



The Norfolk Natterjack

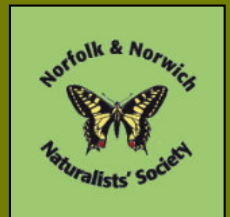


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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society Recorders

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

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Toad-in-the-hole...

As the New Year moves into its second month the night's are pulling out noticeably and spring should be in evidence all around. Have you noticed anything unusual with the local wildlife or is everything much the same as usual? Please send in any interesting observations. My thanks to all our contributors to 'Natterjack' this month, which appears to be devoted in a great part to birds and bees. There are jumping Spiders and don't forget to check out the new Harvestman guide. To wet our appetite there is a look at the new Sweetbriar Marshes research project, a garden invitation, an excursion report, the County Recorders' meeting and an alien flatworm! **FF**

Australian Flatworm

Vanna Bartlet & James Emerson

On Sunday 19th November 2023 we met up in Earlham Cemetery to look for some of the interesting bugs that Vanna had recently found. Although we didn't find what we were looking for, the turning over of a stray terracotta roof tile revealed a new species to us both in the form of an Australian Flatworm.

Never one to leave any stone or log unturned, Vanna lifted a roof tile she spotted lying beyond the gardens bordering Earlham Road. A mass of Keeled Budapest Slugs (*Tandonia budapestensis*) seemed to be the only creatures sheltering underneath but the eagle-eyed James, who seems to know what virtually every organism he sees is, spotted something else and casually remarked something along the lines of 'Oh, New Zealand Flatworm'.



Australian Flatworm *Caenoplana variegata* (Fletcher and Hamilton, 1888), placed on a leaf to photograph. Image / James Emerson

What at first glance looked like yet more slugs coiled up together was in fact one individual flatworm whose identity was given away by the pale stripe running down the length of its back. James picked it up and tried cleaning soil off to get a better look at it and then Vanna managed to uncoil it, transferring it on to a leaf for a photograph. A search on the internet revealed it to be *Caenoplana variegata*, an Australian species rather than a New Zealand one. It grows to at least 15cm long, is dark purplish

brown with a pale yellow stripe running down the length of the back with two dark parallel lines within it. The underside may have a bluish tinge.



Australian Flatworm found coiled up under discarded roof tile, along with some Spotted Snake Millipedes (*Blanniulus gutturalatus*).
Image / Vanna Bartlett

Land flatworms, or terrestrial planarians as they are sometimes known, belong to the phylum Platyhelminthes. Other organisms in this group include free-living aquatic flatworms and parasitic flukes and tapeworms. There are three or four native species of land flatworm in the UK with a growing number of non-native ones being recorded. The identification guide to land flatworms in British Wildlife (Jones, 2005) listed fourteen species; since then, a further nine have been recorded. These have presumably arrived from

their worldwide origins (which include Brazil as well as Australia and New Zealand) via the horticultural trade.

All species of land flatworm are hermaphrodite, as are the segmented worms that include earthworms, and slugs and snails. The native species feed mostly on dead slugs and earthworms (*Lumbricus* spp) while most of the introduced species eat live earthworms, with a few recorded preying on small snails and others not known.

When the New Zealand Flatworm *Arthurdendyus triangulatus* was first reported in the UK (along with scary newspaper headlines) there was deep concern about what impact they would have, largely because their diet was made up principally of our native earthworms. There is at least one confirmed sighting of this species from Norfolk. The only other Norfolk species is the native *Microplana terrestris*. While *Caenoplana variegata* doesn't prey on earthworms, it does feed on a wide variety of arthropods so could well have negative impacts on our native fauna. It reproduces via fission where a piece breaks off and regenerates into another worm so it has the potential to become highly invasive.

Caenoplana variegata was first recorded in the UK in 2008 and there is at least one previous record for Norfolk so it is something for any gardeners in the county to be on the lookout for - or any curious naturalist who peers under logs and stones!

Thanks to Hugh D. Jones (Scientific Associate, Natural History Museum, London) for confirming our record and for further information regarding the species and its distribution in the UK.

References:

Jones, H.D. (2005) British land flatworms, *British Wildlife* Vol 16, 189–194.

Encounters with the Large Scissor Bee, *Chelostoma florissomne*

Jeremy Bartlett

In mid May 2023 Vanna and I had a week's holiday in Suffolk. We cycled down to Ufford, near Woodbridge, and rented a thatched cottage with a lovely big garden.

It was quite late in the day when we arrived but the next morning dawned sunny and as I drew the curtains in the bedroom I noticed a bee on the outside windowsill. It was a good omen for the week ahead, a male Large Scissor Bee,



Our holiday cottage. (The red flowers are Sheep's Sorrel, *Rumex acetosella*.)



Chelostoma florissomne.

Scissor Bees

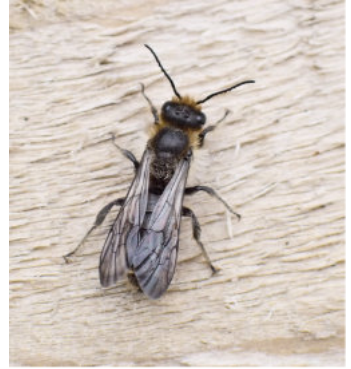
Scissor Bees (*Chelostoma*) are small solitary bees with long, thin cylindrical bodies and there are two species in the British Isles, both of which are found in Norfolk and Suffolk.

I'm most familiar with the Small Scissor Bee, *Chelostoma campanularum*. It's tiny, just 5-6mm long, and occurs where bellflowers (*Campanula*) grow. We see it in our garden every summer, collecting pollen from garden varieties of *Campanula* and nectar from other flowers, such as Geranium 'Rozanne'. We also find it in places where Harebells (*Campanula rotundifolia*) grow, such as in the Brecks.

In contrast, although the Large Scissor Bee, *Chelostoma florissomne*, is widely distributed in Norfolk we don't often see it. It is larger (body length 10mm) and has distinctive white bands of short hairs on the posterior margins of its abdominal segments.

Female *Chelostoma campanularum*
collecting pollen from Chimney Bellflower
(*Campanula pyramidalis*).

Chelostoma florissomne



Chelostoma florissomne males.

We've seen *Chelostoma florissomne* at Strumpshaw Fen, where it nests in the wooden totem by Reception Hide, and at Cranwich Heath in the Brecks, visiting buttercup flowers. The bees are on the wing from May until July.

Our Norfolk sightings have been in ones and twos but when we stepped outside our Suffolk holiday cottage we soon counted a hundred or more males, settling on the windowsills and a wooden well cover in the garden and flying around the edge of the roof. The thatch was clearly home to a sizeable nesting aggregation of bees and we had arrived in the week when males were lekking, waiting for females to emerge and the opportunity to mate.



A male *Chelostoma florissomne* visiting a buttercup flower at Cranwich Heath.

Female Large Scissor Bees collect pollen from buttercups. Males also visit buttercups and sometimes spend the night or a dull day inside a flower, leading to the alternative English name of 'Sleepy Carpenter Bee'.

Chelostoma florissomne will nest in small cavities, such as beetle holes in dead standing trees, wooden timbers and fence posts and thatched roofs. Our cottage's thatched roof was an ideal nesting site and was just a few hundred metres as the bee flies from meadows in the Deben valley packed with buttercups in full flower.



Chelostoma florissomne female on a Daisy flower (*Bellis perennis*).

During our week's stay we only saw a single female *Chelostoma florissomne*, sitting on a Daisy flower. She differed from the males by having a larger head with very long projecting mandibles and a densely-haired, buff-coloured scopa (pollen brush) beneath her abdomen for pollen collection.

If we'd visited in the following week we would have found many more females emerging and a frenzy of mating bees, then in a couple more weeks the males would have finished

mating and died, leaving the females to construct nest cells in the thatch. The female will construct several nest cells within the nest hole, stocking each cell with pollen to feed the larva and then sealing it up.

Monosapyga clavicornis

During our stay we found several of the bee's cleptoparasite, the slim black and yellow solitary wasp *Monosapyga clavicornis*, including a mating pair on a wooden post.



Mating pair of *Monosapyga clavicornis*.



Monosapyga clavicornis (left) and male *Chelostoma florissomne*.

Once *Chelostoma florissomne* starts nesting the female wasps will lay their eggs in *Chelostoma florissomne* nest cells. The wasp's egg will hatch into a larva with large jaws, which will consume the bee's egg. Later instars of the larva have smaller jaws and feed on the stored pollen.

To avoid parasitism, female bees can remove *Monosapyga clavicornis* eggs from cells that have not yet been sealed. However, if the wasp pushes the end of her abdomen into a recently sealed cell before laying her egg, the bee is unable to remove it.

Sometimes a female bee deliberately leaves an empty cell between her brood cells to foil the wasps. If the wasp lays her egg into a blank cell, the larva will have no food and, unable to break into a neighbouring cell, it will die of starvation.

Further Reading

Benton T. & Owens N. (2023). *Solitary Bees*. New Naturalist Library. Harper Collins, London. (Pages 339 and 340 give further details of a 2000 study by Swendsen & Calabuig on the parasitism of *Chelostoma florissomne* by *Monosapyga clavicornis* and the bee's defences.)

Falk S. & Lewington R. (2015). *Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland*. British Wildlife Publishing, London.

Owens, N. (2017). *Bees of Norfolk*. Pisces Publications, Newbury.

Ivy Bee expanding tastes

Chris Durdin

While on an organised trip to Wells-next-to-sea (12 October, 2023), I noticed what I thought was an Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*) on Hogweed, which caught my interest as I have only seen Ivy Bees feeding on Ivy flowers. The timing was end-of-season when Ivy has fewer flowers, which may be a factor. In 'The Bees of Norfolk' book by Nick Owens, feeding on Ivy, Prickly Sow-thistle and Ragwort are mentioned, but not Hogweed. The book is dated 2017 when Ivy bees had just arrived in Norfolk, and now they are ubiquitous, so more records on

different flowers are to be expected.

Nonetheless I reported this sighting to Tim Strudwick, Norfolk recorder for Bumblebees, Solitary Bees and Wasps. Tim says: "Yes, certainly a male Ivy Bee as the thorax is too ginger for any alternatives. There are now records from a large variety of flowers, mostly daisy family but in Norfolk also *Calluna*, *Reseda*, *Scabious*, *Clematis*, *Mint* and *Chives*, but not Hogweed as far as I can see."



Ivy Bee feeding on Hogweed, Wells 12 October 2023
Image / Chris Durdin

Jumping Spiders

Hans Watson

Spiders have intrigued me since childhood, and started when I heard a *Tegenaria* house spider run over a newspaper that was laying on the floor. How I wish that my hearing was that good now. Most naturalists are very aware of the vital role that spiders play in the natural world, and are also aware of spiders' ability to cause people to either love or detest them. Arachnophobia is a well known condition, and I have members of my family that suffer from it. However these family members have told me that they are fascinated by Zebra spiders and other jumping spiders, and even love them. I have asked them why



Zebra Spider with a moth

this should be, and it seems that it is mainly because they are small, alert, and have 'character'. The description 'cute' has also been mentioned, and it may be that as they hunt by stalking their prey like a cat, leaping upon their victim when in range, this makes them appear more mammal-like.



Fencepost Jumping Spider

Last summer I was very pleased to discover a largish jumping spider in my garden that I had not seen before. This was basking in sunshine, and obligingly allowed me to take a series of photographs. From these photographs I rather think that it is a Fencepost Jumping Spider (*Marpissa muscosa*), although I did not think that they occurred in my area of East Norfolk. I am sure that our Arachnophile members will correct my identification if it is wrong. My field guide to Britain's Spiders tells me that there are a number of jumping spiders that are found in Norfolk, and of course one (*Marpissa radiata*), even

made it into the *Norfolk's Wonderful 150* book.

In much of the southern countries in Europe there is a jumping spider, the male of which is quite spectacular. These can often be seen on pathways, even in built up areas. This is *Philaeus chrysops*, and in recent years has been found in the UK. It is believed to have reached Britain in plant imports, so as our weather continues to get warmer it is worth keeping our eyes open. It could be a Norfolk spider one day.



Philaeus chrysops photographed in Croatia

Images / *Hans Watson*

Norfolk Harvestman Guide



A Guide to the Harvestmen of Norfolk is now available on the Society's website. It covers the 24 species so far recorded in Norfolk with details on identification and habitat as well as distribution maps. Most species are under-recorded with several 'missing' from recent years. I hope this guide will stimulate interest in these fascinating invertebrates and encourage more people to find, identify and submit records so we can build a better picture of their distribution and habitat requirements in Norfolk. I am happy to answer queries and look at photographs to help with identification.

<https://norfolknaturalists.org.uk/wp/publications/species-guides/#harvestmen>

Vanna Bartlett, Harvestmen Recorder (email: vannabartlett@gmail.com).

Patch highlights

Steve & Karin Hale

As ever our 'patch' (High Kelling) has delighted us with some surprises this autumn. The first of which were a small group of Redwing that have been feeding in the Rowan since 6/10. A Grey Wagtail pair then spent a day (18/10) in the paddocks, perhaps before heading on their way. A Brambling group turned up the next day (19/10) and stayed over a week with a maximum of nine being seen. They were enjoying the Beech mast.

Images / Steve & Karin Hale



Redwing



Grey Wagtail



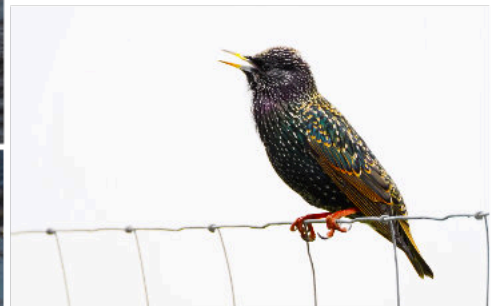
Brambling

Recent encounters with birds

Tony Howes

During November Wendy and I had a few days stay in Cromer, the weather was dismal, but I did have a couple of walks along the beach as I wanted to try out a new lens I had just bought. Gulls were plentiful, so I concentrated on them, resulting in some interesting images showing their behavior. Starlings were also encountered along the top fence-line along the cliffs.

In between feeding spells some would perch and sing for a while showing off their brilliant colours, not always appreciated when at distance.



Herring Gull (*top left*), Black-headed Gull (*bottom left*) and Starling (*right*)

Another trip out to Costessey for a flock of Waxwings was very enjoyable, there were about thirty of them, rowan berries were the attraction, and as is usual with these beautiful northern wanderers, there would be a brief burst of activity when they would all fly down and cram as many berries as they could before returning to the tall trees nearby to digest them. There were red and yellow berried Rowans, but the red ones were firm favourites, the yellow being left to last. We don't see Waxwings every year, but when they do visit they cause a lot of interest, they are certainly very beautiful birds.



Two Waxwing portraits from the Costessey flock of around 30 birds

Another outing to St Benet's Abbey for Short-eared Owls in late November was typical of expectations not reaching fruition, the owls didn't show well at all, too distant, but the afternoon was compensated by a group of twenty four Cranes found further into the marshy fields, there were several young birds among them, they were feeding and preening round the edge of open water.



A group of 19 Cranes at St. Benet's Abbey (*top*) and one of three flocks that subsequently headed for Hickling (*bottom*)

Then just as the light was going they all took off in three separate groups and headed out towards Hickling. Crane numbers in Norfolk have been rising slowly over the years, and its a wonderful sight to see them, especially in flight, the call is very far carrying, and is a beautiful, wild sound.

Fortuitously, Cranes avoided the avian flu that devastated so many species, we could so easily have lost them.

Images / *Tony Howes*

I was in for a great surprise when I arrived at **Strumpshaw** early one morning last July. I had arrived at Strumpshaw (05 July) hoping to see Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admirals and I soon saw Jane running towards me. Jane asked if I wanted to go into her garden as she had a young owl there. Of course I was keen to see and photograph the owl, not knowing which species it was. As I arrived it was hopping from post, tree stump and gate! Jane left me to go



to off to work and I watched this stunning bird preening and shaking its feathers. It was my first Long-eared Owl! The early morning sun was wonderful for taking photos and the bird was so close it filled the frame of my camera. After more than an hour in its company I went to the fen and saw lots of butterflies. It was lovely to see a Grasshopper Warbler singing,



Juvenile Long-eared Owl (*top left*),
Grasshopper Warbler (*bottom left*) and
Common Lizard (*right*)

which I thought was far too late for it to find a mate!! There was a Common Lizard resting, soaking up the sun along the sandy path. Always nice to see them. I left when the rain started. As I was passing Jane's house I noticed the owl sitting on the gate leading to the paddock. I stopped and took a photo, as I checked it I thought the owl looked different! So I went back to the garden and took a few more photos. I am still not sure if it was the same owl or another from the same nest!

Eccles Beach I was lucky to get the last few Little Terns on the beach as they were about to leave our shores (26 July). There was a few Sanderling and Turnstones running around feeding as well as Ringed Plovers. A lovely clean quiet beach to see and bird-watch.



Beach birds (clockwise) Little Terns, Sanderling, Ringed Plover and Turnstone

Hickling. A tip to Hickling (10 Oct) revealed a Red Deer stag which surprised Tony Howes and I as we were watching Bearded Tits. It's not often you expect a Red Deer coming through the reedbed.



Reed bed Red Deer stag and Bearded Tit from Hickling

Ranworth. This was a good place to see Kingfishers. Norfolk Wildlife Trust had built a new bird hide along the stream and had named it 'Kingfisher Hide'. It certainly lived up to its name. They were back and fourth along the stream and stopping on the Alder tree to fish as well as the purposely placed stakes which



Stunning Kingfisher and Fieldfare

Images / *Elizabeth Dack*

had been put in. I watched them fishing there several times and wasn't ever. So many different coloured feather shades. I also saw my first Fieldfare of the year whilst there (Nov). The Otter swam through before vanishing into the reeds leading into the woodland.

Christmas morning 2023

Carol & Bernie Webb

Having been the owners of a caravan at Wells next the Sea for several years it became our custom to visit Snettisham early on Christmas morning to take a walk and view the geese as they took off from the mud flats, for the day. Now that we no longer have this facility, we were going to give it a miss this year until Bern came up with the idea of staying at the Premiere Inn at King's Lynn instead.



Glorious
Snettisham Beach
early Christmas
morning

Image /
Carol Webb

So at about 8am on 25th December we found ourselves, once more, walking along the beach at first light. The tide was out quite a long way but there were still hundreds of birds feeding on the mud and we witnessed several flight displays from Knot, Lapwing and Avocet along with hundreds of Pink-foot flying over our heads as we walked to the hide at the far end.

To our delight, an added bonus was several Goldeneye, seen from the confines of the hide, swimming on the pool at the other side.

We then travelled along the coast road to Brancaster Staithe which at this time of year was devoid of almost all human life and unlike the summer months, several species were present there too.

A really enjoyable morning, not the usual activity for most but highly recommended. So if you have nothing better to do on Christmas Day 2024, maybe you could do the same and we could join together to appreciate wildness on a day when others seem more oblivious than usual that it even exists.

Happy New Year's watching to you all.



Mudflat birds (clockwise) Little Egret, Redshank, Curlew and Bar-tailed Godwit
Images / *Bernie Webb*

New for NNNS this Year

Nature Spaces is our Society's garden for giving you, the members and others, tips on gardening for nature and ideas for sustainable ways of gardening.

The garden is a large cottage garden, which is divided into eleven separate gardens. This variety of gardens gives you plenty to see and think about in relation to what all the species that could live in our gardens require – including humans of course!



How to use the garden: Relax here/add to our species list whilst here/ train here/volunteer here/plan your own space here/observe and leave comments whilst here. Most of all be in Nature's peace whilst here.

We look forward to seeing you!

The garden is open every Tuesday 10am to 4.30pm and for bookings. It is closed at Christmas for a month and at Easter for a week.

Entrance Fee: None/Any donations for garden upkeep would be welcome.

Head Gardener Sarah Butler sarahbutler4s@gmail.com/07954961548/NNNS.org.uk

Simple refreshments/mini kitchen/loo/seating/weather cover available.

Parking: Please park thoughtfully in the village.

Nature Spaces, Rougham, PE32 2SE. Opposite the old School (shares the old Chapels entrance).

Society Notes

AGM

The Society's AGM will held in St Andrews Church Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich NR4 6NW on **Tuesday 26th March 2024 at 7:30pm**, followed by a meeting of the Photographic Group.

Subscriptions

Just to remind members to make the necessary amendments to their Standing Order or their PayPal arrangement if they have not done so already. The subscription has increased to £25.00 and is renewable on 1st April.

Butterfly Recorder

David Prince has been appointed the new Butterfly recorder following the sad announcement of the death of long-serving Andy Brazil in January. Please see details in the NNNS Recorders' listing.

NWT Sweet Briar Marshes - NNS's next research project

Our Society has ensured that species recording - the bread and butter of us naturalists - has been exciting and relevant over the past few years, by organising research projects, where all county recorders, groups and members have focused upon studying a single site, usually over 2-3 years with intensive days supporting regular visits. This has achieved a good understanding of the ecology of an area, based upon the species and their associations. The data can then be interpreted by Society members and other scientists in the light of publications about similar places elsewhere. For example, Buckenham Carrs, a private 340 acre estate in the Broads, was the subject of a 3-year Society study before Covid and more recently, the Society has focused upon Broadland Country Park, a new development on heathland created after removal of pine plantations, just north of Norwich between Felthorpe and Horsford, managed by Broadland District Council.

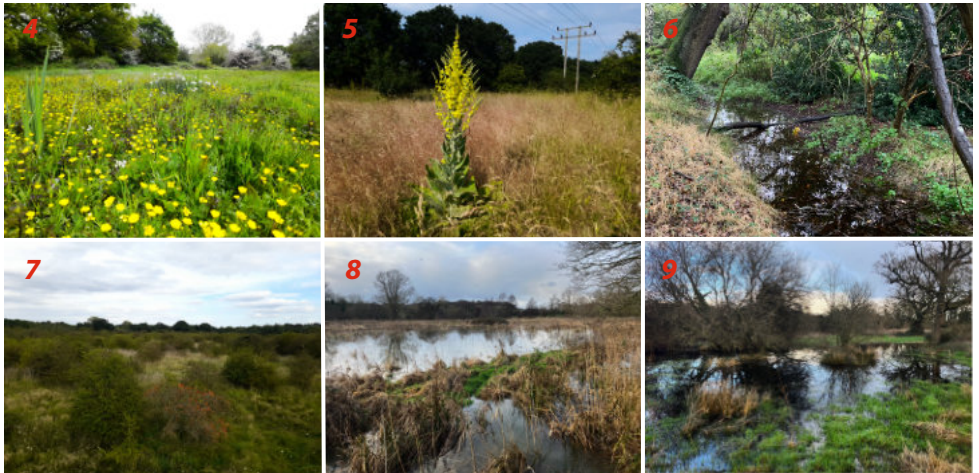
We have now been able formally to agree our next two-year research project with our partner in county nature conservation, Norfolk Wildlife Trust - it will be at NWT Sweet Briar Marshes in Norwich. NWT was able to secure this urban nature reserve after a public appeal, with matched-funding from Aviva. Its location is important, for both conservation and people, being the lowest altitude large piece of nature in the Wensum floodplain, close to the city centre and accessible to tens of thousands of people (Figure 1). NWT has great plans to bring people into contact with nature at Sweet Briar Marshes. Our work will provide the fundamental science needed both to underpin its biodiversity management, and to help make those connections real and meaningful.



Sweet Briar Marshes - Map and main floodplain habitats (Figures 1 - 3)

The exciting aspect of this site for our Society is the sheer variety of habitats in Sweet Briar Marshes, which will be of interest to every one of our specialists and members. It is a grassed floodplain, so its underlying geochemistry makes it immediately different from the location of our previous two research projects, which are predominantly alkaline fen and acid heath. Natural processes have led to a habitat diversity greater than other parts of the Wensum floodplain, with wet alkaline grassland along the river (Figure 2); mature woodland with pools (Figure 3); wet flushes from seepage at the edge

of the floodplain (Figure 4) and patches of acid grassland on the more elevated edges (Figure 5). Past land use has created drainage ditches (Figure 6) and disused arable fields that have undergone succession into scrub (Figure 7). Most of the site becomes flooded in winter (Figures 8 & 9).



Sweet Briar Marshes - Main floodplain habitats (Figures 4 - 7) and two winter landscapes (Figures 8 - 9)
Images / *Matt Wickens, David Harper & John Worthington-Hill*

Many of you attended the County Recorders' meeting in December, which was focused on wetlands in the county and, Sweet Briar Marshes was introduced to attendees by NWT staff presenting board displays that introduce the public to the reserve and to future plans together.

Examples of what the Society could contribute came not only from these presentations, but also from table displays. Nick Owens display showed through bag experiments the association between Yellow Loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*) and the Yellow Loosestrife Bee (*Macropis europaea*), which suggested that the bee was near-essential for pollination of the Loosestrife. Unraveling such relationships is the 'cream' on the 'cake' of species recording - let's hope for many such relationships at Sweet Briar Marshes over the next two years.

Two Society members will co-ordinate the recording through a small Steering Group reporting to the Research Committee. We will have held our first meeting by the time you read this, and will keep all recorders informed through email and members through 'Natterjack'. Hopefully, you will be keen to work on your specialty in Sweet Briar Marshes; because of the public use that NWT hope to promote at the reserve, we need to keep the lines of communication open between us and you. Happy Recording!

Sweet Briar Marshes Coordination - David Harper (david.m.harper@icloud.com) and John Worthington-Hill (joworthingtonhill@gmail.com).

Excursion report:

Litcham Common & Churchyard - 11th November 2023

Rob Yaxley

We were lucky with the weather for this Lichen event, and it stayed mild and sunny through the day. It was really nice to see thirteen participants beside myself. We convened at Litcham Common, and spent the morning looking at lichens on tree trunks and twigs. We looked at how different species find their own niches on trees, with bark texture, light levels, moisture levels and chemistry playing an important role in determining the prevailing species. Litcham Common is largely oak and birch dominated, so foliose species such as *Parmelia sulcata*, *Parmotrema perlatum* and *Hypotrachyna revoluta* and *afrorevoluta* are frequent on smaller branches, with crust species such as *Lecanora*



Rob pointing out the lichens on an Oak such as *Lecanora hybocarpa* (below). Images / Francis Farrow



Looking for Pinhead Lichens

Image / Rob Yaxley

hybocarpa and *Arthonia radiata* being found commonly on twigs. We found *Cliostomum griffithii* and *Lecanora expallens* to be the most frequent



species on oak trunks. Large oak trees at the southern end of the common were host to the pinhead lichens *Chaenotheca trichialis* and *C. brachypoda*.

As well as the lichens, we saw a beautiful Pale Birch Tortrix / Grey Birch Button moth *Acleris logiana*, The Sprawler, *Asteroscopus sphinx*, a late-flying Noctuid moth and some pretty Scarlet Bonnets *Mycena adonis* as well as lots of other non-lichenised fungi.



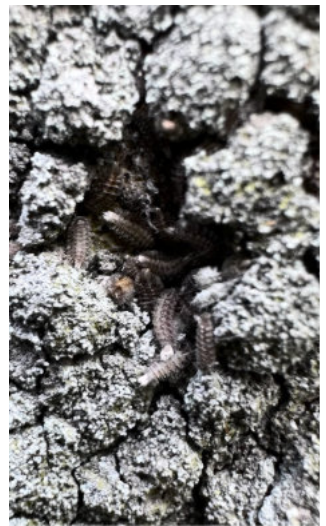
Pale Birch Tortrix / Grey Birch Button and The Sprawler moths at rest Images / *Francis Farrow*

In the afternoon we moved across to Litcham churchyard, where we looked at the different habitats for lichens including acid and calcareous headstones, chest tombs, church walls and churchyard trees. Some of the best species



Caloplaca ulcerosa on Poplar trunk. Image / *Rob Yaxley*

included *Verrucaria calciseda* on a limestone memorial, *Xanthoparmelia verruculifera*, *Caloplaca ulcerosa* on a large poplar in the graveyard and *Lecanora soralifera* on an acid headstone. An added bonus was the silken tubes of the Silver-barred Lichen Moth *Infurcinitinea argentimaculella* on a patch of the leprose lichen *Botryolepraria lesdainii* on the north wall of the church. Also, a small cache of Bristly Millipedes *Polyxenus lagurus* was nice to see.



Bristly Millipedes - a nice find Image / *Rob Yaxley*

Overall we located 25 species of lichen on the Common, and 36 in the churchyard, though we ran out of light somewhat and I suspect we could have squeezed another 10 species or so out of the churchyard on another day. We had a play with the UV torch to look at light reactions in some species, and used chemical tests to separate tricky species. A really enjoyable day and a super-enthusiastic group!

Hopefully there will be enough interest to start regular lichen field meetings.

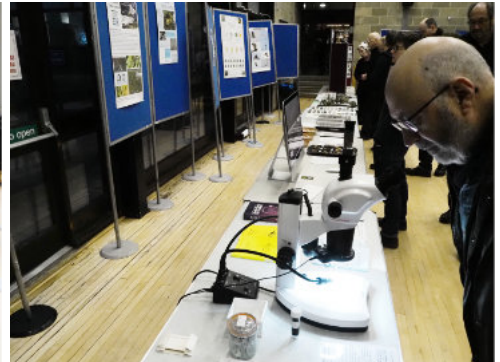
Norfolk County Recorders' Meeting

Tony Irwin

The annual Norfolk County Recorders' meeting took place in Norwich on 2nd December 2023, sponsored jointly by NNNS and NBIS, with the support of the John Innes Centre, who kindly allowed us to use their recreation centre. This year, the invitation was extended to all the Society's members, and despite the icy conditions, it was attended by about 80 people. The theme of the meeting was "*Freshwaters: Recording Today for a Better Tomorrow*".

Registration was followed by an opportunity to look at poster and tabletop displays, which included Norfolk scuttle flies (Mark Welch); prey of Norfolk wasps, mystery fossils from Fuerteventura, and acorns from Norfolk and Hay-on-Wye (all Nick Owens); Norfolk lichens (Rob Yaxley); Beeston and Sheringham Commons (Francis Farrow); photos from the NNNS Photographic Group; flora of Broadland Country Park (Norfolk Flora Group); Milk-parsley status and disease (Swallowtail and Birdwing Butterfly Trust); dragonfly recording and citizen science (British Dragonfly Society); freshwater fungi (Norfolk Fungus Group); Mousehold Heath; and Sweet Briar Marshes – the proposed development of this new reserve (NWT).

Members at the Norfolk County Recorders' meeting enjoying the exhibitions



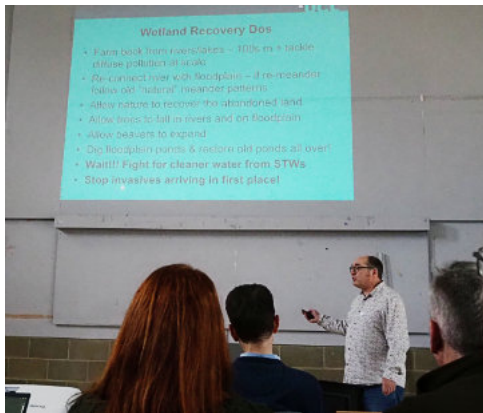
An excellent buffet lunch was enjoyed by all, and lots of chat kept everyone occupied until the talks started.

The Society's president, **Tim Holt-Wilson**, started the afternoon's proceedings with a welcome and introduction to the theme for the day. He reminded us of the wide variety of freshwater habitats in Norfolk, as well as the global perspective of threats to freshwater from climate change and pollution, before noting some of the ways in which the Society has been studying freshwater systems in Norfolk, and what might be done in the future.



Tim Holt-Wilson (NNNS President)

The keynote address from **Carl Sayer** (University College, London) was "*Norfolk's wetlands, the challenge of change*". After introducing us to what Norfolk's rivers, ponds and floodplains might once have looked like before tree clearance and drainage, Carl reminded us of the problems faced by our current wetlands – pollution from chemicals and sediment, too much and too little management,



Carl Sayer delivering keynote address

invasive species, climate change, and a subsequent loss of biodiversity, both flora and fauna. On the positive side, restoration is possible, as shown in the Bodham ponds project, and several projects in Southern England where trees are felled into chalk streams to slow the flow and create meanders. Some large-scale re-meandering projects in Europe have failed to increase biodiversity, because they haven't improved water quality at the same time. Natural

processes are the most successful means of restoration. Re-profiling rivers to encourage flooding, introducing beavers to create rich habitat mosaics, and putting pressure on water companies to keep water clean, can all work together to tackle the challenges our wetlands face.

Tony Leech then took the chair for the first set of talks ("*Ecosystems and habitats*"), starting with **Tim Strudwick** (RSPB) who spoke about "*Protected Areas: are they effective?*" Tim reminded us that there are 163 SSSIs in Norfolk,

many of them included within larger designated sites, such as Ramsar Site, Special Area of Conservation, or National Nature Reserve, but too many others are isolated and needing improvement. Each site has designated features, and it is a criminal offence to “damage or destroy any designated feature” including “disturbance of designated animal species”. Consent to carry out work on an SSSI may be issued by Natural England, and both capital and revenue funding may be available for maintenance work. Notwithstanding this, the condition of SSSIs in England is not improving very much, with environmental problems such as groundwater abstraction, pollution, invasive species and climate change, adding to the load. In the Yare Marshes, floodplain fen and wet woodland are in decline, while in the Ant Valley, it’s floodplain fen and ponds that need attention.

Duncan Holmes (Broads Angling Services Group) presented an interesting talk on *“Recent threats to Norfolk’s wetland biota”*. In it, he explained in detail how salinity in the Broads can increase and stay high under certain conditions, with severe effects on fish stocks as well as invertebrate populations. He said that as a result of increased salinity, Grey Mullet have been found inland, as have European Bass. Occasionally, salinity readings at Acle can be as high as seawater, and drought decreases flow and increases the toxicity.

Geoff Phillips (University of Stirling) spoke on *“Managing our freshwaters: Europe to Norfolk”*, noting that the UK is a leader in freshwater strategies. He introduced the Water Framework Directive, a piece of EU legislation that still applies in Britain today. This focuses on integrated catchment management to protect and improve water quality, using a 6-year cycle of assessment, action and review. After two cycles (in 2018), only 40% of water bodies in Europe were good or better, using a mix of biotic and environmental criteria for assessment. Looking at the upper Wensum in more detail, Geoff noted that it scored well for fish and invertebrate communities, but was not so good on phytoplankton and macrophytes, possibly due to environmental pollution factors. It was difficult to envisage a solution to these problems, and the upper Wensum is likely to remain in a “moderate” condition for some time to come.

David Harper (University of Leicester) reviewed *“Effective use of citizen science: the role of naturalists”*. There are not many long-term datasets for freshwater systems, but currently, there are several citizen science projects that are monitoring freshwater habitats on a national basis. The RiverFly project is based on monitoring the presence of eight easily recognisable invertebrate groups in a timed net sample. The Smart Rivers initiative is similar but uses more detailed identifications. To maintain quality of data, validation by an expert is required. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats project is led by Natural England, and involves volunteers, many of whom are local naturalists recording

flora and fauna of potential sites. In all of these projects, recording environmental factors is straightforward for volunteers using inexpensive digital monitors. In Norfolk, river chemistry is monitored on the Wensum and Bure; RiverFly monitoring is well-developed on the Wensum, while the Priority Habitats scheme is just starting. The Society's Freshwater Study Group has a site on the Yare, and is helping with identifications from the Wensum.

A tea and coffee break was followed by **Sue Gale** taking the chair for the second series of talks ("*Species and communities*").

The first speaker was **Dan Hoare** (Norfolk Freshwater Study Group) with the title "*Flourishing flora and invasive intruders: navigating the dynamics of aquatic ecosystems*". Globally the decline in biodiversity has been greater in freshwater than other ecosystems. From a good 19th century base, with specialist species such as Holly-leaved Naiad, the Broads suffered a significant decline in submerged macrophytes during the 20th century, but water quality has improved and plants such as stoneworts are making a comeback. On the other hand, there are new threats from invasive species like Floating Pennywort and Parrot's Feather, as well as the problem of increasing salinity and climate change. One of the predicted concerns is an increase in floating plants (e.g. the non-native Water-lettuce) as the climate warms, and the consequent loss of submerged macrophytes.

Next up was **Liam Smith** who presented a new recording app for use by naturalists, anglers and the public under the heading "*Challenges & future for Norfolk's freshwater fish*". Most freshwater fish records that NBIS holds come from organised surveys by the Norfolk Rivers Trust, or the Environment Agency. Concern that many potential records from the public, including the angling community, are being missed has prompted the development of a straightforward mobile phone app (that can also be used on computers). Standard observations on who, what, where, when are supplemented by notes on fish health and behaviour. There may still be reticence among some anglers to disclose where they are catching fish, but it's hoped that promotion in angling shops, with boat hire companies, and by word of mouth, will encourage submission of more records. Recorders will be able to access more information, including identification help.

John Buckley (County Recorder for herptiles) stepped in at short notice to deliver a talk prepared by John Baker (Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust), who was unable to attend. This was about "*Pond restoration and amphibian reintroductions*". John emphasised that re-introductions are a last resort – protecting existing colonies, and improving habitat are much more effective in amphibian conservation. Often natural colonisation will happen if the habitat is

right. For amphibians, it's vital that both freshwater and terrestrial habitats are provided. From experience with Natterjack Toads, it appears that site-to-site translocation is the best approach to re-introduction, once the habitat is suitable. It is more efficient, has a lower risk of disease, and avoids "captive adaption" issues. Site-to-site translocation was also favoured for the re-establishment of Northern Pool Frogs, which became extinct at Thompson Common. The source populations in Sweden were unable to provide sufficient individuals to ensure a successful translocation, so a programme of captive breeding was used to increase the number of individuals for release.

To round off the day, **Pam Taylor** (British Dragonfly Society) gave a fascinating presentation on "*Invertebrates: trends in an era of climate change*". Pam explained how several groups of freshwater insects (notably caddis, mayflies and stoneflies) are in decline, probably because of global warming. Dragonflies, however, are doing better, with several species being added to the British list in recent years, and species such as the Norfolk Hawker colonising new sites outside the Broads. There are exceptions to the good news – notably the Small Red Damselfly, which may have disappeared from Scarning Fen – for many years its only site in Norfolk.

In conclusion, **Mark Collins** (Chair of the NNNS Research Committee) summarised the take-away points from the talks and thanked the event's Working Group and speakers for all the hard work they had put into making the day a great success. He thanked everyone for attending and noted that the theme of World Wetlands Day on 2nd February 2024 will be "Wetlands and Human Wellbeing", a theme to which we can all relate.



Mark Collins - Chair, NNNS Research Committee



Present and past NNNS Presidents:
Tim Holt-Wilson
Pam Taylor
Carl Sayer
Tony Irwin

Images / *Hans Watson*

NNNS Events Programme 2023/24 - February to May

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.**

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.

Tuesday, 12 March 2024 19:30 - 21:00

Presidential Address by Tim Holt-Wilson

All members of the Society are welcome.

St Andrew's Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich NR4 6NW, UK.

Tuesday, 26 March 2024 19:30 - 21:00

Annual General Meeting followed by a presentation from the **Photographic Group**.

All members of the Society welcome.

St Andrew's Hall, 41 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich NR4 6NW, UK.

Friday, 01 March 2024 10:30 - 12:30

NWT Cley: 'birds, birds, birds' with Carl Chapman. Join Carl for a walk around the perimeter of the Cley Marshes reserve Park in NWT visitor centre's car park (NR25 7SA / TG053440). Afternoon stay for generalist walk.

Tuesday 05 March 2024. 10:00 - 17:00

Rougham. Opening this Month. **Nature Spaces Garden.** NNNS's new development. This is a base for members. Add to our species list, replan your own naturespace, relax and just be. Look on NNNS website for more ways to be able to benefit and use this garden. Open every Tuesday from 10am to 5pm and for bookings. Closed for a month at Christmas and a week at Easter. Seating/loo/Shelter/simple refreshments/mini kitchen. Please be thoughtful about parking in the village. Rougham (PE32 2SE / TF830201) Opposite the old School, at the back of the old Chapel. Contact Head Gardener Sarah Butler 07954961548/sarahbutler4@gmail.com/NNNS website. Suitable for less able.

Saturday, 23 March 2024 10:30 onwards

Gressenhall. 'A Start to our Season' get together' Get comfortably acquainted with this, our other meeting place. Gressenhall are making us welcome with refreshments including lunch. Socialise, use the microscopes. Help Gressenhall Education Hub with their baseline Bioblitz around the grounds/fields/ river and farmyard. Booking required contact sarahbutler4@gmail.com/07954961548. (NR20 4DR / TF974169).

Saturday, 06 April 2024 11:00 to lunchtime

Sennowe Park, Guist for a guided walk through Sennowe Forest by owner Tom Cook focusing on trees. Continue exploring yourselves with a generalist walk after lunch. (NR20 5PB / TF981255)

Saturday, 27 April 2024 11:00 to lunchtime

Dersingham. A chance to see what grows in our old Norfolk walls with Richard Carter. This event is also suitable for the less able. Meet by St Nicholas church (PE31 6GZ / TF694303) Carry on if you wish as a generalist event in the afternoon.

Saturday, 11 May 2024 10:30 to lunchtime

Dickleborough Moor, Diss Ben Potterton, Trustee/Warden will guide our walk which can be continued in the afternoon at your leisure. Parking will be sign posted from Norwich Road, Dickleborough IP21 4NS (nearest) / TM170832.

Saturday, 25 May 2024 10.30am to lunchtime

Flordon Common. A generalist walk led by Robert Maidstone. Continue yourselves in the afternoon. Flordon Norwich NR15 1RL / TM190970 (nearest). Park through the gates if no cattle, otherwise thoughtfully nearby.



NNNS Events 2024 (February to May)



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

Please send all
articles / notes and photographic material
to the editor as soon as possible by
April 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

New rates are £25 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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