



The Norfolk Natterjack



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Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society**



Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Cover image: Sea-holly (Janet Higgins)

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Toad-in-the-hole....

Check out the Society Officers for changes since the AGM, particularly note that the 'Transaactions' editor is now Nick Owens (Email: owensnw7@gmail.com) so if you have any potential papers/notes please contact him. If you need inspiration maybe you should follow Janet Higgins example in her dedication to Biological recording (page 14). As ever be vigilant and maybe you can find ants in *Sphagnum* as Robin Stevenson did (see below). My thanks to all contributors and if you haven't written anything for 'Natterjack' yet have a go - deadline July 1st. Have a great spring and summer looking at the natural world and I await to hear all about your discoveries. **FF**

Have you seen ants building shelters for their aphid colonies?

Aphids play an important role in the life of many ant species, as honeydew forms the main carbohydrate source for many ants. It is not uncommon to see earth shelters being built by the common brown garden ant, *Lasius niger*, but until last year it had apparently not been documented that workers of its sister species, *L. platythorax*, who nest in wetter habitat in dead wood, tree stumps etc., were constructing unusual 'Sphagnum sleeve' shelters to protect their aphid colonies. These were constructed around small pine and birch saplings at Dersingham Bog NNR, which were discovered and reported by Robin Stevenson in July 2015. Although both Robin and I have published articles, we have not had any response to requests for further sightings.



Sphagnum rich sleeve on a sapling pine



L. platythorax workers tending aphids under Sphagnum rich sleeve

Images Robin Stevenson

If you have seen these phenomena before, or see them in the future, please would you contact me? In fact, I would be very pleased to know of any form of shelter that ants of any species are constructing for their aphid colonies. Doreen Wells, County Ant Recorder, e-mail: wells_doreen@hotmail.com

Ant Records

Many thanks to everyone who sent me ant records for 2015, your contributions have really made a difference to filling in the gaps across Norfolk.

Keep up the good work in 2016 and do not hesitate to send me even one record. We are moving ever closer to covering every 10k square in Norfolk, but we are not there yet so I really need your help.

If YOU need any help with identification please contact me.
Doreen Wells, County Ant Recorder

Bee Species Guides

Nick Owens

Draft species accounts for all Norfolk's bee genera are now on the website with up to date maps, images, descriptions, flight times, habitat, flowers visited and parasites observed. It is planned to update the guides at the end of the season, so any further records, images or observations would be much appreciated. There are many images still to be obtained and areas of the county where we have very few records, particularly north-west Norfolk and the Fens. Notes about nest sites and parasitic bees associated with them would also be very welcome. Also please let me know if you notice any errors, omissions or typos.



Macropsis europaea

Images Nick Owens

Exciting New Residents

Hans Watson

Lengthening daylight and emerging plants and insects have declared that Spring has arrived, and Summer is not far away. Nature lovers everywhere are excited by the first Brimstone butterfly, the first Swallow or Cuckoo etc. In the changing times that we find ourselves living in, with milder winters, each year now brings the prospect of changes in the resident populations of species. Some of our resident species, have undergone drastic and rapid reductions, particularly some of our birds and insects, and I find myself hoping that we will see signs of a halt in many of these population reductions. Already this year, I have been heartened by a return of Greenfinches, and an increase in Chaffinch numbers in my garden, and hope and pray that the *Trichomonas* parasite is experiencing a population reduction of its own.

Last year provided some exciting times particularly for lovers of butterflies and moths, and many nature lovers are holding their breath in anticipation of further excitement this year. With Red Admiral butterflies now increasingly overwintering in Britain, and rumours of Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady butterflies also overwintering, together with Long-tailed Blue butterflies establishing a breeding population in Sussex, one cannot help wondering, what next ? As Long-tailed Blues have even been recorded in Suffolk, there is a chance they could be seen in Norfolk. Moths also provided excitement last year, with large numbers of Hummingbird and Convolvulus Hawkmoths visiting Norfolk, and with evidence mounting that Hummingbird Hawkmoths (right) are also overwintering, I wonder if they will follow the example of



Bedstraw Hawkmoths (left) that now have a thriving, and possibly expanding breeding population in Norfolk. As the saying goes, 'Hope springs eternal'.

Images: *Hans Watson*

Garden Pheasants

Jenny Kelly

In April 2015 I was out weeding the garden when I was hissed at. It took me by surprise and I looked around for the culprit. It turned out to be a female Pheasant who was practically sitting at my feet under a bush. Not wanting to disturb her I moved off to another part of the garden. I did not give it another thought as we frequently have both cock and hen Pheasants in the garden looking for food under the bird feeders.

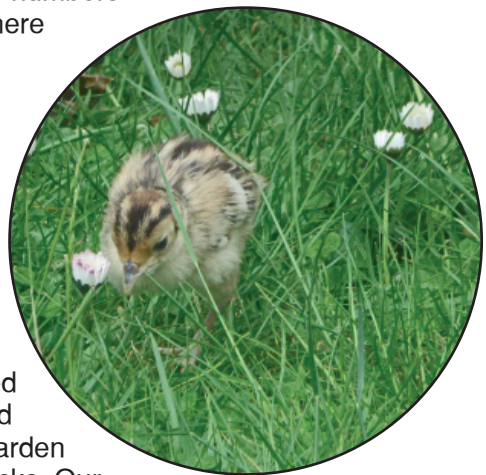
A week later I was back in the same place pruning and I was again hissed at. The female Pheasant was clearly sitting tight and the guess was that she was on eggs. We left her undisturbed, but when we checked on the 8th May she was gone. On closer inspection the nest was full of empty egg shells with



blood around the broken shell edges. We feared that the eggs had been taken by a hedgehog as there was no sign of the pheasant or her chicks. On the 11th May we had the most wonderful find - 10 beautiful fluffy chicks running around the garden amongst the daisies and the proud mother attending them. We felt very honoured that the female had chosen to nest in our garden, and over the next 12 days we were able to watch them daily from our kitchen window. As anticipated the numbers

did decrease so that by the 19th May there were only six chicks left. We were not surprised as we had not expected the whole brood to survive.

On the morning of the 21st the mother was still present with six chicks. Later that morning we noticed a decapitated chick in the middle of the lawn and the mother and remaining chicks were nowhere to be seen. We feared the worst and this was confirmed later that day when the mother returned alone. She continued to come to the garden for the next few weeks, but alas no chicks. Our beautiful chicks had been taken by a predator of



Images: Jenny Kelly

some kind. Given that it occurred during daylight hours we assume it was a cat and this is consistent with the literature as ‘cats will often remove the head of their prey and leave the body remaining’ (Thomas 2016). Although rats are known to take the heads off game birds we rarely get rats in the garden and usually only in the autumn.

We can only imagine how many birds in gardens suffer a similar fate to our pheasant.

Reference:

Thomas C (2016) Q&A Your Wildlife Questions Answered. Nature’s Home. Spring; page 84

A Few Recent Sightings

Tony Howes

Back in January I had a walk along the beach at Horsey to have a look at the grey seals there, this colony has grown quite considerably in recent years, the amount of fish required to feed these very large and numerous mammals must be considerable. It makes me wonder where they are caught, and how far the seals have to travel to find them, I am sure one of our readers has the answer.



Great Black-Backed Gull

As always there will be casualties among the pups born each year, and so it proved on this occasion. A small pup was dead on the sand with two or three Great Black-backed Gulls feeding on the carcass, a gruesome scene, but another example that nothing is ever wasted in the natural world.

Just a few days ago I was up at Titchwell in North Norfolk, as usual the shell beds were alive with waders as the tide dropped. I saw and photographed a dozen different species in the few hours I was there. Always an interesting place, you can fill a memory card up with no trouble at all. Birds photographed were Dunlin, Turnstone, Knot, Oyster-catcher, Sanderling, Redshank, Bar-tailed Godwit, Cormorant, Little Egret, Grey Plover and Brent Geese.

Image: Tony Howes

One image with a comical twist was a Grey Plover extracting a rag-worm from the mud, you can almost hear the ‘Ping’ as the worm leaves it’s hole..



Grey Plover (left), **Sanderling** (above) and **Oyster-catcher** (below)

I particularly enjoy trying for flight images in situations like this, it’s not easy, but very satisfying when you get a shot that’s in focus, showing the plumage well, and has a pleasing back ground.



Images: Tony Howes

Meanderings of a Photographer.

Brian Macfarlane

The last three months have sped by, and it only seems like yesterday I was finishing off the Christmas pudding.

As the weather has been so cold and wet I have not got out into the countryside with the camera. Bird numbers seem to be getting less each year, and unusual shots of them are at a premium. Because of this I have not been visiting Strumpshaw, my home patch, as it has been quiet there so I'm told.

I have ventured up to Cley a few times, Horsey once in February to see the Seals, and saw there were still several hundred laying around. Apart from that it's been Buckenham close to Strumpshaw.



I suppose Cley has presented the best opportunities, such as Snipe, Shoveler, Avocets, Little Egrets, Shelduck, fighting Black-tailed Godwits, and Wood Pigeons scrapping. The evocative sound of the Mute Swan's wing beat, and the noisy flocks of Brent Geese swirling round before settling to feed. Green Plovers or Lapwing displaying with their wing busting turns and dives at high speed, which in theory should break their wings. All wonderful moments.



Grey Seal, Lapwing (above) and **Black-tailed Godwits** (right)

Images: Brian Macfarlane



Elsewhere other sightings of Water Rail, Nuthatch, and a Magpie caught in just the right light to show off it's beautiful colours. The one visit to Horsey was rewarding with various Grey Seals performing, and Sanderlings running around like clockwork toys.



Water Rail (above), **Magpie** (right) and colourful cloud (below)

Recently I was looking out of my bedroom window when I saw a fantastic cloud formation containing various colours. I grabbed a camera to record the sighting before it dispersed. I then saw a reference to it on TV showing almost the identical formation.



As I write at last I can feel the warmth of the sun. So gird up your loins, and get out there and enjoy this summer, it's just round the corner!

Images: *Brian Macfarlane*

Penduline Tit at Strumpshaw

Elizabeth Dack

This was a Red letter day for me. I had never seen or heard one before. I knew there had been one at Strumpshaw Fen which is my local patch. On a Thursday in early April it was pouring with rain but I still went out, as there is always something to see whatever the weather. I met some 'twitchers' who



had made the journey to look especially for the Penduline Tit. They eventually spotted it flitting from tree to Reed Mace.

Although it was still raining it didn't dampen our enthusiasm, I was so excited it was difficult to hold my camera steady trying to snap this beautiful little bird swaying on the reed.

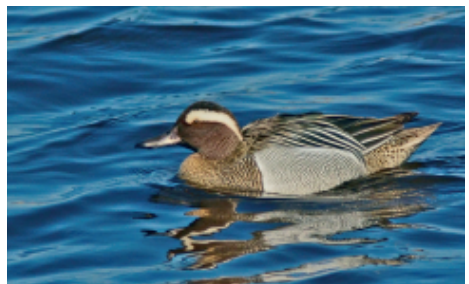
I eventually managed a few photos. What a fabulous wet morning. I also saw, Barn Owl, Common Snipe, Jack Snipe, Sedge Warbler, Firecrest, Green Woodpecker, Reed Bunting, Water Rail, Bittern and all of the usual ducks and woodland birds. A few days earlier I also managed a my first photo of a Garganey also taken at Strumpshaw fen.



Images: *Elizabeth Dack*



Jack Snipe



Garganey

Badgers for DNA testing



Drawing: Thelma Macfarlane

This is a request that if any Badgers are found dead on the road in Norfolk and it is safe to stop, for the dead animal to be checked underneath for any markings, also there is a request for a hair and claw sample to be taken. These samples should be placed in a bag, with the date and the location written on the bag.

This information is for analysis and DNA testing, but a word of warning: please be sure that the animal is dead before even touching it, if a Badger is only stunned when one of its claws is being removed there could be problems!

'Norfolk Badgers' can supply bags for the items required and will cover the cost of any postage. Please contact via: norfolkbadgers@yahoo.co.uk or mobile 07850956493

Old age in animals in the wild

John Vincent

Think about it. How often have you witnessed distress in animal wildlife (not domestic pets) directly attributable to old age?

Compare distress due to:

- illness, maybe;
- lack of sufficient food and/or water;
- injury;
- loss of accustomed habitat;

which are much more readily seen.

But with death looming so large in the natural cycle of life, due to old age, why is the accompanying distress so rarely seen?

Predation? Yes, no doubt accounting for a lot, but it is difficult to conceive of a predator standing by for almost every death due to old age. Natural desire to go into hiding at such an intimate and vulnerable critical time? Maybe also, to an unassessed extent.

Then what? In a life spent roaming the forests of Europe, Africa, S.E. Asia, Oceania and Sri Lanka, vegetation-biased professionally but animal-biased by intense personal interest, I have witnessed virtually no distress in animal wild-life directly attributable to old age. The old ivory hunters' fabled Shangri-La, a massive regional communal elephant 'graveyard', never materialised. What I have witnessed is the contrary, the remarkable fitness and well-being of animals living under testing conditions in the wild, in particular in arid to desert areas. And in UK home life only two incidents spring to mind. The first, at Pensthorpe Nature Reserve and Gardens, where they had a display of live waders in simulated wild living conditions in one of their must-pass-through areas. There was an accompanying notice, saying that the distress obvious in some birds was due to old age and arthritic joints. I vividly remember an old male Ruff, looking very bedraggled and woebegone, with considerable mobility difficulty, until that is a slim, sleek young female drifted across his path and the gallant old fellow pulled himself together and gave her his best shot at a full-on mating display of his lingering, masculine Ruffhood. Well, you never know your luck!

The second, here at The Old Rectory, Edingthorpe, very recently. Two Muntjac deer appeared for a feed on the Bergenias (a change from their usual grazing of over-year bluebell leaves), a young well-set-up male with a simple horns' configuration, and an old female with arthritic problems in her lower spine. She could still move around, but not freely. There was a stiff awkwardness in her back legs and her full, lush, rounded Kardashian hindquarters had given way to a narrowing taper with unhealthily raggedly-dishevelled fur. I grieved for her. This was the old lady who for years now had come to our small estate to drop her fawn and bring it safely through to adulthood. Was the young buck accompanying her her son or her lover? - who can say, but I would suspect the former (maybe the famous gatecrasher himself!). But that by the way. What will her future be? She is coming close to a natural end, but what form will it take? I may never see her again, or I may see her more often as her movement becomes more restricted. Whatever she is a unique part of my wild mammal observing life and I shall be sad when she leaves. So there it is. A life-time's looking and it has all come down to two rare chance Norfolk observations.

How could I have done better?

I could hardly be advised to get out more!

To keep my eyes open to better advantage maybe, but I rate my observational desire and skill on a par with all but the more dedicated professionals on the job. I need to call in help here from our learned and widely field-experienced professional and amateur readers with their undoubted knowledge / recollections relative to this barely-touched-upon topic.

Flora of Norfolk Lawns – appeal for information

Nick Owens

My neighbour's lawn in Springfield Close, Weybourne, has produced bee orchids for several years, and last season sprouted a Common Spotted Orchid. The lawn was established in 1975 on poor calcareous subsoil dug from the building works. I am rather envious of this lawn because mine has no orchids, though almost as many species. The attached list (overleaf) shows the plant species in the orchid lawn and a list from my own lawn together with that of a friend's lawn in Cley. The species count of flowering plants is around 40 for each lawn and 60 overall. These oases contrast with those who have re-turfed their patches or covered them with brick weave and slabs. I would like to put together lists from other lawns and would be grateful to receive anyone's lists. These should be compiled over the season to include as many species as possible. I have been including garden plants such as *Cotoneaster* and Fox and Cubs, as well as annuals which seed themselves in bare patches.

Please give the name of your site, the year of establishment (or a rough idea), approximate area, soil type and the cutting regime. Add bryophytes and fungi if you can!



A challenge - what surprises does your green patch hold?

Image: Francis Farrow

Flowering plant species recorded in Norfolk lawns				
Site		1	2	3
Established		1975	1976	1997
Soil		Chalky marl subsoil	Neutral/acid loam	Chalky marl
Cutting pattern		Cut short every 10 days: clippings removed	Cut irregularly then raked	Cut every 2 weeks: clippings removed
Area/m ²		120	100	80
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow			
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Scarlet Pimpernel			
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley			
<i>Arrhenathium elatius</i>	False Oat Grass			
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy			
<i>Bromus sterilis</i>	Sterile Brome			
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Lesser Knapweed			
<i>Cerastium glomeratum</i>	Sticky Mouse-ear			
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle			
<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	Cotoneaster			
<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	Smooth Hawk's-beard			
<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>	Common Spotted Orchid			
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Teasel			
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue			
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Wild Strawberry			
<i>Geranium molle</i>	Dovesfoot Cranesbill			
<i>Geranium pusillum</i>	Small-flowered Cranesbill			
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert			
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground Ivy			
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog			
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Common Cat's-ear			
<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	Field Scabious			
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Lavender			
<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	Rough Hawkbit			
<i>Linum catharticum</i>	Fairy Flax			
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Rye Grass			
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Birdsfoot Trefoil			
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Common Mallow			
<i>Medicago arabica</i>	Spotted Medic			
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medic			
<i>Melissa officinalis</i>	Balm			

Flowering plant species recorded in Norfolk lawns (2)				
Site		1	2	3
Established		1975	1976	1997
Soil		Chalky marl subsoil	Neutral/acid loam	Chalky marl
Cutting pattern		Cut short every 10 days: clippings removed	Cut irregularly then raked	Cut every 2 weeks: clippings removed
Area/m ²		120	100	80
<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>	Field Forget-me-not			
<i>Myosotis romosissima</i>	Early Forget-me-not			
<i>Ophrys apifera</i>	Bee Orchid			
<i>Oxalis exilis</i>	Least Yellow Sorrel			
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Red Poppy			
<i>Pilosella aurantiaca</i>	Fox-and-cubs			
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain			
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater Plantain			
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual Meadow-grass			
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil			
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Self-heal			
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup			
<i>Rumex sp.</i>	Dock			
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock			
<i>Rumex sp.</i>	Sorrel sp.			
<i>Sagina procumbens</i>	Procumbent Pearlwort			
<i>Sedum acre</i>	Biting Stonecrop			
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Ragwort			
<i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	Field Madder			
<i>Smyrnium olusatrum</i>	Alexanders			
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth Sow-thistle			
<i>Stellaria sp.</i>	Stitchwort sp.			
<i>Taraxacum sp</i>	Dandelion			
<i>Thymus polytrichus</i>	Thyme			
<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Lesser Trefoil			
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover			
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell			
<i>Vernonica sp.</i>	Speedwell sp.			
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common Dog Violet			
<i>Viola riviniana purpurea</i>	Violet (dark leaves)			
<i>Viola odorata</i>	Sweet violet			

An Epic Journey through Biological Recording

Janet Higgins

Sixteen years ago, I decided to take a 'holiday'. I had recently got to know the Derbyshire Flora Group who were recording for Atlas 2000 and the Derbyshire Flora Project (this was eventually published in 2015) and I was keen to learn more. Consequently, I found myself at Preston Montford Field Centre for a 5 day course on **Biological Recording**. This was to be the first of many.

Our first outing was to the Long Mynd. We were all to make a biological record of a rare plant, ensuring we had accurately recorded all the essential information; **What, Where, When and Who**. We arrived in what felt like a hurricane, but carried on regardless, and started recording all the plants for the site. Our first stop was a bank heavily grazed by sheep. A number of students started calling out Latin names and at this point I realised I was completely out of my depth - all I could see was short grass! We found one of the rare plants we were looking for, a spring ephemeral, Shepherd's Cress (*Teesdalia nudicaulis*). I volunteered to make a record for this plant and felt relieved that I had completed the essential task for the day. Despite the unrelenting weather, the tenacity of our group drove us further up the hillside looking for rabbit holes, a good habitat for a rare fern. Eventually we found the rabbit holes, but not a fern in sight. The rain drove us back into the minibus where we huddled together and grabbed some lunch. Our next stop was to search for the Small Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris* var. *radicans*), which we found in an upland marshy area growing amongst Blinks (*Montia fontana*). The weather finally got the better of us, we were relieved to be heading back and enjoyed our well-deserved tea and homemade cakes. I realised that many of the participants on the course were registered for the **University Certificate in Biological Recording and Species Identification** based at the University of Birmingham. Anyone not registered, including me, was encouraged to sign up and complete the two assignments over the next couple of days. So I thought, why not? I immediately started working on my first assignment, **Design and implement a survey situated within the ground of the Preston Montford Field Centre**. Our choice of subject matter reflected the varied interests of the group - small mammals, dragonflies, snails, pond life, bats and in my case vascular plants. I decided to map the distribution of three crucifers over the site. I chose Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) as I had already seen them on our preliminary walk round and they were in flower and easy to identify. I thought I was on fairly safe ground choosing Shepherd's-purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*) but after spending the whole afternoon searching in vain, was about to give up. Finally I spotted a few plants in flower (I was more familiar with its appearance in seed). Once I had got my eye in, I did find a

few patches, but I was surprised by its sparse distribution. A couple of students set up Longworth Traps in the wood one evening and there was great excitement before breakfast the next morning when they had captured a Yellow-necked Mouse (*Apodemus flavicollis*) – a good record for the site. The second assignment, **a critical review of a publication on a biological recording theme**, could be completed at home. As I had recently become interested in the Derbyshire Flora project, I chose to review the Mini-Atlas of the Flora of Derbyshire produced by Nick Moyes. The tutor agreed this would be an interesting exercise as it would enable me to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in producing a county flora. It also gave me the opportunity to study a local project in the light of what I had learnt during the course.

My next course was **Woodland Plants** back at Preston Montford with Sarah Whild. We visited four ancient woodlands: Earl's Hill, Benthall Edge, Loamhole Dingle and The Ercall. These were chosen to show us a variety of woodland types; wet, limestone, oak/birch, base-rich, and acid. We looked at the whole range of vegetation; trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses, sedges, rushes, ferns and mosses. In particular, we were looking for ancient woodland indicators. These are plants which take a long time to establish themselves and spread slowly, therefore the number of these plants present gives an indication of the age of the wood. Some of the highlights were picnicking in a field of orchids and having the opportunity to see some delightful new plants, Herb-paris (*Paris quadrifolia*) and Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*). I also had my first introduction to sedges, rushes and mosses. We had identification tests each evening. Books were allowed, but as we were often only given a few leaves we found it impossible to use the keys. If we did not recognize the plants from our field outings, then it was a case of flicking through the books and hoping for inspiration!

For my second assignment, **Construct a Dichotomous key for a group of five related woodland plants and prepare herbarium sheets for each species**, I chose willows as I knew nothing about them and felt like a challenge! I collected a variety of specimens to press and identify. Fortunately, I managed to borrow the invaluable BSBI book on willows and had to stay up late on Sunday evening to finish the key. The course had been quite hard work with little time for socialising but I was keen to keep working



Sea Pea - Coastal Plants, Flatford Mill

Image: Janet Higgins

towards the certificate.

The next year it was time for another 'holiday' and I was off to Slapton Ley Field Centre for a course on **Dandelions, Daisies and Thistles** with Ros Bennett. This is a lovely centre on the South Devon Coast with varied habitats (pastures, cornfields, waysides, hedgerows, marshes and shingle) within walking distance providing a rich selection of members of the Asteraceae. I really enjoyed learning about this fascinating family with all its associated terminology. We were encouraged to observe specimens under the microscope, draw our observations and then have a go at keying them out. Our first assessment was ongoing throughout the week, for which we were assessed on the quality of our field notes as well as being given Spot I.D. Tests. Our second assignment was to **Record all the species of Asteraceae in a specified area, then select eight of the species and construct a key to distinguish them.** I still have my sketches of some of the plants we observed. I have since recorded some of these in Norfolk, such as Carline Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*), Slender Thistle (*Carduus tenuiflorus*) and Goat's-beard (*Tragopogon pratensis*). In addition, I had the opportunity to see some interesting plants which I am unlikely to find in Norfolk, such as Goldilocks Aster (*Aster linosyris*), Saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*) and Hybrid Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra* x *jacea* = *C. x moncktonii*).

The entire course consisted of 6 modules, so I had a plan to do one each year. However, a new criteria was imposed requiring the course to be completed within 2 years. I had no choice but to withdraw due to family commitments, but I did so on the understanding that I could resume the course at a later date.

Twelve years later in 2013 with the children all at university, now was the time to complete the course and gain my qualification in Biological Recording. I am very grateful to Sarah Whild for giving me this opportunity despite such a long break. The course had now been taken over by Manchester Metropolitan University (<http://www.sste.mmu.ac.uk/recording/>) and I was later to find out that it now had a more structured and challenging assessment criteria. Hence, I arrived at Malham Tarn Field Centre in June for the course on **Limestone Flora** led by Ian Powell. This proved to be my favourite centre as well the most interesting course from a botanical perspective. A lovely and interesting group of both professional and amateur botanists gathered for the hearty evening meal (including scrumptious pudding) on the long wooden tables typical of field studies council centres. In the evening we climbed up the hill behind the centre to get a good view of Malham Tarn and were introduced to two species, Blue Moor Grass (*Sesleria caerulea*) and Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*), which we would see plenty of over the coming days. Over the next three days we recorded 162 species over seven sites. A few of the



Rainbow from High Brae

Image: Janet Higgins

species which stick in my mind are the large and attractive Globeflower (*Trollius europaeus*) and Melancholy Thistle (*Cirsium heterophyllum*), the tiny flowers of Limestone Bedstraw (*Galium sternerii*), and not forgetting the many ferns and sedges such as Brittle Bladder Fern

(*Cystopteris fragilis*) and Large Yellow Sedge (*Carex flava*). We also had the opportunity to see two rare orchids, Dark-red Helleborine (*Epipactys atrorubens*) and Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*) both protected and the latter being planted in a cage. Further species which I have since had the opportunity to record in Norfolk are Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*), Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*) and Common Milkwort (*Polygala vulgaris*).

Now to the final day and time for our test. This took me by surprise, suddenly I felt very stressed as this was the first time I had been under 'exam conditions' since my degree. We had to identify five species without books noting salient identification characteristics as well as the attributes of the plant family to which they belong. This was followed a further challenge to identify 15 species, now with the aid of books. I was cross with myself for not spotting the Hybrid Avens, *Geum x intermedium* (*Geum rivale x urbanum*) and for not recognising an Ash seedling despite thinking, 'these leaves look a lot like ash ... but this is a small plant!'

The second assignment was to be completed at home: **Collect five species of limestone habitats and make herbarium voucher specimens.** This was very enjoyable but proved to be a bit of a challenge in Norfolk, especially as I was looking for places accessible by bicycle. I decided upon Marriott's Way and the nearby Danby Wood on the south west edge of Norwich, as I could obtain the permission of Norwich City Council to collect from these sites. I managed to find five common species which we had recorded in limestone habitats, my best find being Mouse-ear Hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) on Marriott's Way.

My next course was **Coastal Plants** at Flatford Mill led by Ros Bennett. I choose this course as it was closer to home and I could focus on coastal plants which might prove more useful to me for recording in Norfolk. We

learnt about a range of salt-marsh plants including how to differentiate the attractive Sea-lavenders, *Limonium vulgare* and *Limonium humile*. We were introduced to Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*), the fertile amphidiploid hybrid between *S. maritima* and *S. alterniflora* which colonises and stabilises the mudflats. It is impossible to study salt-marsh plants without becoming familiar with halophytic members of the plant family, *Amaranthaceae*, which like the eutrophic environment of the mudflats. Fortunately, I found the article in Natterjack (August 2012, Number 118) on Amazing Samphires by Colin Dunster, which gave me a very useful introduction to these extraordinary plants.

Soon it was the final day and time for our assessment. The first part of the assignment was to record the abundance of salt marsh plants from the pioneer zone, through the lower, middle and upper marsh to the transition zone. This was quite fun in the rain, especially compared to the following written test in the lab later on in the afternoon.

Finally for something completely different, and back to Preston Montford for an excellent course on **Land Mammal Identification** with Garath Parry, together with a larger, younger and more diverse group. This course was a mixture of lectures and field outings. We spent an afternoon looking for signs of Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) along a very overgrown stream. After dinner one evening we went out to observe the local Badger sett. We sat quietly on a steep bank waiting for the Badgers (*Meles meles*) to emerge,



Bank Vole - Land Mammals,
Preston Mountford

Image: Janet Higgins

Unfortunately we could only hear them as it was too dark by the time they came out. We had some fun using the bat detectors on the walk back, although this was not strictly covered in the course. A member of the group set up a camera trap so we could watch a video recording of the badgers the next day.

We each set up a Longworth trap in the evening to be checked early the following morning. I was devastated to find that the Common Shrew (*Sorex araneus*) caught in my Longworth trap appeared dead, we tried to save it but to no avail (we had put mealworms in each trap to ensure that there was a rich protein source as this is required by shrews due to their high

metabolic rate). My next catch caused great excitement, a Water Shrew (*Neomys fodiens*) which was a good record for the site. This one was very

active and to my relief ran away quickly once released.

The assessment was very challenging, starting with a series of pictures of animals to identify, followed by an interesting selection of specimens, including a variety of droppings to sniff and examine, jaw remains found in an owl pellet, a harvest mouse nest and various feeding remains. Perhaps I should stick to plants! The final assignment, **a mammal survey**, took me to my local nature reserve, Marston Marshes, mainly looking for animal signs as there was not much chance of spotting any animals. A Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) very kindly turned up and I had seen Otters (*Lutra lutra*) in a pond on the Marshes, so I was able to find the otter run but I could not find any scats to confirm their presence. The requirement of the assessment was to send the records to the county recorder so this is something I have continued to do for any sighting of mammals in Norfolk.



Whilst the course was still fresh in my mind I attended **Wild Flowers Revealed** at Great Yarmouth, led by Bob Leaney. I found I still had a lot to learn, but it was a great opportunity to see an amazing diversity of plants both on the dunes and along the seafront. This was to be a great introduction to what became regular meetings with the Norfolk Flora Group.

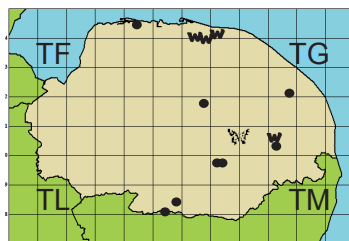
Spiny Restharrow - Gt. Yarmouth

Image: Janet Higgins



Reports

- 2016-17 Field Meeting location
St. Andrew's Hall
Eaton
- ✈ Workshop Centre



There are no reports at this time but please see the Programme Card or the NNNS website for the forthcoming meetings. If you have any suggestions for excursions or feel you can offer help to the sub-committee please contact the Programme Secretary: Stephen Martin Tel. 01603 810327.
E-mail: srmartin@uk2.net

From the NNS Transactions

[From NNS Transactions Vol. XII (1926) - Page 259 and
Miscellaneous Notes page 262]

REPORT OF THE JUNIOR BRANCH FOR 1925-26

The Junior Branch now consists of 31 members, and has held meetings during each of the school holidays. The first of these meetings was in the summer holidays of 1925, when the members met at Attlebridge and went for a walk through the woods and water-meadows. Though nothing of great botanical interest was seen, some members found caterpillars of the Eyed Hawk moth, feeding on willow.

In the Christmas holidays the Branch met at Norwich Museum, when Dr. A. H. Evans, of Cambridge, gave a talk on the birds seen on an imaginary walk through part of Northumberland.

In the Easter Holidays, 1926, an expedition was made to Sutton Broad. Mr. Robert Gurney provided boats and took us down the broad. The most interesting part to most of the members was hearing the Bittern booming, which most of them had never heard before. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gurney kindly asked the whole party back to tea at Ingham, and afterwards our host took us round his museum and showed us his bird skins, pointing out the quickest way of distinguishing birds by their plumage.

On Sept. 7th the members made an expedition to Hickling Broad. Miss Turner conducted the party round "Swim Coots", where a number of interesting birds were seen including a Greenshank and a Smew. Afterwards she was kind enough to give the party tea upon her island.

B. WATERFIELD,
Hon. Sec



Smew - male

INTRODUCTION OF THE LARGE COPPER BUTTERFLY, *Chrysophanurutilus*, IN NORFOLK.-AN attempt has been made during the past summer to introduce the Large Copper Butterfly (*Chrysophanus rutilus*) on one or two of the Norfolk marshlands, on ground where it is justifiable to suppose that its extinct British form, *C. dispar*, may once have flown. The scheme was planned by the Nature Protection Committee, in collaboration with a few Entomologists, and Mr. John Cator, who has taken a keen personal interest himself in the scheme, very kindly allowed his marshes at Woodbastwick to be utilised for the experiment. Mr. E. B. Purefoy, who had successfully planted a colony of *C. rutilus* in Tipperary, Ireland, in 1914, undertook to carry the plan through, and, with Mr. Edelston of the Protection Committee, visited the Woodbastwick marshes last May, when he was shewn all the likely ground by Mr. Cator. A considerable number of pupa, in various consignments, were posted to Mr. Hunt, the headkeeper at Woodbastwick, and these were placed by him under specially arranged nets, stretched over wire frames, which had been prepared for the purpose, in certain spots on the marsh, the idea being to liberate the imagines in the centre of the most suitable ground. The first imago hatched on July 1st. During the whole month of July about 550 butterflies were liberated.

The marshes were visited on July 27th and 28th in bad weather, and only one male was noticed. A fair number of ova were found on Water-docks. It is probable that the bad weather had given the butterflies only a very poor chance, and that they had suffered from a lack of flowers earlier in the month. The marsh flowers were exceptionally late this year.

The ground was visited again a month later, and about 150 larva were counted, just about ready to retire into hibernation for the winter ; they seemed healthy and promising, but there should have been far more. It is hoped that a further consignment of pupa will be put down next year.



The original larva were collected in the marshes north of Berlin. The Nature Protection Committee intend to plant Wood Walton Fen in Huntingdonshire with Dutch *C. dispar* (*rutilus*). Holme Fen is immediately North of Wood Walton, and it was in this Fen that the last 5 British *C. dispar* were captured in 1847.—GERARD H. GURNEY.

Large Copper - male
(*Lycaena dispar*)



The next issue of ***The Norfolk Natterjack*** will be August 2016.

Please send
all articles / notes and photographic material
to the editor as soon as possible by
July 1st 2016 to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham,
Norfolk, NR26 8QD. Email: 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 1st April to 31st March. During this time members will receive four copies of the quarterly *Natterjack* newsletter, and annual copies of the Transactions of the Society, and the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report. A full summer programme of excursions and a winter programme of talks are also organised annually.

Membership renewals are due on **1st April each year** and should be sent to the treasurer:

- David Richmond, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

New memberships should also be sent to:

- David Richmond at the above address.

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

*Cheques payable to: **Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.***

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