



# NATTERJACK

*The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society*

No. 1

May, 1983

## Introduction

When we thought of recasting the Society newsletter, it seemed a good idea to find a name for it: something sort of Norfolk and sort of Naturalist was needed, although the early ideas would not do. We fancy that the Editor of the Transactions has his eye on our Swallowtail as a possible popular title for that publication, and the Broads Authority seem likely to adopt Aeshna, in logo if not in name. Woolly Mullein had a cosy, if rather dull, sound (although not far from Lili Marlene!), and Bog Orchid was rather worse, although not quite as soporific as Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail. We toyed for a while with Bishybarnaby, but in the end we adopted Peter Lambley's suggested Natterjack since it was not only sort of Norfolk and sort of Naturalist but was also sort of mardling, which really sums up what our news letter is all about.

G.D.W.

## New Structures

Those of you that toiled through the proposed revision of the Society Laws sent out in February, and particularly those who attended the A.G.M. in March, will be aware that a reshaping of the management structures of the Society has taken place. Leaving aside the binary fission of the President into an administrative Chairman and a significant-contributor-to-natural-history President, the most important change is the establishment of four standing committees to look after the four most significant areas of activity of the Society. These committees are as follows:

Membership Committee Chairman: Rex Hancy; Secretary: Jeanette Wakefield; Council Members: Ernest Daniels, John Goldsmith, Mike Wolner; Co-opted: Reg Evans, Lil Evans. The job of the Membership Committee will be....'To maintain an up-to-date register of members' names and addresses. To organise the despatch of Society material to members. To represent and guard the interests of members. To devise and execute policies for both maintaining and expanding the membership of the Society, especially with regard to recruiting junior members. To produce a newsletter for members.'

In passing we should mention that Ernest Daniels is undertaking the task of collecting material for 'Natterjack' so that any accounts of meetings, notes, observations, etc. should be sent to him at 41, Brian Avenue, Norwich, before the appropriate deadline - January 15th, April 15th, July 15th, October 15th.

Programme Committee Chairman: Alec Bull; Secretary: Joyce Robinson; Council Members: Colin Dack, Bob Robinson, Roy Smith; Co-opted: Alice De Caux, Charles Neal. The job of the Programme Committee will be....'To receive suggestions for lectures, meetings and excursions. To plan a programme of meetings for Society members. To make the necessary arrangements with lecturers, leaders, landowners,

guides, etc., and to book rooms, transport as necessary, and make such other arrangements for the smooth running of meetings. To draw up and have printed a Programme Card for all members. To arrange for appropriate publicity for future meetings, and to send brief reports of meetings to local newspapers. To liaise with other Societies to hold joint meetings in various parts of the county of Norfolk.'

Publications Committee Chairman: Reg Jones; Secretary: Peter Lambley; Council Members: Rex Hancy, Michael Seago. The job of the Publications Committee will be....'To undertake responsibility for all Society publications (other than the newsletter, programmes, notices, forms and other administrative material). To invite contributions, receive copy, and decide upon priorities. To consider layout, design, size, style and timing of publications. To arrange estimates, printing, proof-reading, storage, distribution (other than to members) and sale of publications.'

Research Committee Chairman: Tony Davy; Secretary: Anne Brewster; Council Members: Rosemary Carpenter, Judy Geeson, Tony Goodwin. The job of the Research Committee will be....'To plan the Society's research commitment. To guide and co-ordinate members involved in investigations or surveys on behalf of the Society. To nominate the organisers of Specialist Groups, and to advise the Council about such groups. To foster individual or joint investigations by Society members, to keep records of work in progress and to encourage the publication of results.'

The Society has offered to undertake a Survey of the Trust's new acquisition, Thompson Common, and this will provide the new committee with its first organising task. Members who are prepared to carry out some biological recording, even if restricted to particular groups such as birds or fungi or other, should let the committee secretary, Anne Brewster, know.

G.D.W.

Excursion to Wells-next-sea, March 27th, 1983

A group of between 20 and 30 members were met in the car park at the end of Beach Road by Mr. Paul Banham who, as leader, took us on a very interesting and informative trek through the pinewoods.

Approaching the pinewoods we noticed shrubby growth where the bark had been nibbled by fieldmice some three to four feet above the ground. We were enabled to recognise the different types of pine - the Monterey, the Scots and the Corsican. Near the entrance to the woods were woodpecker holes in the dead trees. The Corsican pines revealed fantastic shapes like giant candelabra. The woods were quiet and sheltered, and so the light drizzle that had begun as we approached did not affect us.

There were signs of the presence of squirrels signified by the way the pine cones had been nibbled, and we discussed the differences between these and cones as left by crossbills. A small group of goldcrests were seen in the trees at the edge of a clearing, and at intervals the robin popped up above our heads with his song. Whilst in the woods we were shown a simple and accurate way to estimate the height of a tree.

Leaving the woods, we moved among the birch scrub to a patch of open water - a favourite spot for birdwatchers - where we were interested to find strings of toadspawn. We were able to see for ourselves the effect of salt water on the land, for after the flooding of 1977 the silver birches died and only their stark skeletons remained. The orchids, too, disappeared after this (marsh, early purple) but fortunately are beginning to return.

By this time the rain was a steady accompaniment to our walk, so we made our way back for a picnic lunch. After lunch a small interested group met Mr. Banham at the Field Study Centre where he showed us how the microcomputer could be used in Environmental Studies. Despite the rain it was a very successful day.

Joyce Robinson

## Photographic Group Report

The well-attended inaugural meeting of the Photographic Group held at Keswick College on Thursday, 16th December, 1982, has been followed by regular monthly, similarly well attended, indoor meetings which have been photographically instructive, and naturewise both educational and interesting.

Following a pattern which has proved very popular with members, the evening commences with a short, instructive lecture on basic photographic techniques, ably put over by Rex Hancy using self-made visual aids - duration 15 to 20 minutes. An illustrated photographic lecture follows by one of our specialists - normally 30 to 40 minutes - and over the past few months we have had 'Close-Up Equipment' by Geoff Watts, 'Macro & Micro' by Rex Hancy, 'Birds' by Reg Jones, and 'Insect Photography' by Ken Durrant. The final session of the evening is set aside for member participation - the showing of members' slides relating to some aspect of nature. This invariably brings forth discussion, question and answer relative to both nature and photography, flowing freely amongst the group.

A series of outdoor meetings has been arranged for the summer months. These are primarily photographic outings, separate and apart from the outings shown on the main society programme.

If photography, in colour or monochrome, does happen to be an absorbing hobby of yours, why not join our group? Should you have some acquaintance photographically minded who might be interested, kindly note that membership of the main Society is a prerequisite for anyone wishing to join the group.

The next meeting of the Group will be on Friday, May 20th, in one of the science laboratories at Keswick Hall as usual. John Fenton will be the main speaker, dealing with 'Photography in Water'. Rex Hancy will give his usual beginner's item, and the members' subject will be 'My best butterfly slide'.

Bob Robinson

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## Mailing Dates

Since we now have a number of committees beavering away at their appointed tasks, not to mention various involved individuals, the Council thought it might help to let everyone know that - barring emergencies - the Society will aim at four mailings to members during the year, roughly as follows:

Early February	- notice of A.G.M., nominations, Natterjack
Early May	- Transactions, Programme Card, Natterjack
Early August	- Bird and Mammal Report, Natterjack
Early November	- Natterjack

Organisers of specialist groups, secretaries of committees, contributors to Natterjack, etc. might like to keep the deadlines in mind when planning to get in touch with members. It could save postage.

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## Membership

With a membership in excess of 500 persons/families, we are a Society of some substance, although the sight of audience overspill sitting on the stairs in the Library Lecture Theatre is less frequent than several years ago. This slow growth in the face of an unprecedented public interest in natural history confronted the Council with the choice between settling back into our comfortable and venerable ways as we move into our 115th year, or of seeking



an expansion of membership, even if that precipitated problems of another kind. It was decided that we would best serve the aims of the Society by extending our membership, and in this endeavour the new Membership Committee will have some responsibility, but we also need all our individual members to propagate the word. Subscriptions are still very reasonable at £4.00 p.a. (although the Treasurer keeps making threatening noises) and for those under 18, the new Junior Membership at £2.00 for all the privileges of membership (including publications) must be a bargain. Applications for membership to Membership Secretary, Miss J. Wakefield, Post Office Lane, Saxthorpe, NR11 7BL.

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#### Norfolk Bat Group

Everybody must know by now that European bats in general are in decline. Bats occurring in this county in approximately descending numerical order are Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Natterer's, Daubenton's, Noctule, Brandt's, Whiskered, Barbastelle and Serotine, while Leisler's may yet prove to occur.

With the passing of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, which came into effect on Sep. 28th, 1982, all bats and roosts became protected, and a licence is now required to handle bats. Every year a steady stream of enquiries (and complaints!) arrives on the desks of N.C.C. officials, District Council Health Officers, etc. In 1982 over 50 enquiries concerning bats arrived at the Natural History Dept. of the Castle Museum and were dealt with by letter, leaflet and 'phone. Ideally all colonies should be checked out, householder's fears allayed, and attempts made to lessen any 'nuisance' that may be caused.

Bat-related activities already being undertaken by a small group of people in the county include:

- (1) Regular summer roost counting for ITE/NCC national survey to monitor the bat population;
- (2) Public relations - publicising the W. & C. Act and righting the misconceptions of the media and the public about bats;
- (3) Continuing the long-standing county survey of bats - their habits and habitats;
- (4) Monitoring winter hibernation sites;
- (5) Bats in churches - which ones haven't got any? ;
- (6) Roost protection schemes;
- (7) Bat box project.

In order to help channel some of these interests, it was felt by a number of people that the formation of a Norfolk Bat Group was needed. Other bat groups are already in existence in Suffolk, Cambs, Northants, Herts, and about half a dozen other English counties. Accordingly a public meeting was called for interested parties on the afternoon of Saturday, April 16th, which brought in about a dozen people from the warm spring sunshine into the half-light of the Museum Lecture Room. In this bat-like environment Henry Arnold and Tony Mitchell-Jones (ITE/NCC) showed slides of bats and spoke about their problems for four-and-a-half hours (!). The meeting decided to form a Norfolk Bat Group, and to take up the offer of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society Council of becoming a Specialist Group (similar to the Photographic Group). The idea was to be that of an active field group, obviously within the limits that the subject matter allows.

There are about twenty members on my card index so far, so if you feel that you have time to spare, especially to visit worried householders, then please let me know. The next meeting of the group is on Wednesday, May 11th, but because numbers will be limited to six (there isn't much room in the average roof space!) those who would like to come should get in touch with me.....

John Goldsmith, Natural History Dept., Castle Museum.  
(Norwich 611277)

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