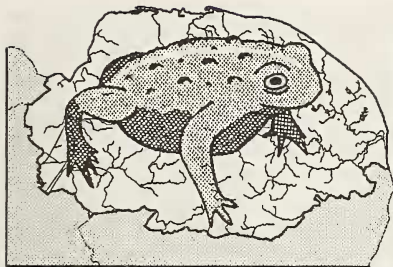


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The Norfolk NATTERJACK

Website: www.nnns.org.uk

Number 88
February 2005

Toad-in-the-hole....

Another new year and the first edition of *'The Norfolk Natterjack'* for 2005. I trust this new year has started well for you all. On 6th January there were two bumblebees foraging in the garden and on 9th January a Peacock butterfly was spotted also in the garden. I'm sure these mild winters will spell disaster for many insects if they emerge too early.

Throughout the year I will be pleased to receive your comments and natural history notes for *'Natterjack'* and if you are leading an excursion please arrange for a short account of the day to be passed on to me. Many new and exciting discoveries are waiting to be found. Good hunting.

FF

100 years ago

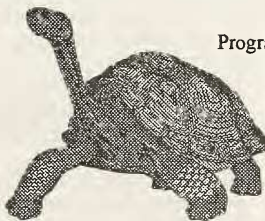
Late in March [1905] a southward migration of Cetacea was observed off the Norfolk coast. They were "Scouters" (White-beaked Dolphins), Grampuses or Porpoises. Mr Lowne, of Fuller's Hill, saw the shoal passing Yarmouth (on the 19th), their "ranks" extending, he stated, from the Wellington Pier to the St. Nicholas Lightship. Three or four at a time sprang from the water, and all were merrily making south. He thought they seemed about 6 feet each in length, and were, in his estimation, Porpoises. They must have mustered two or three hundred.

From *'Natural History Notes from Yarmouth'* by AH Patterson - NNNS Transactions Vol. VIII - page 315.

Programme Change

The subject of Mark Cocker's illustrated talk to the Society on Tuesday, 19th April, 2005 at 7.30p.m. has been changed to 'The Galapagos Islands'. The venue remains the John Innes Centre.

Mark's talk on 'Bird's Britannica' previously scheduled for the April meeting has had to be postponed until October due to a delay in the anticipated publication date of his book of the same title co-authored with Richard Mabey. Apologies to members for this change, but we look forward to the bonus of an evening devoted to the fascinating natural history of the Galapagos.



Stephen Martin
Programme Committee

Grovel time!

In my haste to let members know that Rubyna Sheikh and Nick Elsey were taking over the distribution and sale of the Bird and Mammal Report, I committed the cardinal sin (for a journalist, albeit retired) of misspelling Rubyna's name. It is "Sheikh", not "Shiekh". Mind you, somewhere down the line the final "I" disappeared from my name. These things happen!

David Paull

My apologies to David for dropping the last 'l' from his name. For some reason the DTP programme didn't print exactly what it showed on screen, possibly it was just outside the text frame limit. - Ed.

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HOME BIRDS 2004

Readers may recall that a list of birds recorded on, over or from home at Frettenham (TG240171) during 1998, 2000 and 2002, appeared in *The Norfolk Natterjack* nos. 64, 72 and 80. During 2004 (a leap year), I again maintained a daily list, this time on 350 days (compared with 343, 343 and 352 in the earlier years). Blank days were as follows: one each in January, February and March, three in May, two in July, one in August, two in October, and five in December; there were no blank days in April, June, September and November.

In general, daily observations were gathered over periods of between one and six hours; two hours having been the average. The 2004 daily average was 22.2 species (compared with 20.2, 22.7 and 21.6 in the earlier years). In all, 72 species were noted in 2004 (likewise compared with 75, 75 and 69).

Twenty-eight species were observed in each month. Four more species, Sparrowhawk, Goldfinch, Lapwing and Mallard, 'missed-out' only in February, February again, August and December, 2004, respectively.

Habitats visible from my vantage point include gardens, a small fish-pond, 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 each month.

1= Wood Pigeon 350M	33 Herring Gull 63
1= Starling 350M	34 Cormorant 62M
3 Collared Dove 349M	35 Turtle Dove 58
4 Blackbird 345M	36 Wren 57M
5 Chaffinch 337M	37 Sparrowhawk 56
6 Stock Dove 328M	38 Green Woodpecker 53M
7 Blue Tit 326M	39 Goldfinch 49
8 Carrion Crow 324M	40 Fieldfare 41
9 Greenfinch 319M	41 Grey Heron 40
10 Magpie 313M	42 Pheasant 36
11 Great Tit 300M	43 Coal Tit 35
12 Rook 288M	44 Long-tailed Tit 31
13 House Sparrow 239M	45= Red-legged Partridge 30
14 Dunnock 238M	45= Skylark 30
15 Black-headed Gull 229M	47 Goldcrest 20
16 Mistle Thrush 225M	48 Whitethroat 11
17 Robin 213M	49 Teal 9
18 Jackdaw 199M	50= Willow Warbler 7
19 Pied Wagtail 191M	50= Linnet 7
20 Lesser Black-backed Gull 173M	52= Greylag Goose 5
21 Common Gull 170	52= Yellowhammer 5
22 Kestrel 141M	54= Mute Swan 4
23 Great Black-backed Gull 136M	54= Hobby 4
24 Jay 133M	54= Cuckoo 4
25 Swallow 125	54= Sand Martin 4
26 Song Thrush 121M	58= Blackcap 3
27 Great Spotted Woodpecker 120M	58= Spotted Flycatcher 3
28 House Martin 115	60= Shoveler 2
29 Swift 99	60= Marsh Harrier 2
30 Lapwing 84	62= Bewick's Swan 1
31 Mallard 71	62= Pink-footed Goose 1
32 Redwing 66	62= Canada Goose 1
	62= Egyptian Goose 1
	62= Shelduck 1
	62= Oystercatcher 1
	62= Lesser Spotted Woodpecker 1
	62= Garden Warbler 1
	62= Siskin 1
	62= Bullfinch 1
	62= Reed Bunting 1

Geoffrey Kelly

NOISOME FERMENT OF THE EARTH

During the last few months I have concentrated my photography outings mainly to the subject of fungi, the attraction for me is their diverse range, so many shapes, colours, and sizes. The great advantage of course is that whatever you do they are not going to run or fly away, always a problem with birds and mammals. So you can take your time, and compose an attractive photograph, taking out the odd leaf or blade of grass, even adding vegetation if deemed desirable.

The object for me, and it is a very personal thing, is to create an attractive picture out of the materials at hand, but to have the finished result as natural as

possible. The nature of fungi very often is to grow in rather shaded conditions, with the natural light limited, so I find it an advantage to use flash, especially for those that grow in woodland. I always use a tripod, this particular piece of equipment allows me to get the camera right down on the ground, giving an earth worms view of the subject.

By using a wide-angle lens it is possible to have the fungi well shown, but with the natural terrain also showing in the background, be this woodland, grass meadow, or what ever. I have had much enjoyment and pleasure over the last few months finding and photographing these superb creations of nature. Putting names to them is a different matter, many do not have common names, and as I don't class myself

as a mycologist, am not into spore counts etc:- therefore I often have difficulty identifying them.

A good friend, George McCarthy, has been an inspiration. In 2001 he published a book 'Photographing Fungi In The Field' it's full of beautiful photographs, each one a work of art. It is not a technical book, just a celebration of these enchantingly beautiful manifestations of the natural world.

Fungi have not always been looked upon with favour, in 185 BC the physician Nicander

referred to them as 'The evil ferment of the earth'. In the 17th century Gerard had this to say, 'Some are venomous, others not so noisome, and neither of them very wholesome meat'. He also talks about the country practice of burning 'Fusse Balls (puff balls) 'To kill or smother bees, for which purpose they fitly serveth'.

Collecting fungi for the table is considered by many to be a worthy practice, but unless the poisonous varieties are well known it is probably best left to the experts, it would be so easy to become unwell, or worse.

Tony Howes

Wells East Bank

It's the end of October, and starting to feel like winter. That means that my favourite bird-watching perch, on top of Wells East Bank, is getting interesting again. The Brents are around, croaking away, and there seem to be a good scattering of young ones this year. A few weeks ago a single Greenshank turned up, feeding in its frenzied fashion, so different from the resident Redshanks. They just walk about, prodding in the mud here and there, while the Greenshank charged around in shallow water, its beak stretched out, no doubt catching Gobies or shrimps.

The winter population of Grey Plovers is back. They call out plaintively to each other, and always look thoroughly fed up to me, hunched up as if they are feeling the cold, which they must surely be used to, nesting in the far north. They go around singly, unlike their cousins the Golden Plovers, which fly in large flocks, often with Lapwings. A couple of Bar-tailed Godwits have adopted the area, perhaps for their winter quarters. Their beaks being straight, they can "walk around their own heads" while the beak is plunged into the mud; Curlews can't do that!

A couple of weeks ago I was doing my usual check on Egrets, of which half-a-dozen can sometimes be seen from that spot, scattered over the marsh. Two, apparently in company (which is unusual), through the binoculars resolved into an Egret and a Spoonbill. Previously I have only seen Spoonbills on Holkham fresh marshes, in spring. It seemed that there was some sort of "love/hate" relationship between the two; the Egret would occasionally lunge at the Spoonbill, even though the latter was distinctly bulkier. The Spoonbill would then fly off for a few yards, and both would begin feeding again, the Egret spearing its prey, and the Spoonbill sifting with a side-to-side movement. They were there again the following day, but I haven't seen the Spoonbill since then.

The numbers of Pink-feet passing over the town have been quite incredible, their long skeins filling the sky as they commute between their roosting and feeding areas. These lines of geese are featured, by the way, on the new fence either side of the equally new gates of my old stamping-ground, Wells Field Study Centre. The gates themselves are even more impressive, featuring schools of fish and very realistic kelp - all the work of a black-smithing artist!

Paul Banham

"A long way from home"

In August 2004, my stepson Clive and his family spent a few days camping in the New Forest. The weather was rather mixed, including several very wet days.

As is often the case with camping, it rained on the last day, so they were unable to travel home with a dry tent. The rain was so heavy that all they could do was quickly pack things into the car and make a quick escape.

Back in Norfolk about ten days later, it was a lovely sunny day, and the family decided to go to Eccles beach, near Happisburgh.

Once on the beach, Clive tipped the windbreaks out of their bag, and was taken aback when a 9" Adder dropped out as well !

The young reptile must have sought shelter in the bag from the New Forest "monsoons". It had somehow remained uninjured when the windbreaks were stored in the bag, and then survived for over a week in the boot of Clive's car.

Clive managed to get the small Adder into a bucket and then released it in the Eccles dunes. Being slightly biased, I would have preferred its new home to have been Buxton Heath, but, given the unusual circumstances, and armed with no proper collecting equipment, I think Clive did an admirable job.

So, if you're wandering through the Eccles dunes next summer, and you see a nice little Adder, just remember, it may be the "New Forest Adder", a long way from home.

*Colin Penny,
Mátárfűd, Hungary.*



Not only moths come to light ! (2)

Even some wingless arthropods have been found in my moth traps and some of the most regular are harvestmen like *Oligolophus tridens*, which found its way in on the 20th September 2004. This is one of the commoner ground living species, which is said to favour "open woodland". It does climb quite commonly at night and may have "drifted" into the trap from the trees that are close-by.

Earlier in the month, on the 5th, I was a little surprised to find a whirligig beetle scuttling around the bottom of the trap. It was a shining black with a brassy lustre and was identified by Martin Collier as the common *Gyrinus substriatus*. This is a common species found in still or stagnant water, an apt description of the adjacent pond in which I have not seen whirligig beetles for several years but presumably they are still there. A couple of days later the delightful two-tailed mayfly *Cloeon dipterum* was in the same trap. This again is an inhabitant of still water with emergence from late April to early November. The sub-imago, or dun, is the Pond Olive or Lake Olive of the fly fisherman, which name is also given to the male imago, or spinner, but the fishermen know the female, which this specimen was, as the Apricot Spinner.

On the 10th September one of the caddis flies in the trap was a comparatively small, banded one which is not unlike the migrant moth, *Nomophila noctuella* the Rush Veneer, when seen through ageing eyes and the wrong glasses. It was *Mystacides longicornis*, which is common in ponds and lakes and known to fly fishermen as the Grouse Wing. A larger caddis, *Halesus digitatus*, an autumn flying species was present in the traps for much of September.

Also through most of September I saw the crane-fly *Tipula paludosa* which although on the wing from April to October is most abundant in the autumn. On the 30th September they were joined by just one *Tipula oleracea* another of the more undistinguished species of crane-fly which has the same overall flight period but is most frequently seen in May and June. I have always thought it a little confusing for non-specialists and particularly children that both crane-flies and harvestmen are known as daddy-longlegs.

On the 18th October I noted a broad-nosed weevil in the trap that caught my eye because its elytra were covered with pubescent scales. It was *Barynotus obscurus*, a common and widely distributed species in open grassy and herbaceous areas. It is polyphagous, probably parthenogenetic as no British males are known, and is also wingless which makes its presence in the trap quite intriguing. About the same time, on the 25th October, I found the most attractive soldier fly *Sargus bipunctatus*

in one of the traps. This is a really handsome insect with green thorax, black abdomen with, in the female, a pair of conspicuous orange-red side patches. It is an autumnal species with larvae known from cow dung, compost heaps and from the rotting fruiting bodies of the bracket fungus *Polyporus squamosus*. Interestingly the only other specimen I have seen was a year earlier in September 2003, also in the light trap.

At the end of October, on the 29th, I found a leaf beetle in the trap, which I thought was *Chrysolina oricalcia* (confirmed by Martin Collier). This is uncommon (Notable B status) with larvae feeding on various umbellifers and whilst the regularly recognised foodplants are cow parsley and upright hedge-parsley it also feeds on hemlock, which grows in some profusion in and around the garden.

Continuing the theme of flightless species, on the 23rd November I found a micropterous female Tree Damsel Fly, *Himacerus apterus* in the trap. This is a predatory tree-dwelling bug, which again may have "drifted" into the trap from surrounding trees. However I do find it somewhat difficult to explain flightless arthropods regularly coming to light.

My thanks to Martin Collier for identifying the whirligig beetle and confirming the identity of others.

Mike Hall

Another record of *Stratiomys potamida* in Norwich

I was intrigued to read of Stuart Pastons' recent "unexpected sighting" (*Natterjack* 87) because I too saw a female Banded General *Stratiomys potamida* in Norwich in early August, on the 6th to be precise.

However, you could describe my sighting as even more unexpected because I found the insect at my place of work, sitting quietly on the third-floor windowsill in the main Norwich Union office block in Surrey Street!

Realising it was slightly off course, and wanting to confirm its identification (this was the first example I had seen), I potted it and took it home. Having consulted Stubbs and Drake (*British Soldierflies and their allies*), I released it next morning in more suitable habitat near Catfield Fen.

Andy Beaumont





2004 YOUNG NORFOLK NATURE WRITER AWARD

The prizes in the 2004 Young Norfolk Nature Writer Award, set up in memory of Michael Seago, were won by two of the youngest entrants. Seven-year-old Emily McLaren won the up-to-11 age group with her diary of her visits to Sheringham and Beeston Regis Commons, and James Goldsmith, 11, won the 11-15 group with his essay on "A Year in Colby", in the style of the Eastern Daily Press. In the Countryside columns that Michael Seago wrote for many years. They received their engraved plaques and £50 cheques from Mrs Sylvia Seago at a ceremony at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Hickling Broad reserve. The award is jointly organised by the Trust and the Society.

Emily's diary included a map of the commons with specific areas neatly coloured. She included a description, with her own drawings, of the life cycle of the frog and other notes on lizards, slow worms, ramshorn snails and hedgehogs. What the judges liked was the inclusion of lists of species that Emily had noted on her visits. A recorder for the future?

What particularly impressed the judges about James's essay was his description of what he did after he found a hedgehog that had been injured by a garden trimmer – as you can read in the extracts that follow:

"Who says the countryside is a boring place for children to live. I have lived in Colby with my family for a year now and every day is a new chance to spot wildlife of every kind, from butterflies to deers, hares to hornets.

"The year started for me in the autumn. The first thing I noticed was the barn owls screeching in our copper beech tree at night keeping me awake, closely followed by its hooting cousin the tawny ... After the cornfields were cut there was a twitching sea of ears from hares that were foraging in among the stubble.

"As we moved into winter a family of pheasants decided to set up home on our compost heap ... Early one snowy morning I was greeted by a fox who darted off like a rocket when he noticed me coming. I was concerned that he may have attacked the pheasants but they all survived and remain regular visitors to our garden. After I saw the fox I made sure that my pet rabbit was extra secure.

"The best sighting of the winter was the wonderful barn owl, gliding across a local meadow. We saw this magical bird of prey several times over a period of two or three weeks. I loved watching its graceful beauty as it scanned the meadow for rodents.

"As the weather began to warm up there was a flurry of activity among the garden birds, with nests being built all around the garden including wrens, blackbirds, chaffinch and robin. The male pheasant was kept busy keeping an eye on the four females, flapping his wings and screeching like an old car horn.

"I think that blackbirds make clumsy parents as their babies all fell out of the nest while they still had very little in the way of feathers. Unfortunately they all died apart from one who could be heard cheeping all around the garden for weeks as his worn-out parents kept up a continuous stream of food. Amazingly we think he survived. He could certainly fly last time we saw him.

"While passing a nearby field I noticed some hares. To my amazement two got on their hind legs and began boxing. This went on for a few seconds before they chased off. This for me was the highlight of the year.

"The most unfortunate find of the year was a hedgehog which I named 'Bertie'. He was wandering in the road injured by a garden trimmer. I took him to the local hedgehog rescue but he was too badly injured and he died a few days later. The lady at the hedgehog rescue told me that this happened a lot in our area. This sad incident has prompted me to do a leaflet drop in my local area, asking people to check for wildlife before they use trimmers."



'Millennium Atlas + 5' – nearly there!

Back in May's *Natterjack* I published an article explaining the new 5-year national mapping project for butterflies. At that time several of Norfolk's 10-km squares had virtually no species recorded during 2000–2004. Well, it hasn't been a great summer for filling in those gaps – not like last year. But you've certainly been trying! To all those who've contacted me and sent records, very many thanks. The 65 squares wholly or mainly in Norfolk now have an average of about 23 species per square, with a minimum of 13 and a maximum of 31. I've scoured some of the 'teen' squares to find extra species and it can be a struggle, since most lack nature reserves or other non-agricultural habitats. Some of the more localised species may be genuinely absent.

Of course, there are still a lot of silly gaps, and I would really appreciate it if any members living in or near the following places would let me know at least what they've seen in their gardens over the last five years:

Alburgh, Anmer, Binham, Brooke, Broome, Burgh St Peter, Caister, Chedgrave, Ditchingham, East and West Winch, Fakenham, Freethorpe, Gillingham, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, Grimston, Haddiscoe, Halvergate, Harleston, Harpley, Hempsall, Hemsby, Hilgay, Hindringham, Hockwold, Kettlestone, King's Lynn, Kirby Row, Loddon, Massingham, Newton Flotman, Pulham, Raynham, Reedham, Rougham, Roydon, Rudham, Saxlingham Nethergate, Scraby, Seething, Shotesham, Snoring, Southery, Tasburgh, Terrington, Thurlton, Walsingham, Watlington, Weasenham, Weeting, Wighton, Woodton, Wootton

Dates aren't essential – the only important things are the place and year, and some idea of numbers if possible. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Patrick Bonham (Butterfly Conservation county recorder)
Woodland View, Dixon Road, North Walsham NR28 9EA
(tel. 01692 403917, email wv@lineone.net)

Predator / prey relationships

On the 24th July 2004 I was in my garden looking at a crab spider, *Misumena vatia*, on sea holly. It had caught what looked like and could have been the hoverfly *Eristalis tenax* and was duly extracting its nourishment. Suddenly a common wasp, *Vespa vulgaris*, flew in and set about attacking the prey very vigorously. In a short time it had cut

off the hoverfly's abdomen and flown off with it.

After a short while the wasp returned and attacked the remainder of the hoverfly, showing no fear of the spider and eventually wrestling the prey away and flying off with it.

The spider retreated without showing any sign of attacking the wasp.

Roland Rogers

New ladybird arrives in Britain

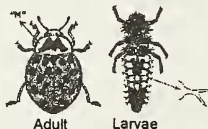
Harmonia axyridis, which is variously called the harlequin ladybird or the multi-coloured ladybug, is a deadly threat to many insects, including other ladybirds.

Introduced from Asia into North America for bio-control of aphids, the harlequin has swept across the States. In the last decade its catastrophic increase in numbers has threatened endemic North American ladybirds and other aphid predators. Harlequin ladybirds are still sold in continental Europe by bio-control companies, and it now roams across France, Belgium and Holland, with numbers soaring annually.

Now, it is in Britain. On 19 September 2004 an 'odd' ladybird was found in a garden in Essex. The ladybird was identified by Dr Michael Majerus of

the Genetics Department, Cambridge University. Dr Majerus said, "This is without doubt the ladybird I have least wanted to see here. Now many of our ladybirds will be in direct competition with this aggressively invasive species, and some will simply not cope".

Michael Majerus can be contacted at the Dept. of Genetics, University of Cambridge CB2 3EH; e-mail: m.majerus@gen.cam.ac.uk If anyone finds these ladybirds please also let our insect recorders know; Tony Irwin, Castle Museum, Norwich and Ken Durrant, 18 The Avenue, Sheringham, NR26 8DG. Ken is writing an account of the first Norfolk records for the 2005 'Transactions'.



New Warden

I am now the Wildlife Warden for Hales Green in South Norfolk. Any records from this site will be gratefully received for inclusion into an annual report. For those who have not visited the site it is situated off the A146 Beccles - Norwich Road at TG375965.

Any records or for further information please contact me on (01502) 569136, Mobile: 0781 0576427 or by email: colin.jacobs@tesco.net

Colin Jacobs

Would all contributors please send your notes etc. to the editor as soon as possible by April 1st, 2005 to the following address: Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or by email to: francis.f@virgin.net

