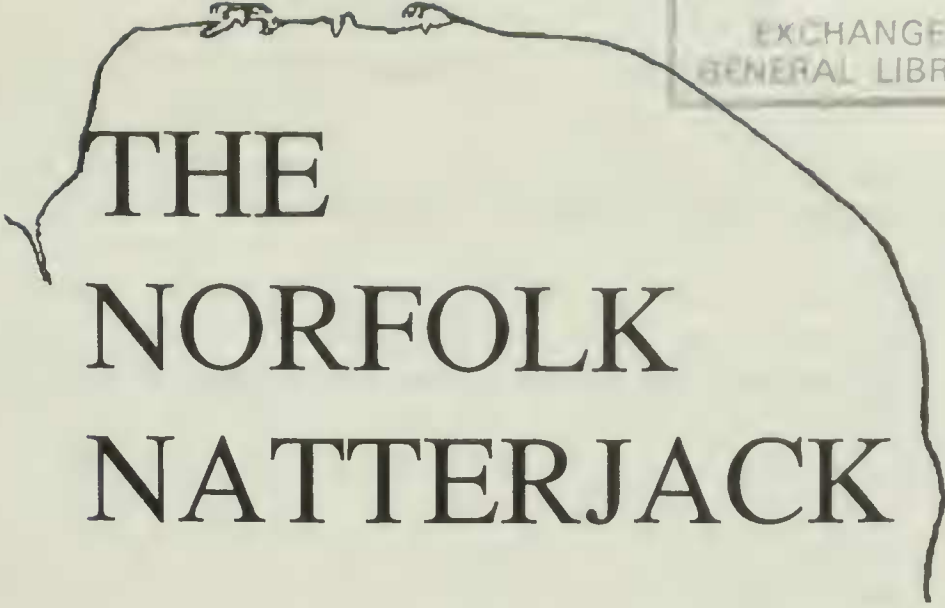




Number 37



THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK

20 MAY 1992
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May 1992

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

CHANGE OF THE SOCIETY'S OFFICERS

At the Society's Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 22nd April 1992, Mrs. Anne Brewster completed three very successful years as Chairman and was succeeded in the chair by Don Dorling. Consequently Don relinquished the position of Honorary Treasurer. Alec Bull retired as General Secretary to concentrate his energies on the proposed new Flora of the County. Both were thanked by the outgoing Chairman for their services to the Society over many years.

The New General Secretary and Honorary Treasurer are:

General Secretary

Dr. A. R. Leech

3, Eccles Road,

Holt

Norfolk. NR25 6HJ

0603 91 712282

Telephone

Honorary Treasurer

Mr. D. I. Richmond

42, Richmond Rise,

Reepham,

Norwich. NR10 4LS

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Telephone

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Dr. Tony Irwin was confirmed as President for the current year. Mrs. G. Dickey, and Messrs F. Farrow, P. Lambley, M. Poulton and P.J. Wanstall were elected to Council.

NEWS HEADLINES

It has been suggested that the practice of asking members at meetings for any items of natural history news should be revived. The idea was taken up following the formal business of the AGM on 22nd April. Rex Hancy mentioned that his attention had been drawn to two large spiders which had recently been found in bunches of Bananas. John Butcher reported that 4 Waxwings were still present at Greenways, Eaton.

We would welcome brief topical items of interest for mention at meetings and the editor of Natterjack will be happy to consider publication of these where appropriate.

HAVE YOU LOST A SLIDE

Have you lost a slide of a Peacock Butterfly on fleabane processed by Coe's. This slide was given to the wrong member after the Society Photographic Group Lecture "The Many Faces of Nature".

BIRDING AT BURNHAM

Sunday 1st March 1992

Undeterred by a distinctly unpromising weather forecast, nearly 20 members gathered at Burnham Overy Staithe and were rewarded with a morning's unexpected sunshine and some splendid sightings.

Winter birds were still about in abundance. From the bank-top path to Gun Hill, we could see dense flocks of Brent, Pink-footed and White-fronted geese. With the tide out, the mud in the channel was a happy hunting ground for large numbers of waders: Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Turnstone, Dunlin, Grey Plover, Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher.

One of the delights of the day was the charm of more than 20 Goldfinches that rose from the path just ahead of us and headed musically for the saltmarsh.

The rain arrived at lunchtime but the hardy handful (the barmy bunch?) walked from Burnham Norton across the water meadows and back via the Burnham Bank.

It was worth getting wet. Even if the hoped-for owls had more sense than we did and stayed under cover, we found six species of duck Wigeon, Pintail, Shoveler, Teal, Shelduck and Mallard, three more species of geese Canada, Greylag and Egyptian, and a field dotted with dozens of Golden Plover and Lapwing.

David Paull.

LOUND RESERVOIR

The Society joined members of the Great Yarmouth Natural History Society for a meeting at Lound Reservoir on Sunday 26th April. The month lived up to its name with sunny periods in the morning accompanied by a fresh SW wind and later heavy showers.

Both Holly Blue and Green-veined White butterflies were active in sheltered corners and a number of summer migrant birds were on view, including Swallows, Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Blackcap, and a Sedge Warbler. On the water were Canada, Barnacle (6 feral) and Egyptian Geese - the last named with a brood of small young, together with Coots, Moorhens etc. Other bird species recorded include, Mistle and Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Starlings, Robins, Chaffinches, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Cuckoo (seen and heard), Woodpigeons, and Kestrel.

This proved to be a most interesting area of varied habitat which, we were pleased to learn, will soon be managed as a reserve by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

D.A.D. 27.4.92

BEDROOM DRAMA

Scene: The bedroom of Tony and Barbara Leech, 11.30pm one September.

Barbara: 'Will you please get that insect out of here.'

Tony: 'It won't do any harm I'll put it out if you like. It looks like a large ichneumon Fly.'

Barbara: 'It won't sting will it?'

Tony: 'Oh, no, it belongs to the division of the Hymenoptera called the Parasitica; only the Aculeata sting. Aargh! The bloody thing's stung me!'

Some time later.

Textbook "*Netelia testaceus*, a very common parasite of moth larvae. Stout ovipositor capable of penetrating human skin if molested."

Footnote: Although not really painful, the irritation persisted for two days suggesting that a venom had been involved. My son cheerfully suggested that it might have laid an egg in me. I assured him that it was not possible and on this occasion appear to have been right.

Tony Leech.

BRECKLAND BOOK

George Jessup has been a member of the Society for 46 years and has written Nature articles for the E.D.P., the Norwich Mercury Series of newspapers, most East Anglian Magazines and some national publications.

He has also given hundreds of illustrated talks on Natural and Local History throughout East Anglia for 40 years. In 1985 he wrote a book on his home town "Watton through the Ages", with the profits going to two local charities. It proved very popular and quickly sold out.

His great love is the "Breckland" area and his illustrated talk on "Breckland Through the Ages" has been seen by thousands of people, many of whom have suggested that he should put his articles on this area into a book for posterity.

At last he has decided to put a selection of them into "Breckland Ramblings", a book that is due out at the end of April this year. It will contain some 160 articles, illustrated with about 100 line drawings and photographs.

The paper back will be retailed at £8.95 and the hard back at £11.95, but George has offered to sell them to paid-up members of the society for £7.60 and £10.60. (Plus 75p Post and Packing).

Copies can be obtained from the following Officers of the Society, Don Dorling, Rex Hancy, Colin Dack and Alec Bull. Also from Nick Gibbons of the Thetford Natural History Society, 4, McKenzie Road, THETFORD, Phone Thetford 752455. Also from George himself at 59, Nelson Court, Watton. Phone Watton (0953) 882846.

Any profit made from sales of the book will be donated to the worthy cause, the Big "C" Appeal.

NORFOLK BIRD REPORT 1991

1992 sees the fifteenth anniversary of the death of Richard Richardson the much-loved Norfolk bird artist and bird-watcher extraordinaire. He was an honorary member of our Society and it seems appropriate to mark the occasion by including in the 1991 Report a selection of his finest illustrations together with those from the pens of the young artists who have won the competition set up in memory of his name: The Richard Richardson Award.

The results of the competition for artists under the age of 21 are linked to the annual Bird Illustrator of the Year competition featured in 'British Birds' magazine.

It is specially pleasing to include an example of Ian Lewington's work. He won the Richard Richardson Award and also the Bird Illustrator of the Year Award in 1985 (at age 20) at his first attempt. He is still the only person to have achieved the double in a single year. Each winner since the competition began has submitted an illustration for the 1991 Norfolk Report.

Line drawings - at the time a considerable innovation - have featured in the county Report since their introduction by Richard in the 1955 issue. At the present time the Society is very fortunate to receive high quality bird illustrations from such professional artists as Norman Arlott, Nik Borrow and Carl Donner. In addition, the excellent artwork contributions from so-called amateurs is greatly appreciated.

M.J.S.

LIFE-CYCLE

Last summer, during a walk over Beeston Regis Common, Cherry found a large green caterpillar crossing a track and brought it home where its identification was confirmed as the larvae of the Emperor Moth *Saturnia pavonia* (Linn.).

I placed it in a container overnight with some hawthorn leaves (one of its listed foodplants) in order to photograph it next morning, however, later that same evening it started to spin its silken cocoon. The cocoon was completed next day, 11th. August, so the container was placed in a shed for the winter.

On April 17th, thinking that the moth should soon emerge, I moved the container closer to a nearby window and on Easter Sunday, 19th April, a fine female Emperor Moth was hanging from the old cocoon. This was approximately 2.30 pm. and I took the moth outside to show the family and to photograph her. With this task completed I placed her about 6 feet up in an ornamental Cherry tree to keep her safe from cats. By now it was about 3 o'clock and within minutes of the moth being placed in the tree a large brownish moth was fluttering around which soon landed next to her and turned out to be a male Emperor. A coupling was attempted causing the moths to fall out of the tree. The male quickly flew off leaving the female in the grass below. I picked her up and placed her on some bramble (the usual foodplant of the larva on the Common) where she soon again had the attention of the male. A second male appeared from the southwest and headed in ever-decreasing circles towards the female.

It was a bright sunny afternoon and warm out of the light east northeast wind. Since the male appeared from the southwest it is likely the pheromones given off by the female were carried to males on the wind. The strength of this scent and the equally remarkable detection by the males via their feathery antenna is phenomenal considering all the competing smells in this modern world.

Personally I haven't seen Emperor Moths for quite a few years although they were plentiful on the coastal heaths when heather was more abundant, especially in the mid-60's. Consequently it was a real pleasure to have them in the garden and to have successfully kept the cocoon through the winter. The moth was gone next morning, hopefully to lay eggs for the next generation on the Common.

Francis and Cherry Farrow.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

This is to remind members that their subscription was due on the 1st April. Cheques should be made payable to the **Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society**. Please send to **Mr. D. Richmond, Honorary Treasurer, 42, Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norwich, Norfolk. NR10 4LS**

Annual Subscription rates are: Junior £3. Ordinary £8. Family £10. Affiliation £15.

A CHANCE FIND

While examining a number of bees I had collected during a recent visit to Kent, I was delighted to find an example of one of our most curious insects.

Only just visible to the naked eye, I detected the hind end of a female *Stylops* protruding from the intersegmental membrane on the abdomen of a male *Andrena* sp. bee. (see illustration).

These curious insects comprise a separate order, the *Strepsiptera*, seventeen species being found in the British Isles. The larvae and females live as endoparasites in the bodies of various host insects, mostly bees and wasps.

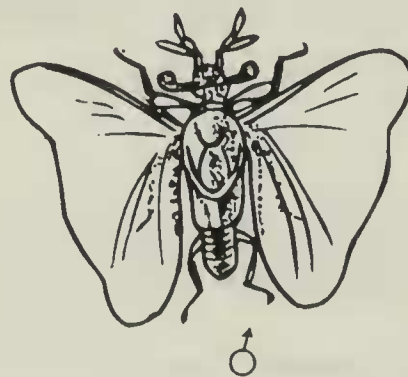
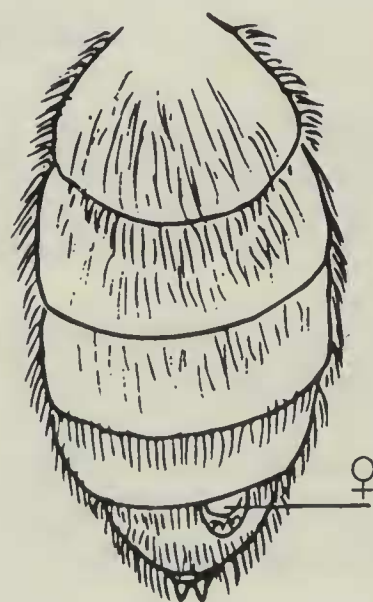
The females resemble minute maggots and never leave the body of the host, only partially protruding when mature to be mated by the free flying males, who after emergence and having located a female by her scent and mated, dies within an hour or so.

The larvae hatch within the body of the female and are released sometimes in vast numbers usually when the host visits flowers. They are extremely minute but have well formed legs and eyes and they are very active, resembling as they do the larvae of the Oil beetle *Meloe* who also congregate on flowers to find a host bee upon which to attach themselves and get taken along to its nest in order to parasitise the larvae.

The Male (see illustration) possess two very large hind wings, the fore wings resembling minute clubs which act as balances in a similar way to the halteres of the *Dipteron* order *Nematocera*, the crane flies etc. Being so small, approximately 2mm long, they are rarely found. In fact in over fifty years collecting bees this is only the second occasion that I have found an example. Unlike most other parasites however the *Styloids* do not kill their hosts although they do render them sterile.

It is interesting that the Royal Entomological Society founded in 1833 uses a minute male *Stylops kirbii* as its emblem.

Ken Durrant.



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 July 1992**. Contributions arriving after this date will not be accepted for the August Natterjack.