



Number 34

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

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The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

PROGRAMME CHANGE

The Excursion to Whin Common has been changed from Sunday 13th October 1991 to Saturday 19th October 1991.

HEGGATT HALL Sunday 26th May 1991

As a visit was made here as recently as last August, it was to be expected that not many new records would be made. However, a few Sedges were new to the flower list, as these would have been gone over as late as August. Hoary Cinquefoil *Potentilla argentea* was new, and also features in the list of 'scarce' species currently being studied by the B.S.B.I. The alien 'Ripgut Grass' *Bromus rigidus* was also found by one track way. Our lunch stop near a piece of Fen, revealed singing Sedge, Reed and Grasshopper Warblers, but the "Bird of the day" was undoubtedly the lovely male Pied Flycatcher, in full song from an old beech tree as we reentered the park.

Alec Bull.

MOSSYMERE 2nd June 1991

Not the best of days for a Naturalist's ramble, certainly not complying with the old adage of flaming June, but at least the rain came late in the afternoon when most of us had returned to our cars.

While our Chairperson, Anne, was describing the origin of the name Mossymere as being a mossy place at the boundary of three parishes, and not a mere lake, a cuckoo flew overhead and we started off on our first ramble.

On the side of a path, the surface of which was covered with Thyme-leaved Speedwell, a yellow banded Sawfly *Strongylogaster lineata* was depositing its eggs in the coiled up frond of Bracken. Brown Silver-lined moths, whose caterpillars also feed upon bracken, were also in evidence. Chiff chaffs were calling as we made our way past numerous Bird Cherry, most of them were just past their best but one or two still exhibited showers of white blossom as if to defy the weather. One tree we found had a number of immature fruits which had been galled by the fungus *Taphrina pruni* which causes them to become elongated, cream coloured and mis-shapen.

Everywhere we went we found literally hundreds of small shining bronze green moths, *Adela reamurella* at rest on the herbage. The males possess extremely long antennae and are usually very active when the sun is shining, but the vast majority that we saw were females. Their caterpillars feed upon the leaf litter under the trees. Another small brown moth *Esperia sulphurella* with a golden streak and triangular spot on the forewing, was frequently found. Their caterpillars feed in dead wood.

We noticed that many of the mature trees had died or were dying, and wondered if this denoted a drastic lowering of the water table. Areas which years ago had contained large



BIRD CHERRY
Normal fruit and
Galled fruit

ponds were now large dry depressions in the wood, covered with Meadow-sweet. Some of the conifers had also died. One group we came upon were decorated with hundreds of psuedo-cones, the galls caused by the aphid *Adelges abietis*.

Yellow Pimpernel, Wood Sanicle and Crosswort were encountered along the paths, the Red Campion especially exhibiting quite a variation in colour. We came upon a Long-tailed Tits nest which had apparently contained young birds. It was laying on the path near the bush from where it had been extracted and ravaged, possibly by Magpies. It had been lined entirely with pheasants feathers.

A bonus for us turned out to be ten Crossbills calling from the top of a high tree. They totally ignored us as binoculars were handed around to let everyone get a better view.

Crane flies were represented here by the prettily marked *Nephrotoma quadrifaria* and the much smaller *Limonia flavipes*. Early Purple Orchids were still in flower, but the Common Spotted Orchids were only conspicuous by their spotted leaves the flower spikes not showing. A number of small black and white spiders *Linyphia peltata* were on the leaves of the bushes no doubt taking advantage of the many small flies sheltering there.

After lunch we proceeded towards the river Bure and a more marshy type of habitat. Herons were seen on the wing. Our prettiest froghopper, the black and red *Cercopsis vulnerata*, were to be found on the reeds and sedges. The Buttercups were infested with beautiful minute shining coppery micro moths, *Micropterix calthella*, who belong to a unique small family of primitive moths exhibiting many features similar to Caddis flies. They possess functional mandibles and no proboscis so they are capable of feeding on pollen.

Egg clusters of Alder flies, *Sialis lutaria*, were to be found on the leaves of the reeds. Many White-lipped Hedge snails, *Cepaea hortensis*, were in the same area, the clear yellow forms being more numerous than the banded ones.

On the way back we came around the edge of the wood on a field that had been planted with a variety of grass and put over to set-aside. The leaves of the bushes and trees at the edge of the wood were shining with the sticky secretions of the Aphids from the Sycamore trees overhead. Many sawflies, *Tenthredo livida*, *Tenthredopsis litterata* and *T. nassata* also *Dolerus liogaster* were to be seen imbibing this manna from above. Hover flies and various beetles were also enjoying this feast, the most conspicuous being the Cardinal beetle *Pyrochroa serraticornis* of clear red colouration. Many of the Sycamore leaves were covered with the small pimple galls of the mite *Eriophyes macrorhynchus aceribus*. One Rawan tree had many of its leaves variegated with yellow spots caused by the galls of another mite, *Eriophyes pyri*.

As soon as we reach the lane we came upon twenty two Pheasant egg shells dispersed about six feet apart along the lane, each one showing signs of having its contents eaten by either Magpies or Crows, these must have represented the entire contents of at least two nests. On reaching our cars the weather forecast proved right for once, the long awaited rain came, ending an enjoyable day in which only one butterfly had been seen, a male Wall Brown.

Ken Durrant.

EXCURSION TO ROYDON GREEN TO STUDY GRASSES

Saturday 22nd June 1991

About 15 members assembled at Brewers Green on a rather overcast but dry day. Arthur Copping started the proceeding by handing round specimens of *Bromus diandrus* collected from the headland of a nearby barley field and explained the structure of a typical grass inflorescence with reference to them.

For the next two hours the party explored the unmown areas of the green, finding over 20 species. The most noteworthy were *Avenula pubescens*, rather local in Norfolk, and both subspecies of *Phleum pratense*.

A short visit was made to Arthur's home where he maintains some rarer species in cultivation including *Festuca longifolia*, *F. brevipila* (Tracey), *F. juncifolia*, *Puccinellia rupestris*, *Poa chaixii*, *Bromus hordeaceus* subsp. *Thominii*, *B. secalinus*, *B. arvensis*, *Avena sterilis* sulsp. *Ludoviciana* and *Leersia oryzoides*.

For the afternoon the party moved on to Worthan Ling, an area of acid heathland containing isolated pockets of base rich soils, just across the Suffolk border. Here *Avenula pubescens* was found again, but growing in company with *A. pratensis*. Nearby grew *Lolium perenne*, *Festuca pratensis* and the sterile intergeneric hybrid between them, X *Festulium loliaceum*. By contrast the acidic areas contained *Festuca tenuifolia*, *Aira praecox*, *Agrostis vinealis*, *Nardus stricta* and *Danthonia decumbens*.

At the conclusion of the main meeting a few members visited specific sites in Diss and Roydon to see some rare specialities. The recently discovered colony of *Poa bulbosa* on Fair Green, Diss consisted of completely withered plants but the small bulbs were easily seen. In Hall Lane, Roydon, the bank supporting *Festuca heterophylla* had just been closely mown, but a few flowing

plants had survived near the hedge bottom. A similar fate had befallen most of the *Bromus willdenowii* which has persisted for several years in Hose Avenue. The meeting ended on the High Road, Roydon, where one plant of *Agrostis castellana* was beginning to flower at the junction of the wall and pavement.

Arthur Copping.

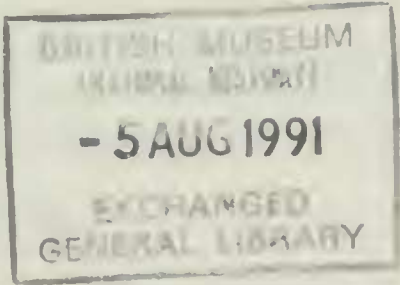
(with the exception of *Festuca brevipila*, the nomenclature follows that used in **Flora of the British Isles** (Third Edition) by Clapham, Tutin and Moore. (Cambridge University Press) 1981).

ADDENDUM (Species list)
BREWERS GREEN (Morning)

Agrostis capillaris
Alopecurus geniculatus
A. pratensis
Anthoxanthum odoratum
Arrhenatherum elatius
Avenula pubescens
Bromus hordeaceus subsp. *hordeaceus*
Bromus sterilis
Cynosurus cristatus
Dayctylis glomerata
Deschampsia cespitosa subsp. *cespitosa*
Festuca arundinacea
Festuca rubra subsp. *rubra*
Glyceria fluitans
Holcus lanatus
Lolium perenne
Phleum pratense subsp. *bertolonii*
P. pratense subsp. *pratense*
Poa angustifolia
Poa pratensis
Poa trivialis

WORTHAM LING (Afternoon) (Additions to morning list only)

Agrostis vinealis
Aira caryophyllaea subsp. *caryophyllaea*
A. praecox
Avenula pratensis
Briza media
Bromus diandrus
B. xpseudothominii
Danthonia decumbens
Festuca pratensis
F. tenuifolia
X festulolium loliaceum
Hordeum murinum
Koeleria macrantha
Nardus stricta
Poa annua
Vulpia bromoides



Specialities visited at conclusion of the main meeting

Agrostis castellana (High Road, Roydon)
Bromus willdenowii (Hose Avenue, Roydon)
Festuca heterophylla (Hall Lane, Roydon)
Poa bulbosa (Fair Green, Diss)

(Total number of taxa noted 42)

BOOK REVIEW
THE ORCHIDS OF SUFFOLK
By Martin Sanford.

Start talking about Orchids, and even the ears of the layman become pricked, especially since colour television brought home to him that there are beautiful and interesting species to be found in his own countryside. On the debit side come the seemingly never ending statistics of what we have lost during the present century. Unfortunately, this is hard fact, and it was to set out in simple terms the full scale of loss both of habitat, and of species of Orchid that have disappeared from the Suffolk countryside that Martin Sanford embarked on the study that resulted in this book.

As a first step, a three year survey started in 1985 to discover or rediscover as many Orchid sites as possible. A map of the county showing "All records" by tetrad, reveals that only 55 tetrads out of a possible 800 or so, can now boast seven species of Orchid, a figure which I could almost have equalled in a single four acre meadow just over 40 years ago. Reading this book sent me off on a round trip of some of the Suffolk sites I used to know. Not the ones I knew had been ploughed up, but places like Primrose Wood at Hitcham, where I used to find Greater Butterfly Orchids by the dozen, and occasionally Fly Orchid as well. This peculiarly shaped piece of ancient woodland, surely a fragment of something bigger, looked and felt much as it ever did. No more gloomy than I remember it. Still Spurge Laurel everywhere. Rather a lot of Cleavers this year. This may be due to a Rookery overhead which didn't used to be there. Not a trace of either Butterfly or Fly Orchids at all. Just a nice colony of 46 spikes of rapidly going over Early Purples. Is the reason for their decline also partly climatic I wonder? Martin Sanford points to the cessation of coppicing as contributing to the decline of the Butterfly Orchid, but Primrose Wood was never coppiced in my memory. Being nowhere more than 70 or 80 yards wide, sufficient light always penetrated from the edge. The Fly Orchid is a different story altogether-and a fascinating one. It is a poor seeder, and in addition, needs to be mated by the male of a Solitary Wasp of either the *Gorytes* or *Argogorytes* genera, to effect pollination. If agricultural insecticides have wiped out the wasp in a Fly Orchid area, then the Orchids must die out as well.

Interesting little snippets of information like this are given under each species, as well as a full description of the plant from the ground upwards, and illustrated by an excellent photograph of each species still extant in the county. All are mapped, including

those which have long since disappeared, like the Early Spider Orchid, last recorded in 1793! I suppose we must be resigned to the fact that none are ever likely to reappear, except possibly the Fen Orchid, last seen at Thelnetham in 1974. But I am a bit "green" to realise that I only missed Burnt Orchid at Risby Black Ditches by 9 years! Having dealt with the 32 species of Orchid known to have occurred in Suffolk, Mr. Sanford devotes the last seven pages of his text to known hybrids, though it should be said that here, as elsewhere, he only accepts those records that he is sure of. If a record is dubious, he says so, even though it had been originally accepted by Francis Simpson himself.

In the chapters preceding the catalogue of species, the ecology of Suffolk Orchids is dealt with, Orchid habitats, the soil regions of the county, and a chapter by Francis Simpson on 'Half a century of change'. There is also a foreword by Edgar Milne-Redhead, a lifelong Orchid lover, and friend of V.S. Summerhayes, who wrote the New Naturalist book, 'Wild Orchids of Britain'. The Bibliography at the end is comprehensive and there is a page of "Useful addresses and publications".

Printed on glossy paper, the book has a nice feel, and both the author and the publishers, the Suffolk Naturalists' Society are to be congratulated on producing an attractive historical record of the Orchids of the county which will also double as an identification book of those likely to be found in East Anglia, and even further afield. At £12, it should not be difficult to find a place for it on anybody's book shelf.

Alec Bull.

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP PROGRAMME 1991/92

Monday 23rd September	"Nature Photography in the Valais" (Bob Illingworth).
Monday 14 th October	" The English Lake District" (Mike Poulton).
Monday 11th November	"Naturalist at Large" (Don Dorling).
Monday 9th December 1992	"The Caribbean Islands" (John Oxenford).
Monday 13th January	"A Garden is a lovesome thing, God Wot." (Alec Bull).
Monday 3rd February	"Natural History Slide Sequences" (Malcolm Eke).
Monday 23rd March	"Slides from Recent Travels" (Paul Banham).
Monday 6th April	"A Photographers World" (Richard Tilbrook).

To Commence at 7.30 pm. (19.30 hrs.), all of the above meetings are being held in the Sir Edmund Bacon Room, at the Assembly House.

BRITISH PLANT GALL SOCIETY WEEK-END 7TH & 8TH SEPTEMBER.

Outside venues are being arranged for the morning and afternoon of 7th Sept. and the morning of 8th Sept. Please contact Rex Hancy (Norwich 860042) for details.

SOCIAL EVENING - 9TH NOVEMBER

Some changes to the evening's programme this time! Food, yes, but we are going back to the simpler fare of some years ago, cheese and wine.

That will be sandwiched between (sorry!) two contrasting entertainments. First, the traditional slide shows and commentaries. Please bring no more than 9. After: inhibitions have been blown away by good company and possible the wine, we will form a literary circle and entertain each other with short extracts from favourite books, poems, stories, all on a natural history theme.

Please contact us before the event with details of the contributions so we can plan the programme.

Tickets at £3 each on sale from September onwards.

Rex and Barbara Hancy Norwich 860042

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ. To arrive not latter than 1st October 1991. Contributions sent after this date will not be accepted for the November Natterjack.