



The Norfolk Natterjack



... Researching
Norfolk's Wildlife

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Cover image: Foliose Lichen *Evernia prunastri* - Mike Ball (see page 20)

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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...

Another new year and the anticipation that comes with it - will butterflies and other flying insects recover? Will new species turn up in UK and Norfolk? There are two new species featured in this edition plus an unusual fungal occurrence, a shieldbug, winter wildlife and a round up of recent events. Check out also some spring workshops and the annual recorder's meeting which is now open to members. My thanks to all contributors for articles and images and look forward to your 2025 observations.

FF

Not what it seems!

Trevor Tabenham - Wildlife Warden
Fairhaven Trust

Stephanie Shepherd, one of two trainee wildlife wardens working at Fairhaven Woodland and Water Gardens, South Walsham and I spent the morning (28th October 2024) looking for new species of fungus that had not been recorded in our archives. We had a good morning with five possible candidates with, so far, only three identified. One that was not initially identified showed black fruiting bodies growing on a live oak trunk from just above ground level and extending to about 30 feet up the same trunk. Not finding anything like it in my book I sent photographs to James Emerson who has sent the following explanation.

"This is very odd looking but as it happens I do know the answer. All of these are Sulphur Tuft, Hypholoma fasciculare, a common species. The pale ones in the second photo are typical. Most fungi have spores that match the gill colour, e.g. the bonnets (Mycena) have white gills and white spores, the large webcap family (Cortinarius) have brown gills and brown spores etc. However, Sulphur Tuft has



A profusion of Sulphur Tuft fruiting bodies have been transformed from the normal yellow capped species into a black-looking species as black spores from the fungus are deposited on to lower growing fruit bodies. The smaller white capped fungi are young Sulphur Tuft fruit bodies.

Images / Trevor Tabenham

yellow gills but black spores. Usually it just grows in clumps, so the spores fall out and get blown about by the wind, leaving the gills a greenish colour (yellow- + black). Here because the fungus is growing in profusion and a long way up the tree, the caps are being coated in spores as they fall down and blow about, turning them black. I have seen the odd blackish fruiting body before, but never to this extent”

Thanks to James we have an ID but what an unusual circumstance.

***Leiobunum* species A: first reported sighting in Norfolk**

Vanna Bartlett
- Harvestman
County Recorder

On 21st September 2024, James Emerson alerted me to a post on the Norfolk Wildlife Facebook page of a video of a group of harvestmen ‘bouncing’ up and down rather dramatically on a house wall. Help with identification was being sought and an explanation of their frantic bobbing behaviour. James rightly supposed from their apparent large size, dark colouration and behaviour that they could be *Leiobunum* species A, a relative newcomer to the UK and a harvestman whose origins are shrouded in mystery.



Small aggregation of *Leiobunum* species A
on wall of house near Stalham

This large and distinctive species was first reported in Europe in the Netherlands in 2004 (anecdotal evidence suggests it has probably been present since about 2000) but no-one could find out where it had originated from. Considering its large size (spread out, the legs have a diameter of up to 18cm) and habit of congregating in large numbers on buildings it can't have gone un-noticed over the previous years in Europe. It also seems unlikely that it has lurked somewhere in the world without ever being

formally described. Different species of *Leiobunum* can be found in Europe, Japan and the Americas but none of the known species corresponded to this one. Because of these doubts, it has become labelled as *Leiobunum* species A until its history can be unravelled (Wijnhoven et al).

Leiobunum species A didn't stay confined to the Netherlands for long and has since been found in a number of other European countries. In 2009 the first British record was reported from Nottinghamshire (see Eakringbirds website) where it quickly became established and it has since been discovered in various widespread parts of the country. I have been eagerly waiting for it to reach Norfolk.

I contacted the person who had posted the video on Facebook, Ashleigh Jackson, and learnt that it was her five-year-old son Rowan who had the honour of spotting a 'new for Norfolk' harvestman by his front door. On being disturbed, the whole group of some 14 or so harvestmen had started bobbing frantically up and down in an agitated manner and then rushed off in different directions only to then later regroup; all rather unnerving behaviour to witness from a cluster of large arachnids.

I made arrangements to visit Ashleigh to confirm the identification of the harvestmen at the earliest opportunity. On 24th September 2024, Jeremy and I cycled out from Norwich to a little way beyond Stalham to see these intriguing harvestmen for ourselves.

Ashleigh had relocated the harvestmen from by the front door to the hedge at the side of the house as her young children were rather scared by their presence and didn't want to go near them. I told her that from what I had read about them they generally returned to a favoured spot. Sure enough, when we arrived, a group of eight of them were back at their station above the door with some stragglers round the corner below the fascia board.



Male *Leiobunum* species A.



Female *Leiobunum* species A.

Images / *Vanna Bartlett*

The main group consisted of six males and two females. When I raised my hand up towards them, they immediately began bobbing rapidly up and down by repeatedly flexing their long legs. Further movement from me resulted in them rushing off in different directions and then slowly regrouping. It was obvious from external characteristics that they were indeed *Leiobunum* species A. The upper surface of the body of the male is dark blackish with a metallic green sheen which contrasts with the pale tan coloured underside. The larger bodied female is also mostly dark with various pale markings, particularly towards the edge of the carapace either side of the eyes. In both sexes the extremely long legs are black with white tips to the ends of the segments. These pale areas 'flash' when the agitated animal commences bobbing up and down, something that is greatly magnified when done by a group en masse.

It is assumed that clustering together in a large, dense group affords some protection from predators, as does the rapid movement when disturbed. A predator would have trouble singling out an individual and would most likely come away with just a leg rather than a body to eat. Harvestmen have a pair of odiferous glands that give off a noxious smell to deter predators (it also makes them taste unpleasant); presumably a large group would collectively give off a greater odour and therefore be better protected than a lone individual.

Leiobunum species A reaches maturity from late summer to early autumn with numbers peaking in September. They persist through autumn and into winter when they are generally killed off by the first frosts. In the Netherlands, *Leiobunum* species A seems to have made itself at home and in some areas aggregations on buildings can number dozens of individuals with counts of over a hundred not uncommon. Although it is exciting to have new species reach Norfolk, it can sometimes result in competition with native ones with detrimental effects. It will be interesting to see if it becomes established in Norfolk and if it turns up anywhere else in the county.

Harvestmen records can be submitted via iRecord or by contacting me directly and I am happy to help with identifications - (Email: vannabartlett@gmail.com).

References:

Wijnhoven, H., Schönhofer, A. L. and Martens, J. (2007) An unidentified harvestman *Leiobunum* sp. alarmingly invading Europe (Arachnida: Opiliones)

<https://www.eakringbirds.com/eakringbirds3/arachnidsleiobunumsp.htm>

Juniper Shieldbug *Cyphostethus tristriatus* at Salthouse John Furse

On 18th October 2024, a chance glance revealed the wondrous find, on the slightly sheltered side of a patch of Sea Club-Rush, about 150m north-east of the north end of the Beach Road, of this most beautiful insect:



Juniper Shieldbug 'in situ' on Sea Club-rush / John Furse

Immediately I spotted it, I knew I hadn't seen this species of Shieldbug before. I quickly took a few shots, in case it flew off. There was a reasonable breeze and the Sea Club-rush was waving around, as if at some sedgy rave. Fortunately, it wasn't at all flighty and allowed me to approach closely, then break off a stem and transfer it for slightly more stabilised (my left hand holding the stem) photography.

Sea Club-rush (which rejoices in the scientific name *Bolboschoenus maritimus*) is, I am informed, and most confusingly, a Sedge. Justin Walker, the County's Terrestrial Heteroptera Recorder told me of two other bugs (Mirids) that can be found on it: *Teratocoris antennatus* and *T. saundersi*. It also hosts a dark, but attractive, Hoverfly *Lejops vittatus*, that has a very restricted range and a micro moth, Saltern Dwarf/Rush-miner *Elachista scirpi*, with one recent record for the County. I will be seeking all these next summer.

This handsome creature had the same predominantly bright-green colour of several other species of Shieldbugs, but the curved shape (which Steven Falk likens to Boomerangs: [Cyphostethus tristriatus \(Juniper Shieldbug\) | Flickr](#)) and reddish-brown markings on the forewings (coria) and the bold, black 'X' on its silvery-grey hemelytral membrane quickly proved conclusive, once the images were viewed at home and a field guide consulted.

iRecord shows almost ninety to date in County – the closest to this previously in Sheringham, over five miles to the East. The first UK records of this species are from the early 1900s (although earlier records may exist in the NHM collection); the first for County in 1976. The species is now regularly found in Scotland. It is normally seen in Britain on one of the many different Junipers *Juniperus* spp. (though *J. communis* is the only native and in decline throughout the UK, for no obvious reason) and Lawson's Cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*. The latter are frequent in churchyards and hedging. It should be looked for feeding on their cones – and also, according to *Shieldbugs of Surrey* (R.D. Hawkins, 2003), on those of Nootka and Sawara Cypress and Western Red Cedar *Thuja plicata*. Why it was near the North Sea in some sedge is anyone's guess. British Bugs ((Acanthosomatidae) *Cyphostethus tristriatus* Juniper Shield Bug) states that it is active in all save for the coldest months (March until well into November) and, since they emerge early in spring, should be sought soon – provided we are not under six feet of snow.

Profuse thanks are due to Justin Walker for his assistance in the writing of this.

I have also referred to Richard Jones' recent and comprehensive *Shieldbugs* (Collins New Naturalist Library, 2023).

John was moved to verse by the sighting:

Ode to a bug

*"I had not long started my walk
When my eyes, they honed in like a hawk.
I'd spotted a Bug –
In my mem'ry, I dug –
And, almost did utter a squawk !*

*At it I, with wonder, did gawk.
Twoz atop a long Sea Club-rush stalk.
Quite similar to Hawthorn –
Pristine. Fresh. NOT worn –
I'd have to check t'website of Falk.*

*His photos would clinch the ID
Of this insect so near the North Sea.
I took some of my own –
With my camera, not 'phone –
VERY kwik . . . I'd not want it to flee.*



*A Juniper Shieldbug, it was
(A Wizardesque critter): becOz
Of the black 'X' on grey –
& brown forewings' array –
No others saw it. I'm so soz !"*

The weekend of 20th – 22nd September 2024 looked very good for potential moth migrants to Norfolk with a moderate east/north easterly winds and warm muggy nights.

Unfortunately, I had prior engagements and I couldn't trap! I didn't want to miss out and with the encouragement from Jon Kelf, I decided to put my 125 watt MV out on Sunday 22nd in the garden at Ormesby St Margaret. Rain was forecast, so a fishing umbrella was placed over the top as a precaution.

I was up well before light as I had to empty the trap before work. The first moth I saw was an *Euchromis ocella* (Silver-spotted Veneer) sitting on the outside. Things were looking good and I was already feeling very pleased with this scarce migrant. Several other commoner migrants were also caught in the trap. One micro looked interesting, so was potted in the torch light for a better look after work.

With closer inspection in daylight, it superficially looked like a *Phycitodes maritima* / *Homoeosoma nimbella* Knot-horn species. However, I wasn't happy, I couldn't find anything that resembled it. It looked too small, having a uniform off white background with black spots and dashes giving it a peppered appearance, it seemed fresh looking. I uploaded photos to X (Twitter) but wasn't happy with the results, so I put the photos on the Norfolk WhatsApp group site.

Dave Appleton was soon to answer and suspected it could be *Phycitodes lacteella*. Luckily, I had kept the moth overnight and Dave suggested it needed dissection to confirm the species.



It was duly dissected by him and confirmed as *Phycitodes lacteella* (Gen.Det.- female), a first for the UK!

The rest they say is history!!



I will be forever indebted to Dave for his interest, initial identification and dissection skills, in addition, for him writing up the formal description (to appear in Atropos.) Thanks also to Dave Norgate for transporting the moth and the wonderful Norfolk moth WhatsApp group for comments and support.

Peppered Knot-horn - First for UK

To say I am still 'buzzing' is an understatement. Definitely, a night to remember!!

An Alien Encounter

Moss Taylor

On 2nd November 2024 I noticed a moth, which I was unable to identify, on a neighbour's gate, so thanks to my ever-present mobile phone I took a photo of it. On returning home, much to my surprise, I was unable to find an illustration of it in any of my moth books, including South's two volume classic or Skinner's excellent *Colour Identification Guide*, which had been my 'bible' when I was moth trapping many years ago. Nor was I able to find it in the more recent *Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland* by Waring and Townsend. I therefore sent the photo to Jim Wheeler the Society's moth recorder, thinking that it may have been a rare species and possibly even new for Norfolk. It turned out to be a Box Tree Moth, one that I had never even heard of, but it set me off on a journey of discovery.



Box Tree Moth - a pretty moth
with devastating larvae
/ Moss Taylor

Its scientific name is *Cydalima perspectalis* and it is a non-welcome alien from East Asia. It is thought that its larvae were inadvertently imported into England on box trees in 2007 and it was first discovered in a private garden in 2011. It was first recorded in Norfolk in 2013 and is now widespread throughout the UK and Ireland.

The greenish-yellow, striped caterpillars feed on the leaves of box, causing defoliation, dieback and webbing. There are generally two generations per year but the Royal Horticultural Society believes that due to the mild winter followed by a warm spring, the caterpillars became active earlier this year and there may have been a third generation. As my neighbour has several box hedges in his garden, I shall be on the lookout for the Box Tree Moth larvae and adults next summer.

Absent Friends

Hans Watson

Like many nature lovers, I am growing more and more alarmed at the noticeable reduction in populations of insects, birds and other forms of wildlife, particularly in our gardens. It is significant that people who are not naturalists are noticing these changes, and I regularly have neighbours asking "where are all the butterflies and birds?". The fact that numbers of birds and butterflies were once large enough to have drawn the attention of these people who now miss them, underlines the serious nature of the population reductions.

Conversations with people who have noticed the loss of birds, often reveal that it



Male Chaffinch



The Chaffinch has a beautiful moss adorned nest with magenta-spotted eggs



Chaffinch affected by *Papillomatosis* , commonly known as Scaly Leg or Tassel Foot, which can be caused by a virus or mites. Images / [Hans Watson](#)

was the total absence of one particular species that first drew their attention to the reduction of all their garden birds. Often this species is the once very common House Sparrow. Fortunately, I still have House Sparrows, but very sadly I no longer have Chaffinches. The year 2024 marks the first year for at least 30 years, that Chaffinches have not bred in my garden, or brightened my day with their cheery little song. Chaffinches are one of the prettiest birds, and their nest is one of the most beautiful of all the finches. Their eggs are also lovely.

Chaffinches are often affected by the disease Trichomonosis. This is a deadly disease caused by a microscopic parasite that infects the mouth and throat/esophagus. Infected birds have difficulty eating and even breathing, and this soon leads to lethargy and death. Other species of garden birds can be affected, but Chaffinches seem especially vulnerable. This is a pity because Chaffinches enhance any garden with their presence. Another disease that Chaffinches are commonly affected by is Papillo - matosis, sometimes referred to as Scaly leg or Tassel Foot. This appears as whitish warty growths on the feet and legs, and affected birds often appear

active and in otherwise good condition, and recovery is known to occur. However, in severe cases , lameness or secondary infection can result which leads to increased susceptibility to predation, or the effects of hard weather.

I have for years practiced the cleaning and disinfecting of my bird feeders and bird baths, which are thought to be where many birds are infected by these diseases, but sadly many other bird lovers fail to do this.

I try, with a kind lift from a good friend, to get down to the RSPB reserve at Strumpshaw at least once a week, it's not far from home, just a 15 minutes drive, I am collected several hours later. I enjoy these trips, it's a nice change from my local woodland.



Cormorant with large Rudd



Redwings - Winter visitors from the north and a close encounter with a Red Kite.



One of the great joys of walking in the countryside is that you never know what will turn up, every day is different, this particular outing certainly provided plenty of photographic opportunities. While sitting in the tower hide I was keeping an eye on a lone Cormorant out in the middle of the water, it was not having much success, dive after dive it emerged with nothing, then out of the blue it surfaced with a large Rudd in its bill, so large that I was thinking no way could it swallow that, but after a few gulps and subtle manoeuvring it managed it.

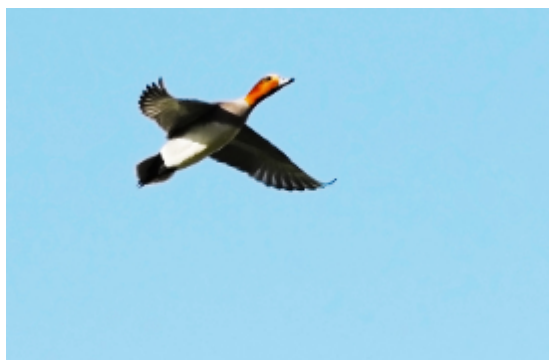
I then walked down the lane to Buckenham, it adjoins Strumpshaw, and again it is looked after by the RSPB, but is very different in character, being open marshland grazed by cattle during the Summer months, then in the winter period its taken over by thousands of wildfowl. On the way down the lane I had found a flock of Redwings spread out over a grass field that had held horses over the past several months, these beautiful little thrushes are winter visitors from the North and are always welcome, a Red Kite also ventured close enough to have its portrait taken.

On the Buckenham marshes the pre-dominant bird was the Wigeon, several thousand of them, during my stay there was a continual movement of these beautiful ducks from one feeding area to another. Over on the edge of the large area of water a group of six Ruff were feeding on the short grass, one of them had a snow white head, a Kestrel also came into view and did a fly past.

Walking back along the track a pair of Chinese Water Deer were seen, the buck seemed very keen to mate, but it didn't happen while they were in view, it was then that a large skein of pink-feet was seen to land some distance away up on the arable fields, I walked up Stone Road to see what was going on, there I was met by many thousands of these beautiful little geese, they were feeding on the remnants of a harvested maze crop.

An enjoyable and interesting day, with hopefully, a few images in the camera.

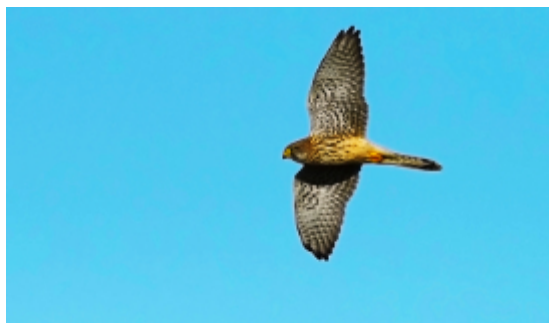
Images / *Tony Howes*



Drake Wigeon in flight



Ruff, part of a group of six



Chinese Water Deer, Kestrel fly-past (above) and Pink-footed Geese (below)



The Norfolk coast and beaches seem to be the place to see more wildlife this winter. Most of the reserves I have visited recently seem to be quieter than normal for the time of the year. The weather seems to have thrown every thing at us lately, wind, rain, fog and sleet. Some days the wind was so strong I could hardly open the car door to get out, never mind trying to hold my camera steady!! Then it is winter after all and with the short days of daylight, we photographers have to make the most of any opportunity which comes our way.

A trip to Titchwell, following a storm had left lots of debris along the strand-line. It was so sad seeing so many dead starfish, sun-stars and sea urchins. As usual, there were hundreds of razor shells crushing beneath our feet as we walked along the beach. Apart from the wind it was beautiful walking along with so many different species of birds to be seen. Golden Plovers were in their hundreds, plus Stonechats, Cormorants, Dunlin, Sanderlings, Knot, Oystercatchers and various gulls to name a few.



Stranded sun-star on Titchwell beach



Hundreds of glittering Golden Plover made a great sighting



Dunlin



Sanderling

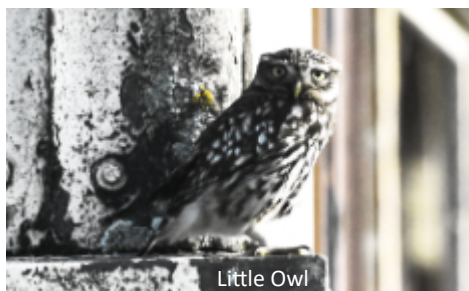


Knot

The tide was on the way out and the birds were flying in for breakfast. The waves crashing and the smell of the sea air was exhilarating. We walked along to where the Grey Seals usually rest. We were pleased to see a few of them basking in the sun.



Grey Seals

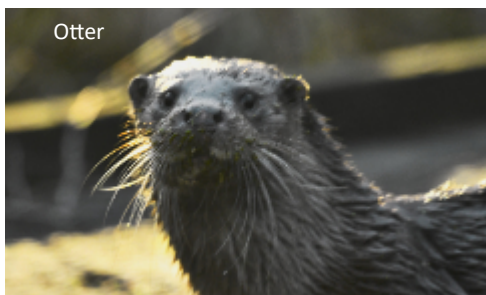


Little Owl

On another trip out I was pleased to see a Little Owl in two different places. One at a barn at Walsingham the other at Tatterset.

I often go to Sculthorpe Moor as there is always something to be seen. I was surprised, however, when I heard a rustle in the undergrowth. I expected a deer to appear, when suddenly an Otter walked out and stopped in front of me on the boardwalk.

Often I hear the tapping of the Great Spotted Woodpecker. You cannot mistake their undulating flight as they fly around the reserve and there seems to be several around as I have seen both males and females. Many times the Bullfinches have also been present along with other woodland birds. It was also nice to see a Mistle Thrush on my recent visit there. Cold winter weather or not, it's so good to get out with nature.



Otter

Images / *Elizabeth Dack*

Following on from Paul Noakes's article in the 2023 Bird and Mammal report (*"Building your own swift colony: Everybody should have one"*) I thought members might be interested to read about a project I carried out in Spring 2023.

I have been in Norfolk for over 25 years and have long thought that unused church towers would make excellent locations for swift nest boxes – the steep louvred entrances to the bell towers almost seem to have been designed for swifts to fly up into. When I finally got around to doing some research I found that, like all good ideas, many people had thought the same before me and had successfully implemented it across the country. After getting access to St Mary's church tower in Reepham to check out the feasibility (to measure up and confirm ease of access) I applied to the church for permission, which was granted enthusiastically.

I was lucky in that the louvres in St Mary's church tower had been replaced recently so I was able to design and build two very simple stacks of eight nest boxes, each out of six pieces of plywood with additional internal separators, which could be screwed directly onto the back of the louvre. The keys to success, as Paul Noakes mentioned, are; a suitable site, a nest box with a nest cup, an attraction system and..... patience. Additional to this for my project I would add a couple of good friends, or local volunteers, one with a bench saw and one with climbing/rope skills.



St Mary's Church louvred window before nest boxes and after nest boxes fitted

The boxes were installed and the Swift calls were played from the tower from early May to mid-July 2023, and again in 2024. There was considerable interest from a number of birds in 2024, including some entering the boxes. I checked the boxes at the end of August in both years and am pleased to report that my first nest has been built and is awaiting for the bird's return this spring to, hopefully, complete the success by rearing some chicks.



Internal view of nest box stack



First nest built in 2024 - good indications for 2025

Images / *Alan Dixon*

Since the installation of these 16 boxes I have also facilitated the installation of five more boxes on another public building in Reepham and am thinking about how to expand the project. Norfolk Wildlife Trust has also chosen Reepham churchyard for a short outdoors Swift walk/talk as part of their 2025 Churchyard Conservation training programme, to take place in June.

I would encourage everybody, if you haven't already, to have a good wander around your town or village to look for opportunities like this. The work involved is not excessive and can make such a difference.

Strange-looking Brent Goose

Janet Negal



During a trip to Cley on 13th January my friend Rona and I found a flock of 200+ Brent Geese grazing on The Eye and amongst them was a strange-looking bird. I did wonder if it could be a hybrid, however, birder friends suggested that the abnormality is most likely due to a leucistic condition as there are no obvious hybrid characteristics.

Fifteen stalwart naturalists braved the rain in Sweet Briar Marshes on 19th October 2024 (nowhere near as bad as predicted the day before by the weather apps!), after drinking tea with cake and biscuits whilst listening to updates on Wildlife Trust management by Matt Wickens at Marlpit Community Centre. Several members also gave updates.

A recent Fungi Group visit took the species recorded up towards 250; the announcement caused gasps when we had just heard of 22 butterfly species so far, but it was tempered by the comment that over 1000 fungal species are recorded from Wheatfen. One other interesting new piece of information was of the interest shown by Natural England in SBM as a site for re-introduction, several years hence, of the Large Copper butterfly from the Netherlands.



*Large Copper (f) /
Francis Farrow*

Upcoming activities with NWT at Sweet Briar Marshes are-

Friday 28th March 10am-1pm - Bird Survey Workshop

Friday 25th April 10am-1pm - Butterfly Survey workshop

Each will consist of the following -

- An approx. one hour class at Marlpit Community Centre to introduce apps used for recording and look at their limitations, an introduction to ID; to fixed point and transect recording techniques.
- A break for tea and coffee (provided by NWT).
- One and a half hours on the Marsh putting into practice techniques learnt.

Members who would like to become involved in SBM are welcome to register -

Mark Hoar, Engagement Officer, NWT Sweet Briar Marshes -

markh@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

Saturday 17th May Recorders day for all groups

Please come along as many did in May 2024 to search for your speciality!

Once again, tea, coffee and cakes together with with friendship and conversation.

Date to be arranged - June or July

A weekend collecting, counting and identifying Earthworms taught by Keiron Brown, a national expert. We don't have a county recorder for these vital soil organisms, if you are interested please get in touch!

Contact for more details from david.m.harper@icloud.com

Excursion & Event reports:

Winter Visitors and Birdwatching History of Cley -

30th November, 2024

The sky almost promised rain. If we were in Scotland we would be describing the day as nothing more than 'dreich'. Despite this we had a good attendance for the walk around the reserve and after a slightly delayed start we set off clockwise around the reserve perimeter.

A flurry of Meadow Pipits was matched by the 'Viz Mig' (Visible Migration) of Starlings in loose flocks moving West for the Winter. As we walked towards the sea on the West Bank we discussed how Cley became probably the best bird watching location in the UK; all the time as I was relating the history to the group we had the background 'chatter' of Pink-footed Geese.

Distantly we inspected a flock of Brent Geese feeding in the 'Eye Field' and were disappointed to note there were no young birds among them; all adults, perhaps the sign of a poor breeding season. A few Wigeon were also grazing among them.

As we watched a Curlew fly off into the distance a Marsh Harrier hunted over the reserve followed by a Sparrowhawk which certainly put up a few Snipe, Golden Plover and Redshanks. However, perhaps the bird of the day was a *Calidus* race Peregrine that flew over us and perched on one of the fence posts out on the marsh. This pale-headed, large race would normally be found much further North breeding within the Arctic circle. An Arctic Peregrine is a rare treat. A full description of this species is very well described in Martin Garners Birding Frontiers Challenge Series 'Winter Volume' p62. We all had the opportunity to look at the perched bird in the scope.

A Little Egret fishing on the salt marsh sparked off a discussion about climate change and how birds not even dreamt about at Cley 50 years ago were now breeding here, our milder winters enabling them to expand their range North.



Little Egret - the first of the many 'new' heron species now in Norfolk

We talked about how on the tailcoats of Little Egret came Great Egrets, Spoon-bills and Cattle Egrets. All now breeding in Norfolk. Who knows what will be next, Purple Herons and Little Bitterns no doubt.



The Lapwing, Peewit or Green Plover

Our walk to the beach road car park was punctuated with sightings of Stonechat and a very obliging Lapwing. We talked about how to sex Lapwings and their very many colloquial names; Green Plover among them, aptly describing our bird's mantle in the now broken sunshine.

The walk East on the beach was very disappointing. Other than the odd Herring Gull there were few birds of note. It wasn't until we got to the East Bank and started heading south that a few birds came to our attention. Among them were a small flock of Pintail. The drakes looking nothing short of dapper having already moulted into their new breeding dress.

A few Little Grebes were on the channels and godwits out on Arnold's marsh, but it was the Bearded Tits that caught our attention as they swung on the reed tops. The Cetti's Warbler calling from the reedbed however was much less obliging.

As we gained height back into the reserve centre we could see a few wintering Avocets on the reserve; again, a sign of a milder climate perhaps.

Everyone seemed to have a good time.

These walks are an opportunity to learn, renew friendships and make new ones. I would encourage all members to attend as many as they can.



Little Grebe

Images / *Carl Chapman*

Carl Chapman (Leader)

A Winter Walk: Burnham Overy - 22nd December, 2024

Leader: Nick Acheson



A skein of Pink-footed Geese / *Francis Farrow*

We had expected to see Pink-footed Geese on this walk and we did indeed obtain good views of them from the track as they grazed in small family groups. It was incredible to think that these beautiful birds had travelled together from the Arctic to feast upon Norfolk grasses. Pink-feet were not the only delights, however, as we were entertained by flocks of glittering Golden Plovers. The weather had miraculously cleared and they lit up

the sky. Flocks of Lapwings joined the dance, having been startled by a Red Kite.

We headed on to join the Coast Path where Nick spotted a male Hen Harrier, such a very pale bird compared to the several Marsh Harriers around. Nick informed us that there are fewer Marsh Harriers in the UK than Golden Eagles so Norfolk is certainly the place to be!

Nick, being a superb botanist, pointed out far too many marsh species for us to remember. Some were graded according to their level of deliciousness and Sea Beet (sauteed I think) comes out as top vegetable for 2025!

The jewel in the crown was a flock of Dark-bellied Brent Geese which we were able to enjoy at very close quarters from the Coast Path. Unlike the Pink-feet, the Brents were totally unperturbed by our presence. They are a small, very neat looking goose, pristine in their black and grey plumage. We could have listened to them chattering for hours but Nick suddenly spotted amidst the flock a single Pale -Bellied Brent Goose. This individual had noticeably brown tinges to its upper parts and a very pale belly which we were all able to pick up on with a 'little' help from our expert leader.

We walked until the light faded and beheld the most beautiful sunset over the marshes. And then came the Pink-feet! Not in huge numbers but beautiful skeins heading off to their roosts. Their “wink-wink” calls made a beautiful end to a what had been a fabulous day.

Neal Oliver

Felbrigg Lichen Outdoor Tutorial - 28th December, 2024

Leader: *Rob Yaxley - Lichen County Recorder*

How wonderful to have dropped out of Christmas for a few hours. Sixteen of us were very up for Felbrigg and lichen's with Rob even on a cold, very grey and moist day. Rob said the moisture was not the best way for any lichen to be at its visible best but we were content with what we saw, in fact it was beautiful to see each fruiting head on the lichen with its big drop of water on it. Of our number it was good that one person had been to Rob's Wheatfen workshop and another to the Gressenhall workshop, we are doing what we can in supporting people in building on the knowledge they gain from our workshops.



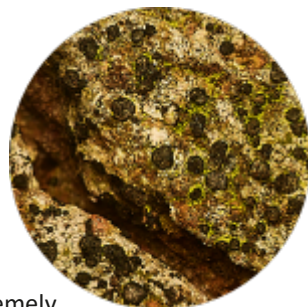
Members looking at lichens on Felbrigg's ancient trees / *Francis Farrow*



Some lichens react to chemicals by undergoing colour changes / *Hayley Strivens*

Lichens probably do no harm but possible add a level of protection to the surfaces they are on. Lichens are food for molluscs, springtails, some moth larvae and ladybirds. Some birds also take lichens to add to their nests, Wrens and Long-tailed Tits for instance.

There are lichens on the very old trees that represent something along the line of 50% of the total world population as the trees need to be over 300 years old, *Cresponea premnea* is one of these special lichens. There has been mixed success when trying to conserve lichens by transplanting say a rare lichen from a tree that has become extremely vulnerable for some reason.

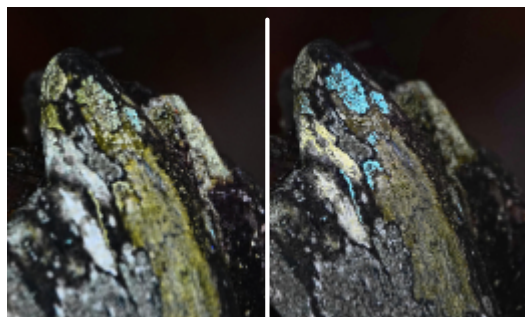


Cresponea premnea / *Mike Ball*

By using UV light many lichens reveal changes of colour, one glowed electric blue (*Fuscidea lightfootii*) and one that glowed high-viz yellow turned out to be a new county record -

Ochrolechia arborea

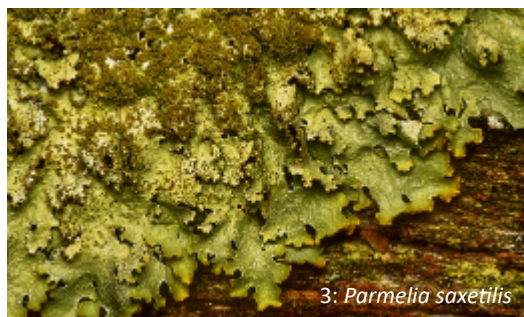
We are blessed in this country with our lichens and especially in Norfolk with our huge number of churches - protected sights such as they are - with all their grave stones, surrounding walls and the stone of the churches themselves.



1: *Fuscidea lightfootii* turning blue under UV light



2: Lichen community on gravestone



3: *Parmelia saxatilis*

Images 1 & 5 / *Francis Farrow*

Image 2 / *Hayley Strivens*

Images 3,4, & 6 / *Mike Ball*

Having Vanna & Jeremy Bartlett, James Emerson and Francis Farrow with us was useful when we passed fungi or in the case of Vanna lifting up logs and spotting newts, frogs and toads and of course harvestmen. A beautiful, pristine specimen of the Porcelain Fungus *Oudemansiella mucida* was seen high up on a branch and admired also great interest was shown in a Hawthorn berry fungus. This little brown job turned out to be Scurfy Twiglet *Tubaria furfuracea* and not the Hawthorn Twiglet *T. dispersa*, which it was first thought.

4: Harvestman *Oligolophus hansenii*

5: Porcelain Fungus

6: Scurfy Twiglet



A few of us had to leave at lunchtime but the more committed stayed on.

A very enjoyable visit.

Sarah Butler

A Winter Walk: West Acre rewilding land - 4th January, 2025

As I was about to de-ice my car, which was thoroughly covered in ice and frost, my expectations for who and how many were going to turn up for this event were not high. But I was pleasantly surprised that there were six of us and two of the cars had come from an hour away each!

We were going to have the Conservation Manager of Westacre leading us today but sadly they are in a gap of having someone in post as Land Conservation Manager so that task fell to me and I had to buff up my knowledge of the area.

Holkham's Earls of Leicester, own most of the immediate land that surrounds Castleacre, which is good because they have long term attitudes to their land and care about wildlife. Their land joins on to Westacre an area of woodland, scrub, marsh, riverside, chalk and some heath which curves right round to the village of Gayton so it is a wonderful sweep of different habitats for wildlife.

We were heading to a natural lunchtime end point an hour and a half away that would you believe it had a delightful pub with two cheerful fires! (It also had Girt Bunting, Stormy Petrel and Crested Tit but they were long dead and behind glass so don't count).

Across Silver Birches and the many soft colours of brown of the Winter water-colour landscape we watched a Woodcock glide to rest, a Sparrowhawk flying overhead, a Kestrel perched on wires, the pure white of swans by the riverbank, Buzzards, a Grey Wagtail, its tail twitching as it hopped amongst the marsh plants - all was soft, gentle and peaceful. We did see the White Park cattle over in the distance but not the Konik ponies on the Holkham land or the Exmoor ponies on the Westacre land.

As it was so cold on the way out we were walking rather than stopping but, on the way back there were findings of Hazel Big-bud Gall mite *Phytoptus avellanae* found by Ste (Steven). Graham found the leafmine of the fly *Phytomyza glechomae* on Ground ivy, leafmines of *Phytomyza hellebori*, the gall of Hemp Agrimony Plume *Adaina microdactyla* and the Yellow Brain fungus *Tremella mesenterica* (very common).

All in all a lovely walk and we did have fun.



Graham engaging members with an interesting find / Sarah Butler

Sarah Butler (Leader)

Sydney Long Medal: Dr Anne Edwards

Norfolk's most prestigious award for naturalists, the Sydney Long Memorial Medal, has been awarded to Dr Anne Edwards, chair of Wymondham Nature Group, in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the promotion of conservation.

The medal winner was announced during Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Annual General Meeting on Thursday 7 November. It is awarded jointly by Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society every two years for an outstanding contribution to the county's natural history.

Anne Edwards has been a committee member of Wymondham Nature Group for 20 years and its Chair for many of these. For the past 18 years, Anne has also organised regular work parties to carry out conservation work at NWT Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood and NWT Hethel Old Thorn, during which time these sites have become bountiful havens for biodiversity.



Dr. Anne Edwards receiving the Sydney Long medal / *Shaun Lawson*

Anne was able to connect her observations on ash die-back at Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood with her professional expertise as a molecular biologist at John Innes Centre and, in 2015, she received the British Empire Medal for services to the environment and public understanding of science.

At John Innes Anne has been working on a three-year programme to try and get women into science and is a member of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society Council.

The award was presented to Anne by Ambassador of Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Nick Acheson, in Ashwellthorpe Wood.

Nick said: "Dr Anne Edwards is a hugely worthy recipient of the Sydney Long Memorial Medal. Through her many years' voluntary work with Wymondham Nature Group and Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society she has helped both document our county's precious wildlife and bring people close to it.

"What's more she has given countless thousands of hours of her time to managing habitat for our wildlife, leading teams of volunteers for many years at Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood and Hethel Old Thorn. I feel sure that Sydney Long himself would endorse Anne as the recipient of this year's medal in his honour."

Chairman of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, Tony Leech, added: "The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society and Norfolk Wildlife Trust are passionate about protecting and restoring Norfolk's wildlife-rich landscape, to be enjoyed by many generations to come. We do this through conservation work and, crucially, by encouraging and nurturing a passion for Norfolk's nature in everyone. We are delighted

to award Anne the Sydney Long medal in recognition of her knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment which have both created bountiful havens for biodiversity in our county and built communities that care deeply for them."

On receiving the medal, Anne Edwards said: "I am hugely honoured to receive this prestigious natural history medal, particularly in the setting of Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Lower Wood, Ashwellthorpe, a veritable cornucopia of biodiversity. A walk in the woods provides pleasure at any time of the year; from the first emergence of cheerful springtime wood anemones and bluebells, through the colourful butterflies and dragonflies of summer and the remarkable fungal array of autumn to the simple stark beauty of winter arboreal skeletons.

"At a time when it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the environmental challenges that we face, an ancient woodland brings calm, inspiration and hope for the future."

The medal is awarded in recognition of Dr Sydney Long, founder of the Norfolk Naturalists Trust in 1926, now the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, who died in 1939.

(Shared from <https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/SydneyLongMedal>)

NNNS Events Programme - February to May 2025

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 for excursions. **Please try to car share or arrive by public transport.** **Winter Talks** - second Tuesday of the month at St. Andrew's Church Hall, 31 Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6NW (7pm for 7.30pm)

Saturday 8th February 10.30 - lunch (optional pm)

A winter walk at Broadland Country Park. Generalist walk. Meet at the car park just off Haverling Road, Norwich, NR10 4DF / TG181175. Leader: Dave Warner

Tuesday 11th February 19.30 - 21.00

A talk by Dr. Simon Butler 'Shifting Soundscapes'. The talk will explain how we can measure and monitor soundscapes. What the characteristics of soundscape above and below ground can tell us about biodiversity and the potential impact of changing soundscapes on human health and wellbeing.

Saturday 22nd February 10.30 - lunch (optional pm)

A winter walk at Buxton Heath with Phil Davison. Generalist walk. Meet at the parking space in the southwest corner, 100m east of the Holt – Norwich road along Heath Road, Hevingham, NR10 5QL / TG172213 / w3w: spider.centuries.proudest.

Tuesday, 25th February: 19:30 – 22:00 (Photographic Group - open to all members)

A talk by Hans Watson 'Nature of France'

Saturday 8th March 10.30 – lunch (optional pm)

A winter walk around Foxley Wood, Dereham. Generalist walk. Parking is available in several small car parks just inside the nature reserve. NR20 4QR / TG049229 / w3w: scale.dockers.duty

Annual General Meeting Tuesday, 11th March: 19:30 – 20:00

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

For details see the NNNS website (<https://norfolknaturalists.org.uk/wp/agm>)

The AGM will be followed by '**Peat Surveying in Norfolk & Suffolk - how, why and what it has revealed**'. A talk by **David Beardsley**

Saturday 22nd March 10.30 – lunch (optional pm)

An early spring walk around Lower Wood, Ashwellthorpe. Generalist walk. Small visitor's carpark in the centre of the village. NR16 1HB / TM137977 / w3w: wades.flamingo.fabricate

Tuesday, 25th March: 19:30 – 22:00 (Photographic Group - open to all members)

Title: '**Show Your Own**'

Bring a laptop or a memory stick or SD card to show and talk about your photos

Further events for April / May are in preparation - please check the events listing online

Saturday 25th May 10:30 – 13:00

Insect experts lead an event at **Buxton Heath/Compton Heath**.

Leaders: Tim Hodge and Martin Greenland

Meet at the small car park Southwest corner 100m East of the Holt- Norwich Rd
TG172213 / w3w: spider.centuries.proudest



NNNS Spring Workshops 2025

1st March: **WASPS**. Tutor: Tim Strudwick

6th April: **SAWFLIES**. Tutor: Andy Musgrove

17th May: **AN INTRODUCTION TO DIPTERA (TRUE FLIES)**.

Tutors: Tim Hodge and Mark Welch

7th June: **AN INTRODUCTION TO BRITISH MOSQUITOES**.

Tutor: Mark Welch

Venues to be confirmed.

The number of participants will be limited to 8.

Price: £15

To book a place, please contact Mark Welch by email m.welch@nhm.ac.uk



Noon Fly *Mesembrina meridiana* /
Francis Farrow

NNNS Annual recorders' and members' meeting

15th March 2025, 10:30-16:30
John Innes Centre, Norwich

Theme for the meeting: "Citizen Science"
Posters and talks

Admission is free

Please contact Mark Welch m.welch@nhm.ac.uk if you are planning to present a poster display.

<https://www.vecteezy.com/free-vector/citizen-science>>Citizen Science Vectors by Vecteezy



The next issue of 'The Norfolk Natterjack' will be
May 2025

Please send all
articles / notes and photographic material
to the editor as soon as possible by
April 1st 2025 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 Naturalists' 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
(£37 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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NB NNNS can also be found on Social Media platforms: X (formerly Twitter): <https://twitter.com/NorfolkNats>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NorfolkNats> and the associated 'Norfolk Wildlife' Facebook Group as well as the website: www.nnns.org.uk