

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

The Quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

No.29

May 1990

* * * * *

AN EXCURSION TO BLAKENEY POINT

As members take part in the excursion programme for 1990 they may be interested to read of the Society's first visit to Blakeney Point. I have a press cutting which gives an account of the occasion which took place almost seventy years ago, on the last Sunday in May 1921. The account is a lengthy one extending to rather more than fifteen hundred words. It is, I suppose, a piece of social history and gives some indication of life in the 1920's. Because of its length, it cannot be reproduced in full.

The first paragraph refers to the acquisition of the Point by the National Trust in 1912 and to the work of Prof. F.W. Oliver. F.R.S. of University College London, who over the years, had investigated and published a great deal about the flora and fauna. It was at his invitation that just under one hundred members of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist's Society should have paid a pilgrimage to the spot on Sunday!

I will repeat the second paragraph verbatim because it includes so many names from the past who have played major roles in the history of the Society.

'In years gone by the pilgrimage suggested by Professor Oliver would have been long and arduous, but on this occasion it was simplicity itself. By motor cars and chars-a-bans, members journeyed from Norwich and various parts of Norfolk and Suffolk, and arrived at Morston Quay between ten and eleven. The company which was thoroughly representative of the Naturalist's Society, included Sir Charles Tomes. F.R.S. and Lady Tomes, Sir Hugh Beevor, Sir T. Barrett-Lennard, Lieut-Colonel Todd, Miss. Geldart, Mrs. Dupuis Brown, Mrs. Claribell Smith, Dr. M. Beverley, Dr. S.H. Burton, Dr. Sydney H. Long (Hon-secretary of the Society), Colonel E.A. and Mrs. Kerrison, Major E.H. Evans-Lombe, Captain C. Colman, Messrs E.T. Boardman, R.J. Colman, J.H. Walter, H.G. Barclay, Robert Gurney, B.B. Riviere, W.L. Sutton, F. Leney, W.A. Nicholson, A.H. Patterson and J. Vincent (Keeper of the Hickling Reserve). To her great regret Miss. E.L. Turner F.L.S. (President of the Society) was unable to be present. From Morston Quay the motor-boat Pelican towed a small fleet of boats down the harbour to a point as near as possible to the beach. Here they transferred to rowing-boats, which in turn rowed nearly up to the shingle, when

ladies and gentlemen had a pick-a-back ride to the shore. The house party at the Point included Professor and Mrs. Oliver, Mr. S.H. Hamer (Secretary of the National Trust). Dr. E.J. Salisbury F.L.S. Miss Winifred Smith, Major T.G. Hill, Mr. A.W. Cozens-Hardy, Major and Mrs. Philip Hamond, Mrs. Bishop and Miss. Bishop. Lunch was provided on the sand hills and tea in the Old Lifeboat House which is the property of the Botanical Department of University College. Professor Oliver was the host and the catering was in the excellent hands of Mrs. R.J. Pinchen (wife of the warden of the point).'

The rest of the article tells of the way the conducted tours were organised together with a very full account of what was seen. Finally there is a concluding paragraph.

'Before leaving each guest was presented by Professor Oliver with a printed souvenir of the visit, copies of a reprint of Professor Oliver's chapter on Blakeney Point in Carey and Oliver's book on Tidal Lands were generously distributed and the visitors book signed. Then the mudflats were crossed, rowing-boats took the party across the channel: and the Morston salt marshes were traversed under the guidance of members of the Ingham troop of Boy Scouts. The return journey was made by way of Blakeney and the last party reached Norwich just before 10.00p.m.

The account is signed W.G.C. I believe the initials to be those of W.G. Clarke the author of 'In Brecklands' Wilds.' He was a journalist with the Eastern Daily Press. I understand that it was quite usual for a member of the press to accompany outings and subsequently write a report for the E.D.P.

Reg Jones.

UNUSUAL FUNGI

When visiting an unusual habitat at the appropriate time of year, we always look out for fungi which we try to identify ourselves, then pass on to Reg Evans to verify and if worthwhile to enter into his records. We visited two dune systems during November and brought back a number of trophies. On the 7th, we walked along the tide line as far as the high dunes just east of Gun Hill, Burnham Overy. Here we found and collected quite a number of species of fungi. These included the black Fairy Clubs *Geoglossum cookeianum*, which we had seen in the past at Wells and the Dune Stinkhorn *Phallus hadriani*, which was quite frequent on this occasion. Surprisingly though, more than a quarter mile from the end of the trees on Holkham Meals, we found such species as *Cortinarius semisanguineus* and *Agaricus comtulus*. Among less common species, was *Lepiota alba* and also *Agaricus spissicaulis*, the last named being new to Reg's list of Norfolk Fungi.

On the 21st November, we walked to Blakeney Point along the shingle ridge and back. Not many fungi left then, but we found three species all together on the Hood, on the way back. *Tricholoma terreum* and *Clitocybe nebularis* are both supposed to be woodland species. So far as I could calculate, looking at the map, the nearest tree was almost two miles away! However, the third specimen was in its correct habitat. The expanded cap had just pushed its way out of the loose sand, a characteristic of *Agaricus devoniensis*. This last was new to Reg's list, and he also confirmed all the above records.

Alec Bull.

11.

[illegible]

Please complete a line of the above form for each new location you find for grasshoppers or bush-crickets in Norfolk.
Completed forms should be sent to: David Richard, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4LS by the end of November.



SIDE KEELS OF PRONOTUM STRONGLY INFLEXED

Song rising to crescendo - mottled grasshopper

The mottled grasshopper can also be uniquely identified (in Norfolk) by its clubbed antennae. Confirmatory features are its small size, mottled appearance and preference for sandy habitats.

..... Song consisting of brisk chirps, produced by rapid leg movements - common field grasshopper

Confirmatory features are large size of females, often drab olive colouration.

..... wheezy song produced by slow leg movements
- stripe-winged grasshopper

Probably Norfolk's most restricted grasshopper with a preference for chalky grassland.

SIDE KEELS STRAIGHT OR SLIGHTLY INCURVED

Continuous loud song with a duration of upto 15 seconds produced by rapid leg movements
Common green grasshopper

..... Gang typically of 2-3 seconds duration, at 10 sec interval - meadow grasshopper

Confirmatory features are the shortened wings of the male (not extending to the tip of the abdomen) and the vestigial wings of the female, only half the length of the abdomen.

.....
Brisk song consisting of 1 second bursts with
rests of 2-3 seconds - lesser marsh grasshopper

Confirmatory features are the straight side keels to the pronotum, and the preference for coastal marshes and sand dunes.

BUSH CRICKETS IN NORFOLK



Bush crickets may be distinguished from grasshoppers by their long antennae, prominent ovipositors of male cerci, and in many species by the absence of fully developed wings. They have a similar life cycle.

Five species are commonly found in Norfolk and are easily separated by colour and appearance.

Dark bush cricket

Widespread, recognised by its brisk, chirping song, given from heavy cover in brambles or shrubs. The male is a dark brown, wingless insect with bright yellow underside. Females are paler brown, also yellow underneath.

Speckled bush cricket

A bright green, wingless insect, speckled with minute brown dots and having a thin, brown dorsal stripe. Long spindly legs and slow crawling habits give it a spiderly appearance. It will crawl onto, or into buildings being most noticeable on windows.

Oak bush cricket

Pale green with yellowish legs and fully developed wings. It is attracted to lighted windows at night, otherwise it is difficult to find as it lives in the canopy of oak and other deciduous trees.

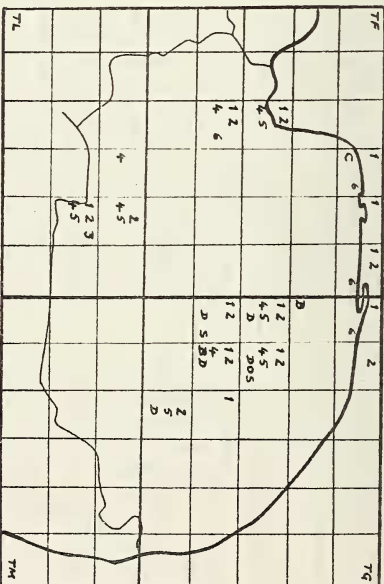
Bog bush cricket

A dark brown insect with two colour forms, one with the top of the head and the top of the pronotum bright green. In the other form these areas are brown, in which case the insect can be separated from dark bush cricket by the presence of vestigial wings, extending over half the abdomen. Its preferred habitat is damp heathland, often where cross-leaved heath is present. It has a loud incessant stridulation.

Short-winged conehead

A bright green insect, with vestigial wings covering no more than half the abdomen. There is a brown dorsal stripe. Its very high pitched song, like the whine of a mosquito, is inaudible to many people. Its preferred habitat is coastal salt marsh and associated dunes.

RECENT RECORDS OF ORTHOPTERA IN NORFOLK (1987-89)



GRASSHOPPERS

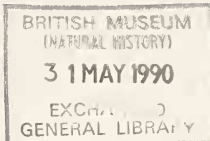
1. Mottled
2. Common Field
3. Stripe-winged
4. Common Green
5. Meadow Marsh
6. Lesser Marsh

BUSH-CRICKETS

- A. Bog bush-cricket
- B. Short-winged conehead
- C. Dark bush-cricket
- D. Oak bush-cricket
- E. Speckled bush cricket

LOCALITIES SURVEYED

TF61	Shouldham Warren	TB01	Sparham Pk. E Tuddenham
TF62	Rodan Common	TB02	Bawdeswell Heath/Hindolvestone
TF74	Tixwell (NSP/dunes)	TB03	Holt Lowes
TF84	Holkham Heals	TB04	Cley/Blaikney/Wiveton
TF94	Holkham Heals/Stiffkey	TB11	Alderford/Ugate/Hougnen
TL79	Faulden Common	TB12	Wespham/Buxton Heath/Blacking
TL88	Santon Downham	TB21	Woburne
TL89	Lyntonford	TB22	Thorpe St Andrew (hospital)
		TL89	Mousenold Heath



ABUNDANT DYKE LIFE

Thirty odd years ago, as a young lad, living in Gorleston, I used to frequent the marshes to the south of Breydon water, now then as Humberstone, Fishers, Gapton and Harfreys marshes. They were criss crossed with a network of dykes into which I would dip my nets at various times of the year, in order to fill my jam jars with the various creatures living in the water that could be taken in the net. Needless to say, in those days, the aquatic life in these dykes was abundant, there was hardly a dyke that did not harbour much that was attractive to a young boy armed with nets and jars. Frogs, toads and newts could be found quite easily, all manner of water beetles and mites, three and ten spined sticklebacks, known to us then as stannickles, were numerous. Various aquatic plants and weeds were also to be found in large quantities and many of the associated insects that visit and frequented the dyke areas could be seen.

Sadly, over the past few years, the industrial estates have taken their toll of these marshes and many of the dykes toward the south have disappeared or are partly filled in along their length, rendering the remaining sections useless. Some are so full of rubbish that they have to be discounted. However, a little over a year ago, I decided to take some samples of water from a dyke that held a great deal of rubbish, industrial and domestic. Some evidence of oil had at some time been spilt into it and it was indeed difficult to find a spot from which to take samples, in order to test what life was within.

I was most surprised to find that this most disgusting dyke contained most of the aquatic life that I used to find many years ago. I have found tadpoles of frogs and toads, newt larva, both sticklebacks, most of the usual molluscs normally found in dykes, water spiders and many small mites, two or three species of caddis larva, I have to say that crustaceans have been very few indeed and of the copepods, only a few cyclops have turned up. A few water beetles and a few leaches have also presented themselves. Of the microscopic wildlife, I have found enough to excite my interest, although I am still in the process of studying water samples, but I have to date, found five species of rotifera, several polyzoans such as *Amoeba* and *Paramecium*, numerous diatoms and I am sure that in my study of water from this dyke, which is only a small remnant, I shall find much more of interest.

All of this from a fairly small remnant of a dyke which I thought too polluted to harbour life at all.

Tony Brown.

ERGOT

Ergot *Clavicers purpurea* is a fungus which attacks the fruiting heads of a wide range of grass species.

One kind of ergot called *Claviceps nigricans* affects the heads of the Spike Rush *Eleocharis palustris* it is by no means common in Norfolk. I mentioned this rarity to Ann Brewater. It came as no surprise that in a few days I received a package of infected Spike Rush heads from her, collected in the Corpusty area.

The black ergots occur in the heads of last years Spike Rush. Eventually falling to the ground. Here they germinate to produce spores to infect the next flower heads of the Spike Rush.

Reg Evans.

ORTHOPTERA RECORDING SCHEME

The British orthoptera are a small group comprising 11 grasshoppers and 10 bush-crickets, plus the less frequently encountered true crickets and ground hoppers.

This article is concerned only with the six species of grasshopper and five bush-crickets commonly found in Norfolk. These exclude the Large Marsh Grasshopper for which there are no post-1961 records; and the Great Green Bush-cricket, which if it still does exist in Norfolk, ought to be discovered by its strident song audible at considerable range.

The national recording scheme for orthoptera, co-ordinated by the Centre for Terrestrial Ecology at Monks Wood, Cambs, has been gathering records throughout the 1980's, and their newsletters have consistently spoken of the scheme being extended 'for one more year'.

The warm dry summer of 1989 and the following mild winter, should make 1990 a bonanza year for recorders, which could well bring the recording scheme to its conclusion. Provisional maps published to date, show almost complete coverage of the south and south-west, but vast tracts of uncharted territory in Norfolk and Suffolk, hence the Society's current initiative to encourage a wider interest in this group.

Enclosed with this edition of Natterjack you should find identification and recording sheets which provide a key to the Norfolk grasshoppers, and descriptions of the county's bush-crickets. Although at first sight (or sound) the insects may appear confusing, they are easily separated into their separate species.

The hunt for them will take you into grassland, marshland and heathland habitats, and along disused railways and roadside verges. You will find them where you search for flowers or butterflies, and records from your own local patch will be just as important as any from prime heathland habitat.

The recording sheets list sites surveyed so far, which will give you clues as to the type of habitat to look at, and also serve to avoid duplication of effort. Make 1990 the year that you took up grasshoppers, and add something new to our knowledge of the fauna of the county.

Please send completed record sheets (end of November) to:

David Richmond, 42, Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4LS

Bibliography

- Grasshoppers & Bush-crickets - Andrew Mohon, *Shire Natural History* (£1.95)
- Grasshoppers - Valerie Brown, *Naturalists Handbooks*, Richmond Publishing Co (£5.95)
- Grasshoppers, Crickets & Cockroaches - David Ragge, *Warne* 1965 (out of print)
- Grasshoppers and allied insects of Gt Britain & Ireland - Judith Marshall & E C M Haes, *Harley Books* (£25.00)

Cassette tape

- Sound Guide to Grasshoppers and allied Insects of Gt Britain & Ireland - *Harley Books*, Gt Horkesley, Colchester, Essex, CO6 4AH (£5.75 + 50p p&p)

Workshop

A workshop on grasshoppers and bush-crickets will be held at Castle Museum on: Tuesday 3 July 1990 at 7.30 pm 19.30hrs. All are welcome at this evening of slides and song!

Q.M.C. 1990 WEEK-END OPEN MEETING

July 21st/22nd, 1990

The meeting will be held at the University of East Anglia. Those who live in or near the area may register for daily attendance.

Saturday, July 21st

'Shifting Scaffolds of the Cell', by Dr. Richard Warm.
 'Surface Structure in Arthropods', by Dr. Tony Irwin.
 'Tardigrades', by Ted Chapman.
 'Centric Diatoms of the Norfolk Broads', by Mr. Keith Clarke.
 'Microscopy in the study of Plant Diseases', by Dr. Brian Lewis.
 'Mounting Entomological Specimens', by Mr. Eric Marson, Hon. Member.
 19.00hrs Norwich Castle for President's Reception and 'Gossip' Meeting.

Sunday, July 22nd

'Some Notable Norfolk Copepods', by Dr. Richard Hamond.
 'Feather Moth Flies' (Psychoidea), by Mr. Phil Withers.
 'Monogenean (Flatworm) Parasites of Fish', by Dr. Graham Kearn. (Video Flim).
 Mr. Eric Marson - Practical Session for those interested in preparing Entomological Mounts.

Booking Form from :- Hon. Business Secretary, 61, Pewley Way, Guildford, Surrey. GU1 3PZ.

GLOBAL WARMING

Global Warming - is it really happening? It may be, but we should be distrustful of emotive arguments unsupported by evidence. What we need is facts, as naturalists we may be able to provide them.

Any real change in the climate, and correspondingly in the pattern of the seasons, will have measurable effects on plant and animal life. Many of us will have records of annual "Biological events": dates of first flowering, first and last dates of birds, etc. Accuracy is, of course, essential, if only to ensure that we are comparing like with like, but if the expertise is present in the County it is surely amongst the membership of our Society.

If you have such records going back over a number of years, and would be prepared to contribute them for analysis, please send them to me at **17, High Street, Wells, NR23 1EW**. All contributions will naturally be acknowledged.

Paul Banham, Chairman, Research Committee.

A COINCIDENCE

Two years ago a hoopoe spent over a week feeding up on beeston Regis common before continuing its journey south for the winter. It frequented an area freshly cleared of Bracken, but was soon spotted by a local bird watcher and very shortly its whereabouts was announced on the telephone bird line, Twitchers from all over the county were soon arriving to see this odd individual.

The botany of this SSSI has been studied and recorded for over a century (400 plants being recorded last year) we now have a few plants appearing which have not been recorded before namely Sea Campion *Silene vulgaris* spp. *maritima*, could it be that seed was brought here in mud on boots or on clothing from reserves further along the coast? as these plants are now flowering where most of the twitchers gathered.

K. C. Durrant.

MICROSCOPY GROUP

Our programme for the remainder of this year, 1990 is as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Tues 15 May | Gossip Meeting at Castle Museum, 7.30 pm. |
| Sat 9 June | A specimen collecting foray to West Runton Beach. Meet at the car park at TG185431 at 12 noon. This will be followed by an afternoon/evening session at Castle to sort our finds. |
| Sat/Sun
21/22 July | The Quekett Microscopical Club meets in Norwich. Contact Tony Irwin at the Museum (Nch 222222 x. 71242) if you want to attend. |
| Tues 4 September | Phil Withers will instruct us on the study of moth-flies. A rare opportunity to investigate this little known subject. Castle Museum at 7.30 pm. |
| Tues 9 October | An outside visit to a pathology laboratory in Suffolk. Informal arrangements for linking up with transport are suggested. Contact Tony Irwin if you are interested. |
| Tues 27 November | The final meeting of the year. There will be much to discuss including plans for 1991 ! Castle Museum 7.30 pm. |

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions were due on 1st April 1990. At the Annual General Meeting on 14th March 1990, the Ordinary and Family subscriptions were increased to £8 and £10 per annum respectively. Those for Junior and Affiliated Membership remain unchanged.

Please send your subscription to the Honorary Treasurer :
Mr D.A. 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 1990**. Contributions to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ.