



# The Norfolk Natterjack



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*... Researching  
Norfolk's Wildlife*

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of the  
Norfolk & Norwich  
Naturalists' Society



# Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

Founded 1869

Reg. Charity No. 291604

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**Cover image:** Broad-bordered Bee-hawk Moth (John Furse)

The moth is nectaring on Garlic Mustard, a plant that has returned to Holt Country Park following conservation clearance work - see page 14

# Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society Recorders

## Mammals

General	Francis Farrow 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD E-mail: francis.farrow@btinternet.com
Badgers	John Crouch 2, Chestnut Cottages, Guton Hall Lane, Brandiston, Norwich, NR10 4PH E-mail: norfolkbadgers@yahoo.co.uk
Bats	John Goldsmith Barn Cottage, Wheelers Lane, Seething, Norwich, NR15 1EJ E-mail: john@aurum-ecology.co.uk
Cetaceans	Carl Chapman Falcon Cottage, Hungry Hill, Northrepps, Cromer, NR27 0LN E-mail: Carl@wildlifetoursandeducation.co.uk

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## Reptiles & Amphibians

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## Fish

Freshwater	Prof. Gordon H. Copp Station Master's House, 56 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St. Andrew, Norwich, NR7 0QF Email: gordon.copp@gmail.com
Marine	Rob Spray & Dawn Watson 1 Town Houses, Yoxford Rd, Sibton, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 2LX E-mail: hello@seasearcheast.org.uk

## Molluscs (Land)

Position vacant

## Insects

Butterflies	Andy Brazil 47 Cavell Road, Lakenham, Norwich, NR1 2LL E-mail: recorder@norfolkbutterflies.co.uk
Moths	Jim Wheeler Iveygreen, Town St., Upwell, Wisbech, PE14 9AD E-mail: jim@norfolkmoths.org.uk
Beetles	Martin Collier Four Winds, Church Close, West Runton, Cromer, NR27 9QY E-mail: norfolk.beetles@gmail.com
Bumblebees / Grasshoppers & Crickets	David Richmond 42, Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norwich, NR10 4LS E-mail: richmond.42rr@btinternet.com
Lacewings, Sponge & Waxflies, Antlions, Alderflies, Snakeflies, Scorpionflies & Snow flea	Paul Cobb 34, Staithe Road, Heacham, King's Lynn, PE31 7EE E-mail: paulcobb@outlook.com
Aphids	Dr J I T Thacker 38, Gladstone, Street, Norwich, NR2 3BH E-mail: jit@caleopteryx.com
Dragonflies	Dr Pam Taylor Decoy Farm, Decoy Rd, Potter Heigham, Gt Yarmouth, NR29 5LX E-mail: pamtaylor@british-dragonflies.org.uk
Parasitic Hymenoptera	Graham Hopkins 15, Matlock Road, Norwich, NR1 1TL E-mail: hopkinsecology@yahoo.co.uk
Solitary Bees & Wasps	Tim Strudwick 16, Beech Way, Brundall, Norwich, NR13 5ND E-mail: timstrud@tiscali.co.uk
Ants	Doreen Wells 1, Cobden Terrace, Northgate Street, Gt Yarmouth, NR30 1BT E-mail: wells_doreen@hotmail.com
Hoverflies	Stuart Paston 25 Connaught Road, Norwich, NR2 3BP E-mail: stuartpaston@yahoo.co.uk
Terrestrial Heteroptera (Land bugs, excld. Aphids, leaf-hoppers etc.)	Rob Coleman, Springfields, North Walsham Road, Felmingham, North Walsham, NR28 0JU E-mail: mail@rob-coleman.co.uk
Froghoppers / Treehoppers and Leafhoppers	Colin Lucas, 49 Mill Road, Beccles, NR34 9UT E-mail: colinbh@hotmail.co.uk
Other Insects	Dr Tony Irwin Natural History Dept., Shirehall, Market Avenue, Norwich, NR1 3JQ E-mail: tony.Irwin@norfolk.gov.uk

## Spiders

Phillip Collyer, 9 Lowther Road, Norwich, NR4 6QN  
E-mail: pipcollyer@yahoo.co.uk

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Woodlice & Pseudoscorpions Dick Jones 14, Post Office Rd., Dersingham, King's Lynn,  
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Freshwater Invertebrates Dr Dan Hoare, Wheatfen Broad, Covey Lane, Surlingham, Norwich,  
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Marine Invertebrates (incl. Molluscs) Rob Spray & Dawn Watson 1 Town Houses, Yoxford  
Marine Algae (Seaweeds) Road, Sibton, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 2LX  
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Vascular Plants  
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West Norfolk Richard Carter 67 Doddshill, Dersingham, King's Lynn, PE30 4DJ  
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Mosses & Liverworts  
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Lichens Peter Lambley The Cottage, Elsing Rd., Lyng, Norwich, NR9 5RR  
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Fungi Dr Tony Leech 3, Eccles Road, Holt, NR25 6HJ E-mail: [tonyleech3@gmail.com](mailto:tonyleech3@gmail.com)

Other Taxa Martin Horlock Biodiversity Information Officer, R301 County Hall, Martineau  
Lane, Norwich, NR1 2SG E-mail: [martin.horlock@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:martin.horlock@norfolk.gov.uk)

Referee:  
Charophytes Alex Prendergast, Bramble Cottage, Low Road, Tasburgh, NR15 1AR  
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## **Special interest groups**

*NNNS Photographic Group:*  
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Other *Special Interest Groups*, although not part of the NNNS, have similar aims to that of the Society:

*Norfolk Amphibian & Reptile Group:* P Parker, White Row Cottages, Leziate Drove,  
Pott Row, King's Lynn, PE32 1DB Tel 01553 630842  
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*Norfolk Bat Group:* J G Goldsmith, The Barn Cottage, Seething, Norwich, NR15 1EJ  
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*Norwich Bat Group:* S Phillips E-mail: [info@norwichbatgroup.org.uk](mailto:info@norwichbatgroup.org.uk)

*Norfolk Flora Group:* S Harmer / R Carter, 67 Doddshill, Dersingham, King's Lynn, PE31 6LP.  
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R W Ellis, 11 Havelock Road, Norwich, NR2 3HQ  
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## Toad-in-the-hole....

There were a few teething problems with the new printing, however, I trust they are being overcome and the newsletter is looking a whole lot better. The articles are varied in nature and I hope full of interest. You can find notes on a spider parasite to a rogue opportunist grey squirrel on the hunt.

My thanks for those who have contributed, especially Stephen Martin and Keith Fox for sending in the Excursion details and to Thelma Macfarland who produced the line drawings at very short notice.

**FF**

### A Spider Problem

*Robin Stevenson*

I took the following picture in Swanton Novers Great Wood on April 15<sup>th</sup> and it shows that there is a small white grub-like thing attached to the spider's back. I wondered whether this might be some sort of parasite, or perhaps just something which was hitching a ride. I asked Pip Collyer (Norfolk Spider Recorder) if he was able to shed any light on the situation.



Image: Robin Stevenson

*Pip replied as follows:*

Almost certainly the grub of a parasite. They always seem to attach themselves to the front of the abdomen presumably so that they can survive the several moults that the spider goes through. I believe that the spider skin splits along the back so the grub can then easily move onto the freshly moulted part of the spider.

This is only my theory that I put forward and I have not discussed it with other arachnologists. It might also be that the grub fixes itself on the front of the abdomen because the spider can't get at it to dislodge it from there. Perhaps grubs that fix themselves elsewhere on the spider do not survive.

Whatever the reason I have only ever seen them in the position shown in your excellent photo. I assume that the spider does not survive the experience.

The spider looks like a *Tetragnatha* but it is not possible to say which species.

## Emperor Moths

John Furse

Image: John Furse

In the early afternoon of May Day, I did one of my regular walks around Gramborough Hill, Salthouse. On my return towards the Beach Road, and as I passed the first bramble patch, what I thought for a fleeting moment was one of the migrant Large Tortoiseshells flew away from me. I followed what I quickly realised were two Emperor Moths, 'joined together'. They dropped into the grass nearby, whereupon I was able to take a few pictures. This is only two days later than the male I had photographed in the same spot last year.



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## Tortoise Bug

Francis Farrow

The Tortoise Bug *Eurygaster testudinaria* (Geoffroy, 1785) is a rare shieldbug in Norfolk. If you look on the NBN Gateway map you will see that it has primarily a southern distribution, but like so many other species from the south it is moving northwards. The Tortoise Bug that was found by Mark Clements on Beeston Common, near Sheringham, 22 June, 2015 is probably the second 10km sq record for East Norfolk. and from the available data from the NBN Gateway ([nbn.org.uk](http://nbn.org.uk)) it looks like it could be the most northerly UK sighting to date. Previous Norfolk records are mainly from Breckland.



It is quite a striking bug so look out for it, especially on the seed heads of grasses - it could turn up anywhere.

Image: Mark Clements



# Norwich Peregrines

*Tony Howes*

In 2009 peregrine falcons were spotted on Norwich Cathedral. To them of course the 315 foot majestic stone spire is just like a cliff face, their natural

habitat, food was in close proximity in the shape of pigeons an item they are particularly fond of.

Images: Tony Howes



As time went by, and it became obvious the pair were happy with their new accommodation the Hawk and Owl Trust got involved, and with the help and cooperation of the Cathedral staff a nesting platform was erected on the spire with

cameras fitted to record the day to day lives of the falcons.

They settled in well and have bred, with varying success, for the last four years.

This year four eggs were laid, they all hatched, but one youngster died early on, the remaining three are now flying well and are gaining much experience doing circuits of the Cathedral spire. They are amazing when flying, fast and elegant, they are known as

one of the fastest of all birds, having been recorded at close to 200 mph when hunting prey.

I have been to the Cathedral often in the hope of getting a few images of these beautiful and charismatic birds. Like all raptors there is always a lot of sitting about between feeds, when they do fly it is pure elegance and grace, wonderful to see. Before long these youngsters will be catching their own pigeons, but for now they rely on their parents for their food.

These falcons create a lot of interest in Norfolk and beyond, they have become celebrities, long may they stay and prosper on our iconic Cathedral.



## Appeal for Lacewing Records

I am finally getting close to writing my long-threatened paper for *Transactions* on Norfolk's lacewings and allies. If things go to plan, I aim to be writing it in the autumn for publication next year.

Therefore, if anyone has any records that have not already been submitted (to myself, the national recording scheme, or the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service) could they please send them to me as soon as possible. Likewise, if anyone is aware of old literature records I may have missed, or paper records in site files and archives of conservation bodies, please let me know.

The groups concerned are:

- Neuroptera - lacewings, wax-flies, sponge-flies, antlions
- Mecoptera - scorpion-flies, snow flea
- Megaloptera - alder-flies
- Raphidioptera - snake-flies

Paul Cobb, 34 Staithe Road, Heacham, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE31 7EE  
email: [paulcobb@outlook.com](mailto:paulcobb@outlook.com)

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## Hoverfly survey at Holt Country Park

I have been asked to assist with a hoverfly survey at Holt Country Park. The boundaries and topography of the Park are as shown on this map:

<https://www.northernorfolk.org/files/HCP Orienteering.pdf>.

Please note that the Lowes (<http://www.holtlowes.org.uk/Lowes%20location.html>) are not included, as they are separate from the Park.

My efforts to date have been largely photographic- and of the larger, more attractive and easier (!) species. Recently, *Volucella inflata* (see above) has been seen, for the second year in succession. This year, though, insects have not been exactly plentiful at this site, with the strange 'summer' that we've had so far. Please email records, with photos, where possible, to the co-ordinating Ranger: [Will.Fitch@north-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Will.Fitch@north-norfolk.gov.uk). NB: these may well take a few days to be acknowledged, as they 'filter through' the system.

Thank you - *John Furse*

Image: John Furse





## **Ants of Norfolk** by Doreen Wells - *A correction*

My apologies to Doreen and to members as it seems I 'lost' two species of Ant when I copied and reorganised the original list for publication in the February 2015 edition of '*Natterjack*' (no. 128). Please see the following corrected listing with all 27 species currently found within the County. - *Ed.*

<i>Formica cunicularia</i>	<i>Lasius niger</i>	<i>Myrmica rubra</i>
<i>Formica fusca</i>	<i>Lasius platythorax</i>	<i>Myrmica ruginodis</i>
<i>Formica lemani</i>	<i>Lasius psammophilus</i>	<i>Myrmica sabuleti</i>
<i>Hypoponera punctatissima</i>	<i>Lasius umbratus</i>	<i>Myrmica scabrinodis</i>
<i>Lasius alienus</i>	<i>Leptothorax acervorum</i>	<i>Myrmica schencki</i>
<i>Lasius flavus</i>	<i>Myrmecina graminicola</i>	<i>Myrmica specioides</i>
<i>Lasius fuliginosus</i>	<i>Myrmica karavajevi</i>	<i>Stenamma debile</i>
<i>Lasius meridionalis</i>	<i>Myrmica lobicornis</i>	<i>Temnothorax nylanderii</i>
<i>Lasius mixtus</i>	<i>Myrmica microrubra</i>	<i>Tetramorium caespitum</i>

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## ***Frog - a looing go!***

*Ian Johnson*

Back in April 2015 my wife called out "Come and have a look at this!" She was in the downstairs toilet, obviously shocked and looking down into the toilet bowl. As you can imagine I was extremely apprehensive, as anyone would be, but it was only a large, adult common frog, *Rana temporaria*.

What, *ONLY* a frog? Instinctively I reached in and grabbed it, then released it in the garden, where it soon hopped off into cover. How on earth did it get there? Could it have grown in the waste system from being a tadpole? That was just as ridiculous as it being a magically transformed prince! I suppose an adult could have come up through the waste pipe, but even that was stretching credulity to the limit. Yet how else could the frog have entered except by struggling up against the smooth sides of the waste pipe and resisting flushes?

It was only a short distance of less than six feet to an accessible drain cover, below which the toilet waste pipe and two rainwater downpipes both emptied. However the drain cover was firmly in place and is only removed for brief inspections. Well, there it is – an unsolved puzzle, unless you, dear reader, can suggest one.

## Cley, Strumpshaw and Saxthorpe

*Brian Macfarlane*

In recent weeks I have been to Cley hoping to see more than I see at Strumpshaw. Again it has been comparatively quiet compared to previous years. I sat in the Bishop hide for four hours the last time I went. The first thing that came on the scene was a female Mallard with 10 ducklings. For once all the heads were visible, and not overlapping. It's a shame that in a week's time there won't be any heads to count because of predation. That is nature for you. A Kestrel came close( 50 yards), and briefly hovered. Then a Gadwall came close and gave me a broadside shot. A Greylag started to preen and wash itself, and decided to turn upside down for full immersion. There was very little else to rattle my cage, so after four hours



Kestrel

All images: *Brian Macfarlane*



Gadwall

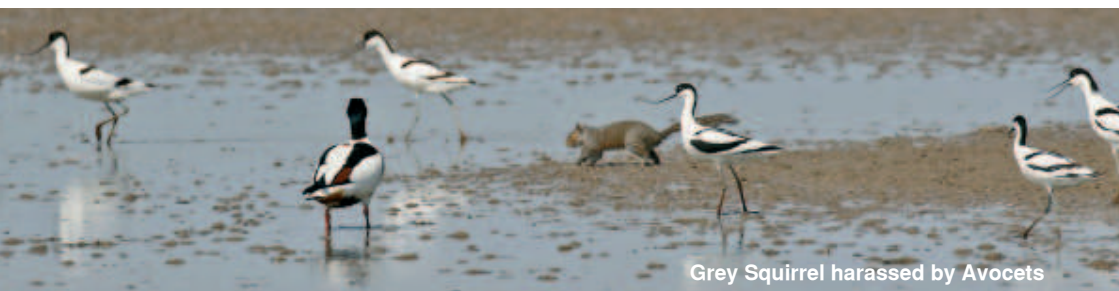


Grey Squirrel

my seat started to feel rather hard, and then standing up my legs seem to have lost the art of supporting my body. As I turned to depart I caught sight of some movement in the shallow water. As it struggled out onto the sticky mud it turned out to be a Grey Squirrel determined to get to the small grassy island in front of the hide. It was going to try and find some birds nesting for a meal of eggs. Time to sit down again and wait for it re-emerge. To my surprise it came

out the other side, and proceeded to walk to the next island some 50 yards away. This meant walking through more mud and shallow water. The Avocets and various other birds started to take an interest, and walked beside it trying to harass it. At the half way mark it had had enough

and turned left to swim back to dry land leaving the birds looking slightly bewildered. When I told the visitor's centre what I had seen they did not want to know. If it had been a Harrier carrying off a live duckling that would have been different, but still a predator.



Grey Squirrel harassed by Avocets

It sometime pays to stay a bit longer than the average person who comes in a hide and states the obvious, "There's not much about!" I will also say one doesn't have to stay four hours before one sees anything.

Anyway the squirrel incident made it all the more worthwhile going there. Something slightly different to the normal gives a little added interest.

STRUMPSHAW DIARY - As usual Strumpshaw has been fairly quiet bird wise for sometime. I go once a week hoping to see some improvement. The terns have arrived and a pair regularly fish in front of the Fen hide. I took a shot of one of the birds as it shook itself after a dive into the water. When I checked the image at home the bird was the right way up, but the head was upside down. Quite a feat!



Common Tern



Kingfisher

The second time this year I saw a Kingfisher turned up hovering in front of the hide. As you can imagine a tiny bird with a very fast wing beat is difficult to capture with a camera. On the way back to the car a Wren (overleaf) was sitting on a post right in the open, and posed for a photo. I find it really sad to visit my favourite reserve where a few years ago the place was

teeming with birds. Then I would go three or four times a week, and came home with a shed full of images!



Wren - Strumpshaw

SAXTHORPE - I had occasion to visit the village of Saxthorpe on the way home from a day at Cley. I know from past years that a pair of Grey Wagtails have nested beside the Mill stream.

I parked and walked up to the bridge overlooking the stream. Within 10 minutes I saw a male bird alight on vegetation in the middle of the stream. It was leaping in the air to catch insects which it caught in large

numbers to take back to the nest. Both sexes came at regular intervals so it gave me plenty to concentrate on. I visited several times hoping to get better sunlight, as it was difficult to get high shutter speed pointing the camera down at the water. They sat in a



Images: Brian Macfarlane



large Larch tree, but looked out of place compared to flitting about over the water. I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge to get the birds in mid air catching the insects.





# ***Cameras as Study Tools***

*Hans Watson*

When my passion for nature started as a youngster, I was advised by my peers, to always carry with me on my walks, a notebook and pencil, and to never rely on my memory. To this day, I still carry a notebook with me. When I became interested in photography, as a teenager, I realised that a camera could supplement my notebook, and even record detail that the eye does not notice. Also, modern digital cameras, record with each image, a wealth of detail that includes date and time, and even GPS location to within 3 or 4 metres.

There have been numerous occasions when I have learned facts from the use of a camera. For example. A few years ago, I spent several days photographing a pair of Kingfishers at Cantley. The birds regularly perched on a branch about 4 metres from my hide, and often had sticklebacks in their bills. On several occasions however, I briefly saw thread like projections, and feared that a piece of fishing line was caught in the birds bill. After examining the photos on my computer, I was very surprised to see that the 'fishing line' was in fact the antenna of prawns that the birds were catching in nearby dykes (see below). As I was unaware of the existence of prawns in dykes at Cantley, I was keen to know more about them, and made enquiries amongst my peers in the



Image: *Hans Watson*

NNNS, who always impress me with their readiness to pass on their knowledge, and help those of us who are eager to learn. And so it was, that Roy Baker not only identified the prawn, but also supplied me with a wealth of other information regarding species found in dyke surveys in the area.

On another occasion, many years ago, I photographed Reed Warblers at their nest in a reed bed (see below), and learned several facts. I noticed that one of the birds was wearing a numbered ring, and by examining



several enlarged photos, was able to read the number. When I reported this number, I found that the bird had been ringed two years previously as a juvenile in the same reed-bed in which I had photographed it, which meant that it had made the hazardous journey to Africa and back, twice. This suggests that Reed Warblers

tend to be site faithful, like Swallows and a number of other species. I also noticed that on several occasions, two birds arrived together at the nest, and neither bird wore a ring. So at least three adults were tending the young. There are a number of species of bird, where 'helpers' have been observed assisting in rearing of broods, but I was not aware that this is the case with Reed Warblers. Also, all the birds sang snatches of song when approaching the nest, suggesting females can, and do sing. I have since read that this has been noted by others, and there are those who believe that there may be other species, yet to be identified, in which the two sexes sport similar plumage, and in which females can sing like the male.



## Hare Behaviour

*Robert Maidstone*

The first mailing I received after rejoining the Society was the 'new look' *Natterjack* containing the article 'Strange Hare behaviour' of a hare and crow's 'frolic's'.

The author, Tony Howes, goes some way to answering his mystery in suggesting the crow was looking for food but Tony failed to consider what the crow might eat. Crows are omnivores eating, in that habitat, insects, sprouting grain or plant leaves but they also feed on carrion and are known to take and kill young birds and small mammals including, one would assume, leverets.



Whether the behaviour of the hare in chasing off the crow, a potential predator of its offspring, indicated that leverets were nearby, this was a female hare or it is a normal response of any hare I don't know but would go some way to explaining the once common discovery by farm workers of hares with their eyes pecked out. This injury was always attributed to crows and if the behaviour witnessed by Tony involved a pair of crows one could see how they could soon exhaust the hare and attack it.

These blinded hares are not as frequently reported nowadays as most end up being killed on the road, if one bothers to stop and check roadside casualties. The way wildlife is killed on the roads would, I think, provide an interesting research project showing how traffic changes affects certain species.

On the matter of hares, some fields surrounding a house were made ready for a spring sowing after having the over-wintered stubble and re-growth sprayed off. The cultivation consisted of a couple of passes of a fixed tine cultivator followed by repeated passes of a power harrow, the bulk of the activity taking place over one day. The householder was somewhat distressed to find over the following day or two a number of dead leverets in the garden and on the drive up to the house. These included part grown as well as quite small leverets.

# The appeal of rarity

Joan Matthews

I just couldn't resist sending a message to say how Tony Leech's article in *Natterjack* struck a chord - I started a plant list when I was nine, initially using Fitter and McClintock for identification and marking rarity with their stars (in red!). I think it started as an exercise suggested by my mother to fill a bored afternoon - how many different wild plants can you find in the garden? and the first day produced 41, though Spring Beauty and Himalayan Balsam, my first "rarities" with stars, were probably barely wild, though definitely naturalised. For years my mother and I were plant-twitchers, actively seeking 3-star plants when opportunity arose as well as recording whatever else we could - the most extreme example was probably crawling up Roundstone in County Galway on hands and knees in the rain, peering at every heather until we identified Mackay's Heath. I still add any "new" plants to the list in the original notebook, but there are very few these days! But I seem to be the exception that proves the rule about all list-makers being men.....!

And yes, the satisfaction is in the finding.



*Himalayan Balsam*

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## A rarity indeed....

Francis Farrow



Talking of finding a rarity that's just what Andy Brown did last June. While walking over some 'waste' ground, north of Norwich Andy spotted a large orchid - a Lizard Orchid and apparently it was the first Norfolk sighting for over 60 years. I was lucky enough to be able to see this magnificent flower and although it was special, the thrill of finding it, was alas not there, especially as all I had to do was follow a GPS co-ordinate!

Image: Francis Farrow

## **PUBLICATIONS *for free!***

The following publications were the property of our late Vice -president, Paul Banham. If any member would like any of those listed please contact his daughter, Clare (details overleaf).

### **Norfolk Bird/Bird and Mammal Reports**

years 1964-67, 1969-74, 1976-80,  
1982-83, 1985-2013.

### **NNNS Transactions**

Vol.23/3 (1974?)

25/3 May 81

summer 1987-2005 (vols 27-38)

2006-2013 (vols 39-46)

### **Norfolk Natterjacks**

no. 35 (Nov. 1991)

1982,83,85,87-90 (2003-2005). These are A4 sheets stapled top left.

1992-101 (Feb. 2006-May 08)

117,118,120-128 (May 2012-Feb. 2015)



### **NNNS Occasional Publications**

4 Peet,TND Moths & Butterflies of Hickling Broad

5 Hancy,R Study of Plant Galls in Norfolk

6 George, M Birds in Norfolk & the Law, Past and Present

7 Richmond D Grasshoppers & Allied Insects of Norfolk

8 Sage, B Ecology of the Egyptian Goose at Holkham Park

9 Taylor, Dr P Dragonflies of Norfolk

10 Hancy, R Notable Trees of Norwich

11 A Natural History of the Catfield House Estate

12 Dye, K & Fiszer,M Checklist of the Birds Of Norfolk

14 Owens, N & Richmond, D Bumblebees of Norfolk

15 Kearn, G Hidden Lives

### Oddments

### **Transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists Society**

13/2 July 1965, 13/3 Jan. 66, 13/4 July 66, 13/5 Feb. 67,

13/6 Aug. 67, 14/1 Feb. 68, 14/2 Aug. 68, 14/3 Feb. 69

## **Norfolk Naturalists Trust publications**

Wild Bird Protection in Norfolk (1948)

38th Annual Report (1964)

Yearbook/Annual Report (1988)

## **Lincolnshire Naturalists Union**

Transactions XVI/2 (1965)

Anyone wanting any of these publications can contact Clare by email:

[clare@banhamfamily.com](mailto:clare@banhamfamily.com)

Telephone (01328 710 533) or at 17 High Street, Wells-next-the-Sea  
Norfolk NR23 1EW

Hope these might fill a few gaps in some shelves!

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## **Holt Country Park**

*Will Fitch - Countryside Ranger*

In the past few years large changes have occurred at Holt Country Park aiming to enhance biodiversity for wildlife. The Countryside Ranger team, with the aid of volunteers like the Holt Daycare as well as the help and knowledge of many local naturalists, have strived to restore an aging pine plantation back to a more natural balance of open broad-leaved woodland.

Through sensitive thinning of the non indigenous pine trees, encouraging natural broad-leaved regeneration with some additional planting, a more structured, diverse mix of woodland has risen in response to the new gaps in the canopy. Oaks and Beech are fighting their way up to become the dominant standards, as well an understorey of Holly, Hawthorn and Hazel, proving a whole array of niches for many species to take advantage of. Much of the thinned pines lay where they fall, a tangled mass of deadwood as nature intended, colonised by a wealth of invertebrates that cause a ricochet up the food web.

The paths and rides have also been restructured, with glades and sun traps being created providing microclimates where wild flowers and many bee and butterfly species flourish. The summer of 2014 saw 60 Silver-washed Fritillary being recorded, including 8 of the unusual female morph *Valesina*. White Admirals and the unusual but spectacular Broad-bordered Bee-hawk Moths have thrived, taking advantage of the nectar sources such as Garlic Mustard as well as the Honeysuckle, the food plant of their caterpillars that has spread under thinned pine canopies.

Amongst other species, Adders and Slow worms bask in the sun traps, and all three species of British newt inhabit the ponds and puddles across the site. Bird's Nest Orchids grace the path edges under the shade of the Beech trees as part of a complex saprophytic relationship with the fungal mycorrhiza found attached to the Beech root system.

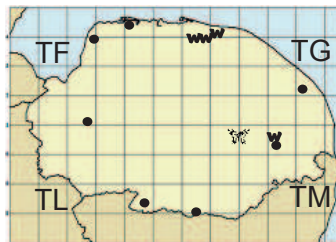
There is still a long way to go at Holt Country Park. The Pine trees are still a dominant feature, and it will take many years to continue to thin them out and change the whole ecology of the ecosystem. Whereas some organisations see it fit to clear fell trees, at Holt we refuse to undertake such management due to the major damage it causes to the existing communities, soil and environment. A delicate balance must be met to ensure species like bracken and bramble do not become invasive on the woodland floor under thinned canopies, choking out regeneration of broad-leaved trees whilst maintaining much deadwood to provide the building blocks for the future woodland communities.

Future plans for more Hazel coppice areas on rotation, pond creation and ride management will hopefully benefit our existing wildlife species as well as bring in new colonists to the developing woodland. We further hope to encourage the spread of Silver-washed Fritillaries to neighbouring woodlands through the ride restructuring and planting of their caterpillars food plant, Common Dog Violets. Every year more species are recorded within the woodlands and we welcome visitors 365 days of the year to come and enjoy the site.



**Holt Country Park and Silver-washed Fritillary** Images: *Francis Farrow*





### RINGSTEAD DOWNS

Sunday May 31<sup>st</sup>

Following last year's wet and windy outing the outlook this year was good. Unfortunately it was not to be but the ten hardy souls who turned up on Sunday morning donned their waterproofs, determined not to be defeated.

Ringstead Downs is a NWT reserve and one of the largest remaining areas of chalk grassland in the county. The steep-sided valley, running East-West, was carved into the chalk by the outflow channel from a glacial lake during the last Ice Age and supports a diverse range of plant and animal species.

On the walk from the carpark to the reserve on the deeper, richer soil were dense stands of Common Gromwell *Lithospermum officinale* with its small creamy-yellow flowers. Interspersed with the Gromwell were individuals of Hounds Tongue *Cynoglossum officinale*, another of the Boraginaceae. It was noticeable that these plants were alongside the path, hardly surprising given that the seeds are covered with hooked bristles to aid their dispersal.

On the South facing slide of the reserve, a steep slope with very little soil, were the typical plants of this chalk grassland. An area of Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa* was in full flower, with over one



**Gromwell** (Top) and **Hounds Tongue** (Bottom)  
Images: Keith Fox



thousand flower heads being counted just a few days before. This is the food plant of the Chalkhill Blue butterfly, found here last year after many years absence. Quaking Grass *Briza media* was just in flower as was Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*. Numerous plants of Long-stalked Crane's-bill *Geranium columbinum* and Hairy Rock-cress *Arabis hirsute* were in flower and Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium* was just coming into bloom. In the richer valley bottom and Meadow Mouse-ear



flowering in  
Meadow Saxifrage and Field Mouse-ear  
Images: Keith Fox

On the woodland surrounding the reserve we found Butchers-broom *Ruscus aculeatus* and Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*. We made a detour to see a single bush of Barberry *Berberis vulgaris*. This species is the alternate host of wheat rust and because of this has been widely destroyed.

The poor weather ensured that there were few active insect species about, but fortunately we had Paul Cobb with us and he was able to identify both the insects and galls that were found.

### Insects:

Moths; Clouded Silver, Common Carpet, *Nemophora degeerella*  
 Hoverfly *Volucella bombylans*, red-tailed form and var. *plumata*  
 Robber fly *Dioctria rufipes*  
 Scorpionfly *Panorpa germanica*  
 Soldier beetles *Cantharis bicolor* (= *cryptica*) and *C. nigricans*  
 Meadow Grasshopper *Chorthippus paralellus*  
 Bumblebee *Bombus pascuorum*

Bumblebee *Bombus pascuorum*

## Rusts:

Rust fungus galls; *Puccinia urticata* on nettle,  
*Phragmidium mucronatum* on rose

## Gallwasp galls:

*Liposthenes glechomae* (=latreillei) on ground-ivy  
Bedeguar gall *Diplolepis rosae* on rose  
Oak-apple *Biorhiza pallida*, Marble gall *Andricus kollari*,  
Currant gall *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*, all on oak  
*Andricus grossulariae* sexual generation on Turkey Oak catkins  
(Paul was unaware of a previous Norfolk record of the sexual  
generation, but found more at Snettisham a few days later)



Nettle rust fungus:  
***Puccinia urtica***

Image: Keith Fox

## Mite galls:

*Aceria campestricola* (=ulmicola) on elm  
*A. myriadeum* (=aceriscampestris) on maple  
*Cecidophyes galii/rouhollahi* (agg.) on goosegrass  
*Eriophyes similis* on blackthorn  
*E. tiliae* on Large-leaved Lime  
*Phyllocoptes goniothorax* on hawthorn  
*Phytoptus avellanae* on hazel

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## BTO NUNNERY LAKES RESERVE, THETFORD

7<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 2015

Eight members joined Mike Toms of the British Trust for Ornithology on a fine day at the nature reserve adjoining the Trust's Nunnery headquarters. The Trust moved to this site from Tring in 1991, and we were first shown the ruins of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century hospitality part of the Nunnery, on the walls of which interesting plants have been recorded, including the scarce Wall Bedstraw and where a thrush's nest with young about to fly was currently providing interest. Other scarce plants on the Nunnery Lakes Reserve include Mossy Stonecrop, which we saw, and Tower Mustard, which we didn't.

We then proceeded down the Nightingale Way track; these days enlivened more by the sounds of other birds such as Willow Warblers, into the Reserve proper. The Reserve, in the valleys of the Thet and Little Ouse and rather linear in shape is nevertheless surprisingly extensive given that it begins so close to Thetford's suburbs, and covering it requires a 3km out-and-return walk. Some 60 bird species breed on the Reserve and the varied habitats include unimproved pasture, river and lakes and woodlands, and feature improved wetland with scrapes. Nunnery Lakes Carp Fishing Syndicates fish the lakes, and indeed we saw impressively large carp close to the

Mike and other BTO officers have located a remarkably large number of nests, and he explained the patient 'triangulation' technique employed of observing the coming-and-going of nesting birds from different viewpoints in order to pinpoint nests. To a 'non-birder' not only the sheer number of nests on the very brink of paths and tracks in seemingly inadequate grassy and bushy positions was eye-opening, but also the difficulty of spotting them in grassy tussocks when they were indicated, until Mike pointed closely at them with his stick. I certainly resolved as more of a botanist to be more careful throughout the County in future when wading off pathways through vegetation to see likely-looking plants. Nests and the birds involved seen on our walk included Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Whitethroats, Linnets and



**Mike Toms pointing out a nest to members at the BTO Nunnery Reserve, Thetford**  
Image: Janet Negal

Blackcaps, and the lakes and wetland yielded Great-crested Grebe, Kingfisher and Canada Geese. Adjacent heath has had nesting Stone Curlew - where hares are also seen - and a Cuckoo was heard. Mike provided fascinating information derived from his own observations and BTO studies and records received, including for instance the fact that Cuckoos are still

plentiful in Scotland and their numbers probably increasing greatly, and that Reed Warblers at the Nunnery Reserve sometimes literally move their nests piece-by-piece from one position to another. The Reserve is rich in other wildlife: we saw Banded Demoiselles, Azure and Blue-tailed Damselflies, and Brown Argus, Small Heath, Brimstone, Common and Holly Blue, Peacock, and Orange-tip butterflies, for example.

Before concluding the visit, Mike showed us the interior of the BTO Nunnery HQ - a notable exception to the normally rather uninteresting homes of natural history bodies! Our thanks go to him for making it such a fascinating visit and for giving some truly instructive guidance.

*Stephen Martin*

## CLAXTON MANOR ESTATE

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2015

On a day of initially-light drizzle, which was to intensify later, thirteen members led by Dan Hoare were welcomed within the main farm entrance off The Street, Claxton, by the owner, John Heathcote and by the Estate's Conservation Manager and Gamekeeper, Peter Lancaster, who was to lead our walk. Mr. Heathcote gave us an outline of the character of the estate, especially from a conservation point of view which has seen considerable development, with for example, 3 new ponds created and 50-60 acres of woodland established including the recent planting of some 300 Alder plus some Grey Poplar and various willows. There is a good marsh flora and the many ditches are significant in a national context, retaining a high density of water voles. These suffer some predation by herons, but no mink have been seen for the past 18 months. Currently two families of otters are present.

Despite Mr Heathcote's revelation later that crop and grass growth this rather cool spring had been up to a month behind that of recent years - though some 'catchup' had been recently apparent - the 'natural' wetland vegetation we pushed through initially on our way past the new ponds and tree plantings, to the grazing meadows and ditches beyond, which lie immediately south of the Yare, now seemed as tall and lush as one would expect in late June. Cutting of the silage marshes, where a plenitude of larks nest successfully, is put off until September for conservation purposes, and to the same end very successful efforts to take off rats have been made, and 27 Mute Swans are currently breeding now that crow numbers are controlled and do not take their eggs. As regards more-welcome raptors, some members of the party saw a Marsh Harrier and a Buzzard, and the Hobby frequents the estate, though we didn't see one on this occasion. A Reed Bunting was seen and heard during our walk, and Mallard and Whitethroat were also spotted. We saw Black-tailed Skimmer, Broad-bodied Chaser and Azure- and possibly Variable- Damselfly. As the rain intensified, so the chance of seeing many butterflies diminished, though Meadow Browns and a Painted Lady were noted. Field Grasshoppers were examined and the fungus Field Conecap collected.

Dan grappled for water plants and algae in the well-vegetated ditches, which among others held Rigid Hornwort, Ivy-leaved Duckweed, Frogbit, Lesser Spearwort, Water Mint and Potamogeton pondweeds (and Water Snails). Water-soldier presented an extraordinary sight in a couple of ditches where a long mat or ribbon of the plant extended unbroken until the ditch seemingly

narrowed to a point in the distance. Perhaps unsurprisingly in this plenitude, a number of plants were carrying white flowers, one specimen of which Dan retrieved for examination by those who had not previously seen a Water-soldier plant in bloom. At first on our walk, Hard Rush had been plentiful, which later gave way mainly to Soft Rush: Peter called the latter, I think, 'Pin weed'; so-called locally because it can cause ulcers in the throats of cattle if it finds its way, cut and dried, into silage.



Dan Hoare showing the finer points of a Water-soldier to members at Claxton Hall Estate

A final treat as we neared the end of our walk was the sight across a marshy meadow of a Chinese Water-deer with young, which were not immediately frightened away, though the faun did spend some of the time we were observing it in thicker cover at the field's edge.

Many thanks to Dan for arranging a fascinating visit to a large estate with a strong nature conservation ethos but normally closed to the general member, to Peter for his patient and always interesting explanations and guidance, and to Mr. Heathcote for his permission to visit Claxton Manor.

*Stephen Martin*

## Latest news....

Just as I was putting the finishing touches to '*Natterjack*' I received the following from John Furse and just had to squeeze the picture in.

John writes:



Image: John Furse

*While on Gramborough Hill, Salthouse 09/07/2015 I found this aberrant Small Copper.*

In Russwurm '*Aberrations of British Butterflies*' it is termed ab. *fuscae* Robson. The form is usually met with in the second brood during a hot summer and is similar to the summer form seen in southern Europe - Ed.



# From the NNS Transactions

An extract from - WILD BIRD PROTECTION IN NORFOLK IN 1950

(NNS Transactions Vol. XVII, Part II, Pages 90-122)

## REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

Mr. R. A. Richardson's account of the year's work at the Cley Observatory is of great interest and serves to prove its scientific value as one of four such stations in the British Isles.

### CLEY BIRD OBSERVATORY.

The Observatory's first full year, which was largely exploratory, ended on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1950 and conforms with the official year of the Bird Ringing Committee at the British Museum.

The main work has been the trapping and ringing of both passage migrants and breeding species and has yielded encouraging results. 1,252 birds of sixty species were ringed during the year, 651 being trapped and 601 being trapped as nestlings.

Special mention may be made of 143 snow-buntings, twenty-two bramblings, seven black redstarts (including two of the Yarmouth nestlings), five Greenland wheatears, two young bitterns, woodcock, dunlin and five trapped redshanks (including one of the Iceland race).

The Heligoland trap has accounted for most of the trapped birds with clap-nets running a close second. The remainder were caught in home-made spring and maze-traps of various experimental patterns. The lack of cover in the shape of bushes remains a problem but intensive planting of suitable shrubs and trees during the autumn should improve the situation this year.

The ringing work continues, together with daily recording of bird movements in relation to wind and weather and the warden is planning a study of meadow pipit, of which fifty were marked with coloured plastic rings last year.

Thanks are due to those who have so readily helped in the work of the Observatory.

*An interesting recovery from the given list:*

BITTERN 506641, ringed as nestling 16.5.50; injured by lorry near Macclesfield, Cheshire, 6.11.50. Successfully nursed at Manchester Zoo and safely released 21.11.50





The next issue of ***The Norfolk Natterjack*** will be November 2015.

Please send  
**all articles / notes and photographic material**  
to the editor as soon as possible by  
**October 1<sup>st</sup> 2015** to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham,  
Norfolk, NR26 8QD. Email: [francis.farrow@btinternet.com](mailto:francis.farrow@btinternet.com)

*All photographs / images are very welcome, especially to accompany an article or document a record, occasionally however, because of space limitations, preference may have to be given to Norfolk-based images, or to those subjects depicting interesting or unusual behaviour, or are less commonly (or rarely) seen in print.*

## Membership subscriptions

The N&NNS membership year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March. During this time members will receive four copies of the quarterly *Natterjack* newsletter, and annual copies of the Transactions of the Society, and the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report. A full summer programme of excursions and a winter programme of talks are also organised annually.

**Membership renewals** are due on **1<sup>st</sup> April each year** and should be sent to the treasurer:

- David Richmond, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

**New memberships** should also be sent to:

- David Richmond at the above address.

**Current rates are £20 for individual, family and group memberships**  
(£30 for individuals living overseas).

*Cheques payable to: **Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.***

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