

The Norfolk Natterjack



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*... Researching
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Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Cover image: *Woodcock* (Elizabeth Dack) - See page 6

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Toad-in-the-hole....

My thanks to all contributors - there are notes on unusual invertebrates and an update on the research project at Buckenham Carrs and Hassingham also a report on the fungi from the project foray. Other articles cover birds, ferns and a relatively new gall. Please note there are vacant positions for County Recorders (freshwater fish and hoverflies) also if you are a wizard at figures (or just good) the Society requires a Treasurer. **FF**

Western Conifer Seed Bug

Dorothy Cheyne

On March 14th 2018 my sister showed me an insect she had picked up off a carpet in Ditchingham, south Norfolk. It was not in the Collins Guide to Insects, but a short search on the internet identified it as *Leptoglossus occidentalis*, or the Western Conifer Seed Bug, in the family Coreidae. 'Western' because it originates from the west coast of America, where it can be a pest as the nymphs feed on the flowers, cones and seeds of over 40 species of conifer.

They are quite large insects, 16-20 mm long. In the photograph, note the flattened area on the hind tibiae, a useful identification feature. They can defend themselves with an unpleasant smelling spray, so handle with care! They are attracted to light, so have been found in moth traps.



It was accidentally introduced into Italy in 1999 and from there has spread into several European countries and arrived on the south east coast of Britain in 2007. It is now thinly present all over the UK, with 2409 records on the NBN Atlas at the last count, including c.180 from Norfolk, although the NBIS records show far fewer, at 14 records in Norfolk starting in August 2009 through to October 2015 (see map), plus my record

and any post-2015 records which have not yet been registered.

So far it has not appeared to be a problem commercially in this country, and because it is now not possible to contain it, it is not a legally reportable species. Time will tell if it proves a problem in the future.

There are a number of Scots Pines on the Bath Hills near where my sister found this specimen, so it is probably now well established in the area.



A non-native aphid sheltering a Norfolk (and national) rarity?

Jit Thacker

Back when I was more organised, I liked to attend at least one field meeting a year. In 2007 that field meeting happened to be at Santon Downham, just north of the railway line. At about TL8188 there's a footpath under the railway. The area alongside the track is heathland, and immediately north is the type of plantation normal for the region. In 2007, there was one lone pine tree close to where the path goes under the track, perhaps a survivor from a clearfell long ago. In the base of that tree was a nest of Jet-black Ants, *Lasius fuliginosus*, an unmistakable and fine ant. But where there are ants, there are usually aphids - even if aphids on conifers are perhaps not relevant in conservation terms. Sure enough, there was an ant-attended aphid on the pine tree: *Cinara pini*, a species common enough that in some countries it is considered a (minor) pest.

But following one of the ants' foraging trails led me to a young oak tree right up against the fence delimiting the rail line. I was expecting to find the aphid *Lachnus roboris*, a species that feeds on small branches and twigs (and is itself fairly scarce). Instead, I found *Stomaphis quercus*, the rare, "Giant" Oak Aphid, whose speciality is feeding in bark fissures in the trunks of mature oaks - not young specimens like this one. Norfolk is a stronghold for the species, but every other colony I had seen up to that point had been on mature trees, so this was quite a surprise.



Left: An individual of *Stomaphis* attended by the jet-black ant. The aphid's long mouthparts are visible behind. It is on the move down the tree - not feeding. Right: Typical *Stomaphis* habitat

Images: Jit Thacker

Fast forward to 2016: I returned to check the colony. Was it still thriving on its little tree?

Well, the answer was no. In a perhaps overzealous, but well-intentioned move (pine trees are weeds, right?), the pine tree hosting the Jet-black Ant had been killed. The ant colony was reduced to a few bewildered individuals running around a sun-baked rotting tree trunk wondering where all the pine aphids were. Of the Giant Oak Aphid, there was no sign, nor was there any sign that foraging Jet-black Ants reached the young oak tree any longer.

Without direct data, I cannot say for sure that killing the pine tree led to the loss of the Giant Oak Aphid colony, but this seems likely. I think the presence of abundant pine aphids supported the Jet-black Ant colony, whose wider foraging in turn supported *Stomaphis*.

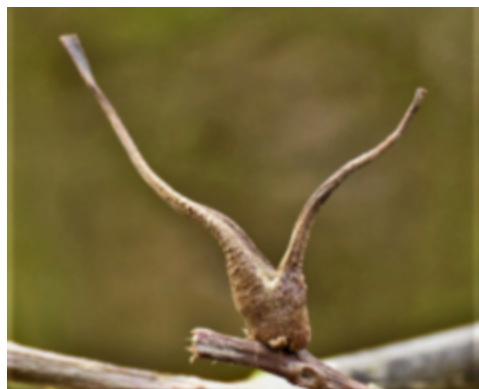
There is one other colony that I know of in Breckland. In 1996 Graham Hopkins and I counted nine trees with *Stomaphis* on one roadside near East Wretham. In 2017, only one of those trees still supported aphids.

Ramshorn Gall

John Furse

Towards the end of February, I was intrigued to see a record of 'Ramshorn Gall' on the Beeston Common Sightings webpage (www.beestoncommon.org.uk). Googling revealed some curiously twisted shapes, reminiscent indeed of this male ruminant's skull protuberances.

Only a week or so later, I found a few on an Oak *Quercus robur* at Gramborough Hill, Salthouse. A photo was taken, which Francis Farrow confirmed was this gall. Over the next few days, by holding each branch in turn, I counted over five dozen, most of which were on the branches to the south of the tree's trunk. I'll have to remember to look next September, when they should be fresh.



Ramshorn Gall

Image: *John Furse*

The gall-wasp responsible for this peculiar gall is *Andricus aries*, originally a species from southeastern Central Europe, but since the start of the 21st century it has become widespread in NW Europe. It was first recorded in the UK in Berkshire in 1997 and since then has spread all over the southern half of England. The wasp lays its eggs in the buds of Common Oak in April, forming the gall from May, with adults emerging in August or September. A sexual generation is found on Turkey Oak.

Unexpected Treat

Nick Elsey

I guess that by now I should expect the unexpected but it's always a treat when I come across something unusual.

In early February I was investigating a water-filled cattle trough, located up on 'hills' close to Whitlingham Sewage Works when I saw what appeared to be the remains of a large insect floating on the surface.



Being inquisitive as to its identity, I used a twig to gently lift the specimen out of its prison. In doing so its legs immediately began to move, so I quickly realised that it was still alive.

Placing it on the ground in a sheltered sunny spot where it could recuperate, it opened its sodden wings within seconds revealing it to be a Peacock butterfly.

I obviously have no idea how long it had been in the water but, by its condition, it must have been there for quite some time. Its resilience seems all the more impressive taking in to account that there had been several frosts of late and even a dusting of snow overnight.

I can only assume that it was disturbed from its hibernation and had attempted to take a drink so as to rehydrate. I did wonder if it had survived because it was able to turn upside down and breathe!



Floating insect reveals itself as a **Peacock butterfly**
Images: *Nick Elsey*

A Hoverfly ‘New to Norfolk’

Francis Farrow

While attempting to get closer to an Adder on Beeston Common to take a photograph I was distracted by an insect that landed on some dead wood just ahead of me. My first thought was that it could be a solitary bee and being 26th March this was likely to be one of the early species. After quickly checking the shot I saw that it was not a bee but a hoverfly. It was a very bright furry insect and one I had not seen before. Later when the image was up on the computer screen I checked my books and discovered it was *Cheilosia chrysocoma*, however the range map in Ball and Morris (Briton’s Hoverflies - 2013) did not show any East Anglian records let alone Norfolk ones.

I sent the image to Stuart Paston, who then sent it on to Roger Morris. Both confirmed my ID as correct and Stuart added that it was indeed a first for Norfolk and that the nearest known record was from the Peterborough area.

Being an early species it is probably under recorded and with the habit of basking on the ground it looks remarkably like (and could be mistaken for) the Tawny Mining Bee *Andrena fulva*. Adults have also been known to visit *Salix* catkins along woodland edges.

It is described as a widespread but extremely local species, although not very much is known about its life history. Females have, however, been observed egg-laying in Europe on Angelica, a large marsh loving plant that is present on the Common.



Cheilosia chrysocoma

Image: Francis Farrow

TRANSACTIONS

If you have a paper/wildlife report/note suitable for ‘Transactions’ please be aware that the deadline for submission is the end of September 2018.

Woodcock and Hares

Elizabeth Dack

It is only the second time I have ever seen a Woodcock and the first time I have been able to take a photograph. I was very excited to see it and what a bonus to get the picture. These birds are usually very well hidden and don't appear out in the daytime very often unless they are flushed out accidentally. This bird was at Sculthorpe Moor (Hawk and Owl Trust) It was camouflaged by the vegetation on a very cold day with a very sharp ground frost. I assumed this may have been why the bird was probably hungry and maybe couldn't get any food, as it came out and started to feed. As it moved along the undergrowth the sun shone showing its beautiful plumage. The bird walked and bobbed from time to time as it used its long bill to find worms and other invertebrates. I stood and watched it feeding and resting, it was very interesting to see this lovely bird as well as having a great photo opportunity. I couldn't believe my luck as it continually walked forward into a small clearing where it rested for a few seconds before returning back into the vegetation.



Woodcock



Brown Hares 'Boxing'

Images: *Elizabeth Dack*

Every year I set myself a challenge of something I would like to photograph. For the past four years I have tried to see and take pictures of Brown Hares boxing!! This year I managed it for the first time. The hares are quiet a way off but I was pleased to see them and chuffed to get the photos. They were taken at Burnham Thorpe in a field alongside some Grey Partridges. Maybe next years challenge will be to improve on the photos!!

Wildlife at Buckenham

Tony Howes

There is a certain field at Buckenham that always has a few hares on it. This year the crop is autumn sown barley which gives a nice green, short sward early in the year, ideal for hare photography. I started visiting in the middle of February with the object of getting some 'Boxing' images, something I have never managed in the past.



Brown Hares 'Boxing'

Another interesting area at Buckenham is the marshland, this is looked after by the RSPB, and during the autumn and winter months is a great attraction for lots of wildfowl and various waders. It's probably best known for the large numbers of Wigeon that congregate there, also Bean Geese and Golden Plovers. Peregrine Falcons hunt there and are often seen sitting on gate posts out in the marsh.



Wigeon

Images: *Tony Howes*

Chinese Water Deer are also numerous on these marshes, often seen feeding in the thicker vegetation during the day, but especially in the early evening. Shelduck visit the open water to feed and preen, the vibrant colours of these birds make them unmistakable, even at distance. Then there are the Lapwings, often hundreds of them feeding out on the marsh, and as Spring advances many of them start their courtship displays, throwing themselves about the sky with gay abandon, and when the light catches their plumage it brings out the rich metallic greens and purples, certainly one of our most beautiful birds.



Top: Wigeon

Mid-left: Shelduck

Mid-right: Lapwing

Bottom: Hares by moonlight

Images: Tony Howes

Sparrows

Hans Watson

Sparrows are probably the most familiar group of birds in the world, and the House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*, possibly the most familiar of all. The family *Passer*, or true sparrows, as opposed to the American sparrows, and others, consists of 27 species worldwide. Many people, even some bird-watchers, consider sparrows as rather plain little birds. I have never shared this opinion, and consider them lovely little birds, with character.

Sparrows were involved in one of the great disasters of the past century. In 1958 the Chinese leaders introduced the infamous Great Sparrow Campaign, which sought to exterminate sparrows, in particular the Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, (which was the commonest sparrow species), simply because they ate grain. Citizens banging pots and pans kept the birds from landing on trees and buildings, and accounts tell of exhausted birds dropping dead in mid air. Shovels were used to clear the masses of dead birds.

Nests were destroyed, and rewards were given to those who handed in the largest number of dead sparrows. This continued for almost two years, by which time sparrows were almost extinct, and the natural ecological balance was gone. Only then was it pointed out to the government officials, that sparrows also ate many insects, as well as grain, so the campaign against sparrows was stopped. By this time it was too late, and with no sparrows to eat them, insect numbers exploded, particularly locusts, which destroyed all the crops. Although other factors were involved, such as misuse of pesticides, the sparrow cull is credited with exacerbating the Great Chinese Famine, in which at least 20 million people died of starvation.



Tree Sparrow



House Sparrow colonial nests
Images: Hans Watson

Although others no longer have House Sparrows in their gardens, I am very fortunate in having them present all year, and even have a few pairs breeding each year. Whilst abroad on holiday this year, I found colonies of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* nesting in branches of trees, and was reminded that many years ago a few pairs made ball like nests in bushes in my shrubbery at home. I would be most interested to know if any other members are aware of Sparrows nesting in this way in Norfolk currently.

Research Project at Buckenham Carrs and Hassingham Update

The Research Committee of the Society is undertaking major recording across species groups at this SSSI and Ramsar site in the Yare Valley. The recording will extend over a number of years and the introductory meeting took place last June. Malcolm Savory, the owner, welcomed around twenty society members to Broad Cottage, overlooking Buckenham Broad and introduced his estate manager, Alan Bates, who would be the main contact for recording. Malcolm handed round maps of the site and explained a bit of his family's involvement as well as pointing out some of the dangers, inherent in the site. The Broad had approximately 4-5 feet of clear water, but 20 odd feet of fen vegetation and mud, before reaching harder substrate. Some of the area was hover, which was why lone recording was not to be allowed. The estate extends up to the boundary with the RSPB and covers such habitats as grazing marsh, carr woodland, fen, open water and dykes and arable land. The estate was a shooting estate and so access to some areas would be restricted at certain times, but this also meant paths along some of the dykes were mown regularly. The area around the meeting point had closely mown lawns and a number of exotic trees, which were an interesting challenge for recorders. Some recording had been done in the past, including a visit to Buckenham Carr by the bryological group in 2008 and Carl Sayer, more recently, had undertaken work on the aquatic wildlife. There was the possibility of using a boat to explore the Broad.



Buckenham Broad

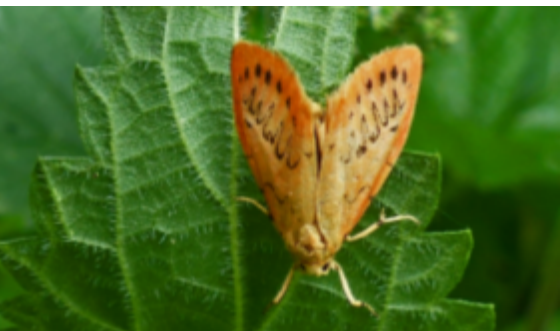
Image: *Jim Froud*

After the introduction, the group split up. The botanists, led by Bob Ellis, headed west along arable fields to explore the edges of the dykes and grazing marsh, while others, including fungi specialists and those studying various invertebrate groups, headed towards the north bank of the Broad. Among the flowering plants noted in passing by Stephen Martin, in this area, were Yellow and White Water Lily, the latter probably introduced, as was the Gunnera, and a range of other waterside plants including Purple Loosestrife, Hemp Agrimony, Marsh Bedstraw and Marsh Fern.



Gunnera Image: Jim Froud

The fungi group recorded twenty one species, all of which, according to Tony Leech, seem to be new to the site. Several of the microfungi seen, were rarely recorded elsewhere in Norfolk. Of note were the Agarics, *Marasmius curreyi*, Grass Parachute, found on the base of *Phragmites australis*, Common Reed, stem, and a brittlestem, *Psathyrella* species, found on the peat, also below *Phragmites*, was being investigated further. Among the rusts and smuts, *Farysia theumanii* on the ovary of *Carex riparia*, Greater Pond-sedge and *Puccinia caricina* var *ribesii-pendula* on the leaf of *C. pendula*, Pendulous Sedge, were infrequently recorded. This was also so among the Ascomycetes and Conidial fungi seen: *Davidiella macrospora* on the living leaves of *Iris pseudocorus*, Yellow Flag and *Lentithecium arundaceum* on a dead *Phragmites* stem. A couple of mite galls were also noted by Stewart Wright - *Aceria filiformis* on elm and *Eriophyses sorbi* on *Sorbus acuparia*, Rowan. The moth specialists recorded evidence of eighty two species on the day. Over half of these were larval mines, primarily on the leaves of the various trees. The highlight was a new record for Vice County 27, East Norfolk, for the nationally scarce A *Ectoedemia seriapeza* on the leaves of *Acer platanoides*, Norway Maple Samara. Also present was *E. heringella* on *Quercus ilex*, Holm Oak. *Phyllocnistis xenia*, another nationally scarce B



Rosy Footman

Image: Jim Froud

species, was found on the leaves of *Populus x canescens*, Grey Poplar. The exit holes of *Sesia apiformis*, Hornet Moth, were seen on Poplars. A number of *Coleophora* species with their feeding case-bearing larvae were also spotted. Of the adult moths recorded, *Crambus uliginosellus*, was another nationally scarce B species and the brightly coloured Rosy Footman was also spotted hiding under a nettle leaf.

Following such a successful initial meeting, various specialists groups have made separate visits. An account of the fungus group's visit in October, written by James Emerson, follows this update.

The Bryological Group spent a day in January recording. After being met by Alan Bates, with suggestions as to access and parking, the group headed off to Cantley and Goldie's Carrs at the extreme east of the estate. This was an area where there had been little previous recording. As to be expected in winter, parts of the site were very wet, but access was through dry coppiced woodland, with large hazel stools and bluebells already thrusting their leaves through the leaf mold. Liggers across the dykes allowed penetration into the carrs and a slightly wobbly large log on Wiregate Marsh, provided a seat for lunch, although, not before tipping one of the group on the ground! All was well, however, as we managed to record *Campylopus introflexus* (Heath Star Moss) on the log!! 35 species were recorded in the area, including six liverworts. Highlights included *Hypnum andoi*, Mamillate Plait-moss, which, in this part of the world, is not recorded unless it has its characteristic mamillate capsules, and *Plagiothecium denticulatum*, Dented Silk-moss. On the way out of the site, Mark Smith spotted a Chinese Water Deer along one of the rides and a little time was spent watching Pink-footed Geese in the distance. Walking back to the parked cars, a maize strip along the otherwise ploughed up arable, (following the sugar beet harvest), was explored. Eight typical arable bryophytes were recorded including the odd looking and aptly named *Sphaerocarpos michelii*, Micheli's Balloonwort, which needs ripe capsules to be identified. An interesting extra was the spiny dead remains of *Datura stramonium*, Thorn-apple, growing along the earthy bank. In all seven new species had been added to the estate's bryophyte list.

My thanks go to all those recorders who sent me species lists for June visits and, of course, to Malcolm Savory and Alan Bates for all their help. The extensive vascular plant species recorded in June will be reported on in a later [Natterjack](#).

Mary Ghullam



Broad Cottage - on the Buckenham and Haddingham Estate

Image: Jim Froud

Buckingham Carrs Fungus Foray

James Emerson

On 7th October 2017 the Norfolk Fungus Study Group visited Buckenham Carrs, a private estate in the Yare Valley with a mixture of habitat types. The owners are keen for the society to record the wildlife on their estate, and the NNNS have made it a research project for the next couple of years. There had been a whole society visit earlier in the year, and various other groups had either visited or arranged to go in the future.



We met up in a small car park and had a quick briefing about where we could go, before setting off across an area of grassland to a small arboretum. There were a few Bonnets (*Mycena* sp) and Blackening Waxcaps (*Hygrocybe conicoides*) in the grassland, but numbers of species started to pick up in the woods. An early highlight came in the form of some Stubble Rosegills (*Volvopluteus gloiocephalus*), large white toadstools that were new for some of the group. We were puzzled by a strange noise coming from the vegetation nearby, and it only became apparent what was making it when a Reeve's Pheasant wandered by. This exotic species, which apparently has the longest tail feathers of any bird, is sometimes released on shooting estates to act as a marker to see how far the Pheasants disperse.

The next phase of our walk took us into some wet woodland and this area was productive, with Dark Honey Fungus (*Armillaria ostoyae*), a small purple *Cortinarius* sp, Ochre Aldercap (*Naucoria escharioides*) and Blue Roundhead (*Stropharia caerulea*). In a nearby bit of Alder carr we saw Lilac Milkcaps (*Lactarius lilacinus*), Jellybabies (*Leotia lubrica*) and some Olive Oysterlings (*Sarcomyxa serotina*). We headed back to the cars for lunch, stopping on the way to look at some Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) growing at eye level. The final find before lunch was a group of Apricot Clubs (*Clavulinopsis luteoalba*) on the lawn.

The rain began to fall a bit harder, so we ate lunch in the cars. After a short break we then headed off to look at another area of woodland. The fungi here was different to the areas we had checked earlier in the day, with Common Puffballs (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*), Upright Coral (*Ramaria stricta*), and a nice patch of Aniseed Funnels (*Clitocybe odora*). Peeling Oysterling (*Crepidotus mollis*) was another good find in the woods before we returned to the grassland species.

Before calling it a day we took in a third area of wet woodland. Yvonne managed to find two very small but interesting fungi growing on plant debris.

Mycena pterigena is a small pinkish bonnet with red gill edges that grows on fern debris, whilst *Marasmius limosus* is a parachute found on reed. After a quick walk to the end of the path to look out over the broad, we returned to the cottage. We had a brief chat with our host, who mentioned that he often saw a Kingfisher in the area. His timing was impeccable as a few moments later a Kingfisher flew in and perched on a small wooden bridge nearby. This proved an excellent end to a day in which we recorded over 80 species of fungi despite the wet weather and not venturing more than 250m from our starting point!



Mycena pterigena

Image: James Emerson

Encounters with Ferns

Cornel Howells

Since moving to Norfolk a few years ago, with my interests primarily woodland and flowering plants, I find quite unexpectedly that I have become fascinated by ferns. As I originally lived in the New Forest which is relatively rich in fern species this may seem rather odd but I was guilty then of the common assumption that “a fern is just a fern” or worse still, just bracken!

There are only 22 species of native ferns found in Norfolk. But that is part of the appeal. Seemingly indistinguishable one from another, or so I thought, each has a signature feature that with a little practice becomes easily recognisable. With a modest degree of time and effort you will become familiar with the majority of Norfolk ferns and be well on the way to seeing them all. Not many plant families are so readily accessible

So what is it about ferns that captures the imagination? They are shy plants, denizens of dark and damp places, hiding away in woodland, in ditches, on bridges, on old walls and with a particular penchant for churches, often high in the tower. They are survivors occupying habitats too challenging for flowering plants. They are primitive plants, evolving some 400 million years ago, and as such retain some of the aura of that distant past.

What appeals particularly is there unpredictability. You don’t go looking for them. Rather they just turn up. And often as not, not in great numbers as orchids are likely to do, but in ones and twos. I found Black Spleenwort

(*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*) on a canal bridge at Antingham, one tiny seemingly vulnerable plant only. Later I found it also singly on a dry hedge bank at Sustead



Common. Others such as Soft Shield Fern (*Polystichum setiferum*) and Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) are the same. Both are found in ones or twos at Southrepps Commons. On the farm I know well near North Walsham there are two ancient double ditches to which no less than seven species of fern cling but each only in the smallest of numbers. They include Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) which is uncommon in Norfolk.

Other ferns are more communal. Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) obviously, but also the Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris paulustris*) as at Holt Lowes. Then there is Polypody (*polypodium*) which thrives in the most challenging conditions, on dry hedgebanks, walls, trees, rock crevices and even sand dunes. Hart's tongue (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) too which I recently discovered growing in hundreds on the face of the chalk cliff of the former quarry at Ringstead Downs.

Because of their antiquity the presence, or indeed absence of ferns, help us to read changes in land use and in the landscape. The story is chiefly one of absence. First there were the plant collectors. Then agricultural intensification and modern forestry which must have wiped out large fern communities. Land drainage and the perceived need for "tidy" countryside would have been more inimical. The farm ferns have only survived because the large ditches have a central island of land where the dredger arm does not reach. Several species such as Golden Scaly Male fern (*Dryopteris affinis*) are ancient woodland indicators and it is poignant to see these growing quite happily in conifer plantations such as at Bacton Wood and Bretts Wood. Lowly Bracken amongst bluebells on a roadside is often the last remnant of a common or wood.



Maidenhair Spleenwort

Image: Cornel Howells

Staying as I write this at a holiday cottage at Ringstead, I chanced to see Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*) growing above the "mind your head" notice above the entrance door. How many heads had ducked under it unawares? The owner, who admittedly was not a plants person, on having it pointed out, enquired whether it had a pretty flower. Maybe that they too keep their heads down will be the key to the survival of our ferns!

To anyone setting out to become acquainted with our ferns I would recommend the excellent guide on the Society's own website. That and a good pair of wellington boots.

ANNOUNCING THE PUBLICATION OF THE SECOND VOLUME OF THE JOURNAL OF BRECKLAND STUDIES

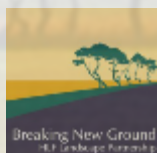
“Few of the lowland districts of England have more striking individual characteristics than the area known as Breckland... Here we feel in touch with man in his early days, with all that is primitive and prehistoric... Calls of pheasants resound through the woodland silences; as a low undercurrent comes the far-off dreamy cadence of the wind in the ever-singing pines.”

W G Clarke, *In Breckland Wilds* (1925)

The Norfolk & Suffolk Brecks cover some 370 square miles of inland East Anglia, an area rich in both cultural history and biodiversity. Yet until the publication of the inaugural volume of the Journal of Breckland Studies in summer 2017, there was no dedicated forum for the publication of papers and articles about the area and its internationally important heritage.

The Breckland Society is therefore delighted to announce the publication of the second volume of the Journal of Breckland Studies on 20 June 2018. A total of seven papers (all illustrated) are included, covering various aspects of the Brecks heritage: a report on the Breckland Bat Project; the history and conservation of shepherd huts; woodland planting on the great country estates pre-1920; the classification and conservation of grasshoppers; the archaeological excavation of a ‘lost’ WW2 prisoner-of-war camp at Eriswell; the demise of lichen flora communities; and a discussion of the ethics of biodiversity research.

Copies will be available from Ceres Bookshop, 20 London St, Swaffham PE37 7DG (tel. 01760 722504/email ceresbooks@aol.co.uk) at £9.99 per copy (plus postage of £2.30 if sent by mail).



The JBS is published by the Breckland Society, a membership organisation that seeks to promote interest and greater understanding of the Brecks. For more information see www.brecsoc.org.uk

Book Reviews: *Birds of the Brecks* and *Flowers of the Brecks* *Part 1: Heath & Grassland*

The recent Heritage Lottery funded 'Breaking New Ground' project succeeded in raising the profile of Breckland and its wildlife, so the decision to release a series of Breckland wildlife guides is a well-timed one. These books, a collaboration between the BTO, Breckland Society, NBIS, NNNs and SNS aim to provide information about the range of wildlife found throughout the Brecks in an affordable and pocket-sized format.



Birds of the Brecks features several pages of familiar birds near the start, ideal for beginners to check their sightings before looking through the more localised species further on. The main species accounts are divided up into four habitat sections - forest, heathland, farmland and wetland, with easy to understand symbols used to denote those species occurring in more than one type of habitat. Star species are allocated a full page, with other species getting half a page. Ample detail is supplied regarding appearance and behaviour, possible confusion species and where to see each one. The latter information is sometimes in the form of sites, but also given in terms of areas or habitat types to take into account the risk of disturbance to rare breeding birds.

A series of symbols in the top right corner of each account give further information including size relative to some common wild birds (or a chicken!) and a calendar wheel illustrating the best time of year to see each bird. There is also a number representing the likelihood of seeing each species, but because these are based on national data in many cases they represent something of an underestimate because they can't take into account the variations between sites. For example you might only see a Mute Swan on 29% of birding visits in general, but you would expect to see them 100% of the time at Lakenheath Fen. Of course reading this book is a good way to boost your likelihood of seeing many of the birds included inside!

The large and diverse flora of the Brecks necessitates two guides to cover them, with *Flowers of the Brecks* part 1 covering the species found on heathland and grassland. As with *Birds of the Brecks*, the star species of the area are each allocated a full page that includes a description, multiple photos and a calendar wheel illustrating the flowering period. Around 240 additional species follow, three to a page but still including a photo and calendar wheel. It is a tribute to Mike Crewe's extensive experience of the Breckland flora that almost all of the photos included were taken by the author, and second photos

Breckland region and those more generalist plants that are common within the Brecks. Many of the species will be familiar to botanists, but I picked out several I was unfamiliar with, such as Hungarian Mullein, and will certainly be utilising some of the information in the book next time I'm botanising in the Brecks.

These two books both succeed in covering a wide range of Breckland species, complete with tips on identification and where to see them, and should appeal to both visitors and locals alike. Work is already underway on the next two volumes, covering Animals of the Brecks and Plants of Wetland, Woodland and Farmland, due out in August.

James Emerson



Book Review:

The Ted Ellis Trust **BUTTERFLIES OF A BROADLAND RESERVE** **WHEATFEN**

A Field Study Guide

This is the second 'Field Study Guide' produced by the Ted Ellis Trust and this time the subject is butterflies. Kevin Radley, a Wheatfen volunteer, has written the text and looks at what butterflies could be seen during two monthly periods throughout the year on the reserve. The book is about Wheatfen and gives specific locations where a particular butterfly species may be found - a location map on the back cover is a useful aid to these. Some 29 species of butterfly are featured and illustrated with photographs, taken by Kevin and other volunteers. The food plants and their relative abundance/scarcity within the reserve are also discussed and a table of flight periods on the back cover is a useful addition. Finally there is also a short report on the extinct Large Copper and Ted Ellis's attempts to reintroduce the butterfly at Wheatfen. A nice link to the past. This is an informative and specific guide - well worth the modest price.

Francis Farrow



The book costs £3.00 or £4.00 p&p from the Ted Ellis Trust, Wheatfen Broad, the Covey, Surlingham, Norfolk, NR14 7AL

Book Review: *Farming and Birds*

Ian Newton

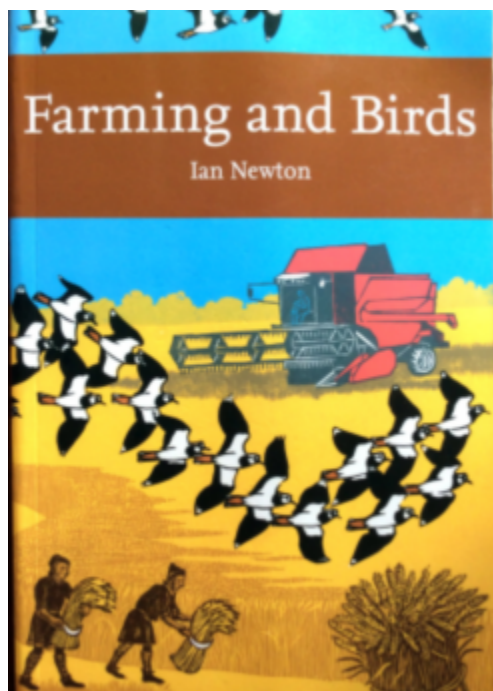
William Collins £35 SB £65 HB

Given the current spotlight on agricultural policy this is a timely addition to the New Naturalist Library.

We all know the birds have gone. This book provides the 'why' in such a cogent and measured way that is all the more telling than any finger pointing tirade would ever be.

Farmland occupies 70% of the land surface of this country and the author describes in great detail, backed up by copious research findings, how every part of this mosaic of land has seen significant declines in bird numbers and how agricultural practices have contributed to this.

The unpalatable conclusion to be drawn from this is that despite the striving of conservationists and wildlife friendly farmers the unending calls for more and cheaper food will defeat them. Not only will we never join up the dots to recreate anything like that which has been lost, but aside from pockets of specific species protection, the decline will continue.



The only hope, as the author concludes, is that farmers, the public and policy makers agree on a sensible system of subsidy that recognises that beautiful landscapes, clean water and abundant wildlife are just as much products of farming as wheat and potatoes. For farmland birdlife they need to look no further than this book for the prescription for such a scheme.

Ian Newton has had a long career as an ornithologist and applied scientist and is an acknowledged expert on birdecology and migration. He is the author of three other New Naturalist publications: on Finches, Bird Migrations and Bird Populations.

Cornel Howells

EUNICE MARGARET PHIPPS

1939 - 2018

On 7 March 2018 at Windmill Care home Eunice passed away from the cruelty of dementia. Her niece Valerie Penn visited her regularly and was a comfort at the time of her passing.

Eunice was born to Val and Ivor Phipps on 14 April 1939 in the Military Hospital, Rhaniket, in India. She later lived in Wales and eventually moved to Wymondham Norfolk.

During her late teens, Eunice enrolled in the Army Nursing Corps, serving for two years before training and qualifying at the age of 25 as a psychiatric nurse. She later became a qualified residential social worker with a special interest in elderly people.



Image: *Lucy Topsom*

Eunice had many interests in different aspects of nature and was continually broadening her knowledge. Birdwatching was always her first love and was a long standing member of many local and national wildlife organisations, taking an active role on several committees and also leading many nature walks.

She was dedicated to her butterfly recordings for the Butterfly Conservation Society, with her main transect patch being at East Harling, where she was nicknamed by the locals as the Butterfly Lady. With three friends she also undertook a trip around Britain to find and record all the British Butterflies.

Eunice was extremely talented at identifying moths and especially macro moths and in addition was also heavily involved with the Dragonfly Society.

Eunice became a member of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists in 1997 and was a council member from 1997 to 2000.

She made a huge contribution to nature will be greatly missed by the wildlife community.

Lucy Topsom

KENNETH ALBERT BECKETT

1929 - 2018

Ken Beckett, who died on 21st February 2018, was a knowledgeable and talented botanist. In addition, he was a well respected writer of many books on garden plants, trees and horticulture. This combination made him outstanding as a field botanist in his ability to recognise and identify the minutest weedling. If he couldn't work it out immediately, he would grow it on until he could identify it. He and his wife Gillian, who died in late 2016, were BSBI Vice-County co-Recorders for West Norfolk, (v.c.28) for 23 years. He was born in Brighton on 12th January 1929, and was an only child. From an early age he had a keen interest in natural history, and left school at 14. His first job was to barrow coal at a nursery near the South Downs, up to the greenhouses. It was hard graft but he stuck at it and was rewarded with work in the greenhouses. He also worked at Highdown Garden, Worthing. This was the start of a 75 year career, which he loved. According to his son, Keith, Ken was one of those lucky people whose work was his passion in life.

He spent the first 20 years in practical horticulture gaining experience in nurseries, public parks, research institutes and botanic gardens. He moved around often as a young man and would soon leave a job if he wasn't happy there. He obtained a diploma (1951-53) at RHS Wisley. He worked at John Innes in Bayfordbury, Herts., then in the USA at Reef Point garden, Maine, and subsequently as Curator at Missouri Botanical Gardens. Later he returned to John Innes to work on the national potato collection and around this time he began to write. In 1965 he resigned as Assistant Curator at Glasgow Botanical Gardens, to become technical editor for the *Gardeners' Chronicle*.

Ken wrote numerous books, articles and monographs about plants and horticulture; as an author, co-author or an editor, he was involved in some 124 works in his lifetime. One of the earliest was the spiral-bound, initial edition of 'Growing under Glass', in 1960, in association with RHS. Other books were, 'The Love of Trees' and, with Gillian as co-author, 'The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Indoor Plants', and also 'Planting Native Trees and Shrubs'. He was technical editor for the Hardy Plant Society for 14 years, and was on various RHS committees, including the RHS Joint Rock Garden and the Scientific committees. He was also a judge at the Chelsea Flower Show in the 80's and 90's.

He joined the BSBI in 1958 and met Gillian for the first time at a field meeting in Yugoslavia, where she was leading her first foreign field meeting in April 1973. They were married soon after and went to live in Essex for a few years, where their son Keith was born. Not long after, they returned to Norfolk to live in Bramley Cottage in Stanhoe, where Gillian had lived with her parents.

In the 80's, work on 'A Flora of Norfolk' was begun, and Ken attended the meetings which Gillian organised in West Norfolk. According to a local naturalist, 'He just hovered quietly in the background, occasionally contributing the correct name for something under discussion'. In 1987 he was awarded the prestigious Veitch Memorial Medal, an international prize issued annually by the Royal Horticultural Society, to "persons of any nationality who have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement and improvement of the science and practice of horticulture."

He was modest about his knowledge which extended beyond vascular plants into many other aspects of general natural history, but his main interest was in plants and especially trees, and following this love he travelled widely abroad, especially in New Zealand, Australia, Japan, North and South America, Austria, Hawaii and China.

In later years his eyesight failed him and he became registered as blind. He also had severe arthritis, but remained cheerful and always interested in talking about the world of plants. Those who knew Ken were frequently amazed by the breadth of his knowledge and interest in botany and horticulture. He was extremely generous and always interested in "new" species and unusual varieties, propagating seemingly tirelessly and distributing widely. A true plantsman.

After Gillian died he moved to live in a smaller house in Docking, near his son, Keith, and had a large greenhouse erected in his garden, in order to pursue his passion. He became ill and went in to King's Lynn hospital and whilst there he contracted pneumonia and sadly died. He leaves his son Keith and daughter-in-law Kathy, granddaughters Chelsea and Sophie and grandson Chris.

Our thanks go to Keith for his help in writing this tribute to his father Ken Beckett.



Image: Keith Beckett

*Tim Doncaster
Frances Schumann*



The next issue of ***The Norfolk Natterjack*** will be August 2018.

Please send
all articles / notes and photographic material
to the editor as soon as possible by
July 1st 2018 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.

New memberships and renewals can be made by credit card or 'PayPal' by visiting the Society's website at www.nnns.org.uk

Alternatively a cheque payable to
'Norfolk & Norwich Naturalist's Society' can be sent to:

Jim Froud, The Membership Secretary, Westward Ho, 4 Kingsley Road,
Norwich NR1 3RB

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

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