

# THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

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## Awakenings and Re-awakenings

We are far enough into the new year to see the first signs of a new growing season, and to take a quiet satisfaction in lengthening catkins, swelling buds and the very early spring flowers. But other things are moving, and with the renewal of controversy over the Halvergate marshes during the last fortnight comes the unwelcome reminder that much wildlife is under siege. Incredibly, the farmers have manoeuvred themselves into a position where they cannot lose. If, despite the wealth of existing arable land and surplus produce, the farmers decide to break up species-rich wetlands, they will be paid guaranteed intervention prices, given grants from the Ministry of Agriculture and helped by the Inland Revenue. If they decide not to plough, they will be richly compensated by the ratepayers and the taxpayers. Somehow we shall have to harness the gathering public disquiet about the situation to gain a better deal for conservation.

The new year has also brought news of the proposed initiation of another conservation group, focussing its energies on urban wildlife in the Norwich area. According to a count we carried out last year, there are now about 34 organisations in the county (counting the seven regional groups of the Trust) dedicated to some aspect of wildlife, most frequently its conservation: in many ways a heartening sign of the interest in, sympathy for and enthusiasm surrounding nature, although with so many unco-ordinated voices, the strength of the movement is dissipated. It is, perhaps, significant that the most recent warnings about Halvergate came from a national rather than a local organisation.

So caring is important, but caring is not enough: a shared caring, and an audible caring are needed. It's time that we all got together and pooled our concerns and spoke as loudly as we can with as much unison as we can find.

G. D. W.

## Questionnaire Results

About 80 members responded positively to our questionnaire, which is approaching 20% of the membership -- a figure considered to be quite good for this kind of exercise. Our thanks to all those who gave of their time to being positive! The replies ranged from fully completed returns (including the back of the form covered with closely handwritten suggestions) to an octogenarian who felt he could no longer play a very active part, but wanted to point out that we had spelled 'Questionnaire' with only one 'n'!

One of the surprises proved to be the large number of members asking for mid-week, daytime meetings -- about half of those who replied, in fact. This season one such meeting is planned, so we hope to see 40 of you there: I shall be

leading it myself!

Quite a few parents felt that something in the way of 'Nature Workshops' would be useful during the school holidays during the week. Something may well transpire on these lines since, fortuitously, one or two members expressed an interest in helping with projects of this kind.

For people who have difficulty in sorting out grid references (and I know from my B.T.O. organising experience that many people do) it is suggested that the programme might also include rough directions to excursion sites. The answer is that there isn't room in a tightly packed programme card, but don't despair: we have decided to try to include a programme preview in Natterjack which will detail the information you need.

Perhaps the most significant feature was the number of people who offered to give talks, or who knew of suitable sites for excursions. The outcome of this will be seen when we publish the 1984/85 programme which will be built around your offers and suggestions and, if your offer or suggestion has not been taken up this year, don't lose heart: the others are all on file and will be taken out and looked at again when we start planning the 1985/86 programme!

Alec Bull, Chairman, Programme Committee

Bird-Watching Excursion to North Norfolk -- December 11th, 1983 -- led by Charles Neale

A small group of only eight people gathered at Blakeney on a cold but bright, clear morning. From the car park, whilst waiting for possible late arrivals, we had good views of large numbers of brent geese in flight. As we set off along the bank, a kingfisher flew along the channel. This promising start was the beginning of an excellent morning's bird watching. Lighting conditions were near-perfect and we had very good views of waders on the mud flats. The following species were seen at Blakeney: little grebe, cormorant, canada geese, brent geese, shelduck, widgeon, goldeneye, kestrel, oystercatcher, ringed plover, grey plover, lapwing, dunlin, redshank, bar-tailed godwit, curlew, black-headed gull, herring gull, great black-backed gull, kingfisher, skylark, yellowhammer, reed bunting, chaffinch, greenfinch, house sparrow, starling.

After a short stop at Cley where we ate our lunch and observed a large flock of brent geese, lapwing and golden plover, seven of the party drove to Felbrigg Hall where other members were waiting for us. It had snowed at Felbrigg during the night, and the difficulty of walking quietly in the snow-covered wood, combined with rapidly failing light, meant that few birds were seen during our one-and-a-half hours there. The highlight of the afternoon was a close-up view of a goldcrest just before we returned to the cars. The following species were seen at Felbrigg: wood pigeon, goldcrest, blue tit, long-tailed tit, nuthatch, wren, redwing, blackbird, robin.

Mike Poulton

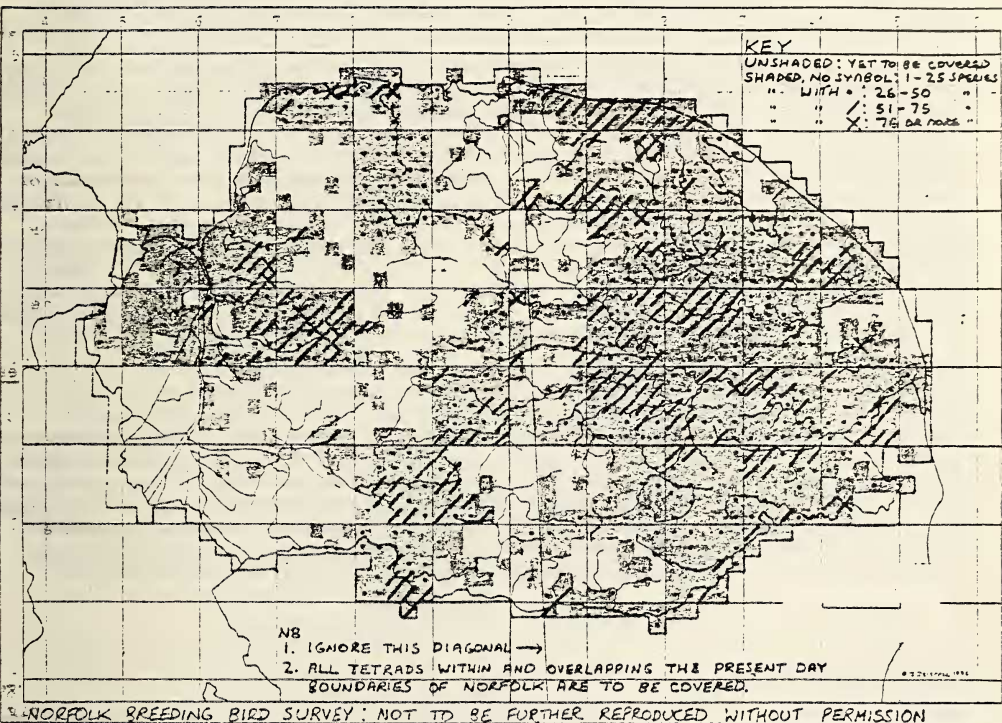
Norfolk Breeding Bird Survey

The direction of this Survey was taken up by Geoffrey I. Kelly subsequent to the resignation of Barrie D. Harding early in 1983. Certain rumours circulated to the effect that this project had been abandoned, but this has not been the case; indeed considerable progress was made during the 1983 breeding season. However, it is now deemed that the period of the Survey will have to be extended one further year; that is, to finish after the 1985 breeding season. Present analysis is that such an extended period should allow adequate work to be undertaken in all 1455 Norfolk tetrads -- this total including those which overlap adjoining counties, as well as part (coastal) ones.

Of the 927 tetrads for which results are on file (on 31st January, 1984), 572 have over 25 species recorded. Such coverage can be regarded as from fair to excellent, depending upon the precise location of each tetrad. A more detailed

breakdown of coverage so far is conveyed by the accompanying map.

All Society members who have not helped with the Survey so far are invited to do so. Offers to take on but a single tetrad, or to supply casual records, will be welcomed of course. However, volunteers are particularly needed to work in areas where coverage has been thin or non-existent (see map).



Please contact Geoffrey Kelly, c/o Natural History Dept., Castle Museum, Norwich, NR1 3JU. His home telephone number is Norwich 898646. Further information will be gladly provided, and all offers of help are looked forward to.

Geoffrey Kelly

Some Bygone Norfolk Naturalists - 2

#### Dawson Turner (1775-1858)

In the early years of the 19th century many of the leading figures in English natural history were wealthy amateurs whose social position allowed them to follow the fashionable pursuits such as botanizing. Prominent among these was Dawson Turner.

Turner was born at Yarmouth in October, 1775, the son of a banker, and was educated at North Walsham Grammar School and then, privately, by the renowned Norfolk botanist, the Rev. Robert Forby, rector of Fincham. Although he entered Pembroke College, Cambridge, to read divinity, his stay there was for no longer than a year for, in 1794, on the death of his father, Turner was forced, albeit not unwillingly, to return to Yarmouth to run the family's bank. It was from here that he conducted most of his natural history.



His interest had been encouraged from an early age, by Forby of course, but also by that remarkable Yarmouth naturalist, Lilly Wigg, whom Turner was to help in the future. He communicated with many leading naturalists of the day, and sent a constant supply of rare plants to James de Carle Sowerby (whose 'English Botany' was begun in 1790), while exchanging more locally common species with distant botanists. Other men whom he counted among his correspondents included Sir Joseph Banks and his close friend James Edward Smith. Later, such eminent figures as Sir Charles Lyell, Sir Richard Owen and Sowerby himself were to grace the rooms of the Yarmouth bankhouse.

Turner had studied seaweeds at Sheringham and Cromer as well as along the coast nearer Yarmouth, and these researches formed the basis of his first botanical work, 'A Synopsis of British Fuci' of 1802 (incidentally a year in which he also described four new species of lichens). Three years later the pioneering 'Botanists' Guide through England and Wales' appeared. Written in collaboration with Lewis Weston Dillwyn, Turner had circulated around the country a printed four-page questionnaire seeking plant records, thus producing not only a topographical handbook for collectors but also leading the way for what has become known as 'network research'. Further publications and discoveries followed and in 1808 there appeared the first volume of what was perhaps Turner's most celebrated work, the four-volume 'Fuci...'. It was published between 1808 and 1819 and contained 258 plates. The ordinary edition sold for £21. A number of the illustrations were executed by William Jackson Hooker, later of Kew Gardens, who became Dawson Turner's son-in-law.

This mammoth undertaking was Turner's last botanical work. The travelling in search of fresh specimens declined and instead, Turner was seeking antiquarian treasures. The remainder of his life was taken up, primarily, with historical research and the consolidating of his huge collection of books and manuscript. After his second marriage in 1851, he departed to London, and it was at Old Brompton that he died and was buried. Turner had made much of the privileges of his birth, and natural history was a great beneficiary. Although he specialised within the cryptogamic (non-flowering) groups of plants, such as lichens, mosses and seaweeds, his love of communicating bound together many of his contemporary workers - and at a time when naturalists were just beginning to enjoy the benefits of national organisation.

Michael Bean

Spring Excursions, 1984

Sunday, February 26th - Joint birdwatching excursion with the Denver, Fordham, Roxham and Ryston Village Trust. Meet at Denver Mill, just off main road, two miles south of Downham Market (TF.605013) at 13.30 hrs.

Sunday, March 4th - Snettisham R.S.P.B. Reserve. Meet at Snettisham beach car park, signposted from the main road (TF.648335) at 11.00 hrs. Leader - A.Bull.

Sunday, April 29th - Walk by beach from Holkham to Gun Hill, returning through woods. Meet at Lady Anne's Drive, Holkham (TF.891448) at 11.00 hrs. Leader - P.Banham.

Sunday, May 6th - Mousehold Heath. Morning session only. Arranged for beginners and newcomers. Meet 10.30 hours in car park, Gurney Road. Leaders - R.Evans, R.Hancy.

Saturday, May 12th - Spring Walk by woodlands and lakeside at Blickling. Meet 10.30 hrs at the Orchard car park, Blickling Hall. Carry packed lunch for circular tour. Leader - D.Neale.

Sunday, May 20th - Mossymere Wood, Saxthorpe. Meet down lane near keeper's cottage (TG.134314), 2 miles N.E. of Saxthorpe off the Saxthorpe/Itteringham road.

Picnic lunch. Leader - Mrs. A. Brewster.

Sunday, June 3rd - Whin Common, Denver, jointly with Denver, Fordham, Roxham and Ryston Village Trust. Meet TF.618010 at 11.00 hrs. Picnic lunch.

Alec Bull (Chairman), Joyce Robinson (Secretary)  
Programme Committee

Contributions to the next Natterjack

should be sent to Ernest Daniels, 41 Brian Avenue, Norwich, Norfolk, to arrive not later than April 15th, 1984.