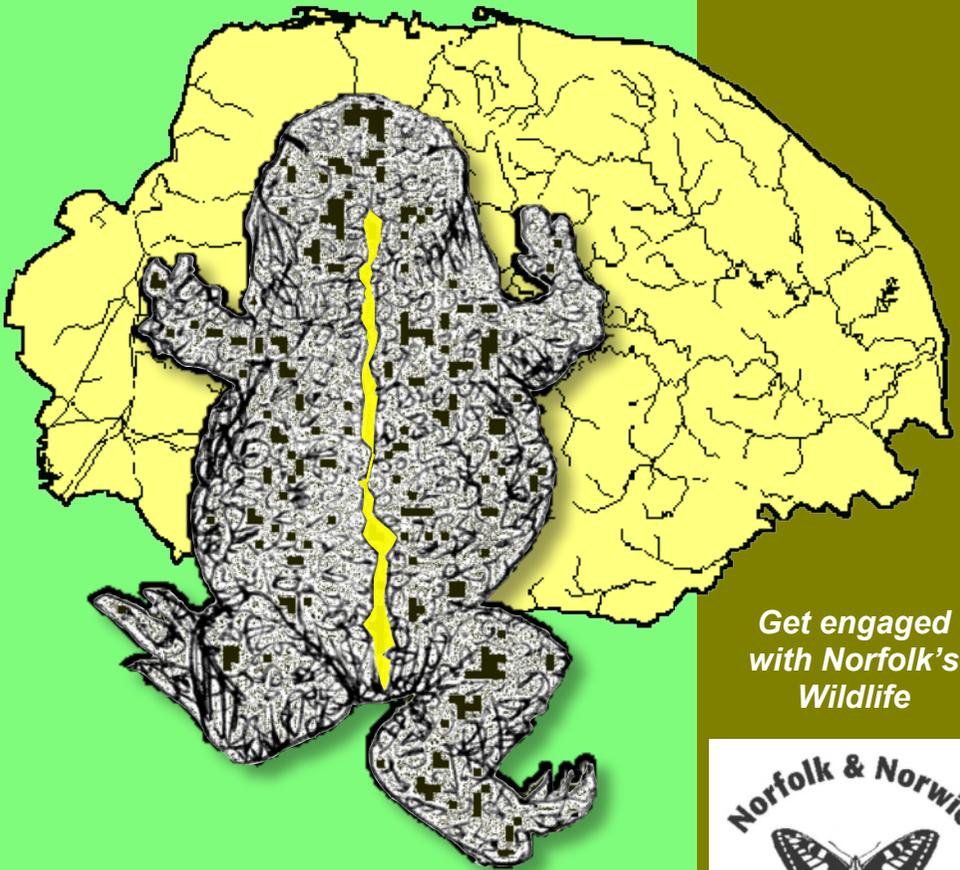


The Norfolk

# *Natterjack*

AUGUST 2013  
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# Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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## Toad-in-the-hole....

What a funny year this started out to be with many plants and insects being at least two weeks late in flowering or emerging but nature being what she is the time of summer has arrived and most plants and wildlife seem to have sorted themselves out. Butterflies and dragonflies seemed very thin on the ground (or in the air) at the beginning of the season, at least on the North Norfolk coast, but now at the end of July there are good numbers of most species.

My thanks again to all contributors for submitting a great mix of articles from fungi through to mammals. Hopefully the summer will give you all many opportunities to observe interesting events that can be sent in to 'Natterjack'. **FF**

## What's in a name?



*Jenny Kelly*

Like many people I am a keen recycler and I keep a Worm composter which I feed with kitchen scraps. In January I opened up the composter to find a mushroom lying flat on the protective mat at the top of the wormery. It was a beautiful mushroom with a bell-shaped shiny black cap covered with contrasting patches of felt white fibres on a white stipe (stem). A battle with the guide book and some help from the experts identified it as a Hare's-foot Inkcup (*Coprinopsis lagopus*). I had never seen one in the wild and although excited to have seen this one I was disappointed to see this fragile and beautiful fungus lying on its side. Within 24 hours the mushroom had deliquesced to a black liquid - that in the past would have been used as ink – hence the name.

Having had the pleasure of the magical appearance of this mushroom, I thought that was the end of it. However at the end of April the wormery produced a crop of eight tiny Hare's-foot Inkcups – and they look delightful and furry, against the less attractive background of worms and compost. They have the vague resemblance of white rabbit paws, and that apparently is the reason for their name although I am concerned that the person who assigned the name did not know the difference between rabbits and hares. I do not know how the Inkcup spores got into the wormery, but my only hope now is that when the compost goes out onto the garden I will get fully grown Hare's-foot Inkcups adorning my garden. I will be watching very closely.

## *Bombus hypnorum* - odd behaviour and an odd individual

Paul Cobb

Last summer (June 2012) in my garden at Heacham I observed very aggressive behaviour by workers of the "new" bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* at flowers of *Cotoneaster simonsii* throughout the several days it was in full flower. There were always large numbers of *B. hypnorum* foraging at the *C. simonsii*, and they defended the bush vigorously against all comers, attacking anything else that was trying to get to the flowers - other bumblebee species, honey bees, and even wasps. Attack was by flying at the target at speed, crashing into it, and knocking it away. The three other species of *Cotoneaster* I have in the garden did not give rise to this behaviour, it was only the *C. simonsii* they were unwilling to share.

In the same month I saw an unusual colour form in the garden. It was clearly a worker *B. hypnorum*, but had the tip of the abdomen orange instead of the usual white, and a narrow band of bright lemon-yellow on the second abdominal segment.

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## Transitional Zone

Francis Farrow



Any transitional zone between habitats is of great interest to the naturalist as it usually holds many different species. A pond margin is such a transitional zone and during June I investigated the habitat around the pond on Beeston Common, near Sheringham.

Damselflies are usually conspicuous amongst the emergent vegetation and at the moment three species are present - the Azure, Blue-tailed and Large Red. Dragonflies are also present and when tired of patrolling over the pond often perch on the Branched Bur-reed or the Large Sweet-grass, again there are three species generally present in early summer, the Broad-bodied Chaser, the Four-spotted Chaser and the Emperor.

Less conspicuous are the Reed-beetles (*Donacia* spp.). These beetles prefer the bur-reed and can be found sitting on the leaves although they readily fly so a cautious approach is necessary. Again three species have been found, *D. simplex*, *D. marginata* and *D. vulgaris*, although only the first two this year. The *Donaciinae* are one of three sub-families making up the *Chrysomelidae* (Leaf-beetles), which contains 21 UK species so there may well be more present.

A sawfly, *Selandria serva* was also found in the fringing vegetation.

# White Starling

*Brian Macfarlane*



You may recall I wrote in the *Natterjack* February issue about a white starling that had been coming to my garden to feed with scores of other normal starlings. By the time you read the article the bird had vanished during December.

I thought it might have succumbed to predation, or met it's demise in the cold weather. However to my amazement it suddenly appeared with lots of other Starlings in May. The normal birds had brought their young to feed on quantities of my superior bird cake. ( Their one weakness!) The white bird fed and disappeared quickly, but was back every 10 minutes for more. I then realised it must be feeding young somewhere.

Soon after that imagine my excitement (NO DON'T TRY) when I saw the white bird feeding two young on the lawn among lots of other families doing the same. That had to be recorded, so I sat in the kitchen doorway with my camera, and threw dried meal worms to bring them closer. This frenzy of feeding lasted about a week, and then they all disappeared. I saw the white bird with it's siblings once or twice, but I have not seen them since. I just ponder; was 'HER' mate colour-blind, in which case I have had two unusual birds in my garden!

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## *“I’ve Got a Little List”*

*Ian Johnson*



Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" had a little list, but many birders keep long lists of the different birds they have seen. There are even printed lists in taxonomic order to put a tick against each new species they see, just like the Ian Allen books of engine numbers train spotters kept and may still keep. "Twitchers" often have several lists, by country, by county or other location, with different lists for each year, each trip or even for each New Year's Day "thrash." One kept a list of birds seen from his study window!

Any bird lists are very personal, depending on the keeper's interest in the hobby and the time available for its pursuit (and the cash if it involves much travel). I have read accounts of competitive listing, which involved total dedication, excluding all the usual joys of travel. Nothing else matters but to come first, not

even food and comfort. Lists also depend on the skill of the claimants and how well they see and hear the species. It is too easy to depend on other people's identification, especially after we had to ask them to point the bird out.

I used to keep several lists, but then the taxonomists kept finding new DNA evidence, wiping several species off my USA list. I began to forget to keep them up to date, even my world list. Then I let them all lapse once I stopped chasing other people's birds. Nothing compares with the thrill of finding your own birds, especially on your own patch, so I will always keep my garden lists up-to-date, a different one for each home.

We lived in Binham for more than 20 years with a garden of half an acre on the edge of open farmland and with plenty of cover for birds. We were not far from the coast so there was a good chance of seeing migrants and even sea birds. By the time we moved in 2010 our list included 102 species, but new ones were slow in coming. From the start we included any species we could see and positively identify from the house and garden, even flybys. A pedant or purist might argue that some were not strictly garden birds. How ridiculous!

Such lists are just fun to keep and hardly scientific but they can show how the populations of birds are changing. Spotted flycatchers used to nest with us every year, but never returned one spring, just like so many that used to visit Britain. Corn Buntings soon vanished and so did "the voice" of the Turtle Dove. By contrast, Buzzards became much more frequent, though never common like their name. One day we were on the edge of a storm with towering thunderheads. Several Buzzards skirted the storm moving west with a handful of Sparrowhawks in what seemed like a migratory movement. Magic!

We love to see birds of prey and the Binham list included species any birder would get excited about on his home turf, like Hen, Marsh and Montagu's Harriers, Honey and Rough-legged Buzzards, Osprey, Little and Short-eared Owl. So we were not eager to leave Binham when the time came to move to Stibbard, where the garden is very much the same size and also on the edge of the village. We never expected it to be as good for birds but we have been agreeably surprised in the three years we have been here. True, coastal birds are fewer but there have been some pluses.

Like many birders we have always fed and watered the birds, though it means refilling the feeders every two days. Undoubtedly they attract species we might not normally get, like Yellowhammer and Turtle Dove. Our population of breeding House Sparrows is very dependent on that food supply, but they are fussy. Fortunately their discarded seeds are soon snapped up by legions of Wood

Pigeons, Collared Doves and even Blackbirds. The regular water supply for drinking and bathing is also important, though that needs cleaning and replenishing rather too often, especially after a party of bathing Starlings.

Our Stibbard list is now up to 71 species, so we have a long way to go and I am not sure about making another 20 years! We have more time to sit and watch the skies, hence the Red Kites, Osprey and Mediterranean Gull. Up to 300 Linnets roost in our neighbour's laurel hedge each winter, but the numbers have dropped this last winter. There was something about the "jizz" of a distant, tree-top bird that made me think of Waxwing and it really was. Sadly, the Black Kite record was not accepted, though I had seen so many abroad. I wonder what they will make of our Red-tailed Hawk this year.

I am not much of a bird photographer, lacking the patience and never being ready in time. Other people's pictures are so much better. Photos are good evidence and so are videos, which I was enthusiastic about for a while - see youtube ianjohnson1000 e.g. Woodcock in a Norfolk Garden- but the editing takes so long. Now I have a digital camera which does nearly everything for itself, with a fantastic zoom lens, so I must give it another go. For now we will just sit and watch the Swallows, which have at last found the nest box we brought from Binham.

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## Norwich Peregrines

*Brian Macfarlane*



Having had the Peregrines breed successfully last year on the Norwich Cathedral spire, it was with anticipation that I was hoping to see more of the same. I was not disappointed, and the pair came back to lay four eggs in late March. The weather was appalling all through the incubation period. High up on the Steeple the wind was incessant, and the birds did well to keep the eggs safe in that exposed position. All four eggs hatched, and the parents were kept busy bringing in small portions of food to start with. The youngsters soon put on weight with all the pigeons that made up most of their diet. I don't think the parents made much impact on the Norwich population as the pigeons were also breeding at the same time.

When the young finally decided to leave the nest, I heard they all virtually tumbled out backwards and fluttered to lower parts of the building. Of course the

parents were reluctant to feed them so close to human activity, so the young had to wait until late evening or early morning before the area got busy.

I went and waited around several times for the birds to exercise their wings, and watch the parents bring in food. I witnessed several food passes high up around the cathedral spire. They were usually at least 200 feet above the ground so long camera lens were needed, and even then the images had to be greatly enlarged for this Publication.

As I write this I have just heard a second young Peregrine has died, crashing in to something solid breaking it's neck. The young birds need to strengthen their wings quickly to avoid being blown about by the strong winds that seem to persist. The first bird to die was probably also killed by colliding with something.

Nature can be cruel, but the demise of young birds of all species can suffer similar fates.

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## Clawed Birds

*Robert Maidstone*

John Vincent's article, and Francis Farrow's response made interesting reading; not that birds have claws but to our extent of knowledge about, probably, the best known and most observed group of wildlife. Both referred to various books, and had from their comments seen the bird in the 'flesh' but neither had any 'hands on' experience.

By 'hands on' I mean just that, our knowledge seems to be confined to book/television/computer learning and far away observations through binoculars or more commonly now the lens of a camera. OK, the Great Skua is not common but we know little more about the physical aspects of many birds, other than feather colour.

One of my observations that relates to another species of web footed bird with sharp curved claws is that of the Muscovy duck, these lumbering, flat footed, placid birds at first seem to have no need for clawed feet. Yet even the newly hatched duckling scratch and draw blood from the soft skin of ones wrist as efficiently as a cat but fortunately without so many claws! Their need for claws is not primarily for defence or food gathering but to enable them to clamber over the wet, algae covered rocks along the swift streams and water courses where they live. But they soon learn that they can drive off a pack of hounds (32 couples) with a few swipes of their feet!

Possibly Skua's and other seabirds have sharp claws to help them grip on wet or icy rock ledges? Maybe someone living near the coast might like to check strandline carcasses to check this out. Like the Muscovy duck the Skua has learnt that a swipe with foot is an efficient means of defence not a means of catching or collecting prey.

This brings me to a broader point that despite the keen interest in wildlife there appears to be little intimate knowledge of the creatures concerned, handling birds dead or alive is frowned on; birds nesting, the searching for nest or the signs that they are there, as opposed to egg collecting, is assumed to be banned; picking wild flowers or their seed pods is a no-no, yet our British knowledge (foreign books are available) of seeds shapes, patterns, germination requirements and seed leaves is almost non-existent; butterflies, dragonflies, bees and hoverflies now snapped by thousands of photographers have great gaps in the knowledge of their lifestyles or larval habits until of course they suffer a population crash and become 'listed'.

The Victorian naturalist without the benefit of television, computers or dotty maps knew much more than the average wildlife enthusiast of today about the wildlife around him. This knowledge is there for anyone to acquire, not just the experts, and now in a time of increasing pressure on wildlife we need that knowledge from whatever source.

Keep reporting your observations John, it makes us look at, think about and debate the questions you pose.

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## GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

*Nick Elsey*



Over the years I have tried to encourage as diverse a selection of wildlife as is possible into my garden. Located on the northern side of a mature wood, the sun has three distinct times of day in which to cast its influence on the species of plant that survive such varied conditions. Early morning, Bee Flies can be found warming themselves on the ivy clad wall. In Spring, hedgerow and woodland species, such as Garlic Mustard, Honesty and Red Campion dominate this habitat and on sunny days attract hoverflies and butterflies alike.

Within this glade, good numbers of insect species go about their business and in order to help them along their way I have resorted to using artificial means of encouraging them, such as you would for the birds.

One of the simplest methods, is to leave the large stone found inside a mango, ideally with some flesh still attached, on a level surface. Several species of small beetle are readily found on the underside and it will attract both wasps and hornets.

Hanging from a branch, a 500ml plastic bottle filled with a honey/water solution and 'corked' with an absorbent cotton wool wick, has proved very popular with wasps, hornets, beetles and butterflies.

Rain water which slowly fills an abandoned pair of old rubber boots becomes stagnant and proves to be the ideal breeding environment for rat-tailed maggots which mature into some species of hoverflies. A plastic food tub filled with out of date golden syrup was left out in the hope of encouraging a variety of flying insects, but has proven to be the final resting place for a number of slugs.

Other than providing all year round food and water for the birds, tubs of wet soil prove invaluable to blackbirds for use in making their nests.

Loosely packed in a wire netting ball and hung from a branch, sheep's wool which was collected from the barbed wire around a farmer's paddock, is readily taken by members of the tit family and used to build nests. Similarly, moss can be presented in a way so as to attract some of our smaller birds such as Coal and Long-tailed Tits and Wrens.

A 60 litre water tub planted with a variety of 'water-weeds' has proved very productive this Spring with the emergence of about 20 Azure Damselflies over a three week period. Clusters of their exuviae have been found on sticks which had been placed strategically in the 'pond' for just this reason.

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## The Otters of Thetford

*Tony Howes*



Having heard on the grapevine about these very approachable mammals I made a visit with the camera to try and get some images of them. Otters are normally regarded as nocturnal creatures, but in recent years it has been noticeable that they are being seen more and more during daylight hours, those at Thetford certainly fall in that category .

There are two that are seen on a regular basis, it is thought they are brother and sister, often seen together fishing but also as individuals. The male is bigger than his sister and is easily recognised by his damaged nose. They are almost fearless of humans, hunting in plain view of people and often climbing out onto the river bank to say 'hello'. Another male otter comes into their territory on occasion and the two males will fight, maybe that is how the damaged nose was acquired.

They seem quite happy to sort through the various rubbish that people throw into the river, eating anything they can find. They are certainly not limited to fish, on one occasion a dead mallard was being eaten with gusto, fish seen captured have been roach and perch, but I also heard of large pike being on the menu.

Up to a few years ago seeing an otter in daylight was a red letter day. Over the years, as a keen angler, I spent many hours on river and lake banks but had only a few sightings. Their numbers have risen dramatically, and otters can now be seen anywhere in the country, on almost any water during daylight hours. Fishery owners are understandably 'up in arms' about their increase, much damage can be done, with very valuable fish being taken and eaten, but for most people I think the return of this charismatic fisherman is looked on with real pleasure.

## ***BOOK REVIEWS***

### **Harrap's Wild Flowers. A Field Guide to the Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland. Simon Harrap/Bloomsbury (£16.99)**

This new field guide by local author and photographer (and Editor of *Transactions*) Simon Harrap is designed to be portable and easy-to-use. Members of the Society who have already given it field trials speak very highly of its usability and its pointers towards the critical differences between similar species. The book contains over 2000 colour photographs, nearly all taken by the author, who is also responsible for the excellent lay-out. Close-ups of flower, fruit and leaf details give further aid to identification. Jargon is kept to the bare essentials and there is a glossary of the terms used. 934 species of flowering plants are covered, each with a distribution map. Some very rare plants (such as those found only on mountain-tops) are excluded as are grasses, sedges, rushes and submerged species. The inside covers display an illustrated index for quick location of the various taxa. This will be an excellent book for beginners as well as a reliable reference for more experienced botanists. The knowledge and expertise of the author and the quality of the images and design suggest that Harrap's Wild Flowers will become a classic among field guides.

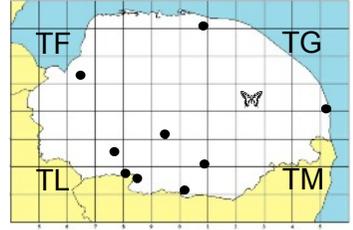
### **The Great British Wildlife Hunt. Anne Harrap/Bloomsbury (£10.99)**

While Simon was writing his wild flower guide, Anne was also busy! This book takes an entertaining and novel approach to wildlife spotting. 164 species of wildlife are described and illustrated, with pointers towards when and where to find them. Readers are directed to Woodlands, Heaths and Moors, Wetlands, Coasts and Open countryside to find particular mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects, plants and fungi. Each species scores points: only 5 for a poppy but 50 for an otter! A species check-list at the back allows a tally of the score. The book will be a source of enjoyable competition as well as encouraging keen observation and better knowledge of wildlife.

Nick Owens

# Excursion

## Reports



## New Buckenham Common

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2013

A dozen members were met in the playground car park at the south-west corner of the Common by our guide Darrell Stevens, NWT Breckland Reserves Manager, on an initially cloudy morning.

This Reserve and SSSI, located on heavy clay, comprises some 37 hectares of semi-natural grassland and scrub, punctuated by a number of dykes, pitholes and ponds, of which Spittle Mere is the largest body of water. The Common, which has been a NWT Reserve since 1984, has never been ploughed, though parts were utilised in the past for the digging of marl. Villagers' Common Rights have existed since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, with the grazing regime still regulated by a Commons Committee. Some 30 cows are usually employed to graze there currently. Formerly, such grazing beasts were watched over by a Pinder\*, though now an electric fence encloses parts of the Common, but -with commons enclosure and free access rights having long been contentious issues in England - never completely. There are no resident deer, but local dog-walkers in good number do exercise both their rights and their canine charges on the Common.

On entering the Common at its south-west corner, we first encountered a few well-established but not full-grown Horse-chestnut trees *Aesculus hippocastanum*,



Horse Chestnut leaf showing extensive mining by *A. hippocastanum*

before as part of a BBC 'Blue Peter' television project. Both Stephen Livermore and Nick Eley found the highly-invasive, fast-spreading leaf-mining moth, *Camenaria ohridella*, which lays its eggs on the leaves. Its larval form creates highly characteristic 'mines' between the veins of the leaves, in which the pupae hibernate. The extensive damage to the foliage does not kill the trees, though smaller 'conkers' may be produced. *C. ohridella* was not discovered by science until 1984, but recent herbaria research suggests it was living in natural stands of trees in Greece a century earlier.

We moved on to Spittle Mere, with marginal Lady's Smock *Cardamine pratensis* bearing the eggs of the Orange-tip butterfly, to look through breaks in the plentiful flowering mats of Water Crowfoot *Ranunculus aquatilis* for signs of Great-crested Newt. Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, and Tubular Water Dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa* are also to be found in wetter areas, whereas the drier grassland was colourfully spattered with Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, Cowslip *Primula veris*, and Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*. We were too early for the Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and Hoary Plantain *Plantago media* which also grow here. Pat Negal found Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*.

A primary objective of the visit when it was planned last winter was to see the large population of Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio*, which has always been in full flower by mid May in recent seasons. The cold winter and slow, chill spring of 2013 had rather dashed these hopes and reports had come in that few if any orchids were yet to be found in bloom at New Buckenham. Fortunately, these fears proved overly pessimistic, and though the display was certainly less profuse, with fewer flower spikes fully developed and open than has been the case on this date in previous years, there were enough blooms to display effectively the variations of shade from mauve to purple that this species can show. The search was soon on to find truly pink-flowered plants, which, while not plentiful, were duly tracked down in two places. We saw no pure white spikes, however, such as occur at Gissing Common and which one might hope not too unreasonably to find in large populations such as that at New Buckenham.

Darrell found and showed us a patch of the diminutive annual fern Adderstongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, not far from a Yellow-cress with an as-yet a short stem and unopened flowers, growing in a shallow pool. It was difficult to be sure of the species, but when Nick revisited the site at a later date and photographed the plant it was confirmed as Great Yellow-cress *Rorippa amphibia*, long abundant on the Reserve.

Nick also found a female hoverfly, *Melanstoma scalare* and Martin Collier recorded 32 beetle species, mostly small staphylinid (rove) beetles.

Many thanks to Darrell for leading and helping arrange the visit. Though it was scheduled as a morning walk, those who lingered were rewarded by welcome sunshine from lunchtime onwards.

\* To 'pind' (or to 'pound') is '... to put beasts in a pound; to impound', and 'Pinder', from Middle-English, indeed denotes '...an officer of a manor who impounds stray beasts'.

Stephen Martin

## BROOMSCOT COMMON, GARBOLDISHAM

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2013

Our visit to the Broomscot Common site of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project was this year's joint field meeting with the Lowestoft Field Club, led by Arthur Copping. Fourteen participants - seven from each society - met in the recreation ground car park adjacent to the Common on a rather cool, grey morning. We were met by Helen Smith of the LOHP who distributed maps and led us on to the common, describing the site and indicating the various habitats. The plan was to devote the morning to Broomscot and probably proceed after lunch to the LOHP's Thelnetham sites of Parkers Piece and Webbs Fen.

Most of the LOHP's growing number of sites abut onto either the Norfolk or Suffolk banks of the Waveney, but Broomscot, located just south of Garboldisham village, is an exception, though linked ultimately to the river by a small stream. It has been leased from Garboldisham Parish Charities only since late 2010 and a continuing restoration programme has been necessary. Its 11.4 hectares comprise wet fen and lowland meadow at the north end and Breck-like dry, sandy grassland to the south with lichen heath and gorse, and on which we found many spring annuals as well as Hoary Cinquefoil *Potentilla argentea* and Heath Dog-violet *Viola canina* ssp *canina*. The land adjacent to the pond and stream at the north end yielded many aquatic and wetland species including Thread-leaved Water-crowfoot, which Arthur rightly describes as 'new to several of us' in his draft report for the Lowestoft Field Club's half-yearly *Bulletin*. I have drawn freely on this report here, as well as Arthur's impeccable Broomscot plant list which reveals that 128 taxa were seen in total (with 65 in flower and 5 in fruit). Among these were Slender Parsley-piert *Aphanes australis*, Early forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima*, Ragged Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, Slender Trefoil *Trifolium micranthum*, Heath Speedwell *Veronica officinalis* and Common Vetch *Vicia saliva* ssp *nigra*. The grasses included Silver Hair-grass *Aira caryophyllea* ssp *caryophyllea*, Great Brome *Anisanthia diandra* and Narrow-leaved Meadow-grass *Poa angustifolia*. The sedges included Grey *Carex divulsa* ssp *leersii*, Oval *C. leporine*, and Prickly *C. muricata* ssp *pairae*. As for notable rushes, there was the Blunt-flowered *Juncus subnodulosus*. A few spikes of a robust Water-speedwell just coming into flower were found in a shallow pond, but could not be positively identified at the time of our visit. They were possibly Hybrid water-speedwell *Veronica x lackschewitzii*, but a visit later in the summer would be required if this was to be confirmed.

After returning to the car park for lunch, several participants drove the short distance south to two other adjacent LOHP reserves, Parkers Piece and Webb's Fen, situated immediately on the Suffolk side of the Waveney at Thelnetham. We enjoyed the surprisingly rapid rotations of the sails of the windmill there - activated as part of a village festival - as we waited for Helen to open the gate so we could drive onto Parkers Piece across the road. Shortage of time limited our explorations and checked our number of finds on these areas of wetland, but Parkers Piece (dominated by Soft Rush and willows) yielded 80 plant species (43 in flower; 2 in

fruit) and recently-acquired Webbs Fen (dominated by tall grasses but with an interesting stretch of water at its centre) 65 species (29 in flower, none in fruit). Interesting plants seen included Great Brome *Anisantha sterilis*, Hairy Sedge *Carex hirta*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Compact Rush *Juncus conglomeratus*, Tufted Forget-me-not *Myosotis laxa* ssp *caespitose*, Brookweed *Samolus valerandi*, Ragged Robin *Silene flos-cuculi* and Pink Water-speedwell *Veronica catenata*.

Not everyone's attention was focused entirely on plants, and Nick Eley recorded various insects at Parkers Piece including a wasp-like sawfly, *Tenthredo mesomela* on a burdock leaf; a member of Muscidae, the fly *Mesembrina meridiana*, on a cow-pat; the Downlooker Snipe Fly *Rhagio scolopacea* which rests head-down on trees and other vertical surfaces; and a hoverfly of the *Eristalini* tribe *Heliophilus* sp. Mating 'crane flies' turned out to be actually members of the Ptychopteridae family. Both sexes of the Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella* were seen, but Nick also found the exuvia of a Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*, with its teneral form alongside. Several adults of this species were seen.

Many thanks to Arthur Copping for organising the field meeting and for his expertise, and to Helen Smith for her help at Broomscot and for providing access to the other two sites.

Stephen Martin

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## CAUDLESPRINGS FEN, CARBROOKE

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2013



For those who have never previously had the good fortune to pass through the gate and alongside Spring Cottage, the wildlife riches of the private nature reserve and county wildlife site that stretches away to the rear are a revelation indeed. This spring-fed fen reserve, with its ponds, scrub and woodland, rich in water plants, birds, dragonflies, water beetles and other insects, has been in the care of Geoff Nobes for some 30 years now, and some seventeen members accepted his kind invitation to the Society to visit the site at its luxuriant best a on a pleasant day in mid-June.

Geoff first conducted participants on a preliminary walk round the reserve, indicating its layout and describing some of its features, though some of us found it difficult not to linger by the richly-vegetated pond immediately beyond the cottage, home to Great-crested Newts, and the varied structures nearby of drilled logs, bricks and the like prepared for - and indeed buzzing with - solitary bees and wasps and other insects. After this introduction to the reserve, members followed up their particular interests in smaller groups, with Geoff never too far away to be able to help with identification problems or point out interesting plants we might otherwise have failed to spot.

Geoff has compiled such extensive species lists over the years that it was indeed unlikely that we would find much that hadn't found its way onto them. To underline this point, it's worth reporting that his list of flora comfortably exceeds 200 species, and the fauna, also in large number and many kinds, also appears. So it's not possible really to follow here the usual practice in excursion accounts of indicating significant finds by the NNNS party, and I must be content instead to indicate one or two highlights.

The visit was timed in the hope that it would coincide with orchid-flowering at its height and this was certainly true of the Dactylorchids, widely present in the fen and putting on a particularly splendid and plentiful show in one area where the flowers ranged from the flesh-pink of Early Marsh *Dactylorchis incarnata* to the rose-purple spikes of Southern Marsh Orchid *D. praetermissa*, augmented by countless shades between provided by variants and by hybrid plants. Common-Spotted Orchid *D. fuchsii* also occurs, adding to the medley of colour. If anything however, good-sized flower spikes of the less showy Twayblade *Listera ovata* attracted even more attention and cameras. In one area it was difficult to decide if we were looking at leaves of immature, non-flowering, single-leaved twayblades or those of the diminutive Adder's-tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, also present. Six orchid species occur at Caudlesprings, but we were too early for the Pyramidal *Anacamptis pyramidalis* and, on this visit, didn't find any Bee Orchids *Ophrys apifera*.



Adder's-tongue Fern

As one would expect in a wetland habitat, certain families are richly represented by a number of species - 6 *Juncus* rushes and 8 *Carex* sedges, for example - but the site varies sufficiently to have yielded one or two less predictable plants, such as Common Broomrape *Orobanche minor* and Quaking Grass *Briza media*, and some wetland plants anything but common these days such as Columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris* have also appeared on the Caudlesprings plantlist.

Though our haul of species new to the site was meagre, Hans Watson found a Dryad Saddle Fungus and also photographed a *Pyrausta* moth and egg-laying Azure Damselfly.

Many thanks to Janet Negal for arranging a memorable visit and to Geoff for hosting the meeting so thoughtfully and helpfully.

Stephen Martin

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**Remember.... Check your programme card and / or the NNNS website for the remaining 2013 excursions and start of the indoor meetings held at St. Andrew's Church Hall, Church Lane, Eaton NR4 6NW.**



The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be November 2013. Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by **October 1<sup>st</sup> 2013** to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8QD. Email: [francis.farrow@btinternet.com](mailto:francis.farrow@btinternet.com)

Please send **all photographic material** to:  
Simon Harrap, 1 Norwich Road, Edgefield,  
Melton Constable, Norfolk, NR22 2RP  
Email: [simon@norfolknature.co.uk](mailto:simon@norfolknature.co.uk)

**Nats' Gallery:** *All photographs 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 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> 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 *1<sup>st</sup> April each year* and should be sent to the treasurer:

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

**New memberships** should also be sent to:

- David Richmond at the above address.

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

*Cheques payable to: Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.*

# Contents

Toad-in-the-hole.....	Page 1
What's in a name <i>Jenny Kelly</i> ( <i>Hare's-foot Inkcap</i> )	
<i>Bombus hypnorum</i> - odd behaviour and an odd individual <i>Paul Cobb</i> Transitional zone <i>Francis Farrow</i>	Page 2
White Starling <i>Brian Macfarlane</i> 'I've got a little list' <i>Ian Johnson</i> ( <i>Garden Birds</i> )	Page 3
Norwich Peregrines <i>Brian Macfarlane</i>	Page 5
Clawed Birds <i>Robert Maidstone</i>	Page 6
NATS' GALLERY ( <i>Members photographs</i> )	Centre
Gardening for wildlife <i>Nick Elsey</i>	Page 7
The otters of Thetford <i>Tony Howes</i>	Page 8
Book Reviews: <i>Nick Owens</i> <i>Harrap's Wildflowers</i> <i>The Great British Wildlife Hunt</i>	Page 9
EXCURSION REPORTS: Compiled by <i>Stephen Martin</i> New Buckenham Common	Page 10
Broomscot Common	Page 12
Caudlesprings Fen, Carbrook	Page 13

## **Illustrations:**

Horse Chestnut leaf showing extensive mining by *A. hippocastanum* (Page 10) - Computer / Clipart

Adder's-tongue Fern (Page 14) - Computer / Clipart