



The Norfolk Natterjack



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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Cover image: *Fly Agaric var. aureola* (Nick Elsey)

Found in October at East Wretham heath. See article on page 1

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Toad-in-the-hole....

Welcome to the last 'Natterjack' of 2015 and by its contents it has proved to be an interesting year with new species being encountered within the County boundaries and recent additions consolidating their hold. My thanks as usual to all contributors for without their time writing / photographing and sending the material in there would not be a magazine. Make an early New Years resolution to contribute if you haven't already done so. Season's greetings to all NNNS members and as you prepare to send all your 2015 sightings to the various County Records dream also of 2016 and what that may bring to Norfolk!

FF

A Fungus variety new to Norfolk

Rubyna Sheikh

On 9th October during one of our *wassat* walks (I see something and ask Nick 'what's that?!') at NWT East Wretham Heath*, we spotted a bright and shiny fungus. Always attracted by the bright and shiny, we strolled over for a closer look. Imagine the colour and sheen of a toffee apple on a short, thick, white stalk, and you have the image. As with everything we see, Nick photographed it, from a couple of different angles. I should have used the GPS to record our location, but didn't...

On returning home, we referred to Collins Complete Guide to British Mushrooms and Toadstools, by Sterry and Hughes, to try to identify this unknown fungus/toadstool. It seemed that it could be the rare variant of Fly Agaric, *Amanita muscaria* var *aureola*. Fly agaric is associated with acidic woodland with birches and our sighting was on the edge of a conifer woodland. But 'go with the common' is our motto; rarities are, well, rare.

As we know very little about fungi, Nick posted our find onto the Norfolk Wildlife Facebook group, where there *are* those who have the knowledge and experience. Active members of the group suggested that it may be an old or faded Fly Agaric that had lost its white scales. But an old Fly Agaric is flat with curled edges and this one was fresh and round, not old. Having tagged fungi county recorder Tony Leech in the post, he replied that he was puzzled by the find. Tony's subsequent research suggested our sighting may be the rare variant *aureola* of Fly Agaric – a new record for Norfolk. Tony had seen it in North America, but said that there were only a dozen or so previous records for the UK.



Fly Agaric

Amanita muscaria var. *aureola*

Image: Nick Elsey

With so many of us out there looking at all sorts of wildlife, I wonder how many species are being seen but not recorded? We are very lucky in Norfolk that many of our county recorders, and other naturalists, are generous and willing to share their knowledge and time. They are only too pleased, and often grateful, to receive records. And don't forget to include your GPS location!

* East Wretham Heath – A Breckland of close cropped turf and bare sandy ground, as grazed by rabbits. There is an old Scots Pine plantation dating from the Battle of Waterloo, and three meres, two of which have cyclic but irregularly fluctuating water levels. We have seen a hide partially under water, and on this visit, the meres were almost dry.

Dark form of Common Darter in Weybourne

Mike Gough

I found a female darter in my garden in Weybourne on 6th September and viewing it through binoculars it appeared to be a Common Darter but was seen to have a 'moustache' (black lines continuing down the sides of its frons/eyes). I took some photos as it clung to a leaf before it was blown away in the blustery winds. I thought expert opinion was needed as to its identity and sent photos to our County Dragonfly Recorder. I hoped it was a Vagrant Darter but she replied that despite our locality she thought it was a dark form Common Darter but would ask her colleagues for their opinions, all of which were in agreement with her.



Image: Mike Gough

This taxon was formerly known as Highland Darter and thought possibly to have been a separate species, but when DNA analysis were finally carried out it was shown to be a colour variation of Common Darter. The range of the dark form of Common Darter is well known as north-west Scotland and they have also been seen on the north-west coast of Ireland, but they are also found along the west coast of Norway. I think it possible that Norway is where this insect originated, being blown down the North Sea and making landfall on the north Norfolk coast. The whole of the week before my sighting we had

experienced strong winds from the sector to our north with drift migrant birds pitching up along the north Norfolk coast and seabirds being blown close inshore. From early the previous day until the time that I found the

darter the wind was from a north north-easterly direction. If a small dragonfly had flown a little too high in coastal Norway it could easily have been pick up on this airstream and if it were lucky enough to survive, it would have taken no time to get to the north Norfolk coast and my garden a kilometre further south.

Coincidentally another dark form Common Darter was photographed in Loddon, Norfolk and reported to the recorder at the end of September.



Head of **Common Darter**
(dark form) showing
'moustache' lines
Image: Mike Gough

Egyptian Grasshopper at Holkham

Andrew Bloomfield, Holkham Estate Warden

During early May 2015 a 'Locust' was reported by a visitor to the Walled Garden in Holkham Park. It was described as being 'huge'. When I heard about the report I spoke with a couple of the gardeners and asked them to let me know if anything fitting that description was found. Nothing transpired until 12th June when I received a call to say that a 'giant cricket type insect' had been found. As I was passing I asked for it to be kept safe and when I arrived, I was taken aback to see a three inch long grasshopper. It was clearly not one of our native species! The head gardener was a bit shocked that it might be an invasive and hungry locust and asked for it to be removed. Although there was talk of Saharan dust



Egyptian Grasshopper

Image: Andrew Bloomfield

appearing in early May in the UK, he felt sure it must have arrived with a shipment of Holm Oaks that arrived from Spain in the winter months. The insect was taken to Sarah Henderson, site manager of Holkham NNR, who did an internet search and thought it most likely to be an Egyptian Grasshopper although could not rule out a Desert Locust. When I later examined my photographs I could see that it had the vertical bars through the eyes typical of both species yet it showed a ridged pronotum with three deep vertical grooves, a feature shown by

Egyptian Grasshopper but not Desert Locust (*Evans and Edmondson 2007*).

Egyptian Grasshopper is said to be one of the largest European grasshoppers and is found commonly in North Africa, the Middle East and much of southern Europe including south west France. It has been reported on about 16 occasions in the UK, some possibly vagrants with others such as the Holkham one possibly accidental imports. A previous Norfolk occurrence was noted at Taverham Garden Centre in 2012.

***Nothochrysa fulviceps*, a lacewing new to Norfolk**

Paul Cobb

On 22nd July I went to the RSPB Titchwell reserve for one of their regular moth trap mornings, to ask if they could save lacewings from their traps for me. As I arrived a trap was being placed on a table ready for opening, and sitting on top of the trap, almost as if it was waiting for me, was the first Norfolk example of *Nothochrysa fulviceps*.

It is a striking large species, of a black and yellow appearance, with a bright red head, and a great rarity with only some 16 British records until this year, most of them very old ones.

It is supposed to inhabit oak woodland, and should not therefore be on the coast, but there were 4 other British examples this July (Southampton, Portsmouth, Wales, and one other), so it would seem that these were migrants.



Lacewing: *Nothochrysa fulviceps*

Image: Ray Kimber

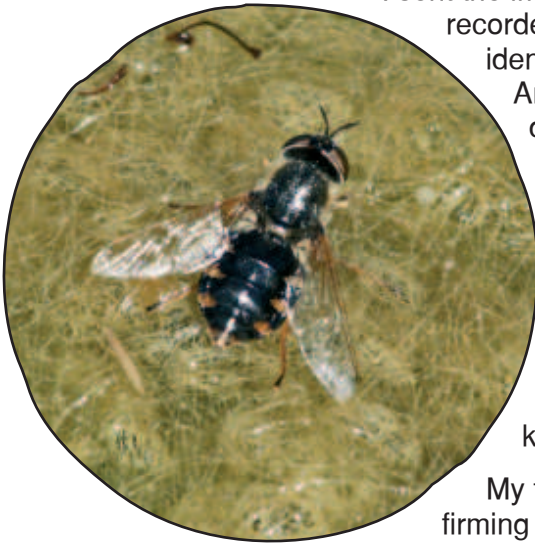
It was a female, and in the photo the white blob on its abdomen is a spermatophore.

It is possible that there was another one nearby 6 days earlier, as a large lacewing with a black stripe was seen briefly at Holme Bird Observatory before it escaped.

An unusual Soldier Fly at Felbrigg Lake

Andrew Clarke

On 15 July a friend and I visited Felbrigg Lake, hoping to photograph the Red-veined Darters that had been reported there. We duly found the darters, and managed to obtain some good photographs of males resting on the path (we never saw any females). Whilst walking the edge of the lake I glanced down and my attention was drawn to a brightly coloured insect resting on the blanket-weed. Assuming it to be a hoverfly I took some photographs with the intention of identifying it later. When I looked at the images on the computer screen, it was immediately obvious that this was not a hoverfly at all, but a soldier-fly (see image). I identified the insect tentatively as the Ornate Brigadier, *Odontomyia ornata*, but was a little concerned as the books suggested this was a species of the Somerset Levels, with very few records from Norfolk.



A record shot of a female **Ornate Brigadier**, *Odontomyia ornata*, at Felbrigg Lake taken on 15 July 2015

Image: Andrew Clarke

I sent the image to Tony Irwin (the Norfolk recorder for Diptera), who confirmed the identification as a female *O. ornata*.

An enquiry to the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) revealed that since the 1990s there have been a few records of larvae and adults in East Norfolk, principally in the Horsey and Winterton areas. This is, however, the first record from Felbrigg, or indeed North Norfolk. It shows how it pays to keep one's eyes open!

My thanks to Tony Irwin for confirming the identification, and Lizzy Oddy at NBIS for a rapid and helpful response to my request for details of other Norfolk records of this species.

Aberration name

Peter Gluth has commented on the aberrant Small Copper from Gramborough Hill found by John Furse (*Natterjack* no. 130 - August 2015). Peter has quoted Frohawk (1938) 'Varieties of British Butterflies' Plate 34 figures 1 and especially figure 2 which depict it as ab. *semi-obscurata*, n.ab.

A Conopid new for Norfolk

Nick Elsey

As I was about to lift the lid of the recycling wheelie bin in my garden I noticed a small black and yellow winged insect which I recognised as being a member of the Conopid family. These flies are parasitoids of adult bumblebees and wasps and, occasionally, solitary bees. The females deposit an egg in the host's abdomen whilst in flight. The larva then develops inside and pupates when the host dies.

Having seen similarly marked specimens when I have been checking wildflowers for hoverflies, I felt reasonably confident enough to label this specimen as *Conops quadrifasciatus*; a fairly common species found throughout Norfolk.

As I was rather pleased with my photograph I decided to post the image with a caption onto the Facebook page dedicated to Conopids. Almost immediately Ian Andrews, an accomplished dipterist, questioned my identification and suggested that due to the rather short proboscis, it was more likely to be a member of the *Leopoldius* genus. He then sought the opinion of another dipterist David Clements, who specialises in the identification of conopids. As positive identification is often difficult from photographs, David enquired if a specimen had been collected as he would be keen to examine it.

Thankfully I had collected this rather sedate insect and placed it in the fridge just in case further examination was needed. It was decided the best option was to post this fly directly to David in south Wales so the next morning it was packed in a small jiffy bag and posted 1st class to Cardiff. The following evening David replied stating that upon examination he had determined the specimen to be a female *Leopoldius brevirostris*, making this an unusual find so late in the year. It also transpires that this species has not been recorded before in Norfolk, with the nearest record coming from Chippenham Fen. A check on the species map on the NBN Gateway shows very few records for the British Isles.



Leopoldius brevirostris

Image: Nick Elsey

The moral to this story is not to take anything for granted, however confident you feel about an identity. Do try and collect a voucher specimen if at all possible – you never know what you may have found!

From Six to Eight - *Colletes* Bees in Norfolk

Nick Owens

Until 2012 we had just six species of *Colletes* bees in Norfolk, all sharing a pattern of rufous hairs on the thorax and humbug-style banding on the abdomen and needing a microscope to distinguish between them. Then in autumn 2013 ***Colletes* No 7**, the Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*), arrived at Snettisham, followed by further appearances in Sheringham and Weybourne in 2014. This September, Francis Farrow informs me, it has already been seen again at Sheringham and at Beeston Regis, by Mark Clements.

The Ivy Bee was only recognised as a separate species in 1993, having been confused with *Colletes halophilus* and *Colletes succinctus* until that time. One identification clue is its very late appearance in the season and its preference for Ivy pollen. Other indications are its fairly large size (often as large as a honeybee) and the orange tint of its pale bands. So far no Norfolk nest sites have been found.

The following list shows the pollen source and flight times of these seven *Colletes* species.

Colletes daviesanus: Asteraceae: June - September

Colletes fodiens: Asteraceae, especially Ragwort: July - September

Colletes halophilus: Sea Aster: August - October.

Colletes hederæ: Ivy: September - November

Colletes marginatus: wide variety: June - August (coast and Brecks only)

Colletes similis: Asteraceae including wild carrot: June - September

Colletes succinctus: Heather (*Calluna*), Asteraceae and Ivy.



***Colletes hederæ*,**

Weybourne, 14th October 2015.

Note the orange tint on the pale bands.
Image: Nick Owens

Several of these species can be found in large nesting aggregations. There is currently (21st September) a very active colony of 1000+ nests of *Colletes succinctus* on the cliffs at Weybourne. This bee is generally a Heather specialist, and in August the Weybourne bees were bringing in white Heather pollen, presumably from Kelling Heath, which is 1.5 km away. However, by 10th September, most had switched to Ivy pollen, which is yellow, with just a few still carrying Heather pollen (see images). When I checked the Heather on Kelling on 11th September I found it to be still in full colour, but the flowers had dried up inside, with little or no pollen

left to be gathered. Even those bees with nests in the middle of the heath, surrounded by Heather, were bringing in Ivy pollen. Seemingly the bees had no choice but to switch pollen source. It is possible that this change had been forced on them by an earlier flowering of Heather owing to climate change. The possibility that a *Colletes* on Ivy may not be an Ivy Bee should be borne in mind! *Colletes succinctus* is generally smaller with whiter bands.



Colletes succinctus with white *Calluna* pollen gathered from Kelling Heath, on Weybourne Cliffs, 10th September (left) and on Kelling Heath with yellow Ivy pollen, 11th September (right).

***Colletes* No 8**

On 28th April this year I visited Stoke Ferry for the first time, looking for bees and wasps. There were many *Andrenas* nesting on the loose sandy cliffs of the Cut-off Channel, including a large grey one. It was only when I got home that I realised the large grey species was in fact not an *Andrena* at all, but *Colletes cunicularius*, and it looked as though I had found the first nesting colony in Norfolk. This species is very large and lacks white bands on the abdomen. Until recently it had a rather odd western UK distribution, being found on sand dunes in Wales and Lancashire, but from



Colletes cunicularius female at Stoke Ferry, 28th April 2015. Note the lack of clear bands on the abdomen.

about 2011 it has colonised several inland southern counties. Unlike all other UK *Colletes* species, this bee emerges in the spring and uses Sallow pollen, though the bees at Stoke Ferry were still making nest burrows and not yet collecting pollen. Since making this find there has been a report of another new county colony, first seen on 24th April (beating me by 4 days!) at a nearby Breckland site. There may well be other sites waiting to be discovered.

Images: Nick Owens

Ladybird Spotting

James Emerson

Ladybirds are an iconic part of our fauna, and part way through 2015 I became aware that I was seeing more species of ladybird than usual. I would estimate that Harlequin and 7-spot Ladybirds accounted for well over 90% of my ladybird sightings, but nonetheless I noticed small numbers of a range of other species on my travels around the county. I noted down my sightings, and by the end of the summer I had seen 15 species of the recognisable ladybirds, plus one of the species that although from the same family, looks like a typical small drab beetle.

My first ladybird of the year was seen on 3rd May at Flitcham Abbey Farm. We were birding and had stopped to look for Little Owls when I noticed a bright yellow 22-spot Ladybird (*Psyllobora 22-punctata*) on some Stinging Nettles. My next species came a week later at Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood when I saw a small, round, black and red ladybird on a tree trunk. Upon closer inspection it was a Kidney-spot Ladybird (*Chilocorus renipustulatus*), a first for me. My third ladybird of the year was another yellow species, 14-spot Ladybird (*Propylea 14-punctata*), seen at Earlham Cemetery.

In mid-June I saw the first of many Harlequin Ladybirds (*Harmonia axyridis*). Despite seeing hundreds since that first sighting I have continued to look closely at them, hoping to discover one infected with a spiky yellow fungus (*Hesperomyces virescens*). This fungus is present in London but is yet to be seen in Norfolk, and despite my searching that remains the case! A couple of days after my first Harlequin sighting a Pine Ladybird (*Exochomus 4-pustulatus*) landed on our door frame in south Norwich. At first I was surprised as there are no pines nearby, but a bit of research showed that Pine Ladybirds are commonly found with deciduous trees and have a penchant for scale insects, something that occur commonly on the streetside Lime trees nearby. Towards the end of the month I saw my first Orange Ladybird (*Halyzia 16-guttata*) of the year in a moth trap at Strumpshaw Fen.

Over the summer I continued to accumulate different ladybird sightings, mostly from my visits to Whitlingham Country Park. On one of these visits in early July I saw a Cream-spot Ladybird (*Calvia 14-guttata*) along with many 7-spot Ladybirds (*Coccinella 7-punctata*). On 7th July a 10-spot Ladybird (*Adalia 10-punctata*) landed on the outside of my office window in Norwich, luckily close enough for me to lean out and pot for checking.

Whitlingham turned up another two ladybird species before the end of the month, the pale-cream 16-spot Ladybird (*Tytthaspis 16-punctata*) and previously-common 2-spot Ladybird (*Adalia 2-punctata*).

In mid-August whilst searching the vegetation along the south shore of Whitlingham great broad with Tim Hodge I saw another three species, two of which I'd not previously seen before. The first was Water Ladybird (*Anisosticta 19-punctata*). This species is usually red in the summer before turning a pale cream colour in the winter, but despite this our specimen was already cream. The second 'new' ladybird was Adonis Ladybird (*Adonia variegata*), which was present on an area of rough ground between the path and the broad. The third species was 24-spot Ladybird (*Subcoccinella 24-punctata*), a small red species found in low grass.

The 15th and final ladybird species that I have seen at the time of writing was the 11-spot Ladybird (*Coccinella 11-punctata*). It was mid-September and I was looking for migrant birds at Gramborough Hill when I noticed a 7-spot Ladybird in a curled up leaf. I gently unfurled the leaf, and inside were two 11-spot Ladybirds, around half the size of the 7-spot. An even smaller beetle, *Rhyzobius litura*, was also a member of the ladybird family, but one of the species that aren't really recognisable as a typical ladybird. Of the ladybird species recorded in Norfolk that I haven't seen this year, it seems many of them are associated with coniferous trees. I'll be paying more attention to them next year, in the hope of adding to my ladybird tally.



Water Ladybird

Adonis Ladybird



Seven-spot Ladybird, two 11-spot Ladybirds and the small beetle *Rhyzobius litura* (also a ladybird)

Images: James Emerson

Nature miscellany



Roger Tidman sent in the 'ball' of conopids (*Sicus ferruginea*) seen at Cranwich in the Brecks - 19 July 2015

Image: Roger Tidman

Meanwhile John Furse was in North Norfolk during September and found the following:



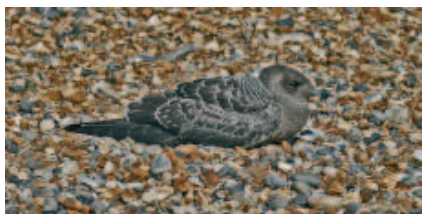
Bordered Straw - flushed from the Dell meadow, Wells Woods 02/09/15



Roesel's Bush-cricket (first sighting) from Gramborough Hill, Salthouse 08/09/15

Long-winged Conehead - Gramborough Hill, Salthouse 25/09/15

Tony Irwin commented that this was an uncommon 'brown form', but known in both species of conehead.



Juv. **Long-tailed Skua** - Salthouse 10/09/15

Tony adds that research on a related Japanese species has shown that the colour morphs are determined by genetics rather than environment.



Juv. **Red-backed Shrike** (injured leg and wing) - Salthouse 08/09/15

Images: John Furse

Pond Wildlife

Nick Elsey

In an attempt to encourage a wide diversity of wildlife into my garden, I have created a new water feature by placing three large water-filled plastic plant tubs close together. Into each tub I put a small amount of aquatic soil and then added a thin layer of shingle.

After the tubs had been filled with collected rainwater and allowed to settle for a few days, I introduced a variety of aquatic plants such as Hornwort, Water Soldier and Frogbit. To allow for the emergence of any possible aquatic invertebrates, Narrow-leaved Water-plantain was placed into the centre of each tub.

Around this time there was a prolonged period of strong wind from all directions which coincided with the flowering season of the neighbouring mature Sycamores. The resultant debris settled onto the water surface and looked most unattractive. Blanket-weed then took a hold and I began to suspect that this shaded area was not a good choice in which to establish a new 'pond' and considered abandoning the project.

However, each time I passed my new creation, a casual glance would reveal yet another visitor to this area. The hoverfly, *Helophilus pendulus*, which is a common species in my garden, was the first species of invertebrate to be recorded here and they would regularly be seen resting on the lip of the tubs before making a quick return dash around the garden to either ward off an intruder or find a mate.

As the winds eased and the water began to clear it soon became apparent that there was a mass of aquatic life occupying this new environment.



Rat-tailed 'maggots'

Image: Nick Elsey

There were what I suspect to be midge larvae in each tub and there was the corpse of a slug, presumed drowned, floating in one of them. On closer inspection I realised that this carcass had turned into a feast for a good number of rat-tailed maggots, the aquatic larvae of some hoverfly species including *H. pendulus*.

A few days later a Common Frog had taken up residency and by mid-July the Water Soldiers were in flower. Since then Large Red Damselflies have been seen taking a lot of interest in this area.

So, all in all, not quite the disaster I had at one time feared and it has now become a focal point of my daily walk around the garden.

Mating Natterjack and Common Toads

Andrew Bloomfield, Holkham Estate Warden

On July 28th 2015 a new and late flush of Natterjack Toad spawn was found alongside Overy Dunes, a regular breeding site at Holkham NNR. On one of the pools I was very surprised to find a mixed pair of copulating toads; a male Natterjack on top of a female Common Toad. The pair was at the edge of a pool and whilst Natterjack spawn was present at the pool's opposite edge, there was nothing to suggest that they had produced any spawn of their own. I had never seen a mixed pairing before and upon consulting *Amphibians and Reptiles* (Beebee and Griffiths New Naturalists 2000) found the following quote - 'Mixed pairs of Common Toads and Natterjacks are sometimes found, but in this case the spawn is of low viability and virtually all embryos die before hatching'.



Image: Andrew Bloomfield

Strumpshaw Diary

Brian Macfarland

I have been visiting Strumpshaw a bit more frequently since I last wrote in the magazine. There has been more activity in certain areas particularly the Tower hide. I have found walking to the hide a bit of a chore as my old legs keep groaning. However I have just started a diet and lost half a stone in a fortnight. When I went to the hide last Sunday, and stayed four hours my legs felt less tired. So less body weight in mass has resulted in less groaning.

Enough of the irrelevant material, and more of the positives. In the Fenn hide I saw a Cormorant catch a large Pike, and eventually swallow it without suffocating. A Bittern flew in and landed in front of the hide on the strip of land that sticks out from a reed bed. I then noticed a second bittern standing in amongst the reeds. When they saw one another they

were not amused and the first one flew off.



One of three **Bitterns**

over that 'all hell lets loose', but the ducks quickly return to resume their snooze.

I was pleased to see a Great White Egret, which stayed for about two weeks. I got several shots of it mainly at a distance of 50 yards or more because it never ventured close to the hide. It is amazing the difference in size between the Little and Great White Egrets. I got a shot of them standing side by side for comparison. I also got a good shot of it flying past the hide looking down from the hide. Sometimes when two Little Egrets land close together they start having a peck at one another.

Also from the hide I see a few different waders, including Ruff, Green Sandpipers, and a few Snipe come and feed on the mud flat in front of the



Cormorant with Pike

Apart from the odd Heron, Little Egret, and occasional Kingfisher the Fenn hide has been very quiet. The odd Snipe calls in, but generally no migrants to speak of as yet.

The Tower hide has a lot more birds, and that means more action. It is much more satisfying to get some movement in my photography. A lot of the ducks spend their time on the water, but all fast asleep. Only when a harrier flies

Little and Great White Egrets



Images: Brian Macfarlane

hide. No doubt other people see more than I do. I did get a clear shot of a Snipe as it flew passed the hide. It is difficult because they will fly so fast with no consideration for the waiting photographers.

An occurrence I have seen on three occasions in the last two months is a Fox coming out of the reed bed, where there is bare mud and a lot of ducks sleeping in the vicinity. Each time it lunges out it misses the ducks as they all fly off in haste. He looks very lean and under nourished because he keeps failing to get a meal. He is not quite like me because I can control my diet!



Well by the time you read this the weather will be colder, and the nights a lot longer. I have mixed feelings about the winter months as I want snow, but not if I don't get sun with it. It makes such a difference to one's well being, and also enhances the photography. **HAPPY CHRISTMAS!**

More from Strumpshaw

Elizabeth Dack

There has been a Great White Egret at Strumpshaw which stayed for about three weeks. It is a beautiful bird and was lovely watching it fishing along side several Grey Herons and Little Egrets. As it stood along side the Little Egret you could see the huge difference in size. This time of the year having it's yellow bill as well as black feet makes it easier to recognise in flight from other Egrets. Lovely to see this beautiful bird visiting our local reserves.



Great White Egret

Images: Elizabeth Dack

Walking along the Sandy path at Strumpshaw Fen, eyes on the ground as it was sunny, thinking maybe a Common Lizard would be out sunning it's self. I was not disappointed, I spotted four in total. There were also several Damsel and Dragonflies resting on the greenery at the side of the path.



My eyes were drawn to a leaf which was moving, watching it I spotted something black, getting my camera ready not taking my eyes off the leaf I then recognised it to be a Water Shrew. It climbed onto a pile of cut reeds. I managed to focus onto it and got a couple of photos. It then jumped off the reeds onto the path. It ran zig-zagging across the path before running along. I tried to

keep up with it to get some more pictures. Eventually I ran way down the path, changed to a smaller lens and managed to get it running towards me. Not such good shot but lovely to show the movement. I don't know if many have been recorded around Strumpshaw but it was a first for me and was very pleased to see it and even more chuffed to get some photographs.



Images: Elizabeth Dack

In Defence of *Felis silvestris catus* (the domestic cat)

Kevin Radley

In his article (Natterjack 130) Ian Johnson asks if we can solve the puzzle of how a frog came to reside in his loo. My presumption is that he doesn't have a pet cat for if he had he would be well aware that this incident constitutes no mystery.

My long haired tabby, Lilli, (now departed God bless her soul) was quite fond of bringing frogs into the house and letting them loose. (Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillars being another favourite.) I've discovered them in

the bath (empty) next leap the dunny? I never found a dead or injured one, though she had all her teeth. Curious also that she seemed to dislike the taste of them, spending ages trying to rid herself of the flavour – gurning madly and sticking her tongue out.

Much maligned, the domestic cat makes an excellent naturalists companion, bringing a never-ending supply of the natural world to the attention of its owner. OK it kills and eats a few small birds but then, not being vegetarian, I am rather fond of eating chicken now and then. Besides, it's great fun trying to guess which songbird species one has in their garden with just a few remaining wing coverts and a pair of legs left on your kitchen floor for clues. It's mostly 'bird people' that dislike cats, what is their problem anyway? After all, birds are only modified flying reptiles the cat is a top-level predator – respect. I am keen on insects but I do not begrudge my little moggy, Lucky, munching a few butterflies, as is her wont. Though I must admit I draw the line at swallowtails, luckily we don't get many in the garden.

When we moved to our new home a few years ago, on warm summer evenings we observed several bats flying around the house; I knew they weren't pipistrelles (they were a fair bit larger) and wondered what species they were. I considered purchasing, or borrowing, a bat detector then through the cat flap came Lucky with a Brown Long-eared Bat for me to examine – dead unfortunately. Mystery solved.

You've not been woken at three in the morning to play catch the mouse? You don't know what you're missing. I remember one particular rodent she brought in which had holed up under the settee with both of us peering underneath but unable to reach it. While she kept guard, I fetched the air rifle and dispatched it (the mouse) with a .22 pellet. Well I didn't want holes chewed in my soft furnishings. Interestingly, it turned out to be a Yellow-necked Mouse, which reminds me I still have it in my freezer. I digress.



Interested in parasites? Well the welts on my ankles bear testament to the number of fleas she brings in for me.

In all, as an aid to the furtherance of natural history study, I can thoroughly recommend the domestic cat - probably.

The fatal lure of water.

John Vincent

The need for water is paramount to life. In escapable.

The lure of water over-rides need, and like any lure is insidious, can and often does by-pass reason (historical in the form of instinct and modern in the form of life experience) to threaten or defeat self-preservation. In the small mammal context, the concern of this article, the major essentials of life are water, food, and avoidance of predation. Small may be beautiful, but in nature your position on the predatory ladder counts for more, and small mammals are a favourite food!

My son Simon, on his annual visit, finds three small mammals, long dead, floating on the surface of a near-full drip-bucket by an outside stand-pipe at The Old Rectory, Edingthorpe.

The drip-bucket is plastic, an inverted truncated cone 33cm tall, top diameter 25cm, base diameter 22cm, standing on a broad concrete base. It is pushed tight into a right-angled redbrick and lime-mortar walled corner, the rim making contact once on each wall. The 2cm diameter glossy-surfaced plastic hose-pipe from the tap touches the rim of the bucket on a steeply inclined irregular S-curve from the hose reel. The enclosure in which the stand-pipe is situated is a walled-in open-topped 'vestibule' to an outside toilet built on to the main house north wall, with a top-silled doorless brick opening to the garden. The brick walls adjacent to the bucket are splash-damp and have millimetre-short green moss and small stunted ferns growing on them here and there.

My formative childhood was spent on a small estate in Bergh-Apton, inclusive of the World War II years. We had a horse which was allowed to run free on a small meadow in the clement days of the year. The nearest ponds were surface drainage, of the order of kilometres away, so a cast-iron copper (the sort used for boiling soiled linen in those days) was let flush into the ground and regularly filled and topped-up by carried water. That came to be my task and I vividly recall being shocked and dismayed by the number of small mammals that contrived to drown themselves in the copper in the intervals between cleanings-out.

The three mature small mammals in the drip-bucket, however, were

readily identifiable as two Pygmy Shrews and a single Common Shrew.

What do I know about Shrews? Not much! They are themselves predators of course. Pygmy Shrews are active by day and night, and are known to be proficient and regular climbers to low heights. Whether Common Shrews share these attributes I don't know? One can see they might all perhaps have been attracted to a water source in a secluded spot, but water was available more readily close by in the form of a shallow earthenware dish kept topped-up daily at the base of the bird-feeding station (a few metres) and an extensive collation of pond/fleet water (a few 10s of metres). If thirst was the only driver there should have been adequate splash water on the concrete base for such small mammals. And anyway, what were they doing poking around lawns and gravel paths close to human habitation? – I had them marked as shy mammals of hedgerow/verge undergrowth and rough grass.

Whatever, they found their way into the bucket. How? They could not climb its steep sides so they had basically two alternatives:

1. climb the hose-pipe. Very difficult if only because of its steepness and getting on to it in the first place, it being some 4cm up in the air from the concrete at its lowest point;
2. climb the vertical wall(s) and get into the bucket via one or both of the contact points.

There are virtually no facts on timing: did they enter together, singly, or in some other combination? We do not know; and, very relevant, how did the water level in the bucket vary over time? – It had not been emptied for some while.

It needs someone much more *au fait* with Shrews to maybe throw more light on this: are they particularly driven by thirst? Do they delight in a bathe? Would they have gone further up the wall to display their spectacular diving skills to a critically shrewd audience!?

Who knows? Certainly not me. The odds are on a repeat of the 'copper' happening, with the lure of the water more charismatic and less obviously need-based. But then again, perhaps others amongst our learned readers may have very different views based on much superior personal knowledge/experience of Shrew behavior?

Problems in the Natural World

Tony Howes

From time to time I have come across creatures with problems and if I have had a camera with me I try and get a photograph to record the situation. The problems could be life threatening or merely temporary inconveniences.

One such event concerned a Grey Seal at Horsey. Somehow it had managed to get some fishing net firmly entangled round its neck, it was tight and highly unlikely to come off on its own. The chances were that eventually the seal would die from the injuries being caused by the net, I did report it but don't know the outcome.



Grey Seal



Bank Vole



Common Lizard

I came across a vole in my local wood which was in a poor way, large lesions covered its back. I have no idea what had caused them, but again, the vole was highly unlikely to recover from the problem, as it looked so severe. Likewise, a Brown Rat I photographed eating seed under a bird feeder had a problem with its ears, the animal looked healthy and alert in all other respects, but both ears were covered by unsightly lumps and bumps.

A Chinese Water Deer I saw recently looked very scruffy, a lot of its pelage on the front of its body was missing, the impression was it had been in a fight, but whatever the reason it was not good news for the deer. I suppose, in this case, it would eventually grow again, but would take some time to do so, not life threatening maybe, but an inconvenience certainly, as its water proofing was now suspect.

Lizards are renowned for shedding their tails if danger threatens, they will grow again, but probably not as neat and tidy as the original. The discarded tail can stay moving for some time, giving the lizard a chance to escape the

danger. This lizard was photographed along the path at Strumpshaw Fen.

The next animal in this short list was an old friend, another water deer, he lived for several years at Strumpshaw Fen. I first photographed him in November 2006 when he was in his prime but already had the injury that caused me to call him 'split ear'. His left ear was in two halves, the lower half hanging downwards. This was almost certainly caused in a fight, it's known that males use their long canines during the rut. A later image taken in October 2008 shows him still strong and healthy, but his right canine has been broken off, again probably during a fight with another male. The last time I photographed this old warrior was during the winter of 2009, by then he had changed a lot, thin and gaunt looking, and with a badly damaged front leg, probably broken. He was eating crab apples along the river path when I saw him, he looked up as I approached then hobbled away into the reed bed. Both of his canines were missing, it was a sad moment, I never saw him again.



Chinese Water Deer Image: Tony Howes

Small Mammal Recording - a bit different!

Francis Farrow

As Mammal Recorder for Norfolk I am always interested in sightings of our native fauna and small mammals are no exception. In the majority of cases most of the small mammal records I receive are from 'traps' or cat kills and occasionally owl pellets. On October 16th, I recorded a Field Vole sighting on Beeston Common, near Sheringham. Nothing peculiar about that as there must be a good population of these animals in the grasslands. The sighting wasn't unusual it was how the sighting was made that makes it interesting. I was with a group of birders who were watching a rather confiding Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike which had taken up residence in an open grassy area for a few days. It had been showing off its aerial skills by catching bees and wasps, however, in one sortie it went down into the grass and emerged carrying Field Vole, which it had presumably killed, and promptly took it to a hawthorn tree where the vole was impaled. The shrike left the unfortunate vole for a few minutes but then returned and started to feed on the animal. A sight none of us had ever witnessed before.

Some Interesting Botanical Sightings

David Holman

4th May 2015 - I found a few budding plants of what was considered to be Fodder Burnet (*Sanguisorba (minor) muricata*) near South Creake, I returned a couple of times taking a few photos on 10th May, I assume that it was planted as part of a headland vegetation scheme but may be of interest.



Fodder Burnet

18th May 2015 - I bumped in to a friend, Peter Hayman, he told me that whilst birding at Bowthorpe in West Norwich he had stumble across an odd unidentified plant in an area of damp woodland and he asked me to check it out. I visited the site that day but only found Ground Ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*). I phoned him with my findings, he was totally unconvinced and gave me improved directions and suggested that I look again. I did as he suggested and found four superb clumps of Purple Toothwort, (*Lathraea clandestina*). I phoned him back rather more upbeat about his find and notified a number of friends and sent emails to county recorders etc as this seems to be only the second site in Norfolk though I assume that its origin has to be questionable.



Purple Toothwort

25th June 2015 - I was told that a Lizard Orchid (*Himantoglossum hircinum*) was in flower at Drayton and, after following rather complex directions, found this splendid bloom, apparently the first to flower in Norfolk for nearly sixty years.

Finally on 23rd July 2015 I noticed what appear to be several tiny plants of a Thorow Wax Sp (*Bupleurum subovatum/rotundifolium*) among a mixed garden seed patch in a garden in Bowthorpe, West Norwich.



Lizard Ochid - first
for Norfolk for 60 years



Images: David Holman

What's in a Name?

Jenny Kelly

I strongly suspect that I am not the most popular person on field trips. Why? Because I like my wildlife in English. This can prove difficult for some expedition leaders as they are professionals and scientists who prefer to refer to wildlife by its scientific name. This is precise – one species one name - compared with the multiple common names an individual organism can have. For example, Bluebells are also known locally amongst other things as Cuckoo's Boots, Ring o'Bells, Sapphire Queen, Wild Williams and Wood-bells.

You would think that I would want to use scientific names as it would give me my only chance to use the Latin that I learnt at school. But I am not good at languages – my grandmother is German and the most German I can manage is sufficient to order two beers, and despite living in Montreal, the Paris of Canada, for 5 years I cannot speak French either. However, it is not just my inability with languages that puts me off using scientific names; I like the English names, as they can be so evocative and informative. For example the marzipan-scented Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) sweetens meadows and gets its name from flavouring mead or *meodu* which was corrupted to meadow, whilst Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) was believed to discourage fleas and so was used in straw mattresses, especially those used by women. The Tawny Grisette (*Amanita fulva*), a close relative of the Disneyesque mushroom Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) so named because its poisons were used as an insecticide, is named after ladies of the night who are referred to in Franz Lehar's 'The Merry Widow'.

However, a couple of incidents have made me reconsider my position. The first involved Bladder and Sea Campion which I have difficulty telling apart.



Images: Jenny Kelly



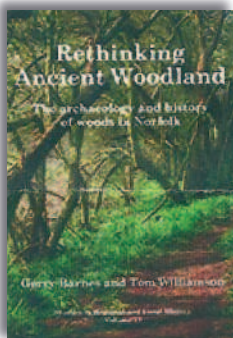
If the plant is growing on the edge of an arable field it is Bladder Campion and if it has the sea lapping at its roots it is clearly Sea Campion. But what about the plants near but not on the beach? As Bob Ellis (Recorder for East Norfolk) pointed out the answer is in the scientific name. Sea Campion is *Silene uniflora* and lives up to its name of having one flower per stalk, compared with the multiple flowers of Bladder Campion (*Silene vulgaris*).

The second incident involved a beautiful yellow flower growing on the edge of Snettisham pits. The flowers were noticeably upright with 5 petals. I thought they might be a garden escape planted by the chalet owners and so I put a photo on I-Spot, my favourite internet site for when I get stuck with an identification. Someone came back suggesting Hoary Cinquefoil (*Potentilla argentea*) – I knew it was not that as the underside of the leaves were not hairy enough. But it got me thinking about Cinquefoils and I revisited and identified the plant as Sulphur Cinquefoil. I got no feedback from I-Spot regarding my new identification so I sent my pictures and description to Richard Carter (Recorder for West Norfolk). He agreed with my ID, and as I wrote up my notes, I noticed the scientific name *Potentilla erecta* – the scientific name describing the most noticeable characteristic of the plant, i.e. its upright stance.



Hoary Cinquefoil

The upshot of these reflections is that I intend to become bilingual in common and scientific naming, so that I can benefit from both. However, don't hold your breath as with my lack of ability it is likely to take me many years to achieve this goal!



NEW BOOK

Rethinking Ancient Woodland: the archaeology and history of woods in Norfolk by Gerry Barnes and Tom Williamson
Vol 13, Studies in Regional and Local History

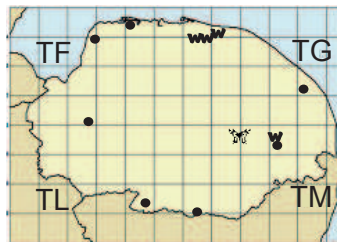
Further details about '*Rethinking Ancient Woodland*'

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Excursion

Reports

● 2015-16 Field
Meeting location
St. Andrew's Hall
Eaton
w Workshop Centre



REDGRAVE & LOPHAM FEN NNR

12th July, 2015

This reserve is owned and maintained by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust but straddles the headwaters of the River Waveney and hence the county boundary with Norfolk, thus providing a very appropriate venue for this joint outing of the Society with a Lowestoft Field Club party led by Arthur Copping and the Norfolk Flora Group under the aegis of Bob Ellis. The spring-fed 125 hectares of Redgrave & Lopham form the largest lowland river valley fen in England with a variety of habitats including sedge and rush beds, rush and grass meadows, wet and dry heath, woodland, and pools.

Seventeen members of the Society and of Flora Group joined seven members of the Lowestoft Field Club in the Visitor's Centre car park at 10.30am on a cloudy morning threatening drizzle but which was to improve gradually throughout the morning before deteriorating all too rapidly to an intense downpour during the afternoon session. The participation of Flora Group and the Lowestoft botanists meant a concentration on plant recording, but most members present had natural history interests wider than the purely botanical and we were fortunate that Dr. Helen Smith of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project had kindly agreed to come along, mainly to help us see, if possible, the Reserve's most famous resident, the Fen Raft Spider.

The entire party first progressed slowly from the Visitor Centre over higher ground bordering the western edge of Middle Fen, with Helen going on ahead to survey the situation in the area of small pools forming the Fen Raft spider's habitat, while small parties made exploratory forays elsewhere into the Fen. Arthur has drawn up his usual meticulous list of plants recorded by the Lowestoft Field Club with contributions by Flora Group, which reveals that 139 taxa were recorded in all, 92 of them in flower. He notes the following as highlights: Bog Pimpernel, Purple Small-reed, Slender Sedge, Meadow Thistle, Great Fen-sedge, Marsh Cinquefoil, Trailing St John's-wort, Bulbous Rush, Tubular and Parsley Water-Dropworts, Fen Pondweed, Greater Spearwort, Brookweed and Greater Bladderwort. Later the Lowestoft party separated to botanise



Greater Bladderwort

Image: Hans Watson

the Suffolk part of Little Fen while Flora Group concentrated on Norfolk grid squares, where Bob Ellis reports that the best afternoon discovery was probably Lesser Water-plantain.

The roll of fauna seen and heard really rivals the plant lists and I must be equally selective here. Among the butterflies seen were Large and Small Whites, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Large and Small Skippers, Small Tortoiseshell - and a Peacock caterpillar - while moths included Cinnabar and Five-spot Burnet. Dragonflies included Common Darter, Brown Hawker, Scarce Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer, Banded Demoiselle and Blue-tailed and Azure Damselflies. As for birds, Helen heard a Green Sandpiper and species seen included Kestrel, Reed Bunting, Reed and Grasshopper Warblers, Linnet, Greenfinch, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Little Egret, Moorhen, Dabchick, Black-headed Gull, Mute Swan and Carrion Crow. Finally, forgive a miscellaneous list to emphasise variety: 7-Spot Ladybird, Marmalade Fly, White-tailed Bumblebee, various hoverflies, Dark- and Speckled Bush Crickets, Common Green -, Marsh-, and Common Meadow Grasshoppers, abundant Labyrinth Spiders, whirligig beetles, rabbits - and a stoat!



The high-point of the visit for many was undoubtedly our encounter with the extremely rare and legally-protected Fen (or Great) Raft Spider *Dolomedes plantarius*. Despite the female having a leg span of up to 70mm (the male is much smaller), one doubts if many of us would have spotted a single specimen in the small but quite heavily-vegetated pools of Middle Fen without the assistance of Helen's experienced and keen eyes - and pointing finger. Eventually, most of the party were able to discern the rich brown or black spider, thanks to the white or cream stripe that normally runs along the sides of her cephalothorax and abdomen. Its hairy legs help the creature move easily over the surface of the water, though it can also disappear beneath in a trice, its body protected in air bubbles. Habitually it rests with back legs on a stem or leaf and front legs resting on the surface of the water to detect any vibrations signaling a possible item of prey - or prospective mate!- nearby, which prey includes other small invertebrates, dragonfly larvae and pond skaters, but may also

Looking for and finding the **Fen (or Great) Raft Spider** at Redgrave
Images: Hans Watson (top), Janet

run to tadpoles and small fish such as sticklebacks. In another nearby pool, Helen showed us a nursery web filled with spiderlets: a silken tent 20-25cm across suspended above the water and attached to plants. For a week or so before the young disperse, the mother spider guards them assiduously, and we were lucky indeed to see her dash out quick as a flash to confront and 'kill' the tip of a shifting reed flowerhead on the surface that she mistook for a threat to her offspring. Helen has been a leading figure in the Fen Raft Spider conservation and research programme also involving Natural England, the Suffolk and Sussex Wildlife Trusts and the Broads Authority, which includes the translocation of Spiders to other suitable Waveney and Broadland wetland sites. The website Dolomedes.org.uk tells more of the Fen Raft Spider and through it, at the time of writing, one can obtain Helen's book 'On the Margins...' illustrated with Sheila Tilmouth's stunning images.

During the afternoon the heavens opened to dampen proceedings greatly, but not to ruin what had been a very satisfying day. Many thanks to Arthur and Bob for organising and recording the visit and to Helen for her patient and illuminating contribution. Thanks also to Stella Taylor for her kind invitation to have refreshments at her Bressingham home and to those who passed on sightings to me, especially Hans Watson and Dorothy Cheyne.

Stephen Martin

Norfolk & Suffolk Bryological Group Meetings 2015 - 2016

Sunday 29 November 2015 – Honing, visiting 2 or 3 grassland/woodland County Wildlife Sites. Meet at the triangle in Honing village at TG 328 274.

Saturday 12 December 2015 - Holme Dunes (NWT reserve), with mudflats, foreshore, sand dunes, dune slacks, scrub, pines, saltmarsh, freshwater and grazing marsh. Turn right down the gravel track at TF 6977 4376 and continue up to the car park adjacent to the visitor centre. Please park in the NWT car park on the left of the track.

Sunday 3 January 2016 – Rosary Cemetery, Norwich. A large Victorian cemetery with conservation areas. Parking (please squash up as much as possible) in the drive up to the chapel (entrance off Rosary Road, adjacent to the Canary Club at TG 2424 0838).

Saturday 16 January 2016 – Great Ryburgh, visiting Starmoor Plantation, Wood and Gt. Ryburgh Common. Wet and dry woodland and grassland, disused railway and possible pingoes, by the River Wensum. Parking: turn north onto rough road Highfield Lane in Great Ryburgh at TF 9515 2734. Continue NE and park on sugar beet pad at TF 9466 2794.

Sunday 31 January 2016 – A tetrad bash in Mid-Norfolk, near Great Ellingham. Park on concrete figure of 8 - access off sharp corner at TM 0272 9827 - at Bush Green.

Saturday 13 February 2016 - Mautby Decoy and associated wet and dry woodland. Park in pull-ins off the road and meet at entrance at TG 4844 1123.

Sunday 28 February 2016 – Fun in Fakenham. Exploring the disused railway, footpaths around The Heath and by the River Wensum, and an industrial estate. Park on Holt Road at TF 9249 3003.

Saturday 5 March 2016 – Bradfield Woods, Suffolk - joint meeting with Cambridge bryologists, and an Oliver Rackham Memorial Visit. This is a working wood that has been under continuous traditional coppice management since 1252. Meet in car park at TL 935 580.

Sunday 27 March 2016 – Houghton Springs, wet grassland by the young River Wissey with some willow and scrub. Also a chance to visit the celebrated church of St Mary which has wall paintings from the late Saxon period, and almost certainly some mosses somewhere. Meet in big gravelled car park area at Houghton Farm at TF 866 051.

British Bryological Society Recorders:

Robin Stevenson, 111 Wootton Road, King s Lynn PE30 4DJ. 01553 766788.
crs111@talktalk.net (West Norfolk)

Mary Ghullam, 5 Beech Drive, North Walsham NR28 0BZ. 01692 402013.
mylia@btinternet.com (East Norfolk)

Richard Fisk, 35 Fair Close, Beccles, Suffolk NR35 9QR. 01502 714968.
richardjfisk@waitrose.com (Suffolk)

Programme: Chris Roberts, 21 The Street, Burgh-next-Aylsham NR11 6TP. 01263 732772
chrisroberts_500@hotmail.com Mobile: 0788 7914047

Post of Society Treasurer is coming available

David Richmond is in his 24th year as treasurer of the Society, and announced at the last AGM, his desire to stand down from this role. As well as handling the Society's finances and preparing annual accounts on a calendar year basis, the task also involves keeping track of membership renewals, completing on-line annual returns to the charity commission and reclaiming gift aid from HMRC.

David is prepared to complete the annual accounts for 2016, but would like the help of an assistant treasurer during that year with a view to them "learning the ropes" and taking over full treasurer's responsibilities with effect from 1st January 2017.

If you are up for this challenge, please contact David on 01603 871000 to discuss in more detail what the role entails. It is essential we have an Assistant Treasurer in post from the next AGM (March 2016) to ensure a smooth handover of this vital role.

New poetry book published – Wilderness by Tim Gardiner

A new collection of natural history poems by Norfolk born writer, Tim Gardiner, has been published by Brambleby Books (April 2015). The collection is titled 'Wilderness' and aims to reflect the emotional connection between poet and wildlife, focusing on an array of species including glow-worms, large marsh grasshoppers, oak trees and the destroying angel fungus. Notes and photographs accompany each poem to further aid the reader's understanding of the species and habitats mentioned.

One poem from the collection 'Bee-pass' laments the building of the Gorleston bypass when the author was a child.

Bee-pass

*Remember the untamed wildlife of the branch line?
Where rambling blackberries and roses intertwined.
Black and yellow bumblebees buzzed hither and tither
reptiles scurried hurriedly among discarded litter.
Red-faced children sledged on the fresh snow
long forgotten friends enjoyed the wintry show.*

*But it all had to change sometime (progress?)
cometh the concrete cresta run of destruction.
Gone are the children and the thorny bushes
so too the grasshoppers, bees and thrushes.
Shadows in headlights and exhaust emissions
yet another undignified, unnatural submission.*

*Mother Nature's 'voice' is too weak to ask
Why must our world come to pass?*

Further details about Wilderness are as follows:

Publisher: Brambleby Books

Format and Pages: Paperback 120pp

ISBN: 9781908241344

Retail Price: £7.99

Brambleby Books Discount Price: £6.50

Available direct from Brambleby Books

<http://www.bramblebybooks.co.uk/wilderness.asp> or from Amazon.



New Book: - From Field and Fen by Mike Toms

Drawn from a decade of the 'In the Countryside' columns published in the Eastern Daily Press, *from Field and Fen* explores our relationship with place and the countryside. The book is the result of looking; of spending time within a few small patches of landscape and of becoming attuned to the shifts and fluxes that would otherwise have been missed. It is a book about feeling and understanding, that moves with the seasons and responds to the external pressures that are an inevitable consequence of the increasing demands on our land.



The book is divided into the four seasons allowing you to dip in and out throughout the year and enjoy the moments at the time they were written. Of course further division into the months refines this sense of now and as I read the book on a wet October afternoon I am in tune with Mike's rich and descriptive writing. The following is from 'Solitude'. **Francis Farrow.**

It is a damp afternoon and the light is not good, but at least the rain has ceased and I have an opportunity to slip out of the house for an hour or so. I've come to the paddocks, an area I know well and where I can lose myself in patient watching. Setting up the scope I stand with my back to the ash and conifers, from which rotund drops of water descend noisily through the foliage. The sound of these falling drops is, for the most part, regular and soon filters itself from my hearing. Every now and then, however, a whole series of drops are set loose by one of the many squirrels that these woods hold.

Slowly I begin to unravel the soundscape: the soft calls of coal tits and goldcrests, a robin already in winter song and the distant calls of jackdaw off towards the house. Patience is the key here and I must stand quietly watching and listening. It feels much later in the afternoon than it actually is, the dark clouds adding hours to my perception of the time.

Further details about 'From Field and Fen' are as follows:

Publisher: Crow Meadow Press

Format and Pages: Hardback 190pp

ISBN: 978-0-9933717-0-7

Retail Price: £12.00

Available from the publisher (www.crowmeadow.co.uk) or via bookshops



The next issue of ***The Norfolk Natterjack*** will be February 2016.

Please send
all articles / notes and photographic material
to the editor as soon as possible by
January 7th 2016 to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham,
Norfolk, NR26 8QD. Email: 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 1st April to 31st 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 **1st 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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