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BEESTON REGIS COMMON SSSI SHERINGHAM

An award has been made by English Nature to the Beeston Common Management Team for outstanding management of Beeston Regis common, North Norfolk. This is the first time that this award has been issued in the county.

The common has been maintained by a small party of volunteers for the past twelve years, during which time metallic rubbish and some thirty acres of bracken have been cleared, with gorse and brambles which were closing in on the bog. The result is now an area of approximately sixty acres rich in flora and fauna. Thirteen species of British orchids have been recorded in recent years, some in their thousands. Each season now four hundred flowering plants can be found, many of them very local, resulting in many visiting botanists each year from other counties.

Nine species of Dragonflies breed in the main pond, twenty eight species of Butterflies have been recorded in recent years many of them breeding on the site. One night last year one hundred and forty different moths were noted in three hours with the light traps.

The common is an open one with free access, many well worn paths cross the area. There is also a handy lay-by near the entrance for visiting cars.

Ken Durrant.



The National SSSI Management Award Certificate
- A first for Norfolk -

TWO NATIVE ORCHID VARIETIES IN NORFOLK

Norfolk probably has more sites and larger concentrations of Marsh Helleborine, *Epipactis palustris* than any other area of similar size in Britain or for that matter the whole of Europe.

The Marsh Helleborine is one of the most beautiful of our 56 species of wild orchid and resembles a miniature *Cymbidium*. The form *Var. ochroleuca* is uncommon and lacks the red-brown pigments in the stem, ovary and flower which are a pale yellowish-green, the inner flower segments and lip remaining white.

I spent several seasons searching for this form concentrating on Beeston Common and the damp dune slacks between Holkham and Burnham Overy Staithe but without success. In 1989 Ken Durrant took me to Foulden Common where he had seen it in the past but to our dismay the small area had been totally destroyed by a maintenance bonfire. Fortunately we found 4 spikes, 3 in perfect flower growing amongst Common Reed, *Phragmites australis*, on the Common far removed from the original site.

Beeston Common has been transformed by extensive conservation work and last year Ken phoned me to say that two spikes of *E. palustris* var. *ochroleuca* had been found there. This year two further locations were found making a total of 11 spikes all growing amongst *Phragmites* which come up as a result of scrub clearance.

In July 1987 Ken phoned me to look at a picotee form Common-Spotted Orchid which he had photographed but the following day it was no longer there. The same happened in 1988 but by the time I got there Ken had met a young lady with a bunch of flowers and this rarity was amongst them. It did not reappear the next or following years.

Another call from Ken this year. He had a photo of a similar plant taken earlier in the week and given to him. After several attempts to locate it we were finally successful but the inflorescence had gone apart from two or three flowers at the top of the spike.

In 1991 this very rare form of Common Spotted orchid was granted variety status *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* var. *rhodochila*. It differs from the typical *D. fuchsii* as follows: leaves rather more heavily spotted, the lip marked with a broad central reddish - purple area with paler edges in place of dots and small lines.

The Beeston Common specimen is an extreme example with leaves suffused on the upper surfaces with purple and the whole lip a rich dark purple without a pale margin.

John Oxenford.

SOME MORE-OR-LESS NOTABLE RECORDS FROM WELLS

On 2nd February, the large numbers of Fieldfares which had arrived very late at last found the Sea Buckthorn berries. I have never seen the bushes so crowded! Meanwhile, a handsome male Scaup had joined the Mergansers and Goldeneye at the Quay. Others subsequently appeared on Abraham's Bosom.

The big (4.5m OD) tides on the 19th February were accompanied by nearly 48 hours of N.E. gale. The marsh litter piled up along Warham Greens was even deeper than that which was brought in by the 1978 surge. It will be a long time before it is dissipated.

On the 31st March, 23 Hares were in one field near Fiddler's Hill. It seems that they are doing better in intensively-farmed East Anglia than in their more traditional strongholds. Also near Fiddler's Hill, on the 23rd June, I heard a Quail. I was quite pleased, having failed to hear one in England previously. Cycling round the next corner, I was even more amazed to see it, taking off in front of me and flying across the road.

On the next day, my wife Eleanor found two plants of Moonwort within Wells parish. This weird fern, related to Adder's Tongue, has appeared only sporadically in Norfolk. Strangely enough, they were only about 50 yards from the Crested Buckler Fern which I first found four years ago. This species is very scarce away from the Broad's.

To crown the year (so far), a Swallowtail butterfly (the Society's symbol, in case you've forgotten), appeared in our garden in Wells town on the 26th August. It briefly joined the Red Admirals, Painted Ladies, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells feeding on a Buddleia. Ken Durrant tells me that there have been a few such wanderings reported, but it is none the less a remarkable event some 30 miles away from their normal stamping- (perhaps flitting- would be better) grounds!

Paul Banham.

ARACHNOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

To have ones home in the head of a reed on a Norfolk fen must be like living on the ultimate fairground ride. Battered by storms and gales this fragile abode somehow survives. In large areas of fen such as found at Woodbastwick these reed head residences form veritable spider cities in the air.

During mid July I entered this city in search of *Marpissa*. I had hunted for this spider for several years without success and after an hour of opening reed head retreats and egg sacs I became despondent. I was beset by the dreadful *Haematopota pluvialis*, the Cleg, and the search was becoming unpleasant under the beating sun.

I had increased my knowledge of the residents considerably. I noted how different spider species used the dry reed heads and each species' accommodation had a different look and feel to it.

The marshland orb weaver *Larinioides cornutus* has a "fat, untidy" retreat. *Clubonia phragmitis* a "tight, crisp, long" egg sac. The black and red *Hypomma bituberculatum* forms its retreat in a more "loose" fashion while the Crab Spiders *Xysticus cristatus* and *Xysticus ulmi* were unexpected in this high - rise community. But no *Marpissa*.

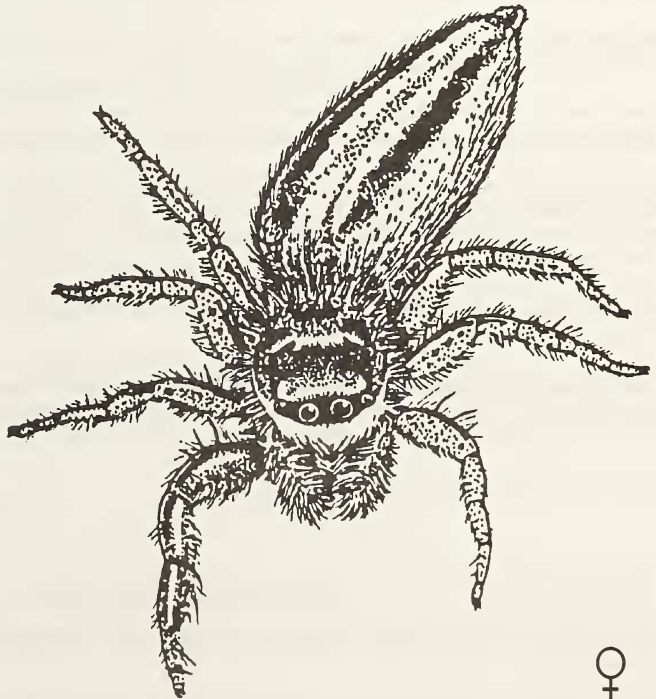
I turned my attentions to an upturned rubber dinghy by the wooden lookout tower. There I found huge numbers of *Zora spinimana* and was pleased to find the Jumping Spider *Salticus cingulatus* dining on an aphid on the tower restaurant. Grass Snakes, Swallowtails and Marsh Harriers eased the frustration of not discovering *Marpissa*.

One last search before leaving found me opening a reed head. A *Clubonia* Spider dropped to the ground but there, staring at me with two headlamp eyes sporting incredibly white, hairy palps was a face that set my heart thumping. A light squeeze and Britain's largest *Salticid* or Jumping Spider, *Marpissa radiata* dropped into my glass tube. Only fellow naturalists would understand how adrenalin can be made to flow on the finding of a rare, and long searched for species.

Marpissa radiata, by all accounts is rare, being confined to East Anglian Reedbeds. I kept this one for a while to observe it. Place a fly in its cage and it will turn its large eyes towards the prey and slowly stalk it in the fashion of a leopard. When about one and a half inches away it leaps and captures the fly with incredible speed.

I found three more specimens, all females, nearby. One dropped into my tube with another *Clubonia* which instantly attacked and killed the *Salticid*. One wonders how they share the same reed head and manage to live in harmony? I do return these spiders to their reeds. Even for scientific purposes it would be hard to kill a jumping spider. They are the most anthropomorphic of all arthropods. It is the way they turn and look at you with those two, big round eyes!

Garth Coupland.



♀

Marpissa radiata
Note leg II has replaced
position of lost leg I

DICRANOPALPUS RAMOSUS - THE SPREAD CONTINUES

On Sunday 15th September, whilst engaged in preparing the eaves of our house for painting, I noticed an unusual harvestman.

Its body was quite small, and its legs were fanned out on each side as the animal held itself flat against the woodwork. My curiosity was aroused, and I captured the harvestman in a container for a more detailed look.

To my surprise, closer scrutiny revealed that my captive possessed an enormous pair of pedipalps, shaped much like a pair of tuning forks.

Convinced I had found something rather unusual, I consulted Dick Jones' excellent photographic guide to spiders, which also includes harvestmen. On page 305 I came face to face with "my" specimen, albeit a photograph of a female of the species.

Reading through the text, I discovered that it was a species found in the Mediterranean region, but at the time the book was published, 1983, had also been recorded in Cornwall, Hampshire, Sussex, and Essex. Although Norfolk was not mentioned, I still believed I was on the right track, and contacted Rex Hancy in a bid to positively identify the creature.

As soon as I told Rex that it sported those strange pedipalps, he immediately confirmed that it was indeed *Dicranopalpus ramosus*, and was, in fact, only the third Norfolk record.

Searching out Rex's article in Transactions, Vol. 30, part 1, dated May 1994, I learned that the previous recordings were at Scratby, and Aurania Avenue in Norwich.

I speculated as to how this species should end up in my garden at Lloyd Road, Taverham. Some family members had recently returned from the New Forest area - had the specimen travelled back with them?

I discounted this theory a week later when, in the process of tidying an area near our garage, I found a male *D. ramosus* accompanied by a female. The day after, on Monday 30th September, I found a male on the house wall, and a second male actually inside the kitchen ! The species appears to have gone from rare to locally common !

During my nocturnal searches for this species, I have also encountered *Phalangium opilio* and the broad-bodied *Odiellus spinosus*.

As all the records of *Dicranopalpus ramosus* come from the East Norfolk vice-county, it would be interesting to see if they have spread further afield into the western half of Norfolk. It is a creature which can easily be overlooked as it lies motionless on brick or wood.

Colin Penny, Buxton Heath Wildlife Group.

"Cley Marsh and Its Birds"

Billy Bishop published his memoirs in 1983 after more than forty years as Warden of Cley Reserve. The book has been long out of print.

To mark the 70th Anniversary of the purchase and creation of the Reserve, in which Dr Sidney Long and other members of the Society were deeply involved, a new paperback edition of Billy's book was published in mid-August - expanded and updated by his successor as Warden, his son Bernard Bishop.

It is available from Norfolk bookshops and Norfolk Wildlife Trust visitor centres, priced £ 12.95. or direct from the publishers (please add £1.50 p & p): Hill House Press Ltd, Coast Road, Cley-next-the-Sea, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 7RZ.

THE NEW NATURAL HISTORY OF GT.YARMOUTH

Half a dozen of the members of the Gt. Yarmouth Naturalists' Society have got together to produce a book with the above title. The object is to compile an up to date list of the wildlife to be found within the area of Gt. Yarmouth, generally speaking within a ten mile radius of Gt. Yarmouth. This sub-committee are all local people, dedicated to the task in hand and very keen to see the project through to fruition. It is hoped that the book will be published in time for the year 2000.

On behalf of the sub-committee, I, as acting Secretary, applied to Council for a loan from the Peet Fund to help with the publishing costs and I am very pleased to say that Council approved my application.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the sub- committee, to thank Council for this approval and to state that this loan would be paid back first from forthcoming sales of the book.

For us who will be working to produce the book, it is an exciting time, we are all busy compiling our records and we have regular meetings to discuss progress. Each member is responsible for the recording of particular groups, while some recording is to be called on from experts in particular fields. We discuss the layout of the text, what drawings and photographs will be used and how we would like to see the finished product.

I, as a member of Council, will keep Council informed as to the progress of the project from time to time and I have made it clear to Council that all records compiled by us would be available to the committee of Wildlife 2000.

Tony Brown.

ABUNDANCE OF HOVERFLIES

This year seems to have been a very good year for several species of hoverflies, at least this seems to have been the case in the area where I do most of my recording. Of all the species that I have recorded this season, two species seem to have been especially abundant above all others, they are the species named *Syrphus ribesii* and *Episyrphus balteatus*.

Other species were also fairly abundant though not in such numbers as these two.

Among the other numerous species I also recorded *Scaeva pyrastris*, *Eristalis tenax*, *Sphaerophorisa scripta*, *Heliophilus pendulus*, and *Volucella pellucens*.

I did find other odd specimens of varying species but only in small numbers. Bearing in mind the vast numbers seen during the season and when one considers that most of these creatures feed on aphids, I can't imagine that there have been that many aphids that have survived the season. To add to their problems there appears to have also been an abundance of ladybirds, especially *Coccinella 7-punctata*.

Tony Brown.

A GREAT YEAR FOR DRAGONFLIES?

Has it been a great year for Dragonflies and Damselflies? I do not think so. It has been a very good year for Dragonfly spotters. But it has been a disaster for the Dragonflies and Damselflies themselves. With so many ponds and small water courses drying up, a vast number of eggs and larvae must have been destroyed. When the Dragonflies and Damselflies that had managed to emerge came to egg-laying, the water had disappeared. Only time will tell as to what has happened. In the next few years will there be very few about and will some species become extinct locally?

With natural ponds and wet places disappearing at a vast rate, the garden pond may turn out to be a very important factor in their survival. I have heard it put forward on television that all garden ponds should be filled in so that children can not fall in them and drown. But you do not have to fill them in. Just make a cover with wire large wire netting that would make them safe.

Colin Dack.

A CLOUDED YELLOW WEEKEND

Many people have been lucky this year to have seen the Clouded Yellow Butterfly *Colias croceus*. The first reports I heard of this migrant were during the NNNS/NT day at Morston, June 9th. and at Beeston Regis the following day, however, it was to be August before I managed to see a Norfolk specimen. On August 17th. while walking over Beeston Common I saw a female of the form *helice* i.e. the ground colour of the butterfly is a very pale yellow to creamy-white as are the yellow markings in the black borders of the wings. This particular example was likely to be a recent arrival as it was "nectaring" on Common Fleabane most of the morning and in some years when immigration is of a large scale this form can be more common, as in an historic invasion in 1947 (Russwurm, 1978).

The following day (Aug. 14th.) it was the NNNS excursion to Woodbastwick, which proved to be one of the hottest days of the summer. Butterflies were everywhere and again the Clouded Yellows were passing through, this time though they were the more typical yellow with chocolate brown bordered wings. A further variation was to appear, however. It was a highly coloured but small example about the same size as a Gatekeeper. Such undersized specimens as this are thought to be of British origin, the offspring of earlier migrants (Russwurm, 1978). In 1947 a so-called dwarf or pigmy species was also recorded near Norwich by a Mr. AJ Warren (Ellis, 1948).

References:

RUSSWURM, ADA., 1978. *Aberrations of British Butterflies*, Clasley, Oxon.
ELLIS, EA., (Ed), 1948. Fauna and Flora of Norfolk, *Trans. Norfolk & Norwich Nats. Soc.* Vol XVI (IV), p.303.

Francis Farrow.

SUCH SWEET NECTAR

In August I tried the "wine-roping" method to attract moths on Beeston Common for a couple of nights. The wine-ropes are 3' lengths of soft rope steeped in a solution of wine saturated with sugar which are then draped over bushes and herbage. I used a 1984 Sweet Mulberry that had been found languishing in a cupboard but I am assured any wine will do! Unfortunately the two nights I tried this out turned clear and cold with bright moonlight but even under such adverse conditions I still attracted some 20 species of moths. Interestingly though other insects were attracted, including hoverflies and large caddis flies, possibly *Anabolia nervosa*. In addition to the insects a number of harvestmen were noted, also apparently imbibing the substrate.

This habit of taking in sweet liquids has been noted by others in the past and although caddis generally do not feed there are some species known to visit flowers for nectar, particularly a continental caddis Drusus, which visits Gentians (Mosely, 1939). Mosely also states that Dohler found that a caddis fly survived 105 days when given sugar and water. In other experiments individuals keep without food survived 4 to 20 days, those given water for about 30 days and others on a sugar/water mix over 70 days. As for the harvestmen, they have been known to visit lepidopterists "sugar" and partake of marmalade at a picnic. In other instances harvestmen may often be seen on fallen fruit, sucking up juices from the bruised skin (Sankey & Savory, 1974).

References:

MOSELY, Martin E., 1939. *The British Caddis Flies*, Routledge, London.
SANKEY, JHP and SAVORY, TH., 1974. *British Harvestmen*, Linn. Soc./Academic Press, London.

Francis Farrow.

Please send items for February Natterjack before 1st January.
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.