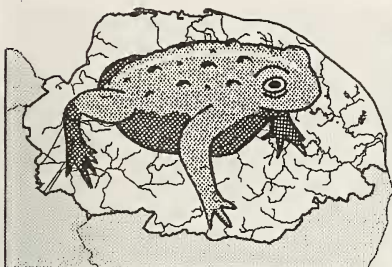


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THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

19 NOV 2002

The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 79
November 2002

Toad-in-the-hole....

This edition of *Natterjack* amounts to 10 pages, however, it still isn't enough to accommodate all the material received, particularly some excursion reports. Excursions that have been held but not included are 'Wild flowers revealed' at Felmingham, a meeting with the British Plant Gall Society at Knettishall, a walk around the Stody Estate and a Fungus Foray with the Fungus Study Group at Bayfield. Reports were received for some of these, however, the lack of space means that they will have to be carried over to the February issue. My apologies to those contributors who laboured to get their reports in before the deadline.

Again my thanks to all contributors and best wishes to all members for Christmas and the New Year. **FF**

Can Farming and Wildlife co-exist in the 21st Century?

Are you worried about the management of our countryside? The introduction of GMOs or if set-aside can sustain wildlife?

If you would like to put written questions on your concerns to the panel at the 'Farming & Wildlife' forum on November 19th (to be held at the Noverre Suite, Assembly House, Theatre Street, Norwich), then please submit them in good time to Stephen Martin (3 St John's Close, Hethersett, NR9 3DQ; e-mail stephen@smartin.fsnet.co.uk) or Bob Ellis (11 Havelock Road, Norwich, NR2 3HQ; e-mail bob@elymus.demon.co.uk).

The meeting will be chaired by Rex Hancy and the panel includes: Adrian Darby, O.B.E. (Plantlife), Ross Haddow (Stody Estate) and Ian Henderson (B.T.O.).

The debate starts at 1930hrs.



DON DORLING HONOURED

We are delighted to announce that Don Dorling, who has given devoted service to both the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust for many years, has deservedly been honoured with the award of the Sydney Long Memorial Medal. It was presented to him at the annual meeting of the Trust on October 18 by the Trust president, Sir John Blofield.

The award is made jointly by the Society and the Trust in memory of the Society's former secretary, Dr Long, who founded the Trust in 1926.

The award citation reads:

"Don Dorling's service to both the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society over many years is perhaps unsurpassed. He was Treasurer of the Society for 25 years and has also served as a Vice-president, Chairman, and Chairman of the Publications Committee. He has been a member of the Trust Council for ten years and was Chairman of the Trust for more than three

years during a particularly busy time in its history, including its 75th anniversary celebrations.


For nearly 40 years he played a vital role in the compilation, production and distribution of the annual Norfolk Bird Report and was a co-author of *The Birds of Norfolk* published in 1999.

The Councils of the Society and the Trust feel that through this long period of service Don has made a significant contribution to wildlife conservation in Norfolk and to the continued success of both organisations.

Throughout, he has had the constant support of his wife Mary who has also given notable service to the Society and the Trust for many years.

Accordingly, the Councils of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society have the greatest pleasure in awarding Don Dorling the Sydney Long Memorial Medal for the year 2002.

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The quarterly bulletin
of the
Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society

Founded 1869

Registered Charity No 291604

Birch Leaf Cornet Rolls

Every year either on a Society meeting or at another event I notice the neat cornet-shaped rolled leaves of birch, alder or hazel. These leaf galls are said to be caused by a species of weevil, formerly of the *Rhynchites* genus but now called *Deporaus betulae*. Every year I open up one or two and find nothing!

Until this year, mind you I had not had a holiday. Three days away with the wife - well two days, since she was attending a conference on one day and I was left to my own devices. Now taking a holiday in Britain is chancy at the best but in June - well, expect the worst - and we got it! Three days of almost solid rain, not dark clouds and torrential rain but dull grey clouds and light but persistent wet.

On my footloose day I decided to go out and look at the local wildlife and having found a small area of heathland designated as a Local Nature Reserve I tramped about in the wet heather and gorse trying to spot anything interesting through my rain splattered and streamed up glasses.

Around the edge of the heath birch trees were slowly attempting to

invade the heather and one tree was festooned with the green rolls so familiar to me. Assuming the beetles had more sense than me and had stayed at home in bad weather I picked several of the rolls, at the same time holding a collecting container under the roll to make sure they did not drop out when the leaf was disturbed. I stuffed the container in my bag for inspection later.

When I returned to our accommodation that evening I carefully unrolled one or two of the rolls and noticed that some had small blisters on the upper surface of the leaf. The beginnings of a gall included by accident I thought and replaced them in the container for later examination at home.

By the time I got home and had a chance to look at them again the leaves had gone brown and started to decay but crawling around the side of the container was one minute weevil. Barely two millimetres long it was not much wider than the petiole of the leaf it had been found on. Surely a little thing like that could not roll up a leaf that large?

The supposed galls were now much larger, some had amalgamated into irregular blotches and were a pale straw colour in contrast to the coffee coloured decaying leaves. Under the microscope I carefully lifted the thin

epidermis over one of the blisters to reveal a small maggot with dark gnashing jaws.

No wonder I had never found anything inside one of these rolls before - I had been expecting to find a substantially larger beetle or its larvae. Just cutting the leaf bade through must have been a daunting task for this weevil but to roll it as well! I have several books which describe and illustrate the weevil, including giving the size, and its nursery but I had not envisaged the relative sizes until now.

How often do we miss something because we fail to relate the given sizes, illustrations or television pictures with comparable and known objects?

Robert Maidstone



Roll-leaf gall
on Alder

NB The above photograph shows a rolled Alder leaf. See 'Natterjack' no.78 for examples of Birch and Hazel.

Children's Games.

I was interested to read Colin Jacobs' contribution "The games we played as children" in the August 'Natterjack'. During the last two weeks of June an eleven-year-old Polish girl was staying with me at Roydon and at that time *Arrhenatherum elatius* was in its prime. Quite spontaneously she used the spikelets to play "Cock and Hen". The Polish words for these terms are "Kogut and Kura", but I think she used different ones for describing the spikelet arrangements.

She also fashioned blowpipes out of dead hogweed stalks. Alexanders does not grow in Poland (nor in Roydon for that matter), but she readily adopted it when we went to Dunwich and became quite adept at using its seeds as missiles!

So, whatever the current state of these childhood pastimes in England, they appear to be alive and well in Poland.

Arthur Copping

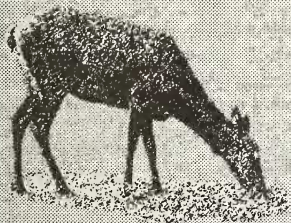
CORRECTION

In the last issue of 'Natterjack' (08/02) the report on the Wells Pinewood visit notes fenugreek *Trigonella foenum-graecum*. The name fenugreek was correct, however, the plant was English fenugreek or Bird's-foot Clover (as Stace calls it) *Trifolium ornithopodioides* and not as stated. A slip of the pen no doubt which could cause a bit of confusion - the 'other' fenugreek being mainly recorded as a bird-seed alien which originates from the eastern Mediterranean.

MAMMAL REPORT EDITOR(S)

Following the note in the last 'Natterjack' the Council of the Society are pleased to announce that the vacancy of Mammal Report Editor has been filled by two volunteers. The role of editor has been taken on by Mike Toms and that of assistant editor by David Leech. Both are currently staff members of the British Trust of Ornithology (BTO) which is based in Thetford.

All records / observations and other mammal contributions should be sent to:



Mike Toms (NNNS Mammals),
c/o BTO, The Nunnery,
Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU
Email: mike.toms@bto.org

David can also be contacted
at the same address or by
email: dave.leech@bto.org

Please send 2002 records etc. by Jan. 31, 2003

NNNS Hand Lens Offer

All naturalists need a hand lens. A simple x8 or x10 lens transports its user into an otherwise unseen world. Again, through the goodwill of *Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies*, the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society can offer good quality 12mm diameter x10 Ruper lenses for £8.50 each including p & p.

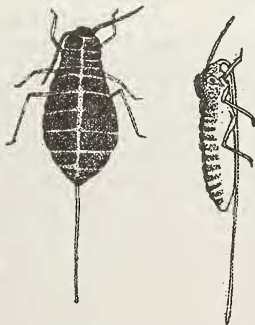


Order from Tony Leech (3 Eccles Road, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6HJ. Tel: 01263 712282 or email leech@dialstart.net), to whom cheques should be made payable, and remember that buying a young naturalist a good lens is an excellent way of encouraging interest.

OAK TRUNK APHID

When one sees a request in *Natterjack* for information on certain species it is generally assumed that anything listed as rare would not be found by the average naturalist. The chances of coming across these rarities on a random excursion are remote however with a small amount of background information the odds are reduced considerably.

One such example is the Oak Trunk Aphid, *Stomphis quercus*, for which records were requested in the May 2002 *Natterjack*. Its habitat, oak trunks, are simple to find, the associated ant the Jet Black Ant, *Lasius fuliginosus*, is easily recognised being three or four times as large as the common black ant found in our houses and gardens and shiny black. This ant follows defined trails from its home in rotting tree stumps to feeding sites one of which is the honeydew exuded by the Oak Trunk Aphid.



Thus on a wet and miserable Tuesday afternoon in August when the rain had almost stopped I decided to liven up my day by visiting a site nearby where earlier this year I had noticed some Jet Black Ants trundling up and down an Oak trunk. The tree trunk concerned was well sheltered by an overgrown hedge and partly festooned with Ivy and I struggled through the vegetation to find a dry section of the bark.

Here the ants no longer followed each other along a well used roadway but ambled apparently aimlessly across the rough fissured bark, aimlessly until I noticed them congregating in one or two deep fissures. A sharp puff of breath sent the ants scurrying off to reveal a few brown pear-shaped objects in the bottom of the fissure.

I then had to equip myself with a probe, a slender twig broken off a strand of honeysuckle, to dislodge one of the objects into a small plastic bag. When it finally fell into the bag several smaller leg-waving creatures went with it. It seemed to be held in the fissure by a long thick straight cord.

However once I had got them home the long cord turned out to be its needle-like mouth parts - a necessary implement to bore through the inner bark into the sap bearing bast.

The time I took between leaving my car to look at the tree and my return with my capture probably took no longer than you have taken to read this.

The ants are not common, Norfolk's Biological Record Centre had only one record, (who looks for big ants?) and none for the Oak Trunk Aphid but they could be in your area - no one will know until you get out and look!

Robert Maidstone



A new host for Mistletoe?

Many years ago a Norwich friend and former colleague, Ellis Marks, introduced mistletoe to a small apple tree in his garden. Male and female plants grow side by side and set a good crop of seed annually. Beneath the apple tree a young plant of *Lonicera syringiantha* was planted and, over the years, has sent up strong shoots amongst the apple branches. Much to everyone's surprise, during recent pruning operations, several young mistletoe plants were seen on two of the *Lonicera* stems. *L. syringiantha* is a shrubby ornamental honeysuckle introduced from China in about 1890. Though not commonly planted, it is well distributed across the gardens of Britain and must come close to mistletoe colonies in other places. As the mistletoe's main host is a member of the Rosaceae, its appearance on a plant of the Caprifoliaceae may seem surprising. I wonder whether the fact that the two plants have been in such close proximity for a number of years has had some effect.

Kenneth Beckett

PINE INVADERS

I have several scots pine trees grown as Bonsai in the garden. The largest of these, almost a metre tall and 25 years old was being tidied up earlier this week. Scots pine are usually trouble free and not very much bothers them, but I found one branch that had become infested with caterpillars, many of the needles had been eaten leaving just bare twigs exposed. On checking through the books I identified them (?) as pine sawfly (*diprion pini*). I went back to the tree and began taking them off one at a time, there were about 30 and they were very sticky to the touch. Rather than killing them I put them out on the bird table, I then retired back indoors to see what, if anything, was interested in eating them. The blackbirds were the most likely candidates, but of the several we get on a regular basis, not one would eat a caterpillar, they picked them up but dropped them instantly. I can only assume the bitter taste and texture of pine resin was not to their liking, can't say that I blame them.

Tony Howes

www.whatsthis caterpillar.co.uk

For those who find the average Lepidoptera field guide pretty useless when it comes to identifying caterpillars, try the above website.

A Plant Gall on Tansy

Whilst visiting my In-laws garden at Blundeston, just north of Lowestoft last August I came across a small non-flowering plant of Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare* growing in soil beside their wildlife pond. On the leaves, mid-rib and leaf edges I found c100 flask like galls looking a much paler green than the leaves.

I checked the Norfolk Galls publication by Rex Hancy against the host plant and came up with the midge *Rhopalomyia taneciticola*. It was written that it could be found on the inflorescence or stem, but no mention of the gall appearing on the leaves.

As I had no previous experience with this particular gall I sent a sample to Rex and Barbara with the line "Have fun with this one." A few days later I was pleased to receive a reply stating that, yes they did indeed have fun with this one.

It was correctly identified as *R. taneciticola* and it has been recorded on the leaf before but this was the first one they had both personally seen. Finally, Rex also noted that the larvae in the sample galls were orange whereas in some papers they are said to be pink or rose.

The much larger flowering Tansy plants were all unaffected by this midge gall.

Blundeston is three miles south of the political Norfolk border. The recording boundary is to the south side of Breydon Water. I have checked Tansy in the 'no-mans' land area of both counties but have not seen any more affected plants.

LIGHT FANTASTIC

What do shooting stars have in common with centipedes? Answer - they bring people out at night to see them. This year on a number of occasions I have had calls from various people to inform me that whilst out watching the display of numerous 'shooting stars' they have seen what at first thought were glow-worms at their feet. However, when a torch has been shone down to get a better view, to their amazement all they could see was a long, very thin centipede approximately 60 mm in length.

Out of the 45 species of centipedes in these islands, three species exhibit phosphorescence by a substance secreted from their sternal glands when they are disturbed. Two of these have been found in Norfolk.

Geophilus carpophagus Leach is often found in leaf litter in woodland, but has also been recorded from inside houses. It is reddish-brown and approximately 50 mm in length. *Haplophilus subterraneus* Shaw, which is yellowish-brown and can reach 70 mm in length, is more often found in sugar beet fields. It is the only species that has turned from being carnivorous to vegetarian and has been blamed for causing damage to root crops. From the descriptions given to me recently this would be the species referred to by my contacts.

Ken Durrant

Colin A Jacobs



The Hellebore Leaf-miner,
Phytomyza hellebori Kaltenbach
(Dip.: Agromyzidae)
in Norfolk

Last year, in *Natterjack*, I reported on the discovery of leaf-mines on plants of stinking hellebore, *Helleborus foetidus*, at the Bressingham nursery of R. H. Meredith & Son. It was thought likely that they could have been caused by larvae of the Agromyzid fly *Phytomyza hellebori* but as, at that time, it was unknown in Norfolk and only comparatively newly recorded in Britain it was necessary to identify adults bred from the larvae in the mines to confirm its presence in Norfolk.

Adults from these mines duly emerged late in 2001 and, early in 2002, from leaves collected from both my garden here at Scole and on the Bath Hills at Ditchingham and all were confirmed as *Phytomyza hellebori* by Tony Irwin – many thanks Tony. Whilst this confirmed the species in Norfolk it had almost certainly been noted a couple of years earlier but not identified as such at that time. Robert Maidstone tells me that he had bred an Agromyzid from leaf-mines in stinking hellebore in 1999 but as *Phytomyza hellebori* had not been reported anywhere in Britain at that time the specimen was tentatively identified as a closely related species *Phytomyza ranunculi* (Shrank). The original paper by Stubbs (2000) describes the species and records it as being new to Britain, in the Peterborough area, in 1999 so Robert's record indicates the fly was also to be found in Norfolk at that time – if we had only known.

In the last year I have had reports of the mines in leaves of stinking hellebore from the Norwich Castle Gardens, Sheringham (although some gardens have the mines and others are still completely free which would seem to indicate fairly recent colonisation), Caston, Dersingham, Thursford, North Creak and Taver-

ham Garden Centre as well as the original records from Bressingham, Scole and Ditchingham. I have also found the mines in a garden at Halesworth in Suffolk so it is obviously well distributed across East Anglia. Up to now *Phytomyza hellebori* has only been recorded from leaves of *Helleborus foetidus* and no other species of hellebore and, indeed, other species of hellebore do not seem to have any species of Agromyzid (or anything else) mining their leaves. However, last year Francis Farrow noted mines in the leaves of *Helleborus argutifolius* (previously known as *Helleborus corsicus*) on plants at the Taverham Garden Centre but as yet nothing has been bred out to confirm this record (all plants having been sold when he went back to get one). As the European distribution of *Phytomyza hellebori* is given as Finland, central Europe and also Corsica (Spencer, 1976) and the two species of hellebore are very similar, this seems a very likely second host for the fly.

It would be very interesting to confirm another hellebore as being susceptible to mining by *Phytomyza hellebori* and also to find the current distribution of the species in Norfolk and perhaps chart its spread on a host plant that is virtually only to be found in gardens, as it does seem to be a very new arrival in the county. Any records of leaf mines in hellebores will be greatly appreciated and can be sent to me at 'Hopefield', Norwich Road, Scole, Diss, IP21 4DY.

Mike Hall

References;

- Spencer, K.A. (1976). The Agromyzidae (Diptera) of Fennoscandia and Denmark. *Fauna Entomologica Scandinavica* 5 (2): 426-427, Scandinavian Science Press Ltd., Denmark.
Stubbs, A. (2000). The hellebore leaf-miner, *Phytomyza hellebori* Kaltenbach (Diptera, Agromyzidae) New to Britain. *Dipterist's Digest* 7: 33-35

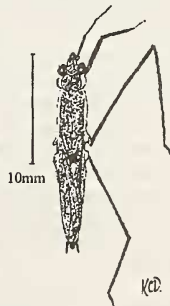
[Correction to my note in *Natterjack* no. 76, February 2002 on the same subject – the page references to Spencer should have been 426-427 (as above) and not 305-306, my apologies]

Another rare bug from the south

Whilst browsing around the pond on Beeston Common, near Sheringham, on 19th Sept., 2002 I was surprised to see three examples of a species of very large pond skater (Gerridae) darting across the surface of the water catching flies etc.

The only time that I had seen their like before was when I had collected a rare immigrant, *Limnoporus rufoscutellatus* (Latr.), from a small pond on Hoe Common, near Dereham some 54 years earlier on 13th March, 1948.

Thinking that these may be the same species I carefully waded into the pond and with luck managed to position myself so as to steer one of them towards the bank where I was able to net it, the others, meanwhile beat a hasty retreat to the centre of pond.



I was more than pleased however, when I later keyed it down using the microscope to find that it turned out to be *Gerris=Aquarius paludum* Fabr. It is considered a southern species which is found up as far as Essex, so here it seems we have another insect moving northwards, possibly a Norfolk first?

Ken Durrant

Ref: Southwood & Leston's 'Land and Water Bugs of the British Isles' Warne (1959) pages 348, 354-356.

BLACK WOODPECKER

On 26th December 1835, according to the diaries of John Salmon quotes in the Society's latest *Transactions* (Vol. 35 Part 1), "a black woodpecker [was] taken at Billingford near Diss in a wood with alder buckthorn and guelder rose."

But the black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) is not, and never has been, on the British List!

Here's what *The Bird's of Norfolk* (1999) says: "Two black woodpeckers were said to have been obtained by Francis Blake at Billingford, near Scole, in 1835, but the record was ejected by Stevenson and Riviere. Richard Fitter, who in 1959 analysed all claimed sightings in the British Isles, also rejects the Billingford record." So that's that!

Or is it? Salmon was an observant, careful naturalist with a penchant for ornithology; that's clear from the diary extracts in the *Transactions*. Black woodpecker is easier to identify than almost any other bird on the European List and the rather casual reference to its discovery in Norfolk by John Drew Salmon in his diary - or was the entry for Boxing Day 1835 extended? - hardly invites rejection. It is almost as though the diarist did not feel it exceptional or that the record was so definite that further details weren't needed.

Both Thetford, where Salmon was living in 1835, and Billingford are in the south of the county and it is almost unbelievable that this keen naturalist didn't leave his brewery immediately to go and have a look at these exceptional specimens.

I wonder what Francis Blake did with the birds he collected? Whatever they were.

Michael Freer

After receiving the above article I searched the *'Transactions'* to see

if there were any early references to John Salmon and found the following interesting note written by Thomas Southwell in 1904 (Vol. VII p.737). FF

Great Black Woodpecker

With reference to the repeated reports of the appearances of this species in England, most of which may at once be dismissed as "unproven," it may be well to put on record a circumstance which has recently come to light. Mr. W.H. Tuck informed me that in the year 1897, seven or eight of these birds were brought from Sweden, where they had been taken from the nest by a friend of his personal knowledge, but he was not allowed to mention the circumstance until a period of three years had expired, and it will doubtless account for the examples reported by the Rev. E.T. Daubeny as seen at Ixworth, Euston Park, and Brandon in 1897, and possibly also for those said by Mr. Digby Pigott to have been seen in Sheringham Park in 1903. That this sedentary species should ever, of its own accord, desert its native forests and migrate hither is so exceedingly improbable, that ornithologists were fully justified in rejecting any but the fullest evidence of the occurrences, and such an introduction as that mentioned ought to be regarded with apprehension even if conducted openly, much more so if secrecy were enjoined on the part of the few who were aware of the transaction. - T.S.

Marsh Tides

During my time at Wells Field Study Centre, and even subsequently in retirement, I think I have been asked more questions about tides than anything else. As tides frequently matter to coastal naturalists, a few words would perhaps not come amiss. Visitors to Wells who happen to be here in the morning or evening are sometimes amazed to see that the saltmarsh has disappeared under water. This really provides the first question: why is the day tripper unlikely to see a "marsh tide"?

Our established, stabilised marshes are about 2.8m above mean sea level, so only tides rising more than this will flood them. This happens only during the bigger spring tides (nothing to do with Spring the season), when the gravitational pull of the sun is added to the much greater pull of the moon. Spring tides occur around New Moon and Full Moon, i.e. for a few days every fortnight, the biggest ones coming a couple of days after new or full. At any given point on the coast such tides always occur at the same time of day, and in Wells that time is roughly between seven and ten o'clock a.m. and p.m., quite different from Yarmouth, by the way. Spring tides are "bunched", with only just over 12 hours between one and the next. Their opposite, "neaps", can stretch to around 13.5 hours between them. The average difference over the fortnight is about 12.5 hours.

The biggest forecast or "astronomical" tides rise about 3.5m above sea level in our bit of the North Sea, and, of course, fall about that much below sea level at low tide, giving a tidal range of up to 7m during springs. Such predictions can, of course, take no account of the weather, which can alter things considerably, as anyone who was here in 1953 or 1978 will be only too aware.

Another factor affecting saltmarshes is that the further "up the creek" you are, the shorter the time of flood, and the longer the ebb. At Wells Quay the tide floods for about 3.5 hours and ebbs for about 9. The change from ebb to flow in a creek system can be quite sudden, with the water moving at quite surprising speed. This is also something to bear in mind when botanising on our marshes, as is the fact that the considerable volume of water making its way back to the sea as the tide falls cuts deep creeks, which may be concealed by plants, especially Sea Purslane, growing over the edges. Good hunting!

Paul Banham



Excursion Reports

Featuring:

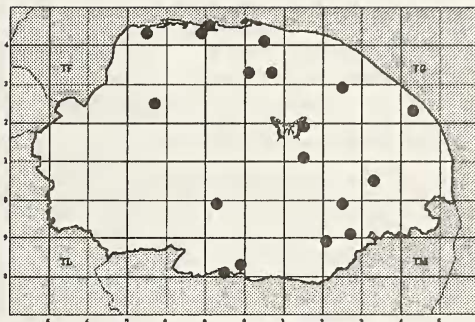
Bedingham Corner RNR

West Harding Heath

National History Day

Hidling RNR

● 2002-03 Field Meeting location
Easton College
Indoor meetings



'Wild Flowers Revealed': Bedingham Corner RNR

Saturday June 29th, 2002

This was the first of three meetings arranged this season as introductions to identifying plants typical of various Norfolk habitat-types, by way of a sequel to the very successful gatherings along similar lines held last year. As our outing to this Roadside Nature Reserve was combined with one of the Flora Group's 2002 Sulphur Clover Survey meetings, a fair number of members, friends and Society botanists met on a fine morning in late June.

Visiting south-Norfolk roadside wild-flower sites, many of which are on the narrow verges of country lanes, usually poses parking problems to motorists in numbers. Fortunately, the Bedingham RNR is flanked at present by 'setaside' grassland in place of the former arable, and we were able to use its margin. The edge of the 'new' grassland on the north side of Topcroft Road is particularly interesting, as the Sulphur Clover (*Trifolium ochroleucon*) and Spiny Rest-harrow (*Ononis spinosa*), both special plants of the chalky boulder clay, are starting to spread there from the verge - or at least are re-appearing there. The north verge itself is up to four metres wide in places and represents one of the county's best sites now for the nationally-scarce Sulphur Clover. This species, with straw-yellow flowers which become browned as they age, also lines both sides of the road to the west of the stretch designated an RNR and had earlier this

season given a wonderful show, though verges outside the reserve unfortunately had been cut three days before our visit! Most plants of the Rest-harrow were not yet in full flower, but they were plentiful and easily found. Although some species characteristic of the boulder-clay are absent from Bedingham Corner, we did see a few plants of Pepper Saxifrage (*Silene silaus*), an umbellifer with flowerheads of a colour rather similar to Sulphur Clover, but not yet showing them to advantage.

The RNR is backed by a hedgerow at its eastern end and a ditch, mostly open but scrubby in places, along the remainder of its length, which helps account for its species richness. Some 112 higher plant species were identified on and near the RNR, including 18 grasses, 5 rushes and 5 sedges. The last of these groups included, in addition to its parents, the hybrid of the False Fox and the Remote Sedge, *Carex x pseudoaxillaris* (*C. otrubae* x *C. remota*), which A Flora of Norfolk mentions as recorded at four other Norfolk sites, all in the east of the county. Amongst the other interesting plants were Hairy St. John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*) and Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*). This is a good roadside orchid site, with four species recorded in the recent past, but this year was disappointing, apart from the ever-increasing Common Spotted-orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) which were much varied morphologically and in flower colour. A single Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) was found in contrast to the dozens of some previous seasons on the banks of the ditches on both sides of the road, but the few Pyramidal Orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) previously

noted growing on a short stretch of steep ditchside formerly almost bare of other vegetation were not to be seen. Possibly they remain amongst the now more-luxuriant growth, but it seems the ditches may be due for sympathetic and selective cutting and clearing.

Bedingham Corner RNR is rich in butterflies and other insect life: most noticeable were the large numbers of Six-spot Burnet moths on the abundant bluish-violet Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*). As for birds, at one point a member drew the attention of botanists intent on the plants at their feet to a Quail calling in the adjacent grassland.

As lunchtime approached, field-meeting participants bent (literally) on improving their botanical identification skills enjoyed a bonus when quadrat recording was undertaken as part of the Sulphur Clover Survey. In the afternoon, remaining members split into smaller groups and set out in various directions by car to assess other *Trifolium ochroleucon* sites in the district, finally reassembling in the car park at Caister St. Edmund Roman Town to pass the results of their recording labours to Bob Ellis.

Stephen Martin



'Wild Flowers Revealed': West Harling Heath for Breckland Plants

Saturday 27th July, 2002

On a very hot day at the end of July, about 30 members and others assembled by a massive heap of wood chips that was all that was left of a section of forest. Gillian Beckett welcomed us and told us that the Forestry Commission has been taking art in a Heathland Re-creation Scheme.

The main area of the forest at Harling was originally planted largely on heathland, the eastern part (where we were) mainly on chalk or sand over chalk, the part further west on deeper, acid sands. Because this land had been planted with conifers and never had any fertiliser, the soil chemistry was not changed and reverts very easily to heathland. The Forestry Commission protected it from the large carrot growing farmers of the area.

This area was one of the three chosen because it still has some of the Breckland specialities. In time it will be grazed by sheep.

Unfortunately Gillian was not able to stay with us and handed the meeting over to Bob Ellis, who was assisted by Arthur Copping, Colin Dunster, Mary Ghullam, Laurie Hall, David Mathias, Bill Mitchell and Stella Taylor.

The conifers had been felled about two years, the roots having been bulldozed into rows, which left the ground open and plants easy to see. We first set off in the chalky area, quickly getting Wild Mignonette (*Reseda lutea*), Hop Trefoil (*Trifolium campestre*), Heath Groundsel (*Senecio sylvaticus*), Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Long-headed Poppy (*Papaver dubium*), Wall Lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*), Thale-cress (*Arabis thaliana*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) and Square-stalked Willow-herb (*Epilobium tetragonum*).

The next plant was Tall Rocket or Tumbling Mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*), which I had not seen before. There were only a few plants.

So far we had only walked about 100 m. There was Viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Hair-

Rockcress (*Arabis hirsuta*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) with yellow flowers, Common Centaury (*Centaurea erythraea*) with white flowers and Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*).

Next Bob showed us Sickie Medick (*Medicago sativa* ssp. *falcata*) which was bright yellow and the hybrid with Lucerne, Sand Lucerne (*Medicago sativa* ssp. *varia*), which was various shades of pink/blue/purple. This was much more widespread than the pure Sickie Medick. Both of these are nationally scarce species.

On the centre of a path was growing Corn Camomile (*Anthemis arvensis*). Then we found two different species of Scabious. Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), a stout, roughly hairy plant and Small Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*), a more delicate plant with upper leaves linear, which prefers chalky soil. Then there were two species of Knapweed, Common (*Centaurea nigra*), sometimes called Hard Head and Greater (*Centaurea scabiosa*), a much more spectacular flower.

As we were on heath land, even though only recently re-instated, you would expect to find a few grasses, and we had the expert: Arthur Copping. We found Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Black Bent (*A. gigantea*) and Creeping Bent (*A. stolonifera*). Barren Brome (*Anisantha sterilis*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), False Cat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Quaking grass (*Briza media*), Soft Brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), Wood small-reed (*Calamagrostis epigejos*), Cock's-foot grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), Common couch-grass (*Elytrigia repens*), Red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Smaller Cat's-tail (*Phleum bertolinii*) and Annual Meadow-grass (*Poa annua*).

Further on was Musk Mallow (*Malva moschata*) growing at the side of the track, and Hoary Plantain (*Plantago media*) growing in the middle of the track. Next was Common Rest-harrow (*Ononis repens*), Basil Thyme (*Acinos arvensis*), both pink and white forms, and Long-stalked Crane's-bill (*Geranium columbinum*).

In a patch next to the track was an area fenced off in which was one plant of Spiked Speedwell (*Veronica spicata*), a

Red Data Book species. This is becoming very scarce in Breckland.

Further on there was Salad Burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*) with its neat little leaves, Large Thyme (*Thymus pulegioides*) and Ribbed Melilot (*Melilotus officinalis*). On the track back along the bottom of the site was plenty of Rock Rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*) and Purple-stemmed Cat's-tail (*Phleum phleoides*). This is similar to Smaller Cat's-tail, which we had seen earlier, but the stem is purple and the inflorescence is slimmer. Smaller Cat's-tail has swollen bases of its glumes, longer ligules, wider leaf blades and blunt tips to its glumes.

The party collected under a large Sallow (*Salix caprea*) which gave some welcome shade from the mid-day sun.

Several members left after lunch and the depleted party set off in the opposite direction to the more acid area. Here we found Hawkweed Ox-tongue (*Picris hieracioides*), Fig-leaved Goosefoot (*Chenopodium ficifolium*), Canadian Fleabane (*Conyza cana-densis*), Common Stork's-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*), Bur Medick (*Medicago minima*), a nationally scarce species, Bugloss (*Anchusa arvensis*) and what we had come looking for: the remains of Sand Catchfly (*Silene conica*), a nationally scarce species, and Spanish Catchfly (*S. oites*), a Red Data Book species, both in decline due to changes in agriculture.

For those interested in butterflies, the following were seen: Brimstone, Common blue, Essex skipper, Gatekeeper, Green-veined white, Large skipper, Large white, Meadow brown, Painted lady, Peacock, Red admiral, Ringlet, Small copper, Small skipper and Small white.

I am indebted to Bill Mitchell who kept the card for the records and who kindly typed out both the English and Scientific names on his new computer and then managed to email them to me.



John Mott

Gatekeeper



Natural History Day at the Ted Ellis Trust Wheatfen Reserve

Sunday August 4th, 2002

Traveling from Lowestoft on Sunday 4th August, I anticipated an enjoyable day with my fellow Naturalists at the Wheatfen Natural History Day. It was very warm with bright sunshine. However, on arrival blustery rain showers greeted me. Luckily there were a few tents and gazeboes housing the varied exhibitions to shelter under. By lunchtime, however, the rain had subsided.

As usual there was plenty to keep everybody occupied and it was pleasing to see that the visitors were bringing items for identification. As I am a member of the Norfolk Fungus Study Group, David Nobbs, our host for the day, put me in charge of the Fungus table.

Here were displayed the Brackets, *Daedalea quercina*, *Diatrype disciformis* and the Rhizomorphs of *Armillaria mellea*. A quick foray alongside Home Marsh produced a metre long branch covered in *Stereum hirsutum*.

Dr Pam Taylor was able to show us a Southern Hawker dragonfly as it emerged from its exuvia in the dyke by the thatch (hide). This produced much amusement for the children.

After lunch I joined Bob and Pam Ellis for a walk around the reserve and Bob pointed out some relatively new arrivals to the reserve such as Green Figwort *Scrophularia umbrosa*, Prickly Lettuce *Lactuca virosa* and a small colony of Broad-leaved Helleborines *Epipactis helleborine*. Other members of the Society manned their various exhibits throughout the showers - ranging from moths to mayflies, bees and wasps to grasshoppers and galls whilst TET members provided a plant stall and a supply of tea and cakes.

I left with Pam Ellis for the journey home tired but full of yet more knowledge about the inhabitants of Wheatfen. Thanks to all who took part and to David for organizing the day.

Incidentally all the insect bites I received there were very painful. I was itching all that next week.

Colin A Jacobs

Joint Meeting with GYNS at Hickling NNR

Sunday September 8th, 2002

It was a wet day that got even wetter. Our joint meeting with the Great Yarmouth Naturalists' Society at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Hickling Broad reserve was probably the dampest field trip of the year. We drove there in the rain, wondering if we were completely mad and whether we would even leave the car park. The rain almost stopped and, after a brief encounter with a nosy piglet who seemed attracted to the smell of walking boots and wellies, the intrepid dozen or so of us set out.

Then the rain started again and got steadily heavier. The effect was that we saw very little. The dragonflies sensibly kept their heads down. The few flowers still in bloom were looking very sad. But we did at least see two of the county's rarer birds. First, we spotted a male marsh harrier, perched on a bush and looking very bedraggled, with his wings outstretched cormorant-fashion. Then a female got up and glided effortlessly over the reed bed for a minute or two. But the "tick" of the day was a common crane, standing almost motionless in the pool overlooked by the new Cadbury Hide. At least we were able to watch it in the dry!

David Paull

'Roots of Norfolk'

'Roots of Norfolk' was the title of an exhibition staged at the Norfolk Rural Life Museum, Gressenhall on Sunday September 29th, 2002. Its theme was wildlife and conservation and local, city, county and national organisations were represented.

I attended with Ken Durrant and Robert Maidstone and helped with the large display of galls, parasites and more easily recognisable insects put together by Ken to promote the Society.

With Ken and Robert busy explaining to the visitors about the various insects displayed I manned a small table illustrating the Society's recent publications and membership details. As Ken's stand drew in the people we became very busy answering many queries, such as: Are badgers increasing in Norfolk? Will there be any more wildflower days and how long do snails take to mate?

It was clear that the event was well worth attending and thanks must go to Robert for organising our presence and to Ken who volunteered to put on the display. It may be run in the future, if so, the Society should be there.

Francis Farrow

Photographic Group Winter Meetings

Monday Nov 25th

'Golden moments of time'
-A photographer's memories.

Tony Howes will take a ramble down memory lane and show us some of the subjects that have been in front of his camera over the years, those special, magical moments that live in your mind forever. Come and see the Norfolk countryside and it's wildlife.

Monday Feb 24th

This is an evening to bring along your latest work, any Society member with an interest in photography is welcome, you have no need to worry about not being an 'expert' we all learn from one another. Recording on film what each of us is interested in, and what we find as we stroll around the Norfolk countryside, or enjoy on more exotic trips abroad, will help keep those memories fresh and in focus, so bring some slides along and tell us all about your experiences.

All the above meetings will be held in the Sports and Conference Centre, Easton College, beginning at 7.30pm.

Tony Howes



Review of 'Guardian Spirit of the East Bank'

Cley Church was crowded on the evening of the 9th August for the formal launch of Moss Taylor's book on the life of Richard Richardson – *Guardian Spirit of the East Bank*. The fact that so many people were present twenty-five years after his death bore testament to the impact that Richard had exercised on the post-war birdwatching scene. In addition to Moss, Robert Gillmor and Richard Fitter were the principal speakers. The two Richards had cooperated, fifty years ago, on the publication of Britain's first real bird field guide, *Collin's Pocket Guide to British Birds*.

The large format book of some 230 pages covers Richard's life from his early days in London, his wartime experiences in Norfolk and the Far East and, particularly, the period of 28 years he lived at Cley. It is illustrated throughout with very many of Richard's line drawings and paintings together with a selection of photographs, many of which were taken from his photograph albums.

The book is an excellent read and has taken your reviewer back to the many happy days spent on the East Bank at Cley [in the days before there were hides on the Reserve] when bird watching seemed a more leisurely affair. It was usual to gather along the Bank wherever Richard had settled down – the scene resembling a prophet surrounded by his disciples! As indicated in the story, he was very generous in sharing his knowledge with other bird-watchers, both young and old.

Richard was, in many ways, a very private person and many of those who knew him were ignorant of much of his background. Fortunately, he kept immaculate records in his diaries and logbooks, which have enabled Moss to piece together Richard's life story from these and the contributions of his many friends and acquaintances. A total of 231 contributors are named in the Appendix and Moss is to be congratulated on the major effort in condensing this vast source of material into such a readable and visually attractive book.

The sometimes-difficult relationships that existed between Richard and The Norfolk Wildlife [then Naturalists] Trust and its Warden at Cley have not been ignored but have been dealt with sympathetically. Although Cley was never able to entice his beloved Black-tailed Godwits to attempt breeding again, Richard was aware, just before he died, that Avocets had bred successfully on the Reserve. I believe that he would be very pleased with the success that the Avocets have enjoyed locally during the 25 years since his passing.

Although many readers of *Natterjack* will not have known RAR, I am sure that anyone interested in birdwatching in Norfolk would enjoy reading this narrative and, particularly, would relish the opportunity to study the many examples of his work which are liberally scattered throughout the book. It is worth owning a copy for these alone.

Don Dorling

Guardian Spirit of the East Bank by Moss Taylor.

Wren Publishing 2002 (ISBN 0-9542545-0-3). £35.00 hbk.

Michael's Memorial

On Sunday September 8th about thirty people gathered for the unveiling of Michael Seago's memorial near the Berney mill at the southern end of Breydon.

This is a worthy tribute as this area is where Michael started



his great love affair with birds that continued the rest of his life. The R.S.P.B. have now named part of the wetland here 'Seago's Marsh'. Another of Michael's interests was windmills, so it is fitting that the Berney mill stands majestic close by over looking this brooding landscape of marshes and big skies.

After the unveiling ceremony we all enjoyed refreshments at the nearby Berney Arms where the talk centred on birds and wildlife, Michael would have loved it.

Thanks must go to Sylvia and family for the moving occasion and the hospitality afterwards, also to the R.S.P.B. for all their work in this project, especially Ian Robinson.

Tony Howes

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by January 10th 2003 to the following address: Francis Farrow, Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net

