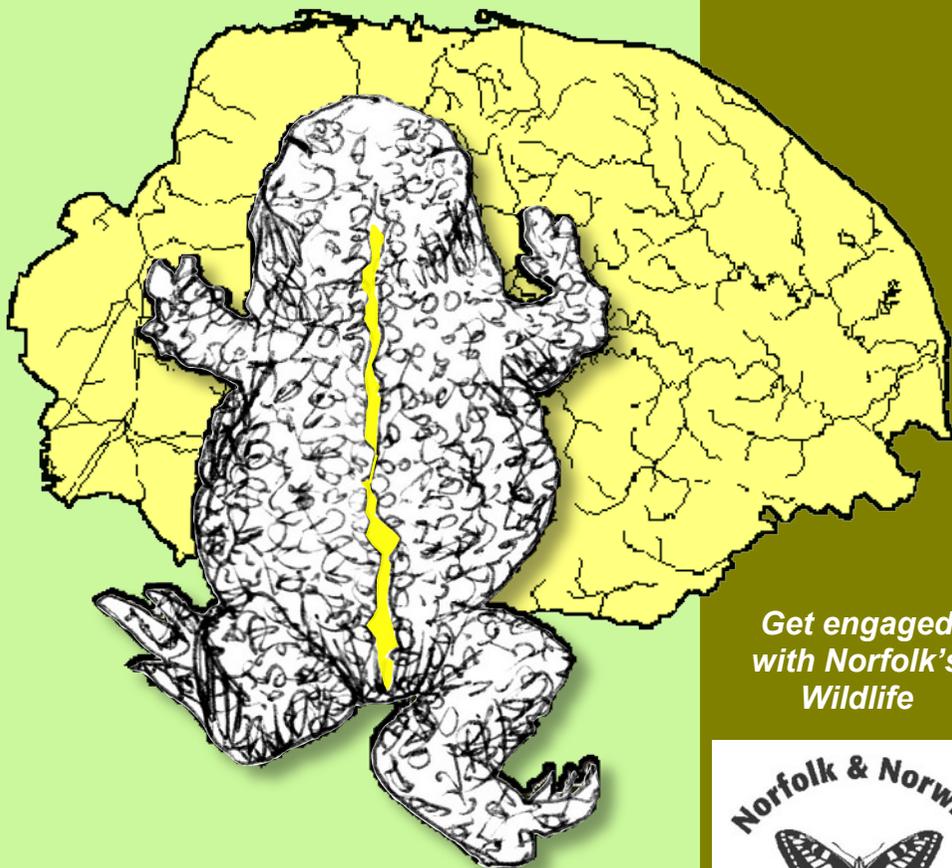


The Norfolk

Natterjack

WINTER 2011
Number 115



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The quarterly bulletin of the
Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

www.nnns.org.uk

Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Reg. Charity No. 291604

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Toad-in-the-hole....

Will the grip of winter be upon us as we read this edition of '*Natterjack*? This has been a strange year weather-wise and the wildlife and plants have behaved unseasonably. I expect more changing times in the future - more unusual weather patterns may mean new county records. Still do not forget to check out your local patch as recently at a NBIS/NNNS Recorder's meeting we heard that Norfolk is the only current known site in the world for a lichen and a 'new to science' marine sponge!

My thanks to all those who have contributed to '*Natterjack*' this quarter and I trust all members will have a great New Year. **FF**

Norfolk & Suffolk Bryological Group Meetings 2011-2012

Beginners are always very welcome - the only equipment needed is a handlens (x10 or x20) and some paper packets (old envelopes are fine) for collecting specimens. Meetings begin at 10.30am and will only be cancelled if there is snow or hard frost. The Norfolk and Suffolk Bryological Group is an informal interest group with no formal status or legal identity. All attendees at the events set out in the annual programme participate in those events entirely at their own risk and no responsibility for any injury loss or damage shall lie against the organisers of the events. The distribution of the programme of events is not intended to and does not form any contract or any other legal relationship between the organisers and the participants.

Saturday 10 December 2011 – Fulmodeston Severals. Commercial woodland but with old species-rich ditches and verges, and mature trees. Turn off B1110 at TG 008 288, also entrance for Hoecroft Plants, drive along track and park on the verge in the woods.

Sunday 8 January 2012 – Woodbastwick fens and marshes – part of the Bure Marshes NNR. Visiting wet woodland, scrub and possibly fen, depending on conditions. Meet in yard at TG 333 161 – turn west at north end of Ferry Rd.

Saturday 28 January 2012 – Joint meeting with Cambridge Bryologists at Stow Hall. Park in overflow car park at Rare Breeds Centre TF 627 055. Mixed woods, wet woods, arable margins, garden walls, orchards, churchyard and even a café.

Sunday 19 February 2012 – Bluestone Plantation, Cawston. Wet woodland. Park on roadside at TG 132 265 opposite the track into the wood.

Sunday 4 March 2012 – Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve, owned by the Hawk and Owl Trust. Wet woodland. Meet on car park by the Visitor Centre at TF 900 305. Reserve has been considerably enlarged since our previous visit in 2004. Held over from 2011.

Saturday 17 March 2012 – Woodrising Woods and Hazel Hurn, Woodrising. Mixed wood, wet wood, plantation and good rides. Turn off Woodrising Road at TL 986 027 at double metal gates (which will be open on the day) – this is north of West Lodge which is marked on the map. Go along the track and park on the grassy verge on the right just before Hazel Hurn.

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All on the Devil's Dyke

Ian Simper

The three articles by Tony Howes, Stephen Martin and Peter Moore in the Autumn 2011 bulletin of *'Natterjack'* all remind me of my own observations and experiences during a visit to the Devil's Dyke on June 19th this year.

Firstly I would thoroughly endorse Tony Howe's views on the Lizard Orchid in his article 'Two Stately Plants'. It certainly is a strange and intriguing plant as well as a highly charismatic one. It always leaves a special impression on me, and the colony I found were the highlight of my outing.

Next I would also thoroughly endorse Stephen Martin's comments in 'Devil's Ditch, Newmarket' that the Devil's Dyke is possibly the richest site for chalk flora in the East Anglian region. My visit turned out to be easily my most rewarding botanical foray during 2011. I found most of the species on Arthur Copping's plant list, though I wonder if any counts of individual plant species were made during the field meeting on 12th June? Stephen mentions that he seems to recall there being more Lizard Orchid flowering spikes on this site in earlier years.

Surely some were made?

Lastly, I found Peter Moore's 'Broomrape' article most interesting.

I approached the Newmarket section from the west direction during my foray, starting from the B1102 near Burwell. The eastern end of this section, as one approaches the A14, was dominated by an abundance of Musk Thistles and grazing sheep. At first this appeared to be a rather unrewarding stretch with nothing of any particular interest, until I noticed that some of the thistles were being parasitized by a broomrape! I was surprised and puzzled by this at first, and like Peter I wondered if they were Thistle Broomrapes. However, after I had examined them thoroughly, I was satisfied that they were in fact Common Broomrape (*Orobanche minor*). Unlike Peter's unusually robust specimen, these plants were all about the normal size and stature. I would agree with Peter that the occurrence of *O. minor* as a parasite of a thistle seems to be a rare and certainly a confusing event. I had never seen or heard of it before, though it is certainly not a unique event, evidently!

O. minor is certainly more catholic in its choice of hosts than its congeners who all seem to have much more specialized requirements. I can remember when my late wife and I were doing our field work for 'A Flora of Norfolk' back in 1991 we found several *O. minor* parasitizing *Tagetes* in a flower bed at Hunstanton. It will, it seems, also parasitize non-indigenous species as well.

Late Flowering of Alexanders *Smyrniium olusatrum*

Colin Jacobs

During the closing weeks of October opening weeks of November 2011 I noticed several flowering plants of *Smyrniium olusatrum* L. (Alexanders.) on the direct coastline between Lowestoft East Suffolk TM59 and Gorleston in East Norfolk TM59. In fact *S. olusatrum* is the UK's most easterly plant growing by Ness Point in Lowestoft. Here and along to Gorleston the plants had many umbels with extended stigmas. It has been so far at the time of writing a very mild autumn with temperatures reaching a consistent 15° C typical early spring temperatures when the flowers would be opening. The plants were introduced from the Mediterranean by the Romans and is typically coastal but can be found as far inland as Norwich where seeds have presumably floated up from the river systems. Even the rust fungus *Puccinia smyrnii* which grows on the Alexanders was common, another spring rust. The plants can survive the cold east winds but does not like more than five days of freezing temperatures which kill or significantly damage the plants, taking weeks to recover.

References.

Mabey R. Flora Britannica. 1997.

Barsted Mr C.P Former Lowestoft Field Club Secretary. (pers comm by letter) 1997

The Affects Of Possible Blandford Fly Bites In Norfolk.

Colin Jacobs

Abstract.

The Blandford Fly *Simulium posticum* Meigen 1838, a species of Black fly, is a biting insect found locally around Blandford Forum and villages bordering the River Stour in Dorset, UK. Its larvae breed in the weed beds of the slow flowing river and when the fly emerges, the female seeks a blood meal before mating. It usually bites the lower legs causing pain and swelling, after which secondary infections set in. In 1988 over 1400 local people were hospitalised, leading to questions in Parliament about the insect. There have also been fatalities as a result of the bites. In the early 1990s Dorset County Council asked the Institute for Freshwater Ecology based in Wareham, Dorset to investigate a means of ameliorating the problem. They came up with a biodegradable organic pesticide which was sprayed into the weed beds. This has been a great success and reduced the bites resulting in hospital admissions in 1999 to just 45. I am not aware of the fly in Norfolk (or my home county of Suffolk) but this documents some of the bites suffered by individuals and offers some explanation as to the cause.

On Monday 2nd August 2010. A news story in the Suffolk Evening Star newspaper about Wendy Johnson, 50, from Cambridgeshire interested me enough to write this paper. She thought she'd been bitten by a horsefly, but it turns out a tiny Dorset "superfly" known as the Blandford fly was thought to be to blame. Ms Johnson was sitting in her in-laws' garden in Waterbeach when the insect bit her. At first it didn't seem so bad but she found herself in agony for three weeks. The fly, which is most common in the south of England along rivers and streams, has started to venture into gardens due to the dry weather this summer – and the popularity of water features. Wendy felt a sting and saw the black "beetle looking fly" on her foot, which she describes as "nothing I've ever seen before". Wendy was back and forth to the doctors for check-ups and was on antibiotics for five days. It took Wendy three weeks until she could get a shoe on, after her blisters were popped by doctors and dressed.

A request by myself on the Dipterists Forum produced the following replies:

"A few years back we had a number of anaphylactic shock cases in north Warwickshire close to the River Tame, seemingly linked to a mass simuliid emergence in very warm weather. One person nearly died and yours truly had to get samples of whatever biting insect was the cause and get these sent to the right experts. Very strange being sent into a popular country park taped off like it was a murder scene. But I'm not sure that blackfly bites are necessarily a direct cause of septicaemia/infection, I think it is post-bite hygiene that affects this with scratching being the main cause (unless somebody else knows otherwise)."

This was followed by my request through the letters page of the Eastern Daily Press (EDP) on the 9th August 2010 for anyone who thought they had been bitten

by a fly and the bite site being much worse than a normal fly bite. I received two Replies:

Mrs Margaret Davidson of Long Stratton, who lives near to a flowing river describes that on Monday 2nd August 2010 she was gardening and felt a prick on the back of her leg which she knew was an insect bite but not a Wasp *Vespa* sp sting. Mrs Davidson often gets bites with a slight swelling she did not think any more about it. However when she awoke in the morning, her leg was double its normal size and she describes the colour like a ripe Victoria Plum (Red / Purple) Mrs Davidson went immediately to her local health centre and saw then nurse. By the afternoon after treating the area with an antihistamine cream prescribed by the Nurse. Small blisters were starting to form and merged into one big blister. The following morning the wound had increased considerably in size as big as a hen's egg. The weight of the fluid within the blister caused it to hang uncomfortably from her leg. Of course the Health centre staff were horrified at the form that had appeared and they agreed they had never seen anything like it before. It was subsequently lanced and dressed but on changing the dressing's smaller blisters returned again. As I write this in mid August the lady tells me that wound is recovering and the swelling is lessening. She assumes it was caused by the Blandford Fly.

The second letter came from a Mrs Sarah Turff of King's Lynn. She claims here bites were nowhere near as serious as the Cambridgeshire woman but the wound was very like it. Mrs Turff was bitten twice. Her bites were on her ankle and her foot and the centre of each bite, which was just a dark pin prick, was surrounded by a disc of flat, white skin and then what appeared to be nettle rash which extended for several inches around the bites. Mrs Turff reports that they were extremely irritating and she did scratch them. The itching was dreadful and the rash formed several very small blisters. She says that ten days after the bite was given it had almost disappeared but the itching continued for some days afterwards. During the wound sequence Mrs Turff did suffer swollen ankles and feet. I wonder if they were linked to the bites.

My conclusion is that there are certainly some nasty flies in Norfolk that could until proven otherwise be the Blandford Fly and why is it only women who suffer such severe bites and wounds?



References:

Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blandford_fly

The Society for the Study of Flies. (The Dipterists Forum) <http://www.dipteristsforum.org.uk>.

Blue, Green and White

Tony Howes



I went with a friend, in mid August, to Warham Camp, an iron age structure in the north of the county. The object of the visit was to hopefully find and photograph Chalk Hill Blue butterflies (*Lysandra coridon*) and the chalk loving plants that thrive there. We were not disappointed, despite the very strong winds and over-cast conditions, the butterflies were everywhere, hundreds of them. The consensus of opinion is that they were introduced there by persons unknown, but there is no doubt that they enjoy the conditions and have now formed a strong colony.

The pale blue males are unmistakable, but the females can be confused with other blues. The caterpillars are nocturnal and feed through the dark hours on horse-shoe vetch, which seems to be their preferred plant. Despite their nocturnal habits they are still attractive to certain ants who attend them through the night. This was a very successful visit to see a beautiful insect.

Later in the summer (?) the same friend and I spent some time in the village of Reedham, it had been several years since I had searched for Great Green Bush Crickets there. We had delayed arriving until late afternoon, hoping that any males present would give the game away by their 'singing'. As it turned out we heard nothing, but were fortunate in finding two, one male and one female, the male was very obliging and posed for us like a professional model. They are our largest cricket and can be over 2 inches in length, as the name implies, they are big beasts and vivid green in colour. Lovely to see them.

During June, on a trip to Minsmere, I was able to watch at close quarters a Mediterranean Gull in full breeding plumage. Pearl grey upper wings and snow white under wings, set off by the black hood and scarlet bill, it was very beautiful, a stunner of a bird. The Black-headed Gulls close by looked dowdy by comparison.

Norfolk Bird and Mammal Reports

1954-2006 inclusive, unbound.

Offers to Keith Dye, 104 Wolseley Road, Great Yarmouth,
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Cley Reserve

Brian Macfarlane



I occasionally go to Cley to have a change from going to Strumpshaw reserve.

Last August Bank Holiday Monday was my highlight for the year. To think I had gone to Cley with my wife for a nice day out together (a rarity) with an excuse to check the water level in Pat's pool, which had recently been drained for maintenance. As we sat eating lunch looking out of the window at the visitor's centre my wife said, why don't you go and have a couple of hours in the hide while I go for a walk? (Sitting in hides is not her 'thing'). She asked if I had brought my camera? Funnily enough I had put a long lens in the boot for an emergency. So glad I did!

It was a perfect blue sky, and lots of birds on Pat's pool. Sitting in the Daulk hide overlooking the pool, at the furthest distance from me there were twelve Spoonbills standing there with their heads under their wings asleep.....as usual when I see them. Suddenly there was a tremendous rushing of wings as all the birds erupted into the air including the Spoonbills. There were hundreds of Greylags and Canada Geese apart from waders, the sky was literally 'Solid'. They all initially flew towards the sea, but a lot turned to come back including the Spoonbills. To my delight the Spoonbills appeared from the right, clear of all other birds against a blue sky background, heading back to where they originally started. The opportunity to photograph them in that situation was really thrilling, and my best shots of that bird so far.

Also I saw a female Sparrowhawk sitting on a gate out to the left of the hide. As close as I have ever been to such a wonderful bird. On another visit the Swallows were lined up in numbers on the overhead wires getting ready to depart. Later I came back along the boardwalk to see young Swallows being fed on fence wires. Just the right height for some action, see photos. It's amazing how they can pop the food in their mouth in full flight. That is typical of the Swallows, they just keep flying, what energy!

The Daulk hide allows one to see two different scrapes either side of a narrow reed bed which runs from West to East. I watched a Little Egret fishing very close to the hide. It was catching very small fish which must have been part of a big shoal. It took over thirty fish without having to move more than a step.



White Ghosts

Tony Howes

One of the many Barn Owl boxes I have made and erected over the years happens to be in a very photogenic spot in an oak tree down in the Yare valley. Last year three youngsters fledged from here, and this year, 2011, I knew that once again there were young owls in the box. I had erected a hide about thirty five yards away on the edge of the wood, and towards the end of July I spent the odd evening there, photographing the parents bringing in voles and mice. Eventually I began to see the youngsters faces at the opening of the box, then one evening they scrambled up to sit on the edge of the opening, I felt like a proud dad. Later on they would venture out onto branches near the box and wait for food, they rely on their parents for many weeks and are often still in the box at 3 months old. Later they become hunters themselves and strike out on their own and take over a new territory.

Barn Owls are very charismatic birds, they have a certain aura about them and I never tire of being in their company. It's a lovely feeling to watch the youngsters venture out of their box for the first time, late on a summer evening, and sit patiently for supper to arrive, giving their strange snoring like call as they wait – Magic.

Norfolk Rook Nest Survey 2011

Malcolm Metcalf

Last spring, with the help of many *Eastern Daily Press* readers, I conducted a survey of the number of Rook nests to be found in Norfolk.

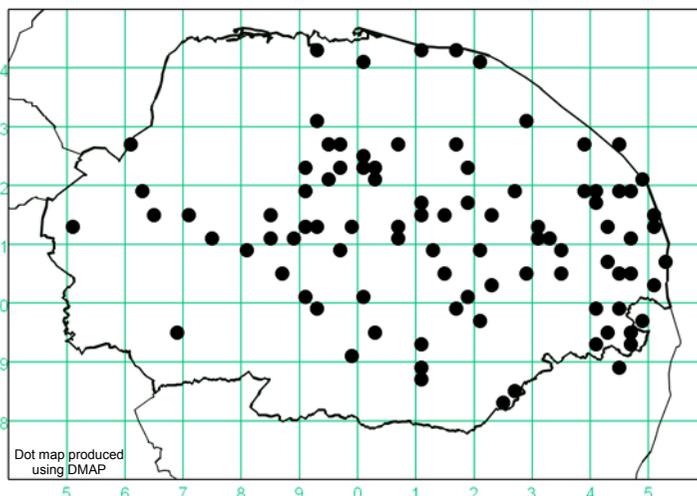
I was inundated by the response, with telephone calls, letters, and people knocking on my door. I received maps and photographs of where many of the sites were. I visited many people in villages that I'd never heard of and having no car, I travelled hundreds of miles on buses. Many people also, including the Great Yarmouth Naturalists, drove me far and wide.

It was a wonderful experience with the final nest total being 4,122.

See following table. **(H)** = Highest count / **(L)** = Lowest count

No	Location	Nests	No	Location	Nests
1	Potter Heigham	15	41	Mulbarton / Bracon Ash	60
2	Repps with Bastwick	6	42	Langham	40
3	North Walsham	77	43	Fakenham (Health Centre)	6
4	Wortwell (opposite Bell P.H.)	9	44	Bawdswell	22
5	Wortwell (behind Goodwins Garage)	24	45	Foxley (A1067 Main Road)	4
6	Wortwell (off Mill Lane)	6	46	Bintree	8
7	Wortwell (behind Sayes Farm)	16	47	Stibbard	116
8	A146 (off Bramerton Road)	-	48	Whissonset	89
9	A146 (near Garden Centre)	52	49	Brisley	20
10	Wheatacre (near church)	46	50	Brisley (near Foxborough Farm)	7
11	Burgh St. Peter marshes (2 sites)	29	51	North Elmham	16
12	Aldeby (near College Farm)	10	52	Easton (Rectory)	130
13	Aldeby (near church – 2 sites)	84	53	Easton (near St. Peter's Church)	77
14	Weston Longville	60	54	Easton (near Marlingford Road)	46
15	Great Ryburgh (old rectory)	30	55	Middleton (Church)	40
16	Mileham	14	56	Middleton (near Church)	20
17	Walpole Highway (B1145)	30	57	Narborough	56
18	Lingwood Old Manor	6	58	East Winch	14
19	Warham (near Wells)	18	59	Fransham	82
20	Watton	6	60	West Bilney (Church)	25
21	Watton (Slesser Park)	4	61	Necton	20
22	Watton (Blenheim Grange)	25	62	Swaffham (Church)	20
23	Griston (Lynda Piercey's garden)	19	63	Swaffham	19
24	Griston (Church)	3	64	Wendling	60
25	Griston (Village)	10	65	Cromer (Hall/Holt Road)	32
26	Griston (Farm)	29	66	Cromer (near Overstrand Road)	14
27	Griston (Park grounds) (H)	159	67	Marsham (near Plough Inn)	20
28	Carleton Rode	40	68	Little Plumstead	25
29	Spixworth (Church -2 sites)	90	69	Little Plumstead (west of school)	26
30	Billockby	50	70	Great Plumstead	43
31	Martham	150	71	Tuddenham	18
32	Halvergate	40	72	Sporle	12
33	Hockering	14	73	Dunston Hall (near Norwich)	15
34	Attleborough	31	74	Tasburgh	51
35	Snetterton	52	75	Taverham (near Hall School)	50
36	Dereham (2 sites)	36	76	Morton-on-the-Hill	20
37	Burgh Castle (Butt Lane)	44	77	Guist	35
38	Burgh Castle (Church)	16	78	AI49 (Sheringham to Salthouse)	10
39	Kings Lynn (Centre)	26	79	Tibenham (L)	2
40	Kings Lynn (near roundabout)	7	80	Tibenham (Goose Lane)	12

No	Location	Nests	No	Location	Nests
81	Norwich U.E.A. (behind Blackdale Building)	10	102	Waxham (near Great Barn)	13
82	Horsford (Church Lane)	88	103	Scratby	35
83	Windfarthing	21	104	Winterton	13
84	Shipdham (A1075)	16	105	West Somerton	22
85	Great Dunham (Rookery Farm)	45	106	Ingham (near Church Rookery Barn)	20
86	Methwold (Cemetery/Park)	82	107	Ingham (nearby)	30
87	Harleston	26	108	Hingham (nearby)	20
88	Ashill	40	109	Potter Hingham (2 sites)	18
89	North Wooton (All Saints Church)	29	110	Gillingham	42
90	Horstead	10	111	Gillingham	20
91	Alysham (Burgh Road)	26	112	Gorleston (Hall Farm – Lowestoft Road)	3
92	Reedham (next to church)	48	113	Somerleyton	45
93	Blofield (Church)	11	114	Thorpe (near Haddiscoe-behind church)	54
94	Blofield (next to Garden Centre)	19	115	Lower Thurlton (nearby)	51
95	Blofield (Rookery House)	6	116	Lower Thurlton (nearby)	12
96	Blofield (Oak Road)	41	117	Thurlton	30
97	Buckingham Marshes (near station)	25	118	Worlingham	10
98	Runham	37	119	Ludham (near church)	25
99	Mautby	32	120	Wood Dalling	110
100	Caister (opposite Tesco's)	17	121	Heatherset (3 sites)	122
101	Great Yarmouth (Caister Road)	5	122	West Somerton	8



Distribution map of Norfolk Rook nests survey 2011 based on parish

How Do Hedgehogs Mate?

George Carrick



When asked the question, “How do Hedgehogs mate?” The old answer used to be, “Carefully!” I have seen Hedgehogs together many times, finding them by the squeals and grunts that they were making. However I have never actually observed them mating until two Hedgehogs did so in our garden in Sheringham this summer.

They first appeared about half past eleven in the evening in the light of my moth trap and circled around each other for about half an hour. Courtship seemed to consist of them giving each other nudges with their noses under the soft part of the belly. They made no sound, and seemed quite oblivious to my presence. Finally the male mounted the female and copulated with her. She did not seem to lower her spines to make him more comfortable. He then remained mounted on her while she wandered about the garden. Every time she stopped he copulated again. This went on for at least half an hour with copulation occurring every one or two yards. Mating lasted no more that 10 seconds. He remained mounted and followed her on his back legs. It was difficult not to admire his stamina. She eventually trundled into the bushes and out of view with the male still firmly in place. How long did they sustain this Olympic feat of mating? Unfortunately I do not know.



*Hi Readers, Swallowtail and I would just like to wish you
A MERRY CHRISTMAS and A HAPPY NEW YEAR*

Chinese Water Deer

Hans Watson



In recent years, the debate regarding the rapidly increasing deer population and its effect on their surroundings has been of particular interest to many naturalists. Until quite recently, the debate had focused mainly on Red, Roe and Muntjac deer and their impact on plantations and woodland. In the last year or two, attention has been drawn to Chinese Water Deer because of their growing numbers. This species has until recently been viewed by many naturalists as having little in the way of negative effect on its surroundings, but there has been a very rapid increase in its population in the last few years. I regard it as quite unusual not to see at least one when I go for a walk in the Yare Valley, and sometimes 4 or 5 may be seen. Some naturalists consider this rapid increase is the result of the larger number of young that Chinese Water Deer produce with each pregnancy. Whilst most of the British deer give birth to a single fawn or less frequently twins, Chinese Water Deer often give birth to 3 to 5 fawns, and even 8 has been recorded. However, I am informed that mortality of fawns may be as high as 40%, and although I regularly see does with fawns, there is usually only one fawn.

It has recently been reported that the paths made by these deer in reed bed territories, provide access for foxes to explore and prey on ground nesting birds that use large reed-beds, such as Bittern, Marsh Harrier, and Crane. More surprising, is the strong suspicion, that a Chinese Water Deer eat the eggs of one of the Norfolk breeding Cranes. Most people regard herbivores such as deer, sheep and horses as strict vegetarians, but Red Deer have been seen eating live Manx Shearwater chicks on the Isle of Rum, a White-tailed Deer in America, has been filmed pursuing, catching, and eating a fledgling bird, and Sheep have been seen eating live Arctic Tern and Arctic Skua chicks on Foula in Shetland. Also, a horse was filmed by an experienced naturalist, eating Partridge eggs.

In 2009, The Telegraph newspaper reported the case of a number of dogs receiving deep lacerations to their back, side and in one case, neck. The Vet that treated five of the dogs, all of which received their injuries whilst being exercised (off the lead) in woods at Ampthill Park in Bedfordshire, was convinced that the injuries were all caused by the fangs of a Chinese Water Deer.

Perhaps the timid, inoffensive, Bambi-like image of deer needs some revision.

Addendum to A Flora of King's Lynn

Due to an oversight we forgot to note that the records presented in this Flora were collected between 2006 and 2010.

Frances Schumann and Robin Stevenson

Strumpshaw Diary

Brian Macfarlane



Last time I wrote in *Natterjack* I was saying the winter, and frozen water seemed a distant memory. It is nearly the end of October, and now the weather forecasters are talking of another severe winter coming. I find that amazing considering they find it tricky to say what is going to happen tomorrow!

Firstly one interesting observation was the continuation all through the summer of the Swallowtail butterflies. which normally has a break between hatchings of at least a month. Again another quirk of unusual happenings in the world of nature this year.

Well I'm pleased to say that Strumpshaw started to show signs of bird life towards the end of August. For instance the heron and kingfisher is back on a regular basis. The good news is the reed beds across the water in front of my 'HOME' (sorry, Fen hide) have been cut back in three swathes going away it. Now the cut reeds have been burnt I am looking forward to seeing a bit more life in that direction.

We have seen a lot of adverse weather since August, but we also saw some very warm days, which gave rise to misty mornings. There is always that feeling of anticipation what might be out there as the mist burns off, and the sun gives a warm glow. On one of the misty mornings I was lucky enough to have a Kingfisher land on the stick in front of the hide with two cobwebs on. MAGIC! The first hint of Autumn.

The Hobbies have been showing well, and staying to quite late in the season. On one occasion while in the hide I saw what I thought was a Sparrowhawk flying very fast low towards me over the reeds. I raised my camera and took two shots before it flew past the hide. The sky was overcast, and my camera was set for underexposing for a Little Egret. In the space of a hundred yards, (old money) two Hobbies had come together, and parted fighting over a Sand-martin one had caught.

There appears to be at least five Bitterns on the reserve, and numbers could still rise with more coming in from the continent. They are flying about a lot, and can be seen most days. Whereas the summer skies were blank.

Until two years ago Herons were catching large fish regularly in front of the hide. Maybe a lot of the big fish died when the reserve was badly flooded containing salt from the high tide. Also the Otters also will have taken it's toll. They tend to swim past the hide under water, but occasionally they catch a big fish, and come to the surface or land on the bank to eat it. The other day I saw a Heron catch a biggish pike so hopefully we shall start to see a few more of the new generation.

At the moment there are masses of small fish swimming near the surface by the sluice, which means plenty of food for fish eating birds.

I mentioned in my last article there appeared to be less Chinese Water Deer about after the bad weather of last winter. Well there have been regular sightings of the animals passing in front of the hide across the water. Now the reeds are cut we should see more.

Marsh Harriers do not fly close very often, but occasionally come really close while looking for prey.

The reeds need cutting immediately in front of the hide despite being cut two months ago. This might enable us to see the very retiring Water Rails, which come to feed close to the waters edge.

Well winter is just round the corner, and I can't wait to see the bitterns up close on the ice. Somehow I feel a 'Musical Ice Spectacular' coming on!

REVIEWS

Thirty Years of Norfolk Butterflies An Atlas of Distribution A Brazil, AP Dawson and CM Dawson

This is the third *Atlas of Norfolk Butterflies* that the Norfolk branch of *Butterfly Conservation* has produced. This latest Atlas provides the opportunity to compare butterfly species distributions in Norfolk over three periods: 1984-1988, 1989-2000 and 2001-2010. For the 2001-2010 survey, 125,545 records were obtained with 1,317 out of Norfolk's 1,441 tetrads covered.

The Atlas shows how species distributions have changed over thirty years, with clear range expansions for some species including Speckled Wood, Brown Argus and White Admiral, and losses for species such as Wall Brown, Grizzled Skipper and Dingy Skipper. The methodology demonstrates the power of citizen science in revealing changes in insect populations. Each map is based on presence or absence of a species in each tetrad during the survey period, and does make allowance for differences in observer effort across the county. The west of the county is the least well covered region, so some blank tetrads here may reflect a lack of observers. We are encouraged to keep recording butterflies for the next recording period, 2011-2020, with the hope that recording effort can be even better for the next Atlas.

Each species account indicates national conservation status and any UKBAP listing. There is also a chart showing flight times recorded for each species in the years 1991-2010. There are obvious year-to-year variations but surprisingly little

evidence of trends towards earlier emergence over this period.

The Atlas is available from Roland Rogers, 1A Tuckswood Lane, Norwich, NR4 6BD. Cheques are payable to Butterfly Conservation - Norfolk Branch. Price £2 plus £1.50 p&p. The publication will also shortly be available online via www.norfolk-butterflies.org.uk

Nick Owens

A Flora of Stanta

Alec Bull

This Flora is the first for the Stanford Training Area since the late Eric Swann's of 1984. Alec Bull and his wife Rita contributed to Swann's Flora and have been visiting Stanta frequently ever since. This new publication covers Flora, Fungi and Mosses and Liverworts between 1990 and 2010. The boundaries of the new Flora are slightly different from those of the earlier Flora owing to habitat changes and also includes the recent 'Northern Extension'.

The author gives a delightful description of Stanta's habitats, taking the reader on an imaginary walk through the various tracks and paths, through plantations, heaths and chalk grasslands or beside abandoned villages, lone churches, streams and pingos. Comments about birds, dragonflies and other wildlife as well as plants and fungi reveal the author's astonishingly comprehensive natural history knowledge, as well as his intimate knowledge and love for the area. Changes since the earlier Flora are described, such as felling of plantations, management work and changes in grazing pressure by sheep and deer.

Twenty eight recording units are used, comprising 19 tetrads and 9 1km squares. The species accounts indicate the number of recording units in which the species was found or - for those species known from five or fewer units – the name and number of the recording units. The classification of each species as neophyte, archaeophyte or native is also given as are indications of typical habitats and locations. Many cultivated plants continue to thrive in lost village gardens and are included in the Flora. Ferns and horsetails are also covered under Flora, with separate sections for Fungi and Bryophytes. The book is richly illustrated in by the author's colour photographs of plants, fungi and scenery.

The Flora can be obtained from Alec Bull, 'Hillcrest', Main Road, East Tuddenham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 3JJ. Price £10 plus £1.50 p&p.

NB Stanta is out of bounds without a pass obtainable from Range Control, following a security briefing and by prior arrangement.

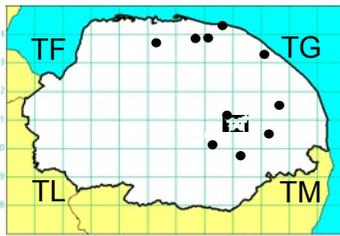
Nick Owens

Excursion

Reports



● 2011-12 Field Meeting location
St. Andrew's Hall Eaton
Indoor meetings



The programme of field meetings and workshops has been completed and the programme cards / flyers give the details of the various 2011/2012 events. The *Natterjack* likes to carry as many of the Excursion reports as possible, so if you have particularly enjoyed an excursion or a workshop please volunteer to write up a short account and send it in.

Knapton Green Lanes

Joint Meeting with the Research Group

Sunday 10th July 2011

Five people met at the small car park at the end of the Knapton rail cutting to explore nearby green lanes and try out a draft survey recording form. Luckily there were a variety of interests represented, both plant and animal.

The sunny weather brought out a number of insects, including a good range of butterflies. The green lanes – all restricted byways – mostly ran through arable fields, but varied in the type of boundaries they had. Some had substantial hedges with old coppiced Field Maple stools and large lapsed pollarded oaks, running along parish boundaries. Indeed one partly sunken lane sported an old parish boundary stone next to a pollarded oak. Others were open on at least one side directly onto the fields. Shady areas provided good areas for Soft Shield Fern and various mosses, while open sunny areas with dry banks were possible habitats for ants and other insects. Occasional large deadwood stumps, standing deadwood in mature trees or dying hedgerow elms added to the variety. It was probable that, this close to Paston, the lanes were being used by *Barbastelle* bats.



By lunchtime the party split up to record different lanes and it was only left to compare notes about the survey forms.

Mary Ghullam

Parish Wildlife Walk at Saxlingham Nethergate

Leader: Trevor Stevens

Saturday 16th July 2011

It was a case of *deja vu* for our second meeting to look at the wildlife of Saxlingham Nethergate. After last years wet and windy May meeting one would think July would stand a better chance of some fine weather but as six of us gathered at the village hall it looked liked being a repeat performance.

Suitably attired, we set off to look at a wet (by now wetter) meadow. The most obvious plant was Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) which had spread out of a dyke and was covering quite an area of the meadow, probably following a trickle of water from a spring higher up. Bur-reed stands provide sheltered roosting and nesting places for wildfowl and in autumn the ripe fruits contribute to their diet. Also noted in this meadow were Marsh Valerian (*Valeriana dioica*) and Square-stemmed St John's-wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*).

Despite the rain and cool conditions, a couple of Meadow Brown butterflies were flying around the meadow and we were to see several more during the morning.

Our route took us through an unusually short crop of Rape and among the weeds at the edge of the path were several plants of Swine-cress (*Coronopus squamatus*). Despite the various English names- Swine, Sow and Hog-cress, there is no evidence that pigs have any interest in it. Swine-cress was once used in salads as a substitute for Watercress but due to its inferior taste was thought to be fit only for pigs.

As we reached the end of this field, a Red Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus x carnea*) was growing beside the path. Robert Maidstone pointed out that it had little sign of the leaf miner *Cameraria ohridella* on its leaves and that the Red Horse Chestnut did not suffer as much as the white form. It appears that this hybrid is highly resistant to *Cameraria ohridella*. Eggs are laid on the leaves and these hatch but the larvae die in the first instar just as they start to expand the mine within the leaf tissues.

Growing beneath this tree were several plants of Rough Chervil (*Chaerophyllum temulum*) also known as Queen Anne's Lace, a name it shares with Cow Parsley which flowers earlier. Rough Chervil is part of the parsley family which includes some of Britains most poisonous plants. If consumed it can simulate the effects of drunkenness and the specific name, *temulum*, is derived from the Latin for vertigo. As we walked beside the playing field, we found Upright Hedge Parsley (*Torilis japonica*). This is the later flowering of the three common roadside species of the parsley family. The generic name *Torilis* is a reference to the furrowed fruits, coming from a Greek word meaning 'to engrave'. One of the local English names is 'Devil's nightcap'.

Moving on to the Saxlingham Meadows project, there were several moths flying around as well as the Meadow Brown butterflies. Several of them were carpet moths but they didn't settle long enough to get a definite identification, however a

Clouded Border (*Lomaspilis marginata*) was more obliging as was a Common Footman (*Eilema lurideola*) sheltering in a nearby Spindle shrub.

We decided to have another look in the small wood containing the ruins of St. Mary's church where last year we had found lots of Goldilocks but by now this had gone. Around the base of the the church walls, Herb-robert (*Geranium robertianum*) was quite plentiful and one of our group wondered why it was so called. I couldn't give an answer but I have looked it up and there are two possible answers: it could be named after Robert, an early Duke of Normandy, for whom a medieval medical treatise was written or could be a corruption of the Latin *ruber* meaning red as Herb-robert turns red in the autumn or when it grows in dry conditions.

Returning through the village, we noted a few plants of Pencilled Cranesbill (*Geranium versicolor*) growing on a grass verge. Whether they were planted there I don't know but they looked quite established.

The rain was persisting as we returned to the village hall, so we sheltered under the porch to decide what to do as the plan was to go on to Smockmill Common in the afternoon. I was keen to go there but would rather wait for a better day and was glad that the others felt the same way, so we decided to call it a day.

While we were sheltering there, a gentleman approached us to ask if we were part of the wedding party going to Smockmill Common for the wedding photographs! While we were suitably dressed for the weather, we certainly didn't look suitable for a wedding, although I would have liked to have seen the resulting pictures, as the rain persisted well into the afternoon.

Thanks again to Trevor for another look around Saxlingham Nethergate. It's a delightful village and I would recommend a visit there but preferably on a drier day.

Bill Mitchell

Your chance to comment on the Society's programme of events

We are now starting to plan next year's programme and would like to know what you think about the Society's events.

- What would you like to see more of in the programme?
- Can you suggest places for field trips, or subjects for illustrated talks?
- How should we advertise our events? As members you get a copy of the programme card at the start of each year but how else would you like to hear about or be reminded of events?

In recent years our illustrated talks have been well attended but our field meetings not so well.

- What would encourage you to come to more of the field meetings?
- Would popular venues with easy parking and facilities help?

What can we do to encourage the interested public to become general naturalists, and the general naturalist to progress?

Let us know what you think - contact: Stephen Livermore, 70 Naseby Way, Dussindale, Norwich NR7 0TP. Email stephenl@btinternet.com



The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be February 2012. Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by **January 7th 2012** to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham,
Norfolk, NR26 8QD Email: francis.f@virgin.net

Please send **all photographic material** to:
Simon Harrap, 1 Norwich Road, Edgefield,
Melton Constable, Norfolk, NR22 2RP Email: harrap@onetel.net

Membership subscriptions

The N&NNS membership year runs from 1st April to 31st March. During this time members will receive four copies of the quarterly *Natterjack* newsletter, and annual copies of the Transactions of the Society, and the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report.

Membership renewals are due on *1st April each year* and should be sent to the treasurer:

- David Richmond, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

New memberships should be sent to:

- Mike Stew, 'Sandpipers', The Street, Kelling, Norfolk, NR25 7EL.

Current rates are £15 for individual, family and group memberships (£25 for individuals living overseas).

Cheques payable to: Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.

