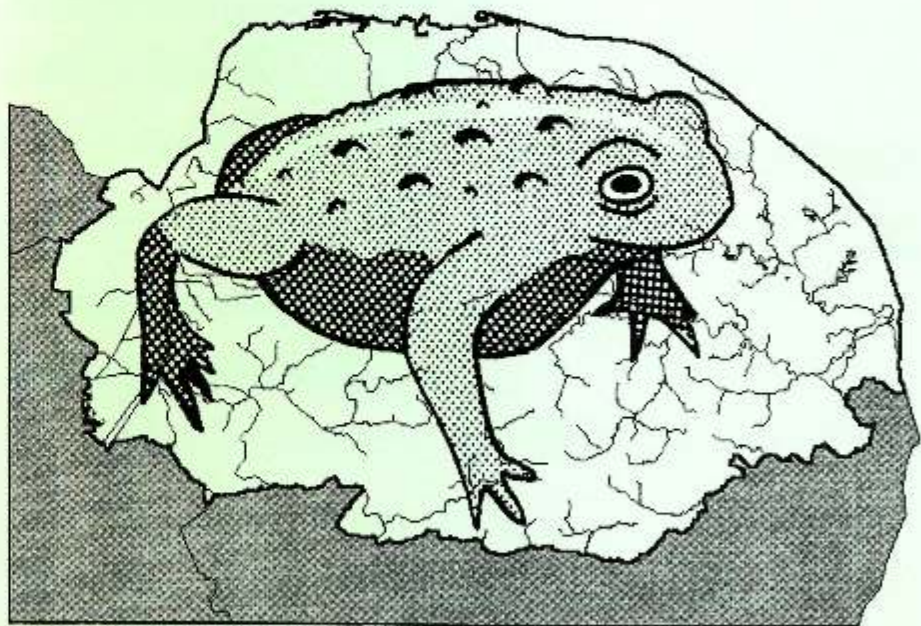


The Norfolk



Natterjack

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society



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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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

Toad-in-the-hole....

Up until August the weather has not been the best, yet nature copes albeit through changes and the most noticeable of these (at least locally in North Norfolk) is the scarcity of insects, particularly small tortoiseshell butterflies. If the weather is inclement and you are stuck indoors then the new NNNS website is worth a visit (details below). Perhaps you will have time to contribute to the photo-gallery. Thanks to all contributors to 'Natterjack' and I look forward to receiving your notes for the November edition.

FF

Get caught up in the web.....

..... possibly bad advice for your average fly, but a great idea for anyone interested in the natural history of Norfolk, as the brand new N&NNS website has just been launched at www.nnns.org.uk. The result of many months' work by the design team, the website will act as an essential resource for members and non-members alike.

Why do we need a website?

A huge proportion of the UK population now have regular access to the internet. Websites provide a cheap and effective way of producing and disseminating high quality, up-to-date information to a large number of people. *Natterjack* already does a fantastic job of keeping members informed about both the Society and the county's flora and fauna, and the website will act in a complementary way, allowing non-members to find out more about the N&NNS and what it has to offer them.

What's on it?

- An introduction to the N&NNS, its history and its remit to record changes in Norfolk's wildlife, improving our own knowledge whilst educating others.
- A full and up-to-date calendar of events, providing a wealth of opportunities to learn more about a broad range of taxa, from plant galls to owls, and about habitats as diverse (in summer, anyway) as Snettisham and the Antarctic. So if you, like me, manage to lose your paper copy



of the programme within five seconds of receiving it, there is no longer any reason to miss out on talks, walks, surveys or events.

- A guide to making your own casual observations count, including information about what details to record and a full list of current county recorders for pretty well any group you can think of, so you will know where to send your observations too. You'll also find lots of links to on-going regional or national surveys looking for willing participants with a few hours to spare.
- Details about the Society's regular and occasional publications and how to get hold of them.
- A photo gallery for N&NNS members to display their images – this relies on you to make it a success, so get out there and get snapping!
- Links to the websites of other conservation organisations in Norfolk and details of the various email discussion groups that will allow you to swap tales of your latest sightings and ask experts for help with those tricky identification problems.

How can I get involved?

One of the great things about websites is that they're designed to be incredibly dynamic. What you'll see when you first visit the site is merely the starting point, with the ever-present potential to expand. So if you've got any ideas about things that you would find useful, interesting or amusing (preferably all three!) then please email the website editor, Stephen Livermore, at stephenl@btinternet.com and let him know. It's already a fantastic site and with your help, it could be even better – please take full advantage of it now it's there and don't forget to visit regularly to see how it develops!

Dave Leech

Winter Hummer (2)

by Keith Dye

In response to the note 'Winter Hummer' in the last 'Natterjack' (May 2007) you may be interested to know that I had an early Hummingbird Hawkmoth in my Great Yarmouth, Southtown garden on 14th March 2007. It was feeding on or attempting to feed on hyacinths.



A STRANGE ENCOUNTER WITH A FLY

by Diane Mussell



On the 17th June, Sunday, I was out at the washing line taking in the washing with help from husband Colin when we saw a fly on one of the items. I gave the item a quick shake to get rid of the fly, but it was still there. I then used my hand to brush it off, but did I really see it jump onto me? Yes there it was on my arm, running this time. I brushed my clothing again and eventually lost sight of it – assuming that it had flown away

Later at about tea time there was a tickling at the back of my neck and I asked Colin to check out what it was, but he couldn't see anything.

Again at about 9pm there was a tickling again under my clothing, – this time at the side of my body near my left arm. Again Colin investigated for me and said "It's a fly, like the one we saw this morning and its running about!" He brushed it away, so he thought, and it disappeared again. We assumed that it had flown away.

Later, when I was getting ready for bed in the bedroom, there it was again, a tickling on my neck/ shoulder. I moved towards the mirror by the sink and sure enough there it was. It was the fly running about on my shoulder!

After much flailing of arms and hands - at last I had the blighter between my finger and thumb. I pressed hard hoping to bring about its demise and eventually I opened my fingers, only to find that *blast me* if the blighter wasn't still alive!

Right, enough is enough, this was *war*! I moved to the bathroom and ran some water into the basin to create a small pool. I put my hand complete with fly into the bowl and under the water I released my hold on the fly. Was I seeing things - the *blighter* rose to the surface and there it was, alive and kicking! I dunked it under the water several more times, but it was definitely still alive! I really couldn't believe what I was seeing. I decided that I needed to leave it in a more secure place as I couldn't face it getting away again in the middle of the night, so while I watched the fly, Colin fetched me a specimen tube. I captured the fly along with some of the water and as the fly was still wriggling, I shook the little chap in the water several times –*cor blast me* it was still alive!! At last after one more shake it landed on its back and was much weaker. This was obviously the answer and eventually it was still – thank goodness. We resolved that in the morning we should try and find out what species this tenacious little fly was.



Next morning first thing was to dry out the fly, which we did, then to get it photographed. Next out with Michael Chinery's Insect book and thumb thru the pages. Eventually we think we have it a - louse fly. *A louse fly* - I went rather hot and cold thinking about a *louse* then read through again. "Many have reduced wings and even fully winged species rarely fly" Well on reflection that is so right, we didn't really see it fly at any time when it disappeared, we just assumed that it had flown off. It did however run about quite a lot and in quite a strange way. Run and stop, run and stop. A little bit like a Plover does when on the ground.

We read on and found that it was probably *Ornithomyia avicularia* described as "On a wide range of woodland birds including owls, pigeons and thrushes, June to October, mainly on young birds."

Well that explains it then. I don't feel so bad now. It must have fallen onto my washing from a passing pigeon - they are nesting in the garden - then onto me. Just a tad scary!

Excellent Garden Birdwatching

by Charles Neale

We live in the middle Wensum valley in Elsing, surrounded by woodland, arable fields, semi-permanent pasture, meadows & worked-out gravel pits.

Saturday 2nd June dawned grey and cool, but by mid-morning the sun had burned off the cloud and in the increasing warmth I was doing a little gentle weeding at the top of the garden. I heard a bird call from overhead not dissimilar to that of common terns which we get from time to time. Looking up through the trees I saw what appeared to be two falcons circling around and diving at each other. No binoculars !!

I hurried down to the house for the 'bins' and got good enough views to tell that both birds were hobbies. I could see their facial patterns and rufous thigh feathers before they circled off to the west and out of my sight. Thoughts of weeding were put aside now I had the binoculars and I turned my attention to the several jackdaws that appeared to be hawking flying beetles (probably garden chafers, *phyllopertha horticola*), which had been emerging from the lawns for several days.



Next into view came a male kestrel which I watched for a couple of minutes catching even larger beetles (cockchafers ?) on the wing in its feet, then bending its head down to eat them in mid-flight. Into view in the far eastern distance came another larger bird flying at right angles to me. It appeared crow-like at that distance, but I was on a roll now and willed it to turn into the north-westerly wind before I would have lost it behind the trees. This it did and I could see it was very buzzard-like. It continued to circle on the wind gliding westwards towards me. As it arrived over the garden I could see it was a common buzzard and so did a corvid which took to mobbing it. At this point my wife, Fran, arrived home and was in time to see it before it disappeared into the west.

I showed her the jackdaws and then into view came a single hobby, hawking for the beetles in a similar way to that of the kestrel. We watched it for a couple of minutes until it was lost from sight behind the trees. If I hadn't heard the initial bird call I would probably not have had this wonderful half hour experience. Two days before this we had seen 4 mistle thrushes and 3 spotted flycatchers in the garden. Later on Saturday I heard alarm calls from the mistle thrushes and saw a sparrowhawk flying off towards the trees without visible prey. I wonder how many times these sorts of birds had been here before when I have had my head down weeding ? I had better spend more time sky watching and less weeding !

THE NEW SWAN PIPE AT WELNEY.

by Bob Blandford



Were it not for the Saturday job I had as a beater for the pheasant shooting in the winter months some 35 or so years ago at Wretham Park which is a farming and shooting estate near Watton, I would never have glimpsed the duck decoy that they had there. This decoy was sited in the shallows at one end of Micklemere, a lovely water teeming with fish and waterfowl. And the ducks trapped in the decoy there were all destined for the table. Us beaters got a distant but nevertheless good view of the decoy in the course of brushing and its pattern became stuck in my mind. So when my wife Allyson and I went to Welney earlier this year and we saw the new swan pipe there, I immediately thought "Wow! A duck decoy". Back at the visitors centre we were assured by a kind and friendly member of the staff that the wildfowl trapped at Welney were definitely not for the table but for ringing and that the correct description of the



trap is swan pipe. She also informed us that some of the other WWT reserves have had swan pipes for some time. We had never seen a swan pipe as such before.

Well of course, the swan pipe has evolved from the duck decoy. For some months now I have been assuming that the new swan pipe at Welney is a first for Norfolk. But now I am told by Graham, who is the cattle stockman at Welney, that there has been a swan pipe at Welney before and that this was situated on the River Delph side of the wildfowl refuge. It could have been up to two miles away from the main hide. It fell to pieces, apparently, about 20 years ago. We still do not know yet the exact year that it was constructed but we hope to soon because Brenda, who is the co-ordinator of volunteers, tells me she has an elderly volunteer on her books whom she thinks will remember.

The WWT started ringing wildfowl in 1946 but its refuge at Welney was not established until 1967. I think that the former swan pipe could have originally been a duck decoy. But we shall see. Just watch this space.

The wildfowl ringed at Welney together with the ringing at other WWT reserves, would have generated a considerable proportion of the re-encounters that were used in the making of The Migration Atlas which was edited by six BTO staff members and published in 2003 by the BTO. The Atlas shows the spread of wildfowl ringed in the UK. It also shows the migration flyways and these have been revealed by the ringing of wildfowl. This is an amazing work and to own a copy must enhance ones enjoyment of bird watching considerably.

The ringing at Welney that had been planned for February of this year was, unfortunately, a non-starter because of flooding. Welney has long been acquainted with flooding and also with hard winters in general. Without the deliberate flooding of the fields from the Old Bedford River, there would not be enough water in the reserve for wildfowl. And there always has been the additional flooding caused by heavy rains. But now it seems that the flood levels are not only high sometimes but the period of high level is getting longer and I am told that it was this factor that caused the problem in February. We can but hope that conditions will be more favourable for this coming winter.

Anyone who wishes to be involved in bird ringing generally may phone the BTO at Thetford on 01842 750050. And anyone who wishes to be involved in the WWT's ringing programme may phone the WWT at Welney on 01453 891900.



Minsmere

by Brian Macfarlane



I have been visiting Minsmere at this time of the year hoping to see bitterns. Of course the ideal is to find a nest site where the bitterns will keep coming back with food for their young. Luckily I knew of a site next to the Mere hide where the bittern had nested in previous years. To my delight this particular female had survived the terrible flooding in May when all the other 6 nests had been washed away. She was called Vee because of the shape of her neck. It hung in a vee shape which made it look as if the crop was full. She came back to the nest to feed the young on average about every 2 hours. This meant I would be lucky to see her more than 3 times on a visit. Staying alert to see her coming in was very tiring to the eyes, and when she did come she was in view for a photo for less than 20 seconds. This meant some disappointments as if you missed on the focus immediately, blurred pictures resulted, and a long wait for her return.

The young were fed for about 10 minutes before the head of the female appeared above the reeds, preparing for take off. Again another few grab shots before she was out of range.

The last time I went the 2 surviving young were in front of the hide near the water, and the harriers were showing them a great deal of attention. While watching for the bitten a little egret flew in.

The magpie has a lot to answer for, but it's plumage in the right light is as good as any British bird. Well, I always get a thrill when I capture a picture of a bittern, as it is still a rare bird, and worth all the hours of waiting!

Another Harlequin

by Francis and Cherry Farrow



In the last edition of 'Natterjack' the Survey Spotlight fell on the Harlequin Ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*). As the article stated the ladybird is very variable and the two photographs shown in Nats' Gallery illustrated the spotted form *succinea* and the blotched form *spectabilis*. A third form is also recognised as an eyed example *conspicua*. It must have been a coincidence that as the week 'Natterjack' was sent off to be printed Cherry spotted the third form on a rosemary bush in our garden at Sheringham, 16th May 2007 and managed to photograph it. It is the first (and I hope the last) that has been recorded in our garden. The nearest previous record I am aware of was one at Salthouse spotted by Alec Bull a couple of years ago.



The use of snares

by John Crouch

Whatever are our opinions in relation to the use of free running snares to trap mammals which are regarded as pest species, the fact remains that their use is currently legal, approved by the government and other organisations. Therefore, snares are employed in large numbers by gamekeepers and landowners to control the red fox, once it has been snared the fox is normally shot.

Early this morning one attended a property which the landowners regard as a nature reserve where foxes have been devastating ground nesting birds and other wildlife, snares had been set on the property by a contractor in an effort to control some of these foxes. However, this morning a badger was found caught in one of the snares, the snare had been set in a tram-line on a field of standing corn and as such there were not any obstacles on which the badger could injure itself.

It may sound strange but one saw this as an unique opportunity to examine and handle a live, wild, healthy and somewhat angry boar badger, what an eye-opening experience it was!

One has witnessed on many occasions the extraordinary natural physical powers of the Eurasian Badger, but only when a wild healthy badger is handled is it appreciated just how strong these animals are, the badger weighed 19.2kg yet had the strength of a fit young male *Homo sapiens*!

A dedicated grasper was used to restrain the badger whilst the snare was removed, an operation which took over five minutes because of the badger struggling, once the snare was removed the animal was placed in a cage containing a large amount of bedding. The badger was examined very carefully and found not to have any visible injuries, it had obviously not been in the snare very long, the cage was then covered and placed under bushes for twenty minutes to allow the animal to settle before release, fresh water was provided. The badger was around four years old and had a pronounced sagittal crest, it was in very fine condition.

After twenty minutes the badger was found to be curled up in the bedding, it was carefully woken then the cage was collapsed, after a few minutes he ambled off towards a large wooded bank where there are active setts. Once the badger reached the edge of the wood he paused and turned in my direction, and was then followed to a known sett where he went to ground.



NATS' GALLERY: August 2007



LIMAX CINEREONIGER This slug can reach 20cm in length and is an indicator species for ancient woodland. It is very rare in East Anglia, but was discovered at Swanton Novers Great Wood in 1995, where these shots were taken in 2007.
Photos: Mike Stew.





A NEW SWAN PIPE at Welney WWT reserve on the Ouse Washes. Designed to catch swans, such as these Whooper's, the birds are destined to be ringed and released, rather than eaten! See article. *Photos: Bob Blandford.*



SMALL RED-EYED DAMSELFLY Edgefield village pond, 12 August 2007. There was an influx of this species mid-month, and good numbers settled on this recently restored pond. *Photo: Simon Harrap/* norfolknature.co.uk

BANDED DEMOISELLE Edgefield 1 August 2007. After three very wet months, warm weather in August encouraged some dispersal of this spectacular species, in this case to a garden pond.

Photo: Simon Harrap/norfolknature.co.uk



NORFOLK'S SPECIAL SEA-LAVENDERS.

Within the British Isles Matted Sea-lavender (left) is confined to the north coast of Norfolk, while the sub-species *anglicum* of Rock Sea-lavender is just about endemic to Norfolk. Photos (Titchwell, 10 August 2007): Simon Harrap/norfolknature.co.uk.



AMAUROBIUS

SIMILIS adult (left)
and egg sac (below).

Photos: Diane
& Colin Mussell.



NUCTENEA UMBRATICA with
egg sac. Photo: Diane & Colin
Mussell.

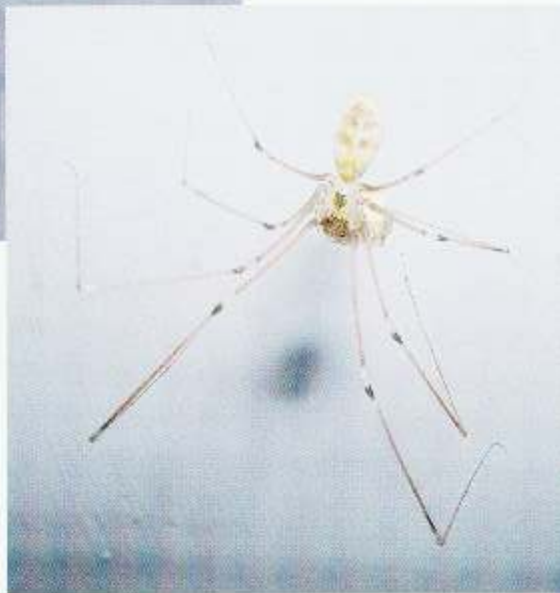




**ARANEUS
DIADEMATUS**
spiderlings.
Photo: Diane
& Colin Mussell.

**PHOLCUS
PHALANGIODES**

with egg sac.
Photo: Diane
& Colin Mussell.



**HARVESTMAN DICRONOPALPUS
RAMOSUS.** Photos: Diane & Colin Mussell (left)
and in a typical pose on Beeston Common,
August 2005, Francis Farrow.



MINSMERE in spring. Patience is rewarded with views of Bitterns, with iridescent Magpies providing distractions during the long vigil. See article. Photos: Brian Macfarlane.



CLEY in spring. Congregations of colourful Black-tailed Godwits and Swifts are an annual event. See article. Photos: Brian Macfarlane.



IMAGES from **MULL** (see article).
Photos: Tony Howes.





HARLEQUIN LADYBIRD

Harmonia axyridis form conspicua, May 2006, Sheringham. This photo nicely complements the pictures of the forms *succinea* (spotted) and *spectabilis* (blotched) in the May edition of *Natterjack*. See article.
Photo: Cherry Farrow.



MICROPHORUS INVESTIGATOR

This burying beetle is often caught in moth traps, and often has an unpleasant infestation of mites. They really do bury small carcasses. Photo: Diane & Colin Mussell.



LOUSE FLY

probably *Ornithomyia avicularia*. This tenacious and hard-to-kill fly is usually found on young woodland birds, but can turn up on humans (see article). Photo: Diane & Colin Mussell

ROESEL'S BUSH-CRICKET *Metrioptera roeselii*, Marriott's Way between Drayton and Costessey, 16 July 2007. This species, first recorded in Norfolk in 1997, continues to spread. Photo: Craig Robson.



Before being released hair was clipped from the tip of the badgers left ear and tip of his tail, this evening observations were conducted at the sett. This highly recognisable badger was witnessed emerging from the sett and to go off foraging, the animal appeared to be none the worse for his ordeal.

Dealing with this badger was a quite wonderful experience, it was a very successful rescue operation which could have easily had a very different ending.

THE ISLE OF MULL

by Tony Howes



During June of this year my wife Wendy and I spent a week on the Isle of Mull. Most days, (nearly all fine and sunny) were spent touring slowly round the roads that circle the island, Wendy driving, and me in the front passenger seat with the camera on my lap.

The word 'STOP' was used often as yet another glorious landscape view unfurled before us, or some creature was spotted, the camera certainly had a good workout. Both golden and white tailed eagles were seen, at one point we were watching a w/t eagle being mobbed by a buzzard, the difference in size was clearly apparent. These eagles are big birds, just short of eight feet across the wings, and are a magnificent sight when seen flying. The white tail of an adult can be clearly seen, even at distance.

Many birds associated with the western isles were seen, we were also fortunate enough to find otters on two occasions. At one time an adult and two cubs fishing in a sea loch, and at another a lone adult fishing in shallow water just off a rocky beach, the nice thing is that they are happy to be about in full day light.

The roads on Mull are primitive, to say the least, and they follow the contours of the land. The 'mile' stones' are in keeping with the ancient feel the island gives me, they are made from cast iron, and have a date of 1897.

A delightful island, full of wildlife and tranquillity.



The last month at Cley

by Brian Macfarlane



April was a really warm month, probably the hottest for years. Since then the sun has been as rare as hen's teeth, but I've been able to grab the odd day at Cley. The bird numbers seem to be down this year, but there is still a lot of activity to observe.

The first thing to show was a large aerial display of swifts, which certainly taxes the ability to focus and photograph. They are a spectacular bird to admire because of their manoeuvrability. Right in front of me appeared a black swan which was obviously an escapee. Two black-tailed godwits were fighting which looked very painful, and they did that several times. On further reflection it could have been a courtship tactic! There were a small flock flying in the distance. A heron flew across the front of the hide. While in the middle of the water a pair of shelducks were chasing one another. To the right several marsh harriers were continually searching the reeds for prey, one of which was this male which came closer than usual.

I find that sitting there for hours on end has its rewards, and one meets some very interesting people. You always learn something, and I never come away without something I had not anticipated seeing in the first place. That's what watching wildlife is all about, seeing the unexpected.

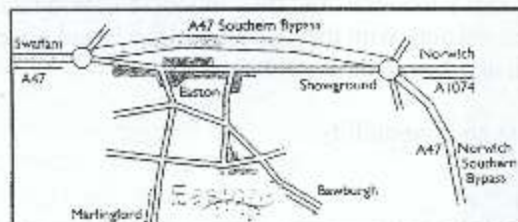
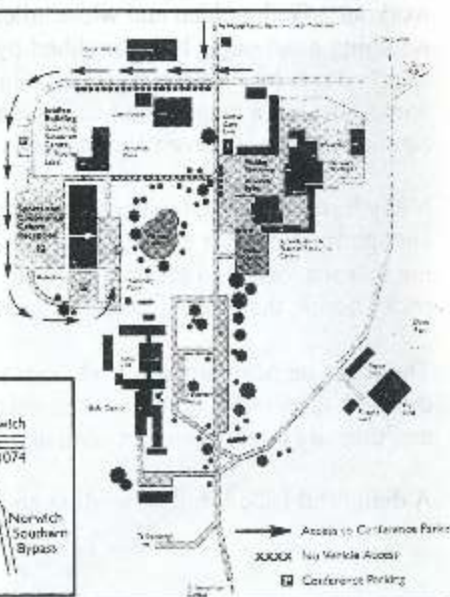
Venue Change

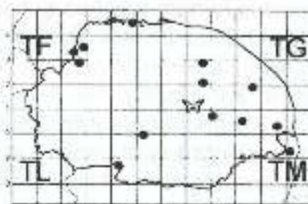
Please note that the indoor meetings will be held at Easton College Sports and Conference Centre.

The first meeting is:

'Wildlife in the wider countryside' by Helen Baczkowska of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust on Tuesday September 18th.

(NB. this is a change from that listed on the 2007/08 programme card)





Wild Flowers Revealed No. 16: Santon Street

13th May, 2007

Considering the sputtering morning rain and forecast of even gloomier weather later in the day, a creditably large group of some seventeen members and guests, including some from the Flora Group, gathered in the car park with our leader for the day, Gillian Beckett, next to the level crossing just north of Santon Downham. Our hope was to track down a number of characteristic early Breckland plants despite the distraction imposed at times by our having to sidestep volleys of participants in a family cross-country charity cycling event.

The prolonged April drought this year had raised fears that the species count in such dry heathland habitats might prove to be lower than would normally be expected, and this did seem to be borne out initially by the absence of even a single discernible plant, flowering or not, of the delightful Breckland pansy, *Viola tricolour subsp. curtisii*, at its well-known station immediately west of the car park, where it sometimes flowers in fair numbers. This is usually dubbed the 'seaside pansy', and indeed records since 2000 indicate the Breck to be now its only location that is significantly inland. On the other hand, the colony of Smith's pepperwort, *Lepidium heterophyllum*, close to the level crossing itself and growing even in the ballast, appeared to be thriving.

Gillian told us that the largely tree-free wide strip of land running alongside the north edge of the railway in the Santon Street area has retained much of its original character, having being kept unplanted, as a fire-break, in the days of steam. Though trees were introduced when diesels came in, protests from naturalists and conservationists and the presence of scarce species led eventually to their removal before irreversible damage was done. We worked our way westwards along the path which runs very close to the railway through this acid heathland area and were rewarded by a number of diminutive Brecklanders including mossy stonecrop *Crassula tillaea*, birdsfoot *Ornithopus perpusillus*, sand spurrey *Spergularia rubra*, corn spurrey *Spergularia arvensis*, hoary cinquefoil *Potentilla argentea*, shepherd's cress *Teesdalia nudicaulis*, the somewhat taller and more common heath groundsel, *Senecio sylvaticus*, smooth catsear *Hypochaeris glabra*, and the sand sedge *Carex arenaria* with its characteristic running 'straight line' of tufts. Particularly useful for teaching plant identification and differentiation were the tiny mats of Annual Knawel *Scrophanthus*



annuus (which has two subspecies, with *subsp. polycarpus* having Breckland as its principal British location), growing close to the extremely rare perennial knawel, *Scleranthus perennis subsp. prostratus*. These unassertive members of, rather improbably, the Pink family are indeed very nearly twins when they grow with the same conditions to mould them, though the perennial plant has, at least at some stages of growth, woodier lower stems. It also bears some sterile shoots at flowering time. Attempts have been made to assure the survival of the Red Data List 'endangered' prostrate form of perennial knawel by sowing its seeds in artificially disturbed areas on suitable protected reserves such as Thetford Common and Weeting Heath, and there are now almost certainly more of these plants in existence than survive elsewhere in the Breck as true natives, though doubts have been expressed as to whether the introduced colonies will prove to be self-sustaining.

As we reached the end of this stretch of ground-hugging plant species, which we seemed to have traversed more on our knees than on our feet, the final notable find was a single plant of tower mustard *Arabis glabra*, another species classed as 'endangered' on the Red Data List, which, though it was not yet in flower, put us in increased good humour as we headed back towards the car park and our sandwiches.

After lunch, a motorised advance guard ascertained that enough cycling families had left the Santon picnic area to the east to leave parking spaces sufficient for our vehicles. At Santon village subsequently, there was discussion about the native status or otherwise of *Ornithogalum angustifolium*, which grows sporadically in grassland there and more plentifully at both ends of the pedestrian tunnel under the railway, which we duly negotiated before turning left onto the ride, or rather track, running west and parallel to the railway. As well as some plants seen earlier and other new ones, small medick *Medicago minima* was found, though the characteristic 'bur' seedheads were hardly in evidence yet. We proceeded until we reached a large area fairly recently rotavated, presumably to encourage tower mustard, which had germinated and flowered in large numbers a few years previously when trees were cleared and the ground disturbed. There were unfortunately very few of this rare crucifer (which one should now call a brassica, I suppose) to be found this time, and in fact only one plant was pointed out to me.

We turned northwards into the forest just as the rain became heavy and set in for the remainder of the afternoon. The cyclists had all disappeared as if by magic, but botanists are made of sterner stuff and, dripping copiously, we continued our circular walk back towards the tunnel. Before we reached it, a lovely show of lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis* was revealed at the wooded edge of a pit, but even more remarkable were the significant numbers of broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* among them, in the early stages of the current year's growth. Some members vowed to return to see them in flower at a later date, especially as yellow birdsnest *Monotropa hypopitys* is said to grow nearby. Many thanks to Gillian for a most interesting and informative day.

Stephen Martin



The Joint Meeting at Carlton Marshes

Sunday 20th May 2007.

With members of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society, the Great Yarmouth Naturalists Society and the Lowestoft Field Club.

Fine sunny warm weather met the three natural history groups at Carlton Marshes near Lowestoft and with so many keen eyes and ears a considerable day of finds were recorded. Two of the most notable of these finds were seen before the meeting began with myself witnessing a red kite over the visitors centre car park and Stephen Martin finding shepherds needle *Scandix pecten-veneris* beside a wheat field off Burnt Hill Lane. Although the main interest was botany I found plenty of plant galls and some beetles, other wildlife were also seen.

On the first grazing marsh we found bog stitchwort *Stellaria uliginosa*, cuckoo flower *Cardamine pratensis* and both soft rush *Juncus effusus* and hard rush *J. inflexus*. We also found celery-leaved buttercup *Ranunculus sceleratus* of which we observed that the cattle had not eaten due to its poisonous capabilities.

Alongside the dyke we found large colonies of water soldier *Stratiotes aloides* which had thankfully survived the winter flooding after the breach of the River Waveney last November. Here too there were several hairy dragonflies *Brachytron pratense* and Janet Negal found the exuvia of one. While we were here we saw blue-tailed damselflies *Ischnura elegans* including forma *violacea* and *rufescens*. A water vole *Arvicola terrestris* was also seen nearby.

After lunch by Round Water those of us remaining carried onto the Forresters and Spratt's Water Lane where we found an unofficial dump which, included some good garden escapes: opium poppy *Papaver somniferum*, *Foeniculum vulgare* fennel, horse radish *Armoracia rusticana* and sweet alison *Lobularia maritima*. We also found a good selection of plant Galls too including *Liparia lucens* the cigar gall on common reed *Phragmites australis*, *Phyllocoptes goniiothorax* on leaf margins of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* ssp *nordica*, *Eriophyes similis* along leaf margin of wild plum *Prunus domestica*, and *Pontania triandrae* on leaf blade of almond willow *Salix triandra*. A grasshopper warbler, sedge warbler, reed warbler and up to six cuckoos were seen or heard.

It was such an enjoyable day and this annual joint meeting is a great way of meeting fellow Naturalists from different societies. We all agreed that the membership-to-attendee ratio was very low but those who did attend thoroughly enjoyed it.

Colin Jacobs



Wild Flowers Revealed No. 17: How Hill

Sunday June 17th 2007

The day was fine, much to the surprise and relief of the people gathering at How Hill for the 17th Wild Flowers Revealed meeting, heavy rain having been forecast.

Dr. Bob Leaney, our leader for the day, had prepared some specimens of grasses to remind us of their structure and to prepare us for what we might find on the nature trail which begins near Toad Hole Cottage. There were enough people for the party to split into at least two groups one of which found sufficient interest in the first hundred yards or so to occupy them until lunch-time. The other group managed the whole trail, but arrived back for lunch rather late! Those who stayed for the afternoon did a circular walk to the south of How Hill.

As was to be expected we concentrated mainly on plants thriving in or by water, in the course of the day finding four duckweeds, including the scarcer greater duckweed (*Spirodela polyrrhiza*), four pondweeds, *Potamogeton friesii* (flat-stalked pondweed) being a Broads speciality as well as the more familiar *P. natans*, *P. polygonifolius*, and *P. crispus*, floating clubrush (*Eleogiton fluitans*) and (unusually) Canadian waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*) in flower. Our leaders were equipped with ingenious extending hooked poles to enable them to show us these otherwise inaccessible plants.

We saw the differences between the common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and the reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*) and purple small reed (*Calamagrostis canescens*) all very tall grasses common in this habitat and three shorter bent grasses (*Agrostis canina*, *A. capillaris* and *A. stolonifera*) in drier conditions.

There was also the opportunity to study the details that distinguish fool's watercress from water cress and lesser water parsnip, and how to separate the water loving forget-me-nots *Myosotis laxa* and *M. scorpioides*.

We noted the red-berried elder (*Sambucus racemosa*) well-naturalised and not altogether welcome in this part of the Broads and searched for the tiny flower on the marsh pennywort. In the dykes were arrowhead, white waterlily, water-violet and frogbit and beside them skullcap, yellow and purple loosestrife, greater tussock sedge (*Carex paniculata*), water dock and the royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) all typical broadland sights.

Heads were down in the main, but we did not miss the swallowtail which was tantalising photographers on the first section of the trail, nor the Norfolk hawk over the dyke further along, no summer morning in the Broads being complete without these or the numerous blue damselflies.

Many thanks to Bob Leaney for leading a most enjoyable day and for preparing the specimens which were available to study at lunch time.

Hatty Aldridge



RESEARCH

Round-up

Research Committee Meetings

Here are details of all our meetings up to the end of this recording season.

Monday 17th September - Southrepps Common

Meet in the small car park TG261351

Our last Monday in the month meetings will be spent recording on the Little Ouse Headwater Project sites.

Three meetings will be held at sites south of the Little Ouse -

Monday 30th July

Monday 24th September

Monday 26th November

On these days we will park at Thelnetham Church - TM019782

Two meetings will be spent looking at the Fens north of the Little Ouse -

Monday 27th August

Monday 29th October

For these, we will park on the concrete sugarbeet pad at Blo' Norton - TM035794

All meetings start at 10.30am. All members are very welcome to come and help us, either as experts in a particular field, or as extra pairs of eyes.

60 Years Ago - from the NNS Transactions

APOLLO BUTTERFLY

A fine specimen of the mountain butterfly *Parnassus apollo* frequented some old lime kilns at Catton from July 23rd to 26th 1947 (A. Hudson). The insect spent most of its time visiting composite flowers, including ragwort. Its arrival coincided with that of a swarm of large whites, amongst which was a gynandromorph (seen by E.A.E.). It is thought possible that the Apollo wandered from Scandinavia during a period of exceptional weather, when other butterflies were migrating.

Note: It is interesting that the above record is not acknowledged in any subsequent review of Norfolk Butterflies after EAEs paper in 1984. Is it no longer considered a genuine observation? (Ed.)



Survey Spotlight

Just passing through.....

Whilst it's always interesting to see species where they're supposed to be, few naturalists would deny, if they were being totally honest, that there is also a real thrill in finding one that isn't. As the autumn approaches, so migratory birds start to make their journeys from summer to winter quarters, and resident twitchers (myself included) start to move towards Britain's coastlines in the hope of spotting rarities. But it's not just the rare birds that we should be interested in – there are also thousands of common species, such as Swallow and Willow Warbler, making their way out of the country south towards Africa, while many waders and wildfowl return to our shores. This is a pivotal time these birds' life cycle, and as such we should monitor it closely so that the impacts of factors such as weather conditions and climate change can be assessed.



Birdtrack (www.birdtrack.net), a survey run jointly by the BTO, RSPB and BirdWatch Ireland, allows you to record sightings of both migrant and resident birds wherever you are in the country, all year round. All you have to do is register the site(s) where you watch birds, giving it a name and grid reference. Once you've made your visit, simply enter the date and a list of species will appear, allowing you to enter your observations by ticking the appropriate boxes and recording any counts that you made. You can also record breeding status of the birds you see, and all of this will feed into national and local projects.

It's not just birds that migrate – many of the moth species that you see in the autumn may also be immigrants, such as the spectacular Hummingbird and Convolvulus Hawkmoths, both of which invaded Norfolk in astonishing numbers in 2006 (although I still managed to miss every one). There are also some stunning resident species that are still flying in August and September, including the Merveille de Jour and the Pink-barred Sallow. And the best bit is, you don't even have to go looking for them, because they'll come to you! Simply search round outside lights, look on the windows of your house at night or erect a white sheet next to a lamp in calm, cloudy conditions – your neighbours may think you've lost the plot, but I bet you see more moths than they do!



Not all species are easy to identify, but there are a range of good books and the UKMoths website (www.ukmoths.org.uk) has photos of over 70% of the species found in the country, including all the common ones. When you do identify them, you can make the most of it by sending your records to the Norfolk Moth Survey (<http://website.lineone.net/~david.hipperson/>), organised by the county recorders, Ken Saul and Dave Hipperson. Recording forms can be downloaded from their website long with the latest newsletters, and you can also find full details of upcoming trapping evenings that will allow you to learn directly from the experts. The Survey aims to record changes in the distribution of British moth species, many of which are declining rapidly but unfortunately do not attract the same level of media attention that species with fur or feathers are able to muster, and results will feed in to the National Moth Recording Scheme (www.mothscount.org/site/). Public interest in moths continues to grow, and with your help their plight can hopefully be brought to the attention of a much wider audience.

Dave Leech

A MATTER OF SIZE

A member has requested that where possible an indication of scale is given to the subjects of the photographs in Nats' Gallery. It just happens that the louse fly taken by Diane Mussell is sitting on 5mm squared paper! I don't think this precision is available every time but maybe the use of a coin where possible or a scale bar added subsequently would help to gauge the size of the plant or animal depicted, of course in many cases the photo is an appreciation of the subject and a scale of any kind can be intrusive. It depends entirely on what the photographer is endeavouring to show (*Ed.*).

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

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

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