



# THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

No.14

August, 1986

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On the 22nd July the Society lost it's most distinguished member, Dr. Ted Ellis. Three times President, honoured by many national Natural History Societies and culminating in 1970 with an honorary Doctor of Science degree by the University of East Anglia.

'Mr. Natural History' as he was affectionately known lived his 77 years to the full, even in his latter years his mind was as alert and active as in his youth. He could instantly recall the name of some obscure micro-fungi, plant or insect and would readily infuse enthusiasm to whom ever he was speaking, be it with children or some professional body.

Recalling over half a century of many interesting excursions taken with Ted throughout the County, in latter years with his duffle coat, gumboots, carrying his collecting basket and with always his beloved pipe for which he was often teased. He was always searching with that spirit of discovery so characteristic of a field naturalist, and he would pass on in his notes what he had found.

In the early 1930's his weekly 'Nature Notes' published in the Eastern Evening News were always looked forward to at the weekends. His command of the written word was such that his daily jottings in the Eastern Daily Press were enjoyed by young and old alike, he would even go into verse at times.

We shall miss his charming personality, he has shown us the way, it is up to us who are left to follow his path.

Our sympathy goes out to Phyllis his wife, and to his family in their bereavement.

Ken Durrant.  
Chairman.

BIRDWATCHING FIELD TRIP

20th April 1986

Six hardy souls, including the leader M.Rains, met at Denver Sluice. Heavy rain on the way there and the threat of more to follow resulted in a change of plan, so that we would not move too far from the minibus.

Tottenham gravel pits proved disappointing except for Goldeneye, Great Crested Grebe and an escaped Barrow's Goldeneye. A visit to a nearby caravan site with lakes and woodland produced sightings of Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Pinkfeet and Greylag Geese and also some sunshine between the showers.

After lunch, eaten in the minibus, five of us walked from Stow Bridge to Downham Market along the Washes. The sixth drove to Downham Market and walked back to meet us. The weather cleared and conditions underfoot were much drier than expected. All of us enjoyed the walk and the sighting of Ruff, Arctic Tern, Wheatear, Yellow Wagtail, Meadow Pipits, Oystercatcher, Snipe, Redshank, Wigeon, Little Grebe and Lapwing.

Returning to Denver in the minibus it was agreed that those who had been deterred by an adverse weather forecast had missed a thoroughly enjoyable day.

Mike Poulton.

MINSMERE CIRCULAR WALK

18th May 1986

Some 20 members arrived at Minsmere cliffs car park and set out, though only 15 of us completed the circumnavigation. The weather was fine, though with a strong south westerly wind. However, in the early stages, the walk was entirely devoid of excitement. Nothing stirred on our crossing of the heath, and the part through the birch woods was strangely quiet, apart from the song of Willow Warblers, which seem to comprise at least 90% of the bird life. Just before we left the woods for the track across open farmland, a Garden Warbler was singing and very obligingly allowed himself to be seen.

The farmland track is usually gay with flowers by this season, but such is the general lateness, that far fewer than usual were found, including Tarweed Amsinckia intermedia, Spring Vetch Vicia lathyroides, and Spring Beauty Montia perfoliata. A few fungi were noted, including Coprinus plicatilis, Bolbitis vitellinus and a large Earth Cup growing among dead leaves by the second area of woodland; this was dark brown on the inside, and pruinose on the outside. The second area of woodland also held a singing Nightingale.

The marshes flanking the Minsmere River, beside which we had lunch, held parties of Canada Geese in either direction, and the one to the east had also a single Barnacle Goose among its members-presumably an escapee from captivity. A pair of Mute Swans were present on the river.

After lunch, as we approached the hamlet of East Bridge, we saw a Yellow Wagtail, a pair of Goldfinches, and were treated to excellent views of a female Gt. Spotted Woodpecker.

We diverted from our path for a while to view a one acre Wild Flower Garden, open on the day at East Bridge as part of the Suffolk Trust for Nature Conservation's contribution to National Wild Flower Week. We found a very interesting and praiseworthy display of something like 250 species of wild flowers which the Lady and Gentleman who own the garden, had collected originally as seed from far and wide, and had painstakingly tried to create the right habitat for them. From here, we saw a lovely male March Harrier over the marshes, and, perhaps a little surprisingly, a passing Holly Blue Butterfly.

From East Bridge to Minsmere beach, we travelled mainly in hope, though we did find Spotted Medick and Water Violet flowering, and heard Reed Warblers singing in reedy dykes. Two Snipe were also drumming over an area of marsh, and several Shoveler were engaged in aerial 'follow my leader'. At a different level, so were four Hares on a field towards Sizewell.

So we came to the beach, being greeted by a Whitethroat singing in some bushes, as we made our way along to the RSPB public hide. Even here, there was no great variety of birds. Lots of Avocets sitting on nests, with over a dozen on one small island. Other waders included Redshank, Oystercatcher, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, and a lone Common Sandpiper, while, Shoveler apart, duck consisted of Shelduck, Mallard and a few Gadwall. Canada and Gray Lag Geese were present, a pair of the former having five fluffy goslings. The highlight of our time in the hide, was undoubtedly the appearance of a pair of Marsh Harriers, sweeping to and fro over the reedbeds, with a third, very distant bird, visible at the same time. Common and Little Terns were present in good numbers, displaying round the pools, and we noted that the RSPB have quite a respectable area cordoned off for them on the beach. It was heartening to see so many Sand Martins going to and fro towards the crumbling cliffs, after the decline in numbers over the past year or two.

Alec Bull.

#### FLORDON COMMON EXCURSION

25th May 1986

About 30 members and friends enjoyed a visit to this famous site in ideal weather. Near the parking area three dragonflies, the Large Red Damselfly Pyrrhosoma nymphula, were seen. From their fluttering flight and rather drab colour it was evident they had recently emerged. The butterflies noted were Orange-tips, Green-veined Whites and Small Whites and a Silver-Y Moth was flying. John Goldsmith found a Snipe's nest with four eggs in a very wet area surrounded by Ash seedlings. Blackcap, White-throat and Song Thrush were heard. Amphibians included a Common Frog and a number of small Common Toads, believed to be two years old.

Choice plants were plentiful, although much retarded by the weather earlier on. Examples of this were Coltsfoot Tussilago farfara and Lesser Celandine Ranunculus ficaria, both still flowering. Adder's Tongue Ophioglossum vulgatum, some with fertile spikes, were frequent locally. Colour was provided by the Cowslips Primula veris, Kingcups Caltha palustris, Bogbeans Menyanthes trifoliata, Heath Milkwort Polygala serpyllifolia, Cuckoo-Flowers Cardamine pratensis and a small colony of Water Avens Geum rivale. We were too early for an orchid display but we saw Twayblade Listera ovata (very common), Marsh Helleborine Epipactis palustris (frequent and widespread) with some in tight bud and very commonly the Early Marsh Orchid Dactylorhiza incarnata; mostly with spikes starting to elongate. A few had the lower flowers showing and it was evident that they were of the sub-species pulchella, from their rich magenta-purple colouring. One was seen with spotted leaves and believed to be a hybrid with the Common Spotted Orchid Dactylorhiza fuchsii. Many plants, without flowers but with broad very heavily-spotted leaves were almost certainly fuchsii. A very nice collection of sedges contained Carnation Sedge Carex panicea, Hairy Sedge Carex hirta, Glaucous sedge Carex flacca, Common Sedge Carex nigra, Brown Sedge Carex acutiformis, Greater Tussock Sedge Carex paniculata and Flea Sedge Carex pulicaris. Cotton Grass Eriophorum angustifolium occurred very locally but Bog-rush Schoenus nigricans was abundant and widespread, often forming large tussocks. Fine patches of Ramsons Allium ursinum and Meadow Saxifrage Saxifraga granulata were seen.



Invertebrates found by John Goldsmith:-

Centipedes

Millipedes

Lithobius crassipes  
Necrophloeophagus longicornis  
Brachygeophilus truncorum

Polydesmus denticulatus  
Glomeris marginatus  
Tachypodolulus niger  
Brachydemus superus

Woodlice  
Haplophthalmus danicus  
Haplophthalmus mengei

E.T.Daniels.

FORDHAM PUMPING STATION

1st June 1986

This was a joint meeting with the Denver, Fordham, Roxham & Ryston Village Trust, and the Thetford Naturalists. Despite the weather being poor those who attended thought the meeting was well worthwhile. In the morning we went into a nearby wood where Reg and Lil Evans settled down for most of the morning, compiling a good list from this wood. I found a Common Shrew under one of the logs we turned over. Rex Hancy was very pleased to find 'Gold leaf' gall on Poplar and Blackthorn leaves infested by gall-mite Eriophyes similis, this was found where we parked our cars, this put Rex on high for the rest of the day. He also found 3 species of woodlice and 6 species of spider. As some of us walked down the lane to the River Wissey two Golden Orioles were singing.

After lunch we walked down the lane to another wood. In the afternoon the Trust ran the pump engine in the Pumping Station and had a tea party there. This meeting was very useful as it brings members of other groups in contact with each other, I hope this will lead to more cooperation between naturalists groups. This is the fourth joint meeting we have had with the Village Trust, I now feel very much at home with them, they set out to make us feel welcome. The Thetford Naturalists commented upon this. I have made a good number of friends through joint meetings with the Village Trust and with the Thetford Naturalists. A very interesting and enjoyable meeting.

Colin Dack.

KENT WEEKEND 14th & 15th June 1986

Saturday

A really enjoyable weekend with weather to suit. It was noticeable on our journeys through Kent that the roadside verges were bordered white with that pernicious alien Hoary Cress Cardaria draba, here and there patched pink with sainfoin Onobrychis viciifolia.

We met with the Kent Field Club on the Barbican car park in Sandwich and made our way towards the famous golf courses, passing along a path bordered with Smooth-leaved Elms Ulmus carpinifolia, the nearby stream bank was covered with Giant Hogweed Heracleum mantegazzianum and Teasel Dipsacus fullonum. Amongst the side herbage our prettiest froghopper Cercopsis vulnerata was conspicuous along with hosts of Kentish Snails Monacha cantiana while near the water's edge the tiny damselfly Ischnura elegans was to be seen.

A great amount of interest and discussion took place concerning the plants as we approached the golf course, crossing it as we did with one eye open in case the flying object turned out to be a golf ball instead of one of the many Martins hawking disturbed flies.

On reaching the dunes we were disappointed not to see the Lizard Orchid Himantoglossum hircium in flower, although well grown we were told that they were late this year. Our joy however soon returned when we came upon numbers of Clove Scented Broomrapes Orobancha caryophyllacea some with extremely strong scent. The Common Storksbill Erodium cicutarium was also a frequent plant here.

Lunch was eaten on the shingle bank amongst the Sea Purslane Honkenya peploides and Sea Holly Eryngium maritimum. All along the edge of the bay were large clumps of Sea Kale Crambe maritimum in full flower, a magnificent sight. At times we thought we had found stray golf balls only to discover they were Puff Balls Bovista plumbea so realistic as to confuse.

A large number of webs containing the caterpillars of the Brown-tail Moth were found upon the Hawthorn bushes and ornamental Rosa rugosa on the edge of the shingle bank.

An old piece of plastic from a smelly dyke created a lot of interest, with Dr. Roy Baker expounding the life histories of the various aquatic snails and leeches found upon it.

Returning via the floodbank we found Dwarf Mallow Malva neglecta and were overjoyed to find Grass Vetchling Lathyrus nissolia in flower, the solitary red flowers contrasting with the grasses.

#### Other Insects noted:-

##### Lepidoptera

Large Garden White  
Small Garden White  
Green-veined White  
Small Heath  
Small Copper  
Wall Brown  
Common Blue  
Cinnabar Moth  
Silver Y  
Yellow Belle  
Oblique Striped

##### Coleoptera

Rhagonycha fulva  
Rhagonycha lignosa  
Rhagonycha clypeata  
Lema lichenis  
Haltica lythri  
Ceuthorrhynchus assimilis  
Phyllobius viridicollis  
Philopodon plagiatus  
Propylea 14 punctata  
Coccinella 7 punctata  
Isomira murina  
Aphodius luridus  
Aphodius sphaelatus  
Adeloceta murina  
Athous hirtus

##### Diptera

Dysmachus trigonus

##### Hymenoptera

##### Ichneumon sarcitorius

#### Sunday

We met at the Wye Nature Reserve on top of the Crundale Chalk Downs along with scores of the hiking fraternity who fortunately were exploring in the opposite direction.

We walked along the top, then down into woodland, Salad Burnet Sanguisorba officinalis was flowing everywhere, we entered a glade amid masses of Twayblades Listera ovata here and there were Large Butterfly Orchids Platanthera chlorantha, Fly Orchids Ophrys insectifera and Lady Orchids Orchis purpurea.

The Broad Helleborines Epipactis helleborine were not in flower although quite conspicuous.

We returned to the downs for our sandwiches, to muddle and check notes before making our various ways homeward, tired but happy.

Insects noted:-

Lepidoptera

Brimstone Butterfly  
Orange Tip  
Large Garden White  
Small Garden White  
Speckled Wood  
Wall Brown  
Common Blue  
Brown Argus  
Small Tortoiseshell Caterpillars  
Poplar Hawk Moth  
Burnet Companion  
Common Pug  
Nettle Tap

Coleoptera

Strangalia maculata  
Isomira murina  
Malachius bipustulatus

Homoptera

Issus coleoptratus

Hymenoptera

Nomada marshamella  
Dolerus germanicus  
Macrophya annulata  
Macrophya ribis  
Rhogogaster punctulata

Diptera

Eristalis pertinax  
Isopogon brevisostris  
Ferdinandea cuprea  
Xylota segnis  
Eristalinus sepulchralis  
Chrysotoxum cautum  
Platycheirus clypeatus  
Platycheirus fulviventris  
Lejogaster metallina  
Cheilosia variabilis  
Tipula vernalis

Many thanks to our Kent hosts for a delightful weekend.

Ken Durrant.

EXCURSION TO RINGSTEAD DOWNS

29th June 1986

On this day a party of 14 met at Ringstead downs to examine the best example of chalk grassland in West Norfolk. A warm sunny day had followed a spell of very dry weather, but the typical plants, rooted in the chalk, were flowering freely. Strict calcophiles of Norfolk were represented by abundant Sanguisorba minor Salad Burnet, Filipendula vulgaris Dropwort and Asperula cynanchica Squinacy Wort. Other species, common on chalk but not confined to it Helianthemum chamaecistus Rock Rose, Arabis hirsuta Hairy Rock-cress and Inula conyza Ploughman's Spikenard. Cirsium acaule Stemless Thistle was abundant but not yet in flower. The fruits of Hippocrepis comosa Horseshoe Vetch could be seen. Some of the party paid due deference to the site where the leader had been accustomed to find Spiranthes spiralis Autumn Ladies Tresses during the nineteen twenties, but there is little hope of it appearing again.

A sad feature of the Downs is the extent to which scrub, chiefly Hawthorn and Sweet Briar, is encroaching on the grassland. As in all chalk downs in southern England the characteristic short turf has been maintained, probably since Neolithic times, by grazing sheep. Now Norfolk agriculture is based on arable farming, and the cost of fencing a long narrow valley is probably prohibitive, so the sheep have gone.

C.P.Petch.



ROYAL ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY REGIONAL MEETING

October 31st 1986 at University of East Anglia, Norwich.

BIOLOGY OF GRASSHOPPERS

Dr Godfrey Hewitt	Hybrid zones in Grasshoppers
Dr Roger Butlin	Grasshopper song and speciation
Dr Mark Hassall	Population dynamics of Grasshoppers in Breckland

Meeting will commence at 16.00

Posters of entomological work will be on display from 15.00

Anyone interested in attending, contact Bob James, School of Biological Sciences, U.E.A., Norwich, for further details.

MOTH WORKSHOP

Tuesday 16th September 1986

The Norfolk Moth survey are arranging a workshop to assist with the identification of autumn moths. Set specimens, genitalia preparations and transparencies of live moths will be used to help separate 'difficult' species. The meeting is primarily for moth fanciers, but is open to everyone who might learn something useful.

DIATOM EVENING

Wednesday 15th October 1986

Keith Clarke has kindly agreed to tell us about diatoms, those important but overlooked little plants upon which so much else depends. Microscopes and slimy water will be provided, and there will also be an opportunity to delve into the past with ancient microscopes and slides. Anyone with an interest in aquatic life or natural history in the nineteenth century should make an effort to attend.

Both the moth and diatom meetings will be held at the Castle Museum, Norwich, starting at 7.30 pm. Numbers may have to be restricted, so if you hope to come, please let Tony Irwin know (work Norwich 611277 Ext.287, home Norwich 56674).

A MESSAGE FROM DOWN UNDER

While holidaying in Western Australia this winter I was able to meet a former member of the N.&N.N.S. Mr Alan Notley who wishes to send his good wishes to the Society. He worked on the grounds at Earlham and for a while was proprietor of the Gardeners Store on the Old Cattle Market. He was also a member of the N.&N. Photographic Society.

At the present time he is horticulturist on a large land development scheme at Yanchep, W.A. and is also Vice President of the Western Australia Naturalist Club. He has been in Australia since 1969.

Should any member be in the Perth area I am sure he would like to meet them and can be contacted at Sun City Nursery, Yanchep (Tel 095 611305).

Yanchep is the site of a large, beautifully laid out marine park with everything from Fairy Penguins to sharks, with shows for adults and children of all ages, in which the humans work with the dolphins in the water in a spectacular show. There seems little doubt that both enjoy their work.

Philip Cambridge.

AN UNUSUAL STARLING

Anyone who birdwatches in a city garden inevitably gets to know some of the birds who visit his garden as individuals. Usually they are recognised for having lost a leg ("Hoppy" a blackbird), or by their behaviours ("Lightening"- another blackbird noted for his speed in swooping down and grabbing food). This year one of these easily recognised birds has appeared in my garden, a starling who has been nicknamed "Beaky" from his deformity, a pale yellowish beak about twice the normal length. The deformity does not seem to bother the bird in any way.

Philip Cambridge.

THE NORFOLK BIRD ATLAS

Enclosed with this issue is a leaflet giving full details of the Norfolk Bird Atlas. This Society venture is due for publication in November and contains the results of fieldwork over a six year period by over 200 observers. The Norfolk Bird Atlas was first organized by Barrie Harding and brought to a successful conclusion by Geoffrey Kelly. The price will be £5 but a special pre publication offer of £3.75 including postage and packing is available until 30th September.

Michael J. Seago

BRITISH BIRDS MAGAZINE

Enclosed with this issue is a leaflet giving details of the concessionary rates of subscription to "British Birds" available for members of this Society.

This excellent monthly publication contains many articles and features applicable to Norfolk.

D.A.Dorling.

WANTED-YOUR POST CODE

If the address on the envelope containing this Newsletter was incorrect please let me know as soon as possible by returning the label duly corrected ( in CAPITALS please ). It is particularly important that we include the correct Post Code to ensure prompt delivery by the P.O . Colin DACK, (Membership Secretary), 12 Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ.

TRANSPORT

Do you require a lift to Society meetings if so please send your name, address and telephone number to Colin Dack, stating if you require lifts to field meetings and lectures. These will be put in Natterjack to see if a member can give you a lift. It is understood that anyone receiving a lift would help with petrol.

Would you like to do more for the Society? If so, please write to Colin Dack stating in which way you think your skills could be used within the Society. For instance can you type?

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Ernest Daniels, 41, Brian Avenue, Norwich, Norfolk. NR1 2DP. To arrive not later than 10th October 1986.

The editorial policy is to try to use the space in the Natterjack to the best advantage, while keeping field meeting reports in chronological order. If your report or article has not appeared in this issue this will be the reason. It would be appreciated if contributors could keep reports of field meetings to about 300 words. Thank you. Colin Dack, editor Natterjack.