



# The Norfolk Natterjack

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society



... Researching  
Norfolk's Wildlife

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# Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Cover image: Ragged Robin on Beeston Common (*Derek Leak* - See page 24)

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

*In this edition we take a look at various alien species such as saprophytic fungi and an amphipod that has travelled from Australia. Also we are welcoming some new insects to the County and getting acquainted with many new species at the Broadland Country Park as Mark Collins, chair of the Research Committee invites naturalists to visit. My thanks to all contributors and as it seems I have a number of articles this time please send me your stories and observations to help fill the pages. The black variety of the Swallowtail featured in the 100 years ago note reminded me of one I saw when on an NNNS excursion to Horsey in the 1970s. It had been caught earlier in the week but unfortunately had died the day before we arrived.*

FF

## Potty Toadstools

Tony Leech

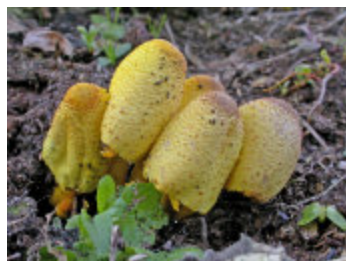
Occasionally an alien settles in next to your potted plant. The arrival of a fungus may bring concern to the gardener (unnecessarily as they are invariably saprophytes not parasites) but joy to the naturalist as such fungi may not occur in Norfolk in the wild.

A recent email from Suzannah Cobb was accompanied by photographs of a delicate pale yellow gill fungus which had appeared in pots of sugar beet seedlings being grown for research purposes at UEA. Examination of dried material confirmed that they were *Leucocoprinus straminellus*. This was first recorded in Britain from greenhouses at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where it commonly occurs. Subsequently it has been recorded from greenhouses in several parts of Britain and recently from two outdoor sites.

The genus *Leucocoprinus* is responsible for a number of greenhouse fungi, the most spectacular of which is undoubtedly *Leucocoprinus birnbaumii*, resembling a lemon-yellow Common Inkcap. It is not that rare and has even been blessed with an English name - Plantpot Dapperling. Four indoor records of this fungus have reached the Norfolk Fungus Record Database and occasionally it does



*Leucocoprinus straminellus*,  
UEA 2021 / *Suzannah Cobb*



*Leucocoprinus birnbaumii*,  
Holt Lowes 2006 / *Tony Leech*



‘fruit’ out of doors; the second British occurrence of this was on old woodchips on Holt Lowes in 2006. A similar white fungus, *Leucocoprinus cretaceus*



*Coprinopsis cf. Cardiaspora*  
Northwold 2021 / *Kate Risely*



*Conocybe rickenii*,  
Holt 2012 / *Tony Leech*



*Conocybe subpubescens*,  
Holt 2008 / *Tony Leech*

occurred in one of Keith Fox's flower-pots at Hunstanton in 2015.

A second recent observation was that made by Kate Risely on broad bean seedlings being grown in cardboard tubes from toilet rolls. They were clearly inkcaps but with over 100 species in Britain, identification is a challenge. Fortunately, fresh material was available and all indications were that the species was *Coprinopsis cardiasporus*. So far, so good, but Derek Schafer (an expert 'coprinologist') informs us that taxonomy in that area has not been resolved and that the species has not been universally accepted as distinct. Dried material has been sent for molecular analysis when the opportunity arises. Appearance of inkcaps on cardboard tubes has been widely reported and there has been speculation as to whether the fungus has come from the compost (which will have been sterilised) or from the cardboard. Another possibility is that it may have originated from the chance arrival of a spore that found conditions suitable for growth.

It has to be admitted that many greenhouse fungi are little brown mushrooms which excite few people. Many belong to the genus *Conocybe* and also occur on rotting material outdoors. *Conocybe rickenii* and *C. subpubescens*



*Conocybe intrusa*,  
Holt 2002 / *Tony Leech*

*Conocybe intrusa*, an American species and another first for the county.

have made appearances in my greenhouse, the latter still the only Norfolk record. *Conocybes* are typically delicate, brown fungi with conical caps, well deserving their English name of conecaps. In 2002, I failed to recognise as a conecap a stouter, paler, in a plant pot in a friend's greenhouse but that is what it turned out to be,

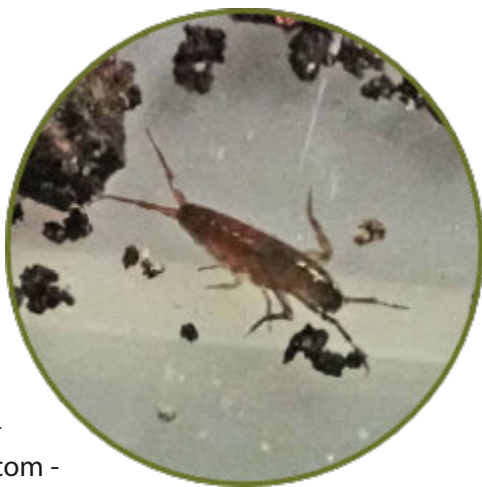
## Landhoppers

*Francis Farrow*

Last May I received a telephone call that introduced a range of animals I had little knowledge of. The call was from Ian Fletcher, who lived a couple of roads away in Sheringham, and he wanted to know what a certain creature was living under vegetation in his garden. He described the animal as like a freshwater shrimp (*Gammarus*) but living on land and able to move around by jumping and that there were 100s of them. A quick search on the internet produced an amphipod known as a Landhopper (*Arcitalitrus dorrieni*). This particular amphipod was originally from Australia so Ian had possibly something from 'down under' living down under his garden!



I did a bit more research and found that terrestrial Landhoppers are from subtropical forests where they are important members of the leaf-litter decomposition fauna. There have been four species reported as introductions to the UK, however, only *A. dorrieni* is capable of living outdoors, the others are only found in heated



An Australian amphipod *Arcitalitrus dorrieni* that has taken to living in the UK for almost a 100 years turned up in a Sheringham garden / *Francis Farrow*



The Landhopper *Arcitalitrus dorrieni* viewed under a low power microscope /

Francis Farrow

glasshouses. The Landhopper was first described in 1924 from Trescoe, Isles of Scilly and has subsequently spread first throughout south-west England and Wales. It was reported from Kew Gardens in 1980 and from Sunderland in 2012. This particular Landhopper is from the forests of New South Wales. A check with the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service for any previous records did not produce any.

In early June I went to Ian's garden and saw the Landhoppers (both large and small) living under plant debris near the compost heap. I collected a couple of specimens and subsequently looked at them under the microscope using a key by Steve J. Gregory\*. From

what I could see the Landhoppers were *A. dorrieni* but as this group is not really known to me it would be good to have confirmation. As there was no official recorder for the group I sent my findings to Tony Irwin. Tony's initial thoughts were *A. dorrieni* but to be sure he would need a specimen so other *Arcitalitrus* species could be eliminated. I sent Tony some specimens through the post and a couple of days later Tony confirmed them as *A. dorrieni*, having checked them against the other terrestrial genera that have come here and other *Arcitalitrus* in Australia that haven't left home yet. Tony also had earlier records of the species from Norfolk - in a Bowthorpe garden in February, 2021 (Emily Swan) and from heathland at West Runton in May, 2015 (Martin Collier). The West Runton record is of interest as they may have been the source of the colony in Ian's garden. Ian enjoys riding his mountain bike along the lanes and byways between Sheringham and Cromer, which means it is possible the Landhoppers may have been picked up in mud on the tyres and inadvertently brought back to his garden, however, Tony thinks it's far more likely that they were introduced via a pot plant possibly from a nearby garden.

These amphipods may be more widespread in Norfolk so check your garden and should any turn up please send the details to the County Terrestrial Invertebrate Recorder - David Hunter (david.hunter37@outlook.com).

\*On the terrestrial Landhopper *Arcitalitrus dorrieni* (Hunt, 1925) (Amphipoda: Talitridae): Identification and current distribution – Steve J. Gregory. Bulletin of the British Myriapod & Isopod Group, Volume 29 (2016)



When Francis contacted me about the *Arcitalitrus* in Sheringham, it reminded me of a strange phenomenon associated with these crustaceans.

Many years ago, my parents had an extensive garden near Holywood, Co. Down. When visiting there, I often took the opportunity to ring the birds in the garden, and was intrigued to find that several of the male blackbirds had developed tomato-red bills and eye rings (see photo). I also noticed that the birds spent most of their time foraging among leaf litter, and the dominant invertebrate in the leaf litter was the alien landhopper *Arcitalitrus dorrieni*.

Small crustaceans are a good source of a carotenoid pigment called astaxanthin, which they assimilate from their food. And in the same way that flamingos use pigments derived from their food to colour their feathers, it seems that blackbirds can use the astaxanthin from *Arcitalitrus* to colour their bills. Red-billed blackbirds are known elsewhere – on the Scilly Isles, for instance (from where *A. dorrieni* was first described in 1924). They also occur on Lord Howe Island, Australia, where the blackbirds are the introduced species, and the *Arcitalitrus* are native.

As *A. dorrieni* spreads throughout Norfolk (as it inevitably will), it will be interesting to note whether any of our local blackbirds take a fancy to it and end up with red bills!



A 'red-billed' Blackbird photographed in Co. Down, Northern Ireland - the consequence of absorbing carotenoid pigments from an alien Landhopper / Tony Irwin

On 20<sup>th</sup> April I planned to visit a small reserve known as West Beckham Old Allotments. The WBOA is a relatively new acquisition in north Norfolk by the Felbeck Trust and is being managed as a potential Turtle Dove breeding location. Part of this management is an on-going biodiversity survey and as one of the survey monitors I undertake regular visits to record species, therefore with reasonable weather, some sun and light wind, Cherry and I set off for a couple of hours of recording.

Along the eastern boundary hedge, bathed in the morning sun and sheltered from the light north-easterly breeze we found a number of insects including around six species of hoverfly among which were some *Syrphus* species. Most were feeding on Alexanders and their black and yellow striped abdomens were easily spotted. On one plant there was a darker Syrphid and one I thought may be temperature affected ie the temperature, particularly low temperatures can cause darker colouration in some hoverflies. I took a couple of photographs of it out of interest and then moved on.



A 'new to Norfolk' hoverfly *Syrphus nitidifrons* found in north Norfolk / Francis Farrow

Later that evening as I looked through the images I decided that maybe the dark Syrphid was something else, such as a possible *Eupoedes* sp. Not being sure I posted a copy of the picture on the Hoverfly Recording Facebook site and Roger Morris remarked that it might be *Syrphus nitidifrons* and invited other opinions, later Gerard Pennards agreed.

*S. nitidifrons* is a recent addition to the British list (2010) and is a scarce southern counties insect where it seems to favour coniferous woodland. The fact that it was along a field edge hedgerow in north Norfolk may be explained by the indications that it is expanding within NW Europe and there are locations in The Netherlands. The insect may have come up from the south or across the North Sea from the Continent. However it turned up it appears to be 'new to Norfolk' and just goes to show that such survey monitoring can produce an unexpected result.

## Personal encounters with some of Norfolk's Wonderful 150...

### Hoverfly *Microdon devius*

Jeremy Bartlett

On the afternoon of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021 Vanna and I visited Foulnden Common, to look for Grizzled and Dingy Skipper butterflies and to see what other insects were about.

Shortly after arriving, Vanna netted what at first appeared to be a solitary bee, flying low over the ground. But on closer inspection she immediately recognised it as a type of *Microdon* hoverfly.

We have four species of *Microdon* in Britain and Vanna had photographed and sketched its relative, *Microdon analis* (the Heath Ant Fly), in the woods at Glasdrum in Western Scotland in spring 2018 while we were looking for Chequered Skipper butterflies (Bartlett 2020).

We had found *Microdon devius*, sometimes known as the Downland Ant Fly. It is one of the species featured in "Norfolk's Wonderful 150" (NNNS 2020).



Sketch of the Heath Ant Fly *Microdon analis* found in western Scotland / Vanna Bartlett



Two views of the Downland Ant Fly *Microdon devius* found at Foulnden Common / Jeremy Bartlett



Ant-hills of the Yellow Meadow Ant *Lasius flavus* on Foulnden Common / *Jeremy Bartlett*

Within minutes we had seen several more, flying low over the grassland. We even witnessed a mating pair in flight, pursued by two unattached males, but it took place far too quickly to photograph.

The adult insects are on the wing from May to July.

*Microdon devius* larvae live in the nests of the Yellow Meadow Ant *Lasius flavus*, which are abundant on Foulnden Common.

The tank-like larvae of *Microdon* hoverflies are so strange that they were once classified as molluscs (Falk 2021). They develop in ant nests as predators of ant eggs and grubs. They are superbly adapted for this role: their hemispherical shape allows them to cling tightly to surfaces and the larva's head is hidden underneath the larva and protected by a dense fringe of hairs. The larvae even absorb the ants' pheromones so that the ants can't chemically detect their presence (Ball & Morris 2015).

There are also records from Foulnden Common in 2014, 2018 and 2019, Redgrave and Lopham Fen in 1966 and 1985, and from Middle Harling in the Brecks in 1988 (Hodge 2021). It would be interesting to see whether the hoverfly is still at these other sites.

...And we saw three Grizzled Skippers (but no Dingy).

## References:

Ball, S. and Morris R. 2015. *Britain's Hoverflies. A Field Guide*. (Second Edition.) WILDGuides. Princeton University Press, Princeton & Woodstock.

Bartlett, V. 2020. *Arthropedia: An Illustrated Alphabet of Invertebrates*. Mascot Media, Norfolk.

Falk, S. 2021. Flickr. *Microdon* (ant-nest hoverflies). <https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/collections/72157629248736410/> and *Microdon devius* (Downland Ant-fly). <https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/sets/72157688994105113/>. (Both accessed 20 June 2021.)

Hodge 2021. Personal communication from Tim Hodge.

NNNS 2021. Norfolk's Wonderful 150. Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society, Norwich.

## When a Spider is a Fly's Best Friend

Vanna Bartlett

I have been observing and photographing the crab spider *Misumena vatia* in my garden for the last few years, documenting the various insect prey items that they catch. This year I spotted a number of tiny flies congregating on a freshly caught Honeybee. Tony Irwin enlightened me on this intriguing behaviour with the following:

*'The flies are in the family Milichiidae - usually a Desmometopa species, but a couple of other genera show this behaviour too, as do some Chloropidae. They are colloquially known as Jackal Flies, and will attend a scene of predation, by spiders, or predatory bugs or robber flies. They seem to be particularly attracted to Hemiptera and Hymenoptera prey - it is thought that the prey species emit a "watch out - I've been attacked - aargh!" pheromone signal which the flies home in on. They feed on juices from the prey insect- earning an alternative name of "Freeloader Flies".'*



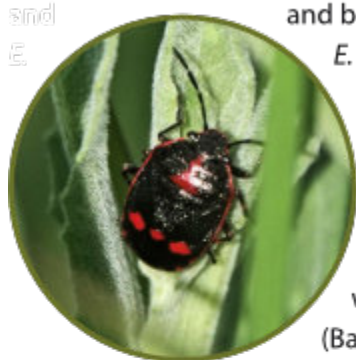
Crab Spider *Misumena vatia* with freshly caught Honeybee and attendant 'Jackal Flies' /

Vanna Bartlett

It never ceases to amaze me what fascinating invertebrate behaviour can to be witnessed almost literally on my doorstep.



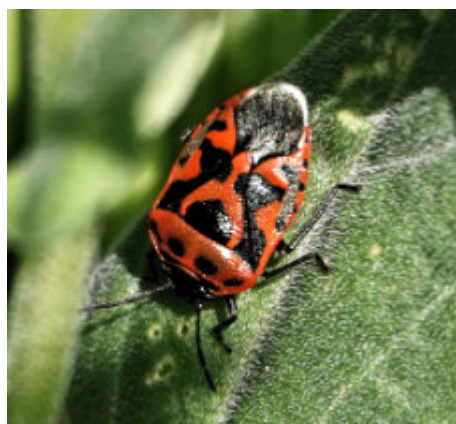
On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021 when checking a patch of Hoary Cress on Beeston Common, Sheringham for Crucifer Shield bugs *Eurydema oleracea* I noticed a larger red and black coloured shieldbug – the Ornate Shieldbug



A Crucifer Shieldbug /  
Francis Farrow

*E. ornata*. This species was found by Mark Clements in exactly the same patch of Hoary Cress last year (6<sup>th</sup> May 2020 – see 'Natterjack' 150) and was the first Norfolk Record. Up to 2020 the insect was only known south of London and mainly from the south coast, between Dorset and Sussex, where it was first recorded for the UK in 1997 (Bantock, 2018).

Ornate Shieldbugs overwinter as an adult so it is likely that it was the same individual that Mark found? If it was it would be around two years old and from studies on the closely related Crucifer Shieldbug (Hawkins, 2003) it was shown that this shieldbug had a life span of less than 18 months. Could another individual have flown in to exactly the same patch of Hoary Cress a year later or was the 2021 individual the result of local breeding?



An Ornate Shieldbug which may become established in Norfolk soon / Francis Farrow

A couple of days after the Beeston Common shieldbug was seen Jeremy Bartlett posted (1<sup>st</sup> June) on the Norfolk Wildlife Facebook Group a picture of an Ornate Shieldbug from his Norwich allotment, which he had found on Garlic Mustard.

It could be that these spectacularly coloured insects are about to set up home in the County and it is worth looking out for them wherever plants of the Brassica family are growing.

### Refereneces:

Tristan Bantock, 2018. Provisional atlas of shieldbugs and allies  
Hawkins, R. D., 2003 Shieldbugs of Surrey. Surrey Wildlife Trust

During April 2020, at a small clearing on a typical heathland site in North Norfolk, unusual interactive behaviour between Adders *Vipera berus* and Grass Snakes *Natrix helvetica* was observed.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of the month the clearing was utilised by three male and two or three female Adders and there was much communal basking, some courtship and brief spells of dancing.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month, over a fairly short period of time, three Grass Snakes arrived at the clearing (Fig. 1).

On this and the following day there was much intermingling of the two species, sometimes just one of each species (Fig. 2) but at other times multiple interacting took place (Fig. 3).



Fig. 1: The third Grass Snake arrives in the clearing



Fig. 2: A Grass Snake adopts an unusual approach to an Adder



Fig. 3: Multiple interaction between the two species  
All images / Bernard Dawson

It was apparent that at least one of the male Adders adopted an aggressive attitude towards the Grass Snakes who themselves were involved in mating behaviour. There is a possibility that pheromones were being transferred between the two species and this may have led to a confused interspecific behavioural response.

The weather deteriorated over the following two days and only one Grass Snake was present, with several Adders, on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Despite diligent searching during 2021 no further interaction between the two species was observed.

### Reference:

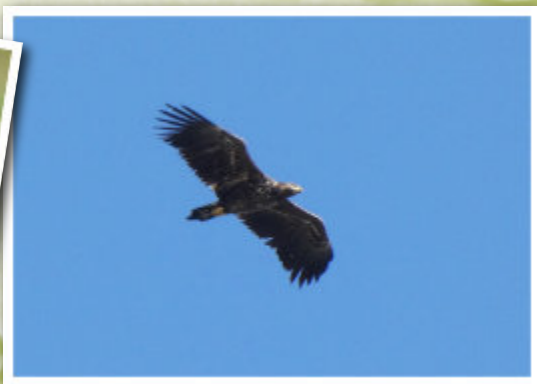
Dawson, B. & Baker, J.M.R. (2020). Behavioural interactions between barred grass snake *Natrix helvetica* and northern viper *Vipera berus*. *The Herpetological Bulletin* 154: 37-38.



# Nature Gallery

2021

A Stonechat in typical pose but not on its normal spiky perch of gorse, Kelling Water Meadows, 04 Apr / *Karin & Steve Hale*



A sensational fly-past by this immature White-tailed Eagle showed just how big these birds are, Weybourne, 02 May / *Mark Clements*



A female Common Blue aberration - lacking orange spots along hind wings, Beeston Common, 31 May / *Francis Farrow*

A male Kestrel sitting silently in full view is in stark contrast to the skulking but very vocal Marsh Warbler, Kelling Water Meadows, 06 & 14 Jun / *Karin & Steve Hale*





Bracken Sawfly *Strongylogaster multifasciata* egg-laying,  
Beeston Common, 03 Jun  
/ Francis Farrow



A Bramble 'party' featuring a  
Tree Bumblebee (left), a Vestal  
Cuckoo-bee (centre) and an  
Early Bumblebee (right),  
Beeston Common, 01 Jul  
/ Francis Farrow



The Sloe berries can become  
misshapen due to a fungal  
infection caused by *Taphrina  
pruni*. The fungus, commonly  
known as 'Pocket Plums'  
chemically affects the sloes as  
they develop, resulting in  
flattened, brown, empty sacs,  
Beeston Common, 07 Jul  
/ Derek Leak

A Bog Bush-cricket nymph was a good  
find during an NWT Commons week  
walk at Beeston Common, 07 Jul  
/ Derek Leak

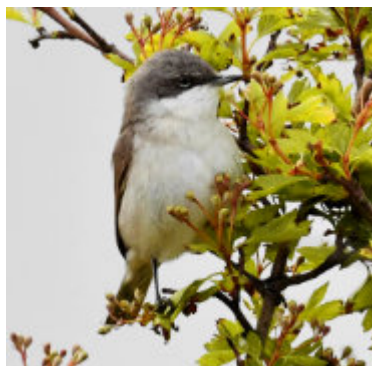




Nightjar asleep on Buxton Heath

I went to Buxton Heath following a 'phone call from a friend who had been searching for Nightjars. He had found one sleeping in the undergrowth. Excitedly I peered in the spot he pointed out and saw a dark shape. I was so pleased to see it was still there as I have never seen one before. After a few snaps we walked away leaving it in peace to continue its sleep and me feeling very happy.

A trip out to Snettisham revealed lots of various species; waders, geese, many different ducks and smaller birds in the gorse bushes. On the way back to the carpark I heard a song I didn't recognise. Not that I know many songs as I don't think of myself as a twitcher, I just love all nature. After managing to find the bird which was singing, I realised it was a Lesser Whitethroat. Not a bird I see so often, unlike Common Whitethroats which seems to be in abundance this year around my area of South Norfolk. I was pleased it came to the end of a branch giving me the opportunity to grab a few photos.



An obliging Lesser Whitethroat at Snettisham

NWT Hickling is one of my usual places to visit. It has been having several rarities lately. When I was there this week I was asked if I had seen the Collared Pratincole? I didn't know there was one there or what it looked like!! I ventured over to Brendon's Marsh and scanned the scrape. I saw two Black-winged Stilts which was a lovely sight. They were a way off. I am not tall enough to see over the reeds but I managed a few pictures.



One of two Black-winged Stilts at Hickling



Then seeing several people with scopes, I assumed they were looking at the Collared Pratincole. I watched it through binoculars and recognised it from the picture in the bird book I keep in the car. It was a long way off and flew very fast and I was wishing it to come close. It came but not as close as I would have liked considering it was a cloudy day and not good for photography.



Collared Pratincole - an exotic visitor to Hickling

I enjoyed watching it fly around with Terns, Lapwings and Swifts. I then chanced taking photos as I had nothing to lose. Not my best but when I got home and downloaded them, I was pleasantly surprised. You could make out what it was and considering it is a rare bird, I felt privileged to see it and getting photographs is always a bonus.

As I walked away from the crowd, I saw a Bittern. It is always lovely to see a them. This one flew back and forth as I walked along the pathway from the scrape towards Bittern Hide. I assumed it had a nest in the reedbed as I saw it



three times doing the same route, checking a young one maybe. A handsome bird which I see often but not everyone may be as lucky as I am.

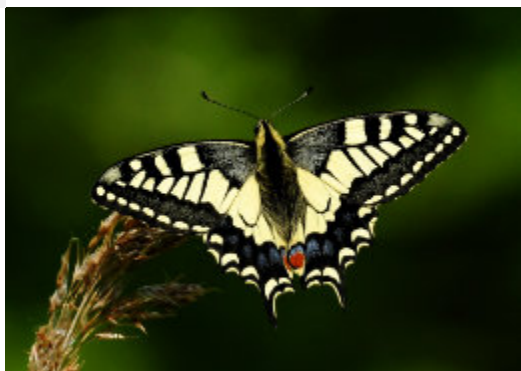
Finally, I just had to add our beautiful Norfolk Swallowtail butterfly. It was in pristine condition and the markings looked like a stained-glass window. It landed on a reed. It made me feel a little bit sad as I couldn't see any flowers for it

Another lucky encounter with a Bittern at Hickling

to nectar on. I don't think there are as many Swallowtails around this year as there were this time last year.

Beautiful Swallowtail at Hickling

All images / *Elizabeth Dack*



The crow family of birds are almost certainly the least popular, not only with general public but also with many naturalists. In spite of this lack of popularity, these intelligent birds seem to prosper. I confess to having a soft spot for them ever since childhood, when many of us boys had Jackdaws and Magpies as pets. I well remember how mischievous they could be and the affection that some of the Jackdaws demonstrated. It has been said that a measure of intelligence is the ability to improvise and, on a number of occasions, I have seen this



Carrion Crow's nest and eggs / *Hans Watson*

ability in the construction of Carrion Crow nests with locally abundant items being used. At one nest, I found a page of a newspaper, used as part of the lining, and in some nests, animal bones are often used instead of sticks.

I recently saw a Carrion Crow in the middle of a large expanse of parkland pecking vigorously at something, and

so I watched it through my binoculars. The bird was standing on the carcass of young Grey Squirrel, and delivering a series of vigorous blows with its bill. It then managed to tear a piece of meat off the carcass and swallow it. This process was then repeated a number of times. I had the impression, that in order to compensate for not having a hooked bill with which to tear flesh and skin, the Crow was making a series of perforations with its stabbing bill, then tearing along the weakened line. As I watched it, I began to wonder how the squirrel had died. Had it been killed, and then dropped by some predator, or had it died at this spot from natural causes? A predator would not just leave it in an open space, and animals that are unwell usually seek cover. Had the crow carried it to this spot from elsewhere?



A Carrion Crow eating a young Grey Squirrel / *Hans Watson*

This seemed unlikely as, when dog-walkers walked past the crow flew off leaving the squirrel, only to return after they had gone. There is a tendency to think of crows as scavengers of an already dead carcass, but the larger members of the crow family are quite capable of killing prey themselves, and occasionally do so. There are many accounts of Carrion Crows killing young Rabbits. So it is possible that the squirrel had been crossing the open parkland, and the Crow had seen an opportunity for a surprise attack. The crow managed to eat much of the squirrel whilst I watched it.

## Summer Migrants

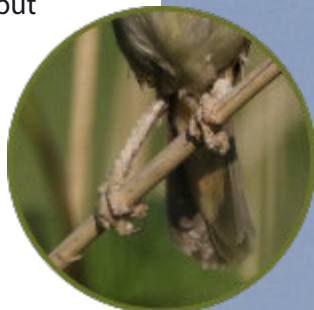
*Tony Howes*

I always enjoy the spring migrants arrival, some just passing through, others that will stay and breed here, it seems incredible that these tiny bundles of feathers can travel such vast distances, but to stand in an English wood on a day in early spring, and hear the beautiful songs created by these wanderers is sure proof that their journey was accomplished safely.

Its also an ideal time to watch and photograph them, the trees and bushes have yet to acquire their green dress of summer leaves, making it easier to spot them, the song is usually the giveaway, pin down the song, and you can often quickly find the singer.

I spent many hours on my local patch this last Spring trying to photograph these remarkable little travellers, Blackcap, Sedge Warbler, Chiffchaff, Reed Warbler, Whitethroat, and Wheatear all had their portraits taken. The song flight of the Sedge Warbler in particular is always difficult to capture photographically, and a considerable amount of time was spent trying to achieve this, its interesting that this bird has a serious problem with its legs and feet, (see image) but otherwise it looks, and behaves, perfectly normal.

Sedge Warbler in song flight mode and inset showing problems with its legs and feet / *Tony Howes*





Blackcap



Sedge Warbler



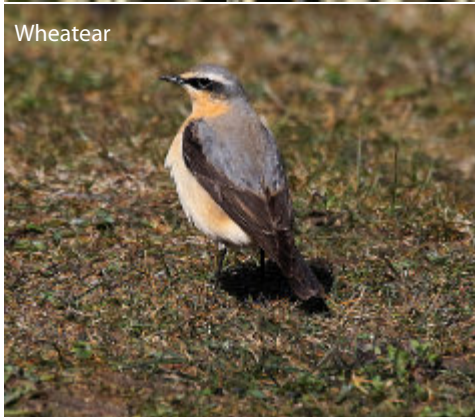
Chiffchaff



Reed Warbler



Whitethroat



Wheatear

All images / *Tony Howes*

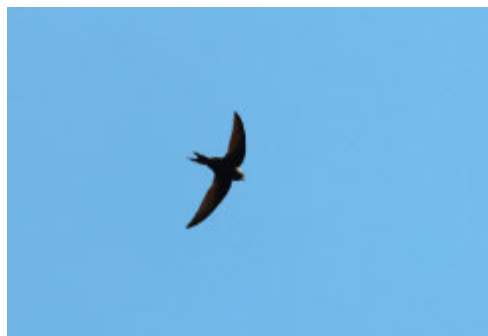
As I write this article in the middle of June, the nesting season for these nomads is in full swing, by the end of summer it will all be over, and these tiny feathered sprites will then do the return journey back to Africa, braving storms, and sea crossings. I wish them all the very best.



## Introducing & growing Norwich Swift Network - keeping the summer skies screaming

Caroline Spinks

Swifts are generally urban, roof nesting birds that come here in summer to breed. The Norwich street where I have lived the past 27 years has lost almost half the Swift nest sites over that time, and observing a roof, which regularly housed two pairs, being re-felted and a subsequent potential loss of their nest sites was the final straw for me. I decided to take action by setting up Norwich Swift Network with an aim to support and monitor the colonies across the Greater Norwich Area, and to raise awareness of these amazing birds.



Sadly, the decline of Swift numbers in my street reflects the national trend, and much of this decline is driven by loss of their roof nest sites. We can



easily reverse this by continuing to allow them access after roofline maintenance (particularly by not fitting bird combs/guards), retrofitting nest boxes, and installing Swift bricks into new developments. Boxes and bricks do not require annual cleaning as Swifts keep the nest cavity clean themselves, and they make a minimal nest cup from feathers and other material they catch on the wing. Swifts are not 'poopy' or

destructive birds, in fact many people are unaware that they have Swifts nesting in their property, certainly the owner of the property at the start of this swift story did not know about the regular summer visitors to his roof!



Many Norwich residents have responded positively to the network, reporting sightings (especially of their Swifts' social screaming parties!) and

A Swift exiting a roof nest site. Such sites are declining as roofs are refurbished but this trend can be reversed / *Caroline Spinks*



putting up boxes. At time of writing NSN has seen 62 new nest boxes (includes some DIY that I know of) and four swift bricks installed across Norwich this year, with a further 20 boxes currently in the pipeline. The main challenge to supporting Swifts is finding someone to help with nest box installations. I have had fantastic help from Leverett Roofers but helping Swifts could be made easier with a few more people armed with a long ladder and head for heights, so if you, or anyone you know of might be willing to help in this regard (it takes about 15mins to put up a box) please get in touch [nswiftnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:nswiftnetwork@gmail.com) I am also starting to work with pubs, schools and Norwich City Council to encourage people to look after their local Swift colonies.

Please also share your #SwiftStories and nest site reports with us via email or on social media @NorwichSwift.

Three quirky Swift facts that might encourage everyone to love these incredible birds:



From the moment they fledge, Swifts do everything on the wing, feeding, drinking, sleeping, preening, and mating, imagine all that at about 30mph!

next

The only time they touch down, albeit in a high up cavity, is to raise the next generation.



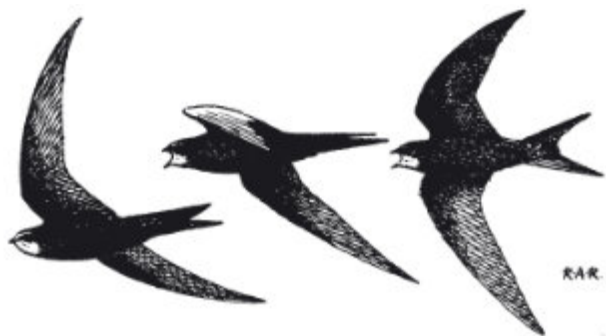
Swifts appear in the fossil record almost 50 million years ago, yes they were living with dinosaurs!



When they rip through the sky at record breaking flat line speeds of 70mph, and turn fast around street corners, they can withstand g forces

three

three times greater than a fighter jet pilot!



Swifts / *Richard A. Richardson*

(Drawing reproduced with kind permission from 'Guardian Spirit of the East Bank' by Moss Taylor)

## New Country Park is a real opportunity for Naturalists

*Mark Collins, Chair, NNNS Research Committee*

In March 2021 Broadland District Council announced a new country park northwest of Norwich and included a three-year agreement with NNNS that allows us to study the ecology and biodiversity of the area as a basis for management, restoration and wildlife conservation. To be successful, this priority project needs as many enthusiasts and County Recorders as possible to get involved.

Broadland Country Park is a fascinating area, comprising 77ha of woodland, heath and marsh situated between Felthorpe and Horsford. It combines several contiguous sites, including Houghen Plantation, purchased by the Council in 2020.

NNNS established a Working Group to meet regularly with the Park's manager, Sarah Burston, and a topographic survey enabled NBIS to produce a useful habitats map (see page 23) that went out to all County Recorders and Special Interest Groups together with a formal invitation to begin work. A series of familiarisation meetings attracted many County Recorders and a steady stream of visits is now delivering a growing list of records. Tim Hodge, County Hoverfly Recorder, has the lead in record-keeping and all data will, of course, be copied to NBIS. Do contact Tim for advice on records: [tim.hodge@btinternet.com](mailto:tim.hodge@btinternet.com).

The NNNS Photographic Group, led by Hans Watson, has placed central Observation Posts in all 16 habitat compartments. Quarterly photographs are



being taken to record seasonality and change resulting from management. These 2m white plastic posts have grid references assigned to their compartments, making it easy to record sightings (and to check which compartment you are in!).

Heathland within BCP / *Dave Weaver*

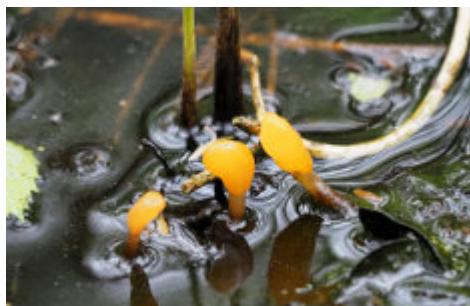
The hard-working Norfolk Flora Group has already compiled a first list of plants for all compartments. Amongst the rarities is the Yellow Bird's-nest *Hypopitys monotropa*, a scarce ericaceous parasite of mycorrhizal fungi in the soils of the coniferous woodlands. Meanwhile, in a growing list of fungi, the



Yellow Bird's-nest *Hypopitys monotropa* and Bog Beacon *Mitrula padulosa* - two of a growing number of interesting species found in the BCP /

Hans Watson

Norfolk Fungus Study Group has identified the rare Bog Beacon *Mitrula padulosa*, which grows on decaying leaves in waterlogged woods.

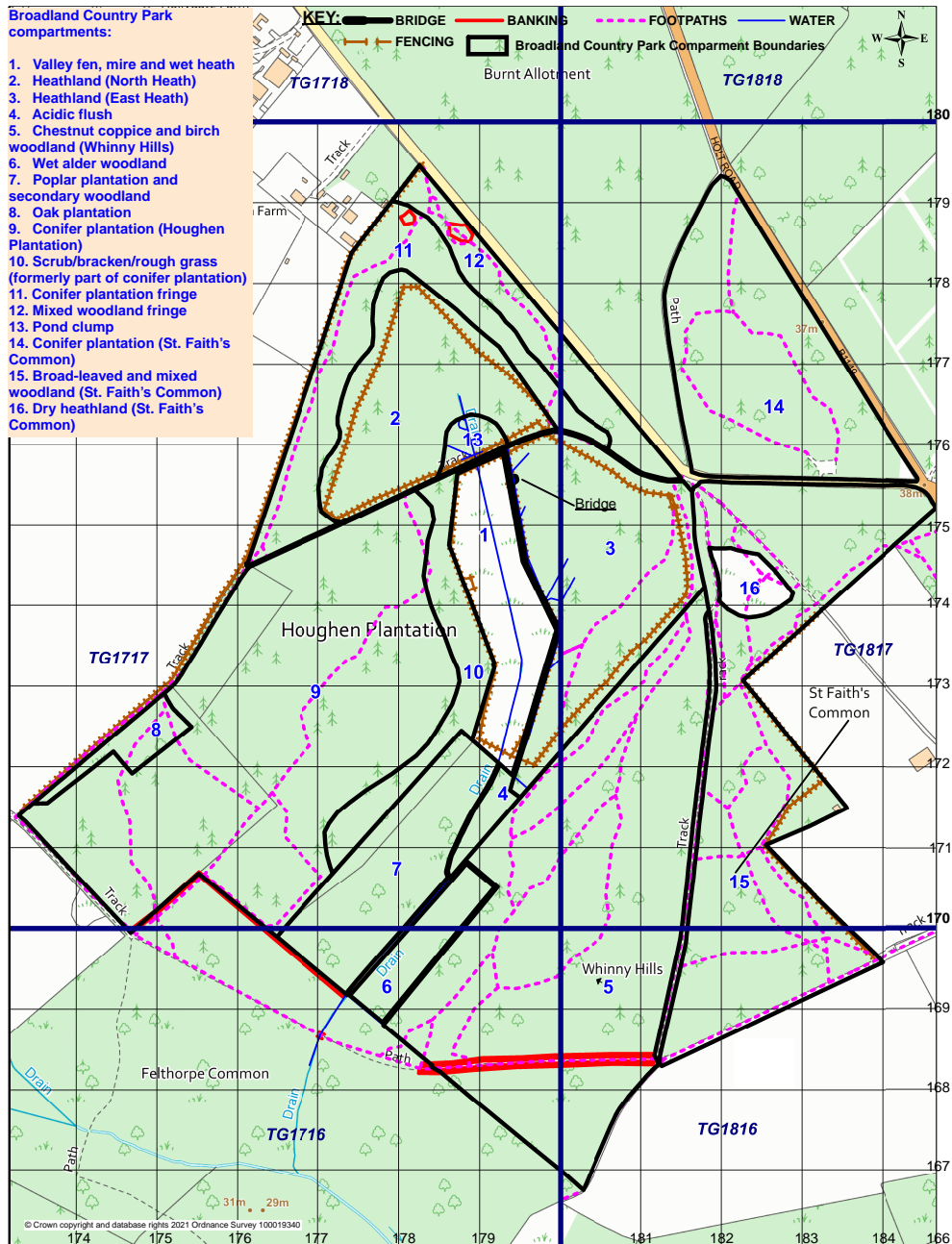


Birdlife includes Woodlarks and large flocks of Crossbills. Spring has seen the return of a wide variety of warblers and other migrants, including several pairs of nesting Nightjars and a pair of Hobby. Lists of beetles, dragonflies, flies, bees, wasps and spiders are also emerging, including some notable rarities such as the black ladybird *Scymnus nigrinus*, a spider-hunting wasp *Priocnemus coriacea*, Tormentil Mining Bee *Andrena tarsata*, Southern Midget moth *Phyllonorycter dubitella* and the Bog Bush-cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera*.

Now is the time for NNNS enthusiasts to get involved and make a visit – we need your expertise! Casual visits are welcome any time but if you want to make regular surveys just get in contact for a District Council authorisation letter, an up-to-date map and some useful information on health and safety at the site. Specialists are encouraged to work with County Recorders wherever possible.

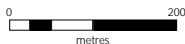
In National Volunteers' Week 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> June Broadland District Council praised the work of NNNS volunteers at the Country Park and Radio Norfolk interviewed NNNS member Dave Weaver, who has spent many hours working on the restoration of heathland there. Why not get along for a visit and add your support to the project? You will be helping a very good cause!

1. Valley fen, mire and wet heath
2. Heathland (North Heath)
3. Heathland (East Heath)
4. Acidic flush
5. Chestnut coppice and birch woodland (Whinny Hills)
6. Wet alder woodland
7. Poplar plantation and secondary woodland
8. Oak plantation
9. Conifer plantation (Houghen Plantation)
10. Scrub/bracken/rough grass (formerly part of conifer plantation)
11. Conifer plantation fringe
12. Mixed woodland fringe
13. Pond clump
14. Conifer plantation (St. Faith's Common)
15. Broad-leaved and mixed woodland (St. Faith's Common)
16. Dry heathland (St. Faith's Common)




### Compartment and land survey map

Compiled by NBIS on 26 March 2021



180



**NBIS**  
Norfolk **Biodiversity**  
Information Service

Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service  
County Hall  
Martineau Lane  
Norwich NR1 2SG

Tel: 01603 224458 Fax: 01603 223219

On 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021 I led a walk around the ancient established Beeston Common as part of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Commons Week. This was an initiative that started in 2017 and the walk was not only to celebrate commons but to



Common Spotted Orchid /  
Derek Leak

highlight a recently published report by Helen Baczkowska (NWT Conservation Officer) in collaboration with David White (Norfolk County Council), which introduces the concept of 'New Commons'.

The idea is that as more development occurs green spaces should become part of that development to provide for people and wildlife. The modern 'common' could be quite versatile, serving a local community and creating a home for biodiversity. Such land could support new common rights ensuring the community engages with the care of the

common. Registered commons have a legal status although not all common or amenity land has, however, in most circumstances each option has its merits.



Ringlet / Derek Leak

The report also looks at the value of commons in addressing climate change where natural habitats can act as carbon sinks and in the value of open spaces where a potential connectivity to nature can bring great benefit to people's health and well-being.

A vision statement in the report summarises this innovative concept:

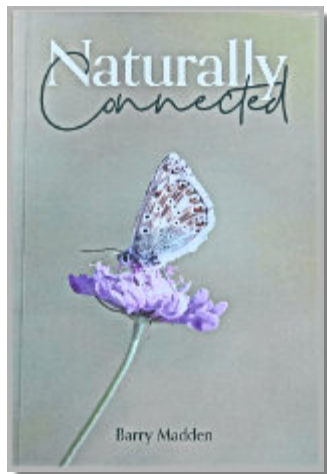


*A new common will be a public open space firmly rooted in the historic landscape of an area, providing a place for 'fresh air and exercise' and perhaps designed to look very like existing local commons. It will be part of the ecological network of an area and have wildlife habitats that play a part in carbon capture, as well as creating a new space for wildlife. New rights of common will provide sustainable local resources and provide one way residents to become involved in the care of the common.*

The report can be read / downloaded from the NWT website:

<https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/documents/downloads/winc/nwt-new-commons-feasibility-study-june-2021>





I found many times while reading this book a connection with the writer as my natural history journey has similar elements. Barry Madden through his enthusiasm, curiosity and just joy of the natural world has managed not only to capture 'moments' but has brought them to life with his descriptive writing and stunning photographs. If you are used to being out and about among 'nature' you will instantly identify with much of the book's content as the essays explore local places, particularly Norfolk's RSPB and NWT reserves, and shares privileged encounters with some of its inhabitants or a feature of the landscape. At times you can feel the cold winds sweeping across the Cley marshes from a restless North Sea or hear the rustle of reeds under a wide Broadland sky. It is almost like you are there walking alongside.

There is a chapter also on foreign places – those distant areas of the world where iconic wildlife can be seen by those able and adventurous enough to travel. At the present time with travel restricted what a marvel it is to have these places and their incredible wildlife brought to our homes through personal and beautiful descriptive observations to enable us to connect momentarily with those exotic species.

If you are one of the many people who have discovered 'nature' recently or have had time to rediscover it then '*Naturally Connected*' is a must read. The connections created by the moments described by a true and talented naturalist will inspire you to make your own connections with the natural world, particularly the wealth of nature still on our doorstep in Norfolk despite the threats and losses over the years. While we are not all able to express and describe our experiences so eloquently as the author we can all 'stop and stare' capturing those personal encounters in our minds, in our hearts - our moments to cherish and to uplift our spirits. This book will start that journey for some and bring delight to those that are already travelling.

*For more information and how to obtain a copy please visit Bittern Books at:*

<https://bitternbooks.co.uk/product/naturally-connected-barry-madden/>

N.B. The book is also available from the NWT visitor centres at Cley, Hickling and Ranworth

**Naturally Connected** by Barry Madden. Wingsearch (2021). 320 pages. ISBN 978-1-916895-90-4 £18.50 (Paperback)

**Legacy** - Barbara Ann Fox of Brooke who died in August 2020 has generously left the Society (1 of 12 charitable beneficiaries) a legacy of £15,882.82. Barbara and her late husband, Bob, had been members of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society since 1972.

Mary Buckell was my aunt and a life-long member of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society. She died in May this year, aged 94, having lived independently in Hoveton right up until a few months before moving to a care home in Wroxham.

In amongst Mary's packed book shelves I came across a folder of NNNS correspondence dating back to 1952 which was the year she was first elected as a member. I note that her annual membership subscription was 15 shillings (75p)!!



Following the war Mary worked for the River Board at Haddiscoe which greatly extended her keen knowledge and interest of the natural history of the Broads. She and her father Capt. REC Dunbar became good friends with Ted Ellis and family, and Mary would often tell the story of meeting the resident toad in the middle of the night in the Ellis's hallway! Mary attended many NNNS field excursions and through her observations she was able to make valuable contributions to various scientific lists and species counts.

Fortunately Mary has effortlessly passed her love and curiosity of the natural world to her whole family – indeed my own NNNS membership was thanks to Mary's introduction many years ago.

## Transactions - 100 years ago

Volume XI - Part II 1920-21

BLACK VARIETY OF THE SWALLOW-TAIL BUTTERFLY. - On August 9<sup>th</sup>. 1921 Mr. J. H. Lloyd, of Norwich, captured an almost completely black variety of *Papilio machaon* on one of the Broads. We have seen the specimen, which is entirely black with the exception of those parts which in an ordinary *machaon* are blue. The antennae are practically identical with those of the ordinary form, otherwise yellow has been entirely replaced with black. This would appear to be the first specimen of the black variety that has ever been taken in the British Isles. We understand that the specimen has been acquired by Lord Rothschild for the Tring museum. Our photograph shows this black variety in contrast with an ordinary Swallow-tailed Butterfly.



Black variety of  
Swallow-tailed Butterfly  
and normal insect



The next issue of 'The Norfolk Natterjack' will be **November 2021**

Please send  
**all articles / notes and photographic material**  
to the editor as soon as possible by  
**October 1<sup>st</sup> 2021** to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham,  
Norfolk, NR26 8QD. Email: [francis.farrow@btinternet.com](mailto:francis.farrow@btinternet.com)

*All photographs / images are very welcome, especially to accompany an article or document a record, occasionally however, because of space limitations, preference may have to be given to Norfolk-based images, or to those subjects depicting interesting or unusual behaviour, or are less commonly (or rarely) seen in print.*

## Membership subscriptions

The N&NNS membership year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March. During this time members will receive four copies of the quarterly newsletter, 'The Norfolk Natterjack', and annual copies of the Transactions of the Society, and the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report. A full summer programme of excursions and a winter programme of talks are also organised annually.

**New memberships and renewals** can be made by credit card or 'PayPal' by visiting the Society's website at [www.nnns.org.uk](http://www.nnns.org.uk)

Alternatively a cheque payable to  
**'Norfolk & Norwich Naturalist's Society'** can be sent to:

Jim Froud, The Membership Secretary, Westward Ho, 4 Kingsley Road,  
Norwich NR1 3RB

Current rates are £20 for individual, family and group memberships  
(£30 for individuals living overseas).

# Contents



|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Toad-in-the-hole...<br>Potty Toadstools <i>Tony Leech</i>   | Page 1  |
| Landhoppers <i>Francis Farrow</i>   | Page 3  |
| Red-billed Blackbirds <i>Tony Irwin</i>   | Page 5  |
| An Unexpected Find <i>Francis Farrow</i><br>( <i>Syrphus nitidifrons</i> )  | Page 6  |
| Personal encounters with some of Norfolk's Wonderful 150...<br>Hoverfly <i>Microdon devius</i> <i>Jeremy Bartlett</i> | Page 7  |
| When a Spider is a Fly's Best Friend <i>Vanna Bartlett</i><br>( <i>'Jackal Flies'</i> )                               | Page 9  |
| Ornate Shieldbug - an update <i>Francis Farrow</i>  | Page 10 |
| Adder and Grass Snake interaction <i>Bernard Dawson</i>   | Page 11 |
| Nature Gallery 2021   | Page 12 |
| Some Norfolk Birds <i>Elizabeth Dack</i>  | Page 14 |
| Carrion Crows <i>Hans Watson</i>  | Page 16 |
| Summer Migrants <i>Tony Howes</i>   | Page 17 |
| Introduction & Growing Norwich Swift Network -<br>Keeping summer skies screaming <i>Caroline Spinks</i>               | Page 19 |
| New Country Park is a real opportunity for Naturalists <i>Mark Collins</i> ,<br>Chair, NNNS Research Committee        | Page 21 |
| New Commons <i>Francis Farrow</i>   | Page 24 |
| Book Review: 'Naturally Connected' - Barry Madden <i>Francis Farrow</i><br>Legacy                                     | Page 25 |
| Tribute to life-long member - Mary Buckell <i>Caroline Leybourn</i>   | Page 26 |
| Transactions - 100 years ago Vol. XI - Part II 1920-21<br>( <i>Black variety of the Swallowtail</i> )                 |         |