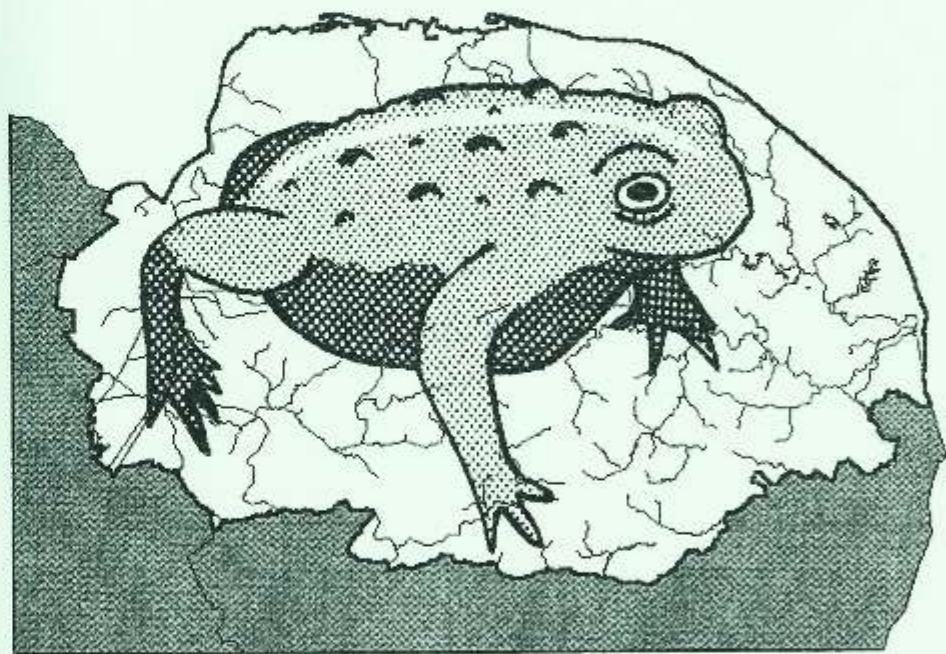


The Norfolk



Natterjack

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Articles with the camera symbol have associated photographs in the Nats' Gallery (centre pages)

Toad-in-the-hole....

Here we are again into the season of dark nights and short days, a time for reflecting on the summer past. *Natterjack* can help, whether it is the close observation of the industrious wasp, finding wildflowers or reliving magical moments. Snapshots of the county and beyond. Other images are captured by David North in his inspirational new book - a stocking filler for any naturalist and lover of Norfolk. My thanks to all those contributors who have sent in either words and/or pictures. Seasons greetings.

FF

RED KITES

by Tony Howes



A friend and I spent two days in Wales during June this year, specifically to attempt photographing red kites at Gigrin farm, one of the many kite feeding stations set up round the country. A trip for this purpose is very dependant on fine weather for success, our two days were not good in that respect, overcast and very dull, but we still enjoyed the experience.

The food is put out at 3 pm but long before this the kites are gathering along with buzzards, crows, ravens and magpies. They can be seen, often very high, drifting over the grassy meadow where the feeding takes place. This area is bordered on the south side by a row of wooden hides and all round by trees of various ages and height. By 3 pm the sky is full of kites, the tractor and trailer pulls into the meadow and the farmer, Chris Powles, puts shovel fulls of meat over much of the area. I was amazed how many kites were coming, even now, minute specks on the horizon told of still more birds coming in, there were well over one hundred kites swirling over the meadow. They very rarely land, preferring to side slip down in a graceful dive, gather a piece of meat in their talons and eat it on the wing.

The highlight for me was seeing a leukistic kite, this bird has been known of for some time, and is, as can be imagined, very beautiful. Unfortunately many of the kites, including the leukistic bird, were moulting, with feathers missing from wings and tail and looking rather tatty.

Overall it was a very enjoyable experience, these charismatic birds are now much more common than in past years. Introductions in England are proving successful and red kites are now a bird that can be seen over much of the U.K. Eventually I am sure, they will colonise Norfolk.



Starling Roost

by Brian Macfarlane



I visited Strumpshaw in late autumn last year hopefully to see an otter from the brick hide. Although it had been a sunny day, the light was beginning to go at about 3-30pm, when I noticed small numbers of starlings flying about.

The numbers gathered momentum, and headed in a south westerly direction to start a larger flock about a mile away. The sun had set and left a rich orange glow which accentuated the large number of black birds against this backdrop.

I was using a camera with a 100mm-400mm zoom lens so the distance did not appear so far through the lens on the 400 end. At around 3-50pm the numbers were in excess of 100,000 birds. Swirling around in exciting formations like shoals of fish in the sea.

When, to my amazement they suddenly disappeared into to the reed beds within 3 seconds to roost for the night. How this natural phenomena took place without some sort of leadership defies belief. It was a memory I shall treasure as one of the best moments in my wildlife experiences. I went three more nights without seeing a single starling. Oh! by the way what about the otters? Who cares on an evening like that !

Wells Coast Watch

by Paul Banham

Some of you will be familiar with the former Coastguard lookout not far from the Lifeboat House on Wells beach. This is now manned by a team of volunteers during the daytime, doing two-hour shifts, who report anything that matters (e.g. people being marooned by the incoming tide on Bob Halls Sand) and log incoming and outgoing vessels.

Although I don't do one of the shifts, I have been taken on as "official bird-watcher". The lookout has one of the best sea-views in Wells, and with my new stabilised binoculars you would be amazed how far away you can distinguish an Arctic from a great skua, or see passing gannets well out to sea.

I am looking forward to seeing the mergansers and eiders which regularly turn up in the "Run", and watching them in much greater comfort than previously. Formerly, I would just climb up the steps and stand outside the lookout, as even



then it provided the best viewing-point for checking things like the first brents, which always went for the zostera, or eel grass, growing on the beach near the East Hills. 12th September this year, by the way.

PUFFIN AND BLOWIN'

by Brian Macfarlane



I spent a delightful week on the Isle of Mull last July 2006 with the express purpose of photographing wildlife. My hope was to see whales, puffins, sea otters, white tailed sea eagles, and osprey.

The weather in those parts do not always give magic sunny days all week, so opportunities had to be taken where possible. I traveled 1,100 miles in a week along single track roads with passing places which made it 'interesting'.

I was fortune enough to see an osprey's nest with one young still in it. This we saw at Loch Lowes on the mainland on the way to Oban to catch the ferry to Mull. Another day I went whale watching about an hours trip out to sea. Eventually I saw a minke surface long enough to get a quick photo. Later a basking shark just showed below the surface.

Because of the popularity of 'Springwatch' on TV the various trips got booked up very quickly. I managed to book a trip to visit the white tailed sea eagle at the nest. Again I was fortunate to be in time to see the remaining chick fly from the nest soon after I arrived. The hottest day of the week had been booked to visit Lunga island to see puffins and guillemots. There had been a lot less puffins this year for some reason which was unexplained. Anyway, it was a very enjoyable trip, and managed to get one or two shots. Finally, I spent an exhaustible week traveling an hour each evening to visit an area where I was likely to see sea otters.

On Thursday I was duly rewarded with the sight of a male otter erupting from the water, and landing on a rock 50 yards from where I stood. He was devouring a freshly caught fish.

Mull is wonderfully scenic place, and I was not disappointed with all its facets, with some in good light. Sunsets looking particularly stunning.



Do not Disturb

by Paul Woolnough

Whilst helping the Norwich Environmental Weekenders (NEWS) conservation group clear gorse at East Winch Common on Sunday January 15 2006 I found a baby adder.

A colleague, with gloved hands, managed to coax the snake into a plastic mug. The little adder was less than pleased to be transported to an uncleared patch of gorse and repeatedly grasped the lip of the mug with his jaws.

Once safely deposited in a new patch of gorse, he was able to resume his winter snooze.

Two Records of Carpenter Bees in Norfolk

by Dick Jones

This year there have been two records of the carpenter bee, *Xylocopa violacea* in Norfolk. The insect, well known to those who visit the south of France, looks like a huge, blue-black bumble bee. Even the wings are blackish brown.

The first sighting was on August 7th at Thornham by Rob Lucking and the second was on 11th of September at Dersingham by myself. I attempted to net it but it dropped into the bush it was feeding from and flew away over the garden fence. In both cases there was no specimen collected so the record is unsubstantiated but it was felt that they should be noted for future reference, as they will become more common as global warming alters the insect population.

A quick look on the net showed that they had been seen at both Dungeness and Portland Bill this year.

Ghosts in the gloaming

by Peter Lambley

In the hot days of late July I got into the habit of taking our dog, Ben for a walk to Sparham Pools in the evening and on the way back would let him swim to cool down in the overflow stream around Lyng Mill. One evening when it was almost dark I noticed what I first thought were bats flying low then up across the stream and around the overhanging bushes. As my eyes adjusted I



realised they were too insubstantial or 'ghostly' for bats and realised they were dragonflies. There must have been at least 10 performing, probably more. At the time this was a new phenomena for me as I did not appreciate that some British species do fly well into the evening. I was not able to identify them but I gather some of the hawkers are known to do this such as the migrant hawker *Aeshna mixta* and brown hawker *Aeshna grandis*. It was a regular event for a week or more.

Fine Flies

by Francis Farrow.



During the usual morning walk (6th August) with the dog I passed a stand of hemp agrimony on Sheringham Common. The tall pink-flowered plants are always worth looking at as they attract numerous insects. This morning was no exception with many hoverflies present. One fly, however, caught my attention – it had colourful swept back wings giving it a somewhat bug-like appearance and a slow ponderous flight. I recognised the shape from a picture in the book '*Flies of the British Isles*' (Colyer and Hammond) but could not remember the name. I managed to get a photograph so on returning home I quickly discovered that it was a male *Phasia* (= *Alophora*) *hemiptera*. This insect is very rare in Norfolk and generally considered a southern counties insect. The fly is a parasitic species (Tachinid) that preys mainly on Hemiptera such as shield-bugs and also Orthoptera (Crickets and grasshoppers). Later, in the afternoon, while cutting back some overgrowth on Beeston Common I noticed a female *P. hemiptera* also on hemp agrimony. The female is much smaller and has a stout, rearward-pointing ovipositor protected by a sort of sheath of similar shape. The presence of both a male and female of a 'new' species for the Commons on the same day was marvelous.

The second 'new' fly was also seen on Beeston Common while walking the dog, about three weeks later, on 27th August. This was a ginger-coloured furry bee-mimic hoverfly named *Arctophila superbiens* (= *fulva*). It tends to like woodland edge habitats and is also very fond of visiting the flowers of devil's-bit scabious. It is generally found in the west or northern parts of the UK and in the book '*British Hoverflies*' (Stubbs and Falk) it is stated that it may be absent from East Anglia. This has been proven not to be true as Ken Durrant has records from the 1950s and 60s, mainly in the west and central areas of the county. Ken also had a record of *Phasia* from near East Bilney a few years ago.

The fact that these insects are now seen close to the coast could be an indication of range expansion due to climate change.



**Notes of Observations of a Nest of the
Wasp *Dolichovespula media* in a Garden at Scratchby, Norfolk**

2nd July to 25th August 2006.

by Diane & Colin Mussell



2nd July 8.49am: Colin noticed a wasp nest being constructed in a bush in the garden. On closer inspection it was in a flowering currant bush and about 9 inches in diameter. It was beautifully constructed and although used the branches of the plant, wrapping around them for support, the branches were in no way suffering because of the nest construction, and the leaves on the branches were still green and flourishing. The wasps were coming and going quite frequently and adding to and extending the outer layers of the nest. The entrance was a small hole at the front bottom of the nest.

They didn't seem to be the usual wasp size or colour so we watched for a while and then consulted our copy of the Michael Chinnery Insect book and decided that they could be the species *Dolichovespula media*. I was able to take several close up photographs of the nest with wasps on it, to help with the identification. I was more than pleased to see that this did not upset the wasps at all and they took almost no notice of my standing close to the nest. They were not aggressive in any way.

As we are not wasp experts I thought we would contact someone who might be and emailed Francis Farrow with a couple of photos. He relayed them to Ken Durrant who confirmed that it was indeed a nest of the wasp *Dolichovespula media*. He also said that they appeared to be the non aggressive form, ie not the really black bodied type. Colin and I then breathed a sigh of relief and began to look forward to more days observing the nest.

3rd July 7am: The nest continued to be expanded rapidly and we noticed that at least 1 outer layer had been added since last observing it the previous day.

11th July 9.54am: There were now several more layers added and the wasps were still working hard to add even more layers.

17th July 8am: The nest was now quite large and at a guess was about 11 inches across. What looked like air vents had now been added. Little sticking out, hood like things – I estimate that there were about 8 of these.

26th July 9.39am: This was a very warm day - even at 9.39am and we noticed that there were several wasps on the outside of the nest. When we looked closer there were wasps at the entrance to the nest that appeared to be fanning their wings. We assumed that this was to try and cool the inside of the nest. I took several photos and as I was doing this a wasp pulled out two grubs from the nest



and dropped them onto the leaves beneath. The grubs were alive but no wasps approached them after they were jettisoned. We were amazed at the size of the grubs I would say about 1 inch long and thought that they could possibly be queens. Rather strange behaviour we thought.

30th July: Again early morning we saw a large wasp emerge from the nest and sit on the outside in the sunshine. This was different again from the usual wasps we had seen, much larger and more black, and with brown/gingery marks on the thorax. The thorax was also much more hairy. We thought that this was probably a queen wasp. We were very surprised then when it flew away as we thought that the queens emerged in late summer and it was only the 30th July!

4th August 11am: We noticed quite a gathering of wasps on the outside of the nest and also on the foliage surrounding the nest. I counted about 12 wasps that I could see, without my disturbing the surrounding foliage. It was quite peaceful, there was no frantic activity at all and they just appeared to be taking a stroll and enjoying the sunshine.

5th August 8.45am: Another gathering of wasps on the outside of the nest and although peaceful, there was much touching of heads and stroking of feelers going on. We thought that there were at least 2 queens amongst them.

11th August 9.12am: Still more gathering of wasps on the outside of the nest. Again I counted about 13 individuals without disturbing any of the foliage surrounding the nest. This did include at least 3 queens again.

23rd August 11.21am: Much less activity at the nest now. Only an occasional worker going in and out.

24th August 10am: Very heavy overnight rain last night and when we checked the nest it was very sodden and water running down all over the outside. There were 3 workers outside looking very disoriented, but very little else going on.

Later at 4.30pm: When the nest was checked again there was only a solitary queen sitting on the outside of the nest and no activity at all.

25th August: Nest now quiet and no activity seen at all.

We enjoyed our wasp watch immensely and would recommend it to anyone. At no time did we feel under any threat from these wasps and even with our grandchildren here in August there was no problem. The only action we did take was not to use the path down the garden which went within 2 feet of the nest – except obviously when I went to take some photographs. This I was able to do without any problems as long as I didn't linger too long – 5 minutes max. So please if you are privileged to have wasps build a nest in your garden be sensible



and enjoy the privilege.

As the nest is now abandoned we shall remove it from the bush. If there is anyone who would like to have this or to look at it please contact me at: musselldi@yahoo.co.uk to arrange this.

Silver-studded Blues



by Hans Watson

Recently, whilst engaged in the dreaded task of sorting, cataloguing and writing photographs to disc, I had to look very closely at a series of photos of silver-studded blues taken during the summer on Kelling Heath. It was then that it became apparent how great a variation there seems to be between individual specimens. I am well aware that the "studs" can vary from almost non-existent in some individuals to the lovely full metallic blue/green spots in others, but from looking at photos of some 15 individuals, it makes me wonder if any two silver-studded blues are the same. Some individuals, as well as having spots of different sizes and relative position with one another, also have white rings around the spots of different width. I have always understood that individuals with an underside ground colour of silvery grey, with a blue wash around the base of the wing, are males, with females having an almost coppery fawn coloured ground colour, with much more prominent white rings round the black spots. It also seems that some of the fawn (female) coloured insects can be very pale, tending toward the silvery grey colour of the males.

A close look at similar photos taken of common blues on Yarmouth North Denes, seems to show much less variation between individuals, regarding colour and markings, with males and females showing no noticeable difference in their pale fawn brown base underside colour.

Any Lepidopterists reading this will immediately discern that I am not one of their number, (and possibly in need of an eye test). Butterfly field guides, which presumably are aimed at the less expert butterfly fans such as myself, make little or no mention of this variation in underside markings or difference in base colour between sexes of silver-studded blues, or indeed that common blues sexes have similar underside base colour.

Notwithstanding, I take pleasure in the knowledge that my attempts to photograph nature have often in the past revealed to me facts and details that I have not found in field guides.



NATS' GALLERY: November 2006



WASPS
DOLICHOVESPULA
MEDIA attending a
nest in a garden at
Scratby in July and
August 2006.
Photos: Diane Mussel.

Left: Wasps gathering on
the outside of the nest.
Below left: Two wasp
queens.
Below right (upper): Two
wasp grubs.
Below right (lower): A
wasp queen.





YELLOW-WINGED DARTER

Strumpshaw Fen, 28 July 2006. The year saw the biggest invasion of Yellow-winged Darters since 1995, with large numbers reported from Norfolk, particularly in the Broads. It will be worth looking out for any locally bred insects in 2007, but it may be that, as in 1996, surprisingly few appear. Photo: Simon Harrap/norfolknature.co.uk.



TWO FINE FLIES Above: a male *Phasia hemiptera* on Hemp Agrimony, 6 August, Sheringham Common. Right: the bee mimicking hoverfly *Arctophila superbiens*, 27 August 2006, Beeston Common. Photos: Francis Farrow.



A PAIR OF RUDDY DARTERS taking advantage of Pat Negal's hat during the Society's excursion to Blo'Norton Fen, 19 August 2006. Photo: Janet Negal.

ELEPHANT HAWKMOTH

caterpillar, one of the highlights of the Society's excursion to Blo'Norton Fen on 19 August. Adults are on the wing from May till August and larvae can be found from late June to September. They overwinter as a pupa, constructing a flimsy cocoon in the leaf-litter or a little underground, and their seemingly aimless peregrinations in search of suitable sites often bring the caterpillars to notice.

Photo: Janet Negal.



CAMBERWELL BEAUTY

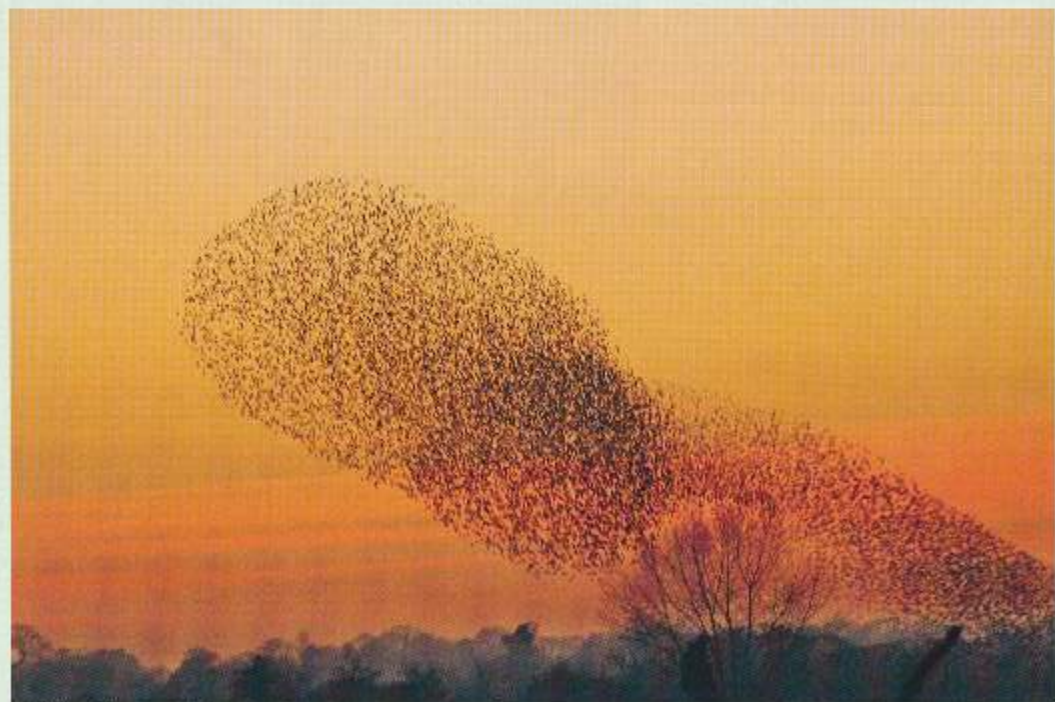
photographed in his garden at Great Ellingham (near Attleborough) on 27 August 2006 by Bob Cobb. As with Yellow-winged Darter, this year was the best season for migrant Camberwell Beauties since 1995, with over 100 reported nationally, of which at least 35 were in Norfolk. Most were seen briefly, however, often only flying past a lucky observer, so Bob was fortunate to obtain this photograph.



PUFFIN AND BLOWIN!

Brian Macfarlane visited the Isle of Mull in July 2006 and came home with some superb photographic memories, including a male

Otter eating a fish,
White-tailed Eagle,
Minke Whale and the
ever-photogenic Puffin
(see text).





STARLINGS

going to roost
at Strumpshaw
Fen (left and
top right).

Photos: Brian
Macfarlane.





FIELD PANSY, SCARLET PIMPERNEL (above) and **FIELD MADDER** (right), Rockland All Saints. Three relatively common arable weeds. Photos: Bob Blandford



NIGHT-FLOWERING CATCHFLY Edgefield, 15 August 2006. Several of these declining arable weeds appeared on a plot sold to provide a new car park for Edgefield church. Note how each petal curls up during the day. Photos: Simon Harrap/norfolknature.co.uk



CORNFLOWER

Edgefield 15 August 2006. Like the catchflies pictured above, these appeared on a former arable field, and also in the nearby headland. Now very rare as a true arable weed, the origin of such plants is always open to doubt Photo: Simon Harrap/norfolknature.co.uk





HARLEQUIN LADYBIRD

Harmonia axyridis (f. *spectabilis*), Langham, 7 November. This Asian invader appeared in 2004 and has spread north and west to Yorkshire and Cornwall.

Photo: Simon Harrap/norfolknature.co.uk



SILVER-STUDDED

BLUES (above) Kelling Heath summer 2006. Careful study revealed marked individual variation. Compare with the **COMMON BLUES** (left) on Sea-holly at Yarmouth North Denes, which show much less variation. Photos: Hans Watson.



LEUCISTIC RED KITE

Gigrin Farm, Powys, June 2006. One of a gathering of over 100 kites at a well-stocked feeding station.

Photo:
Tony Howes.



A photograph of two Bee Orchids (Ophrys sphegodes) in a field. The orchids have pinkish-purple petals and a dark, patterned lip that mimics a bee. They are surrounded by green grass and other wildflowers, with a blurred background of yellow flowers.

BEE ORCHIDS

'Fallen to earth, half-hidden
amongst green grasses
Cowled bee angels
with pink wings
Strange beauties,
with deceit in mind.'

Words on Wildlife
by David North.
(see review).

Photo: Simon Harrap/
norfolknature.co.uk.

Missing Body Parts

by John Hampshire

Over the years whilst wandering around parts of Norfolk I've quite frequently come across the bodies of birds that are missing either their legs or their heads or even both. In recent months for example, I have found individuals of black-headed gull, kittiwake and lapwing in this condition. Sometimes the rest of the body is intact, indeed there may not be any other obvious signs of injury.

What could be eating these extremities? Surely a carnivore wouldn't just be interested in the legs. I was intrigued enough to look into the matter a little further and made some enquires. Eric Meek in Orkney informed me that on at least two islands – North Ronaldsey and Aukerry – sheep, which are confined to the beaches and have to exist on seaweed, chew off the legs and sometimes the wings of dead birds they find, presumably in response to a deficiency of calcium or other mineral in their diet.

I also contacted Professor Stephen Harris of the Bristol University Mammal Group who informed me that foxes frequently bite off the heads of birds leaving the rest, even the breast meat. This is most likely to happen when a fox encounters an abundance of prey, for example a gull or tern colony, but he was unaware of foxes ever taking the legs.

Professor Harris also gave me some very interesting information regarding herbivores, including cows and red deer eating long-dead rabbit carcasses for the calcium content. Also and most remarkably, he mentioned a study in Gloucestershire, which found that cows were minor predators of ground nesting birds eggs – now that really was a surprise.

But what has been eating the legs and heads of finding bird carcasses lacking their legs and/or heads in Norfolk? Also, if herbivores are eating parts of the carcasses of old birds, what about the vast amount of mammal and bird bones that litter the countryside, are any of these consumed by herbivores?

Can anyone shed any light?

Photographs wanted

If you have any photographs from the Research Group project at Catfield Hall could you please send them to Alec Bull ('Hill Crest', Main Road, East Tuddenham, Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 3JJ) by mid-January, 2007. An occasional publication is being planned and all photographs will be considered for inclusion.



Book Review: *Words on Wildlife - Inspired by Nature*

David North's latest book is a small softback but what it lacks in stature it makes up in content. The 48 pages are filled with stunning images by leading Norfolk wildlife photographers and the inspired 'word pictures' taken from poems that David has penned. This combination transforms a story of everyday moments into magical observations of Norfolk's wildlife and wild places. These snapshots of our local countryside - crows tumbling overhead, skeins of geese 'ebbing and flowing' across our skies, summer fields stained red with poppies - are evocative images that come from direct observation and a passion for our 'wild' county, which will enrich all our lives. Who cannot identify with 'Old Hushwing'?

*A white owl flies on white wings
Through a white world
Falling snow, falling silence,
And at the still centre
A white owl flies on white wings*

This is a real Norfolk production and well worth the small space it would occupy on the bookshelf - not that it should reside there - it is a book for dipping into frequently.

Francis Farrow

Published by Birdseyeview Books, Villa Farm, Thurgarton, Norwich, NR11 7PD.
Tel: 01263 761450 www.birdseyeviewbooks.com

The book (ISBN 978-0-9547927-1-8) is a limited edition of 3,000 copies, of which, signed copies are available from the publisher at £4.95 + 50p for post and packing.

Norfolk and Suffolk Bryological Group Meetings 2006/7.

Beginners are always very welcome, the only equipment needed is a handlens (x10 or x20) and some paper packets for collecting specimens. Meetings begin at 10.30am (except for the 3rd March and the 19th December) and will only be cancelled if there is snow or hard frost.

Saturday 4th November 2006. Nunnery Lakes Reserve, Thetford, by permission of the BTO. Woodland, heath, fen, river banks. At TL 868 820 turn NE off the A134 into Nunn's Bridges Road. BTO visitors' car park is on R by flint-faced slab.

Sunday 19th November 2006. Pensthorpe Waterfowl Park, Fakenham. Habitats include mixed woodland, Alder carr and a section of the River Wensum SSSI. The well signposted entrance to the park is on the S side of the A1067 about a mile SE of Fakenham. Meet in car park.

Saturday 2nd December 2006. Sparham Pools, managed by NWT and the Wensum Valley Project. Flooded gravel pit, remnant heath and woodland. Turn S towards Lyng from A1067 at TG 077 191. Entrance on L after ¼m. If you cross the river bridge you have gone too far!

Sunday 17th December 2006. Syderstone Common, a NWT Reserve. Acidic heath but with alkaline springs and ponds in valley bottom. Turn N from B1454 at TF 836 311 towards Syderstone. Small car park on L in ¼m at fork in road by Syderstone ¼ sign. Share cars if possible.



Tuesday 19th December 2006, 7.30pm, N&NNS Meeting at the John Innes Centre, Norwich.
Presentation by the Bryological Group, with festive refreshments.

Saturday 6th January 2007, Smockmill Common, Saxlingham Thorpe, Shotesham Estate but public access. Woodland, grassland, river bank and river overflow. Meet at 'Inishmore', Greenways, Newton Flotman, TM 198 979, double-up to go to the site at TM 218 980.

Sunday 14th January 2007, Foulton Common SSSI, Foulton Latimer Estates. Acidic and calcareous grassland, fen and woodland. Meet at Foulton Village Hall. From Foulton Church at TL 764 989 go NE and turn R into Vicarage Road. Village Hall is on R just past playground on L. Leave some cars here and double up to go to the site entrance at TF 763 000.

Saturday 27th January 2007, Holkham NNR, National Trust. Dunes and pinewoods. Meet at Wells beach pay & display car park at TF 914 454.

Sunday 11th February 2007, East Walton Common SSSI and Walton Wood, West Acre Estate, by permission of Mr. H. Birkbeck. Chalky ridges between glacial depressions, fen, scrub and woodland. In East Walton turn W from B1153 towards East Winch & in 50m turn L into Common Lane by "Montessori School" sign. Turn L immediately over cattle grid by chapel/school on R and park on grass immediately on R at TF 739 166.

Saturday 24th February 2007, The Tollands Wood, Squirrel's Carr and Osier Carr, Blickling Estate, The National Trust. Mixed woodland, carr. Turn W from the Aylsham to Ingworth road at TG 191 290, park on track into wood on the R just before fork in road. Squirrel's Carr is just opposite The Tollands. For Osier Carr turn R from The Tollands gate, fork R and park in car park just opposite RH bend at TG 179 295.

Saturday 3rd March 2007, 11.00am, N&NNS meeting at Merton Church (TL 912 981) near Watton for Lichens. Leader Peter Lambley.

Sunday 11th March 2007, Heckingham Old Carr, Raveningham Hall Estate, by permission of Sir Nicholas Bacon. Wet carr, a very wet, difficult site. Meet in Raveningham Village Hall car park just S of the B1136 at TM 393 970, wind generator at back of hall. Derek Howlett has kindly agreed to meet us there again, take us to Heckingham Old Carr in TM 39 99 and lead us round. Leave some cars at the meeting point and double-up.

Saturday 24th March 2007, Thompson Water, Carr & Common SSSI, a NWT Reserve. Grassland, woodland, pingos and fen. Meet in reserve car park behind large lay-by on W side of A1075 at TL 940 965. Entrance to car park by "Great Eastern Pingo Trail" sign.

Sunday 8th April 2007. Forest Enterprise have asked for a survey of Cranberry Rough. Opinions from Group members please.

East Walton, Foulton and Thompson Commons are among the thirteen SSSI's of the Norfolk Valley Fens Special Area of Conservation.

Br. Bryol. Socy. Recorders:

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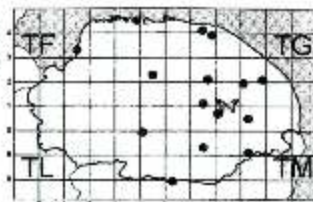
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Excursion

Reports

● 2006-07 Field
Meeting location
John Innes Centre
Indoor meetings



Blo' Norton & Betty's Fens

Saturday 19th August 2006



On a day mainly sunny (until the rain arrived at the end of our visit), we were met by Dr. Helen Smith of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project alongside the minor road that runs immediately north of Blo' Norton Fen. This was the latest of a number of recording visits to LOHP sites under the *aegis* of the Society's Research Committee, and this one concentrated on Betty's Fen, which forms the western third of the Blo' Norton Fen SSSI. The party was small in number but rich in expertise, with Martin and Julie Collier and Pip Collyer recording beetles and spiders respectively to add to the botanical and more general lists compiled by the other members present.

The fen conservation programme at Blo' Norton includes the cutting of different stands on a four-year rotation, so that the resulting areas of vegetation at different stages support a variety of plants and dependent wildlife. We first visited a recently-cut section at the eastern end, which made small, low-growing plant species such as bog pimpernel, fen bedstraw and marsh pennywort relatively easy to spot. Black bog-rush grows here too. There were also the lower stalks and leaves of great burnet at one of its two known Norfolk locations, (both in the Waveney/Little Ouse Valley), but we were able to see its dark red-purple burr-like flowers in their full glory by peering into the tall vegetation of the adjacent block of unmown fen, which also contained some purple loosestrife and parsley water-dropwort. A green sandpiper was heard and, as for butterflies, green-veined and large whites and a speckled wood were seen.

There is a policy of open access to Blo' Norton Fen and it is indeed much more easily penetrated these days than formerly. A path now runs along the north bank of the infant Little Ouse, linked since April to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Thelnetham Fen Reserve south of the river by a substantial new footbridge, flown in and lowered into place by helicopter. We looked unsuccessfully for predicted banded demoiselles as we walked by the river, but their absence was compensated by common- and, especially, ruddy-darters. As Pat Negal knelt to photograph one of the latter at ground level, a publicity-seeking and shameless mating pair settled obligingly on his hat to give Janet an even better



shot! Wooden benches in a sympathetically plain rustic style have been provided here and there along the path, and we had lunch sitting on one of them while watching a hovering kestrel across the river. Nest boxes in fringing woodland have apparently been fully occupied this season, with kestrels among the tenants.

Betty's Fen itself was purchased by the LOHP in 2003 and came to them as derelict, dried-out and mainly woodland. Since then scrub has been cleared and a shallow but extensive turf pond was excavated in 2005. The spoil was used to create a raised path stabilised with plastic mesh, running across the fen from the fringing woodland. Although the scrape was largely empty of water at the time of our visit thanks to a July of record high temperatures and rainfall dearth, a remarkable range of plants has established or regenerated on the site. Some are weeds colonising the temporarily bare drier areas such as the raised pathway, but also in evidence in mid-August were skullcap, gipsywort, brookweed, marsh stitchwort, hemp agrimony, lesser spearwort, marsh yellow-cress, water speedwell, pale persicaria, great fen-sedge, purple loosestrife, common hemp-nettle, water mint and wetted thistle. Helen told us that stoneworts and pondweeds had been seen in the scrape when it contained water earlier in the season. Also seen was a brown hawk, common blue and small white butterflies, and a silver-y Moth, but easily the most enthusiastically received sighting of the day was a magnificent (and huge) elephant hawk-moth caterpillar, which seemed reluctant to remain on its food-plant, the great hairy willowherb, but instead endeavoured to descend to the ground *via* the blade of a rush, possibly to pupate.

Our thanks to Helen for facilitating the visit and ensuring an enjoyable day, and to the trustees and volunteers of the LOHP for their really heartening conservation work. Our recording project at Betty's Fen and other LOHP sites nearby is ongoing, so any member interested in joining future visits (not scheduled on the Society's programme of field meetings) should contact Alec Bull or Janet Negal of Research Committee. Records from visits by individual members would also be gratefully welcomed. Helen Smith herself can be contacted *via* the excellent website www.lohp.org.uk

Stephen Martin

Wild Flowers Revealed no. 15: Felbrigg Park

Sunday 23rd July 2006

Leader: Dr. Bob Leaney

A hot day was forecast for our look at the plants on the Felbrigg estate, so the shade of a copper beech in the car park was welcome as Bob gave the introductory talk and showed us some useful books for identifying different plant families.

We were fortunate to have the company of Mary Ghulam, a long-term country-side volunteer on the Felbrigg estate who is familiar with all parts of the park and



the best areas to visit.

We started off by looking at various grasses in the field in front of the hall, but the recent hot, dry weather had left them dried and withered so we moved on to more productive areas.

We passed a fallen beech tree which had been left where it fell. Mary explained that the estate tries to leave dead wood where possible, especially beech, for saprozoic invertebrates, which has resulted in nationally scarce and Red Data Book species being recorded on the estate.

At the first hedge line we came to, Mary pointed out a large sessile oak, *Quercus petraea*. This particular tree is thought to be a pure sessile oak and has been dated by an expert from Kew to about 1507, and is the oldest tree on the estate. It is thought to be a former boundary tree.

Further along the path we found lesser hawkbit, *Leontodon saxatilis*, which gave Bob the opportunity to explain the differences between similar nearby yellow composites such as cat's-ear, *Hypochaeris radicata* and autumn hawkbit, *Leontodon autumnalis*. Growing close by was harebell, *Campanula rotundifolia*, which we found in several places during the day, but never in any quantity, also red bartsia, *Odontites vernus*.

Moving on towards the damper area, several different species were soon noted such as marsh speedwell, *Veronica scutellata*, marsh yellow-cress, *Rorippa palustris*, lesser water parsnip, *Berula erecta*, greater bird's-foot trefoil, *Lotus pedunculatus*, ragged robin, *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and water horsetail, *Equisetum fluviatile*. We passed over a drier meadow which contained several plants of pignut, *Conopodium majus*. Pigs were once trained to unearth pignuts for human consumption, just as pigs in France are still trained to find truffles. Moving on to another damp area we found several plants of common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, also fen bedstraw, *Galium uliginosum* and marsh bedstraw, *Galium palustre* growing close together, allowing us to study the different identification characteristics between the two. We were fortunate to have the company of Robert Maidstone in our party, who found the galled terminal leaves of marsh bedstraw caused by the psyllid *Trioza galli* and a little further on the leaves of an alder, *Alnus glutinosa* showed signs of the mite gall, *Eriophyes inangulis*.

Entering the wood by the lake gave us some relief from the blazing sun. A horse chestnut in there had many leaves containing the larvae of the leaf miner moth *Cameraria ohridella*. Since first being discovered in Wimbledon in 2002 it has spread as far north as the north Norfolk coast and to the south coast at Bournemouth.

We had our lunch sitting on the grass at the far end of the lake and while the rest of us were putting the remains of our lunch away, Bob was dragging the lake for pondweeds, and fished out curled pondweed, *Potamogeton crispus*, and fennel



tench, an unusual species of rudd and several pike. Although we didn't see any, the small red-eyed damselfly, *Erythromma viridulum* which first appeared in Britain in 2000 has previously been seen ovipositing on the lake.

On the banks of the stream that runs out of the lake, Bob Ellis found bristle club-rush *Isolepis setacea* and close by in the water, ivy-leaved crowfoot, *Ranunculus hederaceus* while on the other bank Bob Leaney was explaining how to identify the clustered dock *Rumex conglomeratus* from similar dockweeds. Our attention was diverted at this point when Tim Lancaster found water whorl-grass, *Catabrosa aquatica* a little further downstream. Formerly more widespread, water whorl-grass has suffered from land-drainage systems and the attentions of cattle which are fond of its succulent foliage and sweet stems. Moving back up the stream, we noted branched bur-reed, *Sparganium erectum* growing in the water, and on the bank, common fleabane, *Pulicaria dysenterica* and nodding bur-marigold, *Bidens cernua* var. *radiata*. This is the scarcer form with large ray florets. It is particularly characteristic of areas that are dry in the summer but under water for most of the winter. In a dyke leading into the lake we found water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica* while on slightly higher ground Tim found trailing St Johns-wort, *Hypericum humifusum*.

There were several blue damselflies in this area, but none would settle long enough to allow identification. However, Robert Maidstone turned out to be an adept damselfly catcher, allowing identification of common blue damselfly, *Enallagma cyathigerum*. We also saw black-tailed skimmer, *Orthetrum cancellatum* by the lake. Moving away from the lake, we crossed a parched field which had several plants of musk thistle, *Carduus nutans* growing on it, seemingly unaffected by the hot dry spell. There were also several plants of creeping thistle, *Cirsium arvense* on this field, hardly noteworthy, but Robert pointed out the caterpillars of the painted lady butterfly feeding within a 'refuge' on them. The eggs are laid singly on the upper surface of the leaf and the chrysalis is formed in the final refuge of leaf and silk. Other butterflies seen were: common skipper, gatekeeper, meadow brown, ringlet, small copper, small white and several silver-y moths.

We had planned to have a look around the churchyard before heading back, but the general consensus was that it would probably be as dried up as the fields, so we headed back to the car park and the pleasant shade of the copper beech to discuss the days finds before heading home. My final record for the day came as I closed the boot of the car and a common footman moth flew out from under the car.

Thanks to Mary Ghullam for arranging the meeting at Felbrigg and also to Bob Leaney for not only leading the meeting, but also for sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with us.

Bill Mitchell



Norfolk memories of Francis Rose 1921 – 2006

Francis Rose was the leading field botanist of his generation, a remarkable man in many ways. My first introduction to Francis was in about 1971, when just beginning in my interest in lichens, I was encouraged by David Hawksworth of the Commonwealth Mycological Institute at Kew to write to him to ask about the Breckland lichens. A few days later I got a wonderful letter back full of information about Lakenheath and other known sites, together with annotated maps and suggestions of places which might be worth visiting. On receipt of this I just had to get out there and look for myself. This was the start of a friendship which changed my life, like so many other botanists. Shortly afterwards one morning I met him in person in a pub at Beccles where he was staying. Characteristically he was still eating his breakfast as he was slow starting but would go on late. (Gill my wife soon learned to prepare meals which could be heated up!) We visited Sotterly Park in north Suffolk that day which was to prove one of the best lichen sites in East Anglia. By the end I was overwhelmed by a great number of new species to me and I was hooked on lichens.

Francis came to lichens quite late in life and his earlier interests were orchids and fens and bogs. It was this interest for which he was awarded his Ph.D. and which first drew him to East Anglia. Soon after the war he travelled up from Kent and began exploring the valley fens, and Broadland swamps of Norfolk and north Suffolk. He called in at the Castle Museum one day and met with Ted Ellis who told him about sites like Buxton heath and they continued to keep in touch. He was also very friendly with George Rocke who lived near Acle and who he considered a very good bryologist. Until the early 1970s he would often stay with Eric Swann and since then with me.

An excursion was always an adventure with him and he had an uncanny way of finding new species and rediscovering old records. This he did through careful detective work. The many records in Petch & Swann's flora attributed to Francis testify to this. I remember him in 1971 showing me marsh club moss at Bryants Heath, the last time it was seen in Norfolk. On one day following up old records of Burrell, he and I fought through very tall vegetation and found Southrepps Common with its oasis of wonderful fen vegetation in the middle. It has since become an SSSI, largely on the basis of Francis's recommendation, like so many others. His detective work resulted in the refinding of Iceland moss, *Cetraria islandica* at North Wootton in 1968 previously last seen about 100 years previously. Although an academic he was nevertheless extremely good at translating his knowledge into practical protection for sites and habitats.

He had an interest in orchids and his knowledge of European sites gave him an insight into their ecology which few British Botanists had at that time. Hence his appreciation that Fen Orchid grows where vegetation has closed over open water. He was interested in mosses and liverworts and in Norfolk particularly the taxonomy of *Leiocolea rutheana*, a rare liverwort which occurred at Holt Lowes, Buxton Heath and Scarning. He was convinced there were two taxa involved. Above all though he had an enquiring mind and was not afraid to speculate. He thought the valley fens may have been kept open by grazing animals and as such his ideas preceded those of Franz Vera.

He was delightful company in the field, at the pub or at our home at the end of the day, where over a glass or two of wine we would travel the country in spirit talking of interesting sites and places. He was knowledgeable about architecture and was very interested in East Anglian churches and had a particular fondness for Norwich as a city and Norfolk as a county. He was a family man proud of his four children and was ably supported by Pauline Wendy his wife. I will miss him.

Peter Lambley



PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP

I have booked the extra night for January 22nd 2007, although I have had no specific suggestions for the evening. However, it might be good to have the opportunity to talk about any problems, and discuss what we can find out about Adobe photoshop. I am sure that we shall all learn from one another, which we don't always have the opportunity when an outside speaker is present. It is not too late to make a suggestion which would be in keeping with the above software.

Brian Macfarlane

Want to know more about crayfish?

For a booklet '*Identifying Native and Alien Crayfish Species in Europe*' plus Wall Chart / leaflets etc please contact:

craynet@univ-poitiers.fr (Website: <http://labo.univ-poitiers.fr/craynet>)

If you have difficulty contact: Dr. Dick Hamond - 01263 740247
or by email: rhamond@0800service.com

Free

BBC wildlife magazines 1996-2000

to anyone interested.

My house is bulging at the seams and some things have to go. If you would like the magazines, ring Dorothy on 01986 894277 (answerphone available). You must be able to collect them from a NNNNS meeting, or a mutually agreeable location in south or central Norwich.

The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*'
will be FEBRUARY 2007.

Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by
January 7th, 2007
to the following address:

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Please send all photographic material to:

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Norfolk, NR22 2RP

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