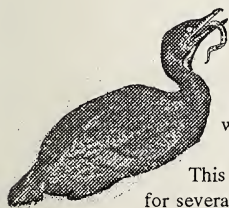
east to south-west axis to include gardens, a small fish-pond, rough pasture, overgrown hedges, (mostly) arable farmland, a worked out chalk pit, partly used for landfill, and the stone beck valley dividing Frettenham from Spixworth and Crostwick parishes, 75 species were recorded. Out of this total 23 species were observed in each month. Two more species, Wren and Carrion Crow, 'missed-out' only in August and February respectively.

The list opposite is in ranking order, viz.: rank, name and number of days - the suffix M meaning recorded in every month.

I consider that such a listing provides a useful 'snapshot' and I would like to do it all again - in a few years time!

Geoffrey Kelly

A LIVELY SNACK



Last January, as I watched from the tower hide at Strumpshaw Fen, a Cormorant surfaced from a dive with an 18 inch eel in its bill. As it tried to swallow it the eel kept winding itself round the birds neck.

This went on for several minutes, then a Heron that had been standing on the bank several yards away decided to join in the fun. It landed beside the Cormorant in deep water, swam alongside and took a stab at the eel, the Cormorant dived taking the fish with it. Twice more this happened, then the Heron flew off. Eventually the Cormorant subdued the eel enough to gulp it down, still squirming and very much alive. I wouldn't care for it myself!



Tony Howes

1	Wood Pigeon	343M
2	Starling	342M
3	Blackbird	338M
4	Collared Dove	326M
5	Stock Dove	325M
6	Blue Tit	323M
7	Chaffinch	320M
8	House Sparrow	293M
9=	Great Tit	284M
9=	Maggie	284M
11	Black-headed Gull	263M
12	Dunnock	241M
13	Robin	236M
14	Greenfinch	233M
15	Mistle Thrush	222M
16	Rook	213M
17	Pied Wagtail	186
18	Jay	159M
19=	Kestrel	144M
19=	Common Gull	144
21	House Martin	123
22	Common Pheasant	103
23	Turtle Dove	99
24=	Swift	88
24=	Swallow	88
26	Lesser Black-backed Gull	87
27	Green Woodpecker	86M
28=	GL Spotted Woodpecker	84M
28=	Goldfinch	84M
30	Song Thrush	71M
31	GL Black-backed Gull	69
32	Carrion Crow	68
33	Lapwing	66M
34	Skylark	59
35	Redwing	51
36	Wren	45
37	Coal Tit	44
38	Mallard	40
39=	Jackdaw	38
39=	Siskin	38
41	Long-tailed Tit	32
42	Yellowhammer	31
43	Linnet	29
44	Cormorant	23
45	Sparrow-hawk	22
46	Grey Heron	21
47	Fieldfare	20
48=	Cuckoo	14
48=	Blackcap	14
50	Herring Gull	11
51=	Barn Owl	10
51=	Goldcrest	10
53	Grey Lag Goose	8
54	Bullfinch	7
55=	Mute Swan	5
55=	Lesser Whitethroat	5
57=	Whitethroat	4
57=	Chiffchaff	4
59	Meadow Pipit	3
60=	Canada Goose	2
60=	Willow Warbler	2
62=	Shelduck	1
62=	Teal	1
62=	Goshawk	1
62=	Hobby	1
62=	Red-legged Partridge	1
62=	Little Ringed Plover	1
62=	Golden Plover	1
62=	Curlew	1
62=	Redshank	1
62=	Kingfisher	1
62=	L. Spotted Woodpecker	1
62=	Sand Martin	1
62=	Spotted Flycatcher	1
62=	Reed Bunting	1

Nature on the net!

Some Natural History Websites

For those of you who are on-line and can "surf" the net the following information may be of interest...

The NNNS URL ('Uniform Resource Locator' - the website address) is currently getting up to 8 "hits" per day and can be found at:

<http://www.paston.co.uk/users/golds/nnnshome.html>

also there is a Norfolk Wildlife finding page at:

http://www.paston.co.uk/users/golds/norf_wlw.html

John Goldsmith

OPEN DAY Wells Field Study Centre

Friday 9th April
2.30 - 8.00pm

The study centre at Polka Road, Wells-next-the-Sea is owned and run by the Education Department of Norfolk County Council. Society members are most welcome to attend.
Christine West

Congratulations to:

Don Dorling

on his appointment as chairman of the NORFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST.

Rex Hancy

on his election to the office of chairman of the BRITISH PLANT GALL SOCIETY.

Bob Ellis

on his appointment to succeed Alec Bull as the East Norfolk recorder for the BOTANICAL SOCIETY of the BRITISH ISLES.

What bird is that?

Society member Anne Brewster is running a short course

BIRDWATCHING
for BEGINNERS

at the
Corpusty Centre
on Sat. 13th March from 2-4 pm

All welcome
Small admission charge

What have we missed?

Could Field Excursion leaders please send a short account of their day out - its highlights, any downfalls etc - to the 'Natterjack', or maybe a 'volunteer' could be nominated to write up the event. I am sure the 'stay-at-homes' would like to know what happened where and what discoveries were made!



A note to CONTRIBUTORS...

Many thanks to all who have sent material to 'The Norfolk Natterjack'. Please keep it coming for the next issue in May. Due to the very unpredictable nature of my work it would be appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the address opposite, as soon as possible, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. This will help locate material quickly when compiling the Bulletin which could well be at very short notice.

'FF'

NNNS

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





From the Chairman...

We are on the move again - and for the first time the regular venue for our indoor meetings will be outside Norwich city centre. We hope you will understand the reasons for the change and will approve our choice.

When fire robbed us of both of our meeting places - the Central Library for our main Society meetings and the Assembly House where the photographic group had been meeting since it was formed - we camped out at a church hall off Ber Street, Norwich. It was not a pleasant experience and the numbers attending meetings dropped off alarmingly.

So when the Assembly house was restored and reopened, we gratefully moved in. Members returned in droves, and therein lies the problem. The Assembly House has rooms that hold a legal maximum of 50 or the far-too-large Music Room and Noverre Suite.

We have outgrown the smaller rooms and, combined with the fact that they are always grossly overheated, conditions have become impossibly uncomfortable. Many

members have complained, quite justifiably. There is also, depending on what else is on in the building, a shortage of parking space.

So, after I had "tested the water" at the February and March meetings and got an almost unanimous show of hands in favour, the Society's Council made the decision to move to the splendid new leisure and conference centre at Easton College.

There we shall have ample space in rooms that should be warm, not tropical, and there is plenty of parking.

The college is reached from the A47 Norwich Southern Bypass and is just a few minutes drive from either the Showground or Ringland roundabouts. A sketch map is enclosed with this issue of *Natterjack*. A larger-scale map with detailed advice on how to find the Easton College Leisure Centre and where to park will be provided with the next issue, shortly before the start of the indoor meetings season.

■ For many members, getting to meetings at Easton will be easier than negotiating through the city

centre traffic. But there will obviously be a problem for those without cars. So now is the time to do what we should have done some time ago: set up a simple register of members with cars who are willing to give other members lifts to indoor meetings and field trips. If you are willing to join such a register, will you please send me a note that need comprise only your name, telephone number and the approximate area from which you are prepared to pick up members, for example: "David Paull, 01603 457270, Eaton Village and Cringleford". I hope to be able to report in the next *Natterjack* that a good number of you volunteered and how members seeking lifts can make use of the service.

David Paull, Chairman

Toad-in-the-hole...

Just a small hole this quarter which means, of course, that you have sent in a good deal of material for "Natterjack" which is encouraging. In this bulletin we have giant slugs, rare fungi, more home birds, requests for information and important Society news. I am also pleased to report that many members have commented favourably on the new style. 'FF'

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 291604

Number 65
May 1999

Past Issues of Transactions

Professor Hinde of St. John's College, Cambridge has delivered to me a number of back issues of the Society's Transactions. Many of these originally belonged to his uncle, Mr. F.C. Hinde, who was Honorary Treasurer of the Society from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s, having served previously as our Honorary Librarian. Prof. Hinde wanted these books to find a good home and was happy for me to fill some gaps in my own run. The bulk of the copies are available for other members who are trying to complete their sets. A list of dates and Part numbers of the run follows and are now available on a first-come first-served basis on application to the undersigned at:

6 New Road, Hethersett, NORWICH, NR9 3HH
Telephone: 01603 810318

Year	Volume - Part		Year	Volume - Part
1872-73	(not shown)		1919-24	XI 1 to 5
1888-89	IV V		1924-29	XII 1 to 5
1892-94	V 4 & 5		1929-34	XIII 1 to 5
1894-99	VI (bound)		1935-38	XIV 1 to 5
1902-03	VII 4		1944-48	XVI 1 to 5
1906-07	VIII 3		1949-53	XVII 1 to 5
1913-14	IX 5			
1914-19	X 1 to 5		1975	24 1

There are duplicates available for some of the years mentioned above.

In addition an anonymous donor left with the Wildlife Trust a further batch of more recent issues dating from 1980 to 1990 (including Bird & Mammal Reports) and these are also available if required.

Don Dorling

LOOK AFTER TOMORROW

Among the many birds that visit our garden are several Coal Tits. They seem to have a liking for Sunflower seeds, but they prefer to take them away from the feeders rather than eat them on the spot. I have watched on the occasion and seen many seeds taken one at a time to different parts of the garden, presumably to be eaten at leisure.

Last March, however, while tidying up the borders I had been surprised to find Sunflower seedlings popping up all over the place. In open soil, in among potted shrubs and in seed trays of small plants. It would appear this small feathery mite of a bird works on the same principle as its larger cousins and like Jays, Magpies and Crows it 'puts a bit away for a rainy day',

Tony Howes

PLANTS ON ROOFS

I am preparing a paper on the vascular plants (i.e. excluding mosses and liverworts) that grow on roofs and in roof gutters, based mainly on several years' observations, often through binoculars, in West Norfolk. But I should be interested to hear from members in any part of the county who may have noticed plants growing in these unlikely situations, particularly if they have been seen in flower. Roofs and gutters are clearly unfavourable habitats for plants,

so I am making a note of these species which manage to reach the flowering stage perched aloft.

Thatched roofs in West Norfolk appear to be devoid of plants. Is this because they are too steeply pitched or perhaps the material is too hostile to plant growth? There is some evidence that wheat straw used in the West Country may be more favourable in this respect than the reed straw which is (or was) traditional in Norfolk. Have members any views on this?



Asbestos roofs appear to support a richer growth of plants than tiles, perhaps because of their alkalinity. Also, of course they usually have a flatter pitch.

Any observations to:

R. M. Payne
"Applegate"

Thieves Bridge Road
Whallington, PE33 0HL

HOME BIRDS II

Our garden, at Stanhoe near King's Lynn, unlike Geoffrey Kelly's (*Natterjack* no. 64 - February 1999) is completely enclosed with trees and shrubs and the only thing visible from the house apart from the garden and adjacent trees is some sky. We liken it to a clearing in a small wood through in fact once away from the garden, the area is largely arable.

We watch from a downstairs window, usually about a half an hour at breakfast time and shorter periods during the day. We have several ponds and well filled birdbaths so entice several birds to bathe, we also feed peanuts, sunflower seeds, small seeds such as niger (*Guizotia abyssinica*) and dripping in a log with holes.

The list opposite, in ranking order, is the total of daily sightings through 1998 made on 354 days, the others we were away. Birds seen over the garden rather than within are indicated with an *.

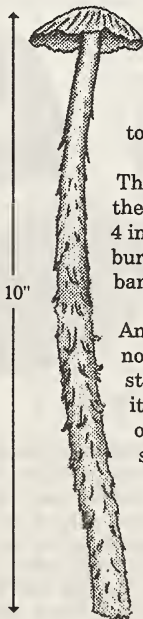
Having been watching intermittently from the same window for thirty or more years there have been many changes, for example, Great Spotted Woodpeckers have arrived only within the last 10 years, but then we would have had nesting House Sparrows, Swallows, Swifts and Starlings and regular Marsh Tits. A check through some old lists would make an article in itself.

Gillian Beckett

A Fungus Find

On March 29th this year I found three hard and dry fruiting body stems of a fungus that I had never seen before. They were in light, sandy soil on a bank overshadowed by a hedge, on the side of the road at Drayton (A1067), near the old David Rice Hospital.

After consulting the books it came down to *Battarea phalloides* (later confirmed by Mike Woolner). It appears to be a very unusual and rare fungus in the UK. The interesting feature is the long, thin stem. It is very rough and woody and



closely resembles a small pine tree topped by a tiny cap.

The average length of the stem was 10 inches, 4 inches of which was buried in the soil of the bank.

An article in *Natterjack* no. 60 (February 1998) states that at that time it had been recorded only on 42 occasions, so I was pleased that my walk along the Drayton Road had resulted in such an interesting find.

Tony Howes

1=	Chaffinch	352
1=	Greenfinch	352
1=	Great Tit	352
4	Blue Tit	351
5	Blackbird	342
6	Collared Dove	331
7	Gt. Sp. Woodpecker	306
8	Robin	291
9	Wood Pigeon	282
10	Coal Tit	268
11	*Jackdaw	237
12	Wren	226
13	Brambling	162
14	Nuthatch	148
15	Long-tailed Tit	125
16	Dunnock	114
17	Mistle Thrush	112
18	Chiff-chaff	96
19	Siskin	89
20	*House Martin	84
21	Tawny Owl	78
22	Stock Dove	77
23	*Swift	74
24	Song Thrush	73
25	Blackcap	62
26	*Pink-footed Goose	53
27=	Pheasant	20
27=	Sparrowhawk	20
29	Black-headed Gull	18
30	Turtle Dove	16
31	Fieldfare	15
32	Willow Warbler	13
33	Starling	11
34	*Carrion Crow	9
35	Goldfinch	8
36	*Oystercatcher	7
37=	Green Woodpecker	6
37=	*Common Gull	6
39=	Tree Creeper	5
39=	*Curlew	5
41	Spotted Flycatcher	3
42=	Garden Warbler	2
42=	*Cuckoo	2
42=	House Sparrow	2
42=	*Swallow	2
42=	*Lapwing	2
42=	*Kestrel	2
48=	Goldcrest	1
48=	Bullfinch	1
48=	*Rook	1
48=	*Jay	1
48=	Redwing	1
48=	*Skylark	1
48=	*Red-legged Partridge	1
48=	*Egyptian Goose	1

(55 species recorded)

EUROPE'S LARGEST SLUG

Three years ago a momentous occasion for students of Norfolk's molluscan fauna passed with barely a comment from the Naturalist community. A specimen of *Limax cinereoniger*, Europe's largest slug had been found in old woodland at the English Nature reserve at Swanton Novers, Norfolk. It was the first time the species had been recorded in the county and only the second record for East Anglia.

Don't get me wrong. I quite understand when others do not love slugs as much as I do, but I was very excited having never seen this species before. Sadly I was not permitted to visit the site which I found understandable but nevertheless frustrating.

Limax cinereoniger is not common. It occurs in old or "ancient" woodland in southern and western Britain. It is apparently intolerant of human disturbance and its presence is considered a good indicator of healthy primary woodland. Normally reaching 20cms in length and rarely 30cms it is an impressive gastropod.

At the time of the Norfolk discovery I was ignorant of the first East Anglian record and so it was that on 4th September, 1997 a bright, sunny afternoon, I found myself passing Wolves Wood near Hadleigh, Suffolk. I was on my way to the Ipswich Museum to purchase Ian Killeen's work on the Land and Freshwater Molluscs of Suffolk.

Wolves Wood is an old, mainly coppiced wood run as a reserve by the RSPB. I thought I might just have a short poke about. I did poke about and found myself five specimens of *L. cinereoniger* in and upon a pile of rotten logs in the

deep shade of a Hornbeam grove.

Believing this to be a new East Anglian site and no doubt quite carried away with enthusiasm I took one slug for the RSPB who, after kindly letting me study the animal, arranged for the find to be confirmed by Michael Kerney of the British Museum.

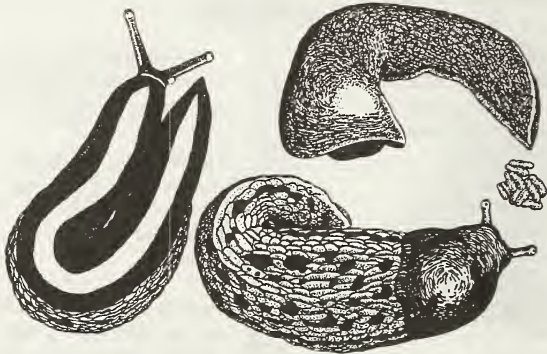
It was only later that day, having bought Mr. Killeen's book that I read of the two slugs found in Wolves Wood in 1987 but never seen again despite extensive searches.

These specimens were all of a uniform dark, brown, grey colour with a white "foot" or "sole". On a subsequent visit I found another one with spots and stripes and a jet black mantle. It also had the diagnostic tripartite "sole" as illustrated.

In 1998 I found numerous individuals under Beech trees in the Forest of Dean. Both these colour types were present and some in between. It appears to be a variable species.

This slug's nearest relative is the familiar and almost ubiquitous Great Grey Slug with aliases of Tiger Slug and Leopard Slug. These names refer to the beautiful markings on *Limax maximus*.

Having studied two specimens of *L. cinereoniger* I feel confident in stating that in behaviour it is quite a different beast to *L. maximus*. Unlike *L. maximus* it is generally very sluggish but can be roused to action quickly by picking it up. It cares not to be handled. Again unlike *L. maximus* which seeks shelter during the day this slug stayed exclusively on the surface.



LIMAX CINEREONIGER Wolf 1803

Both types described are illustrated showing tripartite sole, pale keel, the "hissing posture", the family's "fingerprint" folds on the mantle and some droppings. Similar species: *Limax maximus*.

Together with descriptions of form, colour and habitat in the text, absolute diagnostic features are: Only slug to have the tripartite sole, when present. Pale keel on back extends to halfway or more between tail and mantle (*L. maximus* only one third). Tentacles very finely spotted with minute dark spots (lens). Mantle is uniform dark colour,

Anglian Water Osprey Project - In Partnership with the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust

A curious habit which I have not observed in *L. maximus*, was discovered when I first gave it its' nightly misting of sprayed rain-water (I treat my slugs like VIPs!). It instantly extends the front of its' mantle, drawing in head and tentacles in a surprisingly rapid and sudden movement accompanied by an audible hissing sound. I don't believe this is a defence mechanism as touching or picking up does not induce the reaction.

I fed each slug on a teaspoon of goldfish flakes supplemented with fresh mushroom every two days. The grow rapidly on this diet and produce copious amounts of slime and faeces. Their accommodation must be cleaned daily. Unlike humans they won't tolerate filth!

On 23rd September the first slug laid 99 beautiful, clear, spherical eggs, 3 mm in diameter on the surface of a carpet of moss. Between 3rd and 11th November 67 healthy young hatched. These, after being fattened on fish flakes, were returned to the site in Wolves Wood where I am pleased to say the warden and the RSPB are taking steps to ensure the slugs conservation.

When I met the warden he told me that large slugs had been seen, entwined, hanging from boughs on strings of slime in the wood. I should love to witness this, the strange mating procedure of *Limax cinereoniger*, an hermaphrodite mollusc.

I feel sure that Norfolk must have more sites for this animal. Please keep looking. For diagnostic features please see the illustration panel on page 4.

Garth M. Coupland



Following an absence of over 150 years, attempts are being made by a team at Rutland Water Nature Reserve, to re-establish the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) as a breeding species in England. The translocation project is being run in partnerships Anglian Water and the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and is the first of its kind outside the USA.

During the past three successive summers 24 young birds have been successfully translocated from thriving populations in Scotland and released at Rutland Water. Sadly, since migration, two of the Rutland young have been recovered in West Africa.

In spite of these losses the team remains optimistic that birds will return and believes that the project is now entering a new and exciting phase. By spring the young released in the early years will have reached maturity and although rather young to breed, it is possible that, from April onwards, some may return from their overwintering grounds to prospect for suitable nesting sites. As Ospreys like to nest close to the site where they first fledged it is hoped that returning birds may choose to settle within the locality of Rutland Water. Indeed, it is this aspect of the Osprey ecology that has allowed similar projects in the USA to succeed.

It is of course possible that returning birds may choose a more distant site. In order to extend coverage the project team are hoping to encourage members of bird clubs and wildlife groups to

look out for colour-ringed Ospreys. Each year Scottish Osprey chicks are ringed with a metal BTO ring and a coloured plastic Darvic ring. The colour coding changes from year to year. The translocated chicks bear the same means of identification, but carry rings on the opposite leg to the Scottish birds. For the past three years Rutland chicks have been ringed as follows:

1996 red ring/white lettering left leg
1997 white ring/black lettering left leg
1998 ochre ring/black lettering left leg



If you see any colour-ringed Ospreys the project team would be very interested to hear from you. Please try and record the time, date and place of the sighting and as much detail as possible about the rings. We would stress, however, that the welfare of the birds must come first and attempts at reading colour rings should only be undertaken if the birds use a regular feeding perch where the leg may be visible. All sightings will be followed up and will be treated in confidence.

The project team can be contacted at:

Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre
Rutland Water Nature Reserve
Eggleton, Oakham
Rutland LE15 8BT

Tel: 01572 770651

Fax: 01572 755931

website:

www.fineshade.u-net.com/rw/

If you would like to receive a leaflet about the project please forward an A5 s.a.e to the above address.

FIELD MEETINGS MAY - JULY 1999

Please note that start times are variable.

Sunday 16th May Berney Marshes

10.00 am. Full day, TG475051

This meeting was publicised at the last three meetings, including the AGM, and all the places have now been filled.

Sun. 23rd May Beeston Regis Common

11.00 am. Full day, TG165426

"Beeston Bog" is one of Norfolk's premier wildlife sites and was recently designated as a Special Area of Conservation. The habitats range from acid heath to spring-fed valley mire and the great diversity of plant life supports a wide range of invertebrates, many of which are rare. This is the first of three visits to the common this year and should be a good time for butterwort, early marsh-orchid and possibly Pugsley's marsh orchid.

Sunday 6th June Alderford Common

WILDLIFE 2000

10.30 am. Full day, TG126186

This SSSI is owned by Swannington Parish Council and managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. There are a variety of habitats here including heath, scrub, damp hollows, ponds and chalk grassland (which is unusual for this part of the county). The site is noted for newts, nightingales and turtle doves. Graham Larter is the volunteer warden.

Wednesday 16th June Marston Marsh

10.30 am. Morning only, TG217057

This is an attractive local nature reserve in the Yare Valley consisting mainly of grazing marsh with a network of dykes. With luck, there should be a good show of orchids. This meeting has been re-scheduled from last year's programme as the visit was rained off by a storm of near tropical intensity. Pessimists should bring umbrellas.

Sunday 20th June Pigney's Wood

WILDLIFE 2000

10.30 am. Full day, TG298324

Pigney's Wood was established by the North Norfolk Community Woodland Trust and since 1993 several thousand trees have been planted on what was arable land. As well as the new wood, the site includes

some existing woodland and 4.8 hectares of meadowland adjacent to the North Walsham and Dilham Canal. Many members will remember the excellent talk John Sizer gave us last September.

Sat. 10th July Snettisham Coastal Park

JOINT MEETING

2.00 p.m. Afternoon only, TF648335

Bordering the Wash to the north of the car park, this area has a very rich coastal flora and habitats include shingle bank, brackish marsh and damp grassland. It is also noted for its bird life. For those who wish to make a full day's outing, the RSPB reserve is to the south of the car park. Brian Sage is a well-known all-round naturalist.

Sun. 11th July Beeston Regis Common

11.00 am. Full day, TG165426

This meeting is the second of the three visits to the common and the summer flowers and butterflies should be at their peak. For those who are interested, there will also be a workshop on hoverflies.

Sunday 18th July Strumpshaw Fen

JOINT MEETING

11.00 am. Full day, TG341066

Not only is this a fine birdwatching reserve but the meadows support an excellent variety of wildflowers and the dykes are full of aquatic plants such as water-soldier and frogbit. It is also a good place to see the Norfolk Hawker.

Saturday 31st July Coldharbour Wood

11.00 am. Full day, TL784996

This is in a lesser-known part of the Breck where there are attractive forest rides mainly on chalk. We should see plenty of Breckland plants and insects. Gillian Beckett is the BSB recorder for West Norfolk, co-author of the new Flora of Norfolk and is currently joint president of the society.

N.B. Indoor meetings from September 1999 will be held in the Sports & Leisure Centre at Easton College. Further details will be published in the next issue of *Natterjack*.

Bob Ellis

Castle Museum

The natural history collections at the Norwich Castle Museum will not be available for general study as from July 1st 1999, until further notice, although it may be possible to have limited access until December. This is due to the refurbishment and reorganisation of the museum. It is hoped that the museum will re-open as early in 2000 as possible.

Please contact the following at the Castle Museum if you have any specific queries on:

01603-223642 (AGI)

-223643 (JGG)

-223644 (AJS)

-223645 (RJD)

- or via their URL

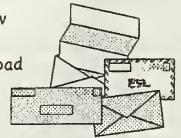
<http://www.paston.co.uk/users/ncm>

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next *Natterjack* will be in August. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, as soon as possible, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful.

'FF'

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



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Members who pay by cheque are reminded that subscriptions fell due on 1 April, 1999.

Current rates are **£10** for ordinary and family members and **£15** for affiliated groups.

Please make cheques payable to **Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society** and send them to:

D I Richmond,
42, Richmond Rise,
Reepham,
Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

From:

Address:

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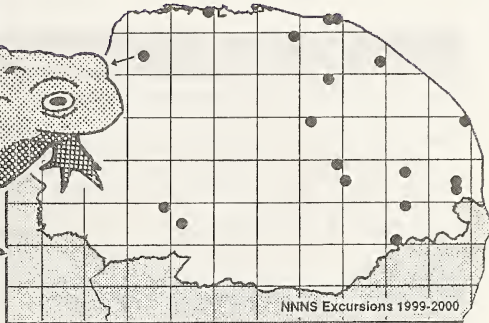
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THE NATURAL
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THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

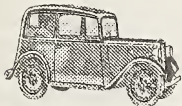


From the Chairman...

LIFTS REGISTER:
A NON-STARTER!

I am disappointed but perhaps, because others have tried it before and failed, I should not be surprised. In the last issue of *Natterjack*, with our move to Easton College in mind, I asked members to offer to join a simple register of those willing to give others a lift to meetings and field trips. I have had not a single response. All I can now suggest is that individual members who cannot get to meetings should contact me (01603 457270) and I will try, either directly or via *Natterjack*, to put them in touch with members in their area. For example, I already know of a lady in Fakenham, another in Sprowston and a couple in Thorpe who will not be able to get to Easton unless someone can give them a lift. Any offers?

David Paull, Chairman



FIELD MEETINGS AUGUST - OCTOBER 1999

Please note that start times for the field meetings are variable and that our evening talks are now being held in the Sports & Leisure Centre at Easton College. If you have not been to the centre before, please see the accompanying map showing how to get there.

Sun. 15th August Belton Common JOINT MEETING

11.00 a.m. Full day, TG474023

We will be joining the British Plant Gall Society, the Lowestoft Field Club and the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society.

Sun. 29th August Ditchingham House Farm Estate WILDLIFE 2000

10.30 a.m. Full day, TM324915

By kind permission of Dorothy Cheyne, this is a rare opportunity to visit and record this private estate which includes Bath Hills.

Sun. 19th Sept. Beeston Regis Common

11.00 a.m. Full day, TG165426

This is our third visit to the common this year and it should be a good time to see Grass-of-Parnassus and other late-flowering plants. If conditions are right we may well see some unusual migrant birds.

Tues. 21st September

'The Otters and Rivers Project'

7.30 p.m. Room 7,

Easton College Sports & Leisure Centre
Since the programme was published, Lisa Schneidau has moved on to pastures new. Steve Henson has taken over responsibility for the project and has kindly agreed to present this illustrated talk.

Sun. 3rd October Holt Lowes

11.00 a.m. Full day, TG083383

A fungus foray with Dr. Tony Leech. Please note that we are meeting at the car park to the north-east of the Country Park off

Hempstead Road NOT in the main Country Park car park.

Sun. 10th Oct. Winterton Dunes and Church

11.00 a.m. Full day, TG499198

Looking at lichens with Dr Chris Hitch who is

Tuesday 19th October

'A view of the world through Colin Dack's camera'

7.30 p.m. Room 7,

Easton College Sports & Leisure Centre

We will spend the evening looking at a selection of Colin's extensive and varied collection of slides. As Colin was seriously dyslexic, although it never deterred him from making a considerable and valued contribution to our Society over many years, we will be having a collection on behalf of the Waveney Valley Dyslexia Association and we hope to raise a generous donation in memory of Colin. The chairman of the association has been invited to speak briefly about the work of the charity.

the Suffolk recorder for the British Lichen Society.

Sun. 24th October Sisland Carr

11.00 a.m. Full day, TM345990

A fungus foray with Mike Woolner. Recently acquired by the Woodland Trust, Sisland Carr has areas of deciduous and coniferous wood on light soils as well as areas of wet carr and it should host a wide range of fungi. The car park is at the south-east corner of the wood and should be approached by the track from the south.

Bob Ellis, Chairman

*See page 2 for maps and
photographic meetings*

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



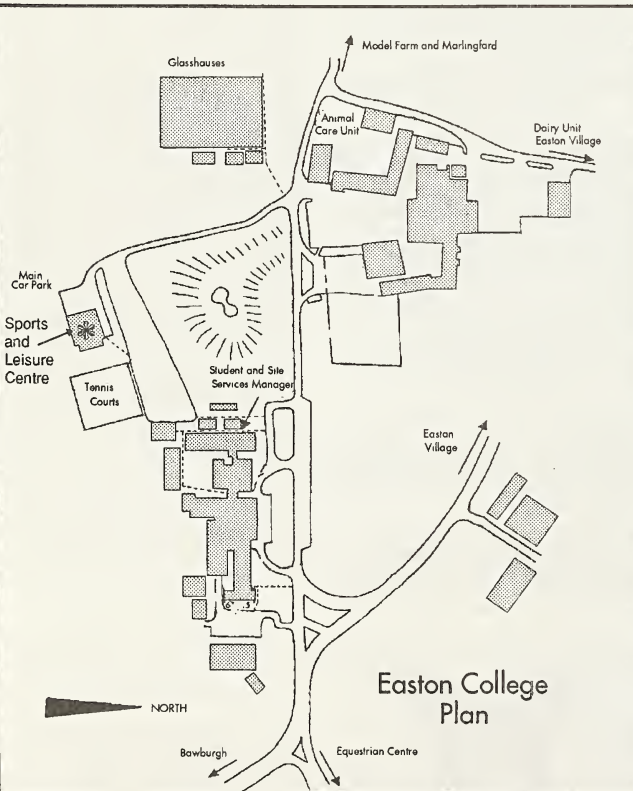
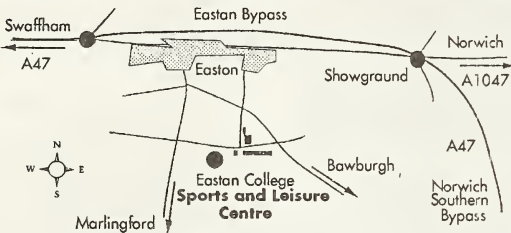
Founded 1865
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Number 66
August 1999

How To Find Easton College Sports and Leisure Centre

Leave the A47 (Norwich Southern Bypass) at either the Showground or Ringland roundabout. Follow the "Easton College" sign. About a quarter of mile down the lane, follow the green college sign (ignoring a right fork to Marlingford). After another quarter of mile at the next green college sign, turn sharp right into the college drive and follow the yellow signs (complete with swallowtail butterfly!) to sports and leisure centre. At the end of the drive, turn sharp left up to the centre. There is limited parking at the front of the centre but for the main car park the centre bear half-right. Walk round to the front of the building to the main entrance.

BEWARE THE SPEED HUMPS!



WOW! - Look at that....

An expression we have all come out with at times. You have just seen a beautiful flower in a meadow or maybe a colourful bird in the garden, you would have liked to photograph it but lacked the know how or the camera.

So why not come along to the Photographic Group meetings and see how it is done. Talk with people able and very willing to put you on the right track, we are only too happy to pass on our knowledge and experience.

Give it a go - come to the first meeting on:-

Monday Oct. 25th
"Bird Photography from a Hide"
 by Tony Howes

Monday Nov. 22nd
"An Introduction to Digital Imaging"
 by Joy and Mike Hancock

Monday Feb. 21st
"An African Safari"
 by Ivan West

Monday March 27th
"High Life Photography"
 by Norman Carmichael

EVERYBODY WELCOME

All meetings at Room 4,
 Easton College Sports and
 Leisure Centre - 7.30pm
Tony Howes
 Chairman, Photographic Group
 Tel: 01603 436867



BERNEY MARSHES
RSPB RESERVE

May 16, 1999

This splendid day began with the bonus of a trip in the RSPB boat from Goodchild Marina, Burgh Castle, on the Waveney to the reserve landing stage on the Yare near the "Berney Arms". It was a day, however, that was tinged with regret that, because of ill-health, Michael Seago was unable to lead us. We are very grateful to the RSPB's Broads area manager, Ian Robinson, for giving up his Sunday to take over at short notice. Ian took us on two long circuits through the reserve and explained the RSPB's long-term management plan for the now-substantial area of land it has acquired. The plan is a simple one: flooding and grazing. The art is how much and when - and having the patience, and courage, to give the plan time to work. The undoubted highlight of the visit was the repeated sightings of a Collared Pratincole hawking for insects among the Swifts. Other birds that excited particular interest were male Garganey, a small flight of Whimbrel, Marsh Harrier, Little Gull, Yellow Wagtail, Cuckoo, and Avocet. Other birds noted, roughly in the order in which they were spotted, were: Mute Swan, Cormorant, Swallow, Great Crested Grebe, Shelduck, Heron, Common Tern, Common Sandpiper, Oyster-catcher, Coot, Goldfinch, Gadwall, Black-headed Gull, Magpie, Pied Wagtail, Redshank, Shoveler, Sedge Warbler, Skylark, Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Pochard, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Kestrel, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Reed Bunting, Great Black-backed Gull, and Greenshank. Hares (probably four different animals) and a Water Vole were also seen.

Fran Neale

MARSTON MARSH

June 16, 1999

By contrast with the frightening storm that brought an abrupt end to last year's excursion, our walk round Marston Marsh, Eaton, took place in glorious sunshine.

Underfoot, following the previous week's heavy rain, the going was very muddy in places, so - for those who visit the marsh regularly all year - it was good to see a BTCV party laying board walks across the two wettest sections of the most popular path. As always with the marsh, the variations in winter and spring weather affect the flora. This year, there has hardly been an Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata* to be found but on our walk we saw plenty of Southern Marsh Orchids *D. praetermissa*, although mostly very small spikes. The success story of the marsh, the once very rare Green Figwort *Scrophularia umbrosa*, is now almost rampant and is spreading still further along the dykes and the banks of River Yare. Its cousin, Water Figwort *S. auriculata*, is also thriving but greatly outnumbered by *umbrosa*. Much of the marsh was ablaze with the yellow of buttercups, including several specimens of Celery-leaved Buttercup *Ranunculus sceleratus*.

The sun brought out the odonata in force. The ponds in the stretch of marsh beside Marston Lane were alive with Four-spotted Chasers *Libellula quadrimaculata* and throughout the marsh we found a variety of damselflies: Common Blue *Enallagma cyathigerum*, Azure *Coenagrion puella*, Blue-tailed *Ischnura elegans*, Large Red *Pyrrosoma nymphula*, and possibly Emerald *Lestes sponsa*. But the stars of the show were the dozens of Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*.

David Paull

BEESTON COMMON

July 11, 1999

A really fine day for a field meeting is an essential requirement, such as it was when the society visited Beeston Common for the second time this year. A large gathering assembled in the lay-by as a pristine Comma visited some bramble blossom nearby. As we entered the back bog Ringlets and Meadow Browns fluttered away.

We soon came upon three fine spikes of Marsh Helleborine var. *ochroleuca* which lack the red pigment of the type species. Along the path many of the Marsh Fragrant Orchids were sampled for their scent and Dodder was noted on the Gorse. Common Spotted Orchids, although plentiful were getting past their best and the few Bee Orchids present this year had gone to seed.

Large and Small Skippers were observed with the occasional Five-spot Burnet moth *trifolii* ssp. *decreta*. Up to now this year has been very poor for insects as witnessed on the numerous Hogweed and Angelica flower heads where the main occupants were Soldier Beetles *Rhagonycha fulva* who were busy ensuring next seasons population. The few Hoverflies noted were *Volucella bombylans*, *Volucella pellucens*, *Cheilosia illustrata* and *Episyrphus balteata*, also present were the small wasps *Ectemnius continuum* who were hunting for diptera with which they stock their nests in rotten wood.

Under the trees many of the Broad Buckler ferns were infested with the Knot gall (leaf terminals twisted into a ball) caused by the larvae of the fly *Chirosia betuleti*. Passing Meadow Vetchling we came to a small calcareous pond from which a large number of teneral Common Darter dragonflies took to the air as we approached, some of them barely

able to fly on their bright shining wings. A number of the Lesser Water Plantain were in flower and under the water the Stonewort *Chara vulgaris* still looked healthy but when pond dries out, as it does now each summer, the stonewort will exist as a model in chalk, only to collapse to dust when disturbed.

We proceeded to cross the centre of the main bog passed Cross-leaved Heath, Ling, Quaking Grass and the Butterworts which having flowered existed like young lettuce leaves flat upon the path. Our two Sundews, the Round-leaved and the Greater were in flower on the Sphagnum Moss mounds. Three Lesser Butterfly Orchids were still in bloom and received much attention. We passed a large patch of Meadow Sweet, to where a number of our *Dryopteris* specie ferns grow, including the scarce Crested Buckler Fern. On Ragwort plants Cinnabar moth caterpillars were feeding as we passed through large patches of Perforate and Slender St. John's Wort to see some Pyramidal Orchids.

We climbed the dry heath to the old pill box to get a grand view of the common and our local 'mountain' Beeston Bump. On descending again to the bog we passed through clumps of Purple Moor Grass and a large expanse of Wavy Hair Grass. On the bog Royal Fern and Adder's Tongue, Teasel, blue, white and pink Milkwort, Twayblades and Red Bartsia were seen. Broom with fasciation or strap growth and Emperor Dragonflies by the pond and a Red Admiral butterfly completed the 1½ hr ramble.

The afternoon session was spent in the Biology Department at Gresham School, Holt courtesy of Dr. A.R. Leech, where a good number of those present in the morning attended a workshop on Hoverflies bringing an end to an enjoyable summers day.

Ken Durrant

The Summer Wine - an algological view.

As we reach Norwich after a tiring day in the field (well, a tiring morning in the field and a tiring lunch in the pub) the botanists, entomologists and molluscologists are all looking forward to snoozing in front of the television at the end of their tiring day. Not so the algologists who have to spend a couple of hours in the lab. looking at the catch, making notes and boiling the diatoms in concentrated nitric acid, (to show them who's master!). This is not made easier if the lunch was particularly tiring. Now that we have acquired some state of the art instruments to measure electrical conductivity and pH there is the further need to check that the calibration has not wandered off during the day. So give a thought to the algologist slaving away while the rest of the group are fast asleep in front of the tele.

I sometimes wonder why I allow myself to be lured into these field days. It sounds idyllic to wander through spring woodland which has not been trodden by human feet for years. The reason for its seclusion is not that it is approached by a mile of track which is used as a testing ground for Land Rover, not that the footpath is flooded to a depth of about 1.1 wellingtons, nor the fact that the understorey is young hawthorn which bears large spines. As I write two of my eight fingers are unusable due to potentially septic wounds from our last visit to the site. I know that two fingers is only 25% of those available but as I type with those two fingers it represents 100% of my capacity.

Algology is not as pointless as some forms of Natural History study. It involves such practical problems as "what is clogging the Ely Ouse Essex tunnel" and "why has the water in Hickling Broad changed?". Roy Baker in last February's *Natterjack* reported our work at Seamer. This

involved a small group from UEA taking cores from the bed of the lake with a Hiller peat sampler while Roy stood on the jetty recording the scene for posterity and finding the process of coring excruciatingly funny (which I must admit, it probably was, except to those with mud all over their best shirts). Even our short core showed the mere had changed completely since the middle ages and was worth further study. We have been fortunate to interest a group from the University of London in taking a deeper core from the centre of the lake.

A great deal has been said and written about algologists eating treacle sponge pudding for lunch. It is not of course a practice unique to algologists. I will not explain all the attractions of such puddings. I will just point out that in most pubs the steamed pudding can be had for £2 while the steak chasseur favoured by molluscologists costs £5.75. We pensioners have to watch every penny. (Recently we have discovered the Pensioners' Lunch which includes not only the main dish but steamed sponge pudding as well, all for £3.75).

To some extent algologists are parasitic on molluscologists. The molluscologists go out in a splendid boat to dredge up Red Data book species (and masses of shirt-staining mud) and go along, not only for the treacle sponge pudding but for water quality samples, diatoms scraped from the timber piling, and mud samples from the ronds along the river (paper in preparation). They also kindly give me specimens of molluscs for me to take home and look at the gut content (diatoms are to bivalves what treacle sponge puddings are to diatomists). But what a way to spend an evening!



Keith Clarke

THOUGHTS ON AMPHIBIAN INTELLIGENCE AND SURVIVAL

Books have always led me to believe that amphibians would score poorly if given an I.Q. test. Does this speak of the I.Q. of writers who assume a newt could read the questions let alone understand them?

In order no doubt to put me in my place sometimes, my mother has the habit of announcing in front of others the poor results of my own childhood I.Q. test. Whether it is because of this supposed affinity with them or whether it is because it is the truth I don't know, but over the years I have gained great respect for the depth of amphibian intelligence. This intelligence must have contributed to their survival, as amphibians, for much longer than we have been around as primates. This intelligence is also that from which our own presumably evolved if Darwin is to be believed. Yes, I know they sometimes have difficulty crossing roads but observe St. Steven's pedestrians in Norwich on a Saturday to see just how far we have in fact evolved!

The great Herpetologist, Malcolm Smith, wrote of newts coming to the surface on his arrival above their tanks to wait for food, I trained, very quickly I recall, a small band of Common Frogs and Toads to come to me across my walled pond enclosure to a certain flat stone. Here I would feed them nightly on delicious slugs, worms and various arthropods. It is of course unscientific to state that their food was delicious, however, they ate it with relish much as human children devour beefburgers at Macdonalds. I achieved this by shining a torch when I fed them at their individual stations around the pond. Over a number of nights the torchlight became the symbol of an immediate meal and they all soon began to come to the flat stone when light fell on it.

Whilst thinking about training animals I considered so called intelligent mammals such as police dogs that can be trained to leap through flaming hoops. No amphibian would do that. They are not so stupid!

I new a great and ancient naturalist in Sussex who for several years observed a large, female toad which climbed to the top of a tall, flowering hedge to pick off the large nectar-feeding moths which visited the flowers at night. How did she discover this? How did she know where to go? How did she remember each year to climb there? Toads are known to loiter with intent to feed on the occupants at the entrance to beehives. We too have our favourite restaurants. My observations of toads in captivity show that they will eat continually until earlier meals are forced, undigested out of their rear ends. We don't do this but I wonder what makes us so sure of our next meal?

One could argue that the examples above merely show a simple Pavlovian type of response to a stimulus not worthy of the title intelligence. I would say that virtually all that we do in our complex lives is simply response to stimuli. We differ from our amphibian brothers only in the complexity of our responses and their stimuli. The degree of difference between us is relative to the size of our relative brains. Intelligence should be measured in terms of quality not quantity. The quality is decided by suitability of the response to the stimulus in terms of how it increases the individuals chances of survival. I suppose the point I'm trying to make is that amphibians are not dim, just small. Perhaps also I'm trying to bring us down a peg or two, clearly a trait inherited from my mother!

Whilst thinking about survival I remember a remarkable incident from my childhood newt-keeping days. Having released some Smooth Newts after watching them breeding someone took my "empty"

tank, still full of water and left it in our cellar. A year later I found it and discovered many healthy, although small, newt larvae. These had hatched and lived on apparently nothing (or possibly each other) in that cold, dark environment. Naked and small I wonder how they survive the northern winters or the filthy water some live in. I marvel at their ability to grow new limbs after amputation. I take my hat off to them!

Returning to intelligence one final observation reminded me why I love studying natural history which always throws up questions with each new experience. I was in Glen Coe one spring and found a male Palmate Newt crossing a fast flowing tributary of the River Coe some eight feet wide by means of a fallen bough. Did he know he would be swept away by the current? Did he deliberately seek out the crossing to reach the swamps and ponds beyond? Did he remember from another year the crossing point? When credited, by Man, with an instinct to walk downhill to find water why did he climb up and then over the bough? Why did he not fall from the three inch wide bridge? What incredible odds would be needed to make chance or coincidence the answer to the riddle of the newt's bridge? Surely intelligence far greater than we credit him with was involved? Surely responses to stimuli far more complex than we believe him capable of was involved?

Garth M. Coupland



I'VE FIGURED IT OUT FREDDY... THE BEST TIME TO CATCH 'EM IS WHEN THEIR HEADS ARE FULL OF "BUSINESS!"

Congratulations to:
Alec Bull

as the recipient of this years

Sidney Long Memorial Medal



Every two years or so, the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust jointly make the above award to someone who has made an outstanding contribution to nature conservation in the county. We are delighted that this year the medal is to be awarded to Alec Bull, co-author of the magnificent new 'Flora of Norfolk' and currently joint president of the Society. The medal will be presented at the Trust annual meeting at the new Ecotech Centre, Swaffham on Friday, October 15. We hope that Society members who are also Trust members will try to get to the meeting to support Alec on this very happy occasion.

HOME BIRDS II

Our garden at Watlington, near King's Lynn, is very different from those of Geoffrey Kelly and Gillian Beckett, but perhaps for that reason some notes on the birds we have seen here over the last eight years may be of interest.

The garden is small, but pretty wild, and with a number of trees and shrubs, including conifers and two large Lime trees. Arable land is on two sides, and we have a high, mainly Elm and Ivy hedge in front.

Unlike the previous articles in this series, our list comprises only birds seen actually in the garden, i.e. at or below the level of the bungalow roof. We put food out all the year round, including nuts, meat, fats and bread on the ground, and nuts and sunflower seeds in suspended containers.

The 25 species shown opposite have been seen each year (1992 - 1999). They are listed roughly in order of frequency, as we have kept no records of actual numbers seen. Another 23 species have been only rarely noticed.

RM & SM Payne

Annual species:-

- 1 Starling
- 2 House Sparrow
- 3 Collared Dove
- 4 Greenfinch
- 5 Chaffinch
- 6 Blackbird
- 7 Blue Tit
- 8 Great Tit
- 9 Dunnock
- 10 Robin
- 11 Jackdaw
- 12 Magpie
- 13 Coal Tit
- 14 Black-headed Gull (winter)
- 15 Pied Wagtail (winter)
- 16 Rook
- 17 Song Thrush
- 18 Long-tailed Tit
- 19 Jay
- 20 Wren
- 21 Wood Pigeon (more frequently in recent years)
- 22 Common Gull (winter)
- 23 Pheasant
- 24 Goldfinch
- 25 Sparrowhawk

Rarely noticed species:-

- 26 Mallard - occ. 2 or 3 on lawn (nearest large pond 250m away)
- 27 Fieldfare - Jan/Dec 1996
- 28 Redwing - Mar 94/w. 96-7/Feb 99
- 29 Siskin - Feb 94/Feb 95/Ma-Apr 98
- 30 Linnets - 1992-97 only
- 31 Mistle Thrush - Mar 96 / May 99
- 32 Tree Creeper - Nov 93 / Jan 99
- 33 Spotted Flycatcher - 1992 / 1994
- 34 Red-leg Partridge - not since 97
- 35 Swallow - (resting in nos. on roof)
- 36 House Martin evening 27/8/94)
- 37 Moorhen - Dec 1991
- 38 Goldcrest - Nov 92 ?overlooked
- 39 Green Woodpecker - Jun 1993
- 40 Heron - Jan 95 (no pond)
- 41 Bullfinch - Jun 1995
- 42 Willow Warbler - Aug 1996
- 43 Nuthatch - Jun 97 (eating seeds)
- 44 Budgerigar - (escape) Apr 1997
- 45 Whitethroat - May 1997
- 46 Gt Sp Woodpecker - June 1997 feeding on nuts
- 47 Kestrel - taking prey June 1997
- 48 Turtle Dove - June 1999

REMINDERS

A reminder to those who have not yet paid their subs - £10 please ASAP to the Treasurer. Cheques payable to Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.

D I Richmond,
42, Richmond Rise, Reepham,
Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

With bird records in mind could members also please remember to send their monthly records to the County Bird Recorder for the Society:

Giles Dunmore
49 Nelson Road, Sheringham,
Norfolk, NR26 8DA

Europe's Largest Slug (*Natterjack* - no. 65)

Unfortunately part of the last sentence in the inset illustration panel on p4 was 'lost'. For those who wish to add it to their copy it is as follows:

never marbled or large spotted. Larger skin tubercles than *L. maximus*.

HAWKS AND HAWKERS

HOOKED BEAK BRIGADE

Earlier this year I had been given as a present a day with a falconer. After a rundown on the various birds and the different methods they use to catch their prey a display followed.

The falconer put different birds through their paces. The most magical for me was a Saker Falcon, the great speed and power of this bird as it came to the lure was breathtaking, often so low that the wing tips were skimming the grass. Or again, coming in from a higher station it was moving at such speed that the sound from its wings as it passed reminded me of fizzing pop. The sheer elegance of this bird in flight was amazing, at one point the other guest and myself were asked to stand just a yard apart, the falconer then swung the lure in such a manner that the Saker came hurtling down the meadow and

between us at head height. This contrasted greatly with the Barn Owl's slow, silent flight.

A walk through the woods with a Harris Hawk showed yet another method of catching your dinner. Sitting it out watching for movement this bird followed us through the trees for about a mile, never far away, its leg bells could be heard as it flew to catch up, it was just like taking the dog for a walk.

I enjoyed seeing so many different birds of prey, I had watched the diminutive Kestrel adept at catching mice and voles, and the mighty awe inspiring power of the Bald Eagle capable of killing a Roe Deer. The crushing grip of this mighty bird, weighing in at 10½ lbs., required the use of a special glove.

Tony Howes



LIQUIDATED!

We have all heard the phrase "Red in tooth and claw" - but drowning? I was intrigued by a letter in *The Times* from 10-year-old Eleanor Batchelor from Hampshire. She described how she saw a bird of prey trying to drown a Blackbird in a puddle-filled pothole. It sat on the Blackbird so that it was completely submerged. Was this, she asked, a common phenomenon? Incidentally, the blackbird survived because Eleanor scared away the hawk. The letter brought this response from Chris Dowsett, of The Grange, Burgh Castle: "Eleanor Batchelor wonders if birds of prey often drown their victims. Three years ago my wife and I sailed up the River Yare in Norfolk and observed a Black-headed Gull swoop and gather up a mouse from the river bank. The gull then settled on the water and held the mouse submerged until its struggles ceased." Have any members observed this ingenious if rather gruesome method of killing prey?

David Paul

I think it may be more usual for gulls to drown their prey, particularly the larger species. I have seen Gr. Black-backed Gulls attack and subsequently drown Redwings as they were crossing the North Sea in October.

'FF'

A WELCOME VISITOR

My eye caught a movement near the garden pond, I stood by the window and watched, then a large dragonfly came into view. I went outside as quickly as possible, it was still there, hovering over the water near the lilies. Much to my surprise it was a female Emperor, the first time I had seen one round the pond in the three years since it was put in. It settled on a lily leaf and began laying eggs - I charged back inside for the camera. On getting back outside the insect was in flight again and within a few seconds it went over the fence out of sight. But with luck I should have a few eggs that maybe in two years time will hatch into these beautiful dragonflies.



They have the largest wingspan of any British dragonfly, the male is a brilliant blue on the abdomen with a black stripe, and the female is green. This was indeed a welcome visitor.

Tony Howes

Michael J. Seago

An era in the history of ornithology in Norfolk ended on 9th July with the death of Michael Seago, aged 73. He began his interest in birdwatching in the early 1940's with regular visits to Breydon where his particular interest in wading birds developed. He joined the Society in 1943 and was soon having observations published in the Society's *Transactions* and elsewhere. In 1953 it was felt that the county should have a dedicated annual bird report to be published jointly by the (then) Norfolk Naturalists Trust and the Society and Michael was persuaded by Bernard Riviere, Dick Bagnall-Oakely, Ted Ellis and others to take on the role of editor.

The first edition under his leadership appeared in 1954 covering the events of 1953 and in the Autumn of 1998 the forty-fifth annual publication, dealing with the records for 1997, was published with Michael still acting as senior editor, a unique record in British ornithological recording. During this long period he was responsible for the introduction of a number of features now taken for granted in such publications, namely line drawings and photographs, the latter having been in full colour since the 1986 Report. These innovations and a much more detailed Classified List in recent years, have received national recognition by awards in the 'Best Annual Bird Report' competition organised by the magazine *British Birds* - joint first for the 1995 edition and a second place for 1997. The Society alone became responsible for the report after the 1992 edition and as a result of sales and Michael's ability to attract sponsorship, the ever increasing size did not result in any substantial additional costs to our funds.

In addition to his role with bird reports, Michael produced two editions of his book *Birds of Norfolk*, first published by Jarrols in 1966 and has been a regular contributor to the local press for almost half a century; for the last 12 years, as a member of the team writing the daily 'In the Countryside' column in *The Eastern Daily Press*. For the last two years much of his time and effort has been dedicated to the preparations, with a team of friends, of a definitive history of The Birds of Norfolk which is due for publication in August. It is a great sorrow to all those involved with this book that Michael did not survive to see this monumental work of over 600 pages complete with his selection of line drawings and coloured photographs, reach fruition.

All his adult life Michael has been very active in supporting local natural history organisations, holding various offices with the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, where he served on the Council for 33 years and the Society. He was the Society's President in both 1962/63 and 1993/94. At the time of his death he was a Vice President of both the Trust and the Society. He has also devoted much time and effort on conservation matters particularly those associated with reserve management and the protection of rare breeding birds. Until his retirement from a full time career at the Norwich Union Insurance Group in 1986, all these activities were carried out in his spare time. In recognition of his long and dedicated service to conservation in Norfolk Michael was presented with the Sydney Long Memorial Medal at the Annual General meeting of the Trust in 1993.

He will be greatly missed by all those many people who he has inspired and encouraged through his writings and wide circle of personal contacts to treasure Norfolk's wildlife, particularly its birds. We extend to Sylvia and her family our deepest sympathy.

Don Dorling

THE NORFOLK BIRD REPORT

No. 1



1953

Dr. C.P. Petch

In my paper on Norfolk Botanists, (*A Flora of Norfolk*, Beckett & Bull 1999), I stated that the late Dr. C.P. Petch returned to his family home at the Manor House, Wolferton on his retirement. His son, Dr. Michael Petch, has written and pointed out that in fact,

Dr. Charles Petch was born and brought up in North Wootton and is buried in the churchyard there, only buying the Manor House at Wolferton on his retirement. I apologise for the error and am sorry for any distress this may have caused.

Alec Bull

A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

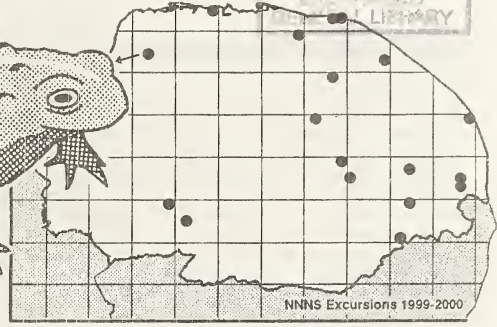
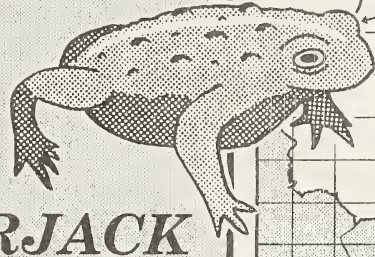
The next *Natterjack* will be in November. Could you please send all correspondence/disc to the following address, as soon as possible, and marked with NNNS on the envelope. 'FF'

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



THE NATIONAL
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THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



NNNS Excursions 1999-2000

Toad-in-the-hole....

Since the last 'Natterjack' I have received a letter from a member wishing to congratulate Keith Clarke for his humorous account of a diatom hunter in the field. The following is taken from that letter:

"I know absolutely nothing about algology whatsoever but the amusing way in which he presented the subject was a joy to read. If only more of us could write in such a way."

There's a challenge for 2000! Talking of which, how about a 'look-back' page for February. Could as many members as possible please send a couple of sentences of a particular natural history highlight or 'red-letter' day. It would be particularly good to cover as many years as possible - Date, place and item of interest with a short comment is all that is required. Any contributions can be sent the usual way or for those of you who are not afraid of the millennium bug by e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

In this issue I would like to draw your attention to the 'Norfolk Bird Atlas' which is about to start in earnest this winter, the Bat Conference Report where new discoveries have been made and of course our prize crossword!

Finally, my thanks to Garth Coupland who has supplied some excellent natural history cartoons which will feature when possible in 'Garth's Corner'.

'FF'

FIELD & INDOOR MEETINGS NOV 1999 - JAN 2000

Please note that start times for the field meetings are variable and that our evening talks are now being held in the Sports & Leisure Centre at Easton College.

Sunday 7th November
Holkham 11.00 a.m. Full day, TF890448
Meeting at Lady Ann's Drive, this is mainly for wintering geese with David Paull and Eunice Phipps

Tuesday 16th November
'An Exercise in Co-operation'
Gillian Beckett/Alec Bull
7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College Sports & Leisure Centre
THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

Tuesday 21st December
'Three Men in a Boat'
Dr. Roy Baker, Keith Clarke, Derek Howlett
7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College Sport & Leisure Centre
This should be a very entertaining presentation by three intrepid experts on aquatic life and pub lunches. It should also be something of a seasonal social occasion.



Tuesday 18th January
'Identifying British Butterflies'
Dr. Bernard Watts
7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College Sports & Leisure Centre

This promises to be a very instructive talk. Hopefully, Dr. Watts will be using a two-projector system to allow us to directly compare those species that are more difficult to separate.



Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee

NOTE

Change of Photographic Group programme

Due to unforeseen circumstances the speakers for 22nd November and 27th March will now change places

Watch this space

Tony Howes
01603 436867

See page 2 for Bryophyte meetings

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 291044

Number 67
November 1999

East Anglian Bryological Excursions 1999 - 2000

The following excursions are planned for the Autumn & Spring of 1999-2000. 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 hard frost. All meetings will start at 10.30am, unless otherwise stated. For further information, contact John Mott or Robin Stevenson (addresses below).

Sunday 7 November:

Tuddenham & Cavenham Heaths, Suffolk, recording for the Suffolk Flora. Meet at TL748.724, on the track leading NE from the centre of the village.

Saturday 20 November:

Holt Lowes. This site has much to offer, including many Sphagna and *Hookeria lucens*. Meet in the Holt Country Park car park TG081.375.

Sunday 19 December:

The walls of Burgh Castle, followed by Waveney Forest, Fritton. Meet at Church Farm Country Club car park, TG476.051 for Burgh Castle, and then Waveney Forest picnic place TG466.007.

Saturday 15 January:

Colney Hall Memorial Park. Meet at Colney Hall, TG170.083. (We may visit Colney and Earham churchyards afterwards).

Sunday 23 January:

Thursford Woods NWT reserve, and environs. Meet in the (rather small) car park at TF979.333. As parking space is very limited, please try and share cars.

Sunday 27 February:

Rosary Cemetery, Norwich. Meet at Chapel, TG243.084. Go east along Thorpe Road from station, and turn sharp left at the bend into Rosary Rd. The cemetery entrance is immediately on the right. Gates open at 11 am. There is room to park in the drive.

Sunday 12 March:

King's Lynn and environs, to 'get your eye in' on aliens such as *Lophocolea semiteres*, *Henediella macrophylla* and *Didymodon australasiae*. Meet at TF665.196 (Bawsey - Mintlyn Wood).

Saturday 25 March:

Barton Broad and Catfield. Meet at Catfield Church, TG382.214.

Sunday 2 April:

East Harling Common. Meet at TL998.877, at end of rough track heading north from East Harling. Small car park on left through locked gate.

Contacts:

Robin Stevenson, College of West Anglia, Tennyson Avenue, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 2QW.
Tel: (01553) 761144 x 248, or home (01553) 766788.

John Mott, 62 Great Melton Road, Hethersett, Norwich, NR9 3HA.
Tel: (01603) 810442.

Flycatcher with a Headache

September 1999

BANG! - I looked up from my book to see a few feathers floating down from the lounge window. This has happened on several occasions in the past, a trick of the light perhaps, mostly the bird concerned gives the glass a glancing blow and continues on its way. This window strike, however, seemed to be a head on hit, for a limp body could be seen lying on the ground. I went outside to pick it up, fearing the worst, - it was a female Pied Flycatcher - the wings were o.k. as were the legs, a drop of blood hung from the bill and the eyes were closed, but it was alive and breathing. I took it indoors and for a half an hour it laid still and unmoving, but slowly it seemed to rally. First the eyes opened, then it showed interest in my movements, finally it flew round the room a couple of times and out through the open door. May the force be with you little bird.

Tony Howes

The Dove and the Toad

Not an unusual pub name, but a strange happening in our garden at the end of March. My notes for the day read as follows:

Still hordes of young male toads. One found itself standing near a collared dove. It moved closer, the dove reacted by turning slightly sideways and lifting its wings high in the air. The toad came closer still and the dove shied away, then ran a few steps away from it into the boarder. At once the little toad, which was probably 3-4 years old, followed it with great energetic leaps. They then came down the garden towards the house for about twenty feet, the dove in front, periodically stopping and lifting its wings as before, then hurrying on when the toad got too close. At this point we thought their travel together was just a coincidence as they were making for a pond, but as it reached the bird bath, the dove turned to one side towards it and so did the toad. The dove made a circuit of the bird bath and then went back the way it had come with the same wing stretching as before, the toad still following closely behind. All of this had taken more than five minutes and eventually brought the dove back to the point where it had all begun. At this point it gave up and flew off across the garden, leaving the toad presumably victor in this odd encounter. The toad itself, presumably quite exhausted with its leaping, then sat absolutely still for the next half an hour. If we hadn't seen it we wouldn't have believed it.

Gillian Beckett

Review of the Birds of Norfolk

(Moss Taylor, Michael Seago, Peter Allard & Don Dorling)

When I first heard of this project I seriously wondered whether the county needed another book about its avifauna. After all, I had read Michael Seago's excellent book and as a regular subscriber to the Norfolk Bird Club magazine I thought I was well on top with my county's birds. I only had to pick up this beautifully produced tome to find out how wrong I was in my initial thinking and also how little I really did know.

The stunning jacket pictures by Norman Arlott immediately catch the eye and prepare the reader for the quality of what lies inside, more than 500 pages of well written text, wonderful line drawings by a variety of artists and a series of colour photographs illustrating habitats and key species. The four main authors have called upon some 40 other amateur and professional experts in their area, to assist them in this project. This makes the book very authoritative, and it is so well edited or the aims were so well defined that each section passes seamlessly to the next. I cannot believe that there can have been many such projects ever attempted at even a national level, never mind on the smaller county scale.

The introductory chapters are all masterful and give a fascinating historical, but also a very up-to-date view, of Norfolk ecology and its birdlife. There are chapters on Habitats, Conservation, Bird Ringing, Migration, and an account of the history and personalities involved in Norfolk Ornithology up to the present day. The chapter by Andy Stoddart on bird migration provides a thorough synthesis of migration patterns and weather systems on a month by month basis. This introductory section clearly illustrates how we can only understand the present by careful assessment of the past.

This is the theme running through the systematic list section that forms the major part of the book. This is not the boring section we have come to expect in such volumes. Each species is handled by one author and uses a common format. First a reference to the wider distribution of the species, then its status in the UK puts us in perspective before looking at what happens in the county. This begins with historical references which provide a fascinating glimpse of an earlier Norfolk, look at the section on the Great Bustard. More recent records come next, deriving from Michael Seago's *Birds of Norfolk* and the Norfolk Bird Reports. However these are augmented by data from numerous, more recent surveys, plus information collated from the growing number of really informed observers throughout the county, including ringing and migration data. These provide a wealth of information that most birders will not really have had access to, well illustrated in the account of the Horsey cranes. All of this information is summarised beautifully, bringing us fully up to date. The quality and interest is there for common or rare species alike.

The colour photographs are good but annoyingly are all together in one section. The line drawings are excellent and it is good to see some by Richard Richardson to whom the book is dedicated.

This book is a fitting way to round off the millennium. It is a tribute to everything that has been achieved in Norfolk Ornithology over the past 400 years, by so many dedicated observers. None finer than the four authors of this excellent book and it is a fitting memorial to Michael Seago. It should also be noted that all the royalties go to conservation projects in Norfolk, so go ahead and get a copy - expert or beginner there is so much in it for everyone.

FUNGUS FORAY HOLT LOWES

October 3rd 1999

Around twenty members, ranging from real experts (Reg and Lil Evans were there, bless 'em) to 5-year-old virgin forayers, met with the aims of sharing field identification knowledge and of building up a species list for Holt Lowes.

This heathland and valley mire SSSI in North Norfolk is scheduled for extensive management work including the introduction of cattle.

An early find was a troop of Hare's Ears (*Otidea ototica*), a large buff-coloured cup-fungus flushed rose-petal pink. Such was the abundance of fungi that we had travelled less than 200 yards before it was time to turn back for a picnic lunch which was enlivened by the appearance of a fearless Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) which ate crumbs and posed for extreme close-ups.



Those who stayed for the afternoon made a more determined effort

and actually got on to the heath. Here the species were fewer but different. The spring-time fire had created conditions for the diverse fungi which favour burnt ground as a habitat, and the cup-fungus *Plicaria trachycarpa* and the agaric *Tephroclype rancida* were interesting additions to the list. I estimate that well over 80 species were recorded but I won't know until I receive Reg and Lil's list; they always send one and it always contains many more names than mine!

Homing Slugs

Recently there has been research into the homing capabilities of snails. However for you throw them, they apparently return to base.

Over the last few weeks two Leopard Slugs have reappeared several times to the same spot on my terrace in spite of my removing them to an anonymous location over the garden fence.

I cannot believe that there is an endless supply of these slugs at that spot, so can only assume that, yes, they do home back to their favourite patch, which is only about 3 feet wide.

Could Garth Coupland or others say whether they have experienced similar observations?

Janet E. Smith

An Auk With Problems

Earlier this year on a visit to the Farne Islands it was evident that nesting Puffins were having a hard time getting into their burrows complete with sand eels for their young. They were coming in off the sea often being chased by a large Herring or Black-backed Gull and on occasion even a Black-headed Gull. The Puffins were often grabbed by their assailants, losing a few feathers in the process, but the sand eels were the target. It meant a quick low flight, straight to the burrow and in, if they dithered the fish were lost.

This diminutive auk, about the size of a Blackbird, seems to be holding its own on the Farnes at

POOL FROGS

May I ask readers who have any personal observations concerning the Pool Frog, *Rana lessonae*, or indeed the until-recently easily confused Edible Frog, *Rana exculenta*, or know of such personal observations (other than in the Castle Museum and Norfolk Record Office, which MSS have already been searched), to let me know. This appeal is linked with my current commission by the Herpetological Conservation Trust to carry out a literature/archive search for this species. There is some degree of urgency, for in order to meet my deadline re submitting the final report I would like to hear of relevant information by no later than early December 1999. Please make contact by writing initially, to me as follows:

Geoffrey Kelly,
Mynhome,
20 Buxton Road,
Frettenham,
Norwich, NR12 7NG.



the moment with many thousands nesting there. Having however to face these pirates is not in their best interest. This little 'clown of the ocean' needs all the luck it can get.

Tony Howes



Norfolk Bird Atlas - a request for help

This year sees the start of fieldwork for the new Norfolk Bird Atlas, a project which is being substantially financed by the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society and which forms part of its Wildlife 2000 initiative to document the fauna and flora of Norfolk at the turn of the century. Plans for this exciting new survey were originally conceived over two years ago, since when pilot fieldwork has been carried out both during the winter and breeding season.

Unlike The Norfolk Bird Atlas, written by Geoffrey Kelly in 1986, the new one will include maps of both the winter and breeding season distributions, as well as showing relative orders of abundance for each species. So far, such a detailed county atlas for birds has not been attempted in the British Isles.

The pilot winter atlas survey was undertaken during the 1998-99 winter with the aim of trying out the recording methods, instructions and recording forms on a group of 23 observers in a variety of habitats. Counts were carried out in 22 tetrads, each of which was visited on two dates, one in each half of the winter period. Initially doubts were expressed as to whether it would be possible to count all the birds encountered in the tetrad. In the event this did prove possible, even if each visit took longer than originally anticipated. It also proved to be a very enjoyable and rewarding experience, and most observers were surprised by some of the results obtained.

A total of 138 species was recorded, of which 8 were found in all 22 tetrads - Woodpigeon, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Chaffinch. Interestingly these are virtually the same

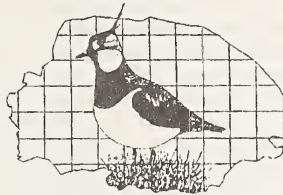
species which have been recorded annually in over 90% of the 1km squares in NE Norfolk during the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey since 1995; the only exception being Mistle Thrush. An additional 12 species were noted in 91-95% of the tetrads visited during the pilot winter survey - Kestrel, Pheasant, Skylark, Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Song Thrush, Long-tailed Tit, Jay, Magpie, Starling, House Sparrow and Greenfinch. It is perhaps surprising, and encouraging to find Song Thrush in this list, although only 85 Song Thrushes were found in 21 tetrads, compared with 744 Blackbirds in 22.

Other species pairs which make interesting comparisons are Sparrowhawk with a total count of 21 in 16 tetrads and Kestrel with 32 in 20; Red-legged Partridge 228 in 18 and Grey Partridge 71 in 11; Fieldfare 1,985 in 13 and Redwing 293 in 16; Marsh Tit 41 in 15 and Willow Tit 9 in 4; House Sparrow 612 in 20 and Tree Sparrow 1 in 1. This last figure really does demonstrate just how rare the Tree Sparrow has become in the county.

Perhaps not surprisingly, more Woodpigeons were counted (7,182) during the pilot winter atlas survey than any other species. Other widespread species (recorded in over 50% of the tetrads covered) with total counts in excess of a thousand were Black-headed Gull (3,886), Lapwing (3,044), Rook (2,015), Fieldfare (1,985), Common Gull (1,860), Starling (1,657), Chaffinch (1,156) and Mallard (1,027). Three species were notable for their low counts - Lesser Black-backed Gull with a total of only 7 in 3 tetrads, Siskin 99 in 9 and Redpoll 28 in 5.

The new Norfolk Bird Atlas will be able to provide similar comparative quantitative data (on a larger scale), in addition to each species' distribution, both during the winter and breeding seasons.

The results of this summer's pilot breeding season survey are still being analysed and will be available during the winter. In the meantime we are now looking for volunteers to take on tetrads for the full survey, fieldwork for which will commence in December 1999.



NORFOLK BIRD ATLAS

The full survey will run for a period of 3-5 years, depending on the response from observers. The more people taking on tetrads, the quicker will the atlas appear. For the winter survey, the aim will be to record the maximum numbers of each species using each tetrad (2 x 2 km square) between December and February inclusive, in any of the winters during which fieldwork is carried out. Thus all casual records will be welcome, as well as those counts made during the two visits, one in each half of the winter period. The same tetrad will not need to be surveyed in full in subsequent winters.

Each recording visit (the first between the start of December and mid-January, the second between mid-January and the end of February) is expected to last 3-5 hours, during which observers are asked to cover as much of the tetrad as possible, certainly visiting all the habitat types present. A preliminary visit to the tetrad is recommended to obtain permission to enter any private land. A letter of introduction will be provided for all recorders. All of the national land-owning bodies have been contacted and the National Trust, for instance, has provided a

letter of introduction which can be shown to tenant farmers when seeking permission to visit their land. Details about the breeding season survey will be available before next spring and it is hoped that the same observers will be able to visit the same tetrads for both the surveys.

Without exception, this project has been very well received by all the conservation bodies within the county, and, as well as the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society, financial support has been provided by the RSPB, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and Cley Bird Club. To all of these the organisers are most grateful.

Offers of help with the fieldwork commencing in December this year should be sent to:

Moss Taylor
4 Heath Road,
Sheringham, NR26 8JH,

or by 'phone on 01263-823637
or e-mail at
mosstaylor@btinternet.com.

Please include your name, address, phone number and tetrad(s) that you would like to cover. Allocation will be on a first come, first serve basis, but it is often easier if the observer is already familiar with the tetrad or is covering it for another survey. Regular updates about the progress of the project will appear in the pages of *The Norfolk Natterjack*.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude to Andy Wilson for extracting the data from the pilot winter atlas survey and for commenting on a draft of this article, and to him and the other members of the Atlas Working Group - Alan Collins, Graham Coxall, Phil Heath and Mike Reed for all their hard work in getting this project off the ground.

Moss Taylor

Through the Lens!

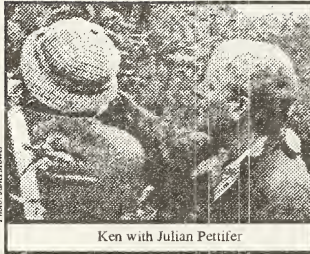
"Rex, could you do all that again - the leaf, the lens, the notebook? We'd like to film it." I had just found a bramble leaf covered with a rust fungus, peered at it through my lens, popped it into an old film canister and made a note of the find. The request was from the crew from BBC TV Bristol who had joined us on Beeston Common (19th Sept. 1999) to take what they called an unobtrusive part in our field meeting. I waited for their preparations to be completed and repeated the performance. "That was great. We'd just like to do it again."

We did it again. "Now we'd like to shoot it from a different angle". That took even longer to prepare. Finding enough leg room for a large tripod on Beeston Common is not easy, especially when the whole shot supposedly depends on one of the legs being just where a particularly difficult and stubborn tussock has already established itself.

So much for not upsetting our routine! Never mind. I am sure it is fair to say those of us who attended enjoyed the experience of seeing how a documentary programme is built up tiny piece by tiny piece. The crew were politeness itself and made it all rather fun. Julian Pettiŕer who is the presenter really did join in, showing genuine interest and wide knowledge, making time to chat to most of us.

Who do you think of when Beeston Common is mentioned? Ken Durrant of course and Ken was in the midst of it all with a radio mike tucked away in an inside pocket giving his normal enthusiastic, knowledgeable and amusing account of species after species while all the while the camera rolled.

The programme to be shown next Spring is looking for proof of global warming in the northward movement of species. Being observers of



Ken with Julian Pettiŕer

natural phenomenon we expressed the view that the expansion of species ranges is a very complicated topic and many factors are involved, not just one. Topical bandwagons do not feature in the Transactions of a Society such as ours! Having said that we did find one midge gall which was until recently confined to the southernmost counties of England and another which but recently crept in so we were able to add to the species list of Beeston Common.

What I believe we did demonstrate was how we go about the task of recording the wildlife of Norfolk and how it contributes to our Wildlife 2000 project. That incidentally is how it all came about. The producers had seen our Wildlife 2000 page on the internet and deduced we had a positive contribution to make.



Rex Hancy



THE W.I. TALK ON BATS WAS NOT A SUCCESS!

NATIONAL BAT CONFERENCE 1999

This year Ripon in Yorkshire was the chosen locality for this annual Bat Conservation Trust event. Whether it was the 200+ miles, or the price of accommodation that meant only four East Anglian bat people ventured north over the weekend of September 10th / 11th / 12th (or what) I'm not sure - certainly the programme was varied and interesting.

It all started in earnest internationally on the Saturday morning with The Work of Bat Conservation International (the American/world organisation) with an account of their perceived role and wide ranging activities of their organisation. There was an interesting account of the bats of Moldova (honest - there is such a place - look it up in your atlas!) and a tantalising glimpse into the bats present on the Brandberg Mountain in the Namib Desert where an expedition from Leeds University and Raleigh International had recently been.

Henry Schofield working for the Vincent Wildlife Trust had spent time tracking Bechstein's bats in a wood while Frank Greenaway gave his customary good account - with excellent slides - on his work on tracking *Barbastelles* in Sussex.

Final slot before lunch was Sue Parsons and John Goldsmith (the dynamic duo) with their PowerPoint demonstration on the Norfolk Barbastelles - but perhaps less said about that the better? Well actually it went pretty well with Ewan giving us at least 7 out of 10.....

The afternoon was taken up with workshops on subjects ranging from biodiversity and bats in bridges through to time-expansion bat detectors.

Sunday was Colin Catto and the National Bat Monitoring Programme and Steven Betts of The Environment Agency recounted what they hope to do for bats. The final morning session was a research one with themes running through Greater Horseshoe population structure, a New Zealand bat, some Caribbean bats and the shape of echolocation calls. Sunday afternoon was education and development including raising awareness of bats, batty Holidays and making planners work for bats.

There were half-a-dozen sales tables plus about a dozen poster exhibitions and table displays - some very nicely done. Mention was made several times of the current Pipistrelle species split. Apparently we should now refer to these as "Common Pipistrelle" (45 Khz) and "Soprano Pipistrelle" (55Khz) - that of course discounts the 3rd Pipistrelle now in Britain - Nathusius' - which I'm sure will be found widely in the county - once we start listening around the county with time expansion detectors. We now have some recordings of Nathusius' Pipistrelle and have spoken to bat workers with experience of this species - I hope some recording along with some bat box details and other new material will appear on the new Norfolk Bat Group web site before long.

IT'S NOW AT:
<http://www.surf.to/NorfolkBatGroup>

Apparently this species prefers a watery rural environment with older traditional buildings. Does that remind you of anywhere?

(see the new Nathusius Pipistrelle U.K distribution map).

The most riveting and worthwhile part of the weekend was a slight departure from normal. Conference things usually end in a flurry by 5 p.m. on the Sunday afternoon! The Sunday evening this time however, was devoted to a session on time-expansion detectors. We had an hour or so of theory then out into the field in three groups into the likely surrounding areas near water. Our group struck lucky and saw and recorded Noctule, Daubenton and 45 kHz Pipistrelles over the river just outside Ripon. Then it was back to the college to put the recordings into the computer and see their sound profiles using a programme called "Batsound".

It was new to me to see Natterers bats as a vertical line -starting at over 100 kHz and dropping to below our hearing range (20 Khz), while one of the sound files brought by Ewan showed Serotine or Noctule in amongst our barn dwelling Barbastelles! It will take me a time to get used to the idea of recording unheard noises in the dark - then coming home to feed them with wires into a computer - before you know what it was you had not heard or seen! I suppose I belong to the older school of natural history - if you cannot see and hear it in the field and name it - then it may well not exist. I expect that's only a short step from the even older - "what's hit is history, what's missed is mystery....."

John Goldsmith



A NATURAL HISTORY CROSSWORD FOR CHRISTMAS

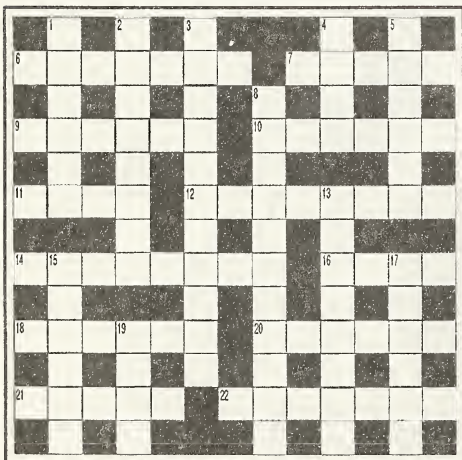
compiled by Malcolm Metcalf

ACROSS

6. Six eyed spider *Dysdera* _____ (7)
7. Young hog (5)
9. Branched horn (6)
10. *Citrus aurantium* (6)
11. Used to frighten away an animal! (4)
12. Aquatic nymph (8)
14. Bay rum is produced from the foliage of this plant (8)
16. Fungus causing (4)
18. Wild sheep of India (6)
20. Desert (6)
21. Cover with dewlike drops (5)
22. Cultivated plant named after Michel Begon (7)

DOWN

1. Natural division of a plant stem (6)
2. Marine bivalve molluscs (8)
3. Sand loving plants (11)
4. Flightless South American bird (4)
5. Coconut tree (6)
8. Red berried garden shrub (11)
13. Another name for Aardvark (5-3)
15. Another name for inchworm (6)
17. Mist or fine rain apparently falling from a cloudless sky (6)
19. Mountain wild goat (4)



*Season's
Greetings*



Malcolm has kindly donated
a book prize for the winner.

*'The Countryside
Remembered'*
by Sadie Ward.

Please send your answers to the Editor of the *Natterjack* by **January 8th 2000**. All correct entries will be placed in a draw and the winner's name together with the answers will be published in the February issue.

Future Photographs for Bird Report

Two bird photographs taken by members of the Photographic Group have been included in the 1998 *Bird and Mammal Report*.

I am seeking to balance photographs of rarities and common birds in future reports and feel sure that some members have slides suitable for possible inclusion in such issues.

Julian Bhalerao (Tel: 01263 - 821347) will be largely responsible for selection of future photographs. Please telephone him if you have any queries. However, any slides should be posted to me at 49 Nelson Road, Sheringham, NR26 8DA and include both place and month of origin.

Giles Dunmore
Editor



A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next *Natterjack* will be in February. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence could be sent to the following address, *as soon as possible*, and marked with NNNS in the envelope. For those with access to a computer a WORD document or an ordinary text file on disc would be most helpful. 'FF'

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



THE NATURAL
HISTORY MUSEUM

-1 FEB 2000

EXHIBITED
AT THE NATURAL LIBRARYTHE
NORFOLK
NATTERJACK

NNNS Excursions 1999-2000

Toad-in-the-hole....

Another packed edition - my thanks to all contributors. This issue has further calls for your valuable time but I trust some of you can help with the various requests. There is a proposal to go, in part, to an electronic format for the next issue (see below). Finally take a look at the the 20th Century page, particularly the earlier decades - it makes you wonder what the 22nd Century Naturalists will be lamenting or praising for the 21st! At least what is present at the beginning of this century is being well documented through *Wildlife* 2000.

World Wide Web.

The internet is becoming for most of us part of everyday life. The NNNS has a website and this includes a description of the Society, its programme, *Wildlife* 2000 and notes on the Bird & Mammal report. Now selected 'Natterjack' items from the next issue are to be placed. These will be without telephone numbers or addresses unless it is otherwise requested, however, if you would rather your contributions were not considered for the website please mention this when submitting material. 'FF'

FIELD & INDOOR MEETINGS February - April 2000

Please note that start times for the field meetings are variable and that our evening talks are now being held in the **Sports & Leisure Centre at Easton College.**

Tuesday 15th February*'The changing lichen flora of Norfolk'*

An illustrated talk by Peter Lambley
7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College
Sports & Leisure Centre

An EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING
WILL BE HELD PRIOR TO THE TALK

Sunday 20th February

West Runton 12.00 noon.
TG184432

Meet at the West Runton Beach car park. In the immortal words of Monty Python "and now for something completely different ..."

**Thursday 16th March**

Lynford Arboretum 11.00 a.m.

Full Day. TL822943
Mainly for spring birds.
Leader: Eunice Phipps.

Tuesday 21st March

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College
Sports & Leisure Centre
Hopefully, business will be quickly dispatched and we will be able to enjoy the ensuing illustrated talk and presentation on the *Wildlife* 2000 project by Rex Hancy.

Saturday 8th April

Earlham Park 10.30 a.m. Full Day.
TG193082

An introduction to mosses and liverworts.
Leader: Robin Stevenson.

**Tuesday 18th April***'A celebration of the seasons: summer'*

7.30 p.m. Room 7, Easton College
Sports & Leisure Centre
This is the annual presentation to the society by the photographic group.

Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Founded 1869
Registered Charity No. 291604

Number 68
February 2000

THINKING OF COLIN ...

It was billed as "A view of the world through Colin Dack's camera" - and what a world it was. From the 9,700 slides that Colin bequeathed to the Society, Mike Poulton and a team of helpers whittled the hoard down to just over 200 and presented a superb and varied show at Easton College on October 19. We were all left asking why, except under pressure and on the rarest occasions, Colin would never let us see his work. It was of a quality that put most of us would-be nature photographers to shame.

Rex Hancy opened the evening with an evocative and at times hilarious word portrait of the enigmatic and sometimes infuriating Colin and recalled those lengthy, late-evening phone calls that most members who have held office in the Society, and some who haven't, received with great regularity.

Rex's particular contribution was to talk about Colin's gall and spider slides. Ken Durrant took up the story with some of Colin's insect pictures, followed by Reg Evans on fungi and Alec Bull on plants. Mike Poulton rounded off the presentation with a selection of memorable landscapes and skiescapes. In the absence of a rather vital lead, Bob Ellis spent a no doubt tiring evening acting as projectionist.

•The evening had a particular purpose - to acknowledge Colin's battle against dyslexia by raising money for the Waveney Valley Dyslexia Association. The association chairman, Lady Addington, told us that dyslexia was not formally recognised by Norfolk education authority until 1978, and then only after a lot of groundwork by the association.



Photo: David Mower

Since then the situation had been a good deal better (far too late for Colin, of course) but provision was still patchy. Members will be delighted to know that the collection at the end of the evening raised £200.45. They will be even more pleased to learn - knowing how Colin, despite his problems, mastered computers - that the money will be spent on computer equipment. I have had this letter from Lady Addington: "I write ... to thank you for a really splendid donation towards our funds ... a really generous sum and one which indicates the true esteem in which your members held your late membership secretary, Colin Dack. "Those of us who came to the meeting on October 19 were fascinated by the slides as well as being most impressed by the obvious expertise of the people giving the commentaries ...

"The WVDA is at the moment trying to raise money to buy computer equipment so that we may offer assessments to members and children of members, and also to show how IT can help overcome some of the problems faced by dyslexic people. The money donated by [your members] will be used for this cause."

David Paull

'FISHING' SPARROWHAWK

Our local Sparrowhawk in giving chase to a young pigeon, missed, but gave it a glancing blow which knocked it into my pond.

The hawk then landed on my birdbath, reviewed the situation; flew up; gained height and then Osprey like, with legs and talons outstretched, tried to retrieve its prey. However, it was nervous of the water and after several abortive attempts gave up, by which time the pigeon had drowned.

Throughout, I gritted my teeth and did not interfere, had it been a rarer bird, I might have reacted differently.

Janet Smith

Have Earth Tongues appeared on your lawn?

When, in the middle of December, I was called to look at the 'ugly black fungi' on a friend's lawn at Edgefield, I expected to find a troop of ageing blackening Waxcaps *Hygrocybe conica* - what I actually found were hundreds of Earth Tongues, pushing their fruit-bodies a few centimetres above the sward.

There are about a dozen species in Britain, most distinguishable only by their microscopic characteristics. The species growing in such uncharacteristic abundance turned out to be *Geoglossum umbratile* but it is not uncommon to find several species on the same lawn; last year I found three on the lawn of the Old Rectory in Holt. Most species are described as occasional, rare or very rare but I suspect that they are often overlooked. This year there were Earth Tongues on all five 'suitable' lawns I visited. If you have a well-established lawn that has been regularly cut and never treated with inorganic fertilizer, you probably have them too, especially if there is plenty of moss. Some years are better than others but next October give your lawn-mower a rest for a few weeks and see what comes up. If the earth sticks its tongues out at you, give me a call.

Tony Leech



Earth Tongue
Geoglossum sp.

LOOK BACK PAGE 1900-1999

(personal highlights of some 20th Century Norfolk Naturalists)

1900-09 (From *Transactions* Vol: VIII)
A flock of about twenty Pallas's Sand Grouse is said to have been seen in the Broads district on 11th June, 1907. None were killed, but the observers were familiar with the appearance of these birds in 1888.

JH Gurney and T Southwell

1910-19 (From *Transactions* Vol: IX)
A fine Sturgeon was discovered in the small river Delph, in West Norfolk, on June 16th 1914. Cartridges loaded with buckshot were useless against its well-protected hide, and it was only after a stout tussle with a boat hook and a shot into a more vulnerable region that it was secured. Weight, 31 stone 5 lb. It was sent to London, where it realised £6.

AH Patterson

1920-29 (From *Transactions* Vol: XII)
A female Oleander Hawk-moth, an exceedingly rare moth, was caught at Hemsby (near Gt. Yarmouth), on September 8th 1926. It was resting on some palings by the roadside and had laid two eggs, which were however infertile.

K Bagnall-Oakeley

1930-39
Thinking back to the 1930s I can recall when as a young lad walking through fields of permanent pastures in North Norfolk and putting up clouds of Meadow Brown butterflies at every step. One swing of the net would capture a dozen or more. On High Kelling heath the Silver-studded Blue butterflies were so common that the small gorse bushes were 'blue' with so many males sitting upon them.

In those days the cattle and horses were grazed on the meadows and not fed the artificial compound foods that they are today, I could also find a few of our largest fly *Asilus crabroniformis* which laid its eggs in the cow pats. These have become extremely rare and have disappeared from our own countryside, come to think of it now so have the permanent pastures.

Ken Durrant

1940-49
March 1947. A bitterly cold spell with thick ice covering all the Broads. In the late afternoon, between Rollesby and Filby Broads, I noted an Otter resting on the ice just a few yards away on the Rollesby side. It was eating a fish. I stopped and watched at close quarters. The Otter took no notice. Then after finishing that particular dish, it re-entered the water through a hole in the ice and swam around for a while before re-emerging with yet another fish which formed, presumably, the second course. It was very cold and I left quietly.

Reg Jones

1950-59
Spring 1952. It was Sunday morning and I was showing a visitor round the Broads. About noon, before returning to base, I called on 'Trickler' Skoyles at Ormesby. He hired out boats which were used by fishermen on Ormesby and Rollesby Broads and had a good knowledge of all that happened in that part of the world. I asked him if he could find me a Bittern's nest for photography. He said he would try. I left for home and was sitting down for lunch at about one o'clock when the 'phone rang. It was 'Trickler' and, yes, he had found one!

Reg Jones

1960-69
While on Beeston Common during the afternoon of October 23rd 1965 I was lucky enough to witness the arrival of many 100's of Waxwings in from the sea. Also during this extraordinary event I saw a juv. Cuckoo, a Ring Ouzel and a Bearded Tit.

Alec Humphrey

1970-79
Was I seeing things or were the stones I was idly throwing into the sea at Salisbury Cove, Maine (June 1977) making green flashes? There were

no lights for the ripples to reflect, not even moonlight so it had to be bioluminescence. I waded in and eventually swam, fascinated by the sight of my luminous arms. I have not been back to Maine but most summers I manage to renew my acquaintance with *Noctiluca scintillans*, the flashing unicell, at Blakeney. I choose a warm moonless night to walk at low-tide by the trickle of water draining out of a creek. When I splash water on to the wet mud it flashes back at me. To wonder why seems almost churlish.

Tony Leech

1980-89
To-day with teams of birders, hi-tech communications and advance preparation getting a 100+ birds in a day in Norfolk is commonplace, however, on 11th May, 1980 and confining my birding to North Norfolk between Felbrigg and Cley a total of 102 species observed was a memorable occasion. I consider the top five birds seen that day to be Bittern, Black Tern, Wood Sandpiper, Wood Warbler and Stonechat. It is interesting to note, however, that Tree Sparrow and Corn Bunting were also on the list.

Francis Farrow

1990-99
My favourite day was the emergence of hundreds of 5-spot Burnet Moths (*Zyaena trifolii*) at Breydon Water, Great Yarmouth on the 16th July, 1998.

Colin Jacobs



The Norfolk Damselfly

(Reproduced with permission from *British Wildlife* Vol. 10 No. 6 August 1999)

An important rediscovery this spring [1999] in the Netherlands of a small population of *Coenagrion armatum* (known as the Norfolk Damselfly in Britain) was prompted the question of whether this damselfly might still be found in the Norfolk Broads or similar habitat. The last known records of Norfolk Damselfly were from near Stalham in 1957, but the original locations have long since become polluted and overgrown and thus unsuitable for its survival. As in this country, the damselfly had not been recorded since 1956 in the Netherlands and its rediscovery in the Weerribben at a pond measuring 30m x 40m, adjacent to a dyke, was a surprising find for Marcel Wasscher and the Dutch Dragonfly Society.

Surrounding plants at this locality included young stands of Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Lesser Bulrush *Typha angustifolia* and some Greater Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris*. In all, ten males, two ovipositing pairs and another immature female were observed flying between vegetation low over the water in somewhat windy conditions. It would be worth observers bearing this rediscovery in mind when surveying in the Norfolk Broads next season. Male Norfolk Damselflies can be distinguished from other similar blue damselflies by the absence of thoracic stripes, a square black spot on a light blue ground on segment two, a light blue segment eight and enlarged anal appendages. The females have bifid black marks on a blue or green ground on segment eight and a relatively large amount of blue or green on segment two, unlike females of other blue damselfly species. Flight period is from late May to late July.

Val Perrin
British Dragonfly Society

Galls on Broom

Following my visit to the Lowestoft Field Club informal session, Mr Arthur Copping of Diss, recently gave me two branches from the shrub Broom (*Cytisus*) from Norwich Railway Station that were covered in small Cauliflower shaped galls, about 10mm in diameter, and wondered if I could identify them for him.

Once in my study and with the aid of a hand lens and microscope I was able to identify them as the gall of the Mite *Eriophyes genista*. They appear in early summer on the buds of Broom and these will fail to develop into normal shoots and leaves.

As time goes by the growths appear as these "cauliflower's" which under a hand lens can be seen to be covered in silver hairs. Even further into the summer period they begin to dry into a dark green colour and will stay on the plants for the whole winter season and can reside on them for many years.

I have checked my mother's Broom at Kessingland, just south of Lowestoft, and it is seen to be clear of this gall. Should anybody have these infestations on their own shrubs I would be pleased to see them as I have not found any along the coastal strip. It may be an inland occurrence where it is warmer during the winter and where the mite may be able to survive (see footnote).

The galls cannot be destroyed by any chemical means and they should be picked off by hand only if it is impairing the growth, otherwise they do not seem to do any harm to the plants at all.

Colin A Jacobs

Dendrological Anomaly! (or Unexpected Tree)

Many of you will know the Joe Jordan hide on the Holkham Reserve, raised on stilts, overlooking some of the best winter goose-watching meadows. I have been going there for years, in fact since well before the hide was there. A few weeks ago I noticed, I am ashamed to say for the first time, that one of the trees behind it is a Monterey Pine, *Pinus radiata*.

I had thought that the only examples of this species locally were those which were planted in 1995 near the Beach Car Park in Wells, and others to the east of the board walk at Holkham Bay. This one near the Joe Jordan hide is a mature tree, apparently of the same age as the Corsican Pines around it. It has the typical bare trunk and lopsided spreading canopy of the ones you see in its native habitat in California. I imagine it predates other Monterey Pines here by 50 years.

Why was it planted? Was it a mistake? (I know of another possible mistake, near the "Drinking Pool", where a Scots Pine was put in a row of Corsicans). How easily were these Corsican pines acquired a century ago? Is it perhaps the oldest of its species in Norfolk?

How to identify a Monterey Pine: dead easy, they have bright green needles in bunches of three, and large cones shaped like hedgehogs, which hang on to the tree for years. I really have no excuse!

Paul Banham

FOOTNOTE: Following receipt of this letter in October I checked some broom on Sheringham Common and found the gall present (in a sheltered position). Later that day I also checked a list recently received from Reg and Lil Evans (made during the September NNNS excursion to Beeston & Sheringham Commons) and yes there was a record of the gall too!

FF

ARACHNOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

So much pleasure have I gained from the study of spiders that I feel it is time I paid tribute to the man who first infected, or was it injected me with enthusiasm for the subject. Like the good teacher he is he helped his pupil with advice, encouragement and above all praise. Like a small boy I searched his face for the signs of pleasure that I knew would appear when he gazed upon a find I believed was rare or a Norfolk first. Thank you Rex Hancy. It is a tribute not cheek when my children run about singing "Hancy wancy spider climbing up the spout!" You have, however, saddled me with an almost impossible task.

Added to the frustration of not finding certain species one wants to find there is the seemingly endless list of species one wants to find!

To illustrate this there are 33 spider families in Britain. I am particularly fond of one of these, the Salticidae or jumping spiders. This family contains 34 British species divided into 15 genera. Ten species are very rare and nine are common. The rest fall between the two, most being local, rare or generally uncommon. In seven years of study I have only found 14 Salticid species. During those years I have searched for the largest of them all and in early July 1997 I found a colony. So, after a long, laborious introduction we finally arrive at the subject of this essay, *Marpissa muscosa*! (see illustration of female).

There is a fence running along the west side of the A1088 between Thetford and Euston (Map ref: TL893799). One hundred yards into Suffolk I found the spider hunting on the fence posts and lying in silken cells within the posts-cracks and splits. Females grow to 11mm which is hefty for a Salticid. It's brown and grey patterns make for perfect camouflage on pine trunks and dead wood. On this visit males were very common with only one female found. I collected one of each sex for study and placed them in a specially designed cage. They ate flies immediately, the female ate two in five hours and appeared quite unconcerned by transport and captivity. They drank from balls of soaked tissue. They leapt on prey over distances of two inches and commenced stalking prey from five inches away. Unusually for sun lovers I found them out and about during the night. The male moulted and became sexually mature on 14 July and although he performed his courtship dance many times, a raising high of the front pair of legs, I never witnessed mating. Sadly he passed on in March 1998. She never laid any eggs and joined him in early August. Was lack of breeding success

due to being in captivity or did she just not fancy him?

I found that in order to walk on the smooth walls of their cage, a Ferrero Rocher container, they covered the surface with thousands of silk spots. At each corner, from where they would leap to the next wall, was a clear space of 1cm on each side. This spotting clearly illustrated the Salticid use of the silk safety line, stuck down every centimetre or so as they move across surfaces.



I believe *Marpissa muscosa* is locally common in Breckland and I did eventually obtain a Norfolk record a hundred yards on the Norfolk side of the border.

Garth M. Coupland

Desert Island

If you fancy a night or two on Norfolk's own desert island - Scolt Head then this could well happen. English Nature / National Trust have proposed to offer their basic accommodation building on the reserve to the Society in return for some recording of the island's natural history. Details of the invitation and dates etc., will appear in the May issue of 'Natterjack'.

Birds Britannica Request for Help

Birds play a unique role in British society. They are intricately involved with our social, cultural and emotional lives. They help shape our sense of place and season. We write songs, compose poems, tell stories, even hold festivals to celebrate birds.

Now Richard Mabey and Mark Cocker are writing an account of this cultural importance, entitled *Birds Britannica*. It follows the format of Richard Mabey's award-winning *Flora Britannica*, and we now need to enlist public help in mapping the ways birds fit into our everyday lives.

Birds Britannica will cover all those species on the British list, be they resident, migrant or occasional visitors, that have what we might call a cultural profile. Here are some of the more specific themes in which we are interested:

Vernacular and local names: for instance, long-pod, jack-in-a-bottle, bum barrel (and a score more) for the long-tailed tit; eve jar, spinner and goatsucker for the nightjar. How many in this great lexicon are still used in everyday speech?

Collective names, graphic and affected by turns: a murmuration of starlings; a watch of nightingales; a charm of goldfinches. What is the origin of these often very literary descriptions?

Literary references: English poetry and prose is full of descriptions of native birds, from the medieval 'Owl and Nightingale' to modern celebrations of the rakish swift.

Bird Images: Birds appear in paintings, stained glass windows,

church carvings, often with some kind of symbolic meaning. How has this changed between the Renaissance (when goldfinches and swallows were popular) and the present? They are also represented in pub names and on pub signs, and it would be fascinating to complete a full list, which would include The Firecrest, near Wendover Forest in the Chilterns, and The Mother Redcap, in East London.

Bird songs: They are almost cultural artefacts in their own right, and have been celebrated in poetry and music. Which are the favourites today? Have the homely tones of the song thrush and blackbird supplanted the more romantic and elusive notes of the nightingale and woodlark? Can birdsong be portrayed in words, such as 'little bit of bread and no cheese' for the yellowhammer or 'wet my lips' for the quail?

The scapegoating of birds: there is a modern list of villains, headed by the magpie and sparrowhawk, both accused of decimating garden bird populations. How does the mythology compare with evidence from the field? Which other birds - for example, the hen harrier and ruddy duck - are popularly demonised?

Having gathered your thoughts and memories (and also those of any relatives!), please write, with any clippings, pictures or letters, to BIRDS BRITANNICA, c/o Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA. If you want further information email Mark Cocker at:

markcocker@btinternet.com, or ring 01603 611797. Any material used will be fully credited in the finished book.

Churchyards & road verges

Over the past few years, volunteers, often members of NNNS, have been carrying out valuable survey work for two schemes overseen by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

The Churchyard Conservation Scheme has supplied management advice to over 300 churches across the county. Research suggests that some species, such as ox-eye daisy, meadow saxifrage and cowslip now rely on churchyards as their strongholds.

The Roadside Nature Reserves scheme, run as a partnership with Norfolk County Council, uses survey data to determine sites suitable for designation as roadside nature reserves. Suitable sites are marked with posts and the contractors responsible for cutting the verge advised on appropriate management. As well as the classic meadow species, road verges can also turn up rarities such as Dutch rush and purple broomrape.

In order to continue this important work, however, we do need more volunteer surveyors. There are several ways in which you could help:

- Join a team looking at verges or churchyards. We meet twice a year to discuss results and choose sites to survey.
- If you can't make the meetings, then please get in touch, we can talk about places to survey near your home.
- Please let me know if you are already surveying a road verge or churchyard.

Surveying need not be a massive commitment; just one site would be a great help, especially if you could visit it over several years. Although we cannot offer any remuneration for expenses, we can let you have blank survey forms and hope to offer a training day for surveyors in May.

Helen Baczkowska
Biodiversity Project Officer
Norfolk Wildlife Trust
01603 62445 / helen@nwt.cix.co.uk

HONOURING ALEC

Every two years, the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust jointly honour someone who has made a distinguished contribution to natural history in the county by awarding the Sydney Long Memorial Medal, which commemorates the Society's former long-serving secretary who founded the Wildlife Trust.

This year's recipient was the Society's current joint president, Alec Bull, who received the medal from the Trust's president, Sir John Blofeld, at the Trust's annual meeting on October 15.

The citation says: "Alec Bull understood the importance of systematic recording before its value was generally appreciated and his documented monitoring of the birds of an arable habitat at Cranworth, near Dereham, for over thirty years is a remarkable and much quoted piece of work. He was West Norfolk regional representative for the British Trust for Ornithology from 1968-82, and was the vice-county organiser for the first Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland.

"As a quite extraordinarily knowledgeable field botanist, he developed national eminence in the taxonomy of brambles (*Rubus* spp) and published an account of the Norfolk species. Alec was plant recorder for East Norfolk for the Botanical Society of the British Isles from 1984-89, and prime mover in the project to record and map Norfolk's flora. Publication of the new Flora of Norfolk in 1999 with Alec as co-editor, will provide an essential conservation tool for the future.

"Alec was President of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society in 1974-75 and currently shares the office of President of the Society with his co-editor Gillian Beckett. He served as Secretary of the Society from 1987-92. All who know Alec speak of his great modesty; a self-made and highly competent naturalist whose like we may not see again.

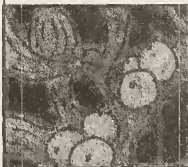
"Accordingly, the Councils of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society and Norfolk Wildlife Trust have agreed that Alec Bull should receive the Sydney Long Memorial Medal for 1999."

David Paul

Grow Your Own

For several years now I have, on and off, made attempts to grow mistletoe on our apple tree. I have followed 'secret methods' given me by old countrymen, I have used common sense and tried to imitate Nature, but all to no avail.

So I was pleased to read Grace Come's article on this subject in the EDP. She too had no success until visiting a certain Mr. Fairhead. Mistletoe grew like weeds on his trees, even a clump on an old wooden box. The recipe is this: choose a young, smooth section of apple tree branch, rub it hard with your thumb until it shines, then squash a berry on, making sure it is well stuck. It is best done in February, on the east side of the tree. I shall give it a go!



Tony Howes

Caddis Flies

Until recently I have never been enthralled by adult caddis flies. The larvae have long held my interest since I discover these in freshwaters and there is a real challenge to identify them from their various larval stages. Adult flies, since they vacate the water, had also vacated my interest!!

This Autumn Derek Howlet, David Nobbs and I have started to collect the autumnal and winter moths of Wheatfen Broad. I found myself surprised to find species of caddis in the traps and this has set me off on a voyage of discovery. Ernest Daniels studied caddis flies in and around Norwich since the 1930s and many years ago he kindly gave me a list of records from Claude Morley for the late 1930s. Ernest published his work in the *Transactions* and other than the occasional note the group has been neglected in our literature.

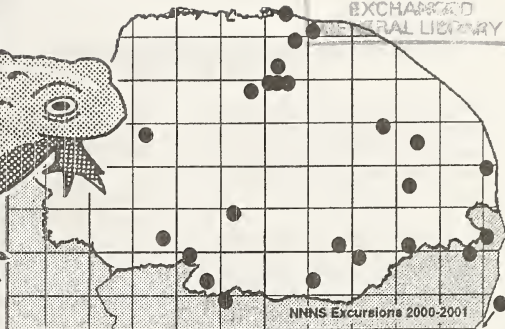
The time has come for me to learn about the adult flies but where to start? I have a copy of the Freshwater Biological Association key by MacCan but frankly I could not follow it. Ken Durrant has become my tutor. Visits to Sheringham have enlightened me on the techniques of setting the insects and guided me through the early stages of identification. I have purchased a copy of the 1938 book on Caddis by Martin Mosely and this has been invaluable in identification. Ken has supplied drawings to illustrate key features and of course he has his magnificent collections of insects to refer to.

Continued on p8.

-4 MAY 2000

EXCHANGED
GENERAL LIBRARY

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



IF YOU GO DOWN IN THE WOODS.....

A naturalist photographing fungi in King's Forest near the Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow was robbed of £7,000-worth of camera equipment, the Eastern Daily Press reported recently. Two men threatened to beat up the man and put him in hospital unless he handed over the equipment. He did so without a struggle and the robbers made off in a red car.

So, should we be concerned that something like this could happen to us when we are out in the field with cameras and other optical equipment? Who better to ask than Garth Coupland, a Norfolk Police wildlife liaison officer and for the past three years a member of the Society's Council.

Garth says that such incidents are very rare in rural areas but there are sensible precautions you can take when you are about to set out with a collection of valuable gear. Be vigilant. Look around to see if there is anyone who might be watching you. The two robbers at West Stow will almost certainly have watched their victim unload his car and head for the woods. If there is anyone about who could be taking too close an interest in you, go

away. Don't take chances. And if you do have the misfortune to be confronted by robbers do as the West Stow victim did: hand over your equipment without putting up a fight. Cameras can be replaced. Resist and you might suffer serious injury - or worse.

But Garth says that much the greater concern for the police - and the victims - is the thieves who prey on cars left at nature reserves and beauty spots. Everyone is advised to put everything out of sight when they leave their car - but the thieves are one jump ahead. They wait and watch the unsuspecting visitor "hide" their valuables in the boot of the car, then break into it as soon as the owner leaves. In many instances, they break into cars anyway in the hope of finding something of value. Hiding property from the thieves is a waste of time. They can break into your car in less than a minute.

Garth offers some sound advice. On your outings, take with you only what you are going to need - and take it with you when you leave your car. If you are taking binoculars, leave the empty case open on the dashboard or the seat. An empty camera case or bag might also persuade thieves that nothing worth stealing has been left in the car. Make sure your equipment is fully insured. Check that your insurance covers your property when you take it

away from home and especially on trips abroad.

Is it worth security-marking your cameras and other gear? Yes, but the most satisfactory methods are the most drastic. If it is equipment that you are not going to want to sell on at a later stage, Garth suggests making it unsaleable by slapping some paint on it - a tactic recommended to schools for their computer equipment. What about marker pens whose "ink" is supposedly readable only under ultra-violet light? It doesn't stop the equipment being stolen. And the "ink" can be seen in ordinary light if the angle is right - and it can be cleaned off. But it is better than nothing because stolen property recovered by the police is always scanned in the hope of tracing the owner.

More satisfactory and of greater help to the police in tracing owners, but again something you might be reluctant to do if you hope to sell the equipment, is marking it permanently by scratching on an identity - postcode and house number, not your name.

It is a tragedy that we should even have to think about these things but this kind of crime is rife and we should do everything we can not to make it easy for the thieves.

David Paull

The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



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Number 69
May 2000

Police appeal for witnesses

May I take a few minutes of your time to introduce to you, or to remind you of the existence within the police force of the Wildlife Liaison Officers (WLOs).

Norfolk Constabulary has about twenty officers scattered throughout the county. Our responsibility for wildlife matters is voluntary and additional to our normal police duties.

We rely on people like the NNNS members who are regularly "out in the field" to act as extra eyes and ears in the never ending battle against wildlife crime, sadly a growing problem. You are all potential witnesses if you come upon an offence, be it wildlife crime or otherwise.

The types of offences you may come across are many. Illegal traps or unchecked legal traps and snares with rotting corpses. Killing, injuring, interference with or disturbance of rare or protected animals such as Badgers, Bats, Great Crested Newts, birds and their nests and eggs. Plant theft including the digging up Bluebells and Snowdrops or the raking for Water Soldiers or lilies. Poisoning offences, often found as pegged out rabbit or poisoned eggs with dead wildlife nearby. **(Do not touch ANYTHING in these circumstances. Some poisoning can kill through inhalation or skin absorption).** Poaching, illegal specimen collecting, smuggling and illegal sale of protected species or their parts. Illegal habitat destruction, damage to nature reserves by "off-road" vehicles or trials bikes. The illegal release of certain species (including Barn Owls) into the wild.

Often people are suspicious of something they see but are not sure why. This results in a failure to report or late reporting of an incident. **IF YOU ARE SUSPICIOUS THEN IT MUST BE SUSPICIOUS!**

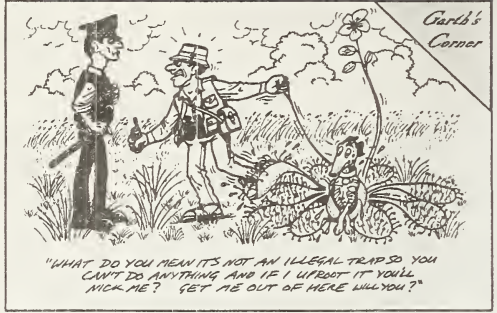
The police do not mind attending a "false alarm with good intent". What often appears to be an offence can turn out to be lawful (whether we agree with the law or not is another matter!). We would rather check it out than risk losing the chance to prosecute an offender.

As potential witnesses I must stress that you should never, ever put yourselves in danger. That is what we are paid for! What we do need is good evidence gathering and early reporting of incidents.

PLEASE always carry a notebook and pencil, write down what you observe accurately and retain it. Your notes could be vital evidence at a future trial. Record vehicle number plates, vehicle types and colours and any vehicle peculiarities. Record descriptions and numbers of suspects and what they are doing. Photograph incidents if it is safe to do so. If you have a mobile phone use it immediately and if a suspected offence is ongoing or suspects have just left the scene use the 999 system. Otherwise contact the police as soon as possible.

If you wish to report or discuss a non-urgent wildlife matter you can contact the police switchboard on 01603 768769 and request a WLO to visit or make contact with you. Or give me a ring - work extension 3126 / home 01493 750095. Thankyou.

Garth M Coupland
PC 215 Acle Police Station



The shrews that thought they were mice (and paid the price)

To find a pygmy shrew, Britain's smallest mammal, is a delight; to find one in your attic is strange; to find one in a cheese-baited mousetrap is bizarre but for this to have happened twice in the same village is remarkable. When, in January, Julia Peaver caught a shrew on the top floor of her house in Edgefield she took it to neighbour Ian Keymer who identified it as a pygmy shrew by its small size and a tail longer than two-thirds of its body length. It was Julia's mother, Angela Turner, who recalled reading in the 1998 Bird & Mammal Report (p. 314) that two had been reported from mousetraps in a loft by AB/RB, Ann and Richard Brooks, who also live in Edgefield!

Tony Leech

Hibernation or what?

A pristine Red Admiral was observed in my Father-in-law's garden at Costessey on March 25th - a case of hibernation over a mild winter or an early migrant?

David Mower

Galls on Broom

I was interested to read Colin A. Jacobs' contribution, *Galls on Broom*, in the February 2000 issue. However, the galls were collected on Diss station and not Norwich as stated.

A small bed has been planted with ornamental shrubs on the 'down' platform at Diss. Two of these were broom, about 10 yards apart. One bush was heavily infested with the galls, the other, curiously, completely free of them.



Arthur Copping

A NEST ON THE WALL

March 29th

A hen Blackbird has been steadily building a nest on my garage wall, tucked well into a *Pyracantha* bush growing there. I found the first few bits of material sticking out over a week ago. Since then she has made a beautifully crafted goblet of fine roots and dead grasses. I watch her from the greenhouse when I am working there, but mostly I can observe her activities from the dining room window which overlooks the garden.

The cock bird is a typical foreman, he sits about on any high vantage point keeping an eye on things. He is still a young bird, no golden circle round the eye yet, but he does his job in keeping others of the species off his patch. He tends to be in full voice in the early morning, the lovely, melodious song ringing round the garden. What would an English spring be without this songster.

I look forward to the continuation of this saga, they almost seem like family.

Tony Howes

Blow me down!

High winds normally cause minor branch falls around the village but at the end of 1999 a blow felled a lone Scol's Pine tree that stood in the corner of a field on the village edge.

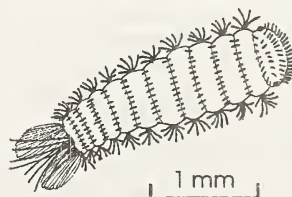
Since pines are not naturally found in our stiff clay soil I stopped to take a closer look at this fallen tree. A contributory cause of its downfall could clearly be seen as the rich reddish-orange of the wood and horizontal cracks in the centre of the trunk indicated that extensive dry rot had reduced the flexibility of the trunk. The bark and outer white wood had twisted and split. Beneath several pieces of loose bark there were shiny shed skins of some small creature. As I prised these off the tree dozens of tiny 1-2mm long hairy creatures scuttled away.

Their general shape, chestnut colour, short hairs down each side and a tuft on the end of the tail reminded me of 'woolly bears' - larvae of beetles that feed on dried animal and plant remains. As usual my pockets contained an assortment of containers and I collected several to breed through to adulthood for subsequent identification.

Some days later I was clearing a partly obstructed footpath and after I had solved that problem I wandered further along to check some bridges. Halfway along the path was a lone stunted oak tree with some patches of dead bark which of course I had to leave off. Under the bark were some more of the creatures and some moth pupae which I collected to identify.

When I came to look at the moth pupae under the

microscope and draw them I saw one of the creatures on its back waving its legs in the air but it had 'legs' along the whole length of its body not just the three pairs beetles have. "Cor! Look at this!" I said to my daughter who was doing her homework at the adjacent desk in the study. "It looks like a woolly woodlouse or millipede", she replied as she leant on my shoulder and peered down the microscope. "That's it", I thought as I pushed the chair back almost knocking her over as I rushed to the bookcase on the other side of the room. There in my newly acquired Key to Millipedes was, - first in the book, the "Bristly Millipede" *Polyxenus lagurus*.



Its small size and distinct silvery brush of hairs on the tail and black tufts down the side makes it easily identified if somewhat difficult to find. The map in the book shows that it was widely distributed over the British Isles but absent from certain counties including Norfolk. This distribution pattern is probably due more to the lack of Millipede experts than the creatures themselves, so I was not surprised to find Norfolk's own millipede expert had found it in several places throughout the county since the book had been published.

Robert Maidstone

West Runton Beach

20th February 2000

When I was asked to lead an excursion to Runton Beach as a winter fixture, I had some reservations, as it turned out to be a better day than some I have had in the height of Summer! A score of members and families ventured on to the uncomfortable walking occasioned by the slippery chalk, flints and seaweed, and managed to find a good variety of the plant and animal life of this unique beach - Norfolk's special version of the rocky shore.

Flat Wrack at the highest level quickly gave way to Bladder Wrack, which in turn was gradually replaced by Serrated Wrack as we went down the gentle slope (about 2.5m vertically over some 200m horizontally) towards the sea. Red seaweeds were represented by Laver *Porphyria umbilicalis* (not enthusiastically recommended by Roy Baker, though Welsh!) and by Coral Wrack, with a couple of Carrageens, *Gigartina* and *Chondrus*, further down. New to some present was the encrusting red seaweed *Lithothamnion*, looking rather like a pinky-purple lichen. Green seaweeds included Sea Lettuce and *Cladophora*.

The animal life, after a rather slow start with little more than Common Periwinkles at the top end of the beach, became much more varied further down. The larger flints were encrusted with the Antipodean barnacle *Elminius modestus* (presumed to have come into European waters on ships' hulls) and serpulid tube-worms. Dog-whelks (some bright yellow) and mainly very small



Beadlet Anemones appeared when we were half-way down the beach. Two fish caught proved to be Shannies (a type of Blenny), and a fresh-looking "empty" Painted Top-shell in fact contained a small Hermit Crab. Small, sometimes very small, Edible Crabs were quite abundant at the lowest levels, and here Francis Farrow managed to find two of the Runton specialities, a Squat Lobster *Galathea squamifera* and an immature Spider-crab, which camouflages itself by "planting" seaweeds on its carapace. An unwelcome addition to the Runton fauna was a few live Slipper Limpets *Crepidula fornicata*, an alien pest of oyster beds; I have previously only seen dead shells washed up.

Paul Banham

Scolt Head Island

The Society has booked the "hut" on Scolt Head Island for the week 10th - 17th June for interested members to visit and record some of the wildlife found on the site. A charge will be made, but the amount will depend on how many people wish to use the hut.

The hut sleeps five (beds, mattresses, pillows provided but not bedding) and gas cooking facilities, but you need to take your own food and matches. The Reserve Warden has offered to ferry members on and off the island at high tide on any day if you wish to stay for only a day or two.



Any member who is interested in staying a night or two (or seven!) and finding out what is there, or experts who cannot come but who would like particular species collected, should contact:

Robert Maidstone on
01508 531287 by June 1st.

Magnification Magic - NNS Hand Lens Offer

Birdwatchers need binoculars, mycologists need microscopes but all naturalists need a hand lens. A simple x8 or x10 lens transports its user into an otherwise unseen world where pollen grains can be seen, fleas look fascinating and even moulds can appear beautiful. Three tips will ensure success:



- Hold the lens as close to your eye as possible.
- Make sure the specimen is well illuminated.
- Keep the lens on a cord round your neck; it will be easier to use and less easy to lose.

Now, through the goodwill of *Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies*, the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society can offer good quality 12 mm diameter x10 Ruper lenses for £7.50 each including p & p. Order from Tony Leech (3, Eccles Road, Holt, Norfolk NR25 6HJ. Tel: 01263 712282), to whom cheques should be made payable, and remember that buying a young naturalist a good lens is an excellent way of encouraging interest.

Tony Leech

Regular Visitor

Last winter a pied wagtail was seen on the lawn when the bird food went out, it seemed to prefer the shredded suet more than the seeds. This was the third winter that this individual had shown up here. How do we know? - because it has a deformed right foot, almost like a little club, but it can walk ok, just a bit ungainly.

It looked out of place somehow mixing in with wood pigeons, doves, blackbirds and the like, but it could hold its own. Such tiny little things must get very cold indeed when sleeping in the severe frosts that were prevalent last December.

Tony Howes

How the Crossbill got its...

Tony Howes' account of the collision of a Pied Flycatcher with his lounge window (*Natterjack*, Nov 1999) reminds me of an experience with a less happy outcome. A group of us were standing outside the Biology Department at Gresham's School, Holt when there was a bang above and a small brown bird fell dead at our feet. The pupil who picked it up pointed out that the impact had twisted the bird's bill; his friend, a very competent bird-watcher, correctly identified it as a female Crossbill.

Tony Leech



Crossbill (? 1st Winter f.) killed after hitting a window, September 8th. 1990.

Whooper Swan — 6S53

I saw a party of 34 Whooper Swans feeding and preening on a ploughed field near Potter Heigham on 19th January 2000. On closer inspection one was seen to be wearing a blue neck-collar. A telescope search enabled me to read this as '6S53'.

The bird, a female, was ringed and given the collar as a cygnet near Ylojavi, Finland on 26th August 1996. It was one of a brood of five ringed at the same time. It was recorded in the same general area on five other occasions that autumn; the last being on 1st December 1996.

One week later, on 20th December 1996 it was seen at Catfield, Norfolk and remained in the Catfield, Ludham area (where it was reported 36 times), usually with three of its siblings, until 28th February 1997. On 10th March 1997 it was reported from near Norkoping, Götland in southern Sweden and on the following day it was seen back in its natal area of Finland. It was reported from that area on a number of occasions until 29th April 1997 and again from 27th October to 13th November 1997.

The next sighting was from Catfield on 27th January 1998 where it remained until 13th February 1998. On its return journey to Finland it stayed briefly in the island of Åland on 3rd & 4th April 1998, being seen back in the Hameenkyro breeding area by 20th April 1998 and 50 miles further north a few days later. It had returned south again

by 25th April when it was one of a flock of 178 birds. It was last reported that autumn in Finland on 16th November 1998.

On Christmas Eve 1998 it was back on sugar beet fields at Sutton Hall and was seen there, at West Lessingham and Catfield on many occasions until 17th January 1999. It was next seen in southern Sweden on 27th March 1999, its last recorded sighting until my record from Potter Heigham on 19th January 2000.

Don Dorling

Fantastic Fulmars

A trip to Northumberland last year gave me the opportunity to watch Fulmars that were nesting on the rock ledges not far from our cottage. It was awesome to see these truly oceanic birds gliding along a sheer rock face in a strong wind. The bullet shaped body with stiffly held wings seems to punch through the swirling air with easy grace and great speed. They would hurtle along the cliff with just an occasional up and down movement of the rigidly held wings, a slight rolling motion as the tail and wings were tilted to steer its course along the rock face was evident. The Kittewakes that shared the ledges with them were slow and ungainly by comparison.

As these Fulmars made each pass, often very close and at my level, I could see their black eyes looking at me as if to say 'What did you think of that then?' I have been to airshows and seen modern jet fighters going through their paces, but to watch a Fulmar Petrel cruising the cliff face in a stiff breeze must be the ultimate - Poetry in Motion.

Tony Howes

One of a few - Fred Ashton - Remembered

Natterjack No. 68 included notes from a few long-standing members of happenings during the last century which were personal highlights. For the most part they were simple observations of events which were unlikely to be repeated at the present time.

Natterjack also included an appreciation of Colin Dack who laboured behind the scenes for many years on behalf of the Society. He was a character, one of a few who have 'lightened our darkness' on many occasions and are remembered with affection. They should not be forgotten.

Some of us will smile at the mention of Fred Ashton, a regular attendee at our meetings and outings in the post-war years. In his youth, Fred was said to have worked in the taxidermist business established by Thomas Gunn in St Giles, Norwich. It flourished in the early part of the century when the shooting and preservation of birds were socially acceptable. Gunn died in 1923 and although the business continued until a few years after the war it finally closed.

At this time Fred was living in a bungalow in Larkman Lane accompanied by his mother. From this base he carried out a certain amount of taxidermy and when paying him a visit one always had to be ready for a surprise. Fred only used the back door, so entry had to be made via the back garden. On one occasion I was greeted by a fox, an adult and very much alive. It was tethered by means of a collar and chain to a stake and its 'earth' was a large hole in the ground beneath a fence. Needless to say, internally, the nature of Fred's latest taxidermal enterprise tended to dominate the scene.

As a result of his experience in taxidermy, Fred was quite

knowledgeable about some aspects of natural history but he was capable of making a statement which left one without a rational reply and what he regarded as normal would raise eyebrows elsewhere.

Apart from taxidermy, Fred had a small parcel of land in Costessey where he kept a few chickens and pigs. To help feed his stock, stale food was collected from various outlets in the city, a trade bicycle being used for transport. The most striking feature of this cycle was a large open wooden scoop at the front. It resembled, in shape, that seen on a modern mechanical digger, and it accommodated all Fred's collections. In addition he had a motorised version. I think it was a tricycle and it was used for longer excursions. It sported an even larger scoop and the versatility of this unit was demonstrated to me, vividly, in the early 1950's. It was a late afternoon in February. It was very cold with a keen frost. I had been photographing the pre-nesting display of herons at Wickhampton and, around sunset, I was returning to Norwich along the old Yarmouth road. Nearing Postwick, I noticed in the distance a figure on a cycle, in silhouette against a fiery sky. On closer approach I realised it was Fred. Pulling out into the middle of the road to pass, I glanced across at the scoop. It contained a figure swathed in furs. It was Fred's mother!

I said that what Fred regarded as normal would raise eyebrows elsewhere. But he was a lovely man whose company we all enjoyed.

Reg Jones



MUSEUM UPDATE

Norwich Castle is now closed and empty of collections, although most of the displays remain, protected from the building work by timber cladding. It opens again in the spring of 2001. The proposed changes to the museums service 'natural history department' took place from April 1st. You will now find Tony Irwin and Rob Driscoll working at the Shirehall - still with the same phone numbers. This is the new "Natural History Curatorial Section".

The newly formed "Environment Section", which operates under "Archaeology & Environment" is now to be found in the East Wing of the Gressenhall Rural Life Museum - just a little way north of Dereham, telephone: 01362 860528. So far this consists of me, although the 4th post has been transferred there as well, and should be filled soon.

I don't think it is any secret that this has been a VERY difficult time for us all, and now the task in hand is to re-organise ourselves and unpack hundreds of books, boxes and specimens. We never want to see another piece of bubble-wrap ever again! We shall try to keep everyone informed of our progress, and will be able to make the collections available for study again before long. I shall be making appointments to see as many Norfolk naturalists as possible during the next few months to elicit your detailed comments on the proposed re-establishment of the Norfolk Biological Records Centre, which I sincerely hope will propel us all forward, and networking together in the 21st century. THANKS for your patience and understanding.

John Goldsmith

FIELD & INDOOR MEETINGS May - July 2000

Please note that start times are variable and that two of the meetings this quarter can only take limited numbers so that booking is essential.

- ▮ Rubber boots recommended.
- ▮▮ Rubber boots essential.

Saturday 6th May Fulmeston Severals and Hindolveston Wood.

10.00 a.m. Full Day. ▮
Directions : Turn north from the A1067 at Guist onto the B1110 towards Holt. After about 4 km. turn right into the farm road just before Severals Grange. TG008288.

We are most grateful to the landowner for the opportunity to visit these private woods and it will be interesting to compare them to nearby Swanton Novers wood that we are to visit the following week. The Severals has some very fine exotic trees. The afternoon meeting point is at TG039285.
Leader: Gillian Beckett.

Saturday 13th May Swanton Novers Great Wood.

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ▮▮
Directions: Turn north from the A1067 at Guist onto the B1110 towards Holt. After about 7 km. bear left into Swanton Novers village. Meet near the telephone box which is on the left, about 100 m. before the crossroads. TG20322.

The wood is a National Nature Reserve with a wide variety of habitats and it is well known for the colony of May Lily. Palmate newts have recently been discovered and there is always the chance of wood warblers passing through at this time of year. We have been asked to restrict the party to 20 persons so please book with Bob Ellis on 01603 662260.
Leader: Robert Baker

Sunday 4th June Thetford Water Meadows.

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ▮
Directions: Meet in the Quicksave car park, Thetford. TL866832.

This site is under-recorded so hopefully we will be able to add to its species list. In the afternoon, we will probably go on the Horse Meadows or another site nearby.
Leader: Nick Gibbons.

Sunday 11th June Shelfanger Town Meadows.

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ▮
Directions: The meeting point is about 3.5 km. north of Diss on the B1077 (towards Shelfanger and Winfarthing) on the east side of the road opposite Hall Lane. TM107833.

If time permits, we will go on to Boyland Common in the afternoon.
Leader: Arthur Copping.

Sunday 18th June Ebb & Flow Marshes.

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ▮
Directions: Meet at Ranworth Staithe. TG359146.

This site was acquired by the Wildlife Trust in 1997 and is part of the Bure Marshes SSSI. Access is best achieved by boat. With mixed habitat of reedbed, sedgebed and carr, there are a number of the scarcer broadland plants here and many of the insects so special to the area. The party is limited to 24 persons so please book with Eunice Phipps on 01953 605273.
Leader: George Taylor.

Wednesday 21st June Spout Hills, Holt.

7.30 p.m. Evening only. ▮▮
Directions: Leave Holt on the A148 towards Fakenham. Meet in the long lay-by on the south side of the road about 300 m. past the church. TG073388.

This is an intriguing site with several artesian springs, some towards the top of the hills. A surprisingly wide range of species are present and there is a disused railway line adjacent which is also of interest.
Leader: Paz Woollacott.

Sunday 25th June East Walton Common

11.00 a.m. Full Day. ▮
Directions: Turn north from the A47 just west of Narborough onto the B1153 towards Gayton. Bear left at East Walton towards East Winch then turn immediately left onto the lane to the common. TF739166.

The common is a SSSI and is well known for its pingoes and chalk grassland.
Leader: Peter Lambley.

Sunday 9th July Wheatfen Natural History Day

Please see the separate panel.

Sunday 23rd July Wacton Parish

11.00 a.m. Full Day
Directions: Turn west off the A140 at Long Stratton towards Wacton. Meet in the village hall car park which is about 100m past the chapel on the south side of the road. TG179915.

Robert has booked the village hall for our use and there will be microscopes, books and keys available, so towards the end of the day we will be able to spend some time in detailed identification work.
Leader: Robert Maidstone.

Saturday 29th July Foxley Wood

8.00 a.m. Morning. ▮
Directions: Meet at the NWT car park. TG049229

Jon will be putting several moth traps out over night so we will be able to check them in the morning, hence the early start.
Leader: Jon Clifton.

I apologise to all concerned for the rather cursory notes in the last issue of *Natterjack*. Due to a technical hitch, the editor received a draft version rather than the intended final copy.

Bob Ellis, Chairman
Programme Committee

WHEATFEN Natural History Day 9th July 2000

The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society and the Ted Ellis Trust are jointly hosting a Natural History Day on Sunday 9th July 2000 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Wheatfen Nature Reserve, Surlingham. Several local specialists have been invited to give demonstrations and guided walks to encourage interest in many aspects of natural history. It is hoped that by holding a number of guided walks with small parties concentrating on particular groups of species, participants will be able to learn more than they would in a large party of general interest.

There will be no admission charge but donations to the reserve will be welcomed as usual and tea and cakes will be on sale. Many of the walks will be repeated morning and afternoon so if you are there for the whole day, it will be possible to take advantage of several walks, or if you can only come for part of the day you should still be able to participate in those that are of interest to you. If you wish to bring a picnic lunch, there will be tables etc. available.

As well as guided walks with hints and tips on identification, it will be possible to talk to local naturalists, to see what books are available and which are recommended and to see what sort of equipment is useful. Beginners will be particularly welcome.