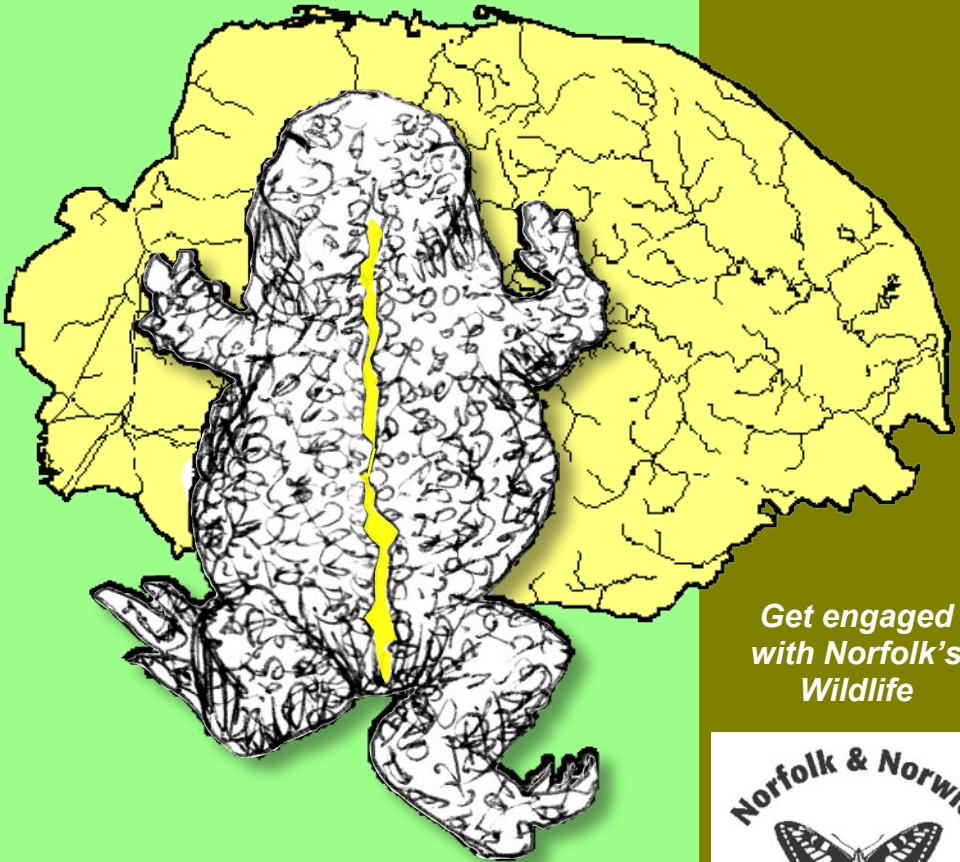


The Norfolk

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Natterjack



*Get engaged
with Norfolk's
Wildlife*



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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Reg. Charity No. 291604

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Toad-in-the-hole....

My thanks to those contributors and photographers who have sent in material for this *Natterjack*. Again there is a variety of subjects ranging from fungi to birds including the 2012 results of Malcolm Metcalf's Rook nest survey and all you ever wanted to know about slugs! There are also three excursion reports covering the wet summer so you can find out what was seen by those who braved the showers!

FF

A dish worth serving?

Tony Brown



Three or four years ago the chef of a local hotel rang me after having read one of my nature articles in the *Yarmouth Mercury*. He asked if I could identify some fungus growing around the property so I agreed to visit him.

There was a large garden area more park-like than garden-like with a large pond and various trees growing all around and I was quite taken by the place from the start. The chef led me to the fungus in question and asked, 'are they ok for me to cook and serve them to my guests'. The species in question were honey fungus (*Armillaria mellea*) and oyster mushrooms (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) with quite large clumps of both species growing around cut down tree stumps and in the grass. He told me that the trees had been cut down some time previously because they were diseased but I suspected with the amount of honey fungus growing around the stumps, the trees had most likely succumbed to attack from that fungus rather than any disease.

I told him that the oyster mushrooms were indeed edible and extremely tasty and since there were lots of them there would be plenty to go around for his guests. However I did advise him against using the honey fungus for any culinary purpose because I had always thought them to be inedible, not necessary poisonous but of no value, but I now know that they are indeed edible when cooked although I have never tried them.

I spent some time chatting with him and he told me to feel at home and have a wander around the grounds with the invite to visit whenever I wished. As I wandered around the grounds I came to an area where there was a large stack of logs, some around four feet in length. They were mainly birch as were the stumps where the honey fungus was growing. On inspection pulling the bark loose there were the telltale signs, there were lots of rhizomorphs of the fungus which had undoubtedly brought about the demise of the trees. Often referred to as the bootlace fungus the rhizomorphs do resemble the old fashioned leather bootlaces. When I left the premises I thought to myself, yes I really must come back here again at different times of the year. It was almost a small nature reserve in its own right.

Resurrection Plants?

Peter Moore



Sea walls, especially those that have been newly constructed or modified, are often rich in botanical interest. One such is the wall leading from Burnham Overy Staithe to the dunes on the east side of the channel. The northern section of this wall has been extensively elevated over the past two years and its new covering of vegetation is now densely developed. At its northern extremity the dominant species are Weld *Reseda luteola* and Opium Poppies *Papaver somniferum*. But interspersed with these a far more interesting plant has put in an appearance, namely White Mignonette *Reseda alba*. This species is easily separated from the Weld, its common relative, as it has larger flowers that are white rather than greenish yellow, five petals rather than four, longer fruits with four apical lobes (the remnants of four stigmas), whereas weld has three, and deeply divided leaves. Beckett and Bull claim that there have only been three records of this species in the county, the last being in 1966. Petch and Swann list records from 1916, 1921, 1929, and 1966, the latter record being that of E.T. Daniels, who further adds (in the 1975 Supplement to the Petch and Swann Flora) that the colony in Norwich had become extinct by 1970. Now three plants, all robust, flowering and fruiting, have turned up on the Burnham Overy sea wall. Their association with Opium Poppies is intriguing, and one additional associate adds to the puzzle. Several plants of Larkspur *Consolida ajacis* are also growing on the newly constructed wall. Beckett and Bull regard most records of this species in Norfolk as garden escapes, but some, including these rather remote individuals, are far removed from garden habitats. This plant was once known as a cornfield weed, especially in eastern England, and one cannot help wondering whether its presence here, along with the white mignonette and opium poppies, is a result of resurrection from a dormant seed bank. Perhaps someone has information concerning the origin of any topsoil used in the construction of this sea wall? Was it local, by any chance? Whatever the source, it is pleasing to record that White Mignonette has once again raised its capsules in Norfolk for the first time in half a century.

Seaside Seeds

Tony Howes



I brought some seeds of Marsh Mallow *Althaea officinalis* home from a seaside site, they are usually found growing in the vicinity of the sea and obviously don't mind a bit of salt. I was curious to find out if they would grow elsewhere, they all germinated and grew well in my garden, flowering during August and September, looking at all times robust and healthy.

THERE BE DRAGONS....

Nick Elsey

On one of the few sunny days in June and with David Nobbs firmly ensconced as helmsman, Pam Taylor and I, along with UEA student Kate Waters, set out in the Wheatfen work boat in the pursuit of dragonfly and damselfly larvae. This mode of transport allowed us to survey those areas that are inaccessible on foot and be able to record those species which are not readily found in the dyke system of this tidal reserve.

Setting off, we caught excellent views of an Norfolk Hawker *Aeshna isosceles* patrolling Home Dyke along with several Four-spotted Chasers *Libellula quadrimaculata* which busied themselves in the pursuit of food or a likely mate. Pairs of Azure Damselflies *Coenagrion puella* were ovipositing into the large mats of Water Starwort *Callitriche spp* and algae that in places form an almost impenetrable mass of vegetation on the dyke's surface.

On reaching a bed of Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea* at a main dyke junction I had hoped to find the larvae of Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*, the adults of which are regularly seen resting on the floating leaves. Using nets we made several sweeps of the area but to no avail.

In order to have an examination tray ready, a plunge of the bucket was made and this produced our first larva. Pam's expertise readily identified it to be that of Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*. This is not a species that is regularly recorded due to its' habit of generally flying low over larger bodies of water.

At various places we came across rafts of Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* and Cowbane *Cicuta virosa* which move freely around the dyke system with the tide. It was suggested that the submerged root systems probably make excellent habitats for several species of aquatic invertebrates, including Odonata. Our searching was not as fruitful as had been hoped with Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans* being the only other species to be caught. We did find a single larva of Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens* at the one spot where it had been predicted. This species is usually associated with faster flowing water than is found on this reserve.

Overall, our best success came when we trawled the many dykes which run off the main channel and broads. It is assumed that here the larvae can feed and find shelter amongst the dense and fairly static aquatic vegetation.

An after lunch venture out on to Home Marsh and around Thack Pond produced a total of 11 species of adult Odonata for the day.

Request for Ant Records

Your county needs your records! Please could anyone who has recorded ants this year (or before) and who has not already sent these to me, or to NBIS, send their records to me (e-mail address below). Biological records need to contain the minimum of **What, Where, When and Who**, as follows:

1. **Species name**
2. **Location and Grid Ref**
3. **Date Recorded**
4. **Recorder's name**



Additional information, such as habitat details and nest description, is also very useful. If you need help with identification, please contact me and I will be happy to help.

Do you have ants in your garden? Are you curious about yours? Would you like me to visit and identify the ant species in **your garden** next year? These records could play a vital part in documenting the ant species across Norfolk.

Many thanks,

Doreen Wells, County Ant Recorder

1 Cobden Terrace, Northgate Street, Great Yarmouth, NR30 1BT

e-mail: wells_doreen@hotmail.com

2012 – The Year of the Slug

Dorothy Cheyne & Garth Coupland



No one can have missed realising that the unusually wet weather this year has been ideal for SLUGS!. Here on the South Norfolk claylands where I live we have slugs by the million and I have labelled 2012 as ‘The Year of the Slug’.

In the old washing up bowl in the photograph you will see the result of 20 minutes collecting around my house on 19th July. The dominant slug species is *Arion ater*, with some *Limax maximus*, one or two small, greyish *Limax marginatus* and tiny creamy coloured *Deroceras reticulatum*. Snails do not seem to have benefitted from the wet weather so much, as their numbers appear close to normal. The washing up bowl was placed in the long grass and the animals allowed to disperse at their own pace.

I flipped two bank voles and a shrew onto the lawn that had unfortunately drowned in a water butt. It was then that I learnt that some slugs are carnivores – soon there were three huddles of slugs dining on the decomposing corpses! Not

an attractive sight, I have to admit! Slugs are also partial to consuming their dead compatriots. I am not sure that some were not even taking nibbles out of other living molluscs when they were cheek by jowl in the washing up bowl.

My interest in slugs having been aroused, I did a bit of research on the internet and also contacted our local expert on gastropods, Garth Coupland. So here are some of the interesting facts compiled between us (in no particular order). There are some very conflicting 'facts' out there on the www, so if anyone cares to confidently dispute any element of the list below, feel free to supply an amended truth!

- They only have one lung, with an external respiratory pore always on the right side of their body. Their 'foot' is one large muscle.
- They grind up their food before swallowing it with a radula - an emery-board's worth of tiny teeth which move forward and are constantly replaced as they wear down (does that remind you of sharks!).
- They are hermaphrodite, but usually exchange sperm with another slug and both then lay eggs.
- There are approximately 30 species of slug in the UK, and Garth reckons we have about 21 of those in Norfolk. A new slug has recently arrived in Britain from Spain - *Arion flagellu*. It is larger and lays 400 eggs a year compared to the 100 or so laid by native species, and so may out-compete them and cause a change in the balance of slug biodiversity.
- They smell and taste with their tentacles, the larger, top pair are light sensitive too. Their sense of smell is acute and they appear to rear up into the breeze to get a better sniff to home in on the direction of the next dog mess! (thank Garth for that unsavoury insight!) They use their sense of smell to return to their daytime hideaway so they do have very good homing instinct.
- The BBC claim that the first ever filming in the wild of the unbelievably extraordinary mating habits of *Limax maximus* took place in Norfolk. (Sorry - not enough space to describe it here – if you are curious, do some research on the internet)
- Norfolk's largest slug is *Limax cinereoniger* which in Europe can grow to a length of 30 cms. The smallest, *Deroceras laeve*, is also the fastest and Garth has timed it at a staggering 30 cms per minute, approximately!
- The large Leopard slug *Limax maximus* has been known to live for 5.3yrs

- My studies of *Limax maximus* show their incredible oneness with the Universal cycles, in that their minute brain and genetics programme them to mate within a window of the same 3 days each year namely August 11, 12 & 13. How this is achieved I don't know. It certainly has nothing to do with weather. (Garth)

If any of you are as mad as Garth or myself (sorry, should I say 'as scientifically curious?') and want to follow the slime trail deeper into the lives of slugs and snails, Garth says there is only really one book to buy and that is the Collins Field Guide to The Land Snails of Britain & N.W. Europe by Kerney & Cameron, and a good internet site is:



www.field-studies-council.org/fieldstudies/documents/vol5.5_156_A.pdf

Strumpshaw Diary

Brian Macfarlane



The autumn is here, just, as I write this article. By the time you read it the weather will be a lot colder, and maybe even a flurry of snow. The last four months have been a none event for me photography wise. I have been stuck indoors virtually the whole time since April, so have not been to my usual reserves.

The first time I resumed visiting Strumpshaw I was rewarded by a wonderful sighting of an Osprey carrying not one, but two fish in one talon. It made my day! The water levels have been lowered for the annual maintenance on the reserve.. That has left some mud showing in front of the Fen hide, so I am hoping to see some waders feeding. One lovely greenshank did fly in one day, but did not stay long. Other people have seen Snipe and Green Sandpipers. There are a large number of Herons, and thirteen have been seen in one place. Two little Egrets have stayed on the reserve for sometime now, and seem to fish successfully in the shallow water. Kingfishers are seen regularly, and Otters pass through occasionally. One interesting find the third week in September was a juvenile Cuckoo seen eating worms on a grassy patch. A pair of Stock Doves fly around usually every time I go.

I went to Rockland St Mary which is just the other side of the river from Strumpshaw. There I was lucky enough to get a Short-eared owl, and a Barn owl in the same frame.

September is the month when I see large flocks of Greylag, and Canada geese flying in from the fields, and landing on the water in front of the Tower hide.

I have been a couple of times to Cley recently. There were a lot of Black-tailed Godwits about, and over 20 Spoonbills have been seen flying in and out of Cley. This shows they now seem to be breeding successfully.

I'm looking forward to the winter months in anticipation of seeing more migrants coming in. The down side is getting very cold sitting in the hides for long periods. I have decided to ration my stay to two hour sessions as this will help keep down the number of chest infections I seem to get when sitting too long.

Honoured

Dr Ian Keymer, one of the Society's longest-serving and most distinguished members, has been honoured by the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. At the Trust's annual meeting on October 18th, he was presented with the Sydney Long Memorial Medal for his voluntary work for Norfolk's wildlife.

The citation read:

Dr Ian Keymer was a consultant veterinary pathologist and lecturer whose career included work for the Natural History Museum, the Zoological Society of London, and, back in his native Norfolk, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

He is an author and a keen amateur naturalist with special interests in birds, amphibians, mammals and wildlife diseases. Since the 1950s, he has studied the wildlife of the military Stanford Training Area where he is currently surveying nightingales and otters.

Ian has been a member of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust for over fifty years, serving on its Council and Conservation Committee, plus being an active volunteer on the fund-raising "A-Team". He is a long-standing member of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, serving on its Council and was President in 1997-98. He has contributed to the work of the Society in many ways, including the editorship of the annual Mammal Report.

He continues to be a prolific recorder of the county's wildlife and gives his time most generously in supporting and encouraging fellow naturalists.

Accordingly, the Councils of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society have the greatest pleasure in awarding

Ian Keymer - The Sydney Long Memorial Medal - For the year 2012

A Master Fisherman

Tony Howes



Watching a heron at Strumpshaw fen recently, I was reminded of how patient they must be when looking for something to eat. This particular bird stood motionless on the edge of the reeds, intently watching the water for at least half an hour, then stretched out its neck as its attention was caught by movement close by. Very slowly it moved forward a couple of paces, then like a rapier the head and neck shot down into the ripples and emerged seconds later with a fish impaled on its bill. A fair sized roach was the catch, it would probably require a few of these to make a substantial meal, but it was soon turned round and swallowed head first, a master fisherman at work.

Predatory Neighbours

Hans Watson



Earlier this year I witnessed an incident that involved two species of bird, both of which we used to regard as extremely rare when I was a boy, but which we nowadays see fairly frequently in this part of the country. The birds were a female Marsh Harrier and a Bittern. I was watching the Bittern flying leisurely over the reed-bed, when the female Marsh Harrier suddenly swooped into the camera viewfinder, and struck the Bittern with its talons, causing it to make a hasty crash landing in the reeds. This event took place about 200 meters away from me, and as usual I was so enthralled that I was slow to press the shutter button, and thus did not catch the actual moment of contact. The long range at which this all took place did not help me to obtain very good images, but the images show the moment immediately after the contact, and the Bittern's less than graceful decent into the reeds.

This event prompted me to marvel at how birds seem to have an instinctive knowledge of which other species pose any kind of threat. We often see birds mobbing birds of another species, such as Crows mobbing Harriers, and other raptors, or Lapwings mobbing Crows etc. In most cases the bird acting as the aggressor has a nest or young close-by, and sees the other bird as a predatory threat. A Bittern does not at first seem to be much of a threat to an adult Marsh Harrier, but Bitterns and other members of the heron family are known to eat young birds, and even adult birds if they are small enough to swallow. I could not help wondering if the Harrier's behaviour was an indication of recently hatched, and therefore vulnerable young harriers nearby.

A Feathered Policeman

Alec Bull

Just after 9.00 am on May 21st, we were looking down our paddock while we drank a cup of coffee. A family of very baby rabbits had been seen in the bottom corner and at least one was out at that time, having his breakfast. A cock Pheasant was nearby, probably seven or eight yards from the rabbit.

Suddenly the local Carrion Crow came swooping down and pounced on the rabbit. We have seen this happen before when they have young to feed and small rabbits are usually dispatched quite quickly. Not this time though. Without a seconds hesitation, the cock Pheasant spread his wings and hurled himself at the Crow knocking it completely off balance. The Crow quickly recovered and made as if to renew its attack on the rabbit but was quickly sent flying twice more by the Pheasant before realising that it had a formidable foe and gave up the hunt and flew off.

While mobbing of Crows and other predators is commonplace, we can never remember seeing a bird of any sort making a sustained attack on a predator in defense of a small mammal. Has anybody else?

A Merlin Moment

John Vincent

My wife and I were driving back from our weekly shop in North Walsham around 13.00 on a dull dank November day. Turning into the lane leading down into Edingthorpe village we noticed a dark shape on the tarmac close to the right hand bank, some 10 -15 metres in. It had a vaguely feathery outline and I suspected a road casualty hen Pheasant. Not so!

As we closed a bird lifted from the shape and was readily identifiable as a Merlin, probably a first winter bird from the brightness and contrast of its plumage, with a lesser possibility of it being an adult female.

Immediately following, a second bird resolved itself out of the balance of the shape, lifted, and was easily identified as an adult Wood Pigeon. Both birds set off down the lane north towards the sea, the Merlin holding close formation above the Wood Pigeon. They passed out of sight, but there was little doubt the Merlin's blood was up and it did not intend losing its prey.

So was this sighting the rarity I think it was?

The bird books consistently write of the Merlin being a dashing aerial predator of small birds. To see it successfully downing a Wood Pigeon, a powerful flyer half as big again as itself and probably twice its body weight, was, for me at least, a revelation.

Rook Nest Survey 2012

The 2012 Rook Nest Survey held many surprises compared with last year. There were many new sites and the numbers were up on most sites too. Johnathan Hall from Wormegay in North-west Norfolk found 160 nests at just one location plus many other new sites and Cliff Maidstone of Little Plumstead sent in over 500 nests. I am indebted to them and the dozens of contributors who also took part.

Malcolm Metcalf

Location	2011	2012	+/-/=
Acle		12	NEW
Aldeby - near Church (2 sites)	84	78	-6
Aldeby - near College Farm	10	20	+10
Ashill	40	38	-2
Attleborough - near Church		12	NEW
Attleborough – B1077 (3 sites)	31	128	+97
Alysham	25	30	+5
Burgh Castle – Butt Lane	42	170	+128
Burgh Castle - Church	16	50	+34
Belton – off Sandy Lane		7	NEW
Billockby	50	92	+42
Blofield – next to Garden Centre	19	20	+1
Blofield - Church	11	33	+22
Blofield – Oak Road	41	39	-2
Blofield – Rookery House	6	7	+1
Buckingham Marshes – near Station	25	30	+5
Burgh St Peter (2 sites)	29	59	+30
Burgh St Peter - Marshes		51	NEW
Bawdeswell – (2 sites)	22	59	+37
Beeston Regis		12	NEW
Brisley – near Foxborough Farm	20	21	+1
Bexwell		50	NEW
Brandon Creek		50	NEW
Beechamwell		120	NEW
Bintree	8	15	+7
Bracon Ash	60	122	+62
Bradwell – near Hall		40	NEW
Carleton Rode	40	42	+2
Cromer - (2 sites)	46	56	+10
Caister on sea – near Tesco	17	24	+7
Claxton – near Beauchamp Arms road		60	NEW
Dereham – Golf Club		50	NEW
Dereham – (2 sites)	36	30	-6
Dereham – Mattishall Road		7	NEW
Dereham – Crown Road		2	NEW
Dunston Hall – near Norwich	15	63	+48
Easton – Dereham Road (Vicarage)	130	155	+25
Easton – near St Peter's Church (beside A47)	77	84	+7
Easton – Marlingford Road	46	61	+15
East Winch	14	16	+2
Fakenham	6	6	=
Fransham	82	137	+55
Foxley	5	7	+2
Foxley – West of village		31	NEW
Great Ryburgh	30	27	-3
Griston – Church	3	3	=
Griston – Lynda Piercey's Garden	19	11	-8
Griston – Village	10	10	=
Griston – Park grounds	159	164	+5
Griston Farm	29	19	-10

Location	2011	2012	+ / - / =
Great Plumstead	43	47	+4
Guist	35	40	+5
Gaywood – Spring Wood		33	NEW
Gorleston – Lowestoft Road Halls Farm	3	16	+13
Great Dunham – Rookery Farm	45	90	+45
Great Yarmouth – Caister Road	5	10	+5
Gillingham – South side	42	54	+12
Gillingham – North side	20	28	+8
Horsford – Church Lane	87	161	+74
Haddiscoe – Thorpe Road		60	NEW
Horsham St Faiths		66	NEW
Hippersons Boatyard – near Beccles		5	NEW
Hockering	14	36	+22
Halvergate	40	42	+2
Harleston	26	49	+23
Hilgay		80	NEW
Hingham – near Church	20	22	+2
Honingham - (2 sites)		33	NEW
Hetherset – Hall and nr Farm Shop (2 sites)	122	134	+12
Hetherset – Church		46	NEW
Hetherset – Whitegates Fire HQ		31	NEW
Hetherset – near School		7	NEW
Ingham - near Church	20	26	+6
Ingham – northeast of Village	30	32	+2
Kings Lynn - Centre	26	30	+4
Kings Lynn – near Roundabout		12	NEW
Kings Lynn – Hardwick Narrows		12	NEW
Lingwood – Old Manor	6	6	=
Little Melton		66	NEW
Lenwade		40	NEW
Langham	40	44	+4
Little Plumstead	51	55	+4
Little Plumstead – Water Lane		55	NEW
Ludham – near Church	25	29	+4
Larling – near Pub		120	NEW
Mileham	14	16	+2
Mautby	32	34	+2
Marsham – near Plough Inn	20	24	+4
Mattishall – near		25	NEW
Middleton - Church	40	42	+2
Middleton - near Church	20	25	+5
Mulbarton – off Long Lane		22	NEW
Martham	150	162	+12
Methwold – Cemetery / Park	82	85	+3
Methwold – No. 4 Main Road		12	NEW
Methwold – The Globe		163	NEW
Morton on the Hill	20	84	+64
Magdalen – near Kings Lynn		14	NEW
North Waltham	42	42	=
North Walsham	35	35	=
North Elmham	16	18	+2
North Wooton – All Saints Church	29	55	+26
Norwich – UEA (Small Wood)	10	24	+14
Narborough	55	96	+41
North Tuddenham	18	38	+20
Newton Flotman – A140 (3 sites)		53	NEW
North Ructon – (2 sites)		38	NEW
Necton	20	20	=
Pulham – South Green		32	NEW

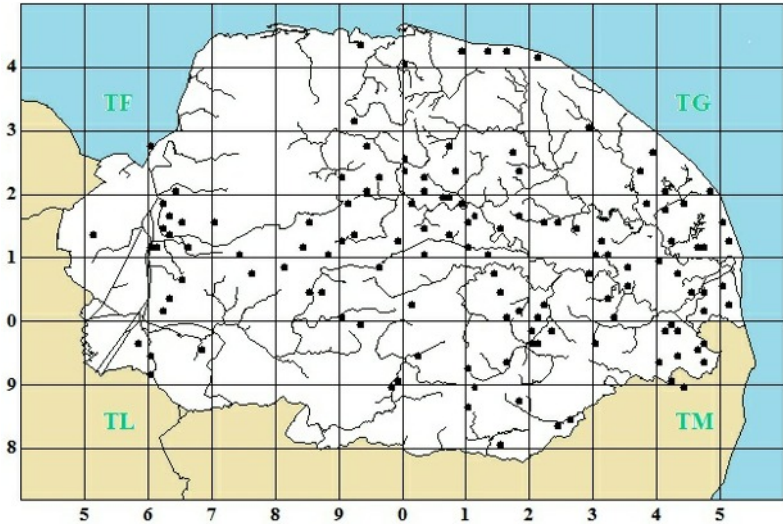
Location	2011	2012	+ / - / =
Postwick	41	28	-13
Potter Heigham – (2 sites)	15	20	+5
Pickenham		47	NEW
Runham – near Church	37	20	-17
Repps with Bastwick	6	6	=
Reedham	48	55	+7
Ryston		20	NEW
Reepham		34	NEW
Rackheath – South of Hall		17	NEW
Scole - Near	30	36	+6
Scratby	35	43	+8
Shipdam	16	20	+4
Somerton – West (2 sites)	30	38	+8
Sutton – London Road B1172		32	NEW
Sporle	12	40	+28
Swanton Morley – (2 sites)		80	NEW
Snetterton – North of Racetrack	52	192	+140
Somerleyton – near Station west	45	46	+1
Somerleyton - East of Station		60	NEW
Somerleyton – opposite Post Office		30	NEW
Swaffham – Church	20	16	-4
Swaffham - Near	19	39	+20
Swaffham – East near MacDonalds		60	NEW
Sparham		24	NEW
Saxingham Nethergate – near Rectory		37	NEW
Shotsham		43	NEW
Seething		15	NEW
Southery		5	NEW
Spixworth – (2 sites)	90	158	+68
Setchey – A10		30	NEW
Stibbard	116	142	+26
Stradsett – A134 / A1122		40	NEW
Swainsthorpe		34	NEW
Sheringham – Salthouse Road A149	10	14	+4
Sheringham – Weybourne Road		4	NEW
Thorpe next Haddiscoe – behind Church	54	120	+66
Thurton – Lower behind Farm	51	113	+63
Thurton – North End Marshes	30	75	+45
Thurton – A146 off Sallow Lane	52	42	-10
Taverham – Beech Avenue	50	180	+130
Taverham – behind School		16	NEW
Tasburgh	51	40	-11
Tibenham	2	2	=
Tibenham – Goose Green	12	10	-2
Waxham – near Big Barn	13	16	+3
Winterton	13	40	+27
Worlingham	10	10	=
Winfarthing	21	26	+5
West Winch – Church		34	NEW
Wood Dalling	110	128	+18
Wisbech – St Peter's Church		3	NEW
Wheatacre – behind Church	46	64	+18
Warham	18	22	+4
Wending	60	62	+2
Wormegay – near Priory Farm		160	NEW
Wortwell – behind Goodwins Garage	24	27	+3
Wortwell – opposite Bell PH	9	9	=
Wortwell – off Mill Lane	6	4	-2
Wortwell – behind Sayes Farm	16	18	+2
Watton – Beaufort Park entrance	25	26	+1

Location	2011	2012	+/- /#
Watton – behind Bluebell Close		8	NEW
Weston Longville	60	58	-2
Walpole Highway	30	34	+4
Watlington		20	NEW
West Bilney - Church	25	30	+5
Whissonset	89	115	+26

Total no of nests in 2011 = 4115

Total no of nests in 2012 = 8243

Largest increase +140 at Snetterton - north of racetrack (from 52 to 192) also this was the largest rookery recorded.



Dmap of Parish Rookeries

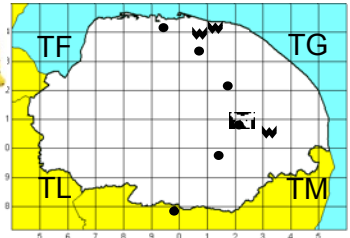
Jay Watch

Colin Jacobs

On Thursday 4th October 2012 I was birding around my new patch at Great Yarmouth North Denes, north to Caister Beach. I was observing and recording visible migration of Goldfinches, a Kestrel in off the sea and a selection of Skylarks and Meadow Pipits flying south. At around midday I saw a flock of seven Jays flying in off the sea at height, however, they decreased altitude as they reached the urban area over a housing estate. On Saturday 6th October I was taking my daily walk along the same route and again observed Jays coming in at height over the Denes. By the time I had reached Caister cliffs, two hours later, I had counted a number of flocks of ten to 20 Jays coming in off the sea, but again decreasing height as they neared land, where some also spilt off from the main group. The total number reached 136 and was by far the best immigration count I have made in the UK.

Excursion

Reports



Stody Estate

Sunday 24th June 2012

Seventeen participants, including NNNS and Norfolk Flora Group botanists, gathered on a rainy morning at Breck Farm on the Stody Estate for this year's 'Wild Flowers Revealed' field meeting, the 24th in the series, no less. With Ross Haddow, the Estate Manager, as our guide, we then drove on past Stody Lodge to park on Estate land on the outskirts of Hunworth village.

The 1700-hectare Stody Estate farm is mainly arable, but the Estate includes areas of woodland and open grassland, and the River Glaven, with its otters, brown trout and white-clawed crayfish, runs through it. Open Access Areas with some 20km of permissive bridleways and paths have been established with the support of Natural England, and the Estate won the regional final of Natural England's national farming award scheme. The main objective of our meeting was to look at arable weeds on the conservation headlands, but the varied estate habitats encountered on our walk meant that a much wider flora was enjoyed.

Before setting out we took refuge in an open-sided barn to shelter from a torrential thunderstorm of such Wagnerian intensity and volume that it threatened our ability to hear what Ross had to tell us of the conservation activities and policies of the Estate and Bob Leaney of the arable flora, though both had the compensating advantage of having ample time for this as we waited for the tumult to subside. When it did, we were to find that access even to a raised footbridge alongside a ford across the Glaven was impossible because of floodwater. Conditions, and the vegetation we passed through, were therefore unsurprisingly damp throughout the day, but the rain did relent to a great extent in the remainder of the morning with some sunshine succeeding after lunch.

Bob Ellis's plant list for the day eventually comprised some 278 taxa, so only a few of the more interesting or unusual species can be mentioned here, especially the arable weeds. Areas of 'zero input' barley held Field Madder *Sherardia arvensis* and Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus*, but probably of most interest to the botanists were the cultivated, uncropped headlands which yielded Henbit Dead-nettle *Lamium amplexicaule*, Night-flowering Catchfly *Silene noctiflora* (also seen in the afternoon at the edge of a daffodil field), Flixweed *Descurainia Sophia*, Treacle mustard *Erysium cheiranthoides*, and Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua*.

Along the farm tracks the party walked were found Prickly Poppy *Papaver argemone*, a group of many plants of Venus's-looking-glass *Legousia hybrida*, and, near Breck farm, Orpine *Sedum telephium*. A roadside verge had Wild Clary *Salvia verbenaca*, and Goldenrod *Solidago vigaurea* was found growing on a roadside bank. Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* grew alongside the woodland path by Hanworth Common. The old railway line had Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus*, while Whorl-grass *Catabrosa aquatica* was found alongside the Glaven. The garden 'escape,' Hidcote Comfrey *Symphytum* 'Hidcote Blue' occurred near a gateway to a meadow and another possible escape was Fingercups *Tellima grandiflora*, though, at the time of writing, this needed confirmation.

The morning session had concluded with discussion 'in the field' about how best to manage the conservation headlands, after which all had been invited to the 'Hunny Bell' for liquid refreshments very kindly supplied by Ross - a new feature of the Society's field meetings that was universally acclaimed a splendid innovation. Just before we reached this inn, the bluey-green thallii of Hemisphaeric Liverwort *Reboulia hemisphaerica* were spotted by Mary Ghullam growing abundantly on the bare soil of a steep roadside bank. Mary tells me that North Norfolk seems to be a stronghold of this plant, with its dark purple margins contrasting with the pale green of the thallii, often growing with the small Green-tufted Stubble-moss *Weissia controversa* which resembles twisted green wire when dry, and the delightful Common Apple-moss *Batramia pomiformis*. A quick search revealed a few apple-shaped capsules of the latter and plenty of unfruiting *Weissia*.

Nick Owens listed the birds seen - for which many thanks - including Barn Owl, Buzzard, Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Sparrow hawk, Tree creeper and Whitethroat. A Brown hare was seen, but conditions were poor for bees, though Nick recorded a White-tailed bumblebee.

Many thanks are due to Bob Leaney who, with Bob Ellis, arranged and planned the visit and once more to Ross Haddow who gave up most of his Sunday but remained a pleasant, generous and informative host.

Stephen Martin

Earlham Cemetery, Norwich

Tuesday, 24th July 2012

Ten members joined the leader for this full-day general meeting which focused on the oldest part of the Cemetery where some compartments of grassland are left uncut during the spring and summer to the benefit of the flora and fauna. The aim of the meeting was to give the participants some idea of the wildlife diversity of a site that is perhaps, for the most part, only really appreciated by those who live close by and visit regularly.

During the unsettled weeks leading up to this meeting the modest hope was simply for a dry day but in the event the weather exceeded all expectations with a cloudless sky throughout the day and the temperature climbing into the eighties.

Conditions were ideal for butterflies with areas of unshaded rough grassland supporting good numbers of Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Gatekeeper. Other species were present in fewer numbers but it was pleasing to record Small Copper, which can be erratic in its appearance, and a new generation of Holly Blue was on the wing. Purple hairstreak however, escaped notice although it is widespread on oaks in the old part of the Cemetery.

The Cemetery supports well over 50 species of hoverfly but they were in short supply during the visit with even the normally abundant *Episyrphus balteatus* only seen in small numbers. This was hardly surprising as 2012 proved to be a very poor year for a great many species owing to the incessant rain of spring and summer that had preceded this meeting. Amid a disappointing list for the day we found *Volucella zonaria* at bramble blossom enabling participants to photograph this striking species which is now an established part of the county's fauna. Bramble, though frequently subject to control, is an important plant for insects here in summer especially bumblebees and Satyrid butterflies. One dragonfly species that enjoyed a good year was the Brown Hawker and we encountered it throughout the Cemetery hunting in the vicinity of trees and shrubs.

The Cemetery boasts a wide variety of trees including many non-native species planted for ornamentation. One that we stopped to admire, on our morning walk west of the Crematorium, is the Bee Bee tree *Tetradium daniellii*, a native of Korea that has clusters of white flowers similar to elderberry blooms. In late summer these are extremely attractive to honey bees and a range of other insects, offering nectar at a time when supplies are scarce in the Cemetery. We were unfortunately too early to witness this as the flowers were still in bud but from previous observations I can vouch for the tree's allure to pollinating insects.

Standing close to this tree is a large oak from whose canopy a nuthatch was heard calling repeatedly. Birds were otherwise not much in evidence as to be expected at the time of year.

As lunch approached the group were directed to an area of conserved grassland east of the Crematorium where a large quantity of Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis* was in flower. The presence of this plant holds the key to the occurrence here of a special resident - the Red Data Book mining bee *Andrena hattorfiana*. At least six females were visiting these blooms on which they are dependant for pollen.

The leader has been aware of the species' presence in the Cemetery since 2004 and on occasions they have occurred in large numbers on this and other nearby uncut compartments. Aside from this site it is currently known to occur in Norfolk only in Breckland and at two recently discovered coastal localities so it was a high-light of the day to be able to introduce the species to others and perhaps with recognition further Norfolk sites will be found.

Among plants in flower on this section of grassland were Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* and Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* whilst Hedge Bedstraw *Galium mollugo* occurs on grassland to the north. Earlier, Perennial Wall Rocket *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* had been recorded on a hard surface pathway west of the Cemetery office and Wall Speedwell *Veronica arvensis* around the edge of a grave in the same area.

After lunch attention focused on the largely wooded area to the east but before setting off we stopped to admire the impressive Holm Oak, alongside the Burial Chapel, which receives a well merited mention, among other Cemetery trees, in Rex Hancy's Notable Trees of Norwich. Above the roadway lined by Sweet Chestnut trees Honey Bees were foraging at the heavily scented blooms as we moved towards the north eastern corner of the Cemetery where winding pathways deviate from the strict rectilinear layout elsewhere. This part of the Cemetery is at its visual best in spring when Primroses and Bluebells are in flower followed by extensive stands of Cow parsley, and with Hogweed having long since seeded, floral colour was virtually confined to plants on the graves of Soldiers Field, one of two military plots in the Cemetery maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Surrounded by a wealth of sheltering trees this open sward serves as a hotspot for insects but there were few in evidence on this occasion.

Before we returned to our starting point Bob Ellis discovered a small patch of Yellow Oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens* in an area alongside the lime avenue, a previously overlooked species.

I thank Stephen Martin for kindly keeping a detailed list of species. All records have been passed to Paul Holley, Natural Areas Officer, Norwich City Council.

Stuart Paston

Warham Camp

Sunday 5th August, 2012



Nineteen members and friends gathered on a splendid sunny morning in the 'Three Horseshoes' car park in Warham village before taking the fairly short walk south along the narrow lane to Warham Camp with its chalk grassland plants and insects. A primary objective was to see butterflies from the introduced Chalkhill Blue population and Derek Longe had thoughtfully brought along a display of butterfly photographs and batch of information sheets. Before our party even left for the Camp, Nick Owens found the two solitary wasps, *Cerceris arenaria* and *C. rybyensis* in the unpaved and unmetalled car park!

Many members will know Warham Camp, a circular hill fort supposedly built by the Iceni in the second century BC next to the River Stiffkey, with a diameter of some 212 metres and comprising a 3-metre high double bank and ditch, though the western end with the original entrance was cut through when the river was diverted in the eighteenth century. Excavations have found evidence of Iron Age and Roman occupation, including a timber palisade and platform within the interior, though the

flat central area has never been excavated.

The gorgeous early August wildflower display on the banks and in the ditches was breathtaking, but the large numbers of Chalkhill Blues flying everywhere on the site were no less astonishing: doubtless more of them even than the 1382 males and 94 females counted by Derek, Eunice Phipps, Alan Dawson and Angela Woodrow on the slightly less calm and warm Tuesday 7th August immediately following our visit. Painted Lady butterflies and Silver-Y moths were seen on the Sunday in pristine condition - probably recent migrants from over the Channel - and other butterflies whose appearance I know of from lists made by various participants included Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Comma, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper, Gatekeeper, Green-veined White & Large White. There were also 6-Spot Burnet moths and Nick Owens recorded six solitary bees including the rare *Melitta leporina*, no less than 10 social bees, and six solitary wasps including the rare *Typha minuta* and *Cerceris ruficornis*. The richness of the site can be gauged by Nick's further records of two grasshopper species, four hoverflies, a Deer Fly, Longhorn Beetle, Hairy Shieldbug, toad, and rabbit, with 11 bird species including swift, house martin, goldcrest, kestrel - and buzzards above trees across the river. Two creatures even reversed a traditional Victorian children's virtue by being heard but not seen: a Common Shrew and a Wimbrel.

As for the plants - some 93 taxa recorded in all – there were many Pyramidal Orchid spikes, though only those in the relative shade of the Holm Oak were still in pristine full flower, and a plenitude of Autumn Gentians almost everywhere along the rings with flowerheads ranging from yet-unopened to shrivelled. A highly selective list must suffice for the best of the rest here: Horseshoe Vetch (perhaps less plentiful than one would hope for the sake of the butterflies), Common Milkwort, Rest-harrow, Small Scabious, Common Rock-rose, Salad Burnet, Harebell, Lady's Bedstraw, Fairy Flax, Hoary Plantain, Squinancywort, Large Thyme, Oxeye Daisy, Wild Mignonette, Common Centaury, Burnet Saxifrage, Dropwort, Carlina Thistle, Dwarf Thistle, Common Toadflax, and inevitably much Yarrow and colourful Ragwort. Among the grasses and sedges seen were Quaking-grass, Fern-grass, Heath-grass, Sheep's-fescue, Meadow Oat-grass, Crested Hair-grass and Spring Sedge.

Some participants remained to eat their packed lunch at the site, but fortunately most had departed by the time the weather degenerated by mid-afternoon to an almighty thunderstorm (at least two of our outings have been threatened by such conditions this season) which temporarily flooded the floors of the Camp's trenches. Hans Watson reported that 'small waterfalls tumbled down the banks' of the Camp and the 'torrents of water' rushing down the lane to Warham made it 'just like a river'. Even after the rain slackened, lanes in the Wighton area were rough going due to the quantities of soil, sand and stones that had been washed off the fields.

Many thanks to those who organised, 'reccied' and conducted what was nevertheless an almost idyllic visit - and the recorders - especially Derek Longe, Hans Watson, Dorothy Cheyne, Bob Ellis, Nick Owens, and Robert Maidstone.

Stephen Martin



NOTE:
NEW Email for Editor
below. Please use after
Dec 4th 2012

The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be February 2013. Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by **January 7th 2013** to the following address:

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

Please send **all photographic material** to:
Simon Harrap, 1 Norwich Road, Edgefield,
Melton Constable, Norfolk, NR22 2RP
Email: simon@norfolknature.co.uk

Nats' Gallery: *All photographs 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.

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 £15 for individual, family and group memberships (£25 for individuals living overseas).

Cheques payable to: Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.

*Season's Greetings
and
A Happy New Year
to all*

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Illustrations:

Ant (Page 4) - *Computer / Clipart*, Slug Cartoon (Page 6) - *Garth Coupland*,
Christmas Cartoon (Back Cover) - *Kevin Radley*