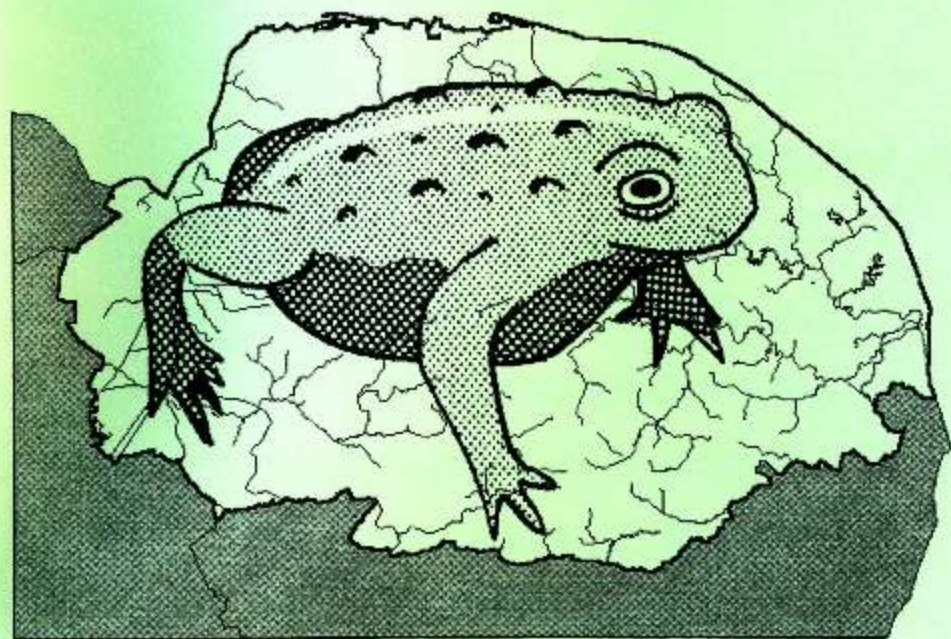


The Norfolk



Natterjack

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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....

'The Norfolk Natterjack' has now had an uninterrupted run for 99 editions. Our next edition will of course therefore be our 100th. Please help make it that bit special by sending in your observations and notes. Don't forget Nats' Gallery for those great pics you have of autumn colours or maybe wintery scenes! The weather in early November was gentle and a red admiral was still flying on the 4th. Redwings and fieldfares were flying in off the sea with the odd woodcock also noted. Seasons greetings to you and all the best for 2008.

FF

Sydney Long Memorial Medal Recipients

Two of the Society's best-known naturalists, Rex and Barbara Hancy, have been jointly awarded the Sydney Long Medal which is presented biennially by the N&NNS and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust to recognise outstanding contributions to the county's natural history. The medal and citation were presented to Rex and Barbara by the NWT president, Sir Nicholas Bacon, at the Trust's annual meeting on October 18th. The citation reads: ".....

Rex and Barbara Hancy have for many years formed a remarkable natural history partnership. Through their unquenchable curiosity and thirst for knowledge, they have made themselves experts in a wide range of subjects, most notably in recent years in the science of cecidology. They were founder members in 1986 of the British Plant Gall Society, which Rex has served as vice-chairman and chairman and is still East Anglia regional representative, and their influence in the Society is undiminished. Their carefully researched book, *A Study of Plant Galls in Norfolk*, was well-received and Rex has made many contributions to the BPGS publication *Cecidology*. Rex has served the N&NNS as president, chairman and now vice-president and actively promoted the Society's Wildlife 2000 initiative. He is a former member of the Council of the Trust. As a teacher and through his broadcasting and newspaper columns, Rex, ably supported by Barbara, has stimulated an interest in wildlife among people of more than one generation, not least with their latest publication, *Notable Trees of Norwich*.

The Councils of the Society and the Trust feel that Rex and Barbara Hancy have made a significant contribution to natural history in Norfolk and beyond and fully merit the joint award of the Sydney Long Medal.



Bryophyte Anomalies

Arthur Copping passed a copy of 'Some Rare Bryophytes' (Colin Dunster) on to his friend Ryszard Ochyra, a Professor of Bryology in the Polish Academy of Sciences Institute of Botany in Kraków and received this reply which sheds some light on *Anthoceros* and the early discoveries regarding *Hookeria lucens* (Simon Harrap photograph) (Natterjack No 97, May 2007).

Thanks so much for a copy of the article from *The Norfolk Natterjack* by Colin Dunster. I note some minor errors in this article. *Anthoceros* is certainly not a primitive liverwort, as stated in the caption to the photo, but it is a hornwort. *Hookeria lucens* was described by Hedwig in 1801 in *Species muscorum frondosorum*, but the species was already known to Dillenius who published it in his *Historia muscorum* in 1741. Thus, the finding of the species in about 1807 on the Lowes by William Hooker did not represent the discovery of a new species. Maybe this discovery prompted Jacob Smith to the description of the new genus *Hookeria* published in 1808 but this is another matter. Incidentally, *Hookeria* is a conserved generic name and now widely used for the genus comprising several species, mostly exotic ones. I looked to the paper by J. E. Smith and see that he cited one locality of *H. lucens* from Holt Heath.

Ryszard Ochyra

A glorious morning

by Cherry and Francis Farrow



Out of a thin mist the sun shone weakly, but by the time we had arrived at Holkham the grey had begun to disperse and the morning turned out like summer, yet this was October 13th. We had come to Holkham to join in a fungus foray organised by ADAS biologists, a group that has often visited Beeston Common. We separated among the pines to see what we could find with the instruction to rendezvous about an hour and a half later.

As we made our way west along the main track from Lady Anne's Drive, we soon spotted a bright pinkish-purple specimen. No it wasn't a fungus but a convolvulus flower. It was recognisable as a morning glory type plant and photographed. At lunch time the ADAS group convened and the morning fungi discussed and where possible identified. Among the species collected were the dune stinkhorn *Phallus hadriani*, the sickener *Russula emetica*, *R. xerampelina* (smells of crab), slippery jack *Suillus lutens* and toad's ear *Otidea bufonia*.



A backdrop of 'whistling' widgeon and the ever-present musical pink-footed geese accompanied the morning walk. A truly glorious morning, which brings us back to the morning glory. The main character to identify the various species are the sepals and although these are not seen in the photograph that well, comparison with 'google' images indicated a preference for the common morning glory *Ipomoea purpurea* over the closely related ivy-leaved morning glory *I. hederacea*. Gillian Beckett, west Norfolk plant recorder, agreed and has accepted it as *I. purpurea* - a new west Norfolk casual plant record.

Encounters with a louse fly and a squirrel

by Kathleen and Ian Johnson

My wife and I thoroughly enjoyed Diane Mansell's note on the louse fly. We had just such an experience a couple of years ago, trying to get rid of the alarmingly persistent pest. Swatting and squashing did not work but we also finally tried to drown it, in our case down the sink waste pipe. Apparent success, but it was back in the sink next morning, looking groggy. Finally we squished it.

We had an odd experience at Holme Reserve (16th September). We were in one of the Trust's bird hides when we noticed a grey squirrel on the bank of one of the shallow scrapes. Odd for a start, because it was on a freshwater marsh with many pools and channels, at least a quarter mile from the pines by the Warden's house and a lot further from any other tree cover.

Odder still when it walked into the pool and started to swim across, putting the ducks to flight and alarming the black-tailed godwits. Its progress along the surface was very slow, with its tail dragging behind in the water. The godwits bunched into a group of about 20 and followed it discreetly, looking down at it, puzzled. For all the world as if looking disapprovingly down their long noses. It swam to the nearside bank, where it was lost to our view. The godwits remained grouped warily for a few minutes then lost interest. We never saw it again.

Who ever heard of a grey squirrel swimming, for which we could see it was singularly ill-adapted? But I have seen a mole swimming strongly, so I looked up the handbook of British Mammals ed. H N Southern. Sure enough it says "Swims well, using hind feet only." So you learn something about wildlife all the time.



Insect Marvels

by Tony Howes



Dragon and damselflies are some of our most beautiful insects. The dazzling colours are for many people spell binding, they certainly equal the butterfly brigade in personal adornment. A freshly emerged hawk dragonfly almost glows with brilliant iridescent colour. Their beauty is matched by the ability to fly in very strong winds and still see and catch the small insects on which they depend. Catching these marvels of nature on camera presents quite a challenge, with a slow, quiet approach to one 'hanging up' on a bush or other herbage or resting on a leaf or reed stem in the case of damselflies.

Their lineage is lengthy, certainly going back to the age of the dinosaurs and over 5,000 species are known world wide. Here in the British Isles about 40 species currently breed, but there may well be more in the future as the climate changes.

'Dragon hunting' with suitable camera equipment is very enjoyable and getting to know the behavioural patterns of each species is helpful. A still day is preferred as moving herbage makes focusing more difficult, with slight cloud cover being better as it gives less harsh shadows than bright sunny conditions.

A wonderful way to spend a hot summer day and later (hopefully) to admire the results of your effort.

"The lure of the wild" an encounter with Six-belted Clearwings

by Mike Ottley and Jackie Welton,



The Clearwing Moths have always been difficult to find. They are day-flying species and are not attracted to traditional moth traps using lights. In fact, the method most commonly used was to go out into the countryside armed with a saw and bring back sections of dead trunk and thick branches and wait to see what emerged – which would often be nothing at all. As a result the clearwings acquired the reputation of being much rarer than they actually are.

The situation has changed, however, with the introduction of synthetic pheromone lures. These emit the scent of virgin females, which the male find irresistible and they fly to the lure almost immediately. This is well illustrated



with the Currant clearwing where hanging a lure in a currant bush may attract half a dozen in less than thirty seconds.

The foodplant of the Six-belted Clearwing is Birdfoot Trefoil. In many areas of the Country the moth has been found on birdsfoot trefoil growing in herb rich chalk grassland – quite a rare habitat in Norfolk. Areas such as Ringstead Downs have been searched without success.

On Friday, 3rd August, it was suggested by Jackie that we should try the clumps of birdsfoot trefoil growing on the shingle ridge between Cley and Salthouse. It was a windy day, not unusual on the shingle ridge, but upon laying the pheromone lure on a clump of birdsfoot trefoil four males materialised almost immediately amongst the trefoil stems, keeping very low amongst the vegetation. We subsequently checked about 200 metres of habitat and attracted in excess of thirty males.

We took a live specimen to Jon Clifton, who kindly confirmed our identification. He suggested we contact Ken Saul, County Recorder, as he strongly suspected that this might be the first Norfolk record in recent years. We then contacted Ken and were surprised to learn that this could well be the first sighting for Norfolk of Six-belted clearwing for at least one hundred years.

On contacting Ken, we were surprised to learn that this was the first confirmed sighting in Norfolk since 1823 when it was reported by Curtis and Stephens at South Creak. In the early 1990s it was claimed to have been found in a layby cutting at Hillington but this record was never confirmed.

In the past two years it has been searched for in various likely habitats, using pheromone lures, without success. The food plant of the Six-belted Clearwing (Bird's-foot Trefoil) is a common plant in many parts of Norfolk and it seems highly likely that other colonies will be found elsewhere.

We would like to thank Jon Clifton for supplying the pheromones and for checking the identification as Six-belted Clearwing, and not one of the several other European species whose distribution extends virtually to the Channel coast.

Thanks also to Ken Saul for his painstaking research into previous records.



Encounters with scarce flies

by Francis Farrow



On the morning of August 11th, while walking the dog over Beeston Common, I noticed a large but sluggish hoverfly that reminded me of *Helophilus hybridus*, a common species I often see around the garden. It settled on hemp agrimony, a favourite plant for many flies, and I managed to take a photograph. There were at least two individuals present.

On arriving home I studied the photograph and the pictures in Stubbs and Falk, *British Hoverflies*, but nothing was quite like it. I settled on *H. trivittatus* because of its large size and bright colouration but the picture did not show the grey triangular markings on the 4th tergite, however, on reading the description they were mentioned so I was more hopeful. I then 'googled' the name for an image on the web and soon found some pictures identical to mine. Just to be sure, as it is considered a scarce species and usually noted as a single individual, I showed Ken Durrant the photo. Ken confirmed the identification and also told me he had only seen it occasionally and generally in central Norfolk.

Over the next two weeks I was to find the species all over Beeston and Sheringham Commons in numbers that on some days made it the most numerous hoverfly present, rivaling the ubiquitous *Eristalis tenax*! I duly sent the record off to Roger Morris who runs the national hoverfly recording scheme and let him know the large numbers encountered. He suggested that it was probably immigration from the continent and also added that he and Stuart Ball had recorded the species exactly a year before (12/08/06) on the Common during a Norfolk meeting of the Dicerists Forum.

I was also lucky enough to see another unusual hoverfly, the very large, *Volucella zonaria*, in my garden at Sheringham on 25th August, but no chance to photograph it as it quickly zoomed off over the hedge. This species established a foothold in southern Britain in the 1940s but has for the last decade been spreading northwards.

NEWT CATCHING STICKLEBACK

by Janet and Ian Keymer

Mid morning on 2nd June 07 we observed a male smooth newt (*Triturus vulgaris*) attempting to eat an adult three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) in our garden pond at Edgefield Green (TG 096 345). The fish was sideways on in the



newt's mouth. The newt was just below the surface resting on submerged aquatic vegetation. Unfortunately it swam deeper out of sight, so we did not see if it succeeded in eating the stickleback. This was a new experience for us and we believe it to be unusual. We have been unable to discover any records of newts eating fish or any other vertebrates.

Does anyone know if newts have been recorded preying on sticklebacks or any other small vertebrates?

The day I went to dispose of some rubbish and struck GOLD !

by Brian Macfarland



I had occasion to take some rubbish to the tip at Strumpshaw one afternoon recently. As always took the camera just in case there is any activity at the reserve, which I must say has been rather quiet this year by comparison to past years. It didn't help having the reserve flooded in the spring resulting in an infiltration of salt water. Luckily it seems to have recovered now as nature usually does in adversity.

I was hoping to photograph dragonflies, and insects in the flower meadow. Unfortunately it was closed because they were haymaking. So I thought I'd give the fen hide a look, which I usually refer to as "watching paint dry", as invariably I sit looking into space for hours on end.

This time I was thrilled to see three kingfishers flying around, and coming close enough to have a pop at. They hung around for so long I stayed 5 hours and had to abandon when the light failed!

For me the hardest thing was making a 4GB memory card last, and only two spare batteries. I hadn't set off to be out long so I didn't take the usual amount of accessories.

Anyway I managed to get some satisfactory shots, for which I was pleased. It is only about the sixth time I have seen these beautiful birds in all my years of photography. This time it was really special because it was the first time I had seen them with the sun on them.

It makes such a difference to the colours. It certainly turned out to be the best load of rubbish I have ever dumped. Sometimes you just get lucky, and happen to be in the right place at the right time!



Woodlark Fortunes

by Hans Watson



I became acquainted with Kelling Heath about 40 years ago, and have watched with interest, the changes that have befallen its wildlife over the years. In the late 1960's and 1970's it seemed that every gorse bush had a pair of linnets, and other birds that are also now in decline such as yellow-hammers, lesser redpolls, bullfinches and nightingales were fairly common. Even the frequent Territorial Army maneuvers with their noise and accidental heath fires seemed not to have a bad effect on the wildlife. But now things are very different. red-backed shrikes are now only a fond memory, and two birds that both seemed to peak in population numbers in the late 1980's are now very scarce on North Norfolk heathland. They are the lesser redpoll and the tree pipit. Curiously, nightjar numbers seem to have remained about the same over the 40 odd years that I have frequented the heaths of Kelling and Salthouse. However, not all the changes are of a negative nature, and on the positive side the lovely little silver-studded blue butterfly has, (with help) returned, and stonechats seem to be increasing. Forty years ago no sane birdwatcher would have believed that Dartford warblers would ever be seen on a North Norfolk heath, but they have, and many birdwatchers now think it will colonise the Kelling and Salthouse heathlands.

To me, the best of the positive changes, is the small but growing population of woodlarks. In the late 1960's, the British population of woodlarks was estimated to be under 200 pairs, and in decline, mainly as a result of habitat loss. Changes brought about by the European Agricultural Policy in the early 1990's, where farmers were paid to take land out of production (set-aside), are regarded by most ornithologists as the reason for the population explosion of woodlarks in the last two decades. By 1997 the population had increased to about 1600 pairs, and since 1997 the population has been estimated to have risen to about 3000 pairs, with more than 50% nesting on set-aside land. Let us hope that the current pressure to produce more biofuels, does not result in more set-aside land being taken back into production.

Whatever the future holds for woodlarks, we can at present enjoy their wonderful song, whilst we walk the North Norfolk heathlands.

FREE OFFER

Norfolk Bird and Mammal Reports 1958 - 2005 (Complete run)

If interested please arrange to collect reports from Gillian Beckett,

Tel: 01485 518225 / Email: kabeckett@btinternet.com



NATS' GALLERY: November 2007



SOCIETY MEMBERS enjoying the massed blooms of Heather on the NNNS excursion to Dersingham Bog on 29 July 2007. Society field meetings offer an excellent opportunity to visit some superb sites and to pick the brains of the experts! Photo: Stephen Martin.



BLACK DARTER

was one of the highlights of the day out at Dersingham in July. Favouring heathland, moorland and bogs, it has been doing well in recent years in Norfolk following positive management at Dersingham and at nearby Roydon Common and Grimston Warren. Photo: Simon Harrap /norfolknature.co.uk



KINGFISHERS at Strumpshaw Fen RSPB reserve. A serendipitous visit provided a rare opportunity to capture these superb images. See article.
Photos: Brian Macfarlane.



PEREGRINE carrying a female Teal, Cley, 4 October 2007. Not long ago Peregrine was a rare bird in Norfolk, but it is now regular in autumn and winter, especially where there are concentrations of wildfowl and waders (see article). *Photos: Brian Macfarlane*



WOODLARKS Probably commoner now than since records began, Woodlarks have made a real comeback in recent years and have colonized (or re-colonized) many areas of heathland in the county. The song, heard from early spring onwards, is beautiful and superbly evocative. *Photos: Hans Watson.*





BLACK-TAILED SKIMMER female (left), mature male (below). Despite the female's lack of a wing, and the male's heavily abraded condition, they were both still able to fly well. See article. Photos: Tony Howes.



MIGRANT HAWKER (male, above right) and **SOUTHERN HAWKER** (female, above, immature male, right). Photos: Tony Howes.





**COMMON
DARTER** (above
and left) Photos:
Tony Howes.



**SOUTHERN
HAWKER**
(below).
Photo: Mike Stew.





COMMON TOAD (deceased) Minsmere 9 June 2007. The unfortunate animal has been dispatched in a particular fashion, and suggestions are requested as to the identity of the culprit. See article. *Photo: Geoff Defeu.*

DARK GREEN FRITILLARY Holkham NNR. Confined in Norfolk to a few coastal areas, the larvae feed on violets. *Photo: Mike Stew.*



SIX-BELTED CLEARWING 3 August 2007, Cley. This exciting discovery was made with the use of an artificial pheromone lure. See article. *Photos: Mike Ottley & Jackie Welton*



COMMON MORNING

GLORY *Ipomoea purpurea*

Holkham, 13 October 2007. A new record 'in the wild' of this attractive garden plant (see article). Photo: Francis Farrow.



HELOPHILUS TRIVITTATUS A scarce species that arrived on Beeston & Sheringham Commons in unprecedented numbers last August (see article). Photo: Francis Farrow.



GREEN TIGER BEETLE (above) Holt Lowes. Photo: Simon Harrap / norfolknature.co.uk.

SPECKLED BUSH-CRICKET (left) Kelling. Photo: Mike Stew.



HARLEQUIN LADYBIRDS *Harmonia axyridis* September 2007, Thorpe Road, Norwich, showing the forms *succinea* (spotted), *spectabilis* (blotched) and ? *conspicua* (single large spot on each wing). Resting on a concrete bollard outside the offices of Natural England, they may have been attracted by the many aphids in the limes above. There seems little doubt that Harlequin Ladybird is here to stay! Photo: Chris Durdin.



**ROESEL'S
BUSH-
CRICKET**

*Metrioptera
roeselii*,
female,
30 July 2007,
Ringstead
Downs NWT
reserve.
The spread
continues....
Photo: John Furse.

For those who wait

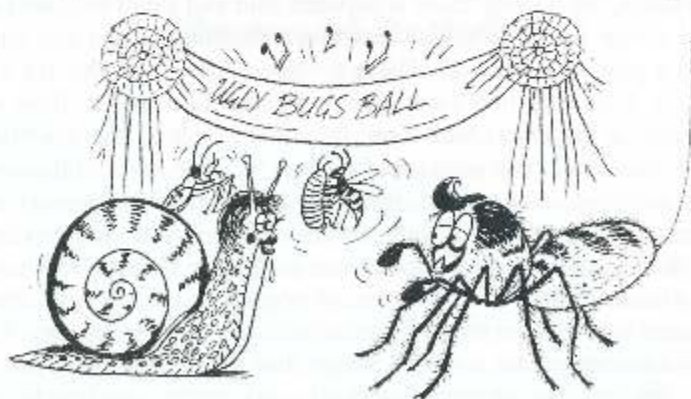
by Brian Macfarland



I went to spend some five hours in the Bishop hide at Cley, that length of time was due to my wife having business in Salthouse, and she had taken the car. I did not mind one bit as it was a perfect day for photography, but not so good for birds. Well there were over 50 grey lag, 100 plus gulls, a few teal, the odd avocets, and green plovers, but all 100 yards away. Never mind, just keep watching, and take anything that flies in range with both barrels, (should read lens). Some days you get lucky and everything seems to be close enough to photograph. Anyway, after two hours I saw something flying towards me at a distance of 300 yards, and 100 feet up. My first thought was a sparrowhawk, but even at a distance I suddenly realised it was a peregrine. The black moustache gave it away, but what was it carrying? It passed over the hide and out of site. An hour later a couple came into the hide, and said did you see the peregrine? I said yes, I had a pot at it with the camera. They had seen it drop to the ground a 100 yards from reed hides and identified the kill as a teal. It started to pluck it but was disturbed, and flew towards me, lucky me.

The only disappointment was I did not get it pin sharp for the purists. As I don't rate myself as that pure I was quite "chuffed", that is a technical term for reasonably pleased. After all I have sat in that hide for many hours this year, and so I had to get lucky by the law of averages.

A Garth Coupland cartoon for all those 'Strictly Come Dancing' fans!



HI GORGEOUS! I SUPPOSE A QUICKSTEP
IS OUT OF THE QUESTION?



NOTE ABOUT THE OLD DUCK DECOY AND THE NEW SWAN PIPE AT WWT RESERVE, WELNEY

by Bob Blandford

Norman, who is one of Welney's veteran volunteers, has recently confirmed that he remembers that the former so called swan pipe was in fact a duck decoy. And Sarah Graves, Welney centre's education officer, has since said that this particular duck decoy would not have been converted to a swan pipe because in the early days at Welney WWT reserve, that is to say in the 70s, there were not enough migrant swans stopping over to have a ringing programme there. Sarah said that a big factor in the subsequent increase in swan numbers at Welney is the growth of the sugar beet industry in the Fens. The migrant swans love eating sugar beet tops in the nearby fields after the beet has been harvested. They roost in the reserve lagoon and fly off early in the morning to the sugar beet fields.

This is very enjoyable for visitors who come to a special early morning event at the reserve to see the swans fly out in their thousands to the sugar beet fields. This event is usually called 'Swans Awake' in the centre's list of events and breakfast can be provided, if it is required, as an optional extra. The next 'Swans Awake' event at Welney is Sunday the 9th December, meet at 6.30 am in car park.

Sugar beet tops represent a very large proportion of the migrant swans total diet. The wheat that is fed to them at the edge of the lagoon is simply a token feed to draw them back to the reserve for the visitors. In the 70s at Welney, swan numbers were in the order of 200 for bewicks and nil for whoopers. Sarah said that nowadays, the normal count is between four and a half thousand and five thousand a year for bewicks and between two thousand and two and a half thousand a year for whoopers. These are good enough figures for a ringing programme. Hence the new swan pipe at Welney. Last season, there was a bit of a blip because the count was three thousand bewicks and four thousand whoopers. Sarah said that because of warmer weather, a lot of the bewicks did not come so far south as usual. Instead, they stopped over at various northern European countries along the flight path from Siberia that were having warmer weather than usual. The reason for almost double the number of whoopers was because of a much higher survival rate of cygnets on the journey. The higher survival rate was because the cygnets had an extra month maturing. The swans had stayed in Iceland for a month longer than usual because of the warmer weather. So the extra whoopers certainly made up the numbers to a normal overall count.



What's the predator?

by John Hampshire



I found the remains of a common toad at Minsmere, Suffolk on June 9th 2007. All that remained of the unfortunate amphibian was its head and a huge flap of skin, which was turned inside out (see photo). I have found the remains of toads in a very similar state before, most memorably on one occasion at Hickling when several individuals that had gathered for spawning were found in close proximity to each other. Can anyone suggest which predator might be responsible?

I am particularly interested in this matter as I have also found the remains of two species of mammal in a very similar state. The first was an otter cub at Hickling in May 2002. All that remained was the head and a very large flap of skin/fur. When I first found the victim, the head was completely concealed and was only revealed after much poking at it with a stick.

The second mammal corpse was that of a water shrew, also found at Hickling. It too was turned completely inside out. Unfortunately, neither of the mammals was photographed but the otter remains were sent to the Castle Museum and the shrew ended up with John Goldsmith.

One thing that all the corpses had in common was that they were all found within a few feet of water an important clue? I do have my own theory as to the likely culprit but I'd be interested in more learned opinions.

Wayward Ratty!

by John Butcher

In May and August each year I enjoy a few days birding at Cley staying at the same B&B establishment in the High Street each time. On 15th August having been out for an early morning stroll with binoculars and telescope I was having breakfast when a man at the next table asked "is that a rat over there". Looking out of the window I saw, running in a westerly direction towards the Mill, not a rat but a water vole. In the 20 odd years I have stayed there I have never seen one. The proprietor saw it when I did and later told me the vole was backwards and forwards there several times during the morning. I checked a week later and no more sightings had occurred. I hope it found its way to a safer place. At least there was no evidence to suggest that it had been run over!



30 Years Ago - from the *RNNS* Transactions

A NOTE ON RAY'S BREEM IN NORFOLK

R. B. WILLIAMS

2 Carrington Place, Tring, Herts.

Recently there has been increasing interest in records of rare or unusual fishes from northern Europe with the objective of amassing distributional data. A fish which has attracted much attention is Ray's Bream (*Brama brama* (Bonnaterre)). During the nineteenth century, there were apparently only about eight confirmed records from Norfolk (references summarized by Mead and Haedrich, 1965). However, in 1927 and 1952, there were considerable invasions of the North Sea (Mead and Haedrich, 1965), and more recently, *Brama* was remarkably abundant in 1967 (Wheeler and Blacker, 1969), 1969 (Wheeler and Blacker, 1972) and 1970 (Wheeler, Blacker and Pirie, 1975).

The distribution of adults is virtually limited by the 10 °C isotherm and there is a northerly migration beginning in April from off Spain and Portugal, around Ireland and Scotland, into the northern entrance of the North Sea, followed by a southward drift in September and October as the 10 °C isotherm retreats. In November and December, the fish become trapped in the North Sea, and the high percentage of beached specimens suggests that the decrease in sea temperature leads to disorientation and stranding, especially during storms (Mead and Haedrich, 1965; Wheeler and Blacker, 1969). A fair proportion (8-25%) of recorded North Sea specimens occur off Norfolk, probably because the North Sea gyre tends to throw them onto the north coast, those that miss being swept out to sea; this would also explain the rarity of *Brama* on the Suffolk and Essex coasts. Table 1 summarizes data from 1966 to 1971 (from Wheeler and Blacker, 1969 and 1972; and Wheeler, Blacker and Pirie, 1975). The remarkable increase in numbers entering the North Sea during the last decade might indicate some dramatic change in hydrographic conditions, but more data is required to confirm this. Recent reports indicate yet another above average influx during the winter of 1976-77.

TABLE 1
Records of Rays' Bream off Norfolk 1966 - 1971

Year	No. Recorded in North Sea	No. and % off Norfolk	No. and % Norfolk specimens stranded
1966	13	1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)
1967	77	13 (16.9%)	12 (92.3%)
1968	8	2 (25.0%)	2 (100%)
1969	99	9 (9.1%)	7 (77.8%)
1970	67	9 (13.4%)	6 (66.7%)
1971	28	5 (17.9%)	5 (100.0%)

Recently I have recorded Ray's Bream in Norfolk three times: a 45cm specimen on Cley beach on 13 December 1975, following a storm; a 40 cm specimen on Wells beach on 20 November 1976; and a 40 cm specimen on the marsh east of Brancaster Staithe on 21 November 1976. All three specimens were beached and, had obviously died very recently.

I am grateful to Mr. A. Wheeler for his helpful advice in preparing this paper.

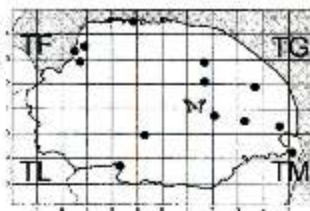
(See page 15 for references)



Excursion

Reports

● 2007-08 Field
Meeting location
Easton College
Indoor meetings



DERSINGHAM BOG

Sunday, 29th July, 2007



As Ashley Murray of Natural England, leader of this field meeting, will have addressed the Society about the history and management of Dersingham Bog by the time this account appears in print, it has been kept intentionally brief and largely restricted to a selection of species seen by the party on its visit.

A modest number of members gathered and were met by Ash at the SSSI car park on a lovely sunny morning. The area near the entrance to the site has become slightly enriched and we were confronted initially by stands of wood sage and wavy hair-grass rather than the ling that covers many of the open heathland areas. White-tailed bumblebees were particularly in evidence. Ash had set up a moth trap the previous night beneath nearby trees which had garnered a rich and fascinating haul including olive, dark spectacle, peppered, black arches, pebble hooktip, poplar hawk-, pine hawk-, large emerald, common footman, true lovers knot, mother of pearl, ruby tiger, broad-bordered yellow underwing and flame shoulder moths.

We were fortunate to have David Richmond with us, so more grasshoppers were located in the heath and bog areas (some by their sound only) than would otherwise have been the case, including mottled and common green. Before descending to the bog itself, we had admired the view to the Wash from the top of the ancient but still surprisingly lofty and steep Wolferton Sea Cliff, now well inland. Sand martins formerly nested in it, but have not been present for some years. The worn path from the clifftop down to the bog is a good indicator of one aspect of the local geology, as the brown carstone, much used in a narrow band of west Norfolk as building material, is plentifully exposed.

From the boardwalk over the bog we admired glistening round-leaved sundews in flower and bog asphodel flowers mainly going over, as well as much more plentiful cross-leaved heath. Oblong-leaved sundew is also present at Dersingham, but in a different part of the bog to which we didn't penetrate. A 'target' of our walk was the black darter dragonfly in one of its very few Norfolk



sites, but it seemed we were to be disappointed and most members of the party had left the boardwalk and were hoping to spot solitary wasps emerging from their holes in a sandy part of the track, when Paul Woolnough, still searching behind, found a single black darter – a male, I believe. It remained obligingly on hand and mainly at rest in a small area of rushes etc. as most members quickly retraced their steps to admire it.

We finished the morning standing in a beautiful elevated and wide expanse of heather, not quite in fullest flower, but remarkable nevertheless in that it had thickly repossessed heathland until very recently conifer-covered. At this point the party split to have lunch in different places so that people could follow their own inclinations in the afternoon.

Many thanks to Ash, who combined close knowledge and experience of the site with splendidly wide-ranging species identification skills to ensure we had a memorable visit.

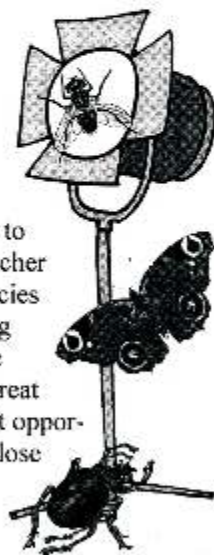
Stephen Martin

Survey Spotlight

Mammals in Norfolk

As autumn turns to winter, temperatures fall and day length shortens, much of Norfolk's wildlife becomes more difficult to observe, with activity levels of both the watched and the watcher decreasing in tandem. Mammals are no exception, many species electing to spend the winter in a warm, dry location, lowering their metabolic rates and entering the state of torpor that we know as hibernation. However, while winter may not be a great time to look for bats, for example, it can provide an excellent opportunity for watching some of our larger mammals. As plants lose their leaves and die back, the amount of cover afforded to species such as brown hare and roe deer decreases and reduced food availability often forces typically wary species to spend more time foraging in open habitats.

Lying snow (a rarity these days, it has to be said) increases the opportunity to monitor mammals indirectly through tracks and signs. So, by braving the chill wind of winter, you will almost certainly increase your chances of many mammal species.



I now have a vested interest in encouraging you to do just this, as I've recently taken over from Mike Toms as the Norfolk Mammal Recorder. Working as his assistant over the past four years, I've been able to learn a great deal, both about mammals and about the recording system that Mike has helped to develop, and I'm very fortunate that he will continue to be available to provide advice and support when needed.

Recording of Norfolk's mammals is increasing at an incredibly encouraging rate. A total of 3,277 mammal records were submitted to the county recorder in 2006, several hundred more than in 2005 and over a thousand more than in 2004, and we're extremely grateful to everybody who contributed. There is still plenty of scope for increasing coverage, though. The species for which most records were submitted last year was actually Chinese water deer, with over 400 reported sightings, compared to just 200 for roe deer. While it's great to have such good coverage of the rarer species in the county, it would also be very useful to receive more records of the more abundant mammals. We really are interested in records of absolutely any species, no matter how common, seen anywhere in the county, from gardens to nature reserves. All your records will be included in the county database and will contribute to the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report, in which you'll be fully acknowledged.

If you do see any mammal, the most important pieces of information to note down are the species, the location (place name and grid reference if possible), the date and whether you've seen a live individual or found a dead one. You can either email your sightings to me directly at dave.leech@bto.org or use the recording form that can be downloaded from the N&NNS website at www.nnns.org.uk/recording/Norfolk_Records.xls. If you don't have access to a computer then write to me at BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU and I can send you a recording sheet in the post which you can return to the same address once you've filled it in. Thanks in advance to everybody who sends their records in – let's see if we can top 3,500 in 2008!

A NOTE ON RAY'S BREAM IN NORFOLK

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- WHEELER, A. & BLACKER, R. W., 1969. "Rare and little-known fishes in British seas in 1966 and 1967". *J. Fish Biol.*, 1, pp.311-331.
- WHEELER, A., BLACKER, R. W., & PIRIE, S. F., 1975. "Rare and little-known fishes in British seas in 1970 and 1971." *J. Fish Biol.*, 7, pp.183-201.

From N&NNS TRANSACTIONS Volume 24, Part 2 (April 1977)



RESEARCH

Round-up

Norfolk and Suffolk Bryological Group Meetings 2007/8.

Beginners are always very welcome, the only equipment needed is a handlens (x10 or x20) and some paper packets for collecting specimens. Meetings begin at 10.30am. (except for the 18th November and 16th March) and will only be cancelled if there is snow or hard frost.

Saturday 1st December 2007. Sugar Fen (Leziate, Sugar and Derby Fens SSSI), by permission of The Grimston Fen Allotment Trust. Remnant Valley Fen with wet Birch and Alder woodland. Park in small layby at TF 696 207 or opp on L of Darby Farm Saddlery entrance (we have the owner's permission) – do not block driveway.

Sunday 16th December 2007. Lamb's Common and The Narboroughs, West Acre Estate, by permission of Mr.H.Birkbeck. Un-managed, woodland, wet in places. Park on verges where track meets road at TF 729 167. Follow track and Permissive Path signs into wood.

Saturday 5th January 2008. Booton Church & Booton Common SSSI, a NWT Reserve. Woodland and Fen. Meet at Booton Church, TG 122 223, to survey Churchyard, then go to free car park, Station Road, Reepham (N exit of cross rds in Reepham) at TG 099 230. Walk to Common appr ¾m - take Booton road (no verges or pavements) past Reepham churches on R, Reepham Fishery on R, over small R bridge, L into 'The Street' almost opp Booton vlge sign, cont straight ahead L of Community Path board onto grass track.

Sunday 20th January 2008. Gresham's School, by permission of Mr. A. Clark, Headmaster. Thatched roofs (ladders provided), mixed and wet woodland with ponds, ditches, banks and outdoor theatre stonework. Meet on the School main car park, entrance just E of footbridge at TG 088 392.

Saturday 2nd February 2008. Whitwell Common SSSI. Wet woodland, Fen, unimproved grassland, old peat-cutting hollows. Follow-on from short visit in Jan 2005. Park in small pull-in by phone box at TG 084 204, perhaps 4x4's on verge opp.

Sunday 17th February 2008. Horningtoft Woods, by permission of Mr. Colin Palmer. Mixed woodland. Meet at Manor Farm, TF 944 237.



Saturday 1st March 2008. Sandringham Estate, by permission of Mr.M.J.O'Loone, Land Agent, numbers limited, contact Pat Negal, 01508 471 070 in February 2008.

Sunday 16th March 2008 at 11am. NNNS meeting for Lichens at Snettisham led by Peter Lambley. Meet at the Church TF 691 344 moving on later to RSPB Reserve TF 650 328 for *Cladonia* heath.

Saturday 29th March 2008. Buckemhan Carrs, by permission of Mr.T and Mr.M.Savory. Carr woodland, dykes, very wet in places, some areas of "hover". Meet the Warden, Joe Cullum at Broad Farm, Hassingham, TG 368 054.

British Bryological Society Recorders:

Robin Stevenson, 111 Wootton Road, King's Lynn, PE30 4DJ.
Tel: 01533 766 788.

Mary Ghulam, 5 Beech Drive, North Walsham, Norfolk, NR28 OBZ.
Tel: 01692 402 013

Richard Fiske, 35 Fair Close, Beccles, Suffolk, NR 34 9QR.
Tel: 01502 714 968.

Programme:

Pat Negal, 'Inishmore', Greenways, Newton Flotman, Norfolk, NR15 1QJ
Tel: 01508 471 070

The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*'
will be February 2008.

Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by
January 7th 2008
to the following address:

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Norfolk, NR26 8QD
Email: francis.f@virgin.net

Please send all photographic material to:
Simon Harrap, 1 Norwich Road, Edgefield, Melton Constable,
Norfolk, NR22 2RP
Email: harrap@onetel.net

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