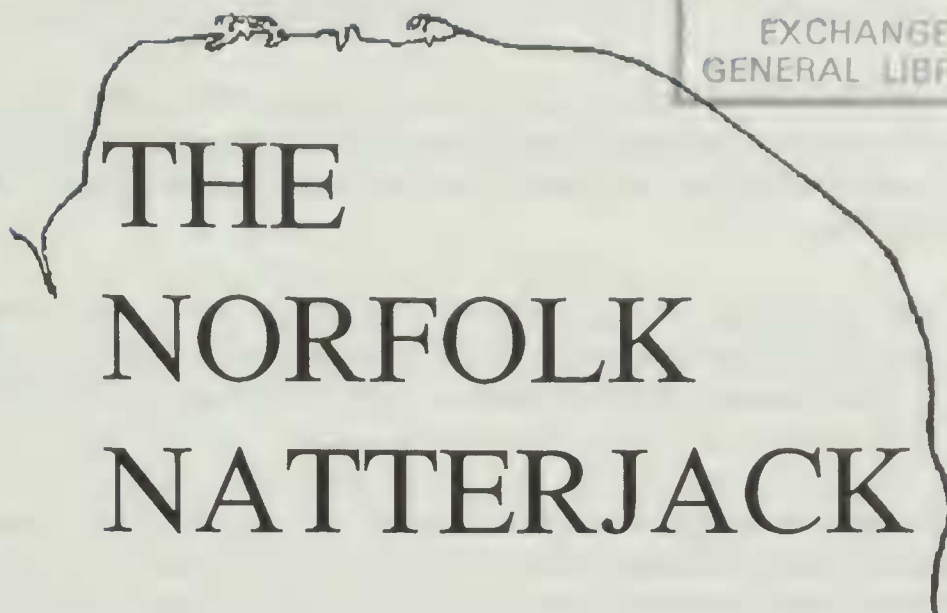




Number 36



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



February 1992

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Society will be held at 19.30 hours on Wednesday 22nd April 1992 in the City Library Lecture Theatre, Norwich

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting. (27th March 1991)
3. Matters arising from the minutes.
4. Presentation of Chairman's Report.
5. Presentation of Treasurer Report and the Income and Expenditure Account for 1991.
6. Presentation of the Council nomination for the President of the Society for 1992-93.
Dr. A. G. Irwin.
7. Presentation of Officers and Council.
Council offers the following nominations, all nominees having consented to serve.
Vice-President. (As Vice-Presidents are elected for life, only new nominations are subject to election.)

Chairman	D. A. Dorling
General Secretary	Dr. A. Leech
Assistant Secretary	Mrs. J. Negal
Treasurer	D. Richmond
Assistant Treasurer	M. J. Woolner
Chairman, Membership Committee	R. Hancy
Secretary, Membership Committee	C. R. Dack
Chairman, Programme Committee	M. J. C. Ewles
Secretary, Programme Committee	Mrs. C. W. Haines
Chairman, Publications Committee	R. Jones
Secretary, Publications Committee	R. E. (Dick) Jones
Chairman, Research Committee	P. R. Banham
Secretary, Research Committee	E. Cross
Honorary Auditor	J. E. Timbers
Elected Council Members to serve for three years, (Retiring 1995)	Mrs. G. Dickey F. Farrow
Elected Council Member to Serve for two years (Replacing D. Richmond nominated for Treasurer).	M. Poulton P. J. Wanstall
	P. Lambley (Retiring 1994)

Any other nominations may be received from members for any of the above posts other than Vice-presidents, duly proposed and seconded and with the nominees written consent, not less than seven clear days before the A.G.M. to (Gen. Sec)

8. Any other business.

Following the A.G.M. , A Slide presentations with commentaries by Brian Webster: "The Folklore of the Countryside" and "Butterflies and Moths".

ORTHOPTERA AT LITCHAM COMMON

In the gloriously hot sun of early July, I stepped out of the shady woodland at Litcham Common onto the acres of tussocky grassland to be greeted by a cacophony of grasshopper song. Not the shrill, high pitched warbling of continental species, but the soft whispering of Common Green Grasshopper, so intense from the sheer numbers present that the individual stridulations merged into a continuous, shuffling song.

In a muddy hollow, my joy was compounded by the discovery of Common and Slender Groundhoppers *Tetrix undulata* and *T. subulata*, new for this 10km square but linking neatly with similar records from Narford, lower down the same river valley, and reminding me yet again how all our remnant, discrete habitats must at some time been linked into continuous distributions of species.

There are the joys of discovery which make grasshoppers so fascinating to me. In no other field of study of our larger insects does so much remain to be discovered about the distribution of species, and because they are sedentary, each new discovery is a glimpse into the past, and a reflection of what our landscape must have looked like centuries ago.

In the current edition of the Transactions you will have found a review of the present state of knowledge of grasshopper distribution. This is not intended to be the last word on the subject but merely the first, a starting point from which you can go out to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of the habitats within the county. Please continue to send orthoptera records to me at the address below, especially if you have records for new tetrads or 10km squares relative to the published maps. Records of bush-crickets are particularly required as the published maps show these to be substantially under recorded throughout the county.

D.I. Richmond, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk. NR10 4LS.

BIRD WATCHING VISIT TO HOLKHAM

Twelve or so Members met at Lady Anne's Drive at Holkham on Sunday 1st December for a bird watching walk through the pines and across the beach at this North Norfolk National Nature Reserve. The weather was overcast but with light winds making it a reasonable winter's day.

The pines were rather quiet but we eventually met up with a mixed party of tits and saw the usual gathering of Little Grebes on the pond. A short visit to the recently re-located hide, now overlooking a much enlarged scrape, allowed good views of Mallards, a pair of Gadwalls and a number of Teal. From this view point we were also able to see large numbers of Brent Geese, a family party of Pink-footed Geese and many Wigeon on the marsh beyond the pools. English Nature are to be congratulated on these changed facilities which, I am sure, will prove to be of great benefit to both birds and bird watchers.

The beach had a few waders feeding by the water's edge - Sanderlings, Grey Plovers and odd Redshanks and Bar-tailed Godwits. Off-shore there was a very large raft of Common Scoters amongst which we saw two or three small parties of Velvet Scoters and three drake Eiders. On returning to the car park a party of nine Shorelarks feeding busily on the embryo saltmarsh provided the highlight of the day. These delightful visitors gave excellent views of their black and lemon head and throat patterns. Once quite common in Winter on the North Norfolk Coast, a party of nine is the largest recorded number for about five years.

After lunch a few hardy members walked in Holkham Park adding one or two species to the list which totalled 57 at the end of a pleasant and interesting day. Our thanks are due to Colin Dack for arranging and leading the walk.

D.A.D.

BROADLAND'S BOOK

Martin George, who was Regional Officer of the Nature Conservancy Council until he retired last year, has compiled a lengthy account of Broadland's past and present land use, ecology and conservation. The book runs to 520 pages -A4 size - and includes over a hundred illustrations, many in colour, plus numerous maps and diagrams. It also contains an extensive list of references.

The work includes descriptions of the geology, soils, climate, water regime and limnology of the region, plus chapters on the fens, the drained marshland area, the flooding problem, and the past and present usage and management of the waterways. There are also detailed accounts of the way in which the region is administered, both now and in the past, and of the steps which conservationists are taking to restore Broadland to the state it was in in the 1930's.

The book will be retailed at £50, but Martin has offered to sell it to paid-up members of the Society for £37.50. Copies at this price can be purchased from Martin himself (he lives at Marsh House, Strumpshaw, beside the RSPB's reserve), or from How Hill, or the Norwich Offices of the Norfolk Naturalist's Trust (72 Cathedral Close) or the Broads Authority (18 Colegate).

A DANGEROUS GAME

I regularly write nature articles for the Yarmouth Mercury under the heading 'World Of Nature'. In November last year I had an article published which dealt with the dangers of picking wild mushrooms for consumption, by those who know little about what they are doing. To press the point, I gave details of the symptoms of poisoning by *Amanita phalloides*, the death Cap.

The article was intended, purely to try to make people aware of the dangers.

I usually invite letters or calls from the readers about their experiences and observations and I have a very good response, a naturalist can learn much from such a source. That evening a gentleman telephoned me, somewhat alarmed after having read the article, he told me that he had experienced some of the symptoms described and had in fact suffered them for around three weeks. I began to question him as to whether he had eaten wild mushrooms and found that he regularly collected and ate them, trying new species as and when he encountered them. He liked to try them himself first and if they seemed alright, he then allowed his family to eat them. I suggested that he was playing a dangerous game. Further questions about recently eaten species, their characteristics, habitats and appearance, eventually told me that the species that had caused his problems and discomfiture, was *Agaricus xanthodermus* a species that is known to be poisonous, though some people seem to be unaffected by them. I suggested that a visit to the doctor might be in order and to tell the doctor the name of the species, which he had apparently eaten on several occasions. Doctors are sometimes able to refer to their medical books with regard to fungal poisoning in order to determine the toxins that they contain so an effective treatment can be achieved.

I couldn't help thinking to myself that it was folk such as this that my original article was aimed at.

Tony Brown.

A FUNGUS FORAY IN THE BATTLE AREA

As we are pass holders for the Battle Area, we endeavour to make a collection of Fungi each autumn, in a different part of the area, to help enlarge the list of species from all disciplines held at Range HQ, and also by Reg and Lil Evans, the county recorders, to whom almost all specimens are taken for verification. This year we collected in the vicinity of Stanford Church and also on part of Bodney Warren on the rather late date of November 15th. Among our gatherings were several species that Reg felt were worthy of comment in Natterjack.

Crepidotus mollis A stump near Stanford church was covered with brackets of this species many of which were up to ten cm across-considerably larger than given in the books. This species is not particularly common in Norfolk.

Lepiota aspera A fine specimen of this near Stanford church. Instead of the scales usual in the genus, the cap under the lens appears to be dotted with little brown pyramids. Not common, but found for the second year in Stanta.

Melanoleuca arcuata Again near Stanford church, and only the second record that Reg has for it.

Inocybe nitiduscula Near Stanford church. Second record on Reg's card index.

Crinipellus stipitarius Abundant amongst short sheep grazed-grass on Bodney Warren in places. Looks like a tiny brownish *Lepiota* with fibres on both cap and stem. Very few Norfolk records and may be overlooked due to its small size. One to look out for in close grazed grassland in the Brecks.

Alec & Rita Bull.

An Atlas of NORFOLK BUTTERFLIES 1984 - 1988

Over 50,000 records from 250 recorders went into the production of this work. It shows the recent distribution of 31 butterflies found in the county of Norfolk, with exception of one or two casual migrants.

Mike Hall is to be congratulated for his dedication to such a time consuming task.

Past distributions are discussed, as are foodplants and habitats. Although not intended as an identification guide sixteen species are superbly illustrated in natural pose by Doug Hammersley. One slip however appears with the last illustration. A Chalkhill blue has the caption Silver-studded blue.

Checking against older distributions makes one realize that Norfolk has lost at least eleven species during the last one hundred years, so what of the future in our changing environment? Only further recordings will reveal.

It is a bargain at £2.95 plus postage, from the Norfolk branch of the British Butterfly Conservation Society. 1A Tuckswood Lane, Norwich. NR4 6BD

Ken Durrant.

MICROSCOPY GROUP

The following meetings have been arranged for the first half of 1992

16th April 7.30p.m.

Mike Woolner, a practical mycologist, will show us how the microscope aids his studies.

'Gossip' sessions with the above!

6th June

A practical session with the great demonstrator and instructor, Eric Marson. This meeting is scheduled for 2.30p.m.. Eric asks us to bring our own implements if possible, fine forceps and fine scissors - microscope of course. Specimens, chemicals and apparatus will be provided.

All meetings are held in the Castle Museum, Norwich.

CUTTLEFISH

At the same time as large numbers of birds on The Wash were being killed by the cold spell in February 1991, many thousands of 'bones' of the Common Cuttlefish washed up on the beach from Hunstanton to Snettisham. When I first saw them, on February 13th, they were all on the same fresh tideline, forming a white ribbon along the beach, and no more turned up on following days. They had clearly all been washed up within a very short space of time, perhaps even on the same tide. While I could have understood whole animals being cast up as a result of some marine disaster, I was at a loss to explain how the bones of long dead animals could arrive on the beach simultaneously in such numbers. I have since been enlightened by a marine biologist friend. Apparently the Cuttlefish is one of those animals which congregate en masse to spawn, and then die. This would of course result in an accumulation of bones in a small area of seabed, which could be disturbed and washed up long after in the way that I witnessed.

Paul Cobb.

WEYBOURNE

Sunday 26th January 1992

After a foggy Saturday, Mike Poulton arrived at Weybourne wondering whether anyone would turn up to look for birds on the Sunday. Fortunately the fog had cleared and the clear sky and bright light was good for sea watching, even if the cold weather did not encourage people to stand still for long. A group of 15 people assembled at Weybourne whilst two others went to Holkham by mistake, despite Colin's notices, and did not find us until about 3.0 p.m. at Cley. The first bird seen was a Red-Throated Diver, the first of several seen as we walked along the coast. Looking inland it was possible with a telescope to identify a flock of Pinkfeet and several Turnstone were seen on the shingle. Walking westward a Gannet was spotted well out to sea and a flock of Scoter flew westward. Turning up the path to the Quaggs a small party of twite and three brightly coloured Yellowhammers were seen. There were several Wigeon and Teal on the pond and close up views were had of two Egyptian geese. In the field above the pond were several Curlew and Lapwings. Two Hares were also seen. After returning to the cars, those who wished to stay for the afternoon drove to Cley beach carpark where packed lunches were eaten in front of a field full of Brent Geese and Golden Plover. A walk eastward along the shingle bank enabled us to locate a party of Snow Buntings, but the Lapland Bunting reputed to be with them was not seen.

Mike Poulton.

APPEAL FOR HELP

You will all have read or heard about the County Council's plans for a rubbish mountain on Hardwick airfield, near Hempnall. We have been approached by the Joint Parish Councils' Action Committee who are anxious that we prepare a dossier on the wildlife of the area to be presented at the Public Enquiry, which will probably be held in the autumn. If anyone has interesting records from the area of Hardwick airfield or the adjacent Spring Wood please would they send them to me or to Paul Banham, Chairman of the Research Committee?

Alec Bull.

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 April 1992**. Contributions arriving after this date will not be accepted for the May Natterjack.