



The Norfolk Natterjack

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... Researching
Norfolk's Wildlife

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Cover image: Silver-washed Fritillary - Busy Summer - Steve & Karin Hale See page 8)

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	Dragonflies	Dr Pam Taylor, Decoy Farm, Decoy Rd, Potter Heigham, Gt. Yarmouth, NR29 5LX. Email: pam.taylor@british-dragonflies.org.uk
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Toad-in-the-hole...

What a summer our wildlife have had - exceptional high temperatures and persistent bird flu. The avian flu continues and as of the second week of October it has been recorded in 57 species of wild bird from Hen Harrier to Manx Shearwater. The birds of prey can get infected by scavenging or catching infected birds. Hopefully it will run its course soon. My thanks to all contributors and another interesting and variable edition awaits. Please send in your notes and observations next year and lets hope 2023 will see some reversal of fortunes for the natural world. Checkout the 'Snow Bee' on page 21.

FF

Kingdom bending

Tony Leech



Willkommlangea reticulata from BCP

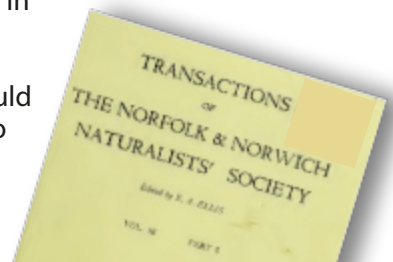
Image / Mark Joy

Is it an animal? Is it a fungus? These questions were asked as soon as Sam Rusby found *Willkommlangea reticulata* on a Norfolk Fungus Study Group foray at the Broadland Country Park, Horsford. The answer is that it is a slime mould. Far more beautiful than their name suggests, slime moulds are placed in Kingdom Protista, together with single-celled 'animals'. Amoeboid cells come together to form a plasmodium, in this case orange and worm-like, which morphs into a dry spore-producing structure.

Willkommlangea reticulata (it has no English name) is far from common with fewer than 20 records in Britain although this is the third from Norfolk.

Transactions etc. 1950s - present

NNNS member Ted Croot, who joined the Society in 1956 is offering his entire unbroken collection of Transactions, Bird & Mammal reports, Occasional publications and 'Natterjacks' to anyone who would like them. Ted now lives in Sheffield but travels to King's Lynn frequently for short breaks and can bring the collection with him by prior arrangement. Ted can be contacted by email - annette.ted@talktalk.net



Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood

Bob Leaney

Report of the Joint Meeting of NNNS and Norfolk Flora Group

The introduction to Botany event was held this year at Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Lower Wood Ashwellthorpe Reserve on 22nd May. We were a little late for the glories of the Bluebells and Wild Garlic, but the timing meant that we were able to find more of the scarcer species in flower to show attendees. We had a very good turn-out of 14, and it seems that we managed to add a few new recruits to the ranks of the NFG.

The visit was made especially enjoyable and informative as we were guided around by Anne Edwards of the Wymondham Nature Group (WyNG), who leads a weekly work party carrying out coppicing and other work on the reserve from October to March.

With Anne's help we found 7 of the 8 scarce species characteristic of the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) W8 community (*Fraxinus excelsior-Mercurialis perennis* woodland): *Anemone nemorosa* (Wood Anemone), *Carex sylvatica* (Wood Sedge), *Lamiasium galeobdolon* (Yellow Archangel), *Melica uniflora* (Wood Melick), *Milium effusum* (Wood Millet), *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple Orchid) and *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks Buttercup).

Other rare and scarce species and ancient woodland indicators found included *Adoxa moschatellina* (Moschatel), *Ajuga reptans* (Bugle), *Cardamine pratensis* (Lady's Smock), *Geum rivale* (Water avens), *Hypericum hirsutum* (Hairy St John's-wort), *Luzula pilosa* (Hairy Wood-rush), *Lysimachia nemorum* (Yellow Pimpernel), *Neottia ovata* (Common Twayblade), and *Veronica montana* (Wood Speedwell). Several large patches of Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) were unfortunately

past their best. The highlight of the day was a large population of *Paris quadrifolia* (Herb Paris), newly arisen on the edge of a recently coppiced compartment. Hopefully there will be more within the compartment itself, which we were unable to enter due to deer-fencing.

We found a small number of vascular plants to add to the list compiled by WyNG: *Athyrium filix-femina* (Lady-fern), *Dryopteris affinis* (Golden-scaled Male Fern), *Brachypodium sylvaticum* (False-brome), *Conopodium majus*



A large population of Herb Paris following recent coppicing was a highlight.

Images / Anne Edwards

(Pignut) and a Downy Rose (probably *Rosa tomentosa*).

The NE, E and SE fringes of the wood have more frequent *Ficaria verna* (Lesser Celandine), *Anemone nemorosa* and *Lamium galeobdolon*; this fits with the NVC W8b *Anemone nemorosa* subcommunity. The SE corner also supported large amounts of *Sanicla europaea* (Sanicle) and it was here that we found most of the Wood Melick, characteristically in very large patches on otherwise bare banks close to the edge of the wood.

In the afternoon a few of us stayed on to look at the west and north sectors of the wood, which we found to be more densely shaded by



Ransoms or Wild Garlic dominated the ground flora in an area shaded by mature coppice.

mature coppice and largely dominated by *Allium ursinum* (Ransoms). This is typical of the NVC W8f *Allium ursinum* subcommunity, in which the field layer is dominated by Wild Garlic to the virtual exclusion of other species. We did however find a few plants of *Euphorbia amygdaloides* (Wood Spurge).

We also had a look at Bellar's Grove to the north of Lower Wood. This woodland is separated from Lower Wood by a

narrow strip of coarse grassland and coarse grasses extended beneath the woodland canopy; but we also found *Anemone nemorosa*, *Veronica montana*, *Milium effusum*, and *Adoxa moschatellina* in small amounts.

In her excellent publication "If you go down to the woods today: a natural and unnatural history of Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood", Anne Edwards documents the coppicing regime since 2003. At present over half of the wood, to the west and north is under a 'minimal management' regime as 'derelict coppice', with Norfolk Wildlife Trust's contractors coppicing 2 compartments in the SW corner. The majority of the species rich central block is coppiced every 8-10 years by WyNGs volunteer group and the aim is to continue at least at a 10-yearly coppice cycle.

The Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood Reserve continues to support an extremely rich ancient woodland flora, but populations of the nationally rare and scarce species are low, and early successional-stage coppice, which is when the flora is

at its most diverse, is infrequent. Widening the rides, some of which are narrow and shaded, and opening up the woodland edge alongside, together with a shorter coppice cycle as envisaged by Anne Edwards, would deliver enormous benefits, but more volunteer labour is needed. If anyone is interested in joining Anne and her team, and getting involved, they can be contacted through <https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/support-us/local-groups/wymondham-nature-group>.

Setting the record straight

Alec Bull

I thought I should contact *Natterjack* after the previous issue as I have the following to add and correct.

- 1) Yellow Buttonweed *Cotula coronopifolia*
'A Flora of Norfolk'* page 210: Large quantities growing on cattle-trampled margins of brackish ditches at Cobham TM50 in 1996, Dave Green
- 2) Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica* is scattered over Norfolk ('A Flora of Norfolk' page 209). The photograph in the August '*Natterjack*' is of the double garden variety which can be quite a nuisance as I know to my cost.

My thanks to Alec for the additional information concerning the Yellow Buttonweed and for pointing out my error regarding the Sneezewort - Ed.

*A Flora of Norfolk - Gillian Beckett & Alec Bull (1999)

Update: Trimingham Bee-eaters

Francis Farrow

The first Bee-eater fledged on August 16th and the last 7 days later, August 23rd. This was an historical event as it was the first recorded successful breeding for Norfolk. The youngsters were able to fly with the adults as soon as they left the nesting burrows and later on August 23rd at around 7pm I and a few lucky observers were able to watch 10 birds zooming over the quarry site.



Evening Bee-eaters

The flock consisted of four juveniles and six adults. The birds eventually left the area towards the end of August. A perfect end to a great summer working with the RSPB, NENBC and other local birders to keep these beautiful and interesting 'rainbow birds' safe.



One of the 10 Bee-eaters 'zooming' around the Trimingham quarry.

Images / Francis Farrow

Walnut *Juglans regia* is a commonly planted tree around Norwich, and on many examples you can see large yellowy 'blister' galls on the the upper surface of the leaf caused by the mite *Aceria erineae*. There are two other species of mite in the genus *Aceria* that also cause galls on Walnut and have been recorded in Britain. The first of these is *Aceria tristriata*, which causes small green or reddish lumps on both sides of the leaf, often but not always associated with veins. It is included in Michael Chinery's photographic guide to galls¹, but he notes "this species seems to be of very local occurrence". The final mite is *Aceria brachytarsus*, which causes pale green pointed galls, resembling small wave crests, on the underside of leaves where they are confined to the veins. This species appears to be a recent colonist, having been recorded new to the UK in Cambridgeshire in 2021.

On 18th August 2022 I was walking along Thunder Lane in Thorpe St Andrew when I noticed branches of a Walnut overhanging the pavement. Many leaves of the tree were covered in the galls caused by the mite *Aceria erineae*, but upon



A blister gall caused by *Aceria erineae*

closer inspection I noticed some additional galls, much smaller and different in form to the blister galls. They looked like small round lumps, raised on both sides of the leaf, some pale green and some reddish in colour. There were many to a leaf, mainly but not exclusively following the veins. I recognised them from posts that I had seen on the British plant galls Facebook page as caused by *Aceria tristriata*, which I later confirmed using the AIDGap key by Redfern & Shirley².



Galls caused by *Aceria tristriata* - top and underside of Walnut leaf.

Images / James Emerson

Suspecting that this might be a new species for Norfolk I checked in both books covering Norfolk's gall fauna (Hancy³ and Maidstone⁴) both of which featured *Aceria erinea* as the sole gall causer on Walnut. I then contacted the county recorder for galls, Dr Anne Hickley, who confirmed that she did not hold any records of *Aceria tristriata* in her Norfolk database. For thoroughness I decided to also check the NBN Atlas online for any records of *Aceria tristriata*, and was surprised to find one listed for somewhere in TM29 (a 10km square in VC27, East Norfolk), dating back to 26/07/1939 (recorded under the old name of *Eriophyes tristriatus*). This is the earliest UK record on the NBN Atlas by 39 years (with the caveat of course that much of our wildlife is under-recorded and data sharing around the country for many groups can be rather patchy). I have been unable to find any other reference to this record, and the other review of Norfolk's mite-induced galls by Manning⁵ only covers *Aceria erinea* for Walnut. It is therefore not clear if the 1939 record has been overlooked, known about and discounted for some reason, or if it has only come to light recently.

When I mentioned the sighting on the aforementioned plant galls Facebook group, Robert Maidstone informed me that he had seen galls resembling those caused by *Aceria tristriata* at the Bishop's Palace in Norwich on 4th August 2022, plus galls on Walnut that might have been this species "many, many years ago". So, not a first record for Norfolk then, although whether I was pipped to the post by 83 years or two weeks we'll probably never know for sure!

I continued to check any Walnut trees that I passed, and on 4th September I checked two near Pull's Ferry. Here in addition to the ubiquitous *Aceria erinea* galls I noticed several hook-shaped *Aceria brachytarsus* galls on the underside of a leaf, in doing so completing the set of Norwich Walnut mite galls. Robert tells me he has not seen this species yet, and given its recent arrival to these



Gall caused by *Aceria brachytarsus*

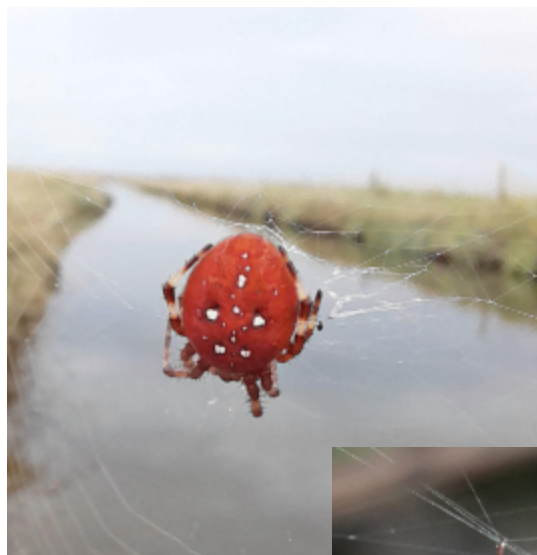
shores I am hopeful that this one at least is new to the county! Incidentally *Aceria brachytarsus* galls can apparently also occur on Black Walnut *Juglans nigra*, but a spot check of some street trees along the Avenues failed to turn up any.

Thanks to Dr Anne Hickley and Robert Maidstone for their comments regarding the Norfolk distribution of *Aceria tristriata*.

References

1. Chinery, M (2011) Britain's plant galls: A photographic guide. *WildGuides Ltd*. Page 68.
2. Redfern, M & Shirley, P (2011) British Plant Galls (2nd Ed), *Field Studies Council AIDGap series*, page 142.
3. Hancy, R (2000) The study of plant galls in Norfolk. *Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society occasional publication 5*, page 92.
4. Maidstone, R (2021) Illustrations of Norfolk plant galls. *Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society occasional publication 19*, page 65.
5. Manning, S.A. (1981) Some Norfolk gall mites (Acarina: Eriophyidae). *Transactions of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society* Vol. 25, part 4, pages 218-222.

Spiders



This striking example of a female Four-spotted Orb Web spider *Araneus quadratus* was found along the Iron Road, Salthouse, 06/09/2022. Body colour can range from light yellow - green - orange - red-brown. It is also the heaviest spider in the UK.

Image / *Sue Gantlett*

A Garden Spider *Araneus diadematus* making a good attempt at hiding amongst a dead thistle at Stubbs Green, Loddon 02/10/2022. One of our most successful spiders because it can live in a variety of habitats.

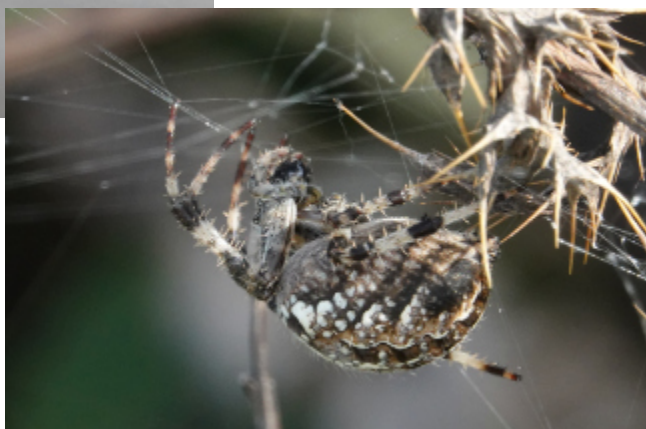
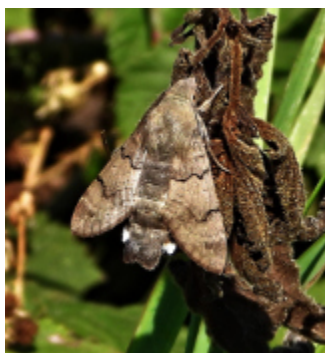
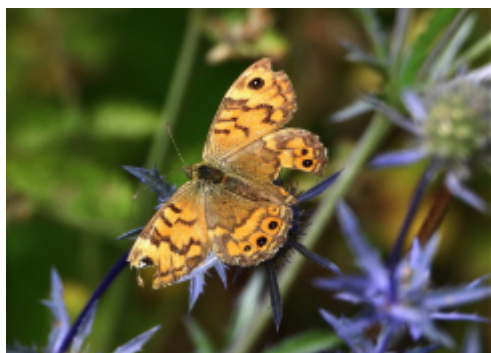


Image / *Bernard Webb*

See also Page 21

Like many, we have had some fascinating garden visitors during the hot weather. All species of our garden butterflies have been down nectaring and drinking from provided pebble/water stations - surprises for us include White Admiral (one time even using a bird bath), Purple Hairstreak daily and Wall Brown. Like many, we have had Silver-washed Fritillaries visiting and two Humming-bird Hawk-moths, plus a caterpillar. We came across another caterpillar at Warham Camp too on a visit and a perched Humming-bird Hawk-moth at Kelling Water Meadow. What an interesting and busy insect summer, but also nightly Hedgehog and hungry/thirsty juvenile birds to cater for.



Top: White Admiral and Purple Hairstreak

Middle: Wall and Humming-bird Hawk-moth

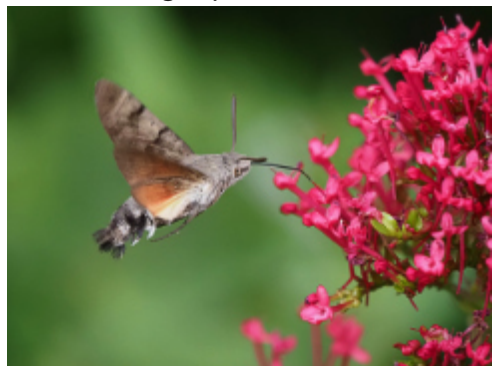
Bottom: Humming-bird Hawk-moth caterpillar

Images / Steve & Karin Hale

The year 2022 has been a particularly good year for sightings of Humming-bird Hawk-moths, *Macroglossum stellatarum*, with some authorities claiming that it has been the best year on record. I have been fortunate to have had several of these lovely little visitors in my garden this year, and have had considerable pleasure watching and photographing them, and although I have been watching them for quite a few years, I have learned new facts. One of these facts is, just how long their proboscis is when extended. Like everything else that these moths do, coiling and un-coiling their proboscis, is very fast, and only the fast shutter of a camera enables such movement to be appreciated, and the length of the proboscis to be seen. I can only marvel at the degree of precision and co-ordination, that enables these moths to insert their proboscis into tiny nectar tubes of flowers, at high speed, and even occasionally in windy conditions.



Humming-bird Hawk-moth showing an extended proboscis



This year has seen many Humming-bird Hawk-moths turning up in gardens

As our climate warms, and our winters become milder, I am sure that we will see more and more of these moths. In fact there is growing evidence that they are already overwintering successfully, and becoming a resident species. Humming-bird Hawk-moths are not the only day-flying Hawk-moths, but can always be identified from the two species of Bee Hawk-moths by the orange coloured hindwings, which show well in flight. I always think that Hummingbird Hawk-moths look much more like tiny hummingbirds than their Bee Hawk-moth relatives, and seem nimbler and faster in flight. Eggs are laid on several species of *Galium*, rather like another new fabulous resident, the Bedstraw Hawk-moth.

Images / Hans Watson

Observed at Wheatfen, at either end of the long hot and dry summer, these two 'zombie' Amber Snails *Succinea putris* are infected by (the intermediate life-stage of) two distinct species of fluke, or digenean, trematode parasite: *Leucochloridium paradoxum*, exhibiting green 'banded' brood-sacs of the sporocyst stage in the parasite's life-cycle, visible in the tentacles and head of one host snail; and *L. pertabatum*, with a single brown banded brood-sac in the other snail.



Amber Snails infected with intermediate stages of flukes - left shows the green-banded brood-sacs of *Leucochloridium paradoxum* and right the brown-banded brood-sac of *L. pertabatum*.

The brood-sacs 'pulsate' rhythmically in the snail's tentacles (and head), apparently to attract the attentions of birds, who may see them as a food source; to the furtherance of the parasite's life-cycle after their ingestion by the bird. The brood-sacs may be retracted from the host snail's tentacles when disturbed – as can be seen in the photo of the *L. pertabatum* below.



When disturbed the brood-sacs may be retracted from the snail's tentacles as seen above.

According to the literature, it is feasible for the sporocysts of the two species of *Leucochloridium* parasite to coexist in a single host; giving rise to the potential of a snail bearing both green and brown banded brood-sacs – green in one tentacle; brown in the other.

A more in-depth account of the parasite's intriguing life-cycle can be found in the excellent NNNs 'Occasional Publications' Number-15; entitled '*Hidden Lives*', by Graham Kearn.

A lot has been said recently about our decline in Swifts over the past few years. Their amazing displays, screaming around the local skies, have almost become a thing of the past. Public are being encouraged to put Swift Boxes or Bricks on their houses to encourage them to breed, where they can no longer get access to roof spaces due to modern house renovations.

While I applaud this action, I would like to promote House Martins too.

Earlier in the year we purchased two pairs of artificial House Martin nest boxes. Having fixed them under the eaves of our very recently built house, we didn't



Young House Martins being fed in an artificial nest fixed to the eaves of our very recently built house.

really hold out much hope that they would serve their purpose this year. Maybe, because of the dry weather and the lack of muddy areas, or maybe not, we were amazed after just a few weeks, when Martins arrived from Africa, they began investigating the boxes and one pair took up residence. Since then, we have seen many more of these threatened birds around our housing estate and all four homes now have little faces peering out, begging to be fed. How many bred and why they are going in and out of these boxes all of the time, during the day, is a mystery.

They obviously are part of a larger family group and it has been a joy to watch them and listen to them chatter to each other. Maybe they are telling each other that our garden is a safe place to stay for the summer and that they will come back next year, who knows?

Whatever the reason that they came to us, we have been delighted and would like to encourage others to do the same. By the time you read this, 'our's' will have left for their other home in Africa, leaving us to hope that they will all return again, next year. Maybe we could all help these lovely birds too and do our bit to bring their numbers back to our summer skies once more.

Images / *Bernard Webb*



An adult bird in flight after feeding its young in the artificial nest.

In what has been a terribly difficult year for our seabirds due to the strain of highly virulent Avian Influenza (AI) ripping through breeding colonies, the East Norfolk Little Tern team wanted to share some positive news.

Typically the Little Terns use beaches at Winterton, Eccles-On-Sea, Kessingland and sometimes North Denes at Great Yarmouth. They generally don't like to share the sites with other species, which this year proved to be a blessing with the AI context. Eccles (of late the largest of the colonies) was abandoned by the birds last year due to intense aerial predation by local Kestrel pairs and Hobby. Little Terns have good memories! This year, after a quick recce at all the sites, all pairs decided to focus their breeding efforts at Winterton, and their decision paid big dividends as they had the most successful year in decades.



An adult and fledgling Little Tern ready to migrate.

almost a third. We even had a handful of pairs successfully raising two broods, which is not frequently observed at our sites. Average clutch size based on 27 nests was 2.51, which is typical. It was predicted from this that 750 would fledge, however an estimate of 50 were predated, predominantly by Hobby. Counts of fledglings were between 585 – 700, giving a brilliant productivity rate of 1.95 -2.33 per pair, this rate needs to be 0.75

Due to the AI issue, and being guided by national advice, it was decided that a very hands off approach would be adopted by the team of wardens this year. This resulted in no ringing, and only one visit inside the colony to establish average clutch size, but we were still able to carry out some monitoring activities.

Average peak nest count (which can be carried out from outside the colony) was 300, up by



Little Terns had a very successful breeding season at Winterton this year.

Images / *Mick Davis*

for population stability. Counting these numbers of fledglings is quite challenging, not only are they very mobile along the beach, but some groups start migration earlier than others. There was, at one point well over 1000 Little Terns on the beach, 600+ adults, including non-breeders, and approximately 400 fledglings. It was joyous to be in a Little Tern 'snow globe' and amongst all their chatter! Winterton is a busy beach for people with increased risk of disturbance to the colony, but aided by positive engagement, most visitors were happy to give the terns space. This was possibly helped by the fact that there were so many terns staking claim to the foreshore!

Yellow-browed Warbler

John Furse

This Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* was found in the mid-afternoon of 25th September, 2022 feeding in the Docks and other vegetation on the shingle beach at Cley. It was one of seven in Norfolk that day and there were over three dozen in the country.

Oblivious to the few observers, it was giving the firm impression that it had never seen a human. It fed low down in the Dock (mainly) and gave some very occasional shots unobstructed by stems and the like.

I have found that the technique of quick-flicking birds like this that it is best to attempt to focus on where you think it is going to perch. Fortunately, on this occasion it 'played ball'.



A confiding Yellow-browed Warbler at Cley - possibly its first contact with humans.

Image / John Furse

There were days this summer when it was just too hot and uncomfortable to walk far, but I try to get an outing in whenever conditions are suitable.

I expect most naturalists in Norfolk have been up to see the Bee-eaters. As I write, all the youngsters have fledged successfully, and are now spending more



A Bee-eater eating a bee although butterflies and dragonflies were also on the menu.

time away from the nesting quarry, before long they will all be on their long journey to Africa. This successful breeding is a first for Norfolk, and might well become a regular occurrence in the future as a result of our warming climate. They certainly are very colourful and beautiful birds.

Down at Strumpshaw fen a pair of Barn Owls reared a successful brood



The fabulous Barn Owl family at Strumpshaw.



of three youngsters in one of the nest boxes. I spent a few magical early mornings with them as they learnt the ropes of being Barn Owls, without doubt these are one of my favourite birds.

Also at Strumpshaw, at the far end of the wood, a pair of Spotted Flycatchers bred, these are fast becoming a rare bird now, but are just about hanging on. In my youth they were a common species, and were



One of a pair of breeding Spotted Flycatchers - an increasingly rare event in the County.

seen everywhere, it's the same very sad story with many of our small birds, year by year there are fewer of them.

Chinese Water Deer are often seen at Strumpshaw, they frequent the fen and meadows, and are completely at home among the marsh reed beds and vegetation. Often on an early session I would come face to face with one feeding on the edge of the path, the surprise would be mutual, they would stand for a few seconds on high alert wondering which way to go, then they are gone, often with a snort of annoyance at having its breakfast disturbed.



Chinese Water Deer seen at Strumpshaw and with young at Poringland.

Recently I was walking with a friend round the area of Poringland, there we came across a doe Water Deer with two half grown fawns. They were well away from their normal marshy ground, but were content enough eating hawthorn leaves in a hedge, when the penny dropped and they saw us, they went straight across the field to our front skipping high into the air to make their escape, very elegant mammals.

In the same general area while following a small stream, a drinking place for cattle proved of interest, it had been churned up and several House Martins



House Martins busily collecting mud when they should be thinking of flying south.

were busy collecting mud, as this was in the middle of August I thought it rather strange, was the warm weather enticing them to try for another brood? They should have been thinking, (like the Bee-eaters), it's time to go.

Nature always has plenty of questions.

Images / *Tony Howes*

Nature Gallery

2022

Two male Chalkhill Blues *Lysandra coridon*. Good numbers seen including six mating pairs - 30 July, Warham Camp / *Janet Negal*

A pair of Ornate-tailed Digger Wasps *Cerceris rybyensis* - 27 July, Raveningham / *Bernard Webb*



Common Wasps *Vespula vulgaris* carving up a caterpillar, 30 July, Flordon / *Janet Negal*



Common Wasp *Vespula vulgaris* drinking from a pond - 05 August Horsey Mill / *Bernard Webb*



Pied Flycatcher in scrub - 18 August, Gramborough Hill, Salthouse, / *John Furse*

Phasia hemiptera a striking parasitic fly whose main hosts include shieldbugs - 11 August, Beeston Common / *Francis Farrow*

Hornet *Vespa crabro* attacking
Common Wasp - St. Margaret's Church,
Hardley 22 August / *Bernard Webb*



Spotted Flycatcher -
27 August,
Gramborough Hill,
Salthouse, / *John Furse*



Red Kite - 29 August,
Ravensingham /
Bernard Webb



Red-throated Diver on sea - 29 August,
Salthouse / *Steve & Karin Hale*



Snow Bunting - 06 October, Salthouse
Beach / *Steve & Karin Hale*



Rhododendron Leafhopper *Graphocephala fennahi*,
a native of the USA introduced to Europe in the early
1900s - 06 October, near Holt / *John Furse*

Tidal surge traps huge fish populations in the Thurne *Mark Collins*

A massive tidal surge pushed seawater up the River Thurne past Womack Water to Potter Heigham, killing tens of thousands of fish and undoubtedly causing untold harm to other species dependent on freshwater for survival. The event has been dubbed an ecological disaster by some and a natural occurrence by others.

It all started on 17th September when the Environment Agency issued a flood alert, saying that upcoming spring tide heights would be exacerbated by northerly winds. They were right, but the full moon was due on 25th September and trouble had already started on 21st September when northerly winds started to force saltwater up into the Bure and Thurne.

At the confluence of the Bure and Thurne, on 23rd September, an eel fisherman reported a lot of crabs in his nets and traps, while patches of wrack seaweeds were floating upstream. Unseen, a massive migration of fish was underway, rushing to escape the deadly saltwater. Hundreds of thousands of fish swam into lagoons and dykes to breathe in the remaining freshwater, but many became trapped and died by the thousand as the oxygen ran out.

At Womack Water alone tens of thousands of fish died, mainly roach, bream and perch. The Environment Agency netted about 45,000 fish, placed them in a tank of oxygenated water and released them into Hickling Broad, but this was probably only a fraction of the fish affected and no-one knows how many would survive the experience.



The Environment Agency stressed that this surge of saltwater is "a natural occurrence" that occurs periodically, while the Broads Authority spokesperson said "...while the Environment Agency is responsible for the clean-up process, we work closely with them and have provided them with any information about locations of reported dead fish." The senior flood warden from North Norfolk Council' called for more coordination, better communication and earlier warnings from BA and EA.

The Herbert Wood marina at Potter Heigham has a removable barrier at its confluence with the River Thurne. It was installed in 1988 when a tidal salt surge killed more than 100,000 fish overwintering in the marina basin, but BBC News reported that it was not deployed for this recent event. The resulting scenes of carnage were widely reported in the official and print media.

Fish killed at Womack Water
as a result of the tidal surge.

Image / *James May*

NNNS Survey Work at Deepdale Farm *Mark Collins & Andy Musgrove*

On Saturday 17th July fifteen NNNs members met at Deepdale Farm to add some additional data to the structured invertebrate surveys being carried out there. The group included a keen mix of county recorders, ecologists, botanists, entomologists and general naturalists.

Deepdale is an arable farm set in a stunning location overlooking Brancaster Staithe and Scolt Head Island. By creating and expanding corners of semi-natural habitat, integrated with carefully managed agricultural areas, the owners want to improve biodiversity and soil quality.



Bioblitz in full swing as NNNs members hunt for species at Deepdale Farm.

Most data will take a while to be processed, but the expectation is that between 500 and 750 species (mainly insects) will have been found. One notable record was the Great Green Bush-cricket *Tettigonia viridissima* (opposite), singing in tall grass. Common in SW England but in Norfolk mostly confined to colonies near Reedham and Thetford, this magnificent species has extended its range along the coast from Minsmere, reaching Salthouse in 2021, and now Deepdale in 2022.

NNNS has a partnership with Deepdale to establish a biodiversity baseline. A DEFRA grant enabled county recorder Andy Musgrove to gather monthly records, but his surveys couldn't cover everything, so a key project element was to extend the research using NNNs specialists to investigate marginal habitats such as hedgerows, ditches, and woodland.

In each of three sites, entomologists set to with vigorous sweeping and beating, erected a Malaise trap for flying insects, and placed ten pitfall traps in the ground to survey ground beetles and the like. These were all retrieved a week later. We also put out six yellow dish water-traps at each site, retrieving these at the end of the day, and experimented with small food items to attract ants. Meanwhile, botanists and ornithologists studied the arable margins and woods.



Images / *Hans Watson*



BCP - an appeal to naturalists

Mark Collins

Broadland Country Park is our priority research project and, amazingly, we have already recorded about 2000 species, but we still need experts and beginners alike to fill in some gaps in our knowledge. A well-rounded picture is essential to help map out a management plan that recognises the value of this area, particularly to residents in nearby Norwich.

Readers may be surprised to know that bird records remain much-needed. Birds are particularly important indicators of successful management for nature recovery. For example, have Stonechats been able to breed in the new heath areas, and are Little Owls nesting in the woods? Please contact Dave



Stonechat - a possible breeding bird



Little Owl - is it breeding at BCP?

Weaver by email:

(david@davidweaver.plus.com) as well as recording your sightings on your favourite app.

The UK has 650 spider species and, amazingly, 400 or so have been recorded in Norfolk, including rarities such as the Fen raft spider. Our County Recorder, Pip Collyer has spent a lifetime studying spiders and is now calling for enthusiasts

to step forward and join the Norfolk Spider Group. We need budding arachnologists to come to Broadland Country Park this Autumn when spiders become more visible for study. You don't have to be an expert to make a start on the 50 or so more common varieties and there is help at hand.

Finally, we need more information on the Park's "bugs" – the Hemiptera. The two main divisions are the Heteroptera, or Shield bugs and their allies, and the Homoptera, or aphids, scale insects and leafhoppers. Where possible, their foodplants should also be noted. The NNNS website has an excellent guide to Shield bugs.

If you would like to contribute, check out the County Recorders on the inside cover of Natterjack. They are there to help and would always like to hear from you.

Images / *Hans Watson*

Spider Enthusiasts - *Your County Needs You!*

NNNS is very keen to support the Norfolk Spider Group, which is headed up by Pip Collyer. Pip has done sterling work as Norfolk's County Spider Recorder for many years now, but he needs some new members to join the group. If we can get a few names together there is every opportunity for some studies in Broadland Country Park and elsewhere in the county. Once the group is active, we can organise basic training in identification. At the moment we need enthusiasm, not necessarily expertise!

In the first instance contact Mark Collins,
Chair, NNNS Research Committee
(collinsmark@gmail.com)



Crab Spider *Xysticus* sp.
Image / *Francis Farrow*



The Snow Bee
Image / *Bernard Webb*

Society Notes

Environmental statement

The Norfolk & Naturalists' Society has rarely, if ever, taken sides in a planning dispute but as a research-based organisation we have encouraged members to investigate Norfolk's wildlife and make the findings available to support planning decisions. With over 650 members it would be impossible to represent all on a single issue. However, recent statements by the government which, in effect, state that economic and development considerations trump those of conservation and the environment, raise issues that are so fundamental to the basis of the Society that we felt that we must speak out.

The Society has no expertise in bringing such opinions to public attention but we have been invited by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, together with other concerned organisations, to join with them in preparing a statement that was issued on September 28th. This expresses serious concern at the reversing of policies evolved to protect the environment and the climate for short-term 'gain'. The full text can be seen on the NWT's website - <https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/news-and-articles/news/all-news/2022-09-28-government-announcements-spell>

Tony Leech, Chair.

Statement from the Treasurer

Please note that in the Financial Statement of the Trustees' Annual Report (TAR) for the year 2021, published in the February 'Natterjack', the "total cash balance" at the year-end was declared to be £123,291. It should have read £127,223 as the delayed banking of one cheque was carried over to 2022.

You may read the corrected TAR listed at:

<https://nnns.org.uk/wp/publications/annual-report/>

Jim Froud, Treasurer.

September 2022



The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be
February 2023

Please send all
articles / notes and photographic material
to the editor as soon as possible by
January 1st 2023 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 newsletter, '*The Norfolk Natterjack*', 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).

The FSC - Forest Stewardship Council - label indicates that materials used in the production of this bulletin are recyclable and sustainably sourced.



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