

Number 46

# THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



August 1994

The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

## LIBRARY FIRE

Following the fire at Norwich Central Library, the Society's lectures have had to be moved. It has not been possible to find one venue for all of them, but we hope the arrangements we have managed to make will prove satisfactory, and give members a taste of other possible locations for the future. Your comments would be welcome.

The dates of the talks have not been changed. Unless stated otherwise, the starting time remains 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September: "BTO Breeding Bird Survey" Chantry Hall, Norwich.

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October: "Conservation of Norfolk Barn Owls" Chantry Hall, Norwich.

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November: "A Wildlife Cruise to Antarctica" Thorpe Parish Hall, Thorpe St. Andrew.

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December: "Broadland maps old and new" To be confirmed.

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January "From Wild Wheat to the Present Day" Wymondham Central Hall.

Wednesday 22<sup>th</sup> February: "The Origins of Some Garden Flowers" Chantry Hall, Norwich.

Wednesday 22<sup>th</sup> March: AGM and "The Pacific Northwest" Chantry Hall, Norwich.

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> April: "A Nature Miscellany" To be confirmed.

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May: "A New Little Wood for Norfolk." Wymondham Central Hall.

Chantry Hall, Norwich, is next to the Assembly House.

Thorpe St. Andrew Parish Hall, is on the Norwich Ring Road at the corner of Sir William's Way and Thunder Lane, enter from Thunder Lane.

Central Hall, Wymondham is in Bridewell Street, close to the first large car park you come to from the old Norwich road.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

Notes are given below of a few of the forthcoming meetings. For full details, please refer to the programme card.

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September** Meet in the cliff top car park at West Runton (TG 183431) at 1300 hrs; for a look at the seashore led by Dick Hamond. This coincides with one of the lowest tides of the year. Rubber boots and plastic jars with lids are essential.

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September** An opportunity to poke around among the leaf litter of Felthorpe woods, led by Rex & Barbara Hancy. Several experts will be on hand to help identify such creatures as beetles, millepedes and woodlice. Meet at 1100 hrs; park on roadside verges off Reepharm road (TG 154167).

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October** Paul Johnson, formerly of the Hawk & Owl Trust, but now at Pensthorpe, will talk about

conservation work on Norfolk barn owls. 1930 hrs; Chantry Hall, Norwich.

## ERRORS AND OMISSIONS

**Tuesday 20th September** Photographic Group. Mike Woolner is now unable to give his talk on this date, and it will therefore be an evening for members to show their slides. Please bring a maximum of 25. Contact David Paull.

### Additional meeting

**Sunday 26th February 1995:** Field meeting to Morston quay for birds. Meet NT car park (TG 007443). Leader David Paull.

**Sunday 21st May 1995:** Field meeting to Barn Meadow, Gt. Moulton. This should be **SUNDAY** and not Saturday as printed in the programme.

## NO MORE LOOKING BACK

Now the major celebration in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich is well behind us we have to remind ourselves that the one day was but part of the whole year. Other events marking the anniversary are in the programme, to be enjoyed by all possible members.

Enjoyment is a term not mentioned in the aims and objectives of the Society yet it is part of everything we do. No doubt about it, one lasting impression of that memorable day in St. Andrew's Hall is the pleasure it gave to the participants who took the opportunity to display their specialities. That view was expressed quite strongly by members of other groups and societies who rarely have such an opportunity to meet together in a common enterprise or just have the time to exchange news and views. Not that most had more than fleeting moments to make those contacts for the visiting public kept us busy with their comments and queries.

The quality of the individual exhibitions was of a very high standard. Some of our friends representing large national organisations had the benefit of professional expertise. Our members and the members of the many other smaller groups rose to the occasion in a remarkable way to create displays belying their amateur status. We thank all of them for their invaluable contributions. Now we must make sure we keep in touch to work together in the common cause.

Those of us who had been working on the details of preparation were agreeably surprised how smoothly the day proceeded. We have to thank the staff at St. Andrew's for their practical assistance and for warning us of possible hurdles in our way. How glad we were to know all those tables would be set up before our arrival early that morning to be replaced by rows of chairs for the evening's address without any of us having to help in any way!

The variety and diversity of interests and projects in the study of the natural world was made very apparent to our visitors, perhaps even to ourselves. What we do as individuals with our limited time and budgets can be of value. It can also be completely absorbing, so much so we scarcely notice what is happening all round us. The launch of Wildlife 2000, announced that evening, may be the means of channelling all that effort into a single, productive cause. So many records are gathering dust as they languish in notebooks on obscure shelves. Collection gave pleasure. Passing on the information to the all-embracing data bank envisaged will give point to the exercise.

The exhibition was a review of what is happening today. The editor of The Transactions worked extremely hard against the clock to see they were published in time for the big day. This issue looks back over the 125 years since our founding and is an achievement in its own right. A copy should be on desk of anyone with an interest in Norfolk's wildlife. Members, treasure your copies! There are precious few remaining.

The Presidential Address by Professor David Bellamy, a descriptive tour of the world before bringing us back to Norfolk, was certainly entertaining but was also deeply thought provoking. There are few world travellers with the knowledge to interpret what they see or to ask the pertinent questions, who are blessed with the gift of language to pass on to us such a clear exposition of the state of the earth. That any one person can visit so many places in such a short time is amazing. The earth is certainly shrinking! Is the supply of natural treasure we gather so greedily shrinking at the same pace?

What a relief to come home to familiar Norfolk! But can we look at our home county in quite the same way again? Probably not but surely we will be inspired to look to the future with clearer objectives and a determination to make our contributions count for something.

Rex Hancy

**HEGGATT HALL 12<sup>th</sup> JUNE 1994**

When we celebrated our centenary we visited the site of the very first field meeting of the society, so it was appropriate that we celebrated our 125<sup>th</sup> year at the same venue.

We were welcomed by Mr. Richard Gurney and his wife. Forty seven members took part, parking their cars under the various large trees to obtain shade on what promised to be a very warm day. We walked from the Hall and out at the top gate passing a long line of moles hung on the wire fence to show proof of the mole catcher's skill. Down the lane we were surprised by the sight of a pure white Pheasant which crossed our path, a Tawny Owl hastily departed from it's perch in a nearby tree probably surprised by such a large party.

Turning off the lane to cross a field put down to five year set aside we passed a large patch of Tar weed *Amsinckia micrantha*, an American plant first recorded in Norfolk some seventy years ago. We had not gone far when we were accosted by a large number of very hungry Horse flies *Hybomitra bimaculata* – vicious biters of bare legs as one or two of the members discovered.

Entering the Doctors Cut, some of the small oaks appeared to have their terminal leaves damaged similar to those on the North coast when the wind carries in the salt spray, but on examination however it was found that the dead leaves were held together by a web containing a number of pupae of the Pyralid moth *Acrobasis consociella*. I took some of the webs home and in a few days obtained the moths, two species of parasitic Ichneumons and one Braconid from them.

While we were examining the cut we ourselves were also examined by Clegs *Haematopa pluvialis*, another specie of biting flies whose stealthy approach is silent. On passing the pump house we found the Deadly Nightshade *Atropa bella-donna* which we had seen 25 years before.

On the way around a field we came across a number of members formed in a ring across the path. Thinking that somebody had succumbed to the heat or the biting flies, we soon found the cause of the excitement was the discovery of a small plant on the footpath which was after much discussion was defined as Hoary Cinquifol *Potentilla argentea*.

We eventually returned to the Hall where some of the members had brought their picnic lunches, having enjoyed a rewarding ramble for me at least, as the list of insects shows.  
Ken Durrant.

#### Lepidoptera

Pieris brassicae  
P. rapae  
P. Napeae  
Anthocharis cardamines  
Tyria jacobaeae Cinnabar  
Xanthorhoe fluctuata  
Nemophora degeerella  
Agapeta hamana  
Agriphila selasella  
Acrobasis consociella

Large White  
Small White  
Green- veined White  
Orange-tip  
  
Garden dart  
Degeers Longhorn

#### Coleoptera

Phyllobius argentatus  
Phy. pomaceus  
Otiorrhynchus singularis  
Deporaus betulae  
Coccinella septempunctata  
Propulea quatuordecimpunctata  
Thea vigintiduopunctata  
Exochomus quadripustulatus  
Cidnorhinus quadrimaculatus  
Byturus urbanus  
B. tomentosa  
Catharis rustica  
C. nigricans  
Athous haemorrhoidalis  
A. hirtus  
Dalopius marginatus  
Malachius bipustulatus  
Pyrochroa serraticornis  
Strangalia maculata  
Olibrus corticalis  
Grammoptera ruficornis  
Clytus ariestis

#### Diptera

Tipula scripta  
Aedes cantans  
A. annulipes  
Merodon equestris  
Vollucella bombylans var. plumata  
V. pellucens  
Eristalis tenax  
E. arbutorum  
E. nemorum  
E. pertinax  
Helophilus pendulus  
Parhelophilus frutetorum  
Syrphus vitripennis  
Cheilosia albitarsis  
Ch. illustrata  
Rhingia campestris  
Xylota segnis  
X. sylvorum  
Syrnitta pipiens  
Hybomitra bimaculata  
Haematopa pluvialis  
Chrysogaster solstitialis  
Chrysopilus cristatus  
Rhagio lineola  
Beris geniculata  
Sarcophaga carnaria  
Lucilia caesar  
Gymnocheata viridis  
Geomyza venusta  
Pherbellia albocostata  
Scathophaga stercoraria  
Opomyza geminationis  
Thereva nobilitata

#### Hymenoptera

Tenthredo mesomelas  
T. livida  
Tenthredopsis nassata  
Rhogogaster viridis  
Rh. punctulata

#### Odonata

Libellula depressa  
L. quadrimaculata  
Enallagma cyathigera

#### Neuroptera



*Dolerus corthurnatus*  
*Macrophya blanda*  
*M. ribis*  
*Argogrytes mystaceus*  
*Nyssus spinosus*  
*Nomada ruficornis*  
*Blaptocampus nigricornis*

**Hemiptera**  
*Troilus luridus*  
*Elasmucha grisea*  
*Stenodema laevigatum*  
*Cylloceria histronicus*  
*Oncopeltus flavicollis*

*Chrysopa commata*

**Mecoptera**  
*Panorpa germanica*  
*P. communis*

**Orthoptera**  
*Tetix undulata*  
*Leptophyes punctatissima* (nymphs)

## SUMMER SOCIAL - 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1994

Our Membership Committee must be congratulated on the highly successful celebratory meeting centred on Oulton Chapel. What inspiration it was to arrange the series of events around a venue that would have met with the full approval of our members a hundred years ago!

The weather played its part by allowing the afternoon and evening walks to be completed in near perfect conditions. That round the lakes in the afternoon of the Bure Fish Farm gave the participants a healthy appetite for the High Tea prepared by the committee and friends. Contributions in kind were much appreciated and donations in cash fully met the expenses of the day

Exhibitions of Victorian books and documents were reminders of our long history. An up-to-date display of photographs of the major events of this special year brought us into the present. An exhibition bringing the Society to the notice of the wider public was to be seen just down the road at the Oulton Fair. We are grateful to the stalwarts who represent us so ably at such events.

Rex Hancy

## WAX MOTHS IN BUMBLEBEE NESTS

We have not seen these parasites often, nor wish to do so. The moth *Aphomia sociella* lays her eggs in the nest of bumblebees and on hatching the larvae burrow into the comb, destroying wax, pupae and bee larvae. They avoid attack by the bees by making silken tunnels into which they can rapidly retreat. When fully grown the larvae are about 1½ inches long and yellowish. They pupate in silk together forming a mass of joined cocoons. We have a record of a nest parasitised by this moth which contained over 200 cocoons.

The first moths have emerged (17<sup>th</sup> June) and it is hoped that some of their parasites will be present.

In the previous records no parasites of the moth were recorded. This is unfortunate as some curb on this dingy brown moth is needed.

Reg & Lil Evans

## BRADFIELD WOODS 14<sup>th</sup>. August, 1994

The joint meeting with the British Plant Gall Society held in Bradfield Woods attracted few members but those who undertook the long journey were determined to see as much as possible and take full advantage of the superb venue.

Warden Peter Fordham gave a short history of the woods and the coppicing regime carried out for many centuries. We were chilled by his account of how so many acres had been grubbed out in recent times and then warmed and encouraged by the story of the swift rescue of the remnant.

The final list of plant galls has yet to be completed. The total is sure to stand beyond fifty galls. This is a substantial contribution to the data held on the woods. Butterflies added colour to the rides and woodland edge and for many of us it was our first experience of the remarkable abundance this year of the Silver Y moth.

Rex Hancy

## A CHINK IN THE BAMBOO CURTAIN

Although I flew to Hong Kong last April – I actually ended up in the People's Republic of China a few hours later and saw the city of Hong Kong only from the back of a speeding taxi as it made its way to the ferry terminal from where I travelled to Shekon in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, PRC.

Since arriving in China I have managed to find my way out of the concrete jungle of high rises to the natural high rises of the surrounding granite mountains (heights up to 1200').

On May 8<sup>th</sup> I walked up a stream bed of pink coarse-grained porphoritic granite boulders - remnants of a Mesozoic intrusion. The stream bed was approximately 6 to 10' wide and fell in a series of zig-zagging small terraces behind which small pools 1 to 2' deep and 3 to 12' long occurred. The pools were being fed by a trickle of water as there had been no rain for two weeks ( when it does rain these small tranquil riffles become torrents washing mud and rocks down the recently de-forested areas onto the roads).

The pools at this time held no water plants although the sides of the stream were flanked by rushes, ferns and trailing plants, which in turn soon gave way to shrubs and recently planted Eucalyptus trees. On a couple of occasions during my short excursion I found about a dozen sundew plants with rounded leaves of a deep red colour. The plants were smaller than the average UK round-leaved sundew and although the flower-spike was of a similar size its flowers were of a deep rose-pink instead of white. The overall small stature of the plants may be due to the soil which consisted entirely of coarse granite grit, which also made up much of the stream bed between the boulders and exposed bedrock. Yet these apparently barren pools did hold life – dragonfly larvae. What they fed on I haven't yet discovered – unless it was each other (although some pools did contain tadpoles and large shrimps (up to ¾") which resembled the common shrimp of the Norfolk coast).

There was certainly a range of dragonfly species and numerous beautiful adults were all around. Basically I identified what can be broadly termed, Damsels, Darters, Skimmers and Hawkers – at least types that looked and behaved as such UK varieties I know.

Only one damsel was found, but one which was plentiful – it was all black in colour and both single and pairs were seen. Some pairs were in tandem, dipping along the margins of the stream in apparent egg-depositing mode.

The "darters" were generally small and highly coloured, red, carmine and deep midnight blue. They were generally small – around the size of the UK Ruddy Darter, but appeared slightly stouter in build. When settled they had a characteristic stance with their wings dropped forwards. The males were holding territory and vigorously seeing off other dragonflies that entered their 'airspace' over the stream, although no signs of active courtship was evident.

A two-tone blue 'Skimmer-type' flew past on one occasion but did not stop and was not seen again. A small predominantly black with thin green rings along its abdomen and possibly a thickened end segment – small club-tailed type some 5 to 6 cms long-was encountered in various parts of the stream and was inclined to bask on the rocks rather than perch on the vegetation.

Best of all though were the large and magnificent "Hawkers" – Emperor dragonfly size and just as impressive, although instead of blue and green were golden-brown and scarlet with fast aerial acrobatics that would equal the 'Red Arrows'.

There were plenty of large colourful butterflies too – spectacular Birdwings, Swallowtails and tiny Blues – but that is another story....

Francis Farrow

## A NEW FUNGUS

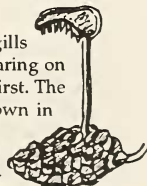
A recent addition to our records was found upon a fallen birch branch. The fungus breaks through the surface of the wood as small black spheres and these have a star-like appearance.

It has been named as *Rosellinia evansii*.

Reg Evans

## 'SPINY' FUNGI

This interesting group of fungi differ from others in that spores are produced on spines instead of gills or pores etc. It seems that the 'Ear Pick' fungus *Auriscalpium vulgare* is one of the commonest, appearing on pine cones which have become buried in the soil. As it is brownish in colour it is not easily seen at first. The cap is laterally attached to the stem and bears spines on its underside which are pinkish to brown in colour.



*Auriscalpium vulgare*

After many years looking for fungi in Norfolk we were pleased to add *Creolophus cirrhatus* to our list, which was found on the lower side of a fallen sycamore tree. This large specimen had shell shaped brackets, pale cream, bearing spines on the lower surface up to 1½ cm long.

The Hedgehog fungus which grows on the ground is described as common or frequent in most books, yet we only have two records over 18 years. Perhaps we have not been in the right place at the right time! Records of this recognisable fungus would be appreciated. Reg & Lil Evans.

Please send items for Natterjack to Colin Dack 12, Shipdham Rd, Toftwood, Dereham Norfolk NR19 1JJ

## AN EVENING WITH COLIN

Several members arrived to record plants in the waste areas and hedgerows around Tesco store Dereham. Knot grass was abundant and heavily infected with a powdery mildew *Erysiphe polygonii* and a rust *Uromyces polygoni-aviculare*. Some groundsel stems were swollen and distorted by the rust *Puccinia lagenophorae*. This rust is native to Australia and first appeared in this country in 1961. Examination of campion seed capsules revealed several of them contained a larva of the Campion Moth *Hadena rivularis*. Poppy capsules *Papaver rhoeas* were damaged by the gall wasp *Aulax minor* causing swelling of the ovules. 1 in 4 were affected. 73 records of flowering plants were made in the small area examined.

Reg Evans.

The idea of this meeting was to look at a habitat we do not normally look at, being a building site which had just been vacated last winter. I think we should look at more sites of a similar type, as this is more like the real world-reserves are the cream, not the norm.

Colin Dack.

## A DOMESTICATED SPIDER

We have lived in this house for some 15 years and share the garden with some rare insects, such as the little moth fly *Psychoda crassipennis* Tonn., the soldier fly *Solva marginata* Mg. and the dolichopodid fly *Neurigona abdominalis* Fall., and the house with a succession of Tegenaria house spiders. This year we had an apparently new visitor, the distinctive spider *Pholcus phalangoides* Fuess., which appeared suddenly in February above the boiler. This adult spider then disappeared after some two weeks, we assumed sucked into the vacuum cleaner, but reappeared (? the same adult) in the bath in May. Replaced in the boiler room, it again surfaced recently in the shower tray, apparently this one solitary mature individual. The spider is distinctive, very well illustrated on page 92 of the Ray Society Volume 1 on British Spiders by Locket & Millidge, resembling a long-legged harvestman as the specific name suggests. Apparently a southern species in Britain, found in houses and outhouses and possibly spreading north, we have not seen this species of spider in the house before this year.

Brian Laurence.

## A NEW PLANT GALL

Some years ago we found *Eriophyes gibbosus* – a gall on bramble leaves. This was in South England and subsequently we have often looked for this in Norfolk.

Recently we found this gall in a damp woodland, where the leaves on some shoots were blistered. On the underside were greyish patches which had many pointed cylindrical hairs just visible with a good hand lens.

It would seem that this gall is not common in Norfolk (considering the searches we have made) and is new to the check list. Transactions Vol 29, Part 1 (July 1991).

Reg & Lil Evans.

## A FRUSTRATED MAMMAL – OBSERVER

Dear fellow members,

I am a keen naturalist, taking pleasure in observing and identifying all manner of flora and fauna; but the highlight of these times tend to be the fleeting glimpse of a passing fox, fleeing deer or squeaking vole.

I am writing in the hopes that some of you out there have mammal watching tips and experience that I and hopefully others interested may draw on.

I spend hours stealthily creeping about my local woods keeping a sharp eye and ear out for signs, hide or hair of many a mammal but so often I come up with few results. Not that this seems to dampen my enthusiasm. It is undoubtedly the very mysteriousness of our night creatures that captivates my interest.

Any interested mammal - lovers please write to this newsletter or myself at 12B Meadow Brook Close, Norwich. NR1 2HJ Suzanne Williams

## SWAP SHOP

This is for members who have old equipment, books etc that they no longer use, and would like to give/sell to others, and for members who looking for such items.

For photographic and miscellaneous equipment Please contact: Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1JJ Tel: 0362 696314

For microscopical equipment please contact: Steven Livermore, 6 Terence Avenue, Sprowston, Norwich. NR7 8EH.