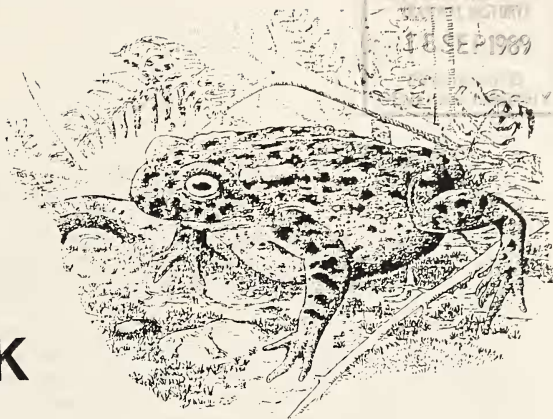


THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



The Quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

No.25

May 1989

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PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP PROGRAMME

1989/90

Wednesday	6th Sept	" Flowering Cacti "	Ken Durrant
Thursday	5th Oct	" Insect Photography "	Ivan West
Thursday	2nd Nov	" British Wild Orchids"	John Oxenford
Friday	8th Dec	" Western Australia "	Philip Cambridge
Wednesday	3rd Jan	" California to Colorado "	Max Smith
Monday	5th Feb	" Facets of East Africa "	Betty Griffin
Wednesday	7th Mar	" Anglesey "	Alec Bull
Monday	2nd April	" A Threesome Entertain "	Messrs Ewles Hardie & Wilson

The above meetings will be held throughout the year in the Sir Edmund Bacon Room at the Assembly House and are scheduled to commence at 7.30pm.

Lecturers are requested to arrange their talks to end at approximately 9.p.m. with a view to allowing members of the audience to ask questions, photographic or naturewise, relevant to the lecture. The following 20 to 30 minutes remaining to be devoted to the showing of members' slides (a maximum of six or so please) brought along for identification of species, or for general comment, as appropriate.

Bob Robinson.

AN INTERESTING HEDGE

From my kitchen window I can look out onto what remains of an old field hedge here in my garden. This twenty five metre length is an ugly sight to many people and one which should have been removed many years ago.

Violets, Snowdrops, Daffodils and a few shrubs have been planted and with the spring flowers now dying off the wild ones take over. White Dead Nettle, Stinging Nettle, Cow Parsley, Common Mallow, Goosegrass, Ground Ivy, Wild Arum and others, topped by Hawthorn, Holly, Oak and dead Elm stumps. All very common plants but with an amazing amount of wildlife. Seven spot ladybirds are abundant this year, the Mallow already has pin holes and galls on the leaves. The whole bank is covered with various spiders, weevils, and when warm enough, bees. Later there will be an abundance of hoverflies and grasshoppers. A large log was placed here some time ago and the local school children have been observing the life underneath it since February 1986. Large numbers of woodlice, slugs and snails and a few centipedes are always found under this log which is rapidly decaying. The occasional toad is also seen. The children have been able to compare the life here with similar logs of wood elsewhere in my garden (one on concrete and one on gravel).

On the old Elm stump, now covered in Ivy, grows the Dryad's Saddle and Oyster Fungus. The flowers of the male Holly are now showing. This tree has now been overshadowed by the Oak growing next to it. The hedge is used extensively by birds both for food and nesting.

It is a pleasure to be able to walk just outside my door and to be able to gaze at these wild plants and the life they attract - to identify the butterfly that has just alighted and to watch the birds without needing binoculars.

Anne Brewster.

FELTHORPE WOODS

12th March 1989

This meeting was announced in the Natterjack as an addition to those listed in the programme.

About 20 members took part in this foray and 57 species of fungi were found. Although many of these were small, 7 kinds of Toadstool appeared in the final list, including *Pluteus lutescens* with pink gills a brown cap and a yellow stipe.

A good number of resupinate fungi were found and we were pleased to see a nice specimen of *Steccherinum ochraceum*. We have only a few previous records of this in the County (collected by Mr & Mrs Tebbit). It has buff to ochre teeth instead of gills or pores.

Reg Evans.

NATURALISTS ON HOLIDAY

Nowadays holidays abroad are extremely popular, charter flights and various 'packages' having opened up almost limitless possibilities. Overseas expeditions arranged for naturalists by commercial companies and other bodies are available in abundance and their effects are very evident. Twenty five years ago, around Easter in Puerto Pollensa, Majorca, one felt rather conspicuous carrying a pair of binoculars. Today at the same time of the year, the place is awash with telescopes and other expensive equipment associated with bird watching. The mere whisper of the presence of a rarity on the island results in the assembly shortly after dawn, of a crowd at the rumoured site, formerly remote and almost unknown.

Many people enjoy joining an organised group with one or more leaders. By doing so they feel they will visit the right places and see the most things. Obviously there is some truth in this. At the same time, there are disadvantages. First, many expeditions have mixed objectives. They may, be advertised as being for Birds and Flowers and the keen ornithologists may be disappointed when in their opinions, too much time is devoted to flowers and vice versa. Other tours may be for Sites and Flowers and the botanists are devastated when they arrive at an archaeological site and find that the custodian has sprayed the terrain to prevent the flower obscuring the ruins, a practice all too common in Greece. When keen photographers are members of a general natural history group they are apt to feel frustrated. Few people appreciate that time is needed to take worthwhile pictures and a party of eager naturalists may not wish to wait around for half an hour until the light is satisfactory for photographing some rare specimen.

Another point to be noted is that organised tours generally take in what are usually accepted as classic sites. Unfortunately many sites have been regarded as such for a very long time and consequently they often show signs of exploitation. It does nothing for the feeling of pleasurable anticipation to arrive at such a place and find there are already two coach-loads of people ranging the ground which has been subjected to similar daily visitations for some time.

The alternative to joining a party is to travel individually or with one or two kindred spirits. It is, of course, necessary to have a plan of campaign which will be based on preliminary reading of the available literature, marking with a large - scale map, marking the areas which are possibly worthy of exploration. For example, Polunin's 'Flowers of Greece and the Balkans' has excellent chapters on plant - hunting regions in that part of the world. His book 'Flowers of South West Europe' is similarly helpful for Spain and Portugal. A feature of the last twenty years is the enormous increase in the amount of literature available for such study.

Proceedings in this way it is possible to develop a feeling about an area and draw up a provisional programme for a visit. With a plan in mind, it is then necessary to book a suitable 'package' which can be based on one centre or two or three. Another option is to 'fly-drive' staying in different places each night. Whatever the type of accommodation it is essential to have transport, which normally means hiring a car. Such an arrangement allows for almost complete flexibility and usually is appreciably cheaper than joining an organised tour. There is the added advantage that it is possible to really

explore, often with rewarding results.

Reg Jones.

THE SOCIETY IN THE YEAR 2010

I believe the main difference in the way the Society is run by the year 2010 will be in the use of computers. By then most, if not all, members will own a computer or FAX. Members will not receive their mail by post (letter), but by the telephone lines from computer to computer or FAX (electronic mail). The way this works is to connect computers to the telephone lines by way of a device called a modem.

The sender will collect all the items submitted to the Natterjack, Transactions, or Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report. Most of the items will have been submitted to the editors by electronic mail.

The mailing will take place at night when the telephone lines are least in use. This will be a low charge time from 12 midnight to 6 in the morning. The computers will be always switched on, they will use very little electricity in a standby mode.

So when all the mail is ready the Secretary or Membership Secretary or who ever looks after the mail then, will load the mail into the computers memory. A programme (a list of instructions) will then be loaded with the Data Base file (list of members) with telephone numbers and addresses also a code which the members' computers will recognise and so accept the mail. The sending computer will dial each members computer in turn, if it cannot connect with the members computer at that time it will make a file (list) to try later. When the computer makes a connection what is called a handshake will take place between the two computers. Then the mail will be transmitted at the speed of light from one to the other.

The members computer will hold the mail in its memory or store it on a floppy disk. Not only will members have the Society mail but will also be told if their subscription is still outstanding (is yours?).

This is not some pie in the sky idea of mine, it is happening today. As the cost of paper rises through the demand for wood when all the rain forests have been destroyed. Mailing a letter will become very costly with fewer letters being sent. Electronic mail will become the norm. The membership then will think us very old fashioned.

If you had sent in the very interesting item which you did not get round to, I would not have been able to put this in!

Colin Dack.

NESTBOXING FOR RAINFORESTS

8th - 9th July 1989

The Norfolk Young Naturalists and the West Norfolk Conservation Volunteers are holding another nest-box build in aid of rainforest conservation this summer. Boxes are for sale (£3.95 each for small bird and bat boxes, a wide range of other types available) or can be sponsored. In the Sponsorship scheme, we make Barn Owl and Bat boxes, which will be given to the Hawk Trust Barn Owl Conservation Network and the Norfolk Bat Group respectively. These boxes will be

put up in Norfolk in sites where they are needed. Sponsors receive an invitation to a bat box inspection (and possibly to a Barn Owl watch), as well as details of what uses the boxes over 18 months and information about the rainforest projects the money raised goes to. Minimum sponsorship fee is £3.75 (£2.75 unwaged).

Offers of sponsorship, orders for boxes or enquiries to Edward Cross, Abbey Farm, Flitcham, King's Lynn, PE31 6BT (Hillington 600227). 130 boxes were made in last years event raising £510 - thanks to all NNNS members who supported this.

Edward Cross.

PENSTHORPE

30th April 1989

Members who missed the excursion on 30th April should treat themselves to a day's outing to Pensthorpe Waterfowl Park and Nature Reserve. The whole reserve covers about 200 acres on either side of the river Wensum near Fakenham. In the 1970s, over one million tons of gravel were extracted, creating 5 lakes. South of these are wet grazing meadows bordering the river, alder carr woodland fed by springs rising from the chalk, and a section of disused railway line. The park was opened in July 1988 by the Duke of Edinburgh, and aims to protect waterfowl, and wetland habitats and to encourage public appreciation of their importance.

David North, the Education Officer, kindly offered to give us a quick conducted tour in the morning, before returning home for his breakfast - he had arrived at 4 a.m. to lead a dawn chorus walk. After lunch, most of us returned for a more detailed look. A wader aviary gave close views of Avocet, Ruff, Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Black-winged Stilt and Teal, While other aviaries contained waterfowl from other parts of the world, such as South American Torrent Ducks, and the curious Australian Musk Duck with it black throat wattle and legs set so far back on its body it is unable to walk on land.

The lakes support captive populations of many species, including Eider, King Eider, Barnacle Geese, Pintail, Shoveler, Red-Crested Pochard, Mandarin Ducks and Barrow's Goldeneye. Wild birds are also attracted, we saw Great Crested Grebe, Tufted Duck, Coot, Moorhen and Mallard. Many migrants over-winter here, especially Wigeon and Goldeneye. The birds were in full breeding plumage, we were able to watch several courtship displays. A pair of Great Crested Grebes were observed playing with a fish too large for them to swallow. They repeatedly dropped it, dived after it and resurfaced with it.

It was a little too early for flowers in the fen meadows, but the disused railway line produced early Forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima*, *Viola riviniana*, and a good display of Ground Ivy. Marsh Marigolds were still in bloom in the Alder Carr, along with Lady's Smock and Primroses. Chiff-Chaff, Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Cuckoo were heard, and St Mark's Flies were on the wing everywhere.

Many people may not approve of keeping captive birds with clipped wings, even in such an ideal habitat, but it does give a unique opportunity to see birds at closer quarters than would be possible in the wild. For most of us, it was the first time we had seen a Ruff displaying to a Reeve (who showed not the slightest interest!), or noticed the beautiful pale blue legs of the Avocets, watched a pair of Barrow's Goldeneye swimming under water, or seen the purple-

blue iridescent sheen on the drake's head: Most visitors were clearly very interested in what they saw at Pensthorpe, and hopefully this will do much to promote conservation, and even produce a few more naturalists.

Carol Haines.

NEW PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

With this Natterjack you will have received your programme of lectures and field meeting for the year June 1989 to May 1990. I am sure you will wish to join me in thanking Bob Robinson his family and committee for producing yet again a fine series of meetings.

The new committee will be starting to plan the following years programme within the next few months we would welcome your comments and suggestions for lectures, field meeting, speakers and leaders.

One or more of the following committee members is normally at each meeting - so track us down. If you can't find us, you can phone us

Mike Ewles Tel No. Norwich 867762 Carol Haines Tel No. Norwich 867825
Mary Cooper Tel No. Norwich 624098 Jack Dawson Tel No. Attleborough 850748

PROGRAMME NOTES

Sunday Field meeting to Horsey Mere and Dunes. Ring Carol On Norwich
4th June 867825 as soon as possible to reserve your places. Time is short
and we are limited in number to 25.

ALSO PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING MEETING WHICH ARE ADDITIONAL TO THOSE SHOWN IN THE PROGRAMME.

Sunday Heathland and Forest walk on Cranwich Heath Nr Mundford.
23rd July Ref: TF 772934 Leader: Gerry Haggett.
11.00 hrs Bring packed lunch.

Sunday Field Meeting to Blakeney Point for coastal flora.
13th August Meet NNT Beach Car Park, Cley Ref: TG048453.
11.00 hrs Leaders: Carol Haines and Janet Ewles.
Bring packed lunch.

Saturday Field meeting to Cranwich Heath for a mothing evening
26th August with Gerry Haggett and Mike Hall.
21.00 hrs Ref: TF 772934.

SENSATIONAL BARGAIN

A copy of **The Norfolk Bird Atlas** by Geoffrey Kelly, for only £1.50 including post and packing. Please make your cheque out to the **Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society**. For your copy please write to Mrs. M. Dorling, "St. Edmundsbury", 6, New Road, Hethersett, Norwich. NR9 3HH.

CONTRIBUTIONS For the Next Natterjack. I must have all contributions for the next Natterjack well before the 1st July 1989, Contributions to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ.