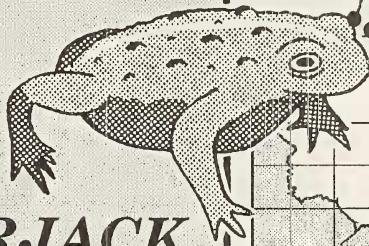


# THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

- 8 NOV 2001

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## Toad-in-the-hole...

According to the numbering when I took over as editor we have reached our 75<sup>th</sup> edition of 'The Norfolk Natterjack' (although the initial bulletin was known simply as 'Natterjack'). A bit of a milestone anyway and one that can only have been reached by members sending in their notes and reports. My thanks for your continued support and especially to those that have contributed to this edition. May I also take this opportunity to wish all readers a very happy Christmas and a peaceful new year. FF

## RESEARCH: County Wildlife Sites

Helen Baczkowska, NWT Biodiversity Project Officer, has passed a request to the Society for any members interested in monitoring two CWS. These sites are on land owned by Watton Produce, a large vegetable-growing farm which has some land in conversion to organic and areas in a Countryside Stewardship scheme. Mr. Negus of Watton Produce, near Attleborough is keen to know what wildlife exists on the farm, especially the CWS and to see if it is possible to set in place some monitoring for the future.



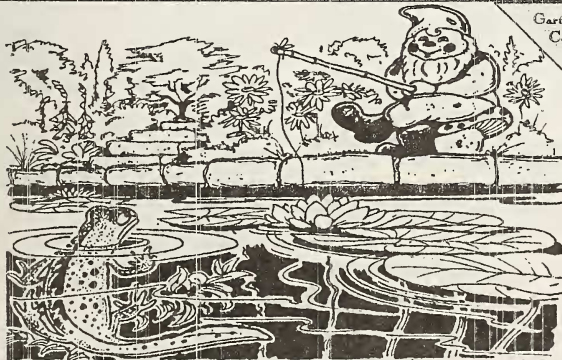
**VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED**

The sites are Shropham Grove (TL 980924) and the River Thet Valley (TL 991913). The former is coppiced woodland with some

standards and adjacent to more disturbed and open woodland with recent plantings. Standards are largely oak *Quercus robur* and hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*. The river valley site is mainly marshy and damp grassland with areas of woodland and scrub. The site is cattle grazed to a short turf in places. In the alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland wood avens *Geum urbanum* and water chickweed *Myosoton aquaticum* have been recorded.

Members are requested initially to contact Robert Maidstone, chairman of the research committee, for further details at:

38 Hall Lane, Wacton, Norwich,  
NR15 2UH. Tel: 01508 531287.



"I WISH THAT MAN WOULD GO AWAY, I'VE GOT TO GET OUT SOON TO HIBERNATE."

The quarterly bulletin  
of the  
Norfolk & Norwich  
Naturalists' Society



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## Scarce Bug Find

During August my friend, Mike Hall, rang me to say that he had found a large plant bug in his moth trap at Scole, near Diss. From his accurate description I felt sure that it was one of our scarcer species. He said he would forward it on to me to verify.

A letter arrived containing two specimens, for he had caught another the next night. They were as expected, *Ledra aurita* L. The Eared Plant Bug. When I rang to thank him he then said that he had been moth trapping on Knettishall heath just over the border in Suffolk and had seen at least half a dozen specimens there. We hope that this scarce insect is on the increase. It feeds on oak, but is practically camouflaged and hard to see naturally.

Ken Durrant

## Rarities still turning up

Each year I receive a number of collections of insects from ultraviolet fly killers situated in cafés and other establishments. One such collection arrived from the café at Sheringham Hall car park via the National Trust warden, Keith Zealand.

I managed to produce a list of 29 different insects on this occasion including a choice find, a large black hoverfly, minus head but identifiable by its large expanded hind femurs. It was the bee mimic, *Brachypalpus laphriformis* Fallen, an extremely rare insect only recorded from ancient forests, like the New Forest or from Southern Wales, where it has been found on dead beech trunks.

Maybe this will turn out to be the first Norfolk example, but from such a most unlikely source.

Ken Durrant

## Observations of the hoverfly *Volucella inanis* in west Norwich

The first recorded occurrence of the hoverfly *Volucella inanis* in Norfolk was in August 1999 when a female visited my Norwich garden as reported in the *Transactions* 2000, p. 29.

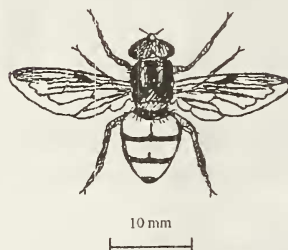
To judge from a couple of sightings made in 2001 it would seem to have consolidated its presence in the suburbs of west Norwich. On 5 August I came across a male on flowers of water mint in the Yare Valley close to Earlham Park and two days later a female arrived again in my garden where it spent a considerable time on marjoram just as its predecessor had done two years previously. It also briefly visited field scabious flowers.

On the face of it there seemed no connection between the sightings - one in a suburban garden and the other on open marshes. But I did find a link. No more than 5 metres away from the marjoram I have meadowsweet and great willow-herb flourishing (especially so with this years rain) and the willow-herb also grows around a pond in an adjoining garden. As to be expected both plants occur in great quantity on the Yare marshes in the area *inanis* was found. This seems too much of a coincidence and I feel sure that the insect in my garden originated from the marshes some 2 miles distant and that the occurrence of these two components of its habitat there acted as a stimulus to investigation.

With its willingness to visit gardens this striking and distinctive hoverfly should certainly attract attention and I dare say there will be further records when people become aware of the likelihood of its presence.

It can only really be confused with the much larger *Volucella zonaria* and both are shown illustrated in Chinery's Guide to Insects of Britain and Western Europe which will aid

recognition and comparison. The respective winglengths are 12.25-14.25mm for *inanis* and 15.5-19.5 for *zonaria*.



Both species are dependent on social wasps, the larvae of *inanis* being ectoparasites of wasp larvae. *Vespa germanica* and *Vespa crabro* (hornet) are recorded hosts and generally speaking a good wasp year will mean a good following year for the hoverflies.

Both species too have a very similar distribution pattern, their stronghold being in the South-east and particularly the surrounds of London where they often frequent parks and gardens.

The spread of *inanis* may be matched by *zonaria* which has already been recorded at Sheringham by Ken Durrant in 2000-so both species are worth looking out for.

It will be interesting to see how quickly *inanis* disperses across the county. Its first recorded appearance in Cambridgeshire was at Chippenham Fen in 1999 raising the possibility that humid sites such as fens and marshes may have a high importance as the insect moves northwards.

Will it become a familiar sight on fen flowers in Broadland? Only time will tell.

Stuart Paston

See also:

"A day to remember" on page 3.

## A day to remember

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, being a nice sunny and warm day, Francis Farrow and I took a stroll over Beeston Common to see what we could find, as the weather in the past weeks had generally been dull or too wet and windy. Certainly the orchids were late in flowering but were also quick to disappear, in early June we could show interested people eight different species but by late July it was an effort to find three. The three insectivorous plants, butterwort, *Pinguicula vulgaris* and the sundews, *Drosera rotundifolia* and *D. longifolia* (= *anglica*), however, had done extremely well due to the wet spring.

Many of the flower heads of wild angelica, a feature of late summer, possessed collections of hoverflies, mainly *Eristalis* spp, and flies such as the parasitic Tachinids, *Tachina fera* and *Ericampocera succincta*, also the sexual dimorphic *Graphomya maculata* together with many small black wasps of the *Crossocerus* and *Tiffia* species.

The *piece de resistance* of the visit, however, came when we arrived at one of the many patches of Canadian goldenrod, *Solidago canadensis*, which was still in full flower. This particular patch was sheltered by shrubs from the gentle breeze and was literally taken over with numerous Bee Wolf wasps, *Philanthus triangulum*, all males. It was possible to see at least 10-12 everywhere we looked. Considering that this wasp has only in recent years been found in East Anglia it was surprising to find such a number.

Another welcome surprise came just as we were about to leave the common, I took my first Norfolk example of the hoverfly, *Volucella inanis* from a bramble leaf but suffered a few large holes in my net for the effort, but it still counts as one of those special days to remember.

Ken Durrant

## The Hat Trick

A trip in August to Strumpshaw R.S.P.B. reserve was high-lighted by a fine osprey seen there. It's not unusual to see this lovely bird in Norfolk, several are recorded passing through on migration each year, often staying for a few days, especially on coming south from Scotland.

This year a pair have nested in the English Lake District, another pair at Rutland Water, so who knows - maybe they will be back breeding in Norfolk before very long. There is no lack of suitable nesting locations for them and fish are plentiful. It's 200 years or so since ospreys last nested in England, providing they are left unmolested by the egg collectors they could have the same success as the red kite. It would be superb to have the 'fish hawk' back breeding on the Broads.

The bird at Strumpshaw was seen to catch a small pike in front of the 'brick hide' and later another small fish, probably a roach, was taken. At one point the osprey, while perched in a dead tree, 'had its collar felt' by a female marsh harrier as it circled the tree a couple of times. Two super birds in view at the same time, what more could one ask? - Well - in another dead tree at the very back of the marsh a third bird sat waiting for the sun to come out so he could have his lunch of dragonflies.

A hat trick of raptors in the binoculars, osprey, marsh harrier and the elegant hobby - Heaven.



Tony Howes

## Goose-watching in Wells.

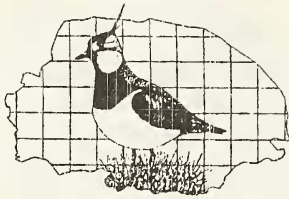


When I moved to Wells from central Norfolk in 1969, the traditional great flocks of Grey Geese were just a folk-memory, preserved by the few surviving pre-war wildfowlers. However, much to everyone's surprise, they began to re-appear in the late eighties, and in recent years the numbers of Pink-foot have been, if not astronomical, at least enormous, counted in tens of thousands. As they roost on the Wells/Warham beach, and feed inland, their early-morning flight-path often takes them over my house, when the sky can be quite filled with their strung-out lines, generally in the traditional V shape. They seem to be only too keen to waste energy on "talking" to each other with their bi-syllabic call, quite different from the "grunt" of the Brents.

My early-morning cycle rides to the beach (*Transactions*, 1998 p.304) sometimes, especially on dull days, enable me to see them still massed on the sand near the tide-line, where they form extensive dark blocks. I assume, though I have never seen it, that they stay there at night even when the tide floats them off. Although many of them feed on sugar-beet fields over much of N. W. Norfolk, there are generally plenty to be found on the permanent pasture either side of Lady Anne's Road, Holkham, where they are joined, from December onwards, by a few hundred White-fronts. For the last couple of years they have got very tame, happily feeding within a few metres of the parked cars. There are generally Brents as well, and three times in recent years there has been a single spectacular Red-breasted Goose with them, apparently under the impression that it, too, is a Brent.

Paul Banham





## NORFOLK BIRD ATLAS

By the end of the summer 2001, two years of fieldwork had been completed for the Norfolk Bird Atlas. Despite the understandable and necessary restrictions imposed by the foot-and-mouth crisis, an encouraging amount of fieldwork was possible during the late winter, spring and summer of 2001. Hopefully full access will once more be possible in most parts of Norfolk during the forthcoming winter and summer.

To date, 341 tetrads have been surveyed in both the early and late winter periods. Thus 23% of Norfolk has been covered for the Winter Atlas, although coverage has not been uniform throughout the county. As has been found in many previous bird surveys, for example those organised by the BTO, good coverage has been achieved around the coast and inland in north-east Norfolk, where large numbers of observers live, but is very patchy in parts of south-east, north-west and west Norfolk. There are large areas in these parts of the county where no fieldwork has yet been carried out.

Unfortunately, coverage during the summer months has proved more difficult and as a result completed forms, with data from two breeding season visits, have only been received for 219 tetrads. However, it is known that others have been visited but the recording forms have yet to be sent in. Again, as in the winter, certain parts of Norfolk have received very poor coverage. It seems likely that the original target of completing the fieldwork in five years will not be met, but it is still hoped to complete it in a reasonable period of time, so that the results are meaningful.

Every single record that has been submitted is now on the database, and the figures from any completed recording sheets are now entered within a day or so of them being received. These are then instantly available for analysis. There can't be many other bird surveys in the country where the information available is so up-to-date! At the time of writing this article, the Winter Atlas database contained 26,725 entries from 'set' visits and 3,904 supplementary records; while the Breeding Atlas database contained 12,479 entries - and they've all been checked!

By asking observers to actually count all the birds (or in the summer the number of pairs) that are found in the tetrad, it is possible to produce much more than simple distribution maps. The relative abundance in different parts of the county will also become apparent, as will any changes of distribution and abundance between winter and summer.

Although different tetrads are being surveyed each year, for the common and widespread species, it should also be possible to obtain some year-on-year comparisons. For example during the breeding season the percentage of occupied tetrads by individual species can be compared, as well as the average number of pairs per occupied tetrad. Figures obtained during the summers of 2000 and 2001 suggest that the numbers of House Sparrows and Starlings have increased markedly between the two years (both over up 30%), whereas Blackcap, Long-tailed Tit and Yellowhammer have all shown a reduction in the average number of pairs per occupied tetrad of over 30%. Whether these trends will be demonstrated nationally or are even significant remains to be seen.

I would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to join the band of over 200 observers that have already helped with the fieldwork for the Norfolk Bird Atlas. I can be contacted at:

4 Heath Road, Sheringham,  
Norfolk, NR 26 8JH or  
mosstaylor@care4free.net

*Moss Taylor*

## Blacker than black

The strangest things don't always happen in the strangest places. In fact my observation only happened during early September this year. While on holiday on the west coast of Scotland, on a damp afternoon, I visited Ullapool. I crossed the road through a housing estate where several of the inhabitants had roaring fires. By the colour of the smoke I would have guessed it was peat they were burning. However, perched on the chimneys around the smoking pots were rooks, jackdaws and hooded crows. Each in turn jumped onto the smoking pot and opened their damp wings fully over the thick black smoke. They then jumped off and preened themselves before jumping back on again. Every house in the row with a fire had other rooks etc., doing the same thing. Were they drying their feathers or simply ridding themselves of mites or the like? They must be truly the blackest birds in Britain. The lady of the house who saw me videoing her chimney, came out in despair looking up. I informed her I was filming the birds on her chimney pot. She replied "Thank god I thought the chimney was on fire!"

*G. Morris*

## Mammal record!

On The 8<sup>th</sup> May 2001 on arrival at Whealfen I was met by the warden, David Nobbs.

"Would you like to see a Yellow-necked Mouse" he asked.

Of course I replied "Yes". He then produced a freshly dead specimen on a saucer.

"Who found that?" I asked.

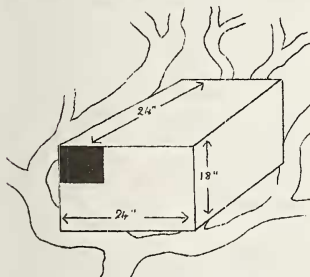
"The Whealfen cat" he replied.

So we now have a new Mammal recorder in more than one way.

*Colin Jacobs*

## Boxing for the Future

Barn owls seem to be holding their own in Norfolk at the moment. Nevertheless they are far from common and it's always a great pleasure to see one, usually at dusk, as it beats slowly along a field edge hunting for voles and mice. I was therefore very pleased when I found one of my nest boxes had been taken over by a pair this year, it had five eggs in mid May and on checking again mid June all had hatched successfully. This part of the Yare valley does not have many old hollow trees and the old fashioned barns and outbuildings



beloved by these beautiful birds are getting scarcer as time goes by. I think erecting nest boxes might be one of the ways forward to help these owls, placed in a tree on the edge of the grazing marshes they are often used to roost in for a year or two. This is easily checked by the pellets they leave behind, if they are undisturbed then they may breed there. They make no nest, laying the eggs directly on to the carpet of pellets.

Apart from barn owls these boxes may also be used by kestrels, stock doves and tawny owls.

Tony Howes

## Eight legs moving north

On a very dull morning (30<sup>th</sup> Aug '01) while walking over Beeston Common I spotted a harvestman sitting on a willowherb leaf. It was unusual in that it was resting with its legs stretched more or less at 90° to its body. Luckily it was still there in the afternoon when I managed to take its photograph. It turned out to be *Dicranopalpus caudatus* Drisco - a species rarely met with in Norfolk but one that is probably moving north with climate change. It was first recorded in Bournemouth in 1957 (Sankey and Savory - *British Harvestmen*, 1974).

Francis Farrow

## EXCURSION REPORTS

### Strumpshaw Fen Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2001

Leader: Bob Ellis

Once again we had a good turnout for the third of the "Wild Flowers Revealed" meetings, with about 25 people attending with a mix of members of the society and new faces.

We divided into two main groups and set off along the footpath leading down to the fen, looking at the wayside flowers on the way. The first plant to catch our attention was butcher's broom *Ruscus aculeatus*, which unlike most other plants has no true leaves but has leaf-like structures that are really flattened stems.

A corner of a barley field provided us with quite a few arable weeds such as fools' parsley, fat hen, field forget-me-not, redshank, wild radish, wall speedwell and field pansy.

Moving on into the fen, we soon came across the broadland specialities such as marsh sowthistle *Sonchus palustris* overtopping the surrounding vegetation; marsh pea *Lathyrus palustris* entwining the reed stems, a delicate relative of the garden everlasting pea; milk-parsley *Peucedanum palustre* the food plant of the swallowtail butterfly - and there were the caterpillars to prove it; cowbane *Cicuta virosa* a very poisonous plant found mainly on the banks of streams and dykes of broadland and marsh fern *Thelypteris palustris*, which is nationally scarce but can be abundant locally.

We all stopped to admire the unusual flowers of the marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* whose wine-red sepals are much larger than the petals. In the Isle of Man this plant is called "bog strawberry".

Also seen in this part of the fen was common skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* which produces a volatile oil called scutellarin, reputed to be one of the best treatments for nervous disorders; orange balsam, a native of North America where it is known as "jewel weed"; ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* whose specific name is Latin for "cuckoo flower", one of three British flowers known by this name. Along the riverbank we encountered a good stand of golden dock *Rumex maritimus*.

After lunch, we moved on to the wild flower meadow, soon finding red bartisia *Odontites vernus* a semi-parasite of grasses, a plant that was once considered a cure for toothache. *Odontites* comes from the Greek word for tooth. Nearby was another partial parasite of grasses, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, the generic name coming from two Greek words meaning "nose" and "flower", relating to the shape of the corolla.

We were a little late for orchids, but we did see marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. In Somerset, common spotted-orchid is also known as "dead man's fingers", referring to the flattened underground tubers which resemble fingers on a hand.

In the dyke crossing the meadow there were lots of water-soldiers *Stratiotes aloides*, another of our broadland specialities. These aloe-like plants sink to the bottom of the dykes at the end of the summer, by accumulating an encrustation of limy matter on their leaves. Also in the dyke was frog-bit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*, this is another plant that avoids the ice in winter by growing special buds and seeds which sink and become buried in the comparatively warm mud. In the same dyke were flat-stalked pondweed *Potamogeton freisii* and lesser water-parsnip *Berula erecta*.

Continued on page 6

*Strumpshaw continued:*

There were several sedges on the meadow, some of which would have remained just sedges but for the expertise of Bob. There were 11 in all including: fibrous tussock-sedge *Carex appropinquata*, tufted-sedge *C. elata*, glaucous sedge *C. flacca*, tawny sedge *C. hostiana*, carnation sedge *C. panicea* and greater tussock-sedge *C. paniculata*.

Some dragonflies were on the wing including brown and southern hawkers and emerald and blue-tailed damselflies. Also noted were short-winged conehead and dark bush cricket.

Although Strumpshaw Fen is managed primarily for birds, we saw very few on the day, but we did hear a quick burst from a Cetti's warbler and saw a marsh harrier quartering the reed beds. However, as we found a grand total of over 230 species of plant, we didn't have much time to look for birds!

*Ell Mitchell*

## GRIMSTON

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2001

Leader: Gillian Beckett

More than 20 people gathered at Grimston for a closer look at arable and wayside plants with Gillian Beckett - the fourth 'Wildflowers revealed' meeting.

When we met on the verge which Gillian had chosen for us to explore, we found that it had been recently trimmed, so we moved on to another a short distance away. The road dipped down to our new parking space and Gillian explained that in this area the richest flora is to be found on slopes where erosion has left the chalk closer to the surface. With us we had a good number of people who really knew their plants and we split into small, rather fluid groups, with people drifting from one to another if something caught their eye. Although this was the 'second

choice' verge, we were rewarded with a very diverse flora. The more experienced botanists were able to point out the differences between species which might cause confusion to the beginner. All three "possible" sowthistles were there - Perennial - *Sonchus arvensis*, Prickly - *S. asper* and Common - *S. oleraceus*. We also found ribwort, greater and hoary plantains - *Plantago lanceolata*, *P. major* and *P. media*, respectively which we were able to compare. Common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and greater knapweed *C. scabiosa* also grew close enough together to allow easy comparison.

The gateway and unsprayed corner of a sugarbeet field proved to be a wonderful hunting ground and we could have quite happily spent a few hours there. 'Gems' from this spot included the beautiful little venus - looking - glass *Legousia hybrida*, night-flowering catchfly *Silene noctiflora* and Flixweed *Dascurainia sophia*, with its finely divided leaves. These were special treats for those of us from the heavy soils of East Norfolk where those plants are rarely found. These less widely distributed plants were growing alongside an enormous number of more common (but none-the-less lovely) species such as scarlet pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, field pansy *Viola arvensis*, white campion *Silene alba* and pineapple weed *Matricaria discoidea*. We were able to compare cut-leaved dead-nettle *Lamium hybridum* and red dead-nettle *L. purpureum*.

Eventually we dragged ourselves away from this little patch and walked the length of the roadside verge to the top of the hill before returning to the cars for our lunch. This verge produced Canadian fleabane *Conyza canadensis*, a plant, introduced from North America, that was first recorded in Norfolk in 1882 near Thetford and has now extended its range to such an extent that it seems to turn up almost anywhere, even Blakeney Point!

After lunch we drove off and parked at the beginning of a wide track which leads through farmland to an area known as Massingham Heath. We found many interesting plants on and beside the track. Many of these were 'firsts' for a lot of us. We discovered small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, another speciality of light calcareous soils, and we were able to compare it with the field scabios *Knautia scabiosa* which we had seen on the roadside verge. Further on a cornfield had a sign stating that it was 'Organic' and we were interested to see that the crop had been undersown with a large cultivated form of the common vetch *Vicia sativa* ssp *sativa* - presumably as a nitrogen fixer. There were plants of interest all along the track and it is only possible to mention a few. The long-headed poppy *Papaver dubium*, musk mallow *Malva moschata*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, large thyme *Thymus pulegioides* and the common rock rose *Helianthemum nummularium* were among our more note-worthy finds. The excitement of finding new things stayed with us right to the end. On the way back, in the corner of a stubble field we were delighted to find annual wall rocket (who called it stinkweed?) *Diplotaxis muralis*, small toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus*, grey field speedwell *Veronica polita*, field madder *Sherardia arvensis* and the diminutive dwarf spurge *Euphorbia exigua*.

As we gathered at the cars someone produced a tiny bit of catmint *Nepeta cataria*, a scarce plant, which seemed to be the 'icing on the cake'.

Our thanks go to Gillian for a really memorable day during which more than 150 species were identified.



*Janet Negal*



## SNETTISHAM RESERVE

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2001

Leaders: Frances Schumann  
and David Lake

The meeting at Snettisham RSPB Reserve was timed for an evening high tide of 6.8 metres, the lowest high tide which will usually cover the mudflats and push waders onto the pits, and we hoped to see one of this country's greatest wildlife spectacles. The Wash is the most important estuary in the UK for wildfowl and waders and at peak times more than 100,000 birds can be found on Snettisham Reserve making it the most important part of the Wash. The forecast all week for Sunday had been to expect bursts of heavy showers, but in the event, luckily for the 9 participants, the rain kept away.

The Reserve consists of a string of disused gravel pits, the foreshore, and an area of marsh at the southern end, some of which is grazed, with hides overlooking the southernmost pit. Water levels in the pits remained high until late May this year, a recurring problem of recent years, which affects the ability of terns and black-headed gulls to breed on the islands, and it is hoped that this autumn an additional large diameter pipe will be installed to help control water levels.

Along the shore yellow horned-poppy *Glaucium flavum* and Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare*, were still in flower. As we walked towards the hides the flocks of waders were building up on the mud, oystercatchers, large numbers of knot, some still in summer colouring; a flock of grey plover collected in an area to the north of the old pier, and hundreds of golden plover to the south. A small flock of linnetts foraged in the debris along the tide-line. Large numbers of teal were out on the mud, with wigeon and shelduck. As the tide advanced and less and

less mud remained available, flocks of oystercatchers came lighting in and over the pit banks onto the roost banks and spits of the southernmost pit. Suddenly a vast cloud of thousands of knot (10,000?) came nearer, wheeling and re-forming, like clouds of smoke, seemingly with bar-tailed godwit bounding one edge of the flock. The vast bulk of the knot soon disappeared, perhaps to Gore Point at Holme and not onto the pit roost banks, parts of which, although cleared of some vegetation, were still grass-covered.

There were many highlights that afternoon: the first sighting this season (for me) of pink-footed geese - 32 - with their soft 'talking' calls; a marsh harrier far over along the sea-bank; grasshoppers in the long grass by the footpath - one at least was a lesser marsh grasshopper *Chorthippus albowmarginatus*, and a common lizard slithering away. The view from Shore hide onto the furthest pit gave oystercatchers and cormorants, several hundred redshank, and large numbers of black-tailed godwit. We found 1 scaup there, said to be one of 3 or 4 around at the moment, a single great-crested grebe, many little grebe, only 1 gadwall, a striking leucistic redshank, and 2 adult common terns which had nested on one of the islands, with 2 young chicks: then as we returned to the shore, the fine sight of a flock of hundreds of golden plover, still partly coloured in summer plumage turning and glinting in the sun.

After the long walk back we approached the area of rough grassland and a barn owl hunted over the grass and then perched on a fence. The final count of species was 57, none rare, but we felt well rewarded by the sight of large flocks of waders tumbling and wheeling against the sky.



Frances Schumann

## Natural History Day at Wheatfen

With fine weather, which seems to have been a sparse commodity for much of this year, and a good attendance, the Natural History Day (29<sup>th</sup> July 2001) at Wheatfen was a great success. Ken Durrant's wonderful display of insects was particularly popular. Many thanks Ken.

Thanks too to Robert Maidstone (wasps etc.), Francis Farrow (mayflies), Rex and Barbara Hancy (galls), David Richmond (grasshoppers and crickets) and Derek Howlett (moths) for their fine displays. Also to David Paull for ruining the society "stand", Roy Baker for pond dipping, Alec Bull, Paul Banham and David Lester for leading walks and everyone else who pitched in.

It was particularly good to see such a mixture of long-standing members, new members and non-members and also to have young people showing such an interest. I'm sure the day did a great deal to promote the study of natural history, as well as serving as something of a social event.

One spin-off from this gathering of naturalists was that several new records were made from the reserve, which must already be one of the best-recorded places in the county. One such record was a ditiscid beetle, found by Geoff Nobes, that glories in the name of *Strictotarsus duodecimpustulatus*.

David Nobbs & Bob Ellis

## Stop press....

August 29<sup>th</sup> 2001: The 'Eastern Daily Press' reported the first Norfolk sighting of Small Red-eyed Damselfly from a North Norfolk pond.

October 6<sup>th</sup> 2001: The 'Daily Express' reported the discovery of a bee new to Britain - *Bombus hypnorum* - which was found on the northern edge of the New Forest.

## EAST ANGLIAN BRYOLOGICAL EXCURSIONS

2001  
to  
2002

The following excursions are planned for the Autumn & Spring of 2001 - 2002. Beginners will be most welcome; the only equipment needed is a hand lens (x 10 or x 20), and some paper packets for collecting into. Meetings will only be cancelled if it snows, or there is hard frost. All meetings will start at 10.30 am, unless otherwise stated. For further information, contact one of the names below.

**Sunday 28 October:** Blakeney Parish mainland, ditto first meeting. Meet at Blakeney Church, access from the Blakeney to Holt road, TG 033 436. We can then go south to Wiveton Downs in the afternoon.

**Sunday 11 November:** Knettishall Heath Country Park, meet in car park by toilet block, TL 956 807. Sign posted from A1066 at TL 957 820.

**Saturday 24 November:** Weeting Heath, NNR & NWT reserve. Meet in car park at TL 756 881.

**Sunday 16 December:** Honing Common. We briefly recorded here this year but there are four commons and possibly Crostwick Common as well. Meet on triangle of grass at TG 328 274.

**Saturday 5 January:** Winterton Dunes, meet in Winterton Beach car park, TG 499 198. Parking fee.

**Sunday 20 January:** Hickling Broad, NNR & NWT reserve, meet in car park at TG 428 222.

**Saturday 2 February:** Bloom's of Bressingham, Bressingham. Meet in the car park, TM 081 808.

**Sunday 17 February:** Horsey Mere & Horsey Gap, National Trust, meet in car park at TG 456 223. (fee possible?)

**Saturday 2 March:** How Hill Trust reserve, meet in the top car park behind the house at TG 373 190.

**Sunday 10 March:** NNNS meeting, 11.00 am. Full-day field meeting for mosses at Hockering Wood. Meet at entrance on 'one-way' lane at north edge of wood, TG 072 150. Leader: Robin Stevenson.

**Wednesday 13 March - Wednesday 20 March:** BBS Spring Meeting, Isle of Wight

**Sunday 24 March:** Swannington Upgate Common. Park on road side at TG 142 183

**30/31 March, Easter**

**Saturday 6 April:** Scarning Fen, NWT reserve & Rush Meadow. Parking at Scarning is difficult; best to park on verges at TF 980 123, before/after the bend in the road. For Rush Meadow, park at TG 977 136 by sewage works

**Sunday 21 April:** Swanton Novers Great Wood NNR. Meet at 'phone box in Swanton Novers village, TG 020 322. The warden, Robert Baker, will lead us into the wood.

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### NNNS INDOOR MEETINGS

**Nov 2001 - Jan 2002**

To be held at Room 7, The Sports and Leisure Centre, Easton College, Easton, Norwich. 7.30 p.m.

**Tuesday 20 November**

"Climate change and nature conservation"

*Irene Lorenzoni and Trudie Docherty*

**Tuesday 18 December**

"Forty years of Survival"

*Mike Linley*

*Festive refreshments will be provided.  
Please note that members will be invited to make a small voluntary contribution towards the cost of these.*

**Tuesday 15 January**

"Madagascar: a world apart"

*Simon Harrap*

## HOLT LOWES REPORT NO. 2

The second report of the Holt Lowes Wildlife Group is now published. It includes articles on birds, reptiles, liverworts, glow-worms, fungi and soil and water pH measurements, and updates on dragonflies, moths and flowering plants, as well as a selection of colour photographs.

Copies are available, at £5 including p&p (cheques payable to "Gresham's School Natural History Society"), from Dr. A.R. Leech, Gresham's School, Cromer Road, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6EA (copies of the first report, at the same price, are also available).

*Simon Harrap*

## 50 YEARS AGO

(Transactions Vol. XVII, page 221)

### Salt-marsh Horse-fly

During the second week of August 1951, the large horse-fly *Tabanus nigrifacies* (Gobert) was common at Scolt Head Island. The females attacked visitors incessantly during sunny weather and the males were seen to visit flowers of common sea lavender on the flats. This species had not been recorded previously from Norfolk and it may be a recent colonist.

*E. A. Ellis*

### A note to CONTRIBUTORS.

The next 'Natterjack' will be in February. It would be much appreciated if any correspondence or disc could be sent to the editor at the following address, as soon as possible by Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 2002, or by e-mail to: francis.f@virgin.net

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