

# The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Website: [www.nnns.org.uk](http://www.nnns.org.uk)

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

Another New Year and the first 'Natterjack' of 2003, which is at this time of the year looking both back with excursion reports and forward with forthcoming events plus a good mixture of articles. Again my thanks to all contributors, however, if you haven't written before make it a New Year's resolution to do so.

Don't forget also to send your 2002 records to the various County Recorders as soon as possible if you have not already done so. Let's hope for some good day's out this Spring with many natural history observations and records.

FF

immediately to 49 Nelson Road, Sheringham NR26 8DA. They can be sent by e-mail as an attached Word or Excel file to: [JDunmore@ukgateway.net](mailto:JDunmore@ukgateway.net) - no scanned sketches or photographs please - these should always be sent by post.

Giles Dunmore - County Recorder

## E.B.L.

European Bat Lyssavirus is a virus well known in European bats which can have dire consequences if not treated in humans! The popular press have been terming this "rabies" - which conveys more than a hint of panic - but we much prefer it to be known by its proper acronym - EBL since it is not classic, general mammalian, foam-at-the-mouth, "rabies".

It is recorded in three bat species (Pond, Daubenton and Serotine) from Denmark down through Holland and France to Spain, but has only been shown to be present in 2 individual Daubenton bats of the thousands of bats tested in the U.K. Our European friends do not seem to dissolve into a jobs-

## Bird Recording

The task of moving to computerisation of the monthly records is now progressing well after a slow start. A smaller team of volunteer recorders is currently involved than was the case with manual recording. The continued success of this venture is totally dependant upon contributors continuing to send in their records at regular intervals throughout the year (preferably every month). It will not be possible to cope with inputting huge volumes of records at the end of a year and still endeavour to meet deadlines to produce the *Bird and Mammal Report* in the late autumn. In order to move towards total computerisation further volunteers are needed. If you have an interest in bird recording and live in north Norfolk I would like to hear from you. You need to be computer literate and have access to a home computer; the necessary software and advice will be provided.

worth style frenzy about this virus, and I feel that we should not either. After all, the chances of contracting it are considerably less than winning the lottery during the next 100 years - and we all know it isn't going to be you! (but if it is - please remember the needy cause of bat conservation).

Basic advice though should be not to handle bats - then you won't get bitten? If you ignore this advice and get bitten then see your GP and get the jab. The unfortunate man in Scotland refused the jab - and died. There is another very important bat conservation message "don't fiddle with bats when they are in a breeding colony" - it's really no good for them or bat conservation.

John Goldsmith

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## White or Black

I have a particular fascination for creatures having white feathers or fur, this was brought to mind recently by a coal tit seen at the nut feeders in the garden, this particular specimen was pale yellow and white, it was speckled all over the back with darker markings, a very strange but striking combination.

When I moved to my present address we had a pure white blackbird in the vicinity, the eye was dark and the bill was yellow, this was a lovely bird indeed, it was around for at least two years, then was taken by a cat I believe Blackbirds seem very prone to these pigment variations, I have known others with various amounts of white in their plumage, one on the Gertrude Road side of Mousehold heath resembled a chess board with blocks of black and white all over, an other in the Thorpe River Green area had a white head, almost like a skull cap, this one died by being struck by a car.

Other species I have seen or known of have included jay (all white), house martin (all white), robin (all white), starling (albino), grey lag goose (all white), wood pigeon (all white). Mammals have included mole (cream), fox (all white), red squirrel (albino), badger (cream), and fallow deer (all white).

The opposite variation to this is melanism, or dark colouration, this seems to be less common, but I have seen or known this in pheasant, barn owl, rabbit, grey squirrel and adder.

I will be pleased to hear from any body regarding leukistic/melanistic variations, especially birds and can be contacted on 01603 436867.

Tony Howes



## HOME BIRDS 2002

Readers may recall that a list of birds recorded on, over or from my home at Frettenham (TG240171) during 1998 and again during 2000, appeared in 'The Norfolk Natterjack' nos. 64 and 72. During 2002, I again maintained a daily list, this time on 352 days (compared with 343 in both 1998 and 2000). The 'blank' days were as follows: January 31; June 3, 4; July 22, 23, 24; August 19, 20, 21; October 17; and December 12, 15, 27. There were no blank days from February to May inclusive, and in September and November.

In general, daily observations were gathered over periods of between one and six hours; two hours having been the average. The 2002 daily average of 21.6 species falls between those of 20.2 in 1998 and 22.7 in 2000. In each of the two earlier years, 75 species were recorded, while only 69 were noted in 2002.

As in 2000, 25 species were observed in each month. Four more species, Cormorant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Lapwing and Mallard, 'missed-out' only in January, February, May and December, 2002, respectively.

Habitats visible from my vantage point include gardens, a small fishpond, rough pasture, species-rich hedges, arable farmland, a mostly wooded, worked-out chalk pit, and the Stone Beck valley, dividing Frettenham from Spixworth and Crostwick parishes.

The list provided is in rank, name, and number of days recorded – the suffix M meaning recorded in every month.

Geoffrey Kelly

1= Wood Pigeon 352M	35 Goldfinch 55
1= Collared Dove 352M	36 Sparrowhawk 51M
1= Starling 352M	37 Cormorant 42
4 Blackbird 348M	38= Turtle Dove 40
5 Chaffinch 346M	38= Skylark 40
6 Blue Tit 340M	40 Green Woodpecker 36M
7 Dunnock 335M	41 Grey Heron 34
8 Greenfinch 332M	42 Redwing 30
9 House Sparrow 327M	43 Long-tailed Tit 29
10 Stock Dove 316M	44 Pheasant 28
11 Great Tit 312M	45 Cuckoo 15
12 Carrion Crow 294M	46 Fieldfare 14
13 Robin 262M	47 Herring Gull 13
14 Black-headed Gull 259M	48= Barn Owl 9
15 Mistle Thrush 236M	48= Goldcrest 9
16 Rook 224M	48= Linnet 9
17 Magpie 211M	51 Whitethroat 7
18 Pied Wagtail 206M	52 Yellowhammer 6
19 Jay 203M	53 Greylag Goose 5
20 Common Gull 185	54= Hobby 4
21 Jackdaw 179M	54= Spotted Flycatcher 4
22 House Martin 126	56= Mute Swan 3
23 Lesser Black-backed Gull 125	56= Teal 3
24 Great Spotted Woodpecker 119	56= Bullfinch 3
25 Song Thrush 88M	59= Canada Goose 2
26 Kestrel 86M	59= Shelduck 2
27 Mallard 85	59= Lesser Spotted Woodpecker 2
28= Great Black-backed Gull 83	59= Blackcap 2
28= Swift 83	59= Willow Warbler 2
30 Swallow 76	59= Siskin 2
31 Lapwing 70	66= Common Buzzard 1
32= Red-legged Partridge 58	66= Moorhen 1
32= Wren 58M	66= Black Redstart 1
34 Coal Tit 56	66= Chiffchaff 1





## Hoverfly death

Following a photograph of a white Hoverfly that had been sent to me which was taken in the Waveney Forest Fritton, during a Lowestoft Field Club meeting. I sent the same to Robert Maidstone for assistance. He thought that the Hoverfly had been affected by a fungus which indeed it had. This was given to me as *Empusa* sp. probably *muscae*. This was indeed correct! (Thanks Robert)

It is also known as *Entomophthora muscae*. This is known as this name on the BMS database for East Norfolk where there are 13 records relating to some diptera and seven records for West Norfolk The Hoverfly Robert correctly identified was a female *Melanosoma scalare*.

Armed with this information I found the following sites which I feel will be of interest to those members with Internet access.

<http://194.131.255.3/bmspages/BMSFRD/bmsfrd.htm>

<http://www.museon.nl/ojextra.engvijanden.html>

<http://www.nifg.org.uk/species/atlas2.htm?Item=15484>

<http://194.131.255.3/bmspages/GBCHKLST/gbsyns.asp?IntGBNum=2232>

Colin Jacobs



## Tales from the river bank

Many years ago I was a fanatical angler, and was keen to get out fishing whenever I could, nowadays I tend to pick the days more carefully, waiting for pleasant conditions to occur, a gleam of sun to warm me is very welcome on the river bank.



Recently I have been fishing on the river Bure between the road and rail bridges at Wroxham, this stretch of river can be very good during the winter months, providing good sport. Traditionally many bream shoal up here and can be caught right through the colder months until the seasons end in the middle of March. The bream can go to a large size, 7 lb fish not being uncommon.

However, another species in this stretch has been getting my attention of late, some very good perch have been showing up, the largest I have caught so far being just on the 3 lb mark, but I have heard of larger ones. The perch in my opinion is the most beautiful of our native fish, with its tall spikey dorsal fin erect and the bold stripes along its flank, it's a most imposing fish.

I can remember as if it were yesterday, laying on my tummy on the banks of the upper Yare, I was about ten I suppose, and I was watching a shoal of small roach and minnows flicking and darting in the crystal clear water below me. Then from a weed bed on the edge of the deeper water emerged three magnificent fish, I had never seen their like before, and didn't know what they were, but I can remember very well how impressed I was as they swam slowly over the gravel patch below me, like three majestic Spanish galleons, dorsals erect, and blood-red fins fanning in the clear water. Ever since that day the perch has been my favourite fish.

Tony Howes

## Another exotic pest?

In addition to the warning in *Natterjack* 78 about a threat to oak trees from a fungus accidentally imported into this country, there comes news of another exotic pest which has devastated horse chestnut trees across Europe and has now been discovered in England.

Horse chestnut leaf miner moth destroys leaves and reduces the number and size of conkers. So far, fortunately, it seems to be confined to Wimbledon, Kingston and Richmond Park. DEFRA has issued an exotic pest alert to every London borough and should be notified if there are any signs of the moth spreading into East Anglia.

David Paull

## A Flower for Norfolk

Last year, as part of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, Plantlife launched a scheme for people to vote for a plant to represent their county. The nominations have now closed and we will not know the outcome till the end of February. Speaking with various NNNS members it seems that the Corn Poppy is a favourite but also many would like to see the 'Norfolk' reed as the county's representative.

FF

Check out your local common on the internet:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-counttryside/issues/common/biosurvey/countyreports/norfolk.pdf>



## MICHAEL'S NAME LIVES ON

Over nearly half a century, Michael Seago, former president and vice-president of the Society, became "Mr Birds of Norfolk". In many thousands of words, mainly in articles in the *Eastern Daily Press*, Michael spread the delights of birdwatching to a large and faithful audience and, by founding the Norfolk Bird Report in 1954 and editing it until he died in 1999, he established himself as the authoritative voice of birding in the county. Finally came the monumental *Birds of Norfolk*, written jointly with Moss Taylor, Don Dorling and Peter Allard, which, regrettably, he did not live to see in published form.

Now, his name will live on in what we hope will be the next generation of young naturalists. Through the Society and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, of which Michael was also a vice-president, Sylvia Seago has established an annual Young Norfolk Nature Writing Award in Michael's memory and is generously giving shields and cash prizes.

The award was launched last year and Sylvia, Don Dorling (on behalf of the Trust) and I, assisted by Justine Millard, the Trust's education manager, had the pleasure of judging the entries. It was a small field but a high-quality one and we were greatly impressed by the knowledge and diligence of the entrants.

We awarded first place to 13-year-old Holly Hancock from Potter Heigham for an elegantly written essay (see below), very much in the mould of Michael's *EDP* "In the Countryside" articles, describing what she saw as she rowed her dinghy on the river at Horning. Ellie Farrow (16) from Sheringham and Harry Ewing from Hempsall, who was only nine when he compiled his entry, both submitted detailed and beautifully illustrated nature diaries. We couldn't separate them and decided to make them joint runners-up.

In a delightful ceremony at the Trust's Hickling reserve on December 7<sup>th</sup>, Sylvia Seago, accompanied by her sons and grandson Robert, presented the awards to the three youngsters, who were there with their families.

*Footnote:* Holly knew exactly what she would do with her £50 prize. Someone stole the dinghy from which she made her observations and she is saving up for a new one!

David Paul



From left to right: (Photo: Don Dorling)  
Ellie Farrow, Holly Hancock, Sylvia Seago  
and Harry Ewing

## MY FAVOURITE NATURE TRAIL

Hi - My name is Holly Hancock and I am 13 years old. I want to share with you my very own, favourite nature trail. So come down to the mooring plot and step aboard my rowing dinghy. ...

As I walk across to the mooring, I often spy a young squirrel scampering across the grass and up into the old oak trees that border the plot. I can hear the wood-pigeons cooing and a woodpecker tapping in the distance. Butterflies hover over the azaleas, hydrangea and green ferns.

Approaching the water there are shiny black water beetles skimming across the surface of the water and below there are hundreds of small tiddlers darting to and fro. Two Dragonflies hover above the delicate green lily pads.

As I leave the basin there is what looks like a rough bundle of sticks and reeds thrown together on the opposite bank, but it is in fact a swan's nest and the mother swan sits proudly upright, gently prodding her two young cygnets back under the warmth of her feathers with her beak. Father Swan is busy collecting weed and other food to take back to his brood. As I pass the next plot where tall reeds sway gently in the breeze, a moorhen with its distinctive red beak jerkily swims out to see if any food is going. Gently rowing upstream, I can see a coot's nest of twigs piled high against the side of the wooden bridge. Careful not to row too close so as not to disturb it, I turn round and row downstream past our mooring plot, past the boathouse, past another plot bright with mauve rhododendrons to the other little bridge where I used to feed the ducks when I was younger. Mother Duck flies over the water and crash lands to see if there is any bread, Father Duck close behind with seven fluffy ducklings in tow.

I turn left into the cut that leads to the main river and see more nests - another Swan's nest and two coots' nests. A white-beaked coot is feeding her young, their distinctive cheeping guiding her back to the nest. Just as I am admiring their antics, an ominous shadow falls over the water as a heron takes off from the roof of a neighbouring riverside holiday property, where fishing rods are left out from the previous night's fishing for bream etc. I clap my hands and bang with the oar to scare it away from the unprotected chicks and it lands on the bank again, standing on one leg, its long beak pointed to the sky, and I hope it will find a fish for dinner this time.

Oars gently swishing, I continue under the slender arms of the weeping willow and can now see the opening to the main river. An Egyptian goose rushes to the side of the corner plot, honking loudly, to warn off intruders against going too near her young goslings, even though they look almost fully grown by now.

Ahead one of the traditional gaff-rigged Hunter's Yachts is sailing by. To the right, the black-sailed wherry 'Albion' makes it way to Horning Ferry. A crested grebe dives under the water and comes up shaking a small eel in its beak. Another carrier is young on its back.

I turn round and row back home, thinking how lucky I am to have my own little piece of Norfolk nature at its best and knowing that it is there for me to see and treasure any time I choose to go on my own special nature trail.



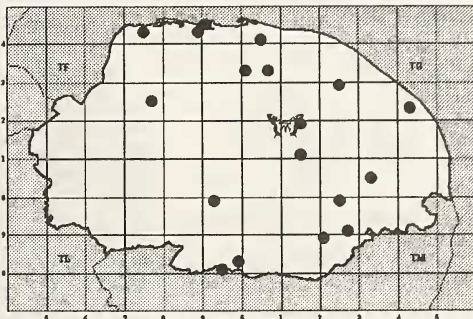


# Excursion Reports

## Featuring:

Felmingham  
Knettishall Heath  
Stoddy Estate  
Titchwell

● 2002-03 Field Meeting location  
Easton College  
Indoor meetings



## 'Wild Flowers Revealed': Felmingham

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2002

For the second of the three Wild Flowers revealed meetings about 15 hopeful botanists gathered at the Felmingham Weavers Way car park on a bright and breezy morning.

After an introduction to the day by leader Dr. Bob Leaney we set off in the direction of Aylsham. The plan was to walk a length of the Weavers Way - the old railway line - looking for some of the days special plants and then to double back along the minor roads for lunch at the car park, taking in some arable field plants (weeds?) along the way. All in all a distance of about three miles we are told.

In the dazzling sunshine of high summer the old railway line seemed particularly atmospheric. I could imagine it in its heyday with trains filling the air with noise or waiting quietly at the station for passengers now unremembered. Yellowhammers and skylarks sang, swallows and numerous butterflies were flying. Every so often we stopped for brief talks on any tricky or especially interesting species and genera from Dr. Leaney and others. Opportunities were taken to compare potential confusion species and to point out useful and interesting botanical minutiae.

Lunch, in the shade, was followed by another short talk from our leader, this time specifically on grasses, using specimens he

had collected and labeled. Passers-by must have wondered what we were up to standing in our large circle on the car park. Finally after a brief look at some of Dr. Leaney's recommended botanical books we set off in the direction of North Walsham, again on the old railway line eventually making our way onto Bryant's Heath for an hour or so. More interesting plants and discussions were enjoyed.

Thanks to Dr. Leaney and others for freely sharing their expertise. I thoroughly enjoyed the day.

David Lester

## Knettishall Heath Country Park

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2002

Knettishall Heath Country Park was the venue for the joint meeting with the British Gail Society. This was the second annual meeting of the two societies where the weather was not too kind, as with last year the day was something of a 'wash-out'. We were soon rather wet and those of us wearing spectacles quickly became 'sightless'. The day therefore was, consequently, severely shortened. Despite this the list amounted to 40 galls on 17 hosts of which 4 were attributed to fungi(MLO), 3 to Psyllids, 9 to Mites, 9 to Midges, 2 to Sawflies and 13 to Wasps.

### Field Maple:

Mite - *Aceria macrochelus*

Mite - *Artacris cephalonea*

### False Oat-grass:

Fungus - *Clavipes purpurea*

### Birch:

MLO or Fungus - *Taphrina betulina*

Mite - *Acalitus rudis*

Mite - *Aceria leionota*

### Hawthorne:

Mite - *Phyllocoptes goniathorax*

### Beech:

Mite - *Aceria stenaspis stenaspis*

Mite - *Eriophyes nervisequus fagineus*

### Ash:

Midge - *Dasineura fraxini*

Psyllid - *Psyllopsis fraxini*

Mite - *Eriophyes fraxinivorus*

### Goosegrass:

Mite - *Cecidophyes gali*

### Ground Ivy:

Midge - *Rondaniola bursaria*

Fungus - *Puccinia glechomatris*

### Hogweed:

Midge - *Macrolabis heraclei*

## Selected Plants from the excursion:

### Morning

White Ramping Fumitory *Capreolata fumaria*

Small-flowered Catchfly *Silene gallica*

Lesser Swine Cress *Coronopus didymus*

Dwarf Mallow *Malva neglecta*

Orpine *Sedum telephium*

Narrow-leaf Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus globosus*

Hairy Tare *Vicia hirsuta*

Smooth Tare *Vicia tetrasperma*

Hoary Willowherb *Epilobium parviflorum*

Broad-leaved Willowherb *Epilobium montanum*

Square-stemmed Willowherb *Epilobium tetragonum*

Short-fruited Willowherb *Epilobium obscurum*

American Willowherb *Epilobium ciliatum*

Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia*

Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hyrisidus*

and other similar species

Shaggy Soldier *Galinsoga quadrifida*

Hook Silky Bent *Apera spica-verti*

Slender Rush *Juncus tenuis*

### Afternoon

Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus*

Heath Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*

Common Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum*

Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina*

Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*

### Common Mallow:

Fungus - *Puccinia malvacearum*

### English Oak:

Wasp - *Andricus anthracina* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus fecundator* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus inflator* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus quercusbaccarum* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus kollari* (Ag)

Wasp - *Andricus quercuscalicis* (Ag)

Wasp - *Biorhiza pallida* (Sx)

Wasp - *Cynips longiventris* (Ag)

Wasp - *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum* (Ag)

Wasp - *Neuroterus albipes* (Ag)

Wasp - *Neuroterus numismalis* (Ag)

Midge - *Macrodiplosis dryobia*

Midge - *Macrodiplosis volvens*

Psyllid - *Trioza remota*

### Buckthorn:

Psyllid - *Trichochermes walkeri*

### Rose:

Sawfly - *Blennocampa phyllocolpa*

Midge - *Wachtliella rosarum*

Wasp - *Diplolepis eglanteriae*

Wasp - *Diplolepis nervosa*

### Bramble:

Midge - *Dasineura plicatrix*

### Grey Sallow:

Midge - *Iteomyia major*

### Osier:

Sawfly - *Rabdophaga clausilia*

### White Clover:

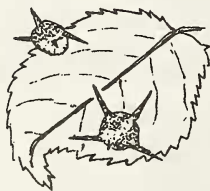
Midge - *Dasineura trifolii*

### Glossary:

Ag and Sx - "The majority of gall on the Oak are induced by cynipid wasps, many species of which have a bizarre life cycle of two quite different generations. One of the generations produces both male and female wasps. This is the Sexual (Sx) generation. The other produces all female, the Agamic (Ag) generation."

(From "The Study of Plant Galls in Norfolk" pp. 22-23)

Rex Hancy



Spiked Pea Gall on Rose Leaf  
Wasp - *Diplolepis nervosa*

## Stody Estate

Saturday, 31<sup>st</sup> August 2002

This outing was the suggestion of Simon Harrap and at the invitation of Ross Haddow, Estate Manager, who kindly acted as guide for the morning session, with Simon taking over in the afternoon. Attended by around 20 members of most persuasions, and with lovely bright hazy weather, we amassed a very respectable vascular plant list, with several scarce species meriting a grid reference. We also recorded fungi, birds and insects with good butterflies to the fore. A full list of all groups has been sent to Ross Haddow.

Ross kicked off with a brief history of the estate and its historic land-use. Comprising 3400 acres, it includes Heath House wood (part of Edgefield Woods on the 1-inch OS map), and on similar soils as Holt Lowes just over the B1149. Heath House wood was in fact open heath until the second world war. The cultivated land is also predominantly stony poor soils.

The estate is taking part in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and is at present leaving 2 metre wide, yearly cut grass strips along the field margins for ground nesting birds and butterflies, and to protect the usually more botanically rich field banks from herbicide and fertiliser drift. There is, however, an increasing realisation that 6 metre wide strips, also paid for by the scheme, allow better access for machinery for management, and there is also an intention to cultivate some of these strips on a yearly basis. Certainly from a botanical viewpoint this would seem desirable, as light stony soils are especially important for scarce arable weeds. We had little time for stubble edges, but even on the one 30 metre length we looked at next to the disused railway line we found three scarce weeds, sharp-leaved fluellin (*Kickxia elatine*), dwarf spurge (*Euphorbia exigua*) and green field-speedwell (*Veronica agrestis*). Com marigold (*Chrysanthemum segetum*) is also a feature of this region, and likely to benefit from this management.

After our talk we plunged straight into Heath House Wood at its southern end. The first part encountered was dominated by sycamore and bracken, but with a few fine rowens of great age, presumably survivors from heathland days. In this part we also came across an interesting bank, seemingly old and bereft of pollards or relict hedge - Simon Harrap believes this is the parish boundary across the old heath.

After a clearing where we found climbing corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*) and large colonies of wall lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*) and 'common' hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis tetrahit*) we descended into a wet patch with large bird's-foot trefoil and water mint. More interesting, however, was bulbous rush (*Juncus bulbosus*) on the path - like a spindly trailing toad rush, but giving itself away as usual by its vivipary - the production of young green plants from seeds still on the parent plant.

Ascending again we came into a very nicely managed wide ride, abutting land managed by the Forestry Commission on a 999 year lease from the estate. This ride was dominated by bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) and ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), but with good amounts of heath rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) together with western gorse (*Ulex gallii*), another scarce plant, and one even scarcer, green-ribbed sedge (*Carex binervis*). Here we also saw a grayling butterfly, a typical place for this species.

Returning to the cars we cut across a remarkably bare and stony pasture, reminiscent of the brecks, and with good amounts of century (*Centaureum erythraea*) and corn mint (*Mentha arvensis*) - this field would be worth a look earlier in the year. In a green lane just before the cars was golden rod (*Solidago vigaurea*). Like the gorse and sedge found earlier this now has less than 30 sites in Norfolk.

In the afternoon we moved over to look at the farmland, wood and disused railway around Beck Farm. In the meadow behind the farm were several rushes, including *Juncus acutiflorus*, bringing the rush tally up to 6 species. Also in the overgrown





ditches here were square-stalked St. John's-wort (*Hypericum tetrapetrum*), trailing St John's-wort (*H. Humifusum*), Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus gerincolatus*) and monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*), with yellow wagtail for the birders, and a spotted flycatcher family.

Moving across to North Meadow Covert we recorded abundant bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), wood speedwell (*Veronica montana*), bird cherry (*Prunus padus*) and the black bun-shaped fungus - King Alfred's Cakes or Cramp Balls (*Daldinia concentrica*). Country people used to put these in their pockets to ward off cramp. Just before the disused railway were the three scarce arable weeds already noted above.

The section of track near Beck Far was the second richest found on the NNNS Disused Railway Survey in 1981 (after Walsingham, visited with Gillian Becket earlier in the year). Some losses have occurred and the track edges and cutting sides need some more attention to mowing and raking off, but the line is still very rich - we recorded birds-foot (*Ornithopteris perpusillus*) and basil-thyme (*Clinopodium acinos*) on the track and tall broomrape (*Orobanchae elatior*), wild basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*), smooth tare (*Vicia tetrasperma*) and an abundant hawkweed (*Heracium sabaudum*) on the verges. A clouded yellow butterfly was the highlight of the day for non-botanists, bringing the day's butterfly list to 12, with speckled wood again as common as any. A dark bush cricket was also of interest.

On the way back over a tributary of the Glaven, a quick dip produced spiked water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and horned pondweed (*Zanichellia palustris*).

This was a really good day out in an attractive and varied area, which would certainly "repay further study".



Bob Leany

## Birding at Titchwell

Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2002

It was a dull and rather misty day for our field trip to RSPB reserve at Titchwell but it didn't spoil the bird-watching. Between us we "ticked" 77 species, a good haul for a winter day, largely thanks to the sharp eyes of our leader, Eunice Phipps.

We had hardly left the car park before we were picking out siskin, goldcrest and goldfinch in the alders beside the path to the visitor centre. Then, on the board walk, we were entertained by a pair of what have become almost rarities - bullfinches. From the main path we saw marsh harrier and little egret and a variety of duck and waders, including large flocks of golden plover, ruff, both godwits, spotted and common redshank, curlew and whimbrel. A few caught a fleeting glimpse of bearded tit.

From the first hide, the more determined sorted out the solitary black brant from the throng of brent geese.



The sea and the beach produced an interesting haul, including black- and red-throated divers, slavic grebe, eider and common scoter. A skua that stayed on the beach preening for some time started out as a great, became a pomarine, and was finally identified as an arctic. The long resident black-winged stilt put in its customary appearance but more elusive was the yellow-legged gull.

I am grateful to that inveterate lister, John Butcher, for compiling the day's checklist.

David Paul

### Excursions and Meetings

Tuesday February 18<sup>th</sup>

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:

'Moss and other grave matters'

-An illustrated talk by Robin Stevenson.

Sunday March 2<sup>nd</sup>

Mosses and Liverworts

at Tyrral's Wood

Leader: John Mott.

Please note that beginners will be particularly welcome. Bring a hand lens if you have one. Meet in Woodland Trust car park (TM205893) at 1100hrs.

Tuesday March 18<sup>th</sup>

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

followed by

'A "question" of spiders'

- An illustrated talk by Garth Coupland.

Sunday April 6<sup>th</sup>

Wayland Wood NWT Reserve

Leader: Paul Newport (Hon. Warden)  
Meet in Reserve car park (TL923996) at 1100hrs.

All the indoor meetings will be held in Room 7 of the sports and conference centre, Easton College, beginning at 7.30pm.

Bob Ellis

### Photographic Group Meetings

Monday March 24<sup>th</sup>

'Good way to "waste" time'

-An illustrated talk by Bill Fairless.

Every so often during trips out into the countryside, I would bump into Bill, we always had a chat, and I began to realise that he was a very capable naturalist indeed, - he also takes photographs, so I grabbed him quick for our programme, come along and enjoy an evening with this Gt Yarmouth naturalist - By the way, the title is his, not mine.

Tuesday April 15<sup>th</sup>

'A celebration of the seasons, "Spring".'

Photographic group lecture.

This is the last in this series, but surely Spring is the most magical season of the year, every thing new and pristine, fresh life every where, the rebirth of the countryside - come and marvel at the glories of an English Spring. Bring along some of your slides and show us your version of this annual awakening

All the above meetings will be held in Room 4 of the sports and conference centre, Easton College, beginning at 7.30pm.

Tony Howes



## Extinct Norfolk wetland plants in Cambridgeshire

We enjoy great botanical good fortune in Norfolk in possessing a number of wetland plants which, elsewhere in Britain, are very thin on the ground (and sometimes in the water) or even absent. But there are also a couple of wetland rarities lost from Norfolk which one must now journey into neighbouring Cambridgeshire to see.

One is Water Germander (*Teucrium scor-dium*), last recorded so far as Norfolk is concerned in the nineteenth century on the western rim of the county at Welney and Stowbridge, and in the east at Horning. It now persists as a mainland British native only at a single Fenland site beyond Wicken and in dune-slacks at Braunton Burrows in North Devon, though it once grew at a few scattered sites in a number of counties from Berkshire and Suffolk to Yorkshire, with the Fens as its heartland. Its extreme rarity now as a wild species is in marked contrast to its not uncommon presence in gardens in years gone by, where it was cultivated as a versatile medicinal plant: a vermicide, antidote to poisons, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and, in the form of a tincture, good for 'exhilarating and rousing torpid faculties' as Mrs. M. Grieve, the herbalist, put it. Certainly, its fresh leaves, if rubbed, give out a quite penetrating odour rather like garlic. It also yielded a yellow-green cloth dye.

No doubt it was chronic torpidity that prevented my spotting the plant in mid August this year at its Cambridgeshire pond (there are some of the whorled pale pinkish-purple flowers to be seen as early as June and the plants are usually still in bloom in October), but my excuse is that the old flooded pit is now rather overgrown with *Phragmites australis* reeds and other vegetation, and ringed with trees and shrubs. The species is said to prefer more open conditions and was down to 12 plants at one point in the mid-1990s, though its decline generally in Britain is doubtless also attributable to the usual suspects of land drainage and 'reclamation', and to deteriorated water quality.

The Cambridgeshire Water Germander has been the subject of an English Nature 'Species Recovery' Programme and so, having discovered that it had been introduced to the adjacent Kingfishers Bridge Wetland Project site, I returned on 30th August, this time with Bob Ellis, hoping to see at least a few plants in their new home. We were in the event rewarded beyond reasonable hope. First, the 150-acre site itself has been transformed since 1995 from top-grade arable farmland to an attractive approximation of a slice of the old Fenland landscape, not least because a large mere with islands has been excavated (a couple of birdwatching hides

now crown one of the vegetated spoil-heaps!), which is used by wintering wildfowl. A mosaic of reedbed, fen, ditches, ponds, scrapes, wet meadows and even low limestone cliffs has been created. Common Terns are present as are breeding Marsh Harriers, Sand Martins and Kingfishers and it is hoped to attract the Bittern. 300 plant species have colonised the site so far, in addition to those deliberately introduced.

Our second delight was to see the Water Germander in abundant if rather restrained glory. 'Thriving' for once seems no exaggeration, as there has been a very high recruitment rate and over 7,500 healthy- and vigorous-looking plants of this officially vulnerable rarity have appeared. Though these perennial plants with stoloniferous creeping rootstocks produce viable seed, Roger Beercoft, Project Consultant to the Kingfisher Bridge Wetland Trust, told us that broken-off or nibbled-off fragments of the plants seem to root easily and are probably spread about by the feeding birds. The plants that we saw grow, with much Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), near a broad dyke in a fairly open community with barish patches, on land flooded in winter.

Fen (or 'Great Fen') Ragwort (*Senecio paludosus*) has also been introduced at Kingfishers Bridge. We didn't go to see this critically endangered RDB perennial species, as we had earlier paid our respects at its only remaining native station alongside a main road not far from Ely where it was found in 1972, four years after the excavation of its ditch habitat, having been assumed extinct in Britain since 1860. We were rather late in the season and its best flowering heads, in the form of loose panicles, had gone over - quite literally - as most of the now-brittle, tall stems had been broken and bent over, presumably in part by the turbulence from the heavy, closely-passing traffic, which accounts of this station almost invariably mention. (The open site was also noticeably subject to gusts of wind on our visit.) In contrast to the Water Germander at Kingfishers Bridge, the roadside Fen Ragwort has unfortunately demonstrated what the 1999 RDB calls 'poor reproductive performance', possibly owing to the buffeting it suffers and a scarcity of pollinating insects. However, it has now been introduced to Wicken and Woodwalton Fens. At one time Fen Ragwort also grew in Lincolnshire and Suffolk. A *Flora of Norfolk* notes that this plant with large saw-toothed leaves was described in 1714 as growing in 'great plenty' between Outwell and Stowbridge on the old Podike, and there was a record from near Filby Broad for 1876.

A disappointment at Kingfishers Bridge was not seeing the Ribbon-leaved (or 'Grass-leaved') Water plantain (*Alisma gramineum*), another critically-endangered RDB species found now only at the edge of the artificial Westwood Great Pool in Worcestershire and

possibly in the River Glen and associated drains in Lincolnshire. This annual or short-lived perennial was first recorded in Britain at Westwood in 1920. There is a strong Norfolk interest here in that the 1975 *Supplement to the Flora of Norfolk* records the fact that Richard Libbey and Eric Swann found the plant in the Forty-foot Drain at Manea in Cambridgeshire a week after making the first and only Norfolk record at Langmere in 1972, where it was flowering submerged in about 18 inches of water. The discoverers felt that migrating wild fowl from Denmark and the Baltic were responsible for its appearance at both sites. The plant had perhaps been seen at Langmere about a dozen years earlier, but its identity had not been confirmed.

Though introduced at Kingfishers Bridge as the subject of another 'Species Recovery' programme, Roger told us that there had been no sign of the *Alisma* in the last year or two, and that it has probably died out. A second introduction may be made to this site, now locally further modified. Some authorities think that the species requires eutrophic water: possibly the clean water seeping from an adjacent limestone ridge at Kingfishers Bridge has, ironically, now rendered conditions rather too pure! The Kingfishers Bridge Project site is not at present open to visitors except by arrangement, though the Trust intends to provide on-site information and signage, has issued a leaflet for public distribution mentioning rarities such as the Water Germander, and holds 'Friends Days' twice a year for those who subscribe.

After thanking Roger for making the trip from his Suffolk home, we continued to the Wicken Fen car park for a picnic lunch and botanical stroll, then on to the famous Cherry Hinton Chalk Pit on the eastern fringe of Cambridge where Moon Carrot (*Seseli libanotis*) and Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) were in flower, not to mention a veritable *Buddleja davidii* jungle.

Stephen Martin

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by April 1st, 2003 to the following address: Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8GD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net





# Norfolk Mammal Recording Form

Please use this record sheet to record mammal sightings within Norfolk. All records will be passed to the Norfolk Biological Records Centre and will be used in production of the Norfolk Mammal Report unless you request otherwise. It would be helpful if you could return forms as soon as completed and all forms for each year should be returned by 31st January the following year. Your help in collating mammal sightings for Norfolk will contribute to our understanding of these species and help towards their conservation. ***Thank you for your help.***

Name:	Tel:		Postcode:
Address:	Your name and address are stored electronically alongside your mammal records and as such will be passed to the Norfolk Biological Records Centre. Please let the County Mammal Recorder know if you object to this.		

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Please return this form to the County Mammal Recorder: Mike Toms, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU. Tel. 01842-750050. E-mail [mike.toms@bto.org](mailto:mike.toms@bto.org)

## ding Form

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