

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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THE HERITAGE OF TED ELLIS

In fifty years at Wheatfen Ted Ellis established a tradition and on his death a number of naturalists have joined together to try to carry on the tradition which grew up at Wheatfen. A Trust has been set up with us both and David Pearce-Gould, an accountant, as Trustees to acquire 100 acres of the Wheatfen land and manage it in the way Ted would have wished.

First and foremost Ted was a researcher of the highest calibre and he was capable of inspiring others to carry out research based on Wheatfen. Phyllis Ellis, Ted's widow, wishes his books and records to be available to research workers in the future and the Trust will try to encourage work at Wheatfen.

Ted was also a great educator, not only through his regular newspaper columns and radio and television appearances but also he never tired of passing on his knowledge to visitors to Wheatfen. The Trust will try to carry on and expand the visits to Wheatfen by individuals and by parties and provide some kind of base where information can be obtained about the Fen.

In the spirit of Ted's ideals we hope to create at Wheatfen not a bird reserve or a nature reserve but a reserve for naturalists.

If you would like to help financially or in other ways we would be glad to hear from you. Write to Dr. Baker at the School of Education in the University of East Anglia.

Roy Baker and Keith Clarke.

ALL THE OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY WISH ALL THEIR FELLOW MEMBERS MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR.

SOCIETY NOTICE BOARD

IMPORTANT NOTICE

A meeting was inadvertently omitted from the current programme, so would all members please make an insert thereon as follows:-

Thursday Feb 26th THE DEER OF THETFORD FOREST.
19.30 hrs Illustrated talk by Rex Whitta, the Thetford Forest
Ranger. City Library Lecture Theatre.

RECORDS

Would all members with records please send them in promptly to the Referees/Recorders of the appropriate groups, Bird and Mammal Report Editors ect. In addition, the Norfolk moth Group would like all records of moths to be sent to Norfolk Moth Group, Castle Museum, Norwich, for their County wide survey.

BOTANISTS

Would interested botanists please note that 1987 sees the start of a new nation wide plant recording scheme. 1987 and 88 will be on a sampling basis, to sample tetrads in approx 10% of 10KM squares throughout the Country. These tetrads will then be redone every 10 years to monitor changes in the flora. Following the sampling period, and during the early 1990s it is expected that a full survey of all squares will be undertaken of those species of plants showing marked increases or decreases since the plant atlas 24 years ago. If you would like to take part in the above, please contact your vice county recorder as soon as possible. (see back of programme.)

CONDUCTED THEIR OWN SURVEY

Our Members, Phyll Hardie and Carol Haines recently conducted their own survey on a piece of waste land that was about to be built on. Nothing rare was revealed but a number of interesting plants such as Sweet Briar were recorded. Their list, of about 72 species, is now filed with me, with details of where the site was, ect. even though the site is probably no more by now.

This type of 'personal survey' is to be recommended to members, especially bearing in mind the likelihood that when the southern by-pass is completed, leaving a stretch of 'virgin countryside' between the City and the road. Something unusual might be discovered, in time to shield it in some way from the land hungry developers!

Alec Bull

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP

I made a mistake when I copied Bob Robinson list of meetings, the April meeting is on Wednesday 15th not 13th please change date in your Natterjack Nol3.

Workshops

Some more workshops are in the pipeline.
Sunday 11th January 1987 2.30 p.m. 14.30hrs at Lound Waterworks for a further look at Diatoms with Keith Clarke and at the Castle Museum on Wednesday 14th January 1987 7.30 p.m. 19.30hrs to discuss the formation of a Microscopy Group.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Workshops on:- Dragonflies, Moths in Spring, Moths in early summer, Aquatic Water Plants, Plant Galls, Lichens and Mosses.
If any Members have any suggestions for Workshops would you please write to Editor "Natterjack" (Colin Dack) who will reproduce your letter in "Natterjack" and try bending the appropriate arms to get your desired Workshop introduced. The Editor would welcome anyone interested in running a Workshop to contact him in the first instance.

Colin Dack

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP1986/87 Indoor Programme

Thursday Dec 11th Assembly House, (Kent Room)
 " The Photography of Insects " Tony Irwin.

Wednesday Jan 28th City library Lecture Theatre
 Group entertains Society Theme to be announced.

Friday Feb 27th Assembly House, (E. Bacon Room)
 " The Common Loke through the Seasons " Mary & Don Dorling

Wednesday Mar 18th Assembly House, (E. Bacon Room)
 " Travels in the Galapagos " Peter Boardman.

Wednesday April 15th Assembly House, (E. Bacon Room)
 Members Evening. A Challenge - your slides to match the theme " Water "

Wednesday May 13th Assembly House, (E. Bacon Room)
 " Travels in the South & West of North America " Max Smith.

As hitherto the final half hour or so of each lecture night is reserved for the showing of members own slides - up to six each please, on any particular theme or subject matter.

Bob Robinson

Address:-the Assembly House, Theatre street, Norwich.

I have repeated the remainder of Photographic Group indoor meetings for those members who have mislaid their Natterjack No13. I would like to remind members that Photographic Group meetings are open to all Society members to attend. You do not have to have the latest in high-technology jewellery hanging round your neck. You do not have to own a camera, just have an interest in Natural history photography and would just like to come to the meetings. We only mention equipment when someone asks about it. If you have a photographic problem someone in the group would be able to help you.

Wanted

Your unwanted early Back numbers of the Bird & Mammal Report and Transactions, as the Society stock is now exhausted. The publication are needed to meet demand from new members and members doing research. All funds from the sale of these publications will go into the Society funds. Please send or give them to Mr.D.A.Dorling, Mr.C.R.Dack or Dr.A.G.Irwin. If you have a number of publications please contact one of us so we can arrange collection.

The Norfolk Bird Atlas

By the time you receive this Natterjack the Bird Atlas will have been published. If you missed the pre-publication offer you can obtain a copy from Mrs.M.Dorling, 6 New Road, Hethersett, Norfolk. NR9 3HH. price £5 + p.p. cheque made payable to Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society.

The Norfolk Bird Atlas will be on sale in good book shops in Norwich. Price £5.

Colin Dack

RAMPARTS FIELD AND WEST STOW

2nd July 1986

Though the weather was hot for this excursion, it was rendered quite pleasant by a nice breeze, except when we went into the forest for a while. It is perhaps worthy of note that, apart from the leader, the only member to turn up was Mr John Davies of Barnham. However, we had a very profitable and interesting day.

Ramparts Field looked rather scorched when we arrived, but first impressions were soon dispelled as we set out across the heathland, carpeted with the massed bright yellow of Stonecrop Sedum acre with here and there, a larger clump of Lady's Bedstraw Galium verum. The Cinnabar Moth caterpillars in places, had eaten themselves out of house and home, and some were seen climbing aimlessly up a tussock of Yorkshire fog!

Among pink flowers which were blooming on the heath, we had a wide range of sizes, varying between Rosebay Willowherb Chamaenerion angustifolium and Sand Spurrey Spergularia rubra, and including Common Thyme Thymus pulegioides. Of more particular interest, however, were two 'Breck rarities' in several clumps of Breckland Thyme Thymus serpyllum, which, as its name suggests, is confined to Breckland in this country, and the Maiden Pink Dianthus deltoides. It was while looking at the latter that we discovered a rare Breckland grass, Purple-Stem Cat's-tail Phleum phleoides, with a dozen or so flowering spikes visible.

Meadow Brown and Small Heath butterflies were on the wing, but these were not the only insects to attract attention. Quite a number of the strangely shaped Sandwasps were going about their business, making burrows to stock with caterpillars in which to lay their eggs. Most of these belong to the species Ammophila sabulosa, but we also saw one specimen which was markedly smaller and slimmer, and of a paler yellow.

Leaving that part of the heath, we went down to the fishing lake, created some years ago from an old gravel pit, and here we spent some considerable time, as there was much of interest to see. Flowers round the margin were unremarkable, and at the same time, very representative of this particular type of habitat, with species such as Water Speedwell Veronica catenata mingling with Greater Pond Sedge Carex riparia, Gt. Hairy Willowherb Epilobium hirsutum and Water Ragwort Sanicula aquatica. The birds dotted about the water surface included many "Mallard" of doubtful parentage, and a little group of Tufted Duck, already well into their 'eclipse' plumage. Canada Geese seemed to have had a good year, as the flock, which included well grown young, on this pool numbered about 150. In addition to Coot and Moorhen, we also admired a pair of Great Crested Grebes with two nearly full grown, stripy headed youngsters. However, the great attraction which kept us beside the water for some while, were the thronging Damsel and Dragonflies. At least three species of the former were present. These were the Common Coenagrion Coenagrion puella which was the most numerous, and many pairs were seen egg laying in the shallows, the Common Ischnura Ischnura elegans which was present in smaller numbers, in pristine condition, as they appeared to be newly emerged. The Common Blue Damselfly Enallagma cyathigerum. While these drifted to and fro along the water edge, about their business. A good number of Darter Dragonflies were patrolling to and fro on their set beats, soon darting out to chase off any intruder of their own kind which happened to stray into their territory. The males, which predominated, had 'powder blue' abdomens, and I immediately thought of the Broad Bodied Libellula Libellula depressa which used to be common beside all kinds of waters. It eventually dawned, however, that the present species, though as big, were much slimmer, the tip of the abdomen was dark, and there were on dark patches on the bases of the wings. I looked through the Dragonflies of the British Isles, by Cynthia Longfield, I then had a telephone conversation with Howard Mendel, the

Suffolk Entomological Recorder, who told me that Libellula depressa is now quite a rare insect, while the insect I had arrived at in my researches, the Black Tailed Orthetrum Orthetrum cancellatum had enjoyed something of a population explosion in Suffolk over the last five years, especially round disused gravel pits.

Strolling round the margin of the pit, we found large numbers of tiny Toads, newly emerged from the water, and very quick to hop toward safety. And well they need to be able to, for, as we were passing among some water side trees, a rustle at our feet caused us to look down, and breathlessly admire a three foot long Grass Snake gliding through the vegetation within inches of us, ignoring us completely as he went on in the never ending quest for food.

A few yards further on, we were suddenly surrounded by a family of baby Sedge Warblers, tottering around a little clearing on unsteady wings, while anxious parents with beaks full of insects made alarm noises at our passing.

Common Blues, Ringlets, Large Skippers and a very bright, newly emerged Small Tortoiseshell butterfly were encountered, as we made our way to the river bank, where we also found a very worn Red Admiral.

During a few hundred yards walk along the bank of the River Lark, we found families of Moorhen, Mallard, with 7 or 8 still downy young, a pair of Mute Swans with 5 fluffy cygnets, and other fluttering families of both Willow and Reed Warblers. Over the low bank across the river, we had good view onto Lankford Pits a series of gravel pits in various stages of use, from quiet, and sallow fringed, to noisy, with a new beach, and gravel washing plant nearby. On the water were another hundred or so Canada Geese, many Mallard, and a nice party of Pochard. When we reached a point opposite the beach, we discovered a Ringed Plover species pottering about, and, after a few minutes, decided that with nothing for comparison, we were unable to say which species it was. However, comparison was at hand. John spotted a little bundle of fluff near the water edge, not far from the adult, and, just at that moment, a Pied Wagtail, which had been foraging along the beach, landed near the bundle of fluff. Immediately the adult bird attacked the Wagtail which, we soon discovered, appeared the larger of the two-so, adult and chick of Little Ringed Plover!

We were encourage by the number of Sand Martins flying round, singing. They seem to be enjoying something of a comeback this year. Common Turns were also present.

Before we left the river bank we saw a Spider Hunting Wasp, climbing over the vegetation, looking for spiders to hunt.

Near the now disused pumping station left over from the Victorian Sewage works, we were surprised to find a large clump of Dittander Lepidium latifolium, more usually found around the edges of saltmarshes in southeast England, and here too was a colony of the herb, Good King Henry Chenopodium bonus-henricus.

Crossing the road into Kings Forest, we found a large plant of Tall Rocket Sisymbrium altissimum, a naturalized alien, frequent in Breckland, and, in this case, it would appear, an alternative food plant for a very late flying Orange Tip Female all the Jack by the Hedge having dried up long ago.

Another plant of Breckland came in for close scrutiny, namely Sickie Medick Medicago falcata alongside which was growing its' common hybrid with lucerne Medicago sativa, known as Medicago X varia. The flowers of the species are bright yellow, while those of the hybrid are every colour from yellowish white thought green and almost blue to mauve as indeed was the case with the plants we studied.

Going through the forest, other plants flowering beside the rides included Kidney Vetch Anthyllis vulneraria, Field Scabious Knautia arvensis, Viper's Bugloss Echium vulgare and Greater Knapweed

Centaurea scabiosa, all with a wealth of attendant insects, some of which appeared very strange beasts indeed, though we did recognize a number of moths, including the Bordered White Bupalus piniaria a pest of pine trees, which flies by day and looks superficially like a very small Speckled Wood butterfly which was also flying among the trees in the warm sunshine.

A very satisfactory excursion a pity though, that not many people enjoyed it!.

Alec Bull.

REMINISCING

From time to time I receive numerous enquiries from people who have found insects attached to various parts of their cars, usually on the blades of the windscreen wipers after their night-time journeys.

Most of the victims that have been brought to my notice during this Autumn have been both sexes of the November moth Epirrita dilutata males of the Winter moth, Operophtera brumata the females of which are wingless and are only found crawling up tree trunks where they were reared, and occasional Angleshades Philogopora meticulosa. This later specie is more often found on the windows of shops where they have been attracted by the illuminations at night.

I have often marvelled, especially when driving home at night in the rain, at the risk these night flying moths take. It seems that each rain drop pushes them out of its way as it falls, not so a car.

As a youth when cars were built with the open honeycomb type radiators, I used to enjoy wandering around the local car park examining these very convenient and productive insect traps, but now this source of interest has disappeared with modern design of vehicles and what would happen today if a budding Entomologist wandered around parked cars examining their radiators, it would not be long before the law intervene to apprehend the suspected vandal or car thief.

Another of my favourite hunting grounds were the gas lamps which illuminated the promenade in my school days, nearly every lamp had its mass of flying insects at night often accompanied by a few bats. Modern street lamps besides being much taller do not to me seem to attract such numbers, how times have changed.

Ken Durrant

Reminder to all photographer's now is the time to check you equipment, if you are not going to use it for the Winter, remove the batteries and store them in a container so if they corrode the equipment will not be damaged. But do put a note on the equipment that the batteries are removed so you do not take out a camera without battery, as some modern cameras are dead without a battery. Now is the time to clean out your camera bag but first have a good look for small screws ect. Which may have come off your equipment, then give the bag a good clean out, as the mechanisms of your camera can be jammed by the smallest grain of sand. Give your equipment a good clean, use a blow brush or a sable paint brush, as this can be cleaned with a gentle wash in warm water. Use lens tissue and lens cleaner only on the lens. Do not use cleaning cloth which are recommended for spectacles, as these are often impregnated with a greasy cleaning agent. If rubbed on the lens grease can give a star filter effect. The best way to protect the lens is to keep a filter on the lens a U.V or skylight. Use a stiffer brush for cleaning the camera body and metal work including the outside lens housing. It is important to keep grit away from the wind-on lever and small controls. If the shutter of your camera is mechanical type, without a film in the camera run through the shutter speeds and all the iris (exposures f 11-16) periodically. Most faults with modern sophisticated cameras are operator malfunctions- people do not read their camera manuals properly.

Colin Cook

BEESTON COMMON

SUNDAY 13th JULY 1986

A perfect day for a nature ramble, we entered the common over an area which two years previous had been impenetrable aged gorse, but having been cleared is now an area of grass, rush and orchids. Meadow Brown butterflies were everywhere certainly in numbers not seen since the 1940's.

The pound is now managed as it was in prewar days, the results were rewarding, the flowering Rush was a delight to see, the flower spikes surrounded by water well away from the fingers of children who in past years had picked them before they could be admired. The Mimulus although of hybrid origin was in full flower along the streams and bog, Three-spined Sticklebacks also abounded in the streams and pound.

One patch of Dodder exists all that remains of the masses which used to cover the gorse before being destroyed by a vandallised fire last year.

Many acres of Bracken and burnt Gorse on the bog, have been cleared by volunteers, resulting in a vast increase of the plant life which in past years had been smothered.

An enjoyable day was had by all.

Lepidoptera seen

Meadow Brown
Ringlet
Gatekeeper
Small Heath
Large Skipper
Small Skipper
Drinker Moth
Garden Tiger
Hebrew Character
Brown Silver Lines
Heart and Dart
Silver Y
Large Yellow Underwing
Common Rustic
Middle Barred Minor
Five-spot Burnet
Common Footman
The Spinach
Small Magpie
White Plume Moth

Coleoptera

Strangalia maculata
Rhagonycha fulva
Hydrobius fuscipes

Heteroptera

Zicron caerulea
Vellia caprai
Napa cinerea
Gerris thoracicus

Diptera

Chloromyia formosa
Oxycera nigricornis
Beris clavipes
Chrysopilus cristatus
Syrirta pipiens
Xylota segnis
Rhagio scolopacea
Sciara thomae
Poecilobothrus nobilitatus
Dolichopus unguilatus
Dolichopus picipes

Odonata

Ischnura elegans

Hymenoptera

Abia sericea
Cladius difformis
Strongylogaster lineata

Ken Durrant.

BURNT FEN, HORNING

SUNDAY 19th OCTOBER 1986

About 24 members gathered on a sunny but windy Sunday for a Fungus Foray at Burnt Fen, Horning, by kind permission of Mrs Nickerson. Fungi found as follows:-

AGARICALES

Hypholoma fasciculare
Plutueus cervinus
Mycena galericulata
Russula ochroleuca
" cyanoxantha
" parazurea
" aeruginea
" nigricans
Amanita rubescens
" muscaria
Macrocyttidia cucumis
Lactarius mitissimus
" turpis

Coprinus micaceus
Boletus parasiticus *
Hygrophorus conicus
" nivea
Clitocybe nebularis
" flaccida
Tricholoma ustale
Cortinarius delibutus
Bolbitus vitellinus
Phaeomarasmius erinaceus
Panaeolus rickenii
Pholiota mutabilis
Tubaria furfuracea
Leccinum scabrum
Paxillus involutus

GASTEROMYCETES

Phallus impudicus
Schleroderma citrinum

DISCOMYCETES

Rhytisma acerinum
Otidea onotica
Dasyscyphus virgineus
Hymenoscyphus scutula
" fructigenus

PYRENOMYCETES

Claviceps purpurea
Xylaria hypoxylon
Hypoxylon multifforme
Diatrypella quercina

TREMELLALES

Calocera viscosa
Hirneola auricula-judae
Dacrymyces stillatus
Exidia glandulosa
Tremella mesenterica

APHYLLOPHORALES

Clavulina cristata
Stereum gausapatum
Daedaleopsis confragosa
Piptoporus betulinus
Peniophora incarnata
Phaeolus schweinitzii
Phlebia radiata
Pseudotrametes gibbosa
Fistulina hepatica

*This is only the second time this fungus has been found in Norfolk.

Mike Woolner.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack 12 Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ. Would contributors please keep reports of field meeting to about 300 words thank you editor Natterjack. Contributions for next natterjack by 15th January 1987 please.

If members have to write to me about membership or "Natterjack". Would they please put their full name above the address on the letter. Also would they please write the letter so I can read it, I do not have a degree in reading bad hand writing. Some letters sent to Don Locking the Treasurer and to myself we have not been able to understand. I think we think said "I have remarried and moved", we could not make out the name or address there was not an old name and address to go by. So please write your best Colin proof writing, the same for contributions to Natterjack. A telephone number would also be a great help if I had to contact you about your letter.