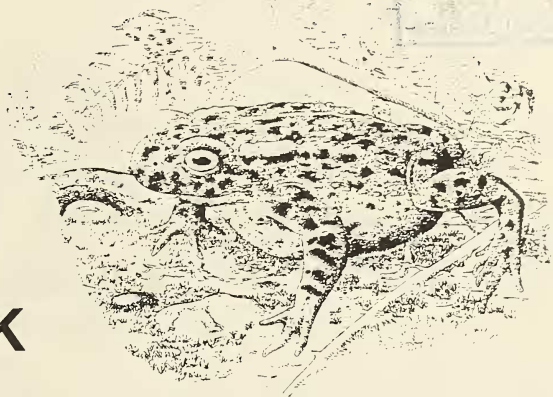


THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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WHAT A SUMMER

As I look out of my window the last remaining flower heads of my five Budlias are packed with butterflies, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells, two Red Admirals and a single Comma, all competing for the nectar with Drone-flies and Bumble bees.

A normal sight on these shrubs in July and August each year, but this is September and the first time that such numbers have visited me this season. Until now only the odd Small White or Small Tortoiseshell has put in an appearance.

The bad weather that we have experienced this year has delayed the normal breeding of many of our butterflies. During early summer I found very few signs of the familiar webs on nettles containing caterpillars of Small Tortoiseshells, but now I am finding them everywhere even newly hatched caterpillars, it is to be hoped that they will be able to pupate and emerge to hibernate before the really rough weather arrives.

I have found more white forms of various flowers this summer than in the past. For a number of years I have known white Common Centaury at West Harling it now seems to be the dominant type there. On Foulden Common there were many white Fragrant Orchids, also white Clustered Bell-flower and white Prickly Rest-harrow, whilst on Buxton Heath I found numerous white Cross-leaved Heath. On Beeston Common we had many pure white Common Spotted Orchids amongst the hundreds of normal types.

It is not only in this country that the weather has affected the flora and fauna. I spent eight days in Germany in July hunting insects and only saw five butterflies. Many of the flowers I had hoped to photograph were not in bloom. My German friends told me that the flora was at least a month behind because of the weather.

Ken Durrant

SOCIETY NOTICE BOARD

WORKSHOP DATES.

(All at the Castle Museum, at 7.30 pm unless stated otherwise.)

30 March 1988 - Small Mammals.

Future workshops will include: insect photography; introduction to lichens; centipedes, millipedes, bumblebees; dragonfly larvae.

BOOKS AT REDUCED PRICES

Harley Books are offering Society members a 10% reduction on the following books if they are ordered through the Society.

		Hardback	Paperback
The Moths & Butterflies of Gt. Britain & Ireland	Vol.1	£33.75	£22.45
	Vol.2	£42.75	£22.45
	Vol.9	£36.00	£22.45
	Vol.10	£40.50	£22.45
The Spiders of Gt. Britain & Ireland. Set of 3 Volumes		£121.50	-
The Dragonflies of Gt. Britain and Ireland		£17.95	£ 8.95
British Pyralid Moths		£17.95	-
Breeding Butterflies and Moths		£18.00	£ 8.95
A Recorder's Log Book or			
Label List of British Butterflies and Moths			£ 1.35

Please contact Tony Irwin at the Castle Museum if you want to take advantage of this offer.

SLOW-WORM AND COMMON LIZARD

Members are invited to send in details of reptile and amphibian sighting made during the year. The recorder is particularly keen to receive Slow-Worm and Common Lizard records even if they're several years old as tetrad distribution maps are to be produced for the next Transactions. Please send records to, John Buckley C/O Natural History Dept., Castle Museum, Norwich.

John Buckley

A NEW FOOD FOR NUTHATCHES

Nuthatches have long been known as visitors to bird tables in search of nuts, suet etc, but so far as I am aware, have not been recorded eating sugar beet pulp.

On 2nd November 1987, while passing a yard where cattle food had been placed in troughs ready for some young stock to eat, I was surprised when a Nuthatch came flying out carrying something in its beak. On looking, I found the trough to contain only unmolassed pressed beet pulp. This is whitish and rather like large pieces of coconut to look at, which may well explain why the bird had been attracted to it. It will be interesting to discover if the habit spreads, or indeed, whether it is already known elsewhere in the County.

Alec Bull

BIRD NEWS

1987 is proving to be a vintage year for the bird watchers in the County and it is felt that members may be interested in an interim report prior to receiving full details in the 1987 Bird & Mammal Report.

Early highlights included the appearance of a male Red-crested Pochard at Welney where large numbers of Bewicks' and Whooper Swans had congregated, and Waxwings which spent several days to the delight of many observers off Heigham Road in Norwich. Great excitement was caused in February when two Great Bustards appeared in a rape field at New Buckenham. Despite their great size they were surprisingly difficult to locate. Nevertheless many enjoyed good views during the three days of their stay. Other Birds of this species were also seen in Suffolk at this time - presumably displaced from their Eastern European homes by the extreme wintry weather.

At this time roosts of Long-Eared Owls were discovered in thickets at a number of locations. Another Broadland roosting site provided overnight sanctuary for Hen Harriers, the odd Marsh Harrier and up to six Merlins.

April began with the appearance of a Penduline Tit at Hickling - the first record of this species for the County. This small bird gave bird watchers excellent views as it fed on the seed heads of Reedmace. On the 8th April a Red-rumped Swallow visited Cley spending some days hawking for insects over the marshes and roosting one very wet night in the porch of St. Margaret's Church Cley

May can usually be relied upon to provide the highlights of the ornithological year and once again it lived up to its reputation. A Drake Ring-necked Duck was seen at Hardley Flood and another distant wanderer, a fine female Wilson's Phalarope, caused excitement at Cley. The Warden's problems were not eased, when on the 12th May a pair of Slender-billed Gulls was discovered on Cley Marsh, another first for the County. They spent the next three days between there and Blakeney Harbour, last being seen from the public hide at Cley at dusk on the 15th May by a lucky few including your correspondent. Additional spring-time highlights included White-winged Black Tern, Spoonbill and Broad-billed Sandpiper all at Hickling (Potter Heigham bank) early one morning; Alpine Swift at Holme and Thrush Nightingale at Holkham.

A number of resplendent Bluethroats appeared at a number of locations including at least twelve at Blakeney Point. These attractive birds, however, were eclipsed when a pair of Blackwinged Stilts arrived on the 17th May on the NNT wader pools at Holme and very soon set about the task of nesting. They eventually hatched three chicks, two of which survived to the flying stage. This was the first successful nesting of this species in Great Britain since two pairs bred at Nottingham sewage farm in 1945.

The breeding season had other, albeit less glamorous successes in the County. Eight young Marsh Harriers were reared at Strumpshaw and ten at Titchwell, with reports of breeding Montagu's Harriers in the West of the County. The Little Tern colony on the North Beach at Great Yarmouth wardened and protected by wire fencing, allowed fifty five pairs to breed in reasonable security with many young reaching the free flying stage. However, Broadland could produce two only booming Bitterns, although others were present in the coastal reedbeds. Breckland provided successful Goshawks nest and the much publicised pair of Red-backed Shrikes - possibly the only pair in the County.

Hickling and Breydon Water were visited by a Caspian Tern on several occasions in June, with two at Breydon on the 5th and 6th July. Holme continued in the limelight with a Woodchat Shrike on the 8th June and on the same day a Red-necked Phalarope visited Cley. Eight days later a Rose-coloured Starling joined a party of Starlings at Stalham. The return wader passage began in July with many birds still in their breeding finery, resplendent silver and black Grey Plovers, Godwits Knots and Curlew Sandpipers in their red plumage and golden and black Golden Plovers. Continuing the run of rarities, a Marsh Sandpiper spent some time on the Cley reserve at the beginning of August when a Night Heron visited Breydon and a Purple Heron was filmed at Welney.

The downpour on 25th August brought down a number of migratory birds - at least three Greenish Warblers, up to thirty Wrynecks (including individuals in Norwich) Redstarts, Pied Flycatchers and a Great Snipe on the shingle bank towards Blakeney Point. We now await with eager anticipation further Autumn surprises.

Don Dorling

SOME RECENT FUNGI RECORDS

A NEW SPECIES

Layers of reddish spores were found under a log in a Norfolk Naturalists Trust reserve. They appeared to have been produced on a bark encrusting fungus and could not be matched in this Country or the U.S.A. It belongs to the genus Sepedonium, in which the species Sepedonium chrysospermum is responsible for the golden yellow colour on decaying Boleti and Paxillus toadstools. It is still being examined

A SPECIES NEW TO BRITAIN

A small fungus from another Trust reserve was found growing on old dead Willow branches. It consists of small pale to orange globules and is Nectria grammicospora. A member of the same genus is the species Nectria cinnabarina which is frequently found on old dead sticks and is known as "Coral Spot". These Norfolk specimens are being described by a mycologist in the U.S.A whose other records of this species are from South America.

Reg Evans

ANNUAL VISIT TO HICKLING

On my annual visit to Hickling I was rewarded with the sighting of a new butterfly and finding a new moth, for my records of this reserve. The butterfly a single Comma was feeding on Hemp Agrimony by Catfield Dyke on 14 August. This butterfly is well known for intermittent alterations in its range perhaps other observers have noted a recent spread.

A new species of moth is always pleasing, a specimen of Rhyacia simulans the Dotted Rustic was noted to light on the 13 August. This also appears to be an insect expanding its range.

T.N.D. Peet

MURDER MOST FOUL

Whilst looking in the grass in one of Norfolk's nature reserves I noticed a small spider Lepthyphantes tenuis which seemed to have a greyish white object on the right side of the abdomen.

When examined closely this was seen to be a small larva, obviously feeding on the living spider. Occasionally the host attempted to dislodge the larva by brushing it off with her legs, but this was never successful as the site is well chosen.

In the following week the larva increased in size and sometimes the listless spider was seen to run across the web for no obvious reason. Eventually the larval parasite was as large as the spider's abdomen. After killing and consuming the host. It was observed to discard its empty carcase by dropping it to the base of the container.

The parasitic larva remained in the spider's web, building there a four - sided cigar shaped cocoon which changed from white to light brown in a few days.

In three weeks a black wasp like parasite emerged Acrodactala degener.

Reg Evans

WATER WEEDS WORKSHOP - 5th AUGUST 1987

As a somewhat indifferent amateur naturalist with a predominant interest in entomology in general and lepidoptera in particular, I would like to make a brief comment on the recent "Water Weeds" workshop at the Castle Museum. By no stretch of the imagination could I be regarded as a serious botanist and yet I found this workshop an absolute delight.

I had gone along on the 5th August knowing virtually nothing about water weeds (I thought I knew Canadian pondweed and the Great Reed-mace) hoping to glean something about an unfamiliar group of plants, but rather expecting to be "out of my depth" in more ways than one. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Yes, there was a lot to try and take in: and yes, it was presented by an expert, but one who understood the needs of at least one member of his audience: and no, I am not now competent to identify water weeds in the field (nor laboratory for that matter): but I do understand HOW to set about identifying what I find and also who to ask when I get in a muddle.

Differences between similar species and similarities between different genera were explained and demonstrated, and there was ample opportunity to study living material. Explanations were readily forthcoming and there seemed to be plenty of time for everyone. I found this particular workshop both valuable and educational and every bit as enjoyable as the ones on the groups with which I am more familiar. I thoroughly recommend the series of workshops being held in the Castle to ALL members, Even if on the surface they do not instantly appeal to your special interests.

Finally I would like to thank Rob Driscoll and his colleagues for all the work and preparation that made this workshop so successful.

Michael Hall

THE ROLE OF THE AMATEUR NATURALIST

The interesting article by Philip Cambridge, commenting on the one day conference "The amateur naturalist in the changing countryside", in the last edition of "Natterjack" poses the question as to what is 'natural' and 'unnatural' countryside.

Whilst it is very true that virtually everything we cherish today has developed as a result of some activity by man, left to her own devices nature also produces an ever changing environment. These changes are much less abrupt and with with our concept of "yesterday and now" being right and "tomorrow" probably being wrong as a result of interference by man, we are too impatient to allow the "natural" cycle to go full circle - probably rightly so as far as the survival of our species is concerned, but do we matter in the overall picture? I agree with everything that Philip says but would respectfully point out that this is his personal view and it may not be shared by all other amateur naturalists. The orchid, Blue Tit and butterfly officianados may all have slightly different priorities which if allowed to reach fullfilment, could result in different countrysides.

What we must achieve is harmony, which can only really come from consideration and compromise. Nothing harms a case more than over-stating it, especially if some of the basic premises are a little 'suspect'. In view of this I would suggest that as well as observing, recording and educating, the role of the amateur naturalist is to moderate. By all means encourage the over - zealous council or farmer to cut verges a little less often or efficiently, but also encourage the professional naturalists and 'conservationists' to accept that virtually no - one destroys the countryside for kicks, they usually have a good reason in their own eyes, and it is not always money.

Much is now being achieved along this road with the setting up of Environmentally Sensitive Areas but so much more can be done at a parish level by the moderating influence of the amateur naturalist. By combining information and advice which is available from the professionals with quite detailed local knowledge of people and "potential problem areas", much can be achieved to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned.

Michael Hall

A HITCH HIKER.

On the 15th July this year whilst walking through the main car-park in Sheringham I picked up a dead moth, on examination it proved to be a Treble Lines Charanyca trigrammica Hufn. This moth is a West coast specie and even there is very local and not at all common. How then did it reach Norfolk, did it fly or was it given a lift by some unsuspecting holiday-maker?

Pre 1900 records however do show at least six localities within the County.

Ken Durrant

FUNGUS FORAY MARSHAM HEATH

Saturday 25th August 1987

The first fungus foray of the year was very successful with an attendance of 19. Often these meetings have 30 or more present, but the enthusiasm of the group fully compensated for the low turn out.

There was a great deal to interest the photographer as apart from the fungi, we paused to see the mating of the spiders Agelena labyrinthica and watched the cautious approach of a male Araneus diadematus to the much larger female he had chosen for a mate.

The parasitic plant Dodder Cuscuta epithymum was present on the heather and growing on the bare soil of the path in pinkish threads. We were also pleased to see numerous butterflies, an adder, two lizards and a colony of pine Sawfly larvae Diprion pini.

More than 100 species of fungi were recorded at this meeting including over 63 'Toadstools' such as Tawny Grisette Amanita fulva, the Blusher Amanita rubescens, the Bay Boletus Boletus badius. Some Chanterelles Cantharellus cibarius were collected for tea. A tiny Toadstool growing on dead Gorse stems proved to be Hemimycena crispula, new to our list. A large Russula nigricans, blackened with age, was found attacked by another Toadstool Asteropmora lycoperdoides which was growing from the cap of its host. There are not many records of this in our Norfolk file.

Under the leaf litter a moth pupa was found infected by a fungus Paecilomyces farinosus. It had several 1" (25mm) long "stems" bearing spores in mass visible as a white powder. These spores, dispersed by various agencies, will lie in the soil awaiting the arrival next year of further larvae moving to pupation sites.

Incidentally, this year many flies have been killed by the fungus Entomophthora. If you have seen dead flies on the window with a whitish ring on the glass around them this is the reason. It seems to be very common this year and such epidemics are sometimes called 'Fly Cholera'.

We hope to give a report on the years activity in the next Natterjack.

Reg & Lil Evans

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 settings) periodically. Most faults with modern sophisticated cameras are operator malfunctions- people do not read their camera manuals properly.

Colin Dack

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP PROGRAMME 1987/88

Wednesday Nov 25th 19.30hrs	"Norfolk the finest bird County" by Mr M Seago Assembly House Edmund Bacon Room
Monday Dec 14th 19.30hrs	"Exploring the Isles of Orkney & Faroe By Mrs A Wilson Assembly House Edmund Bacon Room
Wednesday Jan 20th 19.30hrs	"Between the Tides" By Mr J Fenton Assembly House Edmund Bacon Room
Thursday Feb 18th 19.30hrs	"Walking the Pennine Way" by Mr P Negal Assembly House Edmund Bacon Room
Thursday March 17th 19.30hrs	"Wildlife in the Garden" by Mr T Jennings Assembly House Edmund Bacon Room
Thursday April 14th 19.30hrs	"East Anglia through the Seasons" Photographic Group presentation to Society City Library Lecture Theatre
Wednesday May 18th 19.30hrs	Members Evening A challenge - your slides to match the theme "Broadland". up to 10 slides each please. Assembly House Edmund Bacon Room

Bob Robinson.

I have repeated the remainder of Photographic Group indoor meetings for those members who have mislaid their Natterjack Nol7. I would like to remind members that Photographic Group meetings are open to all Society members to attend.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ, to arrive not later than **15th January 1988**. Contributions sent after this date will not be accepted for the February Natterjack.

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. So please use 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.