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*... Researching  
Norfolk's Wildlife*

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# The Norfolk Natterjack



The quarterly bulletin  
of the  
Norfolk & Norwich  
Naturalists' Society



# Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

Founded 1869

Reg. Charity No. 291604

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**Cover image:** *Holkham NNR* (Jim Froud) - See page 17

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

My thanks to all contributors for both articles and images and I trust members will find something of interest as the articles vary from ferns, historical connections, birds of prey and of course great excursion reports. Excursions are still an important part of the Society and if you can spare the time well worth attending as they often turn up unusual or exciting species and often visit places (or parts thereof) that the general public are normally excluded. Still to come are meetings at Cley for flies and small fungi, at Holme & Titchwell for plants and at Foxley Wood for mosses. If you have any wildlife notes or stories from the summer/early autumn please send them in for the November '*Natterjack*'

**FF**

## **A note from your chairman.**

I am writing this note as news of spring migrant birds around the county keep appearing in my inbox and on my phone, although true spring weather has yet to put in an appearance! Having said that, I appear to be having more than my fair share of sunshine of late having already had two months in Australia within the last six and I am planning another visit in July. One of my forays abroad coincided with the date of the Society's AGM. My shoes were more than amply filled by James Emerson, our secretary, who did a great job in chairing the most agenda filled meeting I can remember. The adjustments to our rules was important and all but one change was passed without issue. These are good, sound changes that will enable the Society to move forward to fulfil its role in today's changing world. James quite rightly decided to delay the one remaining change regarding membership eligibility until it was in a more accurate and acceptable form. This was a good call on his part and it will be discussed thoroughly in council before being reformatting and re-proposed at a later date.

The financial workings of the Society are being aptly controlled by Jim Froud as Assistant Treasurer but I would remind members we are still looking to fill the role of treasurer. Jim's role and any future treasurer's role will be aided by the new Finance Committee. This will give the (assistant) treasurer, members of council and all our members more security in knowing funds are being well monitored.

I shall be chairing the new Liaison Committee aided by Jo Parmenter. We have already had our first meeting and we intend to stretch the Society's influence into other county wildlife organisations. In these times of climate change and other pressures on our wildlife I see it as vital all societies, trusts and other organisations within the county act collectively in preserving what we have. The Society is the oldest wildlife group in Norfolk; it is, and always has been, an organisation with its finger on the pulse of the county's flora and fauna. The scientific research and recording it carries out needs to be promoted to all. The Liaison Committee will do this.

I feel the Camera Club is an under appreciated part of the Society. I hope under the influence of Hans Watson it will be given more prominence. If you are a photographer have you ever thought about what will happen to your photographs when you pass away? Will your family just destroy them? I hope to be able to start a storage facility in which the use of our photographs may live on well after our demise. A pictorial record of the county's wildlife is an important factor in monitoring change and educating.

Details of the new society reference library stored at the Ted Ellis Reserve was well documented by Tony Leech in the last issue of Natterjack. In the coming months we hope to be able to add to the library with carefully chosen volumes which will set the scene for the society's role in educating all to ensure better research.

The educational wildlife app that has been given the working name of 'Natterapp' has now been put for lottery funding. I hope to have some good news on this in the coming months.

The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations are now well underway with more to come. The pages within Natterjack will keep you up to date with what is planned, or you can follow proceedings on the Society's Facebook page. Finally, I would remind you our membership currently stands at around the 630 mark. However, we have some 1500 followers on Facebook - some obviously still haven't got the message regarding how beneficial membership can be. If you are speaking with someone that is wildlife orientated ask them if they are a member and if they aren't ... well, I'll leave the rest to you.

*Carl Chapman*  
Chairman



*Anne Whitaker*

*Carl and Purple Emperor, Fermlyn Woods, Northamptonshire*



# Rare ferns and a curiosity

Cornel Howells

I joined a field trip organised by the British Pteridological Society to Catfield Hall Estate at the end of June. In brilliant hot sunshine we set off to find *dryopteris* ferns. In particular *Dryopteris cristata*, the Crested Buckler Fern and the hybrid with *Dryopteris carthusiana* or Narrow Buckler Fern, known unflatteringly as *Dryopteris uliginosa*.

When we arrived at the fen, Marsh Fern, *Thelypteris palustris* was in abundance, a fern I had only seen before at Holt Lowes. Similarly, there were clumps of the Crested Buckler Fern with its singular twisted ladder like shape. Again, I had only seen one clump before and that was at Beeston Common. Also, Royal Fern *Osmundus regalis* was much in evidence and a small clump of Hard Fern *Blechnant spicant* had become established which I normally find in ditches and indicating relatively acid soil. The jury is still out on *uliginosa* with some members claiming to have found it only to be refuted by others.



Crested Buckler Fern



Marsh Fern

Walking back to the Hall, exciting the curiosity of the White Park cattle, particularly the bull! an alert member found another curiosity. On the side of the track amongst the undergrowth was one flower of the Spiked Star of Bethlehem

*Ornithogalum pyrenacium*, also known as Bath Asparagus. As far as I can discern it has not been recorded in Norfolk. We did not taste it. It was already fading and will no doubt remain a mystery.



Spiked Star of Bethlehem

Images: Cornel Howells

# ***Never trust a Pill Woodlouse!***

*Ash Murray*

Whilst at Narborough Railway Line on the 16<sup>th</sup> April, Anne Simpson and I saw a male *Andrena cinerarea* struggling to carry/open a contracted Pill Woodlouse (*Armadillidium vulgare*). I was baffled as to why a nectivorous creature would be intent on carrying a Pill Woodlouse away, so spent some time watching it lifting and heaving the woodlouse around. On occasions, it tried to lift off with the Woodlouse slung below it.

After pondering it for a while, I came to the conclusion it must have become locked into the contracted shell of the woodlouse. Closer inspection proved this to be the case. Presumably the bee had walked across the woodlouse carapace causing the woodlouse to contract into a ball and, in doing so, trapped the final tarsal segments of the bee. The more the bee struggled, the less likely the woodlouse was to relax, so the two remained locked together.

We mused what the outcome of this chance encounter between the two would have been - presumably, if the bee survived until sundown it would become torpid in the cold, the woodlouse would relax and the bee would have been freed. Whilst it would have been interesting to wait around to test this, I opted for the quicker option and eased the tarsal segment from the woodlouse and it flew off, shaken but intact!



*Andrena cinerarea*  
vs *Armadillidium*

Image: *Ash Murray*

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## **A SMALL TRIUMPH**

*Carol Carpenter*

If you are familiar with the area around Wells next the Sea, you will already know the footpath that leads from the town to the beach. On one side there is a wonderful view of the harbour and on the other, a slight incline of flood bank. A couple of summers ago this area was a delight for all who used the path with an abundance of wildflowers including large swathes of Vipers Bugloss. One particular afternoon my partner Bernie and I were watching the many bees and other insects feeding on one of these plants when, to our delight, we saw a Broad Bordered Bee Hawkmoth. Another couple of holiday makers, who were standing nearby, told us that they had seen them at this spot before and that they had come back especially to find them again. The following day we returned for another look and were devastated. The sight that met us brought me to tears as, that morning, the whole bank from end to end, had been cut!



However, I am now delighted to say that after many e mails to and from various bodies involved in this area of outstanding natural beauty and hopefully from other visitors and local inhabitants too, it seems the tide has turned. I am now assured that the cutting regime has been altered and that the Alexander's, that is also quite prolific and somewhat invasive, is being targeted for removal on a discriminative regime.

This year has, to our delight, now seen somewhat of a comeback. There is still a way to go yet in order to completely repair the damage but Vipers Bugloss is in flower again.

In the June sunshine there were, once more, many species of Bees and other insects and also a plethora of Painted Lady butterflies, as it seems to be a Painted Lady year this year and also, to our delight, this wonderful specimen of a Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoth.

Of course, with the shift in public opinion on insects recently, maybe the authorities would have done this anyway but we can't help thinking that our little protests may have done something to help give this one species a chance to live another day.



*Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoth*

Image: *Bernie Webb*

# **Sparrowhawks**

*Hans Watson*

About a third of my garden is devoted to shrubbery that I have created over the last 40 years expressly for birds and other wildlife. Species of birds that regularly nest there include Dunnock, Robin, Wren, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Collared Dove and Wood Pigeon, with Blue and Great Tits in the boxes that have been provided. Occasionally I have Song Thrush, Goldfinch, Long-tailed Tit and Goldcrest nesting also. My records show that 17 species have used the shrubbery for nesting over the years. On rare occasions in winter, it attracts Woodcock and Waxwing.



*Sparrowhawk (female)*

Image: Hans Watson

It is inevitable that a garden that attracts birds will also attract predators, and Sparrowhawks from the woods close-by make their visits several times each week. Fortunately for the resident birds the Sparrowhawks do not always make a kill, but the panic and hush that their visit causes is amazing. The most frequent victims are Collared Doves, but it does not seem to have any effect on their numbers in the garden. In fact, all the other species seem to be doing well, and Greenfinches are definitely increasing.

I am a great admirer of the flying skills of Sparrowhawks, but they do sometimes make mistakes and, over the last 20 years, 3 have been killed when they flew into my conservatory windows. They always seem very single minded when in pursuit of prey, and whilst I was working on my vegetable garden recently, I heard the familiar sound of panicking wings, and a Blackbird shot past me, closely followed by a Sparrowhawk. The Blackbird flew straight into the greenhouse, via the open door, where the Sparrowhawk caught it. All was quiet for about half a minute, and just as I was wondering if the Sparrowhawk was plucking its prey and making a mess in the greenhouse, it casually flew out with the Blackbird in its talons. If they are surprised whilst plucking prey, they sometimes fly off leaving the prey. However, I have several times quickly erected one of my hides and been able to photograph them when they returned for their kill. This has usually been within about 20 minutes of their leaving it.



*Sparrowhawk (male) with Collared Dove*

Image: Hans Watson



# NORWICH CATHEDRAL PEREGRINES

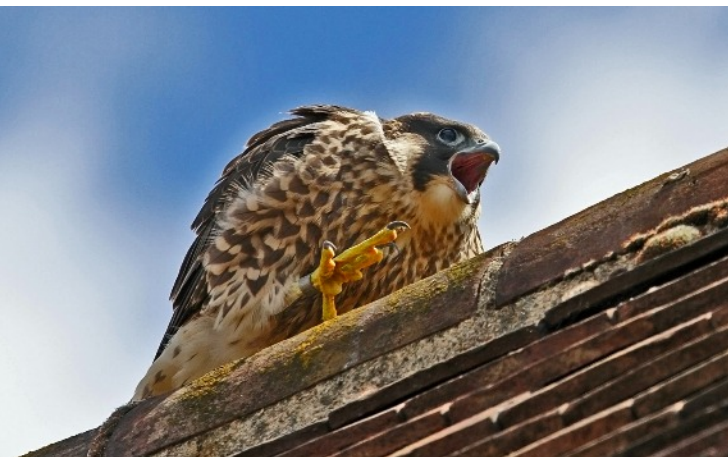
*Tony Howes*

I had my first outing of this year to the Cathedral on 9th June. As I had been away all the previous week I wasn't sure how the Peregrines were progressing, but a quick look on the website told me all three young had fledged successfully.

It was a lovely sunny morning, breezy, with a few fluffy white clouds, ideal for photography. The youngsters were all perched in different places, two were high up on the shadow side of the spire, the other was on a house roof quite

low down, it was this bird that I concentrated on.

During the four hours I was there two prey items were brought in, both were pigeons, one of them wearing leg rings, (a pigeon fancier somewhere would not be a happy bunny), but the lone juvenile would



Juvenile Peregrine on house roof

not fly higher. It was calling incessantly and was obviously hungry, one of the adults did circle round a couple of times to try and entice it higher, but to no avail, I expect it got it's lunch eventually.

It takes quite a while for the young birds to learn how to be a Peregrine Falcon, and I find it a real joy watching this process take place, changing from a small bundle of white down into one of the fastest and most charismatic birds we have in the UK.



Peregrine bringing in a pigeon

Images: *Tony Howes*

## Crossing the border...

*Tony Howes*

An outing to Minsmere in Suffolk proved interesting in late May as the gorse bushes along the shingle ridge had several different bird species nesting in the prickly branches. Linnet, Chaffinch, Whitethroat, Stonechat, and Dartford Warbler were all seen and photographed, Green Hairstreak butterflies also had their portraits taken there, another lover of the yellow gorse, and a gorgeous little creature.

*Linnet*



*Whitethroat*



*Stonechat*



*Dartford Warbler*



*Green Hairstreak*



Images: *Tony Howes*



## NATURE GALLERY

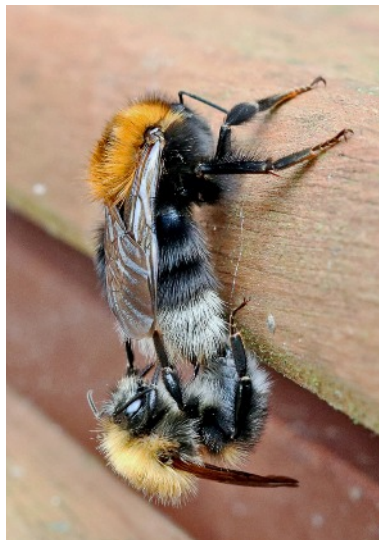


Left: One of several Cuckoos that dropped in at Gramborough Hill, Salthouse (*John Furse*)

Centre left: Bishop's Mitre Shieldbug - a first for Beeston Common (*Mark Clements*)

Centre right: A pair of Tree Bumblebees at Gorleston (*Judy Leak*)

Bottom: An Adder swimming across the pond on Beeston Common (*Francis Farrow*)



# Connecting the past to the present

Clive Slater

Have you ever looked for an item of information and found by accident something entirely different but of greater interest which diverted your attention? This happened to me recently when researching the work of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Yarmouth naturalist William Richard Fisher (1824-1889). As the circumstances relate to the period being commemorated this year by the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society, it might be of interest to Natterjack readers to record what happened.

In his early years Fisher was an avid observer and recorder of bird life in the Yarmouth area and many of his observations were published in the journal *The Zoologist* including in 1846 an *Account of the Birds of Norfolk* on which he collaborated with John Henry Gurney Senior (1819-1890)\*. Fisher's name cropped up unexpectedly when I was reading Michael Shrubbs's 2013 account of a history of the exploitation of wild birds - *Feasting, Fowling and Feathers*. He mentioned a reference to Fisher having, "commissioned a man to obtain all the Goldcrests (*Regulus regulus*) he could in 1843, in the hope of getting a Firecrest (*Regulus ignicapillus*), which he did, having shot 30 Goldcrests." Intrigued by this event and wondering whether it was all true, I traced the original reference to the Rev. Richard Lubbock's 1845 book *Observations on the Fauna of Norfolk*, and, in addition to the above, he said Fisher was attempting to obtain the first specimen of the Fire-crested *Regulus*. A revised second edition of Lubbock's book was published in 1879, some 34 years later, by Thomas Southwell (1831-1909) and I was curious to see if he reproduced the same account of this event.

Thomas Southwell was a prolific author on many natural history subjects and a stalwart supporter of the Norfolk & Norwich Museum and the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society (President in 1879-80 and 1893-94), and published many papers in the Society's Transactions. Norwich Castle Museum fortunately possesses several copies of both editions of Lubbock's book and while looking through them Southwell's own proof-copy of the second edition caught my eye. Thumbing through it I was struck by the numerous detailed annotations in Southwell's hand-writing, as well as several letters and newspaper cuttings glued between pages. Amongst this mass of information, however, one small newspaper cutting stood out for me as I immediately recognised the context. It was a short Letter to the Editor of the Eastern Daily Press from John Henry Gurney Junior (1848-1922) published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1896 (see photograph).

Gurney Junior was responding to a reader's query about the Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) trees at Catton Park, on the outskirts of Norwich, and he knew these trees well having once lived with his family at Catton Hall. He was able to inform readers they were grown from seeds in cones sent by a

Letter to the EDP from John Henry Gurney junior, published 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1896.

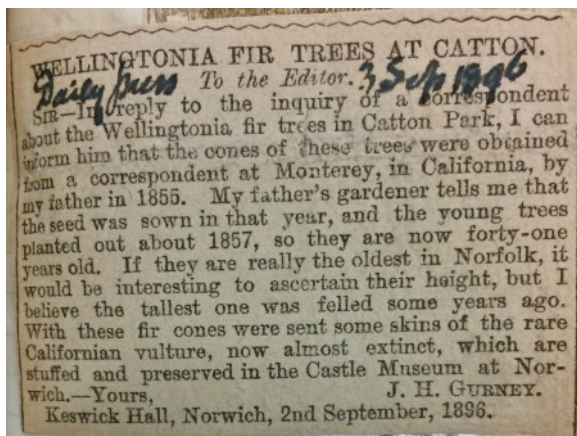
(Image: Clive Slater)

friend of his father from Monterey, California in the mid-1850s (the earliest trees were introduced in England in 1853). So at this time they would have been about 40 years old and a good size. Seven of these trees survive today and perhaps

many *Natterjack* readers will be familiar with their imposing height and girth after about 165 years of growth (see photograph). I recently measured the girth of most of these trees with the help of a colleague, Duncan Smith, and the largest was 7.0 metres which is impressive, but of course nowhere near the size they can grow to in their native California where they are also known as the Giant



Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), Catton Park, Norwich (Image: Clive Slater)



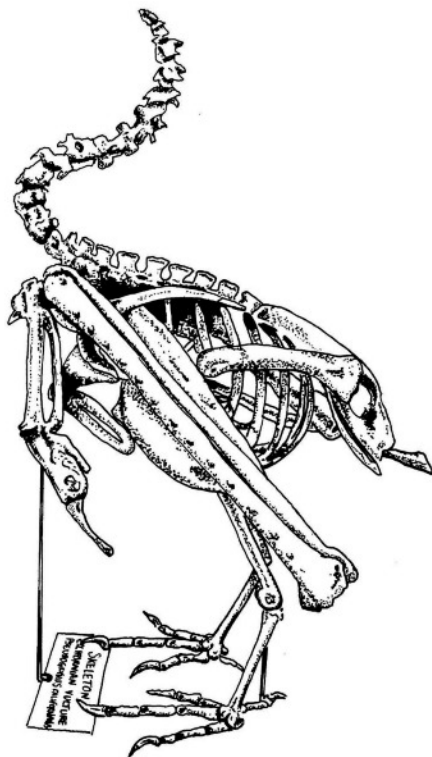
Sequoia. However, it was not only the mention of these trees in the press cutting that interested me, it was also the reference to the fact that specimens of the California vulture (condor) had been sent from the same source in California and were preserved at the Castle Museum.

Although Gurney Junior didn't mention who the source was, I knew it to be Alexander Smith Taylor (1817-1876) from Monterey, California as I had examined these specimens in the Bird Collection at the Natural History Museum, Tring, a couple of years earlier when researching Gurney Senior's renowned Raptorial Collection. These specimens were amongst the first California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) specimens and first egg to ever be collected, and therefore all are scientifically very important. I also knew from catalogues that Gurney's collection had included a Condor skeleton that had not gone to the



Natural History Museum, but was it still at the Castle Museum? With the help of Dr Tony Irwin at the Museum, the skeleton was found, albeit minus the skull, and is shown in the accompanying drawing by courtesy of Julie Curl. This skeleton is also important because it was one of the first collected and on examination by Julie showed signs of a few pathologies such as damage or infections which had healed and may have been caused during competition for food, but probably did not affect its ability to function and feed. It is remarkable that most of these Condor specimens remained at the Norwich Museum, and later the Castle Museum, for about 100 years before passing to the British Museum (Natural History), except for the skeleton.

Alexander Smith Taylor was quite a character - he was described by the expert on the history of the California Condor, Sanford Wilbur, in his 2012 book *Nine feet from Tip to Tip*, in this way, "If it is possible for a person to be both well-known and unknown, Alexander S. Taylor fits the bill." His private life is little-known but, "he became the first widely-quoted 'authority' on the California Condor." Taylor was in England in 1840, arriving from the United States on the same boat as Gurney's father, Joseph John Gurney, and visited Earlham Hall where he would have met John Henry Gurney. They became long-term friends and correspondents and both later developed a mutual interest in condors. Gurney described Taylor as, "a very intelligent and assiduous observer of the Ornithology of California." Unfortunately, Taylor's writing on condors was not as reliable as it seemed at the time, causing Wilbur to declare, "almost everything he wrote has been shown to be either incorrect or unlikely - yet his writings still colour the way that the history of the condor is perceived." Nevertheless, he gained recognition for his historical and natural science works by being elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society and was made an honorary member of the California Academy of Sciences. It is quite extraordinary to think that John Henry Gurney's connection to his friend from California in the 1850s resulted in trees that we can still see today in Catton Park, and a rare Condor skeleton still held at the Castle Museum.



Skeleton of a California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) minus the skull  
(Drawing: Julie Curl)

But what of William Richard Fisher's 'Fire-crested Regulus' event from where we started? After the above diversion I examined Thomas Southwell's copy of Lubbock's 1845 edition and found he had included a number of hand-written annotations initialed 'W.R.F.' which he said he had copied from a copy of Lubbock's book in the library of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society. On the page containing the Fire-crested Regulus was written, "I don't know where he got this number. I certainly did not count the common ones. W.R.F." On the assumption this was William Richard Fisher's annotation of his own copy of Lubbock, it appears he did not dispute he had commissioned a man to collect Goldcrests for him, but he is clear he did not count how many were collected. But did he make history by collecting the first specimen of a Firecrest? In one sense he did. According to Keith Dye and colleagues, writing in 2009 on *Birds New to Norfolk*, if a bird, "caught in the rigging of a ship five miles off the Norfolk coast in October 1836" is considered the first 'offshore' record for Britain, then Fisher's 1843 bird is, "certainly the first recorded on Norfolk's and Britain's mainland."

\*The 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019 was the bicentennial anniversary of the birth of John Henry Gurney Senior. His contributions to the development of Norwich Museum and the ornithology of Raptorial birds in the Victorian period were immense.

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## New Book: *Muntjac and Water Deer* - Arnold Cooke

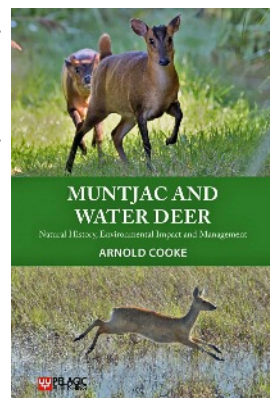
(ISBN: 9781784271909 - Paperback/Pelagic Publishing £34.99)

Muntjac and water deer were introduced to Britain from the Far East. *Muntjac and Water Deer* provides a comprehensive overview of their natural history and the management of their environmental impacts.

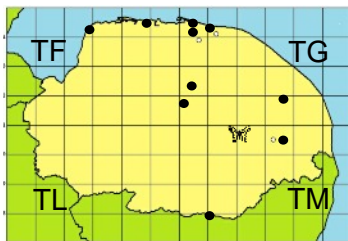
The first section covers the natural history of both species including: breeding biology, deer in the field, colonisation of Britain, a detailed look at colonisation in a single county, methods for studying deer populations and a review of deer population numbers. The second section covers environmental impact: risk assessment, impact management, control of Muntjac, effect of Muntjac browsing and grazing, habitat recovery from Muntjac impacts and a study on the impacts of Water Deer. The section concludes with an overview of management and monitoring.

The costs and benefits of both species are discussed, and questions asked about whether we are getting on top of problems caused by Muntjac (locally and nationally) and will Water Deer turn out to be similar to Muntjac?

Arnold Cooke worked for the national nature conservation agencies as a researcher and an adviser for 30 years, leaving in 1998 to pursue his interests in deer, birds and herpetofauna. In 2017, he was awarded the Balfour-Browne trophy by the British Deer Society for his work on Muntjac and Water Deer.







### Birds at Weybourne Camp, including Muckleborough Hill Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2019

The members met in the Muckleborough Collection car park where our leader for the walk, Moss Taylor explained that the old military camp at Weybourne was owned by Sir Michael Savory and it was with his kind permission that we were allowed access for the walk, our first 150<sup>th</sup> year anniversary event. Prior to leaving the car park Moss alerted us to a repeated plaintive note, which was the 'rain song' of the Chaffinch, although at the time it was sunny. As we headed down the track towards the beach we passed patches of Hoary Cress, saw a male Kestrel or 'Windhover' and were entertained by four Brown Hares cavorting in a field and occasionally leaping over a small fence on to the track and back again. It looked like it was three males chasing a female. In the confusion of the chase the



Brown Hares Images: *Hans Watson*

female managed to give the males the slip and headed off across the field. As we approached the Weybourne Hope reedbed we saw a Mallard duck, Sand Martins and Swallows plus a male Sparrowhawk. Unfortunately the north-west wind was quite strong and the area yielded no warblers (Cetti's, Reed and Sedge are normally heard) but a male Reed Bunting was seen. We turned and faced the wind, which was brisk and

chilly, and then the Chaffinch was proved correct, as it usually is, when a rain shower hit us. We eventually left the coastal path and headed into a pine wood which was sheltered. In the wood we were shown two large holes dug into the sandy soil. From

the lack of smell and the way the sand had been dragged out from one of the holes we concluded that it was a Badger sett rather than a Fox den. Leaving the wood we came upon a small pool from which the scratchy tune of a Sedge Warbler was emanating. Linnets flew overhead and Water Crowfoot was in flower along the margin of the pond. As we headed towards 'The Mound' we were surprised by the sudden appearance of a very rare bird - a Great Spotted Cuckoo - as it flew past. This bird had been in the area for a few days but was proving very elusive. We retraced our steps in the hope that we may get a better look and our luck was in as it did a splendid fly-past, which resulted in the quick-fingered photographers 'capturing' the bird. This was a great sighting to kick off the anniversary year. We also had a fine view of a Whimbrel as it flew west along the beach. We spent a bit of time trying to re-locate the Great Spotted Cuckoo and while passing a copse Moss pointed out a Buzzard's nest and the webs made by the Brown-tailed Moth caterpillars, which were the main food of the Great Spotted Cuckoo. By the time we arrived back at the Muckleborough Collection it was past noon and it was decided that the strong wind would not make visiting Muckleborough Hill worthwhile as most birds, such as the Garden Warbler would not be singing. We did tick off Mistle Thrush though in the field by the main drive. Although the northwest wind is not ideal for migrants not one of the 17 members present could deny that they had not had an extremely interesting morning (plus a new bird for life for most) and we would like to thank Moss for being a most informative guide as we walked around the Camp.

*Francis Farrow*



Great Spotted Cuckoo in flight  
Image: John Kerrison



Great Spotted Cuckoo at rest in the afternoon  
Image: Moss Taylor



Brown-tail moth caterpillar  
Image: Francis Farrow

## Holkham NNR

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2019

We met at the north end of Lady Anne's Drive at 10am, and Andy Bloomfield (Warden) arranged free parking for the four members and two affiliated from “*The Ecology Consultancy*” in Norwich, who were present. To start, Andy took us back down the Drive to see where and why changes were planned for the creek that runs east from there. As we approached, Andy pointed-out a Spoonbill and a Little Egret flying directly overhead.

He told us that from the 1500s the creek previously ran east from there to the harbour at Wells, but became blocked by the newly built harbour wall in 1859 (ten years before the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society was inaugurated). The plan for the creek, which is still quite deep enough for wildlife, but has steep sides, is to dig away the edges to broaden it and make it more accessible, both to its inhabitants and to the gaze of the public viewing them. A sluice is used to maintain suitable levels in the creek and in pools alongside Andy showed us Wood Sandpiper, a Redshank some Mallard, Shelduck and Lapwings.



**Wood Sandpiper** Image: Derek Longe

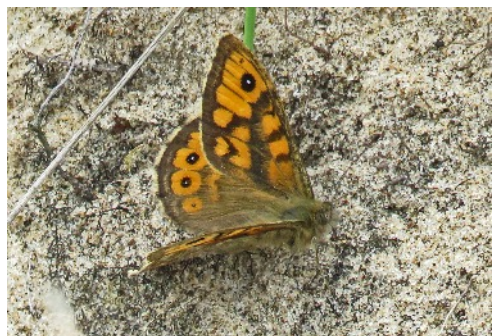
In arable wet fields to the west of Lady Anne's Drive, we saw Avocets, which nest there. Andy explained that there is extensive predator management on the estate, to protect ground-nesting birds, principally from crows and foxes. We saw more Spoonbills flying over and a couple of large raptors in the distance, as we made our way towards Holkham Pines, which grow in woods parallel to the beach, just inland from the dune-slacks. Along the path we saw several Orange-tip butterflies and Speckled Wood. The broad footpath is lined on the Pines side with Holm Oaks, which were all suffering from the effects of a micro moth identified by Tony Moverley as New Holm Oak Pygmy, *Ectoedemia heringella*, which has given most leaves a dull rusty look. Andy said that this had been worsened because of drought.

Young English Elm has very ridged bark, which might look to some as though it has fungi on it, in fact many of them had leaf button-galls. Two Mistle Thrush were spotted on the marsh, beyond the fence inland. We heard but saw no Chiffchaff. Along the path we saw Brown Argus butterflies on bramble and some remains of Cinnabar moths, Common Carder bees were feeding of the flowers of Hound's Tongue.



From a wooden boardwalk we saw dozens of Green Longhorn Fairy moths, *Adela reaumurella*, displaying on bramble leaves. They are not uncommon, but the males have uncommonly long antennae, nearby we spotted some females of the species. Getting photos involved disturbing unseen ants which attacked Andy.

Nearby flowers were visited by wasp-like Nomad bees and Azure Damselflies landed around us. Holly Blue butterflies were seen on young Holm Oak and Germander Speedwell grew below. The metallic colours of a Green Hairstreak on bramble caught our attention, and a Large White rested on the Sycamore saplings.



**Wall Brown** Image: Derek Longe

When we arrived in the dune slacks, Andy spotted a Sand Wasp, which may have been *Podalonia hirsuta* or *Ammophila* sp. Wall Brown butterflies were sunning on the dunes and Labyrinth spiders in the Marram. The older dunes had Common Polypody or similar ferns, Mouse-ear Hawkweed, Cats-ear and Hounds Tongue on their sides. Alongside were the hairy leaves of Blue Fleabane (not in flower yet) and Groundsel. A buzzard flew over and the sun stopped beating down and the rain

fell, despite which we crouched on the sand finding several tiny flowering plants. We should have had a botanist with us. Andy pointed out Sea Milkwort and I saw Scarlet Pimpernel and have a dozen unidentified photographs.

A Meadow Pipit took an interest as we poked about amongst Sea Spurge, White Campion, Ragwort and Biting Stonecrop. Someone flushed a Grey Partridge from the dunes and Skylarks flew overhead. The designated areas for ground-nesting birds was a long way off, but we saw Little Terns and Oystercatchers nesting, with dogs off-lead near the cordoned-off area.



**Meadow Pipit** Image: Jim Froud

When the rain eased, the ecologists, Beth and Griff, wanted to see where Andy knew there were Yellow Bird's-nest, growing in the pines: he showed us the location, but the plants were still dormant. A Crossbill was heard but not seen, despite being lured by a birdsong on Beth's mobile phone.

We then visited the Ant Lions and Andy found them an ant to demonstrate their strategy for catching them and explained their life-cycle. The “lions” are the larvae which dig sand traps and live in them hidden at the bottom of a conical pit for one or more years. Any small insect, such as an ant, slips into the trap and into the jaws of the “lion”. Eventually the larva will pupate in a spherical case made of sand, and then emerge as an imago which resembles a damselfly (but only has two wings). There are many species of Myrmeleontidae, those at Holkham are not common. As we left the Ant Lions, the rain started again and we passed clumps of Stinking Hellebore and St John's Wort and we heard more Chiffchaff on our way to “*The Jo Jordan Hide*”.



**Ant-lion location** Image: Jim Froud

From there, we looked out over the Roman Iron Age Fort and several distant scrapes, where we saw a row of at least a dozen Spoonbills. There were Swifts, a Grey Heron, a Kestrel, several Lesser Black Backed Gulls, a pair of Egyptian Geese, and a Great White Egret flew past. Several Grey Lags fed on the salt-marsh near the cattle, by the scrapes were Cormorants, Wood Pigeons and Pheasant. Mute Swans and Shelduck were more distant, as was a Marsh Harrier. A Hobby was spotted, a Red Kite and Avocets flew by, and another Grey Heron and a pair of Gadwall were identified on a distant pond-scape.



**Botanising in the rain** Image: Derek Longe

Leaving the hide we heard gold-crest, one of us had left for lunch and the rest headed on west. We heard Willow Warblers and Long Tailed Tits and saw more woodland butterflies. We then entered through a private gateway to wet grassland with Southern Marsh Orchids coming into bloom and there we many grasshopper nymphs activated by the rain.

Suddenly and unexpectedly we found ourselves unavoidably meeting a Natterjack Toad, which must have been

foraging along the path for insects. Andy showed us a pool nearby where the tadpoles were hatching and told us of the after-dark singing of the Natterjacks. He tries to prevent predation by transferring tadpoles, newts and others to different parts of the marsh. He spotted a Mother Shipton moth and we also saw several Brown Argus, Common Blue and a Painted Lady. We identified a few plants, Black Medick, Dove's Foot Cranesbill, Mouse-ear, Lesser Stitchwort, Lesser Birdsfoot Trefoil and, purple, yellow and white Horseshoe Vetch. We saw Common Whitethroat and Linnet. Andy showed us the very scarce Jersey Cudweed, which survives there in very limited numbers in a very few locations.



After these highlights we were getting tired and only spotted a few other insect species before we headed back to the cars. Slender Ground Hopper, Luna Yellow Underwing Moth, Small Heath and Small Copper butterflies, and a pair of Broad-bodied Chaser Dragonflies.

As we headed for home someone found a Common Toad and I very nearly tripped over to avoid another very active Natterjack - the second I ever saw!

As there were only six of us, we had good shares of Andy Bloomfield's expertise and are very grateful for the time he spent showing us some of the treasures of the Holkham Estate's wildlife. I listed 31 birds, 23 invertebrates, 4 amphibians and 30 flora.

*Jim Froud*

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## **Wortham Ling & Roydon Fen**

### **Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019**

This year's mainly-botanical joint field meeting of the Society with the Lowestoft Field Club and Norfolk Flora Group, led once more by Arthur Copping, fell on a glorious sunny June day - the warmest of the year to date - as members, numbered in the low teens and including a 5-member contingent from the Lowestoft Club, met in the car park at the eastern extremity of Wortham Ling, with the intention of transferring to nearby Roydon Fen in the afternoon.

Wortham Ling, just south of the Waveney, is an extensive SSSI of over 50 hectares managed since 1987 by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and important for its lowland dry heath and acid grassland communities which have developed on a sandy, glaciofluvial drift deposit. The vegetation has close similarities with Breck dry heaths, though the site in fact lies within a predominantly boulder-clay area and is isolated from the Brecklands. Though most of the Ling is characterised, appropriately, by abundant Ling *Calluna vulgaris* - associated more sparsely with various grasses and open areas of mosses and *Cladonia* lichens - our party concentrated initially on the botanically interesting area south of the car park where acid areas, a basic outcrop and even a shallow pond occur. Encouraged by successes here, we later moved off by car to the main Ling car park at the eastern end, off Doit Lane, where acid and basic areas are again to be found.

Arthur has compiled his usual impeccable plant lists which he has kindly supplied me with and allowed me to use here. In total, 187 vascular plants were recorded at Wortham, 94 of which were in flower and 12 in fruit. Although our Wortham visit repeated as far as the venue is concerned a field meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> May 2008, so little time was spent on the Ling eleven years ago that there would be very limited value in



**Members exploring** Image: Jim Froud

comparing the plant list then with the current one, so I shall limit myself here to listing those plants noted by Arthur as highlights of this year's visit, confirming their continuing presence: Bur Chervil, both Slender and Thyme-leaved Sandwort, Downy and Meadow Oat-grass, Quaking-grass, eight *Carex* species, Dwarf Thistle, Wild Basil, Mossy Stonecrop, Hairy and Smooth Tare, Dropwort, Alder Buckthorn, Imperforate St. John's-wort, Smooth Cat's-ear, Crested Hair-grass, Field Pepperwort, Creeping Jenny, Changing and early Forget-me-not, Mat-grass, Argentine Needle-grass ('a new intruder'), Common Broomrape, Hoary Plantain, Buckthorn, Meadow Saxifrage, Annual Knawel, Shepherd's Cress, Common Meadow-rue, Slender Trefoil, Clustered and Knotted Clover, Marsh Speedwell and Bearded Fescue. Arthur notes that most specimens of the *Festuca ovina* aggregate on the Ling are awnless with short spikelets and short lemmas, but in fact some material examined during the meeting had short-awned lemmas, though in all other respects they conformed to published descriptions of *Festuca filiformis*, which taxon they are referred to in his list.



**Mossy Stonecrop**

Image: Jim Froud

After lunch the party moved on by car to the Roydon Fen Reserve car park, only a mile or so from Diss, for a circular walk clockwise round the fen by way of the wooden walkway, returning to the cars via Fen Lane. The 50 acres-or-so of Roydon Fen are located on the Norfolk side of the Waveney but have been managed since 1994 by the SWT on behalf of South Norfolk District Council. The fen had been all but abandoned in the twentieth century when the cutting of sedge, reed and peat by the commoners in the Middle Ages had long since dwindled and ceased, and a large area was lost 'to the slow creep of wet woodland and scrub'. Though the west end of the reserve is still dominated by woodland, the restored and mown fen areas to the east are 'rich with many classic fen species such as marsh helleborine, marsh fragrant orchid and saw sedge'. To those of us with a particular interest in orchids, Roydon Fen is notable for the first British record by J.E Lousley of *Dactylorhiza incarnata* ssp. *ochroleuca*, always extremely rare in this country and its straw-coloured flower spikes regrettably long-gone from Roydon.

The shade, open fen and roadside habitats covered by members of the party yielded 159 taxa, 69 flowering and 12 in fruit. 46 taxa had not been recorded on the joint field meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2008, the majority of which occurred on the stretch of the Angles Way, including Fen Street, not traversed in 2008. Arthur picks out as of most interest Greater Burdock, Quaking-grass, Purple Small-reed, Tufted-sedge, Meadow Thistle, Great Fen-sedge, Southern Marsh-orchid, Few-flowered and Slender Spike-rush, Shore Horsetail, Marsh Pennywort, Bog Pimpernel, Marsh Lousewort, Fen Pondweed, Brookweed, Black Bog-rush and Marsh Valerian. The undoubted 'find of the day' was Bob Ellis's discovery of Few-flowered Spike-rush *Eleocharis quinqueflora*, which had been considered

extinct in Suffolk by 1860 but was found in Hopton Fen by Jo Parmenter in 2000 and seen later in 2003 at Redgrave & Lopham Fen. Arthur remarks that it is likely to have been present at Roydon, one of this series of Waveney Valley fens, but undetected until now. The 1999 *Flora of Norfolk* mentioned one West Norfolk and six East Norfolk stations, remarking it is 'a chiefly north-western species found occasionally in water-logged marshes and fens. Bob and some Flora Group members, concentrating on open fen areas in the monad TM 10/79, noted 13 species additional to Arthur's list, including, unexpectedly in this habitat, Bee Orchid. Other interesting finds away from the open fen included a spruce, *Picea sitchensis*, overhanging the Angles Way and a horse chestnut on Fen Lane which was white-flowered but had leaves similar to those of the Red Horse-chestnut, with its five petals leading to an 'identification impasse'. Only retirement to the pub at Roydon could provide accommodation adequate to further musings, and the party finally dispersed at 6.30pm.

Many thanks to Arthur for a splendid day, for organising the visits, and for recording and analysing the findings.

*Stephen Martin*

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**NNNS 150<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY FIELD MEETING:  
BAYFIELD DRAGONFLY WALK  
7<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

Eleven members gathered on a sunny yet not oppressively hot July morning at the Natural Surroundings Wildlife Gardening and Wildflower Discovery Centre adjoining the Bayfield Park Estate north of Holt. 'Natural Surroundings' will be known to many members as owned and run by Simon and Anne Harrap, who were indeed on site that morning. Our objective was a walk with NNNs member Pam Taylor, Norfolk Dragonfly Recorder and a past President of the British Dragonfly Society, to see the dragonflies, plentiful and varied on such a favourable day, to be found at this site next to the River Glaven and also along part of the west bank of the Bayfield Hall Estate Lake. Pam, in addition to an earlier Thompson Common meeting, has now also led memorable dragonfly walks for the Society in the last couple of years at, almost, the southern and northern extremities of the county, and those who had attended the Earham meeting in 2018 knew they would again benefit hugely from her comprehensive knowledge and identification skills at Bayfield.

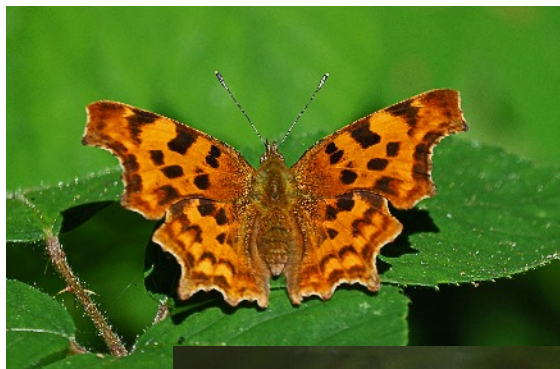
The flora and fauna are richly diverse as one descends from the Centre through its wildlife gardens and other features. As this visit concentrated on dragonflies and other insects, I'll refrain from attempting a comprehensive list of the many plants seen as we descended gently and gradually from the Centre to the valley bottom, rich in Meadowsweet, Marsh Thistle and a host of other damp habitat plants. However, I can't resist commenting on the Flowering Rush in full bloom in the shallows of the pond among Water-soldier and other aquatics: a very local

species not as frequently come across these days as once was the case in suitable Norfolk habitats.

From the north bank alongside the clear waters of the narrow Glaven, one of the only a-hundred-or-so chalk rivers in the world, we saw many Banded Demoiselles flitting about above the water. The plentiful males caught the eye, but there were probably more of the less prominently marked females than it seemed. On our way to the river, and later near the south bank of the lake we saw, listed here in no particular order, Common Blue, Azure Blue, Blue-tailed and Red-eyed Damselflies plus a rather late Large Red, Southern Hawker exuviae, Broad-bodied and Four-spotted Chaser, Ruddy Darter, Common Darter, Black-tailed Skimmer and Emperor Dragonfly. Butterflies seen included Small Skipper, Meadow Brown, Comma, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral and Large and Small White. Hans Watson comments that July is a bad month for resident birds, though he saw or heard Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Sedge Warbler, Chaffinch, Wood pigeon and Buzzard. The most colourful avian sight of the day was a Kingfisher perched on a branch on our side of the Lake before flying across to the thick tree cover on the northern bank.

We returned to the Centre a little after our intended 1pm finishing time after a thoroughly satisfying field meeting. Many thanks to Pam, and also to Hans for his usual high-quality photographs.

*Stephen Martin*



Comma

Images: *Hans Watson*

Common Blue Damselflies





Four-spotted Chaser



Banded Demoiselle (female)



Red-eyed Damselfly



Large Red Damselfly

Images: *Hans Watson*

## 150 years ago - from the 'Transactions'

Volume 1 (1869-74) Part 1 Miscellaneous Notes - pages 62-64

NOTE ON THE RECENT VISITATION OF LADY-BIRDS, &c.—Norfolk has shared the advantages derived from the timely visit of immense flights of Lady-birds, and the plague of Aphides, from which vegetation was suffering so severely, has rapidly disappeared before them. There has been great discussion as to how far we are indebted to immigration for these friendly visitors, and from whence they come; of course opinions differ greatly, but I am inclined to believe we need not revert to that shadowy land, "the Continent," to account for their presence.

In my own garden there have been immense numbers, but the numbers of the larvae, I observed, was also very great. Their onward movement in search of fresh supplies of food would, I think, account for their congregating on the shore, which has led to the impression that they had just arrived in this country ; but their flight, although strong and rapid, is not, I believe, sufficiently sustained to carry them far over the sea, into which they would drop exhausted and perish.

In support of this view I will mention a circumstance which occurred off the Norfolk coast, on the 24th of July last. A yacht belonging to Mr. Cresswell of Lynn, sailing off Hunstanton, passed through a mass of dead Lady-birds, accumulated on the surface of the water, about ten feet broad, and extending for two or three miles, bearing the appearance of a black stripe on the water.

This occurred in the Wash, about nine miles from the Norfolk and thirteen miles from the Lincolnshire shore ; the wind was very light in occasional puffs from off the Norfolk shore, and the exact locality the entrance to the channel called the "Bull dogs."



Mr. Cresswell accounts for the presence of this vast mass of dead Lady-birds as follows:—At low water there are uncovered sands, with pools and channels between them, extending from the shore to the navigable channel called the "Bull dogs." He presumes that the mass of dead Lady-birds in the "Bull dogs " were drowned by the rising water covering the crown of the sands on which they had rested, and brought by the current into the vast accumulation the "*Wild Duck*" passed through.

There is very little doubt these Lady-birds left the Norfolk shore, and alighting on the first uncovered spot they came to, were saved from dropping exhausted into the sea, only to be drowned by the rising flood which gradually covered their island resting place. But had they possessed the strength to renew their flight, and chance directed them either to the Norfolk or Lincolnshire coast, any person witnessing their return would probably have been impressed with the belief that they were a fresh arrival from "the Continent."

At the same time and place the "*Wild Duck*" was surrounded by an immense swarm of what at the time were believed to be Wasps, but which, from the description, I have no doubt were Syrphidae, of at least two species, one much larger than the other. These were so numerous that they were swept from the sails in thousands, and whilst one man steered, another had to be employed in brushing them off him ; as it was they did not escape being bitten, the bite was attended with considerable pain and swelling.

These Syrphidae had probably accompanied the Lady-birds in their flight ; but their superior powers on the wing had saved them for a time from the fate which had overtaken the latter—only for a time however, as they would soon add their numbers to the slain.

The thought suggests itself whether this impulse to leave the shore *is* not a provision of nature to rid us of what, after having performed its allotted purpose, would prove a serious nuisance if remaining.

N.B. When I wrote the above note I had not observed Mr. Cordeaux's note in the " Zoologist." s.s., p. 1839. On the 24th of July, (the same day as above referred to), about thirteen miles from the Lincolnshire coast, his cutter ran through numerous belts of water "from a few yards to some hundreds in breadth, and extending both to port and starboard as far as the

eye could reach ;" so full of myriads of green-winged Aphides as to present a "thick pea-soup appearance." The air in and around this city literally swarmed with these insects during the whole of that day, Mr. Cordeaux also mentions the astonishing number of the larvae of the Lady-bird in the pea-fields—ten or twelve on each plant. "There were many of the perfect insects, but the larvae outnumbered the parents as fifty to one." —*T. Southwell, Sept., 1869*



**Seven-spot Ladybird**

Image: *Francis Farrow*



## How Hill celebration day wildlife photo results

Photographs of the NNNS photographic competition were displayed and winners announced at the Society's 150<sup>th</sup> celebratory event on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2019 at the Studies centre, How Hill.

The judges found it extremely difficult to find winning photographs from the entries. The standard of all submissions was amazingly good.

It is my pleasure to announce the winners:

Overall Winner and winner of the 'Wildlife in a Norfolk Habitat' category:

*Tony Howes: Hunting Barn Owl*

Winner of the 'Swallowtail' category:

*Bob Cobbold: Swallowtail Hickling*

Winner of the 'Wildlife Portrait' category:

*Emma Buck: Juvenile Cuckoo*

Winner of the 'Showing a Key ID Feature' category:

*Emma Buck: Silver Studded Blue Butterflies*

Congratulations to all the winners.

The winning photos from each category will be published in the 150<sup>th</sup> year celebratory '*Transactions and wildlife reports*' to be issued later this year.

*Carl Chapman*  
Chairman

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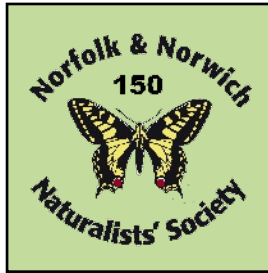
### *Past Presidents*

*It is with great sadness that we record the deaths of three of our past presidents. Full obituaries for each will follow in due course in 'Transactions'*

*December 8<sup>th</sup> 2018 - Anne Brewster (1989 - 1990)*

*March 6<sup>th</sup> 2019 - John Goldsmith (1996 - 1997)*

*June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019 - Robin Stevenson (2002 - 2003)*



The next issue of ***The Norfolk Natterjack*** will be November 2019.

Please send  
**all articles / notes and photographic material**  
to the editor as soon as possible by  
**October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019** to the following address:

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

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

## Membership subscriptions

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

***New memberships and renewals*** can be made by credit card or 'PayPal' by visiting the Society's website at [www.nnns.org.uk](http://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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