



The Norfolk Natterjack

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*... Researching
Norfolk's Wildlife*

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The quarterly bulletin of
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Norfolk & Norwich
Naturalists' Society



Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Vice Presidents: Dr R E Baker, A L Bull, R C Hancy, P W Lambley, D I Richmond

Chairman: C Chapman, 14 Travers Court, Runton House Close, West Runton, Cromer, NR27 9RA.
Tel: 01263 837038 Mobile: 07833463034 Email: carl@wildlifetoursandeducation.co.uk

Secretary: J Emerson, 108 Sleaford Green, Norwich, NR3 3JT.
Tel: 01603 961939 Email: jamesemerson2007@gmail.com

Assistant Secretary: F J L Farrow (address below - Editor, *The Norfolk Natterjack*)

Treasurer: J Froud, Westward Ho, 4 Kingsley Road, Norwich, NR1 3RB.
Tel: 01603 440444 Email: membership@nnns.org.uk

Assistant Treasurer: T Hodge, Belvedere Cottage, Horsey Corner, Horsey, Norfolk, NR9 4EH.
Tel 01493 393562 Email: tim.hodge@btinternet.com

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Tel 07963 733601 Email danielle.engelbrecht93@gmail.com

Secretary: *Position vacant*

Publications Committee: Dr A R Leech, 3 Eccles Road, Holt, NR25 6HJ.

Tel: 01263 712282 Email: tonyleech3@gmail.com

Secretary: Dr J Parmenter, Alpha House, 37 Station Road, Reedham, Norfolk NR13 3TB.

Tel: 07710252468 Email: jo.parmenter@tlp.uk.com

Editor, Transactions: Dr N W Owens, 22 Springfield Close, Weybourne, Holt, NR25 7TB.

Tel: 01263 588410 Email: owensnw7@gmail.com

Editors, Bird & Mammal Report:

Birds: A M Stoddart, 7 Elsdon Close, Holt, NR25 6JW.

Mammals: R Moores, Horseshoe Barn, Halvergate, Norfolk, NR13 3AJ.

Email: norfolk-mammalrecorder@outlook.com

Research Committee: Dr A G Irwin, 47 The Avenues, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 3PH.

Tel: 01603 453524 Email: dr.tony.irwin@gmail.com

Secretary: Dr N M Collins, Weavers Way Barn, The Hill, Acle, Norwich, NR13 3DW

Tel: 01493 750472 Email: collinsmark@gmail.com

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The Newsletter, *The Norfolk Natterjack*, is published quarterly.

Editor: F J L Farrow, Heathlands, 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, NR26 8QD.

Email: francis.farrow@btinternet.com

Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society Recorders

<u>Mammals</u>	General and Bats	Richard Moores, Horseshoe Barn, Halvergate, Norfolk, NR13 3AJ. E-mail: norfolk-mammalrecorder@outlook.com
	Badgers	John Crouch, 2 Chestnut Cottages, Guton Hall Lane, Brandiston, NR10 4PH. E-mail: norfolkbadgers@yahoo.co.uk
	Cetaceans	Carl Chapman, Flat 5 Travers Court, Runtun House Close, West Runton, Cromer, NR27 9RA. E-mail: Carl@wildlifetoursandeducation.co.uk
<u>Birds</u>		Neil Lawton, 27 Swann Grove, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6DP. E-mail: norfolkbirdrecs@gmail.com
<u>Reptiles & Amphibians</u>		John Buckley, 77, Janson Rd, Shirillery, Southampton, SO15 5GL. E-mail: john.buckley@arc-trust.org
<u>Fish</u>	Freshwater	Charlie Halliday, 8 Swaffham Road, Narborough, King's Lynn, PE32 1TB E-mail: cjwhalliday@gmail.com
	Marine	Rob Spray & Dawn Watson, 1 Town Houses, Yoxford Rd, Sibton, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 2LX. E-mail: hello@1townhouses.co.uk
<u>Molluscs (Land)</u>		Jake Stone, 2 School Cottages, Walnut Hill, Surlingham, NR14 7DQ. E-mail: norfolk-molluscs@outlook.com
<u>Insects</u>	Butterflies	Andy Brazil, 19 Beeching Road, Norwich, NR1 2LE E-mail: recorder@norfolk-butterflies.co.uk
	Moths	Jim Wheeler, Iveygreen, Town St., Upwell, Wisbech, PE14 9AD. E-mail: jim@norfolk-moths.co.uk
	Beetles	Martin Collier, The Mill House, Worthing, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5HP. E-mail: norfolk-beetles@gmail.com
	Bumblebees	Dr. Nick Owens, 22 Springfield Close, Weybourne, Holt, NR25 7TB. E-mail: owensnw7@gmail.com
	Grasshoppers & Crickets	David Richmond, 42, Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norwich, NR10 4LS E-mail: richmond.42rr@btinternet.com.
	Lacewings, Sponge & Waxflies, Antlions, Alderflies, Snakeflies, Scorpionflies & Snow flea	Paul Cobb, 82 Mauchline Road, Catrine, Mauchline, Ayrshire, KA5 6QJ. E-mail: paulcobb@outlook.com
	Aphids	Dr J I T Thacker, 38, Gladstone Street, Norwich, NR2 3BH. E-mail: jit@calopteryx.com
	Dragonflies	Dr Pam Taylor, Decoy Farm, Decoy Rd, Potter Heigham, Gt. Yarmouth, NR29 5LX. E-mail: pamtaylor@british-dragonflies.org.uk
	Parasitic Hymenoptera	Graham Hopkins, 15, Matlock Road, Norwich, NR1 1TL E-mail: hopkinsecology@yahoo.co.uk
	Sawflies	Andy Musgrove, Tendaba, The Street, Shotesham, NR15 1YG. E-mail: andy@bubo.org
	Solitary Bees & Wasps	Tim Strudwick, 16, Beech Way, Brundall, Norwich, NR13 5ND. E-mail: timstrud@tiscali.co.uk
	Ants	Anna Jordan, Plough Cottage, Rode Lane, Carleton Rode, Norwich, NR16 1RQ. E-mail: norfolkants@yahoo.com
	Hoverflies	Tim Hodge, Belvedere Cottage, Horsey Corner, Horsey, Norfolk, NR9 4EH E-mail: tim.hodge@btinternet.com
	Terrestrial Heteroptera	(Land bugs, exclud. Aphids, leaf-hoppers etc.) Rob Coleman, Springfields, North Walsham Road, Felmingham, North Walsham, NR28 0JU. E-mail: mail@rob-coleman.co.uk
	Froghoppers / Treehoppers and Leafhoppers	Colin Lucas, 49 Mill Road, Beccles, NR34 9UT E-mail: colinh@hotmail.co.uk
	Other Insects	Dr Tony Irwin, 47 The Avenues, Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 3PH. E-mail: dr.tony.irwin@gmail.com
<u>Spiders</u>		Phillip Collyer, 9 Lowther Road, Norwich, NR4 6QN E-mail: pipcollyer@yahoo.co.uk
<u>Harvestmen</u>		Peter Nicholson, Greystone House, Castle Howard Rd, Malton, North Yorkshire YO17 7AT. E-mail: petejnich@outlook.com
<u>Woodlice & Pseudoscorpions</u>		David Hunter, The Saltings, Holt Road, Gresham, Norfolk NR11 8AD
<u>Centipedes & Millipedes</u>		E-mail: david.hunter37@outlook.com

<u>Freshwater Invertebrates</u>	Dr Dan Hoare, Wheatfen Broad, Covey Lane, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7AL. E-mail: daniel.j.hoare@gmail.com
<u>Marine Invertebrates</u> (incl. Molluscs)	Rob Spray & Dawn Watson, 1 Town Houses, Yoxford
<u>Marine Algae</u> (Seaweeds)	Road, Sibton, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 2LX. E-mail: hello@1townhouses.co.uk
<u>Galls</u>	Anne Hickley, 23 Biggin Hill Way, Watton IP25 6NZ. E-mail: anne@penguinofficeservices.co.uk
<u>Vascular Plants</u> East Norfolk	Bob Ellis, 11, Havelock Rd., Norwich, NR2 3HQ , E-mail: bob@elymus.net
West Norfolk	Richard Carter/, 67 Doddshill, Dersingham, King's Lynn, PE30 4DJ E-mail: rcarter@rsk.co.uk
<u>Mosses & Liverworts</u> East Norfolk	- Mary Ghullam, 5, Beech Drive, Cromer Road, North Walsham, NR28 0BZ. E-mail: mylia@btinternet.com
West Norfolk	- Julia Masson, Kestrels, Docking Road, Great Bircham, King's Lynn, PE31 6QP E-mail: jemnaturenet@gmail.com
<u>Lichens</u>	Peter Lambley, The Cottage, Elsing Rd., Lyng, Norwich, NR9 5RR. E-mail: plambley@aol.com
<u>Fungi</u>	Dr Tony Leech, 3, Eccles Road, Holt, NR25 6HJ. E-mail: tonyleech3@gmail.com
<u>Other Taxa</u>	Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service, Community and Environmental Services, 6 th Floor, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DH. E-mail: nbis@norfolk.gov.uk
<u>Referee:</u>	
<u>Charophytes</u>	Alex Prendergast, Bramble Cottage, Low Road, Tasburgh, NR15 1AR. E-mail: mushroom_alex@hotmail.com

Special interest groups

NNNS Photographic Group:

C H Watson, 28 Spencer Close, Lingwood, Norwich, NR13 4BB.
Tel: 01603 714582 E-mail: charles.waston13@btopenworld.com

For Microscopy enquiries:

S M Livermore, 70 Naseby Way, Dussingdale, Norwich, NR7 0TP.
Tel: 01603 431849 E-mail: stephenlivermore@outlook.com

Other *Special Interest Groups*, although not part of the NNNS, have similar aims to that of the Society:

Norfolk Amphibian & Reptile Group: P Parker, White Row Cottages, Leziate Drove,
Pott Row, King's Lynn, PE32 1DB. Tel: 01553 630842
E-mail: admin@philipparkerassociates.co.uk

Norfolk Barbastelles Study Group: Dr. C Packman

E-mail enquiries@norfolkbarbastellestudygroup.org / lotty@wildwingsecology.co.uk

Norwich Bat Group: L Bilstone E-mail: norwichbatgroup@gmail.com

Norfolk Flora Group: West Norfolk: S Harmer / R Carter, 67 Doddshill, Dersingham PE31 6LP.

Tel: 07711870553 / 07711870554 E-mail: sharmer@rsk.co.uk / rcarter@rsk.co.uk

East Norfolk: R W Ellis, 11 Havelock Road, Norwich, NR2 3HQ. Tel: 01603 662260

Email: bob@elymus.net

(www.norfolkflora.org.uk)

Norfolk Freshwater Study Group: Dr D Hoare, Wheatfen Broad, Covey Lane, Surlingham, Norwich NR14 7AL.

Tel: 01508 538157 E-mail: daniel.j.hoare@gmail.com

Norfolk Fungus Study Group: Dr A R Leech, 3 Eccles Road, Holt, NR25 6HJ.

Tel: 01263 712282 E-mail: tonyleech3@gmail.com

Norfolk Lichen Group: P W Lambley, The Cottage, Elsing Road, Lyng, Norwich, NR9 5RR.

Tel: 01603 872574 E-mail: Plambley@aol.com

Norfolk Moth Survey: K G Saul, Albion, Main Road, Filby, Gt Yarmouth, NR29 3HS.

E-mail: kensaul@stone-angel.co.uk

Norfolk Spider Group: P Collyer, 9 Lowther Road, Norwich, NR4 6QN.

Tel: 01603 259703 E-mail: pipcollyer@yahoo.co.uk

Norfolk & Suffolk Bryological Group: East Norfolk: Mrs M P Ghullam, 5 Beech Drive, Cromer Road,
North Walsham, NR28 0BZ. Tel: 01692 402013 E-mail: mylia@btinternet.com

West Norfolk: J E Masson, Kestrels, Docking Road, Great Bircham, King's Lynn, PE31 6QP
E-mail: jemnaturenet@gmail.com

Toad-in-the-hole....

In the last issue I asked members to send in their 'Lockdown' observations and you have responded brilliantly. Norfolk's biodiversity has benefited from your observations with bugs, beetles, bees, wasps and a dung fungus! My thanks to all contributors and look forward to what summer 2020 has to offer. **FF**

Please note that the Annual General Meeting of the Society has moved to Tuesday 23rd March (1930hrs, St. Andrews Hall, Eaton). We are delighted to welcome all members to the meeting; and look forward to the proceeding illustrated talk by Domonic Buscall and Rod Pilcher titled '*Wild Ken Hill - a Norfolk Ecological Restoration Project*'. For possible programme/event changes such as cancellations due to any on-going Covid-19 situations please check the website (www.nnns.org.uk) for updates before attending meetings.

Coprinopsis candidolanata

Yvonne Mynett

During the recent “lockdown” all our usual Norfolk Fungus Study Group forays were canceled and we were restricted to local walks only. This, and the extremely dry weather, meant that fungi finds this spring have been rather thin on the ground.

Fortunately we live in a village surrounded by footpaths and on one of our daily walks to Martham Broad I resorted to collecting deer dung to incubate for coprophilous fungi.

After a couple of weeks I was pleased to find a number of *Coprinus*, or inkcap, type of fungi appear on the dung. These are often tiny and impossible to identify in the field but with the aid of my microscope and a good key, I determined the specimens as *Coprinopsis candidolanata*. Unfortunately this has no common name.

This species was first identified in Britain by Derek Schafer in 2013 from a collection from North East Yorkshire. Since then, no other specimens have been found although, interestingly, with the advent of DNA techniques a specimen from the fungorum at Kew from 1998, recorded under another name, was found to be this species. It appears that *C. candidolanata* has probably been present in Britain for a number of years yet rarely recorded. Our collection is the third British record and the first for Norfolk.



Image: *Yvonne Mynett*

Coprinopsis candidolanata.

Ostracods

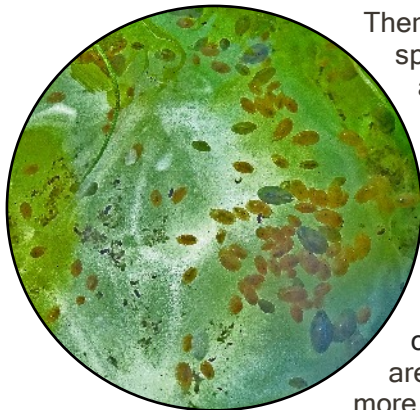
Nick Elsey and Rubyna Sheikh

To create a more diverse habitat in our garden which is set within a woodland glade, we use small plastic water-tight tubs from the garden centre to grow bog and aquatic plants. This Spring, we checked these small 'ponds' for any signs of amphibian activity as Common Newts - *Lissotriton vulgaris* - were regularly found sheltering under bricks and plant tubs during the winter months.

In one tub, which is half-filled with nutrient-poor soil and topped up with rainwater, grows a Lesser Water-plantain - *Alisma lanceolate*. Ramshorn snails - *Planorbarius corneus* - have been introduced to help control the blanket weed and other floating algae which could lead to the deoxygenation of the water and have a detrimental effect on the pond life. Slices of cucumber are added as a food supplement to all the tubs which have colonies of breeding water snails.

In late April 2020, one newt was seen in this tub along with what we initially believed to be masses of water fleas. Many of these minute free-swimming creatures appeared to be feeding on a cucumber slice. However, when we closely examined some photographs, it became apparent that these orange specks were certainly not what we had previously found at several locations whilst pond-dipping.

After placing a few of them into a petri dish and then under a microscope we remembered that we had seen similar images posted onto a specialist Facebook page. We identified our find as *Ostracods* which are typically 1mm in size and are in the class of *Crustacea*.



Ostracods

Image: Nick Elsey

There are 13,000 species in existence, so our species identification research stopped abruptly at this point! Apparently, they are exceedingly common in almost any freshwater pond containing green water-plants. *Ostracods* are generally characterized as omnivorous scavengers. They eat tiny organisms like algae, diatoms, bacteria, moulds and pieces of organic detritus that are present in the water or on vegetation. Viewed from the side they are bean-shaped while from above they look more like an egg. The shell is often brown with blackish markings, or pale yellow with green markings, or sometimes almost peacock-blue. These colours are thought to match their surroundings as a form of

camouflage. Most species are regarded as being highly active, with some swimming by using their antennae while others walk.

We are assuming that the newt is laying its eggs in this tub as it will be filled with fresh bite-sized meals for its developing eft during the summer months.

A Norfolk First.

Mark Clements

Beeston Common is my local patch which I've been watching for nearly 24 years. My main interest are birds but over the years working closely with Francis Farrow, the Hon. Warden there, has got me interested in all wildlife and I always like to see anything new that's turned up.

On the 6th May 2020 I met Francis, both of us on our daily 'Lockdown' walk, we talked for a while and he told me he had found some Elm Zigzag larvae and directed me to the area they were in so I went to look and found them after a bit of searching. As the area they were in was the same general area we found Brassica Shieldbug last year I started looking around some of the Hoary Cress plants and noticed a red and black coloured bug sitting on top, I managed to quickly get a couple of photographs of it before it dropped into the undergrowth. Looking at my photo I didn't recognise it as something I'd seen before on the Common.

When I got home I started going through my insect books and identified it as an Ornate Shieldbug (*Eurydema ornata*) but started to doubt my identification as it said it was mainly on the south coast. I did a quick search on the web and found records of it but all south of London. I sent the photo and record to Francis knowing it was probably a new site record for the Common and just

making sure he agreed with my identification, which he did and thought it could be new for Norfolk too, adding that Rob Coleman (Norfolk Heteroptera Recorder) would be interested in it too. I emailed him and Rob quickly answered to confirm it was a new species for Norfolk which just made my year really.



Ornate Shieldbug

Image: *Mark Clements*

Possibly a new East Norfolk record

Francis Farrow

As I was walking through a wooded area on Beeston Common on May 30th 2020 I spotted a bug on a Nettle leaf. I took a quick close-up pic before it disappeared and later I found I couldn't match it. Thinking it might just be a variation of a common bug I sent it to Rob Colman (Norfolk Heteroptera Recorder) for an ID. Rob emailed back saying: "It is *Closterotomus trivialis* - a relatively recent UK arrival - although apparently all over the place in the SE now. There were records of this bug from west Norfolk (Hunstanton 2016) but not sure if it had been recorded from east Norfolk before, although possibly Norwich."



Closterotomus trivialis - early adult and more mature adult

Images: Francis Farrow

On June 9th I found about a dozen of the bugs on a patch of Nettles in my garden at Sheringham. I noticed the more mature bugs had become darker and the green areas had turned red-brown.

Animal, vegetable or mineral?

Nick Elsey



Eared Leafhopper Image: Nick Elsey

In late April, during my daily search for wildlife in the garden, I found the nymph of the Eared Leafhopper, *Ledra aurita*. I was not sure of its composition until it was placed under a microscope and movement was observed.

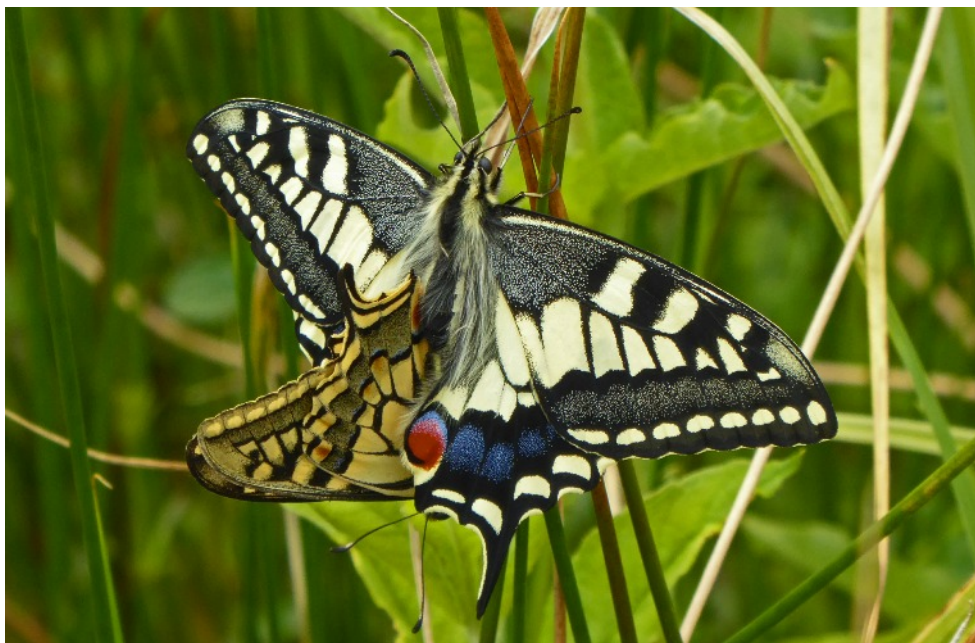
A few days later, while reading Alec Bull's article in the May 2020 edition of *Natterjack*, I was reminded to send a record of my unusual find to the County Recorder.

Is it a Bird, Is it a Plane?

Kevin Radley

This unadulterated (Photoshop etcetera - I wouldn't know how to anyway) digital image, of what I initially thought to be some abominable freak of nature, was taken as I carried out surveys at Wheatfen (Ted Ellis Trust). However, closer inspection revealed this *lusus naturae* to be nothing more - or indeed, nothing less - than a mating pair of Swallowtail Butterflies. The female, with wings flared wide open, successfully 'warning' me of their proximity as I unwittingly approached their secret place in the reedbed. Photo taken, I left them in peace to their *affaire de coeur*.

Incidentally, as I carefully passed by the same spot an hour or so later, they were still to be found 'in cop'.



Another Large Tortoiseshell

Karin & Steve Hale

We were very lucky that on 18th May 2020 we had another Large Tortoiseshell turn up in our garden at High Kelling during 'Lockdown'. Our previous encounter was earlier this year on 7th April (see 'Natterjack' no 149). There have been a number of reports of the butterfly in the County this year.

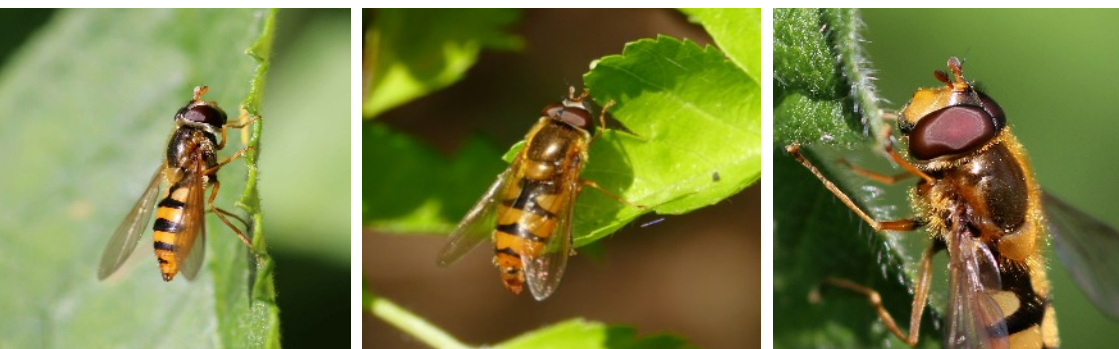
A new resident hoverfly species?

David White

In April 2020, Anne Crotty posted photos of an *Epistrophe* hoverfly on the Hoverfly recording page on Facebook, which she considered was an *E. melanostoma*. The identity was confirmed by the national recorder. *Epistrophe melanostoma* was first recorded in Britain in 1986 and has turned up relatively widely in southern England since, but had never previously been recorded in Norfolk.

Looking at Anne's photo, I immediately noticed a great similarity with a female *Epistrophe* I had photographed in Caistor St Edmund almost a year earlier in May 2019. I re-posted my image and had confirmation that this too was an *E. melanostoma*. Resembling the commoner *E. nitidicollis*, it lacks the black hairs on the top of the scutellum and has narrower black bands on the tergites which become progressively narrower towards the tip of the abdomen. Just a few days after the acceptance of the 'armchair' addition to my hoverfly list, I came across another *Epistrophe* that looked decidedly orange and clearly had orange antennae. On examination of my photos, it seemed that it too was an *E. melanostoma*, but this time a male. Subsequently I photographed a further female at Danby Woods.

E. melanostoma is thought to be migratory with individuals arriving in the UK from the near Continent. However, this little cluster of records in a small area immediately south of Norwich gives a tantalising hint of a possible resident population. The larva are presumed to be aphidophagous like other members of the genus. Adults fly from April to June and are reported to be attracted to the flowers of umbellifers, although there are seemingly no strong habitat preferences.



Left to right: *Epistrophe melanostoma* female (Caistor St Edmund, 12/05/2019; David White); male (Whitlingham Marsh, 17/04/2020, Anne Crotty, male (Caistor St Edmunds; 03/05/2020; David White)

Paper wasps in Norfolk

Tim Strudwick

The paper wasps, or Polistinae, are one of the three sub-families of the hymenopteran family Vespidae, represented in Europe by several *Polistes* species. At least three species have been recorded in Britain, with most records considered accidental human imports from mainland Europe. For more than a decade there has been a small established population of the most frequently recorded species, *P. dominula*, at Richmond-upon-Thames.

In 2017, I observed several female *Polistes* wasps at my Brundall allotment on multiple dates between July and October. I collected one and confirmed that it was a female *P. dominula* and a new wasp species for Norfolk. In 2018, despite much searching, I found none, and I concluded that an overwintering female had arrived and established a nest, but no progeny survived the following winter. However, in July and August 2019 I saw females again and a few males, and in October an allotment neighbour discovered the nest inside her garden incinerator. Then in May 2020 I saw a *Polistes* wasp briefly in my garden, around 1.5 km from the allotments, on two dates. The occurrence of *Polistes dominula* over four years implies successful nesting and overwintering and a tenuously established population in the area. This note is to prompt readers to look out for the wasps, and their distinctive nests, particularly around Norwich and the villages to the east.



Polistes dominula female and male, Brundall, September 2019

Images: *Tim Strudwick*

Both male and female wasps are large, around 17-23mm long, more elongate than vespid wasps and with a different pattern of yellow markings. They have a distinctive “jizz” in flight with their long hind legs dangling downwards. Males can be distinguished from females by the more extensively yellow face, curled tips to the antennae and partly green eyes. The wasps are best looked for from July to September on fennel flowers, which seems to be a favourite nectar source, and close to human habitation. *Polistes nimpha* and *P. gallicus*

have also been identified in the UK so a selection of photos from multiple angles, or a captured specimen, will be helpful in confirming identity of any *Polistes*.

P. dominula is a social wasp and the females make a nest of chewed wood in a wide variety of situations including on vegetation, buildings, fences and other man-made structures. In the UK nests are generally in a sheltered cavity of some kind. The nest is typically 8-12 cm in diameter with no more than 300 cells and could be mistaken from an incomplete nest of a vespid wasp but differs in that the honeycomb is always constructed in a single layer and there is no outer enveloping “paper” sheet.



Paper wasps are not normally aggressive and not considered a threat to other wildlife and if they do become established should be welcomed alongside other natural colonists.

If you suspect you have seen *Polistes* or its nest, I would be grateful if you could contact me by email at timstrud@tiscali.co.uk.

Underside of *Polistes dominula* nest, Brundall, October 2019 Image: *Tim Strudwick*

Bryony Mining Bee, *Andrena florea* – New to Norfolk

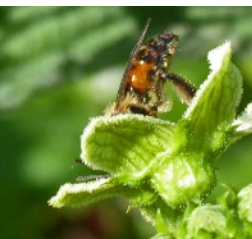
Jeremy & Vanna Bartlett

On Thursday 28th May 2020 we cycled out from our home in Norwich to Boudicca's Way, near Arminghall, to look at insects. It was our second visit to the site - we first visited three days before, looking for and finding *Andrena proxima* (Broad-faced Mining Bee), which Tim Strudwick had rediscovered there in June 2018 (Strudwick 2019) and seen a few days earlier.

Mike Hoit, another naturalist, was already there, looking for insects. As we stood on either side of a strip of Hogweed and Nettles along the field edge, we all noticed a bee visiting flowers on the White Bryony that was twining through the taller herbage. The bee was about the size of a Honeybee, with a shiny black abdomen with red on the sides of the first two segments. *Andrena bimaculata* (Large Gorse Mining Bee) and *Andrena trimmerana* (Trimmer's Mining Bee) females can be extensively marked with red, but our bee didn't look right for this.

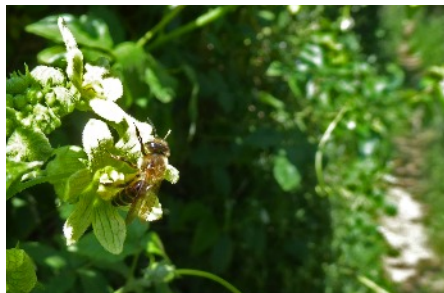
We were aware that the Bryony Mining Bee, *Andrena florea*, has been spreading northwards from its stronghold in south-east England, reaching Suffolk in 2015 (at Shotley Gate, Knowles 2017) and listed as a species probably “Coming Soon” to Norfolk (Owens 2017). Females collect pollen only from White Bryony, *Bryonia dioica*, and, on the continent, the related *Bryonia alba* and *B. cretica* (BWARS 2018). Could this be what we had seen?

Mike had to head off but we spent a few more hours at the site, alternating between the field edge and a large patch of White Bryony by the footpath at the south-east corner of Arminghall Quarry. Eventually Jeremy took two very poor quality pictures at the field edge (TG245048), which we sent to Tim Strudwick. He confirmed that we had seen *Andrena florea*.



We wanted better views and to take better photographs, so we headed back on Sunday 31st May. Arriving on site at about 09.30, it took us until 13.15 to find a Bryony Mining Bee on the large patch of White Bryony by the quarry (TG242046). We sent our pictures to Tim, and to Nick Owens.

Bryony Mining Bee - top picture showing red on the sides of the first two abdominal segments
Images: *Jeremy Bartlett*



We also shared our photos on Facebook and Twitter. Iain Barr replied via Twitter to let us know that our tweet had inspired him to look for *Andrena*

florea. He saw two females and one male on 2nd June 2020, at Hellington, near Rockland St. Mary (grid ref TG318036), 5 miles (8km) to the south-east. His record is on iRecord.

There was a light north-east wind when we visited Arminghall and we found that the bees seemed to prefer their White Bryony flowers to be in shelter, either amongst other vegetation at the field edge, or under overhanging White Bryony foliage by the quarry. In contrast, the masses of Honeybees on the patch of White Bryony by the quarry were visiting flowers out in the open.

Tim Strudwick also managed to find *Andrena florea* on one of his visits and we returned on 17th June 2020, when Vanna had another brief sighting. Again, the bee was on overhanging White Bryony flowers by the path at the back of the quarry, but we couldn't take any more photographs.

At the moment *Andrena florea* appears to be in Norfolk in low numbers, making it quite easy to overlook. But once it becomes more established, it should become "one of the easiest bees to find; go to a flowering plant and there it will be" (Baldock 2008).

As numbers build up it will be worth searching for the bee's nest burrows. In Surrey, these are "usually found in hard sandy paths, sometimes in large aggregations" (Baldock 2008).

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The Wheatfen Beetle

Will Fitch



Image: *Elizabeth Dack*

The *Galeruca laticollis* beetle is found at Wheatfen, but nowhere else in the UK. Its larvae (shown left), can be seen throughout May and June, feeding on the uncommon fen specialist, Meadow Rue. The adult beetle can be seen feeding on the leaves of creeping thistle late July and August. Alas despite being one of the "true rarities" of Wheatfen, its rather drab appearance as a larvae (and being a bit of a plain brown job in its adult stage) has left it overshadowed by the show off swallowtails, alluring marsh harriers, and enticing cuckoos, amongst many others.

Inconspicuous Ladybirds.

Vanna Bartlett

I have to admit that until the publication of the Field Guide to the Ladybirds of Great Britain and Ireland by Roy, Brown and Lewington (Bloomsbury 2018) I didn't even know that such a thing as an inconspicuous ladybird existed. Once I was aware of them, I was determined to find one. They are, as their name suggests, rather small and easily overlooked. One is in fact so small that it has been called the Dot Ladybird. They are also difficult to photograph especially if, like me, you only have a compact camera (so apologies for the quality of the images). They are shaped much like the larger or conspicuous ladybirds and have the same short antennae. Apart from size, the main difference is that most of them have a covering of short hairs making them appear quite dull to the naked eye. They are predatory, mostly feeding on aphids and scale insects.



Nephus quadrimaculatus tucked amongst ivy on a gravestone in Earham Cemetery, Norwich. This was where I encountered my first inconspicuous ladybird.



Nephus quadrimaculatus - pair mating in spring sunshine, Earham Cemetery, Norwich.

The Field Guide is an excellent little book with superb illustrations by Richard Lewington and lots of helpful advice on how to find some of the more elusive or specialist species. I have discovered that most inconspicuous ladybirds have found me rather than the other way around, although now that I know that *Nephus quadrimaculatus* is in my local cemetery I have managed to find several with a bit of careful searching.

Our small, wildlife-friendly garden has provided many interesting records over the years so I was determined to find at least one species in it. The garden proved a real boon during lockdown and I spent even more time than usual looking out for interesting invertebrates. I was intently watching foraging solitary bees when a tiny beetle suddenly appeared which I quickly potted in the specimen tube I had at hand. This turned out to be *Scymnus suturalis*, a species usually associated coniferous woodland, although it does pop up in gardens from time to time (there is a Scots Pine two gardens away). *S. suturalis* is fairly straight forward to identify owing to the dark central stripe that forms a 'T' on the elytra. This individual was rather unusual in that it had red head whereas the literature stated that it should be black. After several emails to Martin Collier it was confirmed as *suturalis* (on the continent males have sometimes been recorded with a red head).



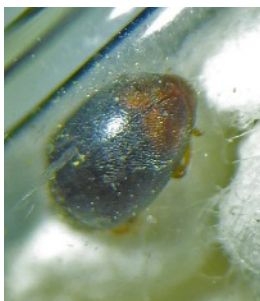
Scymnus suturalis.



Rhizobius litura.

On 1st May I found our second species in the garden - *Rhizobius litura* which we had previously found on our nearby allotment earlier in the year. They are particularly common around patches of Stinging Nettles in spring but also other low vegetation. We have now recorded them three times in the garden. *Rhizobius* are more elongate than other species and have much longer antennae making them look less ladybird like. *R. litura* is unusual in that its wings are poorly developed so that it can't fly although it makes up for it by running away very rapidly when you try to photograph it.

Scymnus haemorrhoidalis was a rather surprising record for the garden. This species is usually found in damp habitats including bogs and water margins. It was found on the back of the house near a pot with Giant Horsetail growing in it. We often find unusual insects on the house quite possibly because it is painted yellow, a colour whose attractiveness to insects is exploited when it comes to pan traps.



Scymnus haemorrhoidalis photographed down a microscope at x20 and showing (on the right) the distinctive reddish end to the elytra.

Our fourth species was *Scymnus frontalis*, the commonest and largest *Scymnus* at a whopping 3.2mm. This one was found during a bio-blitz of the garden that I was invited to take part in on 16th May. I was hunting around under various

plants, desperate to find more species at the end of the afternoon and there it was. I have since seen a couple more, both male and female, on the back of the house.

With twenty species of inconspicuous ladybird on the British list (only one of which hasn't been recorded in Norfolk) I am hopeful of finding plenty more, perhaps not in the garden but who knows!



Scymnus frontalis. The black head shows that this is a female, males having a reddish brown head.

The Return of the Rose Chafer Beetle, *Cetonia aurata*.

Susan Weeks

The Rose chafer beetle *Cetonia aurata* hasn't been recorded in Norfolk since 1963 so it was quite a surprise to see three in my garden just north of Norwich in May / June this year!

When I heard a characteristic loud buzzing coming from a Weigela shrub on 26th May I assumed it was another Common cockchafer beetle as I had seen one the week before. I watched from a distance as it dropped haphazardly down through the shrub and landed underneath on a fragment of concrete. Yes, a chafer beetle, but this one was a bright green colour. Not having seen one like this before I grabbed my camera and took a few snaps to research later.

Being a very distinctive insect a quick "Google" soon gave me the ID of *Cetonia aurata*, the Rose chafer beetle, but it wasn't until I looked at a UK species distribution map that I realised it may be a significant sighting in this part of the country. Some photos were duly sent to County Recorder Martin Collier who confirmed this was the case and kindly sent back details of previous records.*

This species occurs locally and sometimes commonly in southern England and south Wales although numbers tend to fluctuate. Typically they are common for a year or two and then scarce for a few years. There are scattered sightings further north but the most recent records for Norfolk date back to the 1960s.

Rose chafers are large attractive beetles, bright iridescent green in colour with variable white marks on the elytra. (Fig. 1 & 2) There is a V shaped mark on the back where the wing cases meet. They become active in spring when the temperature reaches about 15 degrees and are typically seen in sunny weather flying clumsily between flowering shrubs and trees stopping to feed on the pollen and nectar. They are particularly fond of roses, hence the common name.



Susan Weeks

Rose Chafer Fig. 1 & 2 showing the variable white marks on the elytra



Fig.3

This proved to be the case in my garden as the following week I saw another high up on a flowering pyracantha and watched a third fly loudly and erratically round the garden before landing on a rose (Fig. 3). All three sightings were on warm sunny days.

The life cycle of *Cetonia aurata* usually takes two years. Mating occurs in spring and eggs are laid among compost or in decaying trees. The larvae grow quickly but take two years

to become fully grown. They pupate in the middle of summer in a subterranean cell in humus-rich soil among compost or tree-trunk detritus then overwinter as adults. A few may become active in the autumn but the majority remain in the pupal cell until the following spring.

Larvae have been found in plant pots, feeding on the compost etc. but apparently not harming the plants. Unlike the larvae of some chafers they do not feed on roots.

So back to my garden - where is it coming from? I have a couple of log piles and a compost heap but my best guess is a dead standing Robinia tree trunk currently covered in flowering clematis. Closer inspection shows peeling bark with decay beneath and lots of insect activity in the form of many holes of varying size. Some are quite large! I'm keeping a close eye on that tree trunk

* Martin Collier, County Recorder for beetles, provided the following information and would welcome further records (norfolk.beetles@gmail.com):

The Norfolk county list published in 1893 says "Common in Norwich many years ago". A supplement to this list published in 1909 says "Has occurred at Downham Market but not recently".

A note on a card index in the Castle Museum says "One at Thorpe, 9.8.1961 and 24.7.1962"

The Lodge, Saxlingham Thorpe, 1960-1963 (M. Bamford).

On the distribution map shown opposite (Fig. 4), only the last of these records has been mapped.

PS: Since this article was written Susan spotted another Rose Chafer on 25th June. On this occasion it was feeding on hogweed on Catton Park (image opposite) which is just over the road from where she lives.

Images: Susan Weeks



Cetonia aurata

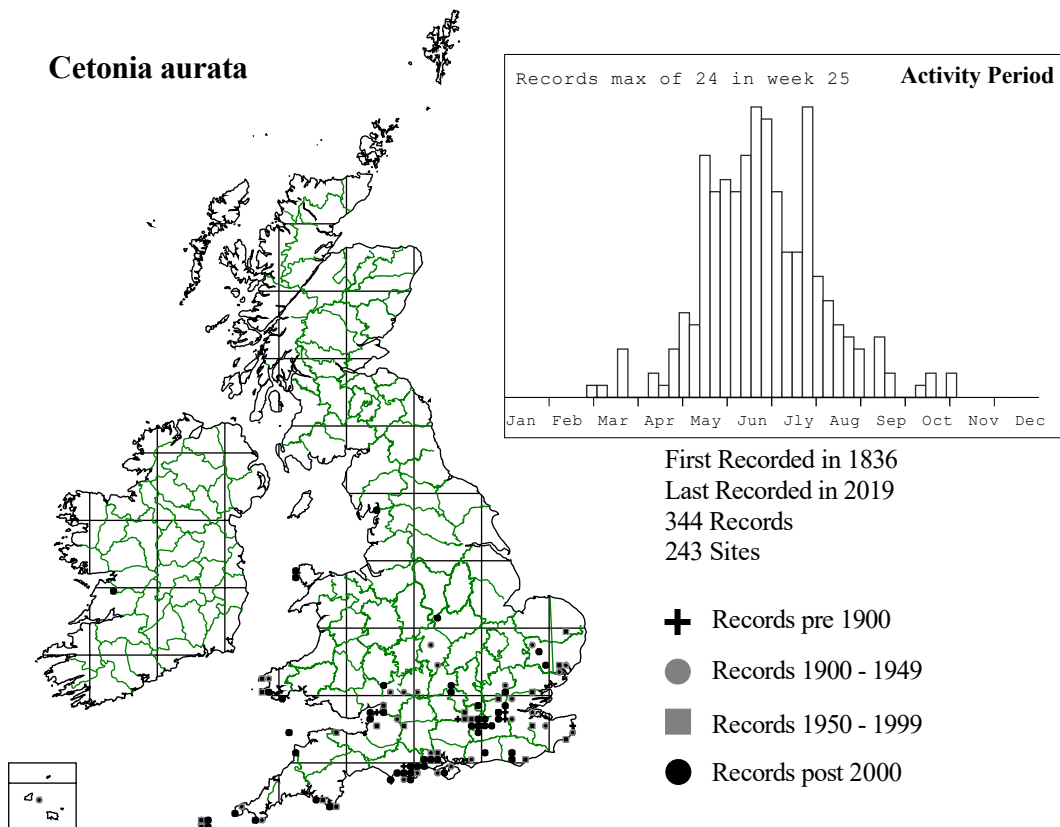


Fig. 4 Distribution of *Cetonia aurata*.

[Map courtesy of Darren Mann, Scarabaeoidea Recording Scheme organiser]

An Uncommon Beetle

Rob Colman

I photographed this carabid at Beeston Common on 8/5/2020, which I found along a wet grassy margin. It is called *Stenolophus skrimshiranus* and one I have not seen before so probably fairly scarce.

I sent the image to Martin Collier for confirmation who said it was a new 10km square record. Martin added that it was a beetle that had no modern records until 2004 but has over the last five years seemed to have done well.



Stenolophus skrimshiranus

NOTES FROM MY NATURAL HISTORY JOURNAL

7th April 2019 & 24th June 2018

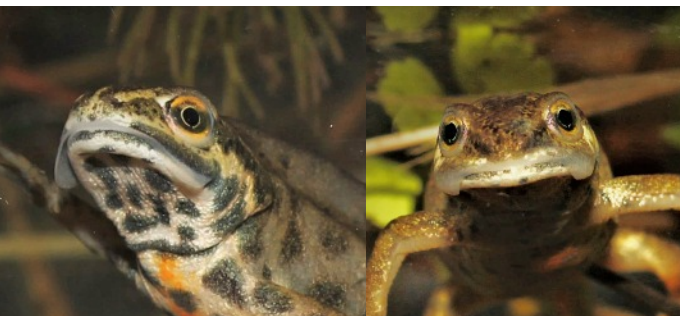
Garth Coupland

Whilst photographing Smooth Newts *Lissotriton vulgaris* underwater it came to my attention that during the early months of their aquatic phase, both sexes develop what, in the light of finding no information concerning them, I might name as 'flanges'. These translucent additions to the outer, upper mandible disappear in late June prior to leaving the water to commence the terrestrial stage of their annual life-cycle. I have observed this also in the Palmate Newt - *Lissotriton helveticus*. The function of the 'flange' would appear to be unknown and so hypothesising brings forth interesting theories but no conclusions.

The German Herpetologist Michael Fahrbach writes about 'saugschnappen'. This is a name, adopted by science, for the feeding technique of opening the mouth to suck in prey; as seen in aquatic amphibians and fish. Perhaps the 'flanges' aid the newt in exercising this means of prey capture.

I have two theories. Firstly, I postulate that they might aid in taste detection. This may have three functions that would be useful during the aquatic phase. One would be detection of the opposite sex in the dense jungle of water plants. However, this theory appears to fail in that it is usually the males of species that detect females and head in their direction, drawn by the feminine pheromones wafted to their anxious senses! Second, and also to do with breeding, the 'flanges' may aid the newts in positioning themselves for the sperm-package transfer process. This takes place as the female moves over the package deposited on the substrate by the male. She picks it up with her cloaca. Thirdly the 'flanges' may simply aid in prey detection by taste.

My second theory, which I favour, is that whilst in water, creatures are able to develop more delicate appendages due to the support afforded by the aquatic environment, for example, the magnificent, flowing crests of the breeding males. These also disappear completely as the males exit the water in mid-summer. I hypothesise that these delicate 'flanges' can only be grown whilst in the water and act somewhat in the manner of mammalian whiskers in that they aid, by the sense of touch, the Newts daily doings underwater.



Smooth Newt (m/f) showing upper mandible 'flanges'

Whatever their function, these 'flanges' are a new discovery for me, after a lifetime of studying these wonderful animals. There is always something new and fascinating to find as we use our Human minds to probe the mysteries of the Universe.

Images: *Garth Coupland*

Snipe Decline

Hans Watson

Restrictions on travel resulting from the Corvid-19 crisis, and the requirement for many of us to stay at home most of our time, gave us time to reflect on better times, and make plans for the expected better times to come. And so it was, on a sunny April morning whilst confined to watching the birds from my conservatory, that my thoughts drifted back to similar sunny April days of my boyhood at Old Costessey in the 1950's, when I would wander the marshes in the Wensum valley, and listen to that wonderful sound of Snipe drumming above me. This sound is very hard to describe, and has been likened by some, to the bleating of sheep. I have always considered this to be misleading, as the sound is mechanical and not vocal. Snipe were the commonest wader that we boys encountered in those far off days, and started my lifelong love of waders. Thinking of those lovely childhood times, I recalled that I had revisited these marshes after I had married and moved to East Norfolk, and by chance found, and photographed a Snipe nest. When I



located the photo of this nest, I found that the date was 27th April 1975. At the time I did not realise that this would be the last time I would see a Snipe nest in the UK, and that it was very possibly one of the very last Snipe nests in that part of Norfolk. The number of Snipe nesting in Norfolk is now very small, and they are likely to become extinct as breeding birds in the county within the

next few years. It is hard to believe that Snipe once nested within the circle of the Norwich ring-road not far from Sweetbriar Road. I am saddened to think that they will join the Red-backed Shrike, which is another bird that I recall nesting at Old Costessey, and which also once bred within the Norwich ring-road on Mousehold Heath, but now no longer breeds in Norfolk.



Images: *Hans Watson*

Nuthatches

Janet Negal

Is it unusual for Nuthatches to nest in boxes? Up until about a year ago we rarely saw one here (occasionally heard them), then they started coming to bird feeders and by the beginning of last winter were daily visitors. A few weeks ago I saw one investigating a hole in the branch of an Ash tree opposite us and was disappointed when it seemed to lose interest. Then at the beginning of last week when walking past one of our nestboxes, I heard young birds inside and as both Great Tits and Blue Tits have used it before (it has a Great Tit sized plate) I decided to hide amongst the trees and watch for a parent to answer their call. To my delight and amazement it was a Nuthatch! In the lovely spring weather we were experiencing I sat for hours under the trees just watching them, the fragrance of Hawthorn blossom and our Balsam Poplar drifting over me, a Blackbird and Blackcap bellowing just above my head and Orange Tips visiting the Hedge Garlic that was all around. I decided that 'Lockdown' didn't get any better than that, and counted my blessings as I know it must have been awful for some.

The interesting thing is that a couple of weeks ago some dried mud appeared on the front of the box, under the 'eves,' and I vaguely thought of Nuthatch but dismissed it because obviously the mud was nowhere near the entrance. But it seems that even if the hole fits, they have the urge to put mud somewhere!



Nuthatch using nest-box
Image: *Janet Negal*

Ed - Nuthatches are known to use nestboxes and specific ones can be bought. Interestingly BBC's 'Springwatch' featured a Nuthatch nesting in a box this year.

PERAMBULATIONS DURING LOCK DOWN.

Tony Howes

The first week or so of the lock down was spent sorting the garden out, plenty to do out there, trimming of shrubs, sowing seeds, potting on, weeding etc; then I began to get itchy feet, I missed going out with the camera. Fortunately our local woods are within one hundred yards of home, so I began walking there in the afternoons. I soon realised that there was plenty there to keep me busy, Grass Snakes, various butterflies and other insects, Sparrowhawks and Buzzards were all seen, but several Muntjac were also spotted, and I decided to concentrate on them.

After watching for several days I decided on an area where the deer had been seen regularly, and began baiting with broken up apples scattered over the woodland floor. At this point it was still early spring, and the trees and bushes were bare of leaves. The bait was being eaten, The first time I sat late one bright afternoon I was disappointed, two Grey Squirrels soon made an appearance, were these culprits eating all my apples?. Then soon after a dark shadow emerged slowly out of the gloom of the trees and a Muntjac doe was eating the bait, to be followed shortly by a second doe.

I had seen a fine looking buck several times so was hoping he would turn up, but it was almost two weeks before I managed to get

a portrait of him, he was always nervous, and never came out into the open. By this time the woods were getting their summer dress of greenery, and the extra shading was cutting down on the light and available shutter speed, so I started just walking to see what would turn up. A few



Female Muntjac



Male Muntjac

evenings later I came across a female roe deer, she was feeding on the edge of a grassy path, I managed to get a few shots before the penny dropped and she was

away. I have seen several of these beautiful deer over the last few weeks, but they are always on edge, the woods are used by other people, including dog owners, and the sound of a human voice, or a dog barking is enough for them to melt back into thick cover, probably not to be seen again for some time. But I have enjoyed the challenge.



Female Roe Deer

Images: *Tony Howes*

I have also had a few trips out to the South Walsham marshes, these wide open spaces are completely different to the woodlands, especially on a fine sunny day with white clouds moving gently across a pure blue sky. Lovely just to be there. Here I have been able to meet up with some fabulous birds, among them Yellow Wagtail (male and female), a party of Whimbrel, a lone Crane, and Marsh Harriers. It was also pleasing to discover that Water Voles are fairly numerous there, several of the dykes are showing activity, with bank side holes and latrines.



Yellow Wagtail (male)
Image: Tony Howes

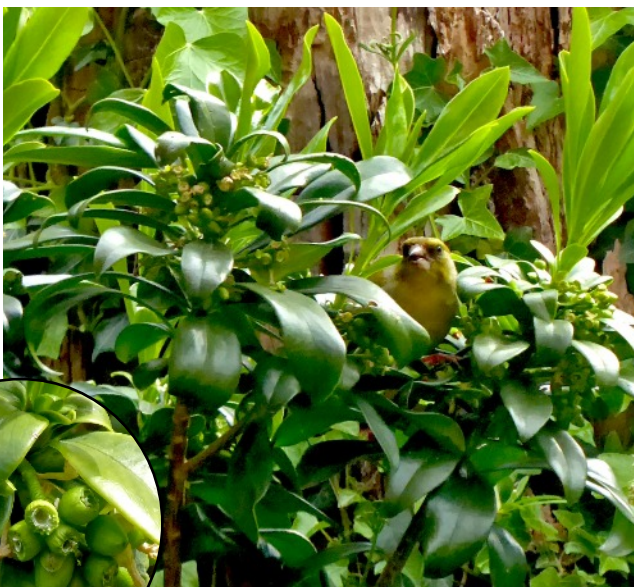
My wife Wendy is missing going out for her beloved coffee (and cake), but we have a walk daily somewhere local. Some day we shall be able to return to something close to normal, meantime enjoy the natural World, it's therapeutic, and works wonders for our well being. KEEP SAFE.

Greenfinch food

Tony Leech

My wife noticed that Greenfinches were regularly visiting a Spurge Laurel *Daphne laureola* bush in the garden and appeared to be feeding on it. When the plant was examined closely it could be seen that many of the unripe fruits had been opened and the seeds removed. The plant is very poisonous to humans but not, apparently, to birds. Nevertheless, the Greenfinches appeared to be discarding the end of the fruit.

Spurge Laurel is a widespread native plant of woodlands but its green flowers and unremarkable appearance makes it easy to overlook. Not so with its flamboyant, but equally poisonous, relative, Mezereon which is very rare in the wild but often planted.



Images: Tony Leech

Greenfinch visiting Spurge Laurel and the unripe fruits opened with seeds removed (inset)

Broadland Reserves re-open

Elizabeth Dack

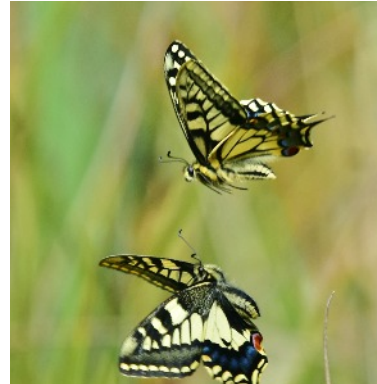
After most of the reserves had been closed for a long period during 'lockdown' it was lovely that NWT Hickling opened just before the Bank Holiday. By putting a one-way system in place to keep people safe, the public could visit the reserve in time to see Swallowtail butterflies which were just emerging. It seemed to be a bumper year for them and there were so many flitting around I didn't know where to look. I even managed to get some in flight (challenging) including two together, they appeared as though they were looking at each other!

The Deadly Nightshade flowers have been very beautiful this year. The large purple bells looked slightly pinkish as the early morning sun shone through them.

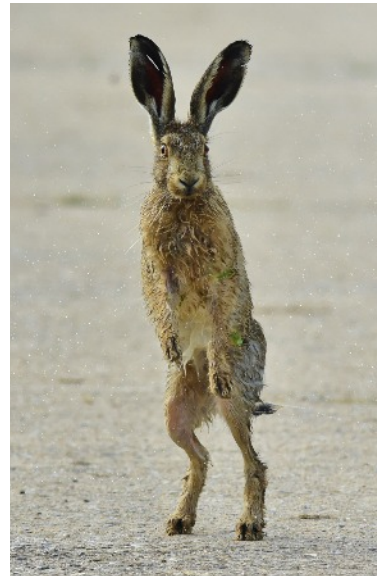


Deadly Nightshade illuminated

Whilst at NWT Upton Marshes listening, watching and photographing Sedge Warblers, I turned and saw a Brown Hare running away, vanishing into the greenery. It had obviously spotted me. I scanned the field with my binoculars but I couldn't see over the reeds, however as I stood scanning, I could hear splashing in the dyke. Walking on a bit further I then stood to photograph a lovely male Marsh Harrier. After checking the image on my camera I looked up and the hare was in front of me washing, it then ran a bit closer to me and I noticed it was soaking wet! I realised it was the hare I had heard splashing! I started taking some photos of it and then all of a sudden it stood up on its strong hind legs and shook itself, the water and bits of weed were cascading all around it with a lot of water running from its tail. It was an amazing site to witness. I didn't know hares went into water. As it continued to shake and wash itself I noticed it had a rip in its ear. It looked like a Nike Logo! I felt well chuffed with my photos as I thought they were unusual images.



Double-take Swallowtails



'Soggy' Brown Hare

Images: *Elizabeth Dack*

An Unusual Butterfly

Janet Negal

I was really excited because on 30/05/2020 there were two Small Tortoiseshells in the garden and I didn't see one here last year. I grabbed the camera and was trying to photograph it when I realised, seeing it up close, that it was



Small Tortoiseshell

Image: Janet Negal

“different” - dark patch on hind wing very pale and some spots missing. I read in the Thomas and Lewington book that when they emerge after a hot summer they are brighter, with more orange.

Ed. - A similar looking butterfly is presently in the unclassified section of the 'UK Butterflies' website so at the moment it seems it is not a named aberration. Aberrations occur if the larva are exposed to strong sunlight or frost (ie temperature fluctuations) or they can be genetically induced.

NOTES FROM MY NATURAL HISTORY JOURNAL

21st May 1992 - Acle, Norfolk, England.

Garth Coupland



Ross and Garth deep in study

I found a little notebook in a box the other day. Its owner, my then 6 year old son, Ross, had clearly allowed me to use it as it is full, from cover to cover, with my notes on philosophy. However, inside the cover he had drawn a beetle. This was a sure sign of things to come because Ross has become a superb natural historian and photographer of species and landscapes from across the planet.

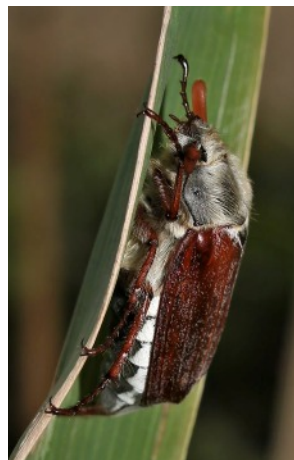
From Costa Rica to Nepal, Borneo to Louisiana or Spain to Australia, Ross' photographs illustrate and testify to the wonders that he has found and appreciated and then captured with his art. Ross was a member of the N&NNS until he emigrated to Queensland in 2013.

Entomology, I believe, is his greatest passion. He is about to publish a scientific paper with the great Entomologist, Paul Brock, on the subject of

Australian Phasmids. As a child, Ross collected, and saw through to imago stage, many species of the Lepidoptera. He once narrowly escaped death in a road accident whilst cycling home with some Hawk Moth caterpillars he had discovered. His main concern were his larvae rather than the cuts and bruises he had sustained!

Another incident that shows the dedication to detail of this young naturalist was when the then Chairman of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society, Rex Hancy, showed Ross, aged 4, a small, yellow and black spotted ladybird whilst on a society field trip. Ross says, "Ah! That's *Calvia quatuordecimpunctata*. We found *Calvia quatuordecimguttata* yesterday". Rex gathered a crowd around and got Ross to repeat the performance. Ross clearly couldn't see what the fuss was about. He was simply stating fact and definitely not showing off! Rex became a great mentor for Ross who, partly desiring Rex's praise, would diligently search for new species of spider to add to the County list. By the age of seven Ross had found eleven new species for Norfolk and had received much praise for doing so from Rex, who at that time was County recorder for spiders.

Look at the detail of that beetle he drew in the notebook. It is instantly recognisable as the Cockchafer - *Melolontha melolontha*. Observe the lamellate antennae, the spike at the rear of the abdomen, the colours and the accuracy of the hooks at the end of each leg. Compare his work with the photograph. Now, the notebook



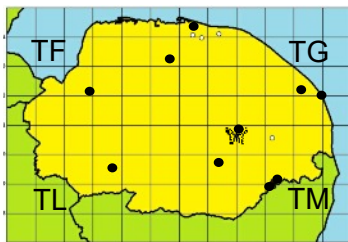
Cockchafer which the young Ross drew in detail

was given to Ross as a Christmas gift by Julie Chase in 1991 and I have seen Cockchafers fly from mid May to mid June in Norfolk. I conclude that if I look in my Natural History Journal for May 1992 I might find this very beast; the model for Ross' drawing. I do so and immediately find the date above with the entry '1st Cockchafers of the year'. This Cockchafer flies at night, so I can, with confidence, state that the drawing was done on the 22nd May 1992.

Early drawing by Ross of a Cockchafer



Keeping diaries and journals provide you with time to contemplate your doings and thoughts as you compose your entry and those entries give you stimuli for remembering your past joys and sorrows.



Beginners' Moss Meeting: Foxley Wood NNR

10th November 2019

It seems a world away back in November, when a number of members of the Norfolk & Suffolk Bryology Group met up with people new to bryology to introduce them to the mosses and liverworts of Foxley Wood NNR. This large NWT site consists primarily of coppiced ancient woodland with wet heathland and diverse rides and banks. It extends into six kilometre squares and the main square was recorded by the Bryology Group twenty years ago, when, with a few previous additions, seventy different bryophytes were recorded. So it seemed an ideal place to introduce a wide range of species to beginners, as well as catch upon a bit of recording.

After a slight hiccup in one of the car parks, when two stalwart bystanders were needed to help rescue a vehicle, stuck in the mud and after the usual 'housekeeping' had taken place, Julia Masson introduced the beginners to the exciting world of 'mossing', initially in the car park! Almost inevitably four of six species, new to the site that day, were found there. Known in the trade as 'the usual grots', many are small acrocarpous mosses, which, by virtue of their size, are difficult to see in detail in the field and often need to be examined under a microscope. This was true of Raspberry Bryum, *Bryum klinggraeffii*, so named from its tiny raspberry-like tubers found on its rhizoids and, in this case, a new record for both the site and the 10 km square.

The basic differences between pleurocarpous and acrocarpous mosses were explained;- that the former grow in a mat-like formation, weaving through vegetation and producing capsules along their main stems and the latter are often cushion-forming, with upright stems and capsules usually only emerging from the top of the stem. Typical moss capsules such as those on the ubiquitous pleurocarps Rough-stalked Feather-moss, *Brachythecium rutabulum*, or Cypress-leaved Plait-moss, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, have a lidded capsule on a stalk known as a *seta* with a *calyptra* or 'hat' on top as extra protection.

Others from the group set out to find more examples to show people and also to search out some of the rarer species, known from the site. Springy Turf-moss, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, familiar from many lawns and growing along the



Rough-stalked Feather-moss

edge of the track, provided a good illustration of a medium sized pleurocarp, with bent-back (squarrose) leaves. Even larger and useful for comparison was its near relative, Big Shaggy-moss, *R. triquetrus*, primarily a woodland moss, it occasionally grows on roadside or ditch banks in Norfolk. Other common woodland pleurocarps, such as Common Tamarisk-moss, *Thuidium tamariscinum*, looking like miniature ferns and the somewhat tree-like Foxtail Feather-moss, *Thamnobryum alopecurum* were seen, but initially finding mosses with capsules was difficult.

Looking at the acrocarp Hart's-tongue Thyme-moss, *Plagiomnium undulatum*, provided a contrast in growth habit to the previous pleurocarps seen, and enabled toothed edges of leaves as well as distinct leaf nerves to be examined. The Common Pocket-moss, *Fissidens taxifolius*, with its leaves arranged in two ranks, appears like a liverwort, but has a distinct nerve, which liverworts do not.

It was not until we delved further into woods, that fruiting cushion-type acrocarps were spotted. These included Bristle-mosses White-tipped, *Orthotrichum diaphanum*, and Wood, *O. affine*, allowing examination of both the peristome (ring of teeth) at the mouth of the capsules and their leaves, hair-tipped in the former. Here we also encountered a number of liverworts. These, like mosses, can also be divided into two groups - leafy and thallose. Both types were present on the trees, although only one of the leafy liverworts, Even Scalewort, *Radula complanata*, had capsules. In liverworts, these are usually round, on flimsy *setae*, and divide into four, having neither lids, peristomes or *calyptrae*. Easily spotted features are always useful in the field and Dilated Scalewort, *Frullania dilatata*, another leafy liverwort, can often be seen from a distance, as a dark or purple patch on a tree. Unfortunately, it can also be green and then care may be needed to distinguish it from the slightly larger Even Scalewort,

with which it is often found. The highlight of the liverwort day was refinding Greater Featherwort, *Plagiochila asplenoides*, a large leafy species, which grows on the woodland banks and floors. This is one of the rarer species to be found at Foxley and can be an ancient woodland indicator in Norfolk.

Many bryophytes rarely produce capsules and use alternative means to reproduce or spread. The two acrocarpous *Bryum* species seen, Bicoloured *Bryum*, *Bryum dichotomum* and *B. klinggraeffii*, can spread by bulbils, tiny buds in the leaf axils or by 'raspberry' tubers. Others mosses and



Foxtail Feather-moss



Even Scalewort



Greater Featherwort

liverworts produce *gemmae* on their surface, such as the thalloid strap-like liverwort, Forked Veilwort, *Metzgeria furcata*, or reproduce vegetatively from broken leaves or stems. The tiny acrocarp, Minute Earth-moss, *Ephemerum minutissimum*, which Richard Fisk found after lunch, did indeed have capsules, buried among its leaves. Atypically, however, its spores escape through the capsule's ruptured side, as it has neither peristome nor lid and is one of those mosses with nerveless leaves.



Minute Earth-moss

Just prior to lunch, time was taken out to admire and photograph the Wild Service-tree, *Sorbus torminalis*,



Big Shaggy-moss

distinguished by its distinctive leaves and chequered bark. Inevitably the rain, which had held off until then, fell immediately we found a convenient log for a lunch spot. Luckily it did not last long, but meant the usual discussion about useful books and tips was cut short. A smaller group spent the rest of the afternoon recording and searching for less common species, previously recorded at the site, such as Blunt-leaved Bog-moss, *Sphagnum palustre*. Eventually this was found on edge of a ride and in the adjacent wet heathland among Purple Moor-grass, *Molinia caerulea*, growing with Common Haircap, *Polytrichum commune*. On the way back, more Greater Featherwort was discovered, both in an overgrown ditch and beneath hazel coppice, where it was growing with Big Shaggy-moss.

Mary Ghullam

Images: Mike Ball

All the pictures from Foxley Wood can be seen in greater detail on Mike's post: <http://www.puffinuspuffinus2019.suckedslant.uk/files/category-foxley-wood.php>



Image: Peter Aspinall

A Strange Gall

Peter Aspinall

My work for South Norfolk Council doing grounds maintenance on public spaces of all kinds is usually local, but recently we have been sent on jobs in Norwich. While working in Dussindale on the east side of Norwich in early June I found a strange Gall.

We were working beneath an Oak tree with low branches and I accidentally snapped off a twig, which happened to have the gall attached, although I first thought it was a feather. I sent an image to Janet Negal who identified the gall as the Cotton Wool Gall *Andricus quercusramuli*, which I believe is uncommon in Norfolk.



The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be November 2020

Please send
all articles / notes and photographic material
to the editor as soon as possible by
October 1st 2020 to the following address:

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

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

Membership subscriptions

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

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

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

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

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

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