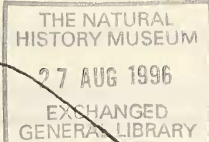
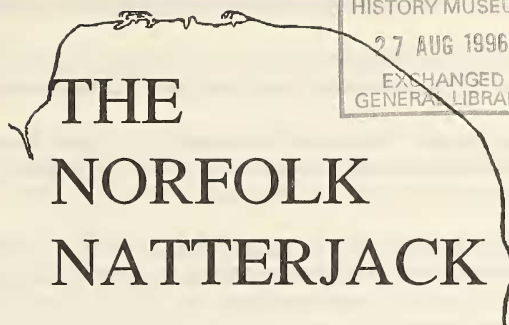




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### 1996/7 PROGRAMME

Places are still available for the 'Introduction to Fungi' meeting at Gresham's School on Sunday 13th October. It will include an introductory talk, a foray into the woods, a wild mushroom lunch, a short talk on mushroom cookery, and time for identification using microscopes in the school biology lab. A small charge will be made for the lunch. Phone Carol Haines (01603 867825) to book a place.

### SUNDAY AUGUST 11<sup>th</sup>

Field Meeting at Brampton Wood, near Huntingdon

Meet at 11am at the reserve entrance. Grid. Ref. TL 185698.

Leader Rex Hancy.

The wood, which is a Wildlife Trust reserve, lies on the west side of the A1, Just south of the A1/ A14 junction. [NB: The A14 is the old A604!]

Visitors arriving on the A1 from the south should continue northwards for about 1.5 miles beyond the Buckden roundabout and turn left on to a very narrow road just before a narrow bridge crosses the A1. Look for BPGS signs. The entrance to the wood, with a small car park, is about a mile along this road on the right. **There is no access from the southbound carriageway of the A1, and visitors from the north or arriving on the A14 from the east must continue to the Buckden roundabout to pick up the northbound carriageway.** Visitors arriving on the A14 from the west can reach the wood more easily via the villages of Ellington and Grafham. Look for BPGS signs in Grafham.

Brampton Wood is the second largest area of ancient woodland in Cambridgeshire and much of it is at least 900 years old. The wood contains a wide range of flora and should give us a good yield of galls.

Further details from Rex Hancy on 01603 860042

## Questions and Answers regarding Wildlife 2000, The Newsletter

Have you read your copy? Or did you say,

"More paper! I'll put this to one side and look at it later." If so, can you still find it?

"What's it all about anyway? How does it affect me?" Read the first two pages which set out clearly and precisely why we have embarked upon this huge project, why it is so important and why we need to spread the word as widely and as soon as possible

"Why send the Wildlife 2000 Newsletter in a separate mailing?" The year 2000 looms ever nearer and if we are to reach our target we must make full use of the remainder of this season. We could not afford to wait till the August mailing.

"Who is being circulated?" All members of the Society, members of specialist groups and known individual recorders. If you know of anyone who has been missed out, please let us know immediately.

"How often will the Newsletter be published?" Hopefully, every three months. But after issue No.2, because of the costs involved, you will not automatically receive a copy. Issue No. 2 will include a return slip for you to request further editions. We hope to make the complete set a useful reference work in its own right.

Do take part in the project. We need every pair of eyes and every record and it would be a shame not to be involved, in however small a way, in the most exciting recording scheme ever organised by your Society.

Rex Hancy, Chairman.

### THE ELM IN NORFOLK

The wholesale death of elms over the past 30 years from Dutch Elm Disease has been a severe loss to the Norfolk landscape as in the rest of the British Isles. Elm is still plentiful in the countryside as it regenerates freely from suckers but once it reaches a certain size it succumbs to the disease again. However disease resistant Wych and Smooth-leaved Elm trees have been found in Kent, Hampshire and elsewhere and there is now an effort to try and take cuttings from these few remaining specimens which remain.

I believe we should extend this work to Norfolk and as a first step I would be pleased to receive any records from members. As a minimum I would like to have the map reference and description of the locality but identification to species would be helpful as well. This would be the first stage in producing an inventory in the same way as Eric Rogers did for the Black Poplar a few years ago. Hopefully then we can then start to develop a programme for taking cuttings.

Peter Lambley

The Cottage, Elsing Road, Lyng, Norwich, NR9 5RR.

## BIRDING AT BLAKENEY

One of the risks in organising a programme of field trips more than a year in advance is that by the time the trip takes place conditions can have changed drastically.

A walk I led at Benacre had to be curtailed because the sea had breached the shingle bank and we could not go on to the Kessingland pits. A previous walk, from Burnham Overy Staithe, took place in thick mist.

Perhaps someone was dropping hints but I persevered. More than a year ago I offered to lead a walk from Cley Beach car park to Blakeney Point on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1996. Little did I know that on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1996, the sea would devastate the whole area. I had envisaged that we would reach the point because the walk along the mostly grassy path on the channel side of the bank was fairly comfortable going.

The sea changed all that. On 12<sup>th</sup> May, that grassy path was under a foot of shingle. Progress was slow and tiring - two forward, one back! We got no farther than the "Halfway House" but lunch on a nearby sandy hump overlooking the mudflats and the channel was a sheer delight. Bold wheatears approached within feet of us. Linnets sang from the scrub. Out on the mud were waders by the hundred - grey plovers in their glorious black and white breeding plumage, bar-tailed godwits, some beginning to take on their summer chestnut hue, ringed plovers, dunlin, knot, redshank, oystercatchers, and looking as elegant in flight as on the ground the occasional pair of avocets. Among the duck in the channel were, perhaps surprisingly, gadwall. Sandwich, common and little terns were constantly on the move in their increasingly difficult hunt for food.

Assistant secretary John Butcher made use of the opportunity to do a sponsored bird watch in aid of cancer research. With more than a dozen extra pairs of eyes to help him, his tally for the day was 35 - and that did not include the dead birds. Casualties of the storm included a gannet, a kittiwake, a scoter and several guillemots.

A sad sight - but there was cheering evidence of how nature can recover with remarkable speed. The sea-driven shingle which had obliterated much of the bank's plantlife was showing large patches of bright green. Sea sandwort *Honkenya peploides* was thrusting its way up to the surface from possibly several feet down and in places was already in flower. So too was sea campion *Silene maritima*. Also forcing their way to the surface were sea holly *Eryngium maritimum*, yellow-horned poppy *Glaucium flavum* and the seemingly indestructible shrubby seabite *Suaeda vera*, the older plants of which were still looking brown and battered after their dunking in sea water.

For some of us the day ended with a mini-twitch: a red-necked phalarope, obligingly feeding in a dyke on the NWT's Cley Marsh reserve that was clearly visible from the shingle bank.

David Paull.

## TRANSACTIONS 1997

I would be interested in receiving papers for consideration for publication the Transactions in the next few months. The deadline is January 31st.

Peter Lambley  
Editor

The Cottage, Elsing Road, Lyng, Norwich, NR9 5RR.

## GRASS SNAKES AT BUXTON HEATH

On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April 1996, the Buxton Heath Wildlife Group held one of its regular task days to clear some birch and willow regrowth from the all-important valley mire.

It was a lovely, sunny day and in the course of our work we saw an Orange Underwing Moth *Archiearis parthenias* and Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni* and Peacock *Inachis io* butterflies. On the surface of the stream were Pond Skaters *Gerris lacustris* and Water Crickets *Velia caprai*.

An afternoon walk to the northern part of the site revealed Green Tiger Beetles *Cicindela campestris* on the sandy paths, Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* and Chiffchaffs *P.collybita*.

We walked lightly towards the north-west corner of the site, hoping to find an Adder basking on the embankment. We found no such Adder, but were amazed to find two Grass Snakes *Natrix natrix*. Unfortunately, the reptiles were soon aware of our presence and slipped into cover.

We waited some time but the snakes were too apprehensive to reappear, resulting in no photographic evidence of our sighting. This was frustrating as I had been searching Buxton Heath for Grass Snakes since my five-year involvement with the site began, concentrating on the frog-rich valley mire. Therefore it was somewhat ironic that our discovery was made on a far-flung boundary of the site.

Sadly, we have not encountered these reptiles since, so were they merely passing through? The nearest Ken Durrant has recorded them to our site is Haveringland. A small specimen was removed from the Marsham Arms public house last autumn by landlord Nigel Bradley!

Finally, if anyone has records of Grass Snakes or anything else seen during visits to the Heath, I would be most grateful for a copy for our sightings database.

Colin Penny, 68 Lloyd Road, Taverham, Norwich, NR8 6LN. Tel. 01603 867981.

## WHAT A YEAR

1995 may well be remembered by naturalists as one of the most remarkable for many years, especially when one recalls the summer months when the influx of rare dragonflies and butterflies caused so much excitement for so many of us.

Record books were filled with new observations in many branches of natural history.

It was the kind of year that all naturalists pray for but, unfortunately, only turn up on rare occasions. Personally, I became so used to recording new or abundant species that I became very frustrated in autumn when looking for species of fungi, they just weren't there. In the various locations that I regularly visit, where many species are usually so abundant, it was very difficult to find any specimens at all of certain species. I never saw for example, a single specimen of the death cap all through the season and many other species were also missing from my notebooks. I realize of course that the prolonged summer conditions that extended well into the fungi season, may well account for the absence of many species, but what an anti-climax after such a summer.

I suppose like many other naturalists, I just wanted it to go on and on.

Tony Brown.



## REMINISCENCES (Natterjacks at Reedham.)

My early childhood was lived during the late 1950s at Reedham, that small village perched atop the sandy bluffs that formed the edge of the ancient Yare estuary.

Until the age of seven I had never seen a Common Toad. The only toads in Reedham were Natterjacks which I could find almost anywhere but particularly under "Mr. Brown's doorstep," a sheet of thick steel at the back of the Post Office.

My Father and I sunk a sink in the garden and surrounded it with wire netting for the keeping of Frogs and Natterjacks. One day a Grass Snake broke in and consumed one of the inmates of my "frodery". Due to the large bulge caused by the unhappy occupant of the snake's stomach the intruder could not then escape through the wire thus demonstrating the total lack of forward planning in the herpetological brain!

I placed the snake in a bucket to show my Great Aunt, due to arrive from Glasgow that evening. She subsequently wished she had not arrived at all. As I proudly showed her my captured serpent her city-dweller's revulsion at such beasts was increased tenfold as the snake regurgitated a large Natterjack right before her eyes.

I found my first Common Toad, a large red, brown female, in the swimming pool of a prep' school chum called Jewson who lived at Mulbarton. She was added to my collection which was now housed in Pater's greenhouse. On returning from school one day I was furious to learn that some T.V. people had taken one of my Natterjacks for making a film about witchcraft. My fury turned to contempt when I found my prize Common Toad missing and all Natterjacks accounted for. Frantic phone calls to Dick Bagnall-Oakley, the T.V. people's scientific advisor revealed that the filming had been completed before the mistake was realised. They clearly thought they could get away with the deception because the stand-in remained the star!

I will never forgive my parents for not allowing me to see my Toad on television. Nor will I forgive those T.V. people who brought my Toad home in an emaciated condition accompanied by an equally emaciated small "Lizard". Apparently the derision in my voice as I informed them that the "Lizard" was a newt was undisguised.

They paid me one guinea for my services which I spent on having a dead weasel stuffed by Pettitts of Reedham. I still have that weasel but sadly the last Natterjack in Reedham was seen in 1962

Garth Coupland.

## WILD FLOWERS OF EAST ANGLIA

This book, scheduled for publication in the autumn, developed from an original intention to seek to publish a selection from my many wildflower colour slides taken in the region over a period of some seventeen years. The Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trusts are associated in promoting the planned special limited edition, which aims to interest readers with a developing or newly-awakened interest in our region's wild flowers - especially the 'ordinary members' of the East Anglian trusts and natural history societies - rather than primarily the most advanced botanists. In addition to some description of a large selection of wild flowers, their habitats and (where they may be safely revealed) some representative sites in the region, the book also touches on the plants' traditional culinary and medicinal uses, their part in traditional lore and significance of

their scientific and alternative common or local names, especially where there is a strong East Anglian connection. A number of line drawings add variety to the many photographic illustrations. I am grateful to the Society for allowing me to bring the book to the attention of fellow-members by means of the publisher's order from enclosed with this issue of Natterjack: further forms may be obtained from me on (01603) 810327.

Stephen Martin.

## SYNANTHROPIC EVOLUTION CAUGHT IN THE ACT ?

Anyone who has been to Africa, even aviphobes such as myself, cannot help but be aware of Marabou Storks. They are large enough to be easily identified, and their favourite habitat - the rubbish dump - is widespread and, providing the wind is in the right direction, easily located.

Presumably they do have a more natural habitat, but they seem to be much commoner in and around rubbish tips than anywhere else; they have moved successfully in on man's territory; they have become a synanthropic species.

In Britain the Black Headed Gull occupies a somewhat similar niche. However, some recent observations suggest that the familiar *Larus ridibundus* may be about to encounter some competition for the role of urban avian scavenger, by a bird of distinctly more Marabou like dimensions and appearance. The Heron.

Every morning, whilst walking our dogs, I pass a public litter bin which sits on the banks of the great, grey-green, greasy, Gaywood River, in King's Lynn. On two occasions recently I have seen a Heron having a good old delve about amongst the contents of the bin.

Are these the first signs of a major niche adjustment? Can we expect the skies of our cities to be darkened soon by sieges of Herons, winging their way towards the dump?

Remember, you read it first in the pages of the Natterjack.

Robin Stevenson.

While typing in Robin's article the thought crossed my mind was the Heron attracted to the rubbish in the first place by mice and rats that were feeding there?

Colin.

*Please send items for November Natterjack before 1<sup>st</sup> October.  
To Colin Dack 12, Shipdham Rd, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1JJ*

If you have any items for "Down Memory Lane " please do let us all read them. I am certain other members will enjoy them.