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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:** *Stone Curlew* (Elizabeth Dack) - See page 12

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

Welcome to the last 'Natterjack' of the Society's Anniversary Year. Inside you can catch up on some of the special walks at NWTs Cley Reserve plus other notes and articles from the summer. My thanks to all contributors.

Please see the note on Page 7 concerning the new arrangements at the Waitrose Car Park, Eaton when attending our indoor meetings.

I look forward to 2020 and wish all members a Happy New Year and hope to receive more articles and pictures from your excursions into the natural world as we pass from autumn into winter. If you haven't written to 'Natterjack' before please make it a new year's resolution to do so.

FF

## Autumn Flowers

Francis Farrow

As I write this note in the second week of October we have yet to experience a frost in Sheringham this autumn. My walks over neighbouring Beeston Common are still on sunny days butterfly filled with Red Admiral, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Painted Lady, Speckled Wood, Large White, Small White and Small Copper all seen this last week. On the ground there are a great many wild flowers in bloom with two autumn favourites showing particularly well - the Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) and the Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*).



Grass of Parnassus

The Grass of Parnassus was named in the 16<sup>th</sup> century after Mt. Parnassus in Greece where it was said to occur 'like grass'. Its creamy-white flowers and their delicate green veining are hard to miss and it stands out well against a back-drop of fawn rush and marsh grasses. It is an indicator of M13 habitat (*Schoenus nigricans* - *Juncus subnodulosus* mire), which is characterised as lowland Alkaline fen - a rare habitat outside upland areas of the UK. Growing alongside the Parnassus is the Devil's-bit Scabious with its mauve 'pom-pom' flower heads and magenta anthers making it worthy of closer inspection. Its name, according to legend, is

because the Devil was angry at the plants medicinal properties and tried to get rid of the plant by biting the roots off thus giving the plant its short and stubby roots. Both plants are great nectar sources at the end of the season and late-flying insects such as hoverflies, bees and wasps can be found visiting them.

Images: Francis Farrow



*Helophilus trivittatus* (hoverfly)  
visiting Devil's-bit Scabious



# Hornet Hoverflies

*Martin Greenland*

I was pleased to see both species of “Hornet Hoverfly” at Chedgrave on 1<sup>st</sup> August - then realised I’d got one of each on the same photo: *Volucella zonaria* (top, with chestnut spots at the base of the abdomen) and *Volucella inanis* (below, with yellow squares). It’s advisable to check the identification

with a view of the underside: the base of the abdomen is mostly black in *zonaria*, yellow in *inanis* (see photos). The *Volucella* on the thistle (Swanton Abbott) looked like *inanis* from above - but sight of the underside revealed it to be *zonaria*.

Images: *Martin Greenland*



Top: *Volucella zonaria* and *V. inanis*

Middle (left): *V. inanis*

Middle (right): *V. zonaria*

Bottom: *V. zonaria*



# A Surprise Find.

*Carol Webb*

Hoping to find a Large Elephant Hawk Moth all summer, I had been searching Willow Herbs and Fuchsia for any signs of one, with no avail. Then, one afternoon on a chance trip to the compost bin in the garden I saw something speeding along the patio slabs. Imagine my surprise on finding one in our tiny, very new garden on a still not completed housing estate.

After the initial shocked surprise, I rushed for a handy plant pot and scooped it up. Thinking it must be looking for somewhere to pupate I put a layer of compost in a large plastic tub, previously used for storing fat balls for the birds, picked a few sprigs of Rosebay Willow Herb from the only specimen in the garden and put it inside. For about two days it continued to walk around in this confined space and seemed to be content to eat the leaves that I had provided. Then it began to excavate a hole in the compost and partially burrowed in it. It then just stayed there without moving. After a couple of days I really thought it must have died and I began to regret my actions and then, the following day I took another look and lo and behold the miracle had occurred. I now am the proud custodian of a rather large dark brown chrysalis. The pattern under the surface is quite distinct and I believe, if all that I have read is correct, that I have to look after it until next summer before the moth will emerge. I think I will keep it in the pot, covered with a muslin sheet, throughout the winter. I will put it on a shelf in the shed and hopefully will be able to report on the emergence when it happens. How wonderful is the natural world? How privileged am I to have discovered this magical creature? I only hope that I can keep it safe until maturity.



Elephant Hawk-moth caterpillar



Chrysalis

Images: *Carol Webb*

# Large Whites - what is going on?

Derek Leak

The image below shows a number of Large White Caterpillars on nasturtium. The caterpillar second from the right looks in poor condition compared with the others - and there seems to be an egg-like form beneath it. My wife suggests that it may be being predated by something which is eating it.

The yellow eggs - top right - appear to be covered in a web-like substance. Previously I have only seen them uncovered and standing on their end.

I showed this image to a friend who was a former Head of Science in a Lowestoft School and he has informed me that the yellow objects are not eggs but are a group of cocoons (pupae) of a parasite of the butterfly. This is a small parasitic wasp called *Cotesia (Apanteles) glomeratus*. It doesn't appear to have an English name but considering it does such a useful job in controlling the caterpillars perhaps it should be better known.



Large White caterpillars and cocoons of its parasite, the wasp *Cotesia (Apanteles) glomeratus*. Also showing a parasitoid caterpillar (third left).

Image: Derek Leak

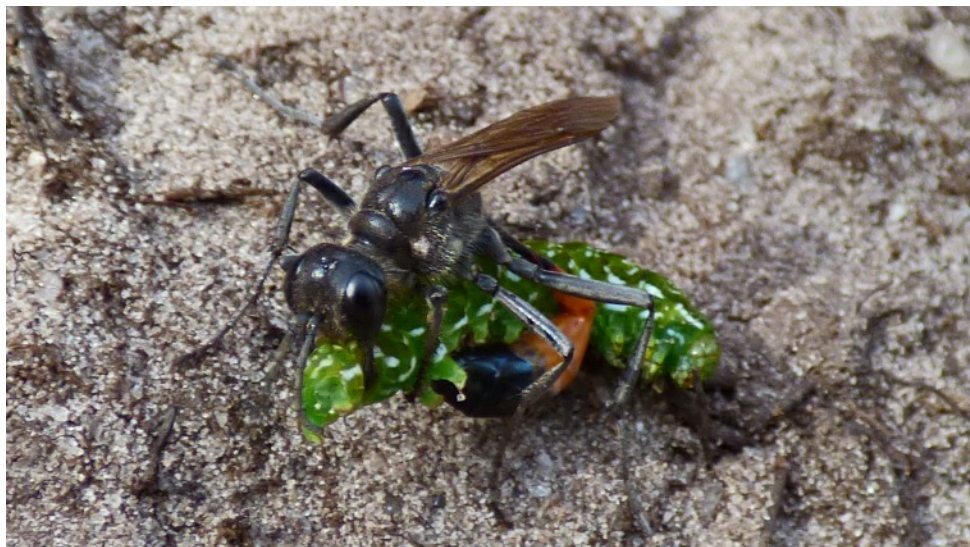


## **Theft of buried treasure!**

### **(Observations of sand-wasps at Dersingham Bog)**

*Rowena & Reg Langston*

On 22 August 2019, during a visit to Dersingham Bog NNR, we watched two female sand-wasps on a sandy cliff beside the path for approximately 15 minutes. Female 1, F1, was exploring part of the bank, clearly sensing something of interest. Soon, she started digging, exposing a burrow which she entered. She emerged with an immobile caterpillar of a beautiful yellow underwing moth which she carried in her jaws whilst wrapping her abdomen around its body. We assume that she may have oviposited in the caterpillar at this point, and perhaps topped up the paralysing agent? A second female sand wasp, F2, appeared at the burrow and flew at F1 causing her to tumble down the bank. F2 proceeded to re-plug the entrance to her plundered burrow, using balls of sand including one that had been removed by F1, but made no attempt to reclaim the caterpillar. The stolen caterpillar was a sizeable load for F1 and, although she hung on, she struggled to carry it, taking it up to another location on the same bank in a series of short flights and scrambling. Then, leaving her load close by, F1 searched across a small patch of sand and exposed heather roots before starting to open up another burrow. She reversed into this burrow, dragging the caterpillar behind her. It took her several forays to gather sand to plug the entrance. Once satisfied, she flew off, leaving a scarcely visible slight depression at the burrow entrance.



**Female Sand Wasp with caterpillar** Image: Rowena & Reg Langston

# The Bee-wolf Wasp at Wells-next-the-Sea.

Bernard and Carol Webb

We were walking along the path from the Pinewoods car park towards Wells Woods when our attention was drawn to what appeared to be wasps excavating in the sandy soil. We had passed that way many times before but this was the first time we had noticed them.

After photographing and observing them for some time they appeared to be carrying bees back to their tunnels and taking them below. We had a stab at identifying them (wrongly but close!) but after forwarding photos to Nick Owens, he identified them as Bee-wolf wasps, *Philanthus triangulum*.

Apparently, these were were restricted to Minsmere and the North Norfolk Coast but have spread further afield and can be found as far north as Yorkshire now.

The wasps excavate their tunnels about a metre down and create anything up to 40 chambers. They catch the Honey Bees, paralysing them by stinging them on the back of the neck and then convey them to their individual tunnel, where they take them down into a chamber and lay an egg in the bee. They continue to bring more bees to the chamber as a food supply, up to four or five and then start on an adjacent chamber.

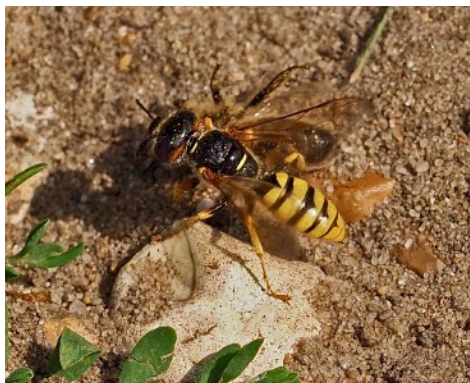
The wasps can catch as many as 300 bees for their individual tunnels.



Whilst they are solitary wasps they live in a loose colony with many others each in their own individual tunnel. They protect their tunnel by sealing it when they depart to prevent detection. All this work is carried out by the females, the males apparently lounge about in the sun lekking and waiting to be chosen by a female to mate.

Bee-wolf with captured Honey Bee Image: Bernard & Carol Webb

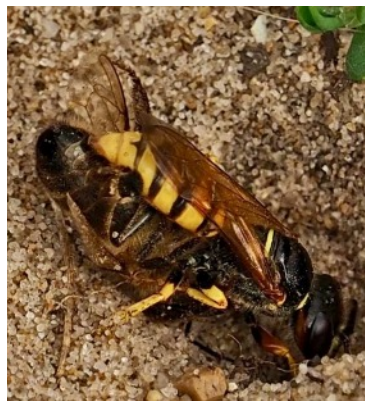
Life is not all plain sailing for them, as German Wasps sometimes attack the Bee-wolf wasps taking the bees, removing its heads and legs and stealing the body for their own consumption. You can see in one of the photographs a Bee-wolf heading down its tunnel but nearby is a pile of bee body parts which we presumed was the work of the Germans. The grubs stay underground after pupating, until the following year.



Bee-wolf wasps bringing in honey bees to nest area



Bee-wolf with honey bee passing the discarded remains of a bee that has presumably been 'stolen' by a German Wasp



Bee-wolf entering a nesting tunnel

Images: *Bernard & Carol Webb*

### **Car parking for NNNS meetings held at St. Andrew's Church Hall, Eaton**

New parking arrangements at the Waitrose Eaton store include the use of 24-hour cctv cameras recording number plates of all vehicle arrivals and departures, a 3-hour parking stay limit, and a charge of up to £70 for overstay.

For NNNS members using the Waitrose car park on those Tuesday evenings on which our indoor meetings are held - and the St. Andrew's Parish Hall car park is full - Waitrose have kindly waived the additional restriction of a 30-minutes-only limit after the store closes at 8pm, and the barrier will be left open.

The 3-hour maximum Waitrose parking period will still apply and NNNS members uncertain of how long their vehicle might remain, or who are reluctant to rely on the concession above, might park in a nearby street or other place not controlled by double yellow lines or other prohibitions. Please note that members park at their own risk and neither the Society nor the Church authorities can accept liability for any penalties incurred or other problems encountered.



# BUTTERFLIES OF SUMMER 2019

*Tony Howes*

In recent years butterflies have been going through a bad patch, with numbers showing a marked decline in many species. The changing climate probably has something to do with this reduction, but loss of habitat also plays a part. Farming practices too must have an impact, the pesticide/herbicide chemicals now sprayed regularly on farm crops each year are pretty lethal to all insects, as evidenced by the lack of them stuck on the front of cars these days after a trip into the countryside.

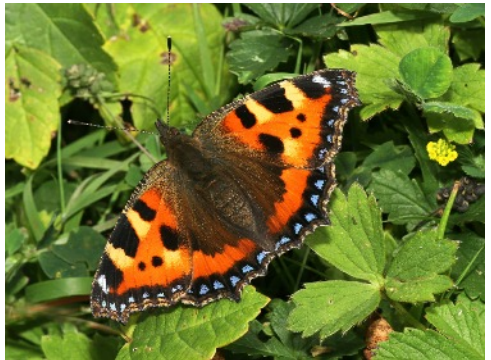
Thankfully the summer months of 2019 were a huge improvement. Much to the surprise of many people several butterfly species began showing in good numbers; Peacocks, Red Admirals, Commas, Brimstones, White Admirals, Silver-washed Fritillaries and several others were all being seen and commented on. It was wonderful to experience this improvement in these exotic creatures, the countryside seemed to come alive, flashes of bright metallic colour were seen everywhere as the butterflies worked their magic.

Then in mid-summer, as if to add the cherry on the cake, there was an influx of Painted Ladies. These very beautiful butterflies don't migrate to us from the south every year, but 2019 will go down as a Painted Lady year, many thousands turned up to add their gorgeous colours to the mix, and dazzle us with their flamboyant finery.

Let us hope this is something of a turning point, that this improvement continues in future years. Many of our bird species have shown a huge decline in the last few decades, it's a strong possibility that our grand children may never hear a Nightingale singing its heart out, or a Turtle Dove purring from the spinney. It would be a calamity if our beautiful butterflies were to become so endangered that they too become figments from the past.



Peacock

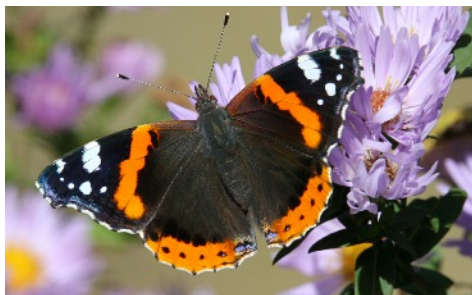


Small Tortoiseshell

*Images: Tony Howes*



White Admiral



Red Admiral



Painted Lady



Gatekeeper

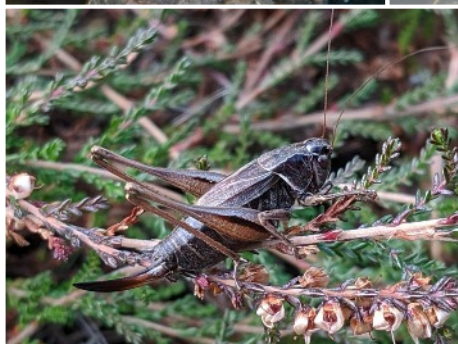


Swallowtail

Images: Tony Howes



# NATURE GALLERY



Clockwise: Ant Damsel Bug nymph - Beeston Common (*Mark Clements*), Emperor Dragonfly\_female ovipositing - Beeston Common (*Janet Negal*), Boarded Straw - Gramborough Hill (*John Furse*), Box Bug - Weybourne (*John Furse*), Purple Emperor\_first for over 40 years at Foxley Wood (*John Furse*), Purple Emperor\_female 3<sup>rd</sup> year running at Beeston Common (*Mark Clements*), Bog Bush-cricket - Beeston Common (*Tony Moverley*), Soldier-fly *Oxycera nigricornis* - Beeston Common (*Francis Farrow*)

# *Sandpiper Year*

*Hans Watson*

The year 2019 will, no doubt, be remembered by Norfolk birdwatchers, as a special year for quite a few reasons. One of these will probably be the unusually large number of Wood Sandpipers that visited Norfolk on passage. They are usually regarded as fairly scarce visitors in spring or autumn, and only singly, or single figure groups. However, the autumn passage in 2019 saw quite remarkable numbers turn up mainly at coastal sites such as Cley, where over 100 were seen, Wells and Titchwell. The Yare Valley also had good numbers.

Most Wood Sandpipers breed inside the Arctic circle, from Scandinavia, eastwards as far as Kamchatka, but since about 1959, a tiny population of just a few pairs has nested in northern Scotland. After breeding, the birds migrate south, and birds from eastern breeding areas, may fly as far as New Zealand and Australia. I have had the pleasure of watching them in quite a few countries, and am always surprised at how completely at ease they seem, whether they are feeding in a rice paddy amongst Water Buffalo, or perched on the back of a Hippo in the Okavango, or just on the muddy lagoon of Cantley sugar factory.



**Wood Sandpiper** Images: *Hans Watson*

In contrast to the unusually large numbers of Wood Sandpipers, numbers of their relative the Green Sandpiper, have been unusually low in the Yare Valley. At Cantley factory, which for years has been regarded as the best place in Norfolk to see Green Sandpipers, their numbers have on some days, been lower than the numbers of Wood Sandpipers. In the 50 years that I have held a permit to birdwatch at Cantley factory, 2019 is the first year that I have known such low numbers of Green Sandpipers. However, I feel that I should celebrate seeing even one of these fabulous birds. They are among my favourites.



**Green and Wood Sandpipers** Image: *Hans Watson*

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## **A couple of unusual photo opportunities: Stone Curlews and a young Red Deer Stag.**

*Elizabeth Dack*

As Education Events and Photographer Volunteer for Norfolk Wildlife Trust, I was privileged to be taken out by one of our wardens to the site where the Stone Curlews roost and meet up before they leave us to return back to Africa. Each Spring they return to the UK from North Africa to breed. The dry sandy soils of the Brecks provide the perfect conditions for these ground nesting birds. The Stone Curlew, or Norfolk plover is a species of wading bird but is not as its name might suggest related to the Eurasian Curlew.

Surprisingly Stone Curlews are not always easy to spot. Often the birds sit motionless and it's not until they move across the ground in short running bursts that they become obvious to see. With their large yellow eyes and long yellow legs they are easily recognised. These are very distinctive features of the bird. They are also well known for their knobbly knees! With 'Thick-knee', being an alternative name. Their plumage is brown and streaky which is a good camouflage when they are on the nest. They are usually more active towards dusk. Then their activity levels rise and they often begin to make their haunting wailing calls. The warden contacted the BTO, we were given permission to take and use these photos, I am pleased to be able to share these unusual pictures with you and hope you enjoying seeing them as much as I enjoyed taking them.





**Stone Curlew** Image: *Elizabeth Dack*

Whist out at Norfolk Wildlife Trust Hickling early in the morning I went to Stubb Mill. It was a misty morning as the sun was rising. I looked down the lane and saw a dark shape. Looking through my binoculars I realised it was a young Red Deer stag looking straight back at me! Not daring to go too close, I picked up my camera which was fitted with a 300 prime lens and 1.7 converter and took a photo. It walked a few steps towards me before it turned and walked down the bank and into the stream. I have seen deer there before go into that stream to get into the adjacent meadow. This young stag walked up the stream and started to bath and splash around. It was lovely to watch him. He then came back up the bank with water dripping of him. He definitely knew I was watching him. He turned and looked straight at me as if to say I can see you! I stood still admiring him continuing snapping my camera. I was very pleased to have taken a sequence of photos 27 frames in total of this handsome beast in beautiful light with a lovely background. He then trotted off down the lane back to the field from which he came. It was an unusual event to witness and a great photo opportunity!



Young Red Deer stag bathing in and then emerging from the dyke at Hickling Images: *Elizabeth Dack*



## A Batty Village

*Jenny Kelly*

The Norfolk Bat Project is a survey of bats conducted across Norfolk by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). These adorable furry mammals are poorly recorded as they only fly at night and so are not easily seen. The purpose of the Project is to encourage members of the public to borrow modern, sophisticated recording equipment and record the echo location calls made by bats in a specified one-kilometre square. These recordings are then analysed by the BTO to determine which species are present. We decided to take part and to survey a one-kilometre square comprising part of Sedgeford village (TF7136).

We e-mailed the BTO ([norfolkbatsurvey@bto.org](mailto:norfolkbatsurvey@bto.org)) and booked a bat detector which we collected from our local bat monitoring centre at the RSPB Titchwell Reserve. The equipment consists of a microphone on a bamboo pole connected to a battery-operated digital recorder. The survey is carried out over three successive nights at different sites within the 1-kilometre square. We erected the equipment on the first night in our own garden and then in two other sites within the square - putting it up an hour before sunset and taking it down an hour after sunrise. The equipment runs unattended throughout the night, so there is no need remain with it all night. At the end of the three nights the equipment was returned to Titchwell and we sent the memory card of recordings off to the BTO.

A few weeks later we got a 15-page preliminary report back and discovered to our amazement that in our square we had recorded 10 species of bat: Barbastelle, Brown long-eared, Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's, Leisler's, Natters, Noctule, Serotine, Soprano Pipistrelle as well as either a Whiskered or Brandt's bat.

What was most amazing was that all three sites in the square recorded at least eight species of bat, and we had no idea that we had so many species coming to our garden. It was a very rewarding experience and we plan to cover the other squares covered by the village next year. We are privileged to share our village with so many species of such a delightful and entirely harmless mammal.



# Marshman's Cottage, Halvergate

*David Talks*

In 1971 I bought a marshman's cottage in the middle of Halvergate Marshes, as I was looking for somewhere to paint, although I know that I am not the first artist attracted by the wide open spaces and big skies of this area. Little did I realise then that my cottage with its two acres of reedbeds and the surrounding marshland would reveal such a wealth of wildlife. It is within the Halvergate Marshes conservation area, and so is part of that SSSI.

I can do no better than list the wildlife recorded during a weekend in July 2013 by Barnaby Briggs, a friend of my youngest son and a very capable naturalist, who stayed at our cottage to experience some 'Digital Detoxing' (all devices, phones and even watches were handed in!):

## Dragonflies

Norfolk Hawker  
Brown Hawker  
Emperor Dragonfly  
Southern Hawker  
Variable Damselfly  
Common Blue Damselfly  
Blue-tailed Damselfly  
Red-eyed Damselfly

## Butterflies

Red Admiral  
Painted Lady  
Small Tortoiseshell  
Meadow Brown  
Large Skipper  
Speckled Wood

## Birds

Common Pheasant  
Grey Heron (4)  
Little Egret (3)  
Cormorant  
Marsh Harrier (8)  
Kestrel (2)  
Water Rail (3) (call)  
Oystercatcher  
Lapwing  
Curlew  
Black-headed Gull  
Herring Gull  
Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Common Tern  
Stock Dove  
Wood Pigeon  
Cuckoo  
Barn Owl (nest in barn)  
Swift  
Jackdaw  
Rook  
Carrion Crow  
Great Tit  
Blue Tit  
Bearded Tit (3)  
Skylark

View along one of the dykes that surround the Cottage land at Halvergate

Image: *David Talks*



Swallow (nests in barn)  
House Martin  
Cetti's Warbler  
Chiffchaff  
Sedge Warbler  
Reed Warbler  
Wren  
Starling  
Blackbird  
Yellow Wagtail  
Pied Wagtail  
Chaffinch  
Greenfinch  
Goldfinch  
Linnet  
Reed Bunting

I would like to add a few more!

Butterflies		Birds	
Wall (abundant)	Mute Swan	Snipe	Pink-footed Goose <sup>3</sup>
Small Heath	Moorhen	Wheatear	Turtle Dove (12.08.1982)
	Mallard	Song Thrush	Green Sandpiper (08.1982)
Mammals	Grey Partridge	Fieldfare	Whimbrel (02.08.1983)
Chinese Water Deer <sup>1</sup>	Red-legged Partridge	Shelduck	Willow Warbler (1985)
Stoat	Meadow Pipit	Spotted Flycatcher (1970s)	Marabou Stork (21.09.1985) <sup>4</sup>
Fox	Short-eared Owl <sup>2</sup>	Cattle Egret (21.08.1974)	Golden Plover (11.08.1986)
Brown Hare	Bittern	Purple Heron (17.08.1975)	Tawny Owl (26-29.10.1987)

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Now common

<sup>2</sup> In winter but present in summer 1992

<sup>3</sup> Hundreds overhead in winter

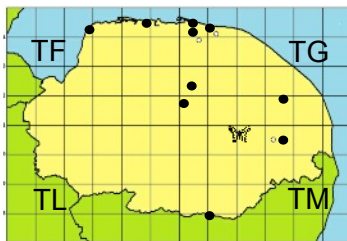
<sup>4</sup> Eating a dead sheep

## The Photographic Group – Then and Now

The Photographic Group of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist Society was formed by a group of far-sighted members in 1986. These members, which include some very well known names such as Rex Hancy, and the late, and much missed, Don Dorling, Reg Jones, and Bob Robinson, realised the value of photography as a recording medium, and as an aid to education. At the time, photography was film based, and as such, posed quite a few problems, that are not so apparent with today's digital equipment. The most obvious of these, was the limited number of photographs that each roll of film allowed. This, together with the cost of film, often caused photographers to 'ration' the number of photos taken of any given subject. By contrast, modern digital cameras are able to take hundreds of photographs on a memory card that, once downloaded onto other storage media, can be used again and again. As well as excellent still images, modern digital cameras can also record high quality video clips, with sound, which could be valuable records of rare events. Many cameras record GPS details with each image, which can be accurate to within 10 feet, and I have often used this to relocate rare plants and fungi in subsequent years. As a youngster, I was encouraged by my naturalist peers, to always carry a notebook and pen on my rambles, and I still do this. However, a camera can compliment notes, especially regarding fine details of pattern, and habitat.

The Photo Group has no formal membership, and all members are welcome to come along to any of the 5 meetings held each season. The aims of the group are still the same as they were at the beginning, namely to encourage the use of cameras to record natural subjects, whilst always having regard to the subjects wellbeing - in other words, never take a photograph which may cause stress to the subject, or which may contravene laws relating to rare species. Also, to promote the use of cameras as study aids. Meetings are informal, and at two of the 5 meetings, members can show their own photographs, exchange ideas and information, and learn from each other. The other three meetings have guest speakers, details of which appear on the programme card. Meetings are on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of October, November, January, February and March of each year. Why not come and see for yourself?

*Hans Watson*



## TITCHWELL & HOLME

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2019

This joint field meeting with the Norfolk Flora Group, comprising a morning visit to RSPB Titchwell Marsh, a premier RSPB reserve since 1973, followed by a transfer a little further to the west along the coast to Holme Dunes in the afternoon, formed this year's meeting in the 'Wild Flowers Revealed' series. The weather was initially pleasant enough, though the possibility of an occasional shower was forecast, which proved accurate on our reaching Holme in the afternoon.

Some 13 participants, most of whom were members of both bodies, gathered in the RSPB Titchwell car park at 10.30am to be met by our leader, Bob Leaney, and Jo Parmenter's much-appreciated cakes! Bob outlined the history and geology of the site and the habitats we would encounter, pointing out how former grassland and arable areas of the reserve and adjacent land in the last century were now mainly freshwater marsh and salt marsh. In fact, the varied 171-hectare Titchwell Marsh Reserve, part of the North Norfolk SSSI, now comprises reedbeds, saltmarsh and freshwater lagoons fronted by a wide sandy beach. A variety of waders and wildfowl occur and Avocets, Bearded Tits and Marsh Harriers nest there, with Bitterns also to be found, encouraged by the area of tidal saltmarsh created to replace a brackish lagoon in 2010-11. On our visit, Ruff, Swallows, Lapwings and Dunlin were evident, and Mike Crewe saw a Spoonbill.

The large numbers of birders with substantial optical equipment encountered along the West Bank path as we struck out north from the Visitor Centre towards the beach were therefore hardly a surprise, and the presence of our more lightly-equipped group largely intent on the flora must have been a novelty, though we were careful to disturb the birders and not just the birds as little as possible.

Though determining the willows and aspen close to the Visitor Centre initially provided botanical interest, the crest of the dry-ish bank yielded few attention-grabbing plant species, though looking down to marsh and reedbed did enable discussion of the differences between glasswort species (Perennial Glasswort was a highlight) and some similarities of Sea Beet and Sugar Beet. Eventually, as we drew nearer to the dunes and beach, most of



*Limonium bellidifolium*

Image: Jo Parmenter

the party descended the rather steep slope from the bank to the saltmarsh stretching beyond the western boundary of the reserve. This area yielded a tapestry of the saltmarsh plants one might hope for, including Sea Lavender (the three species *Limonium bellidifolium*, *L. binervosum* and *L. vulgare*), Sea Wormwood, Sea Purslane, Sea Milkwort and Annual Seablite.

It was remarked that *Seriphidium maritimum* has joined other halophytes to be found on some road verges. Among highlights at Titchwell, Jo Parmenter recorded Long-bracted Sedge *Carex extensa* and a Wasp Spider, plus nationally-scarce Sharp Rush *Juncus acutus*, which I believe had been recorded at Titchwell in the past, but not refound on a 'reccy' a few days before our outing.



*Carex extensa*



Wasp Spider



Lesser Centaury

Images: Jo Parmenter

The party reached the narrow line of dunes, with Sea Campion and other plants. and the foreshore where lunch was consumed in pleasant sunshine before the return to our vehicles to transfer to Holme. I didn't go on to Holme Dunes, but Bill Mitchell reports that those who did had to wait in their cars until a heavy shower passed. I'm indebted to Bill for his account of the visit, which I've quoted from extensively below.

The car park itself yielded Haresfoot Clover, Lady's Bedstraw, Spreading Yellow Sorrel and Common Fleabane, the latter growing out of a low wall near the NWT Visitor Centre. When the party moved on to the dunes Sand Sedge was abundant, along with Common Centaury, Sea Campion, Lesser Hawkbit and Sea Milkwort. Tim Doncaster called the attention of the party to a small Natterjack Toad which, despite its size was complete with its yellow stripe as it made its way through the lichen *Cladonia rangiformis* which provides the grey dunes with their greyness. A little further along, Jo Parmenter was waiting to show people a specimen of Narrow-leaved Hawkweed and several plants of Ploughman's Spikenard and a single specimen of Blue Fleabane. After much debating and lens-work, a tiny



*Trifolium* species was pronounced to be Rough Clover. While there were several specimens of Carline Thistle growing in the dunes, one had a completely different look due to fascination.

In a sheltered dune slack was a patch of Henbane and in a damper area several plants of Brookweed and Sea Rush. A small pond at the bottom of the dune slack held Brackish Water-crowfoot and Sea Club-Rush. A few plants of Broad-leaved Helleborine, along with Fairy Flax and Parsley Water Dropwort, were found while searching an area for Adderstongue. Eventually, Mike Crewe found a few leaves and stems of the *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, and just before the party started back, he showed members Lesser Centaury. Bill points out that the weather at Holme meant there were few butterflies about, with only Meadow Brown and Common Blue noted.

Jo adds to the list of Holme highlights - including 'the gorgeous Lesser Centaury' in dune slacks - Knotted Pearlwort ('perhaps the plant of the day') Flat Sedge found at the end of the day in the fresh-marshes, Strawberry Clover on the grazing marsh, Ploughman's Spikenard, and 'masses of ...harebell' with the equally-plentiful Blue Fleabane in the dune slacks.

Many thanks to Bill, Jo and other members present and of course to Bob Leaney for setting up and conducting, along with Flora Group, another memorable and rewarding 'Wild Flowers revealed' outing.

Stephen Martin



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**Anniversary Walks at Cley NWT Reserve**  
(A series of walks looking at different groups were organised throughout the summer as part of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NNNS)



## **Grasshoppers, Bees & Hoverflies**

13<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Twelve people assembled at Cley NWT Visitor Centre at 10.30 in fine weather. The focus of our interest soon extended well beyond the grasshoppers, bees and hoverflies on the billing to include all insects, galls, fungi and much more, making the job of the leader much easier, owing to the range of expertise in the group. The first hour was spent searching the bramble banks around the overflow car park. (Cars had been directed here owing to a pair of Little Ringed Plovers choosing to nest in the main parking area!). We then proceeded slowly eastwards along the footpath towards the East Bank, eventually reaching the Arnold's Marsh lookout before turning back for a late lunch. Two *Andrena* solitary bee species and bumblebees were collecting pollen from bramble flowers, while various lady-birds, flower beetles and soldier beetles were also identified. The least common species seen were probably the beetles *Cerapheles terminatus* and *Clanoptilus barnevillei*, plus the conopid *Physocephala rufipes*. It was also good to see a female Pantaloon

Bee *Dasypoda hirtipes* collecting pollen from Field Sowthistle. This plant also displayed some rather dramatic looking galls on its leaves, identified as *Cystiphora sonchi* by James Emerson, who also noticed rust fungus on Sea Beet.



Galls caused by *Cystiphora sonchi*.



*Uromyces beticola* rust on Sea Beet.

Images: James Emerson

The borders of the East Bank had been spared any cutting at this point and had developed an excellent mix of Tufted Vetch, Ragwort, thistles and Chicory amongst tall grasses. We heard that the Environment Agency had plans to cut it soon in order to deter Alexanders, though there was very little of this plant visible.



Red-tailed Bumblebee worker on Tufted Vetch



*Ectemnius continuous* female. Wasps of this genus lay eggs on paralysed flies in holes in wood.

Images: Nick Owens

Three individuals of the hoverfly *Chrysotoxum verallii* was also present along the bank and as final bonus three species of soldier flies with appealing names were seen taking nectar, namely the Broad Centurion, the Common Green Colonel and the Flecked General.

James Emerson & Nick Owens

*N.B. A full list of species seen during the walk follows this report.*

## **Species list from Cley Walk - 13/07/2019**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Vernacular name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
Amphibians	Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>
Bees	Gwynne's Mining-bee	<i>Andrena bicolor</i>
Bees	Short-fringed Mining-bee	<i>Andrena dorsata</i>
Bees	Western Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>
Bees	Red-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus lapidarius</i>
Bees	White-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus lucorum</i>
Bees	Common Carder Bee	<i>Bombus pascuorum</i>
Bees	Vestal Cuckoo Bee	<i>Bombus vestalis</i>
Bees	Pantaloone Bee	<i>Dasygaster hirtipes</i>
Bees	Common Furrow Bee	<i>Lasioglossum calceatum</i>
Beetles - False Blister Beetles	Swollen-thighed Beetle	<i>Oedemera nobilis</i>
Beetles - Ladybirds	11-spot ladybird	<i>Coccinella 11-punctata</i>
Beetles - Ladybirds	7-spot ladybird	<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>
Beetles - Ladybirds	22-spot ladybird	<i>Psylliodes 22-punctata</i>
Beetles - Ladybirds	24-spot ladybird	<i>Subcoccinella 24-punctata</i>
Beetles - Longhorn Beetles	Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle	<i>Agapanthia villosa viridescens</i>
Beetles - Soft-winged Flower Beetles		<i>Anthrenus rufus</i>
Beetles - Soft-winged Flower Beetles		<i>Ceraphebe terminatus</i>
Beetles - Soft-winged Flower Beetles		<i>Clanoptilus barnevillei</i>
Beetles - Soldier Beetles		<i>Cantharis nigra</i>
Beetles - Soldier Beetles		<i>Crucianella ruficollis</i>
Beetles - Soldier Beetles		<i>Rhagonycha fulva</i>
Beetles - Weevils		<i>Phyllotreta roboratorius</i>
Bugs	Potato Capsid	<i>Closterotomus norwegicus</i>
Bugs	Dock Bug	<i>Coreus marginatus</i>
Bugs		<i>Heterotoma planicornis</i>
Bugs		<i>Orthops campestris</i>
Bugs	Spiked Shieldbug	<i>Picromerus bidens</i>
Butterflies	Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>
Butterflies	Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>
Butterflies	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>
Butterflies	Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>
Butterflies	Essex Skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>
Butterflies	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
Flies - Agromyzids		<i>Phytomyza ranunculi</i>
Flies - Conopids		<i>Physocephala rufipes</i>
Flies - Conopids		<i>Sicus ferrugineus</i>
Flies - Dung Flies	Yellow Dung Fly	<i>Scathophaga stercoraria</i>
Flies - Hoverflies		<i>Chrysotoxum verralli</i>
Flies - Hoverflies		<i>Episyrphus balteatus</i>
Flies - Hoverflies		<i>Eristalis pectinax</i>
Flies - Hoverflies		<i>Euclyptus corollae</i>
Flies - Hoverflies		<i>Helophilus pendulus</i>
Flies - Hoverflies		<i>Melanostoma scalare</i>
Flies - Hoverflies		<i>Sphaerophoria scripta</i>
Flies - Hoverflies		<i>Syrphus ribesii</i>
Flies - Midges		<i>Cystophora sonchi</i>
Flies - Muscids		<i>Graphomya maculata</i>
Flies - Muscids	Noon Fly	<i>Mesembrina meridiana</i>
Flies - Robberflies	Striped Slender Robberfly	<i>Leptogaster cylindrica</i>
Flies - Soldierflies	Broad Centurion	<i>Chloromyia formosa</i>
Flies - Soldierflies	Common Green Colonel	<i>Oplodontha viridula</i>



Common Green Colonel  
*Opodontha viridula*



Flecked General  
*Stratiomys singularior*

Images: James Emerson

### Category

Flies - Soldierflies  
Flies - Tachinids  
Flies - Ullidiidae  
Leafhoppers  
Moths  
Moths  
Moths  
Moths  
Moths  
Moths  
Moths  
Moths  
Moths  
Moths  
Odonata  
Orthoptera  
Orthoptera  
Orthoptera  
Orthoptera  
Plants  
Plants  
Plants  
Rust fungi  
Rust fungi  
Sawflies  
Sawflies  
Spiders  
Spiders  
Wasps  
Wasps

### Vernacular name

Flecked General  
  
Common Froghopper  
Ribwort Slender  
Yellow-tail  
Blackneck Moth  
Southern Wainscot  
White Plume Moth  
Scrubland Pigmy  
Cinnabar  
Timothy Tortrix  
Five-spot Burnet agg  
Blue-tailed Damsel fly  
Lesser Marsh Grasshopper  
Field Grasshopper  
Long-winged Conehead  
Roesel's Bush-cricket  
Wild Celery  
Sea Beet  
Chicory  
Bristly Oxtongue  
Hollyhock Rust  
  
Turnip Sawfly  
  
Slender Wood-boring Wasp

### Scientific name

*Stratiomys singularior*  
*Phania funesta*  
*Ceroxys urticae*  
*Philaenus spumarius*  
*Aspilapteryx tringipennella*  
*Euproctis similis*  
*Lygephila pastinum*  
*Mythimna straminea*  
*Pterophorus pentadactyla*  
*Stigmella plagiocolella*  
*Tyria jacobaeae*  
*Zelotherses paleana*  
*Zygaena trifolii*  
*Ischnura elegans*  
*Chorthippus albomarginatus*  
*Chorthippus brunneus*  
*Conocephalus discolor*  
*Metrioptera roesellii*  
*Apium graveolens*  
*Beta vulgaris*  
*Cichorium intybus*  
*Picris echioides*  
*Puccinia malvacearum*  
*Uromyces beticola*  
*Athalia rosae*  
*Cephus pygmaeus*  
*Larinoides cornutus*  
*Pisaura mirabilis*  
*Ectemnius continuus*  
*Trypoxylon attenuatum*

## Flies and other Insects

3 August 2019

A walk looking at flies was never going to be that popular, and indeed just six people joined me for a look at the fly life on NWT Cley reserve. Rather than waving a large white net in front of the hides, we opted for the more discrete approach of walking on the roadside path, then along the East Bank to the beach and back again.

As well as spotting and catching adult flies, we also looked out for evidence of larval activity. This included distinctive galls on Perennial Sowthistle leaves - made by the gall midge *Cystiphora sonchi*, and the characteristic "Cigar Gall" on Common Reed caused by *Lipara lucens*.

For adult flies, the major sources of food are found at flowers, where males imbibe nectar for energy, and the females eat pollen (for protein to help mature their eggs). Many of the adults have aquatic or semi-aquatic larvae, and included the small cranefly *Dicranomyia sera* (typical of saltmarsh habitats), the soldierflies *Stratiomys singularior*, *Stratiomys potamida* and *Nemotelus uliginosus*, the horseflies *Haematopota pluvialis* and *Chrysops relictus*, the long-legged fly *Campsicnemus armatus*, and the hoverflies *Eristalis tenax* and *Helophilus pendulus*. Both of the last two species have rat-tailed maggots that can survive in organically rich pools with very low oxygen, by breathing through their long "tails".

Other hoverflies included the abundant "Marmalade Hoverfly" - *Episyrphus balteatus*, *Sphaerophoria scripta*, *Syrirta pipiens* and *Volucella pellucens*. This last species spends its larval life as a scavenger in the bottom of wasp nests. Several parasitic species were observed, such as *Sicus ferrugineus* which is an internal parasite of adult bumble bees, and two tachinids - *Eriothrix rufomaculatus* (which attacks crambid grass moth caterpillars) and the spectacular *Nowickia ferox*, a parasite of the Dark Arches moth caterpillar.

The housefly family was represented by *Coenosia antennata* and the local *Limnospila albifrons*, as well as the better known Noon Fly, *Mesembrina meridiana*, a visitor from the abundant cow pats on the adjacent marshes.

Among the "small fry" (the tiny black dots rushing around in my pooter) were the grass fly *Calamoncosis duinensis* and the shore flies *Atissa limosina*, *Schema acrostichale*, *Glenanthe ripicola* and *Scatella lutosa* - all typical of saltmarsh habitats. To round off the Diptera, there were quite a few picture-winged flies as well, notably *Ceroxys urticae*, *Meliera omissa* and *Campiglossa plantaginis* (which is a specialist feeder on sea aster flowers).

Other orders of insects were not ignored - Essex Skippers were common, and a geometrid caterpillar was found feeding on seed heads of Hemlock - a *Eupithecia* species (now waiting for it to emerge from its pupa). The dragonfly *Sympetrum striolatum* was busy hunting on the East Bank, and keeping out of its way were the shorebug *Saldula pilosella*, and the Nationally Notable hoppers *Pentastiridius leporinus* and *Chloriona dorsata*.

Despite the distractions, I eventually guided our party to the beach where I knew



that a long-dead seal carcass awaited to provide the highlight of our walk. Sadly flies were little in evidence, but that disappointment was offset by the discovery of the Red-legged Ham Beetle, *Necrobia rufipes*. The larvae of this beetle are predatory on fly larvae that feed on the carrion. It is regarded as scarce, and there are only six Norfolk sites from where it has been recorded.



Red-legged Ham Beetle, *Necrobia rufipes*

Image: Tony Irwin

Many thanks to Yvonne Mynett, Tony Moverley, Andrew Clarke, Mike Noble and Paul Wells for contributing so much to make the walk a success, and particularly to Tim Hodge for sharing his encyclopaedic knowledge so freely.

*Tony Irwin*

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## **‘Spots & Dots’- The Smaller Fungi**

7 September 2019

Cley in early September is not the ideal place or time to introduce anyone to fungal diversity. Unless, that is, the emphasis is on very small fungi. After everyone had been equipped with a hand lens, the group set off to examine plants and their remains in the vicinity of the NWT Visitor Centre.

Rust fungi are a large group of parasitic fungi that produce spores in clusters, often orange or brown, on living plants. Many have very complex lifecycles. Those that are specific to nameable host plants can be confidently named in the field and a short walk produced rust fungi on Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, Perennial Sow-thistle

*Sonchus arvensis*, Common Mallow *Malva sylvestris*, Sea Beet *Beta vulgaris*, Common Reed *Phragmites australis* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. Examples of other groups of microfungi were found on various plants.

Stephen Pinnington penetrated the reedbed to find a minute gilled fungus (*Marasmius limosus*) with a cap barely 2 mm across and, on the way back, Yvonne Mynett picked up the only large fungus of the day, a Stubble Rosegill *Volvariella gloiocephala* with a cap some 8 cm across. How we missed it on the way out we don't know!

Tony Leech

## 150 years ago - from the 'Transactions'

Volume 1 (1869-74)

(Part of) Stray Notes on Norfolk and Suffolk Mammalia - pages 22-26

By J. H. Gurney, F.Z.S.

Read 25<sup>th</sup> May, 1869.

PINE MARTEN (*Martes abietum*.) BEECH MARTEN (*Martes foina*.) During the latter part of the last century "Marten Cats" existed in Brooke Wood, as I was informed by an old woodman, now deceased, who was employed there in that capacity in his youth.

If my recollection does not deceive me, the late Jehoshaphat Postle, Esq., of Colney, had in his collection a stuffed Norfolk specimen of the marten.

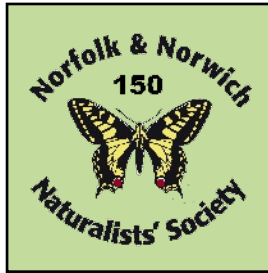
It is probably impossible now to ascertain to which of the two races of marten found in Great Britain those which formerly inhabited Norfolk belonged.

STOAT (*Mustela erminea*.) A gamekeeper at Northrepps having missed some pheasant's eggs from a nest on top of a bank next a plantation, watched the place, and observed a stoat take an egg out of the nest, and carry it without breaking it along the top of the bank to its hole several yards off: the hole was dug out, and in it were found all the other missing eggs unbroken, except a slight puncture made by the stoat's teeth in carrying them to its hole.

The stoat is called "lobster" in Norfolk - a name which, it has been suggested, may have been originally "leapster," and given to it from its habit of progressing by succession of leaps or bounds. The stoat frequently becomes white in Norfolk during the winter months, as it always does in the Arctic regions.

WEASEL (*Mustela vulgaris*.) The difference of size in the sexes of this animal is very remarkable; the females, which are much smaller than the males, are called "mouse-hunters" in Norfolk.

A female weasel was once seen at Earlham in the act of attacking a half-grown rabbit, by biting it behind the ear; both animals were killed at one shot, and stuffed in the attitude in which they were observed before the shot was fired.



The next issue of ***The Norfolk Natterjack*** will be February 2020.

Please send  
**all articles / notes and photographic material**  
to the editor as soon as possible by  
**January 5<sup>th</sup> 2020** 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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