



Number 45

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



May 1994



The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

125 - and still counting

The day of celebration in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich, is almost upon us. For some of us it occupies most of our waking thoughts and without a doubt we will sink back the following day in relieved exhaustion. Part of our objective in holding such a public birthday party has already been achieved. *The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society* is a name that now means more than it has ever done to the general public. By bringing together so many representatives of other organisations under one roof for the daytime exhibition it also demonstrates a unity of purpose we share but do not always demonstrate as effectively as we should.

We are grateful to those clubs, societies, public bodies and specialist groups within our own society for so readily accepting our invitations to exhibit. Any initial fears of not filling our largest local meeting place were soon removed by their near overwhelming response. In fact, the jig-saw puzzle of fitting them all in was itself an exercise in care and precision.

That was just one part of the work of the committee set up to organise the events of the year. All its members have brought their own expertise and worked smoothly together to bring us to this point. In paying tribute to their major contribution we acknowledge the practical benefits of the constitutional changes brought about by Dr. Geoffrey Watts a decade ago. Our present committee system is clearly flexible enough to take anything in its stride!

Our President, Professor David Bellamy, hopes to arrive early enough during the afternoon to tour the exhibition. His presence will certainly ensure any remaining tickets for his Presidential Address that evening will be snapped up by the public. If yours are not already safely in your pocket, phone straight away!

Strenuous efforts are being made to ensure this year's *Transactions* are published before 21st. May. This is a very special edition, reviewing the whole of our 125 years and as such will form a valued reference. A note from the Chairman of Publications is elsewhere in Natterjack.

Ever since the 100th. anniversary, certain members have proudly flaunted their Society neck-ties. More of us can join them now we have acquired a limited stock. Society mugs will also be available on the day. Produced by Cherry Farrow, the design incorporates our President's signature. How many in this limited edition? It had to be 125!

So much for the one day. That however is but one day of a very special year and other featured events are planned. Not only that, the real work of the Society, investigating our wildlife goes on and on and we confidently expect, from strength to strength.

Rex Hancy

Society Neckties

A small stock of Society neckties is available to members. They are in dark green and bear the swallowtail butterfly emblem. The cost is £6.50 at Society events. If ordering by post, please add 50p. Send to: Rex Hancy, 124 Fakenham Road, Taverham, Norwich, Norfolk. NR8 6QH

The Anniversary Mug

Anniversary mugs will be available only at society events as packing and posting is not practical. The mug is decorated with the swallowtail emblem, headed by the name of the society and the words, *125 Years Researching Norfolk's Wildlife*.

The reverse is printed with *125th Anniversary Congratulations.....* and the President's signature. The base of each mug bears its individual numbering out of the limited edition of 125. This collectable memento is priced at a modest £2.50

125th ANNIVERSARY – SPECIAL ISSUE OF TRANSACTIONS

A special edition of Transactions is being published to mark the Society's 125th Anniversary and it is hoped that it will be available for sale at St. Andrew's Hall on Saturday, 21st May 1994. It will contain a series of articles covering changes that have occurred during the life of the Society to many branches of the County's Flora and Fauna.

Members who are visiting the Exhibition (and we hope that will mean the majority of you!) will be able to collect their free copy from the Society's Publications Stand. Additional copies will be available price £5.

In addition we hope to have a number of back issues of Transactions and Bird & Mammal Reports for sale. If you have any gaps in your collection why not visit Stand 14 and see if you can fill them.

NORFOLK CONSERVATION FORUM MEETING 1994

I represented the Society at the second Norfolk Conservation Forum; this year held at the Norwich City College on Saturday, 5th March. The theme was "Funding Conservation Initiatives in Norfolk" and Jonathan Peel was in the Chair.

The four speakers covered a wide spectrum of conservation topics dealing with historic buildings, the wider countryside and Anglian Water's perspective of conservation in the County. The last subject was the one with the greatest natural history content dealing with AW's interests in improving the environment at their properties, making grants for appropriate projects and improving water quality from sewage works etc. A worthwhile day putting conservation into a wider context.

DAD

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members who pay by cheque are reminded that Subscriptions for 1994/95 are now due.

Current rates are £8 individual, £10 family.

Please send cheques to:

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

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 1994. Contributions arriving after this date will not be accepted for the February Natterjack.

PROGRAMME NOTES

As the 1994/95 Programme is enclosed with this issue of Natterjack, only items needing extra information that could not be fitted on to the programme card have been included in the following notes.

Sunday 12th June To celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Society, a repeat of the first visit in 1869 to Heggatt Hall, owned by Mr. Richard Gurney. Meet at TG 271183 at 1100 hrs; leader Ken Durrant. It is hoped that as many members as possible will be able to attend.

Wednesday 22nd June An evening excursion to the NNT reserve at Thursford wood, led by the warden, Alan Bristow. Meet at entrance off the A148 at TF 979333 at 1930 hrs. Park carefully on roadside verge, or on hard standing at entrance to the Old Coach House B & B.

Sunday 26th June A full day excursion to Barnham Cross Common south of Thetford, looking at the chalk side of the common in the morning and the acid side in the afternoon, mainly for plants, butterflies and birds. Park by the playing field on the RHS of the A134 out of Thetford, TL 867818. Meet at 1100 hrs. Leader Nick Gibbons.

Sunday 31st July Meet at 1100 hrs near Cockthorpe Hall Toy Museum (TF 484422) for a look at Cockthorpe Common. After lunch there will be a visit to Stiffkey salt marsh, starting at approximately 1400 hrs from TF 965439. This excursion is repeated in December so that a comparison can be made of the area at different seasons.

Saturday 20th August A new format for the Social gathering. Meet at Oulton Chapel (TG 140292) at 1500 hours for a short walk in the area led by Anne Brewster. At 1700 hrs there will be a Victorian High Tea in Oulton Chapel. This former Congregational Church, opened in 1731, was recently restored by the Norfolk Historic Buildings Trust. In the early evening there will be another short walk, weather permitting, or indoor entertainment if wet. Members are welcome to join in at any stage.

Thursday 8th 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.

SOME MORE NORFOLK GALLS

The few of us who take an interest in Norfolk's galls are only too well aware of just how provisional was Ken Durrant's county check-list in the 1991 Transactions, and of how many more must be out there somewhere, just waiting to be found. To be going on with, I have these names to add to Ken's list.

Gypsonoma aceriana. Galls of this micromoth were abundant on Poplars in 'The Plantation' on Blakeney Point (in TF94) in early July 1971.

Phytoptus (= *Eriophyes*) *triradiatus*. This mite causes a gross malformation of the female catkin of willow, a fist-sized object reminiscent of a witches-broom. I found galls on *Salix fragilis* at Heacham in May 1992.

Urophora jaceana. Caused by a tephritid fly, this is one of those galls that is not apparent to the eye, and has to be felt for as a hard lump within the seedhead of Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. It seems to be extremely common, as whenever I have searched for it I have found it, and I have records, some of them confirmed by rearing out the flies, from Heacham, Ringstead, Fring, Foxley Wood, N. Tuddenham Common, and Holt Lowes, and it is also listed by Ted Ellis in his book *The Broads*. There is much confusion in the literature over the identity of the tephritid flies that gall Knapweeds, Thistles and Burdocks - only use the most recent books, Askew & Redfern's *Naturalists' Handbook* for the galls, and White's *Royal Entomological Society Handbook* for the flies.

Midges *Iteomyia capreae* and *I. major*. On this society's fungus foray at Roydon Common in October 1993 I

collected some galled Sallow leaves. Most were *I. capreae* (another one that Ted Ellis listed in The Broads), but one leaf clearly has galls of both species on it, as some are substantially larger and coalesced together along the midrib. This is another group where the literature is confused, and even the Plant Gall Society's Provisional Keys appears to be describing *I. major* under the name of *I. capreae*. Askew & Redfern's book fortunately has them both keyed correctly, and there are good illustrations in Docters van Leeuwens' Gallenboek.

Aceria genistae. When I had almost finished writing this (February 1994) Dr. J. Wells telephoned to ask my opinion on some galls in his garden. They turned out to be ones caused by this species of mite, and were abundant on a cultivar of Broom *Cytisus scoparius*. The gall is a marble-sized object replacing the bud from which a side-shoot should develop, and rather resembles a cone or pineapple. It has a distinctly frosted appearance, and from it project many thickened and deformed leaflets with just a few normal ones among them. Although not in the few available British gall books, it has been found recently in several counties, and seems to be associated more with cultivated Broom than with the wild plant.

If the distortions caused by some aphids and froghoppers are counted as galls, then species such as *Aphis fabae* and *A. viburni* can be added to the list. A thorough trawl of the literature would add many more names, and I know there are several to be found in my own small reference library. I wonder how many galls we've really got and whether we shall ever find them all.

Paul Cobb.

NORFOLK FLORA

The organisers of the Norfolk Flora Project, Gillian Beckett and Alec Bull, are still hoping for help in some parts of the county, notably south of Norwich and eastwards towards Yarmouth. The tetrads (2x2km squares) which form the basis of our mapping, should average about 250 plants, but some are still awaiting their first record. There must be some of you who could make a list of the plants growing in your area, a dandelion and a daisy would be two new ones for empty squares! Even if you don't feel up to tackling things like grasses, a good list of the flowering plants would enable the experts to concentrate later on the more difficult groups. Don't let your home square be a blank on the map, so when you come to 125th Anniversary exhibition on 21st May, come over to our exhibit, see the value of what we are doing, and talk to one of us, you will be made most welcome!

Gillian Beckett, Alec Bull.

FROGS IN THE GARDEN

In recent months we have heard much of the decline of frogs in many parts of the world. We have had frogs in our garden ponds (all artificial) for at least 12 years with young hatching every year. Last year we noticed an imbalance in the number of male and female adults and this year, of the approximately 80 frogs, only about 15 are female. If the numbers should fall over the next few years, that proportion could lead to the extinction of the colony. Has anyone else had a similar experience to ours and can anyone offer an explanation?

Kenneth & Gillian Beckett.

AN EARLY BIRD?

On the afternoon of March 7th, 1994 while watching Siskins around the nut feeder I noticed a small bird in the top of the Cherry tree. It was a Chiffchaff and later that same afternoon with Alec Humphrey a second one was spotted on the edge of Beeston Common. Three days later a Chiffchaff was heard singing on the Common and as Alec had also seen Small Tortoiseshell at Upper Sheringham and Peacock in Sheringham that day it seemed spring was here but no the weather has thought otherwise! Has anyone else recorded early Chiffchaffs in Norfolk?

Francis Farrow.

