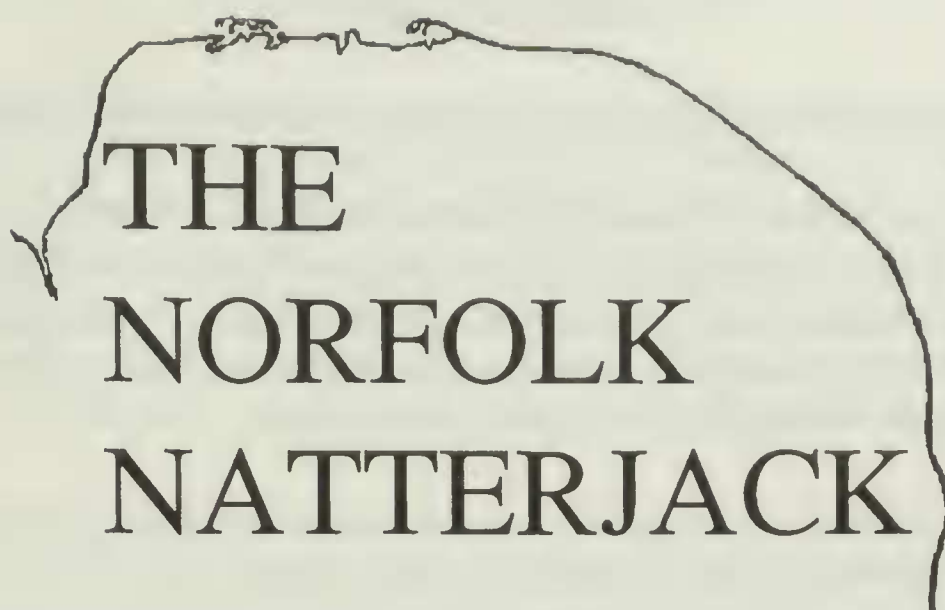


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SYDNEY LONG MEMORIAL MEDAL

CONGRATULATIONS to Mr. Ken Durrant who was presented with the SYDNEY LONG MEDAL at the Annual General Meeting of the Norfolk Naturalists Trust earlier this year.

Many members are aware of his dedication to the study of natural history, especially in the field of ENTOMOLOGY. Also of his interest and work on Beeston Common and the enthusiastic way in which he conveys his knowledge to other people.

Anne Brewster.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Professor Hubert Lamb would like to enlarge on the title for his Presidential address to be given on Wednesday 11 March 1992. His talk will be on "Our climate and the Norfolk scene: Some persistent influences but ever-unfolding changes".

FIELD MEETINGS

1991

Sunday 1st December
11.00hrs

HOLKHAM FOR WINTER MIGRANTS

Meet Lady Ann's Road TF890448
Leader: Colin Dack

1992

Sunday 26th January
10.30Hrs*

WEYBOURNE

Meet Weybourne Beach Car park TG 111437
Leader: Mike Poulton

Sunday 9th February
10.30hrs*

HOLKHAM

Meet Lady Ann's Road TF890448
Leader: Michael Seago

Sunday 1st March
10.30HRS*

BURNHAM OVERY STAITHE

Meet Burnham Overy Staithe Beach Car Park TF 843443
Leader: David Paull

**Please note earlier starting times.*

BIRTHWORT

It is good to see that rare Birthwort *Aristolochia clematitis* is alive and well and thriving in Norwich.

Carrow Priory ruins are set within the factory and office complex of Colman's, and are all that remain of the Benedictine nunnery which was founded during the reign of the Norman King Stephen (1135-1154). *A. clematitis* grows as a weed among the ruins and is considered to be a relic of the nuns' physic garden. Formerly used by midwives as an anodyne, it is a hairless, foetid perennial, 1-2 feet high, with heart-shaped leaves and with small clusters of long, tubular, pale yellow flowers.

Among the interesting trees and shrubs growing in the Colman complex, planted by Prof. James Stuart at the turn of the century, are a weeping beech and a cut-leaved beech.

The whole complex is worth a botanical survey, dependent upon permission from, or collaboration with, Colman's to do this.

Phyll Hardie.

FISH LICE *Argulus foliaceus*

I recently noticed that one of the larger shubunkins in my garden pond, was showing signs of localised red patches on the side of the body as though blood were beneath the skin from some internal injury. The behaviour of the fish itself was normal and showing no signs of stress or disease and it was feeding well among the other fish in the pond. Whilst looking at the fish as it rose to the surface, as they do when we are about to feed them. My wife noticed something that appeared to be sticking to its side, so I netted and bowled the fish for further examination and found the appendage to be a fish louse *Argulus foliaceus* firmly stuck to its side and under a hand lens, I could actually see it taking blood from its host. The fact that it continued extracting blood even when out of the water, interested me. To call these creatures lice, is very misleading. They are in fact crustaceans and not lice, which are in fact insects. They attach themselves to their hosts by means of huge suckers and when using tweezers to remove them, it is most surprising just how firmly they stick to the fish. These suckers and their extremely flat bodies, mean that, no matter how fast the fish moves through the water, the creature remains firmly attached.

Towards the end of the summer, the females lay their eggs in batches of one to two hundred in a jelly like mass on almost anything that will support them. They take about four to five weeks to hatch and the larvae will attach themselves to fish almost immediately, moulting a number of times before they reach adulthood. These creatures are more common than is generally supposed, especially in the wild. At times, quite a number may be attached to one fish and will eventually cause the death of the unfortunate host, when they will simply detach themselves from the dead fish and swim around until they find another unfortunate victim. They have been found on several species of fish, carp, pike, bream, sticklebacks, minnows, dace, trout, perch and tench and now it seems, my shubunkins. Obviously in the confines of a garden pond, it is not difficult to imagine the damage that can occur if this parasite is not eradicated, especially when found among expensive ornamental fish.

I would be most interested to know if other pond owners (naturalists) have experienced problems with this troublesome pest.

Tony Brown.

Any letters concerning the above to Tony Brown, 16 Mariners Park Close, Hopton, Gt. Yarmouth. NR31 9DQ.

"LONG-LOST" SPECIES

The Research Committee, meeting in October, discussed the question of some long-lost species, both plant and animal, which have subsequently been re-discovered in Norfolk. For example, the late Ted Ellis was delighted when Richard Harmer, of Stibbard, showed him a thriving colony of Dutch Rush *Equisetum hyemale* in a hedgerow; until then it was believed to be extinct in Norfolk. I myself was (wrongly, I quickly confessed) incredulous when I was told that the "Edible" Frog, introduced in the mid 19th Century to various sites, and, it was believed, subsequently lost, was still living at Thompson Common in the late 1950's (it is, in fact, now classified as the Pool Frog *Rana lessonae*, which is very similar to the Edible Frog *R. esculenta*).

What else may still be lurking in some corner of the County awaiting the right person at the right time, we wondered? Could Dick Bagnall-Oakeley have been right when he insisted, I suppose some 30 years ago, that the Palmate Newt *Triturus helveticus* was to be found in a pond near Holt? The male is easily distinguished from the Smooth Newt *T. vulgaris* by its dark, webbed hind feet, and tail ending in a filament. Edward Cross is living in hopes that the weird and wonderful "Colander" Earth Star *Myriostoma coliformis* (see Roger Phillip's **Mushrooms**, p. 252) is still present in his neck-of-the-woods for some determined Mycologist to locate. It was last seen at Hillington in 1880.

It is a fact well-known to compiler of reports that distribution-maps as often as not show the distribution of observers rather than the species in question, which leads David Richmond to surmise that Roesel's Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii* could well be producing its high-pitched stridulation in Norfolk saltmarshes (see Michael Chinnery's **Insects**, pp 52/53), since it has been recorded from Benacre, Suffolk and the Humber. I am sure that many other examples could be produced. So, here's a chance to make your mark and get yourself into the annals!

Paul Banham, Chairman, Research Committee.

A NEW BOOK - SOME NORFOLK GALLS

There is a need for a book on galls for beginners, and for those wishing to enlarge their knowledge of the subject. The study of Norfolk galls has been made over the last decade, and over 100 species are listed in the book. Each species is accompanied by a line drawing and some - diagrams of the life history.

The parasites and inquilines (lodgers) have also been mentioned. Distribution of the species has been confined to stating some of the sites in which they have been found. It is not possible to insert frequency since much of Norfolk has yet to be explored.

This book will be useful in other counties since most of the galls are present elsewhere. It is available for £4 (+ 50p. Postage) from Mrs. Lilian Evans, Chanterelle, Church Road, Welborne, E. Dereham. Norfolk. NR20 3LH.



COTTON WOOL GALL

FUNGUS FORAY - BRIDGHAM PICNIC SITE

Sunday 22nd September

The dry season this year had made the prospect of a large number of records unlikely - and so it proved to

be. Perhaps if a day had been chosen some weeks later the situation might have been very different now that we have rain at last.

Usually the number of fungi species varies from 50-150 in the site in late September, probably many members thought the drought would have made fungi hunting a wasted effort. In fact only 8 Society members arrived (apart from us) when we have known a total of 50-60 at this meeting. We were joined by British Mycological Society members two from Oxford (on holiday) and two from Welney.

The total number of fungi species was 23 but we also recorded a large spider (*Araneus marmoreus vat pyramidata*) on oak leaves. Buff Tip and Festoon moth caterpillars, mostly on oak, but on Sycamore. The moth is stated to be uncommon.

Reg Evans.

MEDITERRANEAN ORCHIDS

The May issue of Natterjack included a note about plant hunting in Rhodes and a comment on how well a contact from Germany had been briefed on the distribution of the orchids. A recently published book - Field Guide to the Orchids of Britain and Europe by Buttler - refers to the work which has been done in recent time, notably in Germany, on the distribution of European orchids and to the mapping scheme, including the Mediterranean area, being carried out by a group known as OPTIMA. Elsewhere, in the bibliography, there is an indication that information is available from Otto Feldweg, Schonbergstr. I, D-7400 Tubingen, Germany.

As I hope to go to northern Cyprus next spring, I wrote to Herr Feldweg, in English, asking if he could supply any information about the orchid flora of Cyprus and also details of distribution. Almost by return of post he sent me a publication which included a long paper about Cyprus. The orchid species are listed, there are descriptions of the sites where orchids are found and distribution maps. The detail is impressive. Around 400 sites are described. Let me give one example:

Map ref.

WEI3II Lapithos to Vasilia Road. 200m West of moslem cemetery. *Phrygana*. *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. *Ophrys flavomarginata*. *Ophrys fusca*. *Ophrys iricolor*. *Ophrys kotschyi*. *Ophrys lapethica*. *Ophrys lutea s. sp galilaea*. *Ophrys transhyrcana*. *Ophrys umbilicata*. *Orchis italica*. *Orchis syriaca*.

The paper is, of course, in German but it is quite straightforward and, with the aid of a dictionary, the essential details soon become apparent.

If any member intends visiting a part of the Mediterranean such as Crete or Rhodes and is looking for flowers, I suggest a note to Herr Feldweg might be advantageous. Incidentally, the publication was not expensive - 15DM plus 2DM postage - about £6.

Reg Jones.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS?

When thinking about Christmas presents for your naturalist friends why not consider:-	
Birds of Great Yarmouth	£7-50 + 50p post
1990 Bird & Mammal Report	£3-50 + 50p post
Norfolk Bird Atlas	£1-50 + 50p post
Bird & Mammal Reports - bargain pack of five colour issues	£10 + £1 post
1991 Transactions - (galls etc in in colour)	£4 + 50p post
Available from Mrs. Mary Dorling, 6 New Road, Hethersett, Norwich. NR9 3HH	

BEESTON REGIS COMMON, SHERINGHAM

As there has been no organised walk round Beeston Regis Common during 1991, we thought you might like to know what we have been doing since the last visit by the Society.

The early part of this year was spent in clearing some of the gorse from the main bog area. What seemed to be a thankless task was rewarded in the summer by a profusion of flora, including bee and lesser butterfly orchids which appeared in this area after an absence of a few years. The lesser butterfly orchids proved a major attraction for several photographers - some of them were even lucky enough to find them!

A large area has now been cleared to the N. E. corner of the site which was previously overgrown with ash, gorse, birch, etc. A considerable effort was made to achieve this clearance by a small band of volunteers. However our efforts were rewarded by a good showing of flora, not to mention a pair of tawny owls who have taken up residence.

Many members who have not visited the common in the last few years will remember it as being overgrown with bracken. Where previously access was limited to narrow pathways by bracken of up to 8ft high, we have now brought it under control on most of the more interesting parts of the common making access easy to all areas.

Many of the areas freed of bracken have produced a profusion of ground flora including, in one area, over twenty pyramidal orchids. On the heath similarly cleared, we have been pleased to see the start of the regeneration of the ling and bellheather that once covered these areas. With the regeneration of the flora, we have also seen an increase in the insect life including at least 24 species of butterfly, all in large numbers. A recent moth survey found around 150 different species on one area of the common in just the four hours from 10pm - 2am.

The main pond was cleared in October 1990 using a JCB. This revealed such treasures as 22ft long scaffold poles, prams, bikes and various other items, including antique bottles! We were surprised at how quickly the pond returned to its former glory with a profusion of aquatic life, damsel and dragon flies. The flowering rush put on a display worthy of any flower show!

Much of the western side of the main bog has been taken over by extensive stands of gorse. We have just started this winters project to remove as much of this gorse as possible. This will double the size of the bog area. However, our main problem is not the gorse but rather a lack of willing bodies. As the old saying goes 'many hands make light work' but getting the extra hands is proving a problem. At present, our Sunday morning work parties number only 4 or 5 at best (usually only 2!) whereas 6-8 would make the task much easier. If any of you could give us a hand, we would be very pleased to see you. We usually work on Sunday mornings from 9 - 1 from October through to April. (You need only provide the hands - we have the tools!). If you can help, please phone either Ken Durrant on Sheringham 823666 or us on Sheringham 824499. Although gorse clearance is hard work, the rewards are great. On a area cleared of gorse at the Northern end of the site where previously only a handful of orchids bloomed, at the last count we had over 2000!

We would have liked to have attended more of the Societys meetings and excursions this year but, owing to the pressures of looking after the site, we felt that the Common should be our main priority as regards our time. We hope to be able to join you more in the future!

David Mower and Janet Holyoak.

SPANGLE GALLS

There has been a great scarcity of spangle galls throughout the county this autumn. These small galls on the underside of the oak leaves are usually to be found in their thousands in normal years, there are records of over 300 being found on one leaf.

I have only found four sites this year for the Common Spangle gall caused by the wasp *Neuroterus quercus-baccarum*, that is one leaf with three or four galls on it at four separate sites. Two sites only for the Smooth Spangle *N. albipes*, and only one for Silk Button *N. numismatis*.

Last year numbers of these galls were not what they had been in previous years, but the sudden drop in numbers this year means that something drastic has happened, possibly the wet and cold weather experienced at the critical time in spring, when the agamic females should have emerged from the fallen galls of the previous year which had overwintered in the undergrowth, and should have started the alternate generation on the catkins etc. These galls were almost nonexistent this year as well.

There does not appear to have been a decline in any other of our galls, in fact the Oak Apple seems to have been abundant everywhere this summer.

Two galls were unfortunately omitted from my list published in the Transactions this year, and should have appeared under the heading

DIPTERA Cecidomyiidae

Host

Brachyeurina peniophore

Fungi *Peniophora cinerea*.

Mycocecis ovalis

Fungi *Hypoxylon rubiginosum*

Ken Durrant

STARLING EGGS

About two or three years ago I was puzzled by the presence of complete, undamaged and apparently perfect blue eggs of starlings lying on the grass. I made a few enquiries among members of the society but no one had an answer except one I had considered myself - that the female bird had started to lay an egg while away from the nest, and unable to stop had laid it wherever it could. At that time we had several starlings nesting under the pantiles and I wondered if it might be a bird pirating a nest site and ousting the eggs already there. Four or five eggs appeared during the season, almost all in perfect condition. This happened for two more years and then ceased. This may well be because our house, the one next door and one or two others in the area had been birdproofed. Now, reading the Newsletter of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society "White Admiral" No 19, I seem to have the answer and other members may be interested. It seems that some starlings have been imitating cuckoos, laying eggs in another starling's nest and removing a similar number of eggs belonging to the owner. But why are these usually laid on the grass, a few on fresh dug earth but none on hard paths? It seems we have a lot to learn about the behaviour of even our commonest birds and animals. Seeing them at food put out for birds, the starlings are noisy, active birds and usually blamed for being "quarrelsome". May I suggest a simpler answer? The more common way of group feeding among starlings is stretched in a line and advancing across a field each bird just out of pecking reach of the neighbours. This ensures that any insect disturbed and missed by one bird will be caught by another bird in the line and is an effective way of making the most of a feeding ground. If there is a strong instinct to keep other birds in the line a beak's distance away while feeding naturally, when the bird finds an unnaturally large store of food, it is faced with conflicting instincts - to eat as much as possible and at the same time to keep its neighbour a beak thrust away, and it reacts by an unnatural reaction. In fact it is often counterproductive, for some times while two starlings "argue" over a piece of fat or bread, a sparrow darts in, grabs it and is away. It is not unusual for many animals to show unnatural behaviour when faced with an abnormal amount of food.

The Editor of "White Admiral" suggests that anyone interested in this handsome bird could read "The Starling" by Chris Feare 1984 O.U.P. Sorry, no price. given, Shire Publications also have a cheap booklet in their series. "The Starling", paperback, at £1.95. Philip Cambrige.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NATTERJACK should be sent to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ. To arrive not later than 1st January 1992. Contributions sent after this date will not be accepted for the February Natterjack.