



The Norfolk Natterjack

The quarterly bulletin of the
Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society



... Researching
Norfolk's Wildlife

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Cover image: Glossy Ibis - Hans Watson (See page 8)

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<u>Woodlice, Pseudoscorpions, Centipedes & Millipedes</u>		<i>Position vacant</i>

NB: Please check <https://norfolknaturalists.org.uk/wp/recording/county-recorders/> for updates

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Toad-in-the-hole...

My thanks to those members that have contributed to this edition of 'Natterjack'. It is a special issue for me as it marks my 100th edition as editor. The quarterly bulletin has changed over the years from stapled A4 black and white sheets to the full colour A5 booklet produced to-day. This edition has notes on gall-flies, caterpillars, bees and how the UK birding scene is changing. There is, and it's been awhile now, also an 'Excursion Report'. As we end this year and look forward to 2024 the natural world is changing and we should record those events - hopefully here in 'Natterjack'.
FF

A rather striking gall-fly

Anne Hickley

As a very general rule of thumb, the easiest way to find evidence of gall-forming insects is to look for the galls, which are often conspicuous and never fly away! However, there are some exceptions, where the adult is more conspicuous than the gall containing its larva, and one of them is this rather striking little tephritid fly, which I believe to be *Terellia tussilaginis*. These flies gall the achenes of burdock, but they cause minimal swelling and leave only small holes in the seeds (or so I read, not having actually seen any yet).

However, the adults are quite striking as, though small, they are a rather bright greenish-yellow with distinctive 'painted' wings. This is a male but the females

also has an impressive ovipositor, presumably in order to lay her eggs deep within the burdock flowers. There is another similar tephritid that galls burdock, *Tephritis bardanae*, but both wing patterning and body colour/pattern are different. An excellent reference is Malcom Storey's guide to the Tephritidae in the UK at <https://bioimages.org.uk/downloads/Diptera/Tephritidae%20Pictorial%20Guide.pdf>



Gall-fly *Terellia tussilaginis* Image / Anne Hickley

A nesting aggregation of *Panurgus calcaratus* (Scopoli, 1763)

Vanna Bartlett, Jeremy Bartlett and Anne Crotty

On 11 July 2023 we visited the Norfolk Brecks to look for solitary bees. Our target species was *Anthophora bimaculata* (Green-eyed Flower Bee) which we had previously found nesting in several places on the Norfolk side of the county border near Santon Downham.

On the walk in from the car park by the railway crossing, Anne spotted a dark bee on Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*) and took a couple of photos but the bee flew off before Vanna could catch it. Looking at the photos Vanna knew it was a male *Panurgus* and, judging by the orange on the antennae, was pretty sure it was *Panurgus calcaratus* (Small Shaggy Bee).

Panurgus calcaratus is a scarce species in Norfolk and until this year there have only been four records. Tim Strudwick made the first Norfolk sighting in August 2015, a male at Cranwich Heath (Owens 2017). Vanna photographed a female at Weeting Heath in August 2017 and Tim subsequently found a female at the same site in July 2016 and a female at Thetford Warren in July 2022 (Strudwick 2023).

We checked out other patches of Cat's-ear and found a couple more bees, one of which Vanna caught and examined to confirm the identification (the male has a diagnostic spur on the underside of the hind femora).



Male *Panurgus calcaratus* showing the diagnostic spur on the hind femur.

Image / Vanna Bartlett

We were next to an area of nesting *Anthophora bimaculata* and as well as their distinctive semi-circular nest entrance holes, there were several much smaller round holes. We had a hunch that they could be the nest holes of *Panurgus calcaratus* and as we were looking at them a female laden with pollen flew in and went straight down a hole.

While we waited for this bee to emerge, a second bee came in and went down the same hole. Keeping an eye on the other entrance holes we soon saw several more females arriving laden with pollen and it was clear that several females were using the same nest hole. We also kept an eye on the Cat's-ear flowers and saw several males on them and occasionally a female. We had discovered a small nesting aggregation with at least twelve females seen and six males.



Panurgus calcaratus: female with pollen and male showing the extensive orange on the antennae, nestled in a Cat's-ear flower.

Image / *Vanna Bartlett*



Pollen laden females at communal nest. Image / *Anne Crotty*

The weather in the morning was intermittently cloudy and when the sun went in the male bees would just sit in the Cat's-ear flowers. We noted that the Cat's-ear flowers had all closed up by early afternoon. We knew that some species of bee only forage in the morning because the flowers they visit close up like this, so later in the day we checked on the nest holes and found that they had all been covered up.

Reading up about the bees later that evening our observations were confirmed; females use communal nests and collect pollen solely from 'hawkish composites' (Cat's-ear being one of them) which tend to close in the after-noon so foraging is restricted to mornings (Else & Edwards 2018).



The Cat's-ear flowers had all closed up by early afternoon.

Image / *Jeremy Bartlett*

Vanna and Jeremy revisited the site on 16th July 2023 and managed to photograph a pair of mating *Panurgus calcaratus* on a Cat's-ear flower.

Vanna and Anne at the *Panurgus* nesting site. Image / *Jeremy Bartlett*



Mating *Panurgus calcaratus* on a Cat's-ear flower. Image / *Vanna Bartlett*

References

- Else G.R. & Edwards M. 2018. *Handbook of the Bees of the British Isles*. Ray Society, London.
- Owens, N. 2017. *The Bees of Norfolk*. Pisces Publications, Newbury.
- Strudwick, T. 2023, personal communication.

Gramborough Hill, Salthouse is always giving me something to think about. On 2nd October, 2023 I spotted a large caterpillar high up in a Tamarisk, At first I



Larva of Poplar Hawk-moth in Tamarisk

was at a loss to work out what it was as it was confusingly upside-down. Once it had re-orientated itself to a more normal position the horned tail, diagnostic of a hawk-moth larva, was seen and being pale yellow on a purple spotted pale green body with oblique yellow stripes identified it as a Poplar Hawk-moth caterpillar. Tamarisk is not its food plant so I could only surmise that it had wandered from an adjacent Goat Willow.



Larva of Ruby Tiger moth
Images / John Furse

A couple of days later, 4th October, I found another caterpillar which was unfamiliar to me. It was low down in the undergrowth and appeared exceedingly well protected by pale brown sharp bristles (setae). Thanks to Francis Farrow it was identified as the larva of a Ruby Tiger, a moth that I don't recall seeing as an adult on the hill.

Beeston Common - Some summer highlights *Francis Farrow*

This summer's weather has been mixed with a cool cloudy May, a hot dry June and the sun and shower pattern over July, August and September, which has kept everything fresh on Beeston Common and most insect groups seem to have done well, although flies, particularly hoverflies seem to have been down both in species and numbers. Despite this new records or records of insect species not seen for a while have been made by various observers.

Shieldbugs have been particularly good with the Forget-me-not Shieldbug *Sehirus luctuosus* seen 19th May, followed by the small Bordered Shieldbug *Legnotus limbosus* (Mark Clements) on 3rd June. Both these were new to the site and on 3rd August a Blue Shieldbug *Zicrona caerulea* was spotted deep in the undergrowth. This was only the second record in over 35 years.

New beetles have included one of the water scavenger beetles, *Sphaeridium lunatum*, (Mark Clements) 18th May and *Chrysolina banksii*, (John Furse) 11th August. Also on 11th August the 'valezina' form of the Silver-washed Fritillary was noted, another 'first' for this particular genetic variation of the female. A few days later, 14th August, a rather striking example of a female Common Blue was found where it has extensive blue on its wings instead of the more normal brown. It is the aberration 'caerulea'. Finally on 19th September a chance encounter with a hoverfly turned out to be a new species for me and only the second record for the site. It was *Riponnensia splendens* and was first recorded 16th August 1989 by Stephen Falk.



Forget-me-not Shieldbug (1)



Bordered Shieldbug (2)



Blue Shieldbug (3)



Sphaeridium lunatum (4)



Chrysolina banksii (5)



Silver-washed Fritillary 'valezina' (6)



Common Blue 'caerulea' (7)



Riponnensia splendens (8)

Images 1,3,6,7 & 8 / Francis Farrow
 Images 2 & 4 / Mark Clements
 Image 5 / John Furse

Few naturalists will have failed to notice the small invasion of birds from southern Europe that graced our county this last spring and early summer, and there certainly appears to be indications that this invasion will continue, and even accelerate.

Trend setting Little Egrets and Mediterranean Gulls have shown the way for Great White Egrets, Spoonbills, Cattle Egrets, with signs that Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Black-winged Stilts and Bee-eaters are also gradually becoming established as breeding residents in Britain. It is probable that Squacco Herons and Night Herons will also follow, and the number of Glossy Ibis recorded this year, indicates they may also become resident. Some authorities think that Black Kite and Great Reed Warbler are also likely to become breeding birds in the UK. All of this, together with all of the new species of insects that are gradually becoming resident, is an ominous sign that nature is responding to rising temperatures. Also, as birds move north to Britain to escape rising temperature and drought in southern Europe, so birds like Willow Warblers are moving north to escape rising temperatures in southern Britain.



Not Spain but Norfolk - A pair of Glossy Ibis sharing a pool with Black-tailed Godwit and Avocets

In June and July of this year, I had the privilege of being able to watch a pair of Black-winged Stilts and a pair of Glossy Ibis within a mile or two of my home. I



even saw signs that the Glossy Ibis had set up a territory giving hope that they might nest*. But this did not happen. At the same time that the Stilts and Ibis were present, unusually large flocks of Black-tailed Godwits arrived, all in lovely brick red summer plumage, which makes me wonder if these were birds that had had an early breeding season, or were they failed or non-breeding birds. I counted 84 birds in one flock.

**News has recently been released that a pair of Glossy Ibis bred successfully in Cambridgeshire in 2022.*



Top: A pair of Black-winged Stilts - now breeding successfully in the UK.

Middle: A Glossy Ibis - the latest exotic bird to be added to the UK breeding list.

Bottom: A Black-tailed Godwit. Two subspecies breed in the UK in small numbers. The *limosa* subspecies is generally found in East Anglia and the *islandica* subspecies breeds in Scotland



Images / Hans Watson

Excursion report:

Kelling Heath - 29th July 2023

Nick Owens

The weather was sunny and warm with occasional cloud. As the group was quite large (16 plus leader) and the paths narrow, Francis Farrow and Hans Watson kindly agreed to help with pointing out fauna and flora of interest as the group became spread out. Plastic magnifying pots were shared to assist with catching and inspecting some of the more mobile invertebrates. At about 10.45 we moved off slowly on a circular walk around the northern section of the heath. We first came across large numbers of skippers, which Francis explained the features which identified them as a mixture of Small Skippers and Essex Skippers. Most were feeding on Viper's Bugloss, close to the car park.



Naturalists assembling at
Kelling Heath car park



Skipper butterflies visiting
Viper's Bugloss flowers

Orthoptera were the next topic of interest, and illustrations were given out of Norfolk's grasshoppers and crickets. We also used a bat detector to home in on orthoptera sounds, and quickly managed to pot and identify several Field Grasshoppers and Roesel's Bush-crickets. Common Green Grasshoppers and Mottled Grasshoppers were also stridulating. Walking slowly along an area scraped bare to encourage Silver-studded Blue butterflies (the adults mostly now finished) we were able to find several insect species which use open areas for nesting and catching prey, including the Spider-hunting Wasp *Anoplius viaticus*, the Sand Wasp *Ammophila sabulosa* and another caterpillar-hunter *Podalonia hirsuta*, all three being quite large and having a rather similar black and red body pattern. Green Tiger Beetles also scuttled and flew along before us. There followed an enjoyable interlude using binoculars and a telescope to watch a very fine male Stonechat, accompanied by several fledged young. Dartford Warblers



Sand Wasp *Ammophila sabulosa*



A male Stonechat

were half-expected as they often associate with Stonechats on the heath. One was spotted briefly by one person but did not show itself again. Another highlight came in the form of two species of solitary bees beside the path, collecting pollen from Catsear flowers – a Pantaloon Bee (*Dasygaster hirtipes*) and several Large Shaggy Bees (*Panurgus banksianus*), both being specialists on Asteraceae pollen.



Pantaloon Bee *Dasygaster hirtipes* (female)



Large Shaggy Bee *Panurgus banksianus*

Further towards the sea we emerged into an area which had been cut short two seasons beforehand and now presented a spectacular show of bell heather and western gorse, with some ling heather just showing its colour. On one patch, a couple of late and very worn Silver-studded Blues were spotted and seen by most of the group. From here we wended our way back to the starting point, spotting many patches of flowering Dodder on the short-cut Gorse shoots (some on Western Gorse, distinguished by Hans Watson from Common Gorse by its less blue-green colour), each with its own collection of insects and spiders.



NNNS members looking at a Silver-studded Blue



A rather worn Silver-studded Blue



Dodder - a parasitic plant growing on Gorse



Tawny Grisette *Amanita fulva*

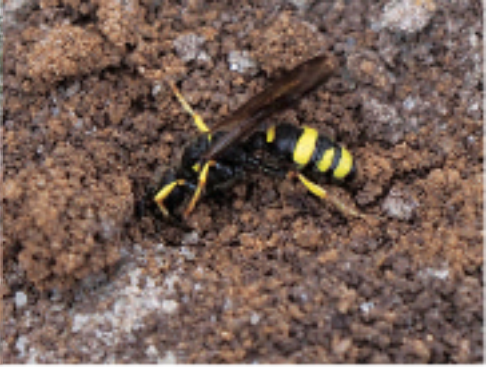
Near the track, specimens of Tawny Grisette fungus (*Amanita fulva*) were spotted as well as several Labyrinth Spiders (*Agelina labyrinthina*) in their funnel-shaped lairs. We also noticed Ornate Bee Fox wasps (*Cerceris rybyensis*), entering and leaving their burrows in the gravelly ground, some of them with solitary bee prey. The main walk finished at at the car park at about 1 pm after a very enjoyable morning. Seven of us stayed for a picnic lunch amongst the Viper's Bugloss and followed a circuit on the south side of the road, where we were able to spend more time watching solitary wasps in the bare track alongside the steam railway (with some passing trains) and the fungus experts discovered some Blusher fungi (*Amanita rubescens*). We returned to the car park by about 15.30, with rain just beginning to threaten.



Kelling Heath - a colourful mix of Bell Heather, Western Gorse and Ling Image / *Francis Farrow*



A Labyrinth Spider *Agelina labyrinthina*
in its funnel-shaped lair



Ornate Bee Fox wasp *Cerceris rybyensis*

Images / *Hans Watson*

Society Notes

VOLUNTEER PROJECT SECRETARY NEEDED

NNNS has agreed with Norfolk Wildlife Trust to focus its expertise on the biodiversity of Sweet Briar Marshes (SBM) in Norwich. Recently purchased by NWT, but not yet open to the public, SBM is a compact but diverse wetland of 90ha. The Research Committee seeks a Volunteer Project Secretary to help organise visits and recording. You will need to be a good organiser, but not a biodiversity expert. Would suit a member living in or near Norwich. Contact Mark Collins, Chair, NNNS Research Committee (collinsmark@gmail.com).



Tubular Water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa* is one of the more interesting plants growing in the Sweet Briar marshes. It is an indicator of ancient habitats with a low nutrient water content.

Tribute to our Vice - presidents

During 2023 we lost two further stalwarts of the Society, both were current Vice-presidents but have had an active role on Council throughout the years. Formal obituaries for both will appear in the 2023 *Transactions* but a short tribute follows.

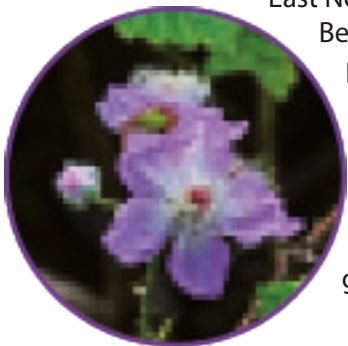
Dr. Roy Baker

Roy Baker passed away 20th July 2023. As well as being a Vice-president Roy had served the NNNS as Secretary and Editor of *Transactions*. He joined the Society in 1966 when he was at Keswick Hall training teachers in science and became Secretary three years later, a post he held for 18 years. He was also instrumental in setting up the Ted Ellis Trust and was its Chair for 25 years. With his friend, Derek Howlet, a book entitled, '*An Historical Study of the Freshwater Snails, Mussels and Clams of Wheatfen and Rockland Broads and their Associated Marshes*' was printed in 2020 and covered a group that had long held Roy's interest being a former county recorder for Mollusca.



Alec Bull

Alec Bull passed away 8th August 2023. Within the Society Alec held a number of roles including, Programme committee chairman, Secretary and President as well as being a Vice-president. Alec was also a former plant recorder for East Norfolk and went on to produce with Gillian Beckett '*A Flora of Norfolk*' (1999). Brambles were a particular interest and this culminated in a book '*Looking at Brambles*' (2010). Alec was an all round naturalist and a lot of his studies were not lost on his family and one of his daughters, Sally, penned her own tribute to her dad - the naturalist on Father's Day 2023 and has graciously allowed it to be reproduced opposite.





DAD



If it wasn't for you
I wouldn't know much
About insects like bees,
moths or sawflies and such



If it wasn't for you
I'd not know a lot
About which plant is which
And what plant is what.



If it wasn't for you
I'd not have a clue
About which birds go 'cheep'
And which 'twit-terwoo'



If it wasn't for you
I'd be quite confounded
By creatures that swam,
And hopped, even bounded.



But aside from all this,
And let's be quite clear....
If it wasn't for you
I wouldn't be here!!!



Christmas Word Search

I X M E G D I R T R A P E N X
E X S I U R N U N Y U J W U B
B F B J S L N S W A N G K T H
H O L L Y T G A L Y E R G C M
Y K L C S G L X S C P E U R T
T R R E I N D E E R I V E A N
A U H F R P H Z T V X O A C A
F C R N O R L E Y O I D O K S
K R E K T X I Y L M E U Z E A
X R B F E V I U E L K L U R E
W M A M J Y K L Q C E F O O H
D L S K B J H E D S U B W X P
M R A E B R A L O P I R O J I
E D S V Q Y M O T N V J P R H
P B U L N P Z G K B Q T J S E

The following words are from the natural world and have an association with winter and/or Christmas. Find the words in the puzzle which can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other. Enjoy.

CHESTNUT	DOVE	FOX	GREYLAG
HELLEBORE	HOLLY	IVY	MISTLETOE
NUTCRACKER	PARTRIDGE	PHEASANT	POLARBEAR
REINDEER	ROBIN	SPRUCE	SQUIRREL
SWAN	TURKEY	WREN	YULELOG



Solution on
back cover

NNNS Events Programme 2023/24 - November to February

The following programme of events are those arranged up to publication of this edition of 'Natterjack'. **Please check the events listing online at www.nnns.org.uk for up to date information and any other events/excursions.** Wear suitable clothing/footwear for the conditions and bring your own refreshments. Most of the events are on Saturdays or Sundays. The Broadland Country Park event is on a Thursday. **Please try to car share or arrive by public transport.**

Saturday 11th November 10.30 start.

Litcham Common with Rob Yaxley, County Lichen Recorder. Learn your Lichens. Meet at Litcham Common car park PE32 2NT (nearest) / TF887172 - The car park is located near the top of Dunham Road, the turn off for which can be found at the Church Street / Dereham Road junction south of Litcham.

Tuesday 14th November 19.30 - 21.30

A talk by Nick Acheson '*The Meaning of Geese*'. All members welcome. St. Andrew's Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6NW.

Sunday 26th November 10.00. – afternoon

Wheatfen: The Ted Ellis Trust Reserve. Leader Will Fitch, the head warden. An introduction first by Will who will then take us around the fen. After lunch you can continue at your leisure, enjoy our library there and the microscopes will be available so feel free to bring specimens. Park in TET car park NR14 7AL (nearest) / TG324056 (The Covey, Surlingham, Norwich).

Tuesday 28th November 19:30 - 21:00

NNNS Photographic Group meeting - '*Autumn in the USA*' with Hans Watson. All members welcome. St. Andrew's Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6NW.

Tuesday 12th December 19.30 – 21.30

A talk by Tony Leech '*Norfolk's Fabulous 150*' followed by our normal refreshments maybe with a festive twist! All members welcome. St. Andrew's Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6NW.



Tuesday, 9th January 2024 19:30-21:30

A talk by Allan Archer 'Developing Naturalist'. Allan is the Society's key provider of education for children and families. All members welcome. St. Andrew's Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6NW.

Tuesday, 23 January 2024 19:30 - 21:00

Photographic Group: 'Shore to Heath' by Carl Chapman

All members of the Society welcome. St Andrew's Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich NR4 6NW, UK.

Tuesday, 13 February 2024 19:30 - 21:30

A talk by John Fleetwood 'The work of The Tree Council'. John is the Coordinator of The Tree Council. All members of the Society are welcome. St Andrew's Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich NR4 6NW, UK.

Tuesday, 27 February 2024 19:30 - 21:00

Photographic Group: 'Keeping it Local, Keeping it Real. Twitching versus Patching' by David Bryant. All members of the Society welcome. St Andrew's Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich NR4 6NW, UK.

NNNS Events 2023 (November to February)





The next issue of 'The Norfolk Natterjack' will be
February 2024

Please send all
articles / notes and photographic material
to the editor as soon as possible by
January 1st 2024 to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road,
Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD or
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).

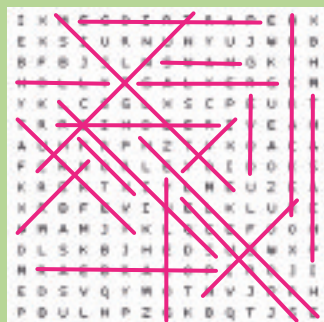
The FSC - Forest Stewardship Council - label indicates that materials used in the production of this bulletin are recyclable and sustainably sourced.



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Christmas Word Search Solution