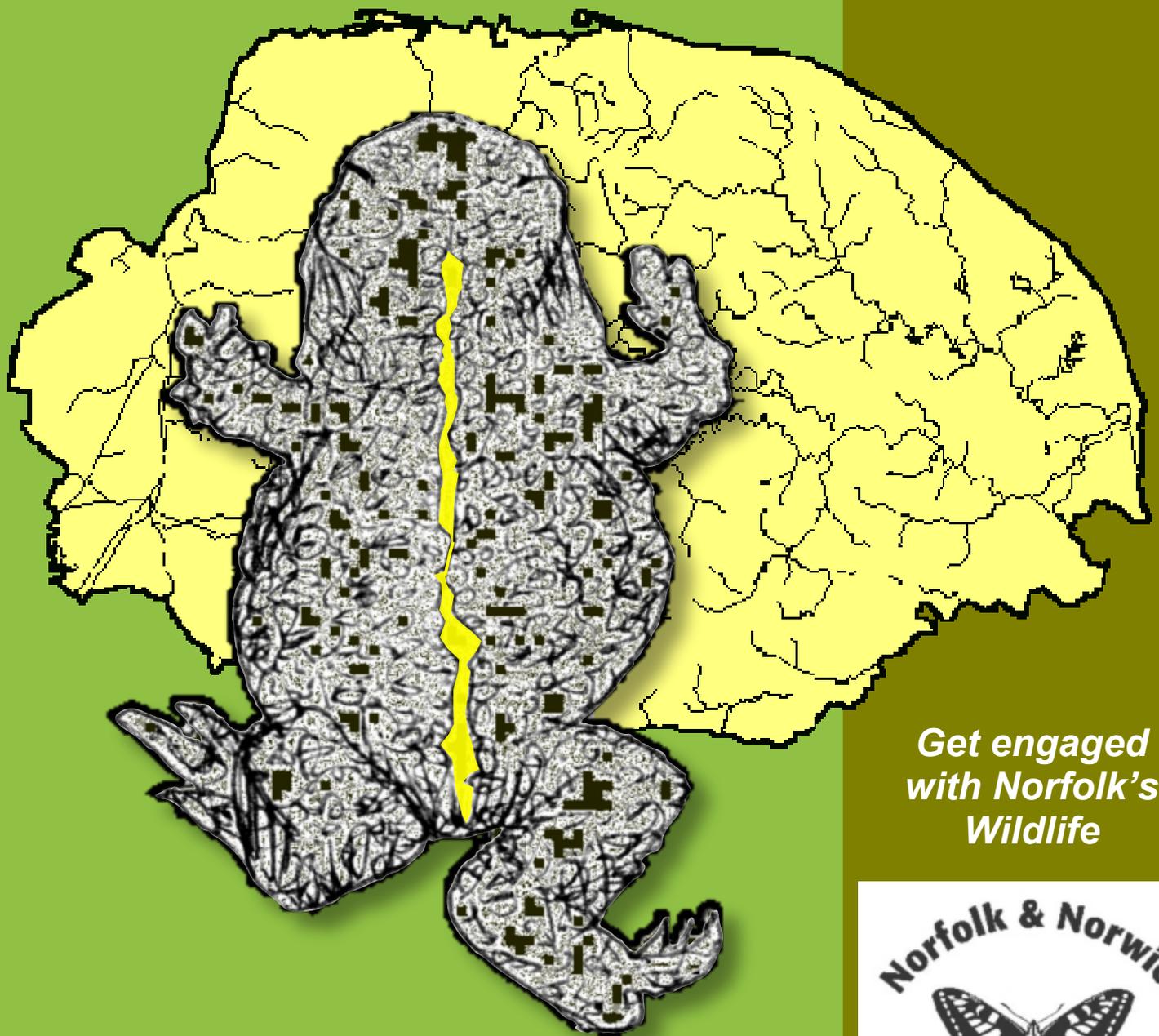


The Norfolk

Natterjack

NOVEMBER 2013
Number 123



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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

Founded 1869

Reg. Charity No. 291604

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Toad-in-the-hole....

Well I think overall we can say it has been a great summer. The butterflies and dragonflies have been very visible into autumn despite a late start. What sort of winter are we likely to get is anyone's guess - I've not heard of any particular predictions as to whether it will be hard or not, but if you go by the number of berries on the trees and the fact that birds have only just started to eat them then the old saying is that it will be hard if the birds leave the berries. We shall see!

My thanks to all contributors and in this edition the results of the Norfolk Rook Nest survey are published, which shows a number of new sites for Rooks but also some large gaps.

FF

Three Special Insects

Hans Watson



On the 19th July I decided to escape the rather stifling hot weather and go bird-watching on the North Norfolk coast where the temperature would be lower.

Unfortunately, when I arrived at the coast there was a thick fog that put an end to any ideas of bird-watching, and apart from a nice walk round Cley reserve and a tantalising glimpse of a group of Spoonbills beside the East Bank, there was not much to see. And so, in order to not waste a journey I decided to visit Holt Lowes to look at the Keeled Skimmers dragonflies.

As I walked through the woods toward the Lowes, a large orange brown butterfly flashed past and landed on the top of a bramble about 20 meters ahead of me. Through binoculars I could clearly see it was a Silver-washed Fritillary. Then, as quickly as it arrived, it was gone. I continued on to the Lowes, where I found dozens of lovely Keeled Skimmers on the wing in the bright sunshine. After enjoying the Skimmers for what seemed like ages, I decided to look in the woods for butterflies. I met another nature enthusiast who directed me to an area of brambles where he had seen several Silver-washed Fritillaries, and following his directions, I came to the spot to find up to 4 of the Fritillaries in view at the same time, together with 2 White Admirals. They were all feeding on the bramble flowers. I left feeling very privileged to be able to see three lovely and special insects in such a lovely area. Long may they flourish.

Bright prospects for Dark Green Fritillary

Peter D. Moore



The Dark Green Fritillary butterfly is very local in Norfolk, being found mainly in coastal areas of the extreme east and north. It has long been a regular feature of the dunes between Holkham and Burnham Overy, but the summer of 2013 seems to have been a particularly good season for them. They are most often observed as fast-flying insects, rapidly and frustratingly disappearing over the marram ridges of the dunes, but in late July this year they were not only abundant, but also relatively confiding in their behaviour. This was especially true of the females, which were evidently seeking the larval food plant, Heath Dog-violet (*Viola canina*). I watched one female landing on the leaves of a violet plant, but instead of laying its egg there, it proceeded to fold its wings tightly and wriggle beneath the surrounding mass of dead herbage. Apparently, they often lay upon litter close to the food plant, and when the larva hatches it goes directly into hibernation, not feeding until the following spring. Having been fascinated by this species in the Holkham dunes over the past 60 years, it was a great privilege to be able to observe at close hand this unusual reproductive behaviour.

A late season bonus

Francis Farrow



As I walked the dog over Beeston Common near Sheringham in the late afternoon of Saturday 5th October I was suddenly aware of a large insect rising up in front of me. The insect, the size of a bumblebee, settled high up on a small birch tree. As it rested in the sun I managed a couple of quick photos before it flew off.

As soon as I saw the insect I recognised it as the uncommon hoverfly *Arctophila superbiens*. This is a bumblebee mimic that is a pale buff-colour with a striking dark wing cloud. The hoverfly likes to visit Devils'-bit Scabious flowers and has one of the latest flight times of all hoverflies - peaking at the end July and going through to October. In this case I expect the hoverfly was disturbed from a clump of Devils'-bit growing close to the birch.

I last saw this hoverfly species in August 2006 so it is by no means common. Looking at its distribution in 'Britain's Hoverflies' by Ball & Morris it is generally a north or western UK species although there is a population in Norfolk.

WHAT A SUMMER FOR MOTHS!

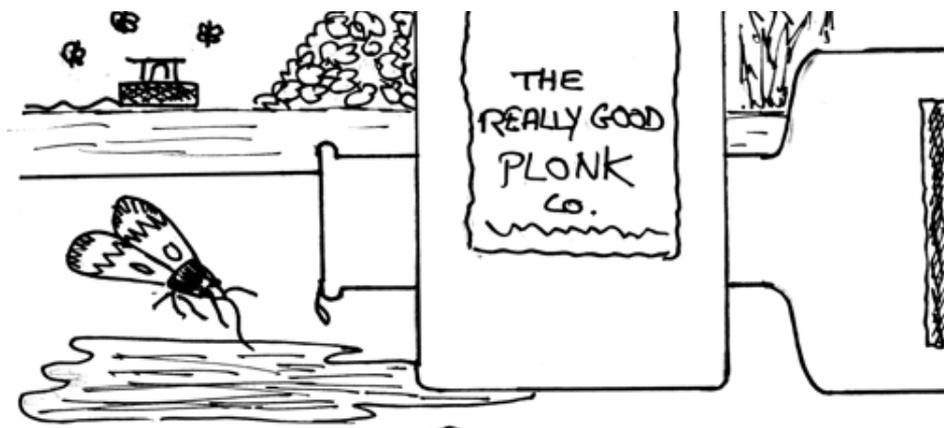
Carol Carpenter



For several years I have been thinking of buying a Moth Trap but funds being limited, I really could not justify the expense. However, when a friend offered to make me one earlier this year I jumped at the chance. I had no idea how much interest it would engender in my neighbourhood or how obsessive a band of novices could all become.

Over the summer months we have had several ‘get togethers’ in my garden and others. We have spent many happy hours together in the evenings watching an amazing variety of species flying in. Embracing the party spirit with wine and cheese refreshments has enhanced this activity no end. (These, of course, were not obligatory) It was decided on the first occasion that instead of turning the lamp off at the end of the evening I should leave it until sunrise. This meant that I then had to get out of bed, turn it off and cover the box with a sheet until about 10am. Everyone then returned (for coffee and cake) and we were able to catch and identify as many as possible before their release. On several occasions I found myself padding around my garden in the early hours photographing and catching those resting outside the box just in case they disappeared before everyone else had seen them. One morning I was so excited as there was a Garden Tiger, which I know are few and far between nowadays. Of course, being newcomers to the Moth world we have all purchased good identification books and I have tried to record our sightings although there were many that we had no idea of.

On more than one occasion eggs were laid, whilst they were captive, and these later hatched. Those from the Poplar Hawk Moth grew to quite a size before I let them go on a nearby young Black Poplar, the leaves of which I had been feeding them on. If, like me, you have been harbouring a vague interest in a moth trap I recommend that you get one before next spring and then you can observe the many species throughout the seasons. You may even acquire more friends especially if your wine rack is full!



I'm only here for the wine

Look out for the Snow-flea

Paul Cobb

I would be grateful if members could look for the Snow-flea *Boreus hyemalis* this winter, and send me details should you be successful. As one of the Mecoptera, related to scorpion-flies, it is allied to the lacewings, and falls within my remit as county recorder.

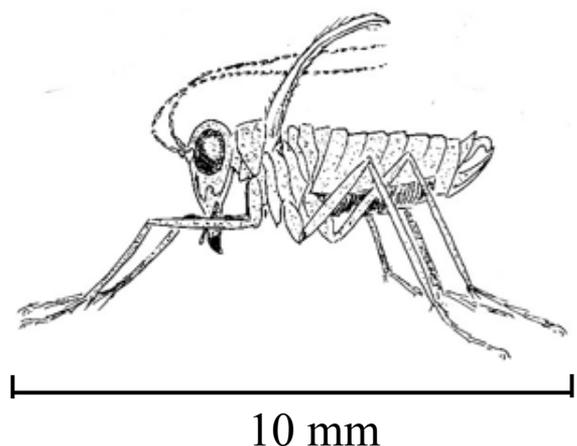
It is a flightless ground-dwelling insect, about 5 mm. long, is only about during the winter, and it hops. The male has a horn-like structure on its back, which is modified wings, that the female uses to hold on when she mounts him during mating. Anyone who has learned the knack of finding groundhoppers in summer should be able to find Snow-fleas in winter.

It lives in moss, and moss is the requirement rather than the habitat it grows in. Heathland is the most likely place to find it in Norfolk, though it could turn up in any mossy habitat.

The first British record was from Costessey sometime before 1826, but it has not to my knowledge been found in Norfolk since (unless I've missed something from the parts of Norfolk that get lost in Watsonian Suffolk). It is not surprising that it is under-recorded, as entomologists do not normally go out in winter to crawl around in moss - but bryologists do, and they are the most likely people to meet snow-fleas. Anyone operating pitfall traps in winter might also encounter it.

Should it be found by a bryologist, please record the species of moss it is using, as this is not known with certainty.

Drawing of male Snow-flea by Ken Durrant from 'Scorpion Flies (Mecoptera)' Trans. Norfolk Norwich Nat. Soc. 1989 Vol 28 / p240.



General Observations

Brian Macfarlane



The bird life in general since July has not been exactly overwhelming. This is fairly normal for that time of the year. So I decided to get some lessons in landscape photography. I have found it just as difficult as wildlife photography. Finding locations and waiting for the right light, etc is just as time consuming as sitting in a bird hide.

However on my travels I have spotted one or two things of interest. I was walking alongside the Bure Valley railway line at I heard a mewing sound up and high above there appeared to be two Buzzards chasing one another, so I took a few shots only to discover when I got home one was an Osprey. They were so high it was not easily recognisable.

I went to Cley for a change from Strumpshaw, and found there was a very rare bird there. It was a Wilson's Phalarope which apparently has not been seen in Norfolk for a long time.

I was sitting in my garden having a cup of tea when I noticed a lot of activity beside the pond. Flying ants were erupting from a crack between the paving slabs. There were a lot of weak flyers and they landed in the pond. Once in the water pond skaters arrived in large numbers to devour the helpless ants. I have not witnessed an eruption of ants going off on their honeymoon for years.

Down at my regular haunt (Strumpshaw) I have seen a little activity in the form of Swallowtail butterfly caterpillars, and the butterfly itself. Grey lag quarrelling and chasing one another about. Also recently a Chinese Water Deer has been coming out of the reeds and crossing the water in front of the fen hide. It has been doing this for about a week now, and if you get in the hide later than 7-10am you've missed it!

I was at Strumpshaw recently to photo a sunset. I noticed a hot air balloon coming from the Norwich direction fairly high up and hardly moving because there was no wind. I was concentrating on the birds in front of me when the whole lot took off at speed, and I thought maybe an otter was going to appear from the right. Then I realised the hot air balloon had dropped very quickly and was drifting 10 feet above the reeds moving left to right. I thought for a moment it was going to ditch into the reed bed, and the consequences of that could have been dire for the people in the basket. As it approached the tree line it suddenly rose up quickly with a long burst of flame. It landed the other side of the trees. I thought that flying bird hides were not allowed to fly so low scaring all the birds in sight. I know aircraft are not welcome! Anyway the Warden rang them up the next day to complain, as I had supplied him with the telephone number I copied from the side of the balloon.

TWO SMART BIRDS

Tony Howes



I was fortunate enough to be shown a pair of redstarts that had taken up residence in an old scots pine, they were using a woodpecker hole as their nest chamber and were busy taking in nest material. After watching these delightful birds for a while it became apparent that the male liked to spend some time perched on top of a hawthorn bush, and by manoeuvring slowly into position close to the bush I was able to get near enough to get a few images and hear him singing. These are far from common birds these days so I was very pleased to spend some time with them.

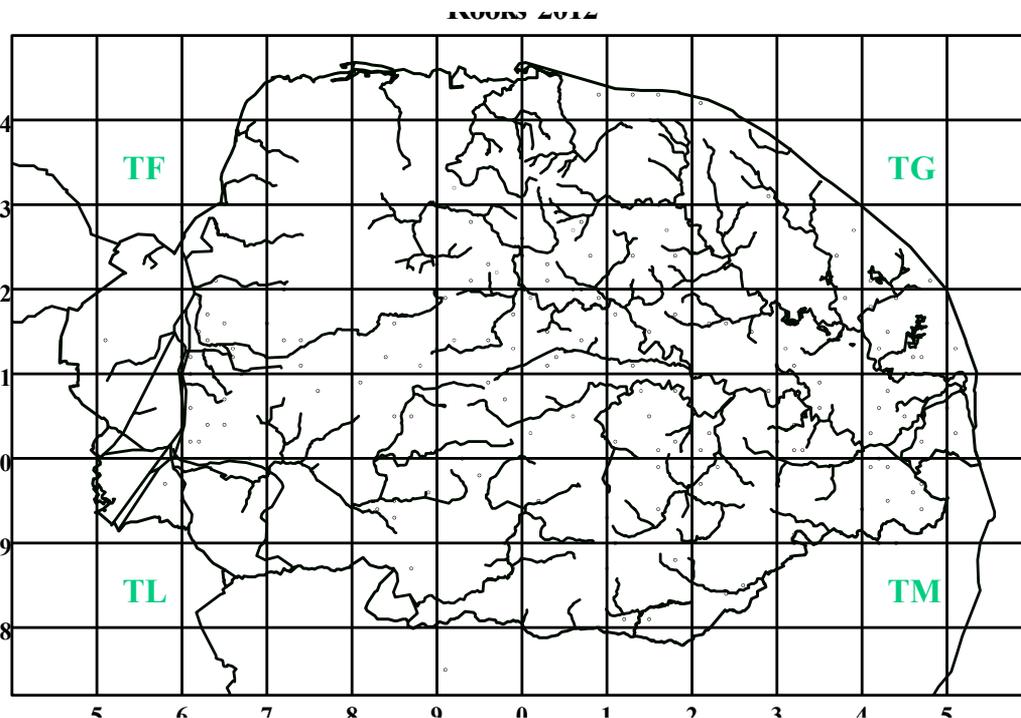
There was another species down at Strumpshaw recently that is also far from common, a wryneck that was very obliging and would allow a close approach. They used to be found breeding in Norfolk back in the mists of time, but are nowadays only seen as passing migrants. They are a member of the woodpecker family and like them they have two toes forward and two back; the colouration is very similar to that of a nightjar. A beautiful bird.

Norfolk Rook Nest Survey

Malcolm Metcalf

The following table shows the results of the 2013 Norfolk Rook nest survey with comparisons to 2011 and 2012. My thanks to all contributors, especially to the 58 new subscribers who discovered 2,444 nests between

them. The cold spring had an impact on nesting and most contributors reported that the Rooks nested much later this year. The DMAP opposite shows the distribution of nests on a 1km square parish basis.



Location	2011	2012	2013	Comment
Aldeby (near church)	84	78	59	
Aldeby (College Farm)	10	20	32	
Ashill	40	38	28	
Ashill (Recycling centre)	-	-	30	NEW
Attleborough (next to church)	-	12	10	
Attleborough (B1037)	31	128	109	
Acle (next to market)	-	14	26	
Alysham	25	30	28	
Burgh Castle (Butt Lane)	42	170	145	
Burgh Castle (church)	16	50	29	
Beccles (Morrisons car park)	-	-	24	NEW
Beccles (Puddingmoor)	-	-	22	NEW
Beechamwell	-	120	122	
Bergh Apton	-	-	20	NEW
Bawdeswell (Reepham Rd., 2 groups)	22	59	156	
Brisley	20	21	23	
Beeston	-	12	30	
Bracon Ash	60	120	110	
Belton (Sandy Lane)	-	7	4	
Blofield (Church area)	-	18	15	
Blofield (Garden Centre)	19	20	16	
Blofield (Corner Cucumber Lane)	-	-	4	NEW
Blofield (Oak Road)	11	33	11	
Blofield (near playing field)	-	-	19	NEW
Blofield (near A47)	-	-	7	NEW
Burgh St. Peter (marshes, 1 site)	25	30	77	
Burgh St. Peter (marshes, 2 sites)	29	59	91	
Bilney (west)	25	30	55	
Billockby	50	92	100	

Location	2011	2012	2013	Comment
Bagmore	-	-	31	NEW
Bungay (Golf Club)	-	-	6	NEW
Cawston (Bird Lane)	-	-	74	NEW
Crimplesham (2 sites)	-	-	55	NEW
Caister (opposite Tesco)	17	24	22	
Cromer (2 sites)	46	56	40	
Colney (next to N&N Hospital)	-	-	6	NEW
Claxton (near Beauchamp Arms Rd.)	-	60	55	
Carleton Road	-	40	38	
Caston (near Walsop Farm)	-	-	30	NEW
Caston area	-	-	82	NEW
Croxton (Sheep Pen)	-	-	92	NEW
Croxton (Frog Hill)	-	-	65	NEW
Clippesby	-	-	35	NEW
Diss (behind Desira Garage)	-	-	40	NEW
Dereham (Watering Farm)	-	-	10	NEW
Dereham (2 sites)	-	50	40	
Dereham (Crown Road)	-	7	6	
Dereham (Golf Club)	-	50	15	
Downham Market	-	-	101	NEW
Dunstan Hall, Norwich (near)	15	63	56	
Denver	-	-	10	NEW
Earsham	-	-	62	NEW
Earsham (A143)	-	-	11	NEW
East Harling	-	-	76	NEW
East Winch	14	16	60	
Easton (Vicarage, Dereham Rd.)	130	155	149	
Easton (near St. Peter's Church)	77	85	87	
Easton (Marlingford Road)	46	61	74	

Location	2011	2012	2013	Comment
Elmham Park	-	-	39	NEW
Elmham Park (behind Doctors)	-	-	36	NEW
Fakenham	6	6	6	
Fransham (A47)	82	137	108	
Foxley (2 sites)	-	31	42	
Great Dunham	43	90	70	
Griston (Park grounds)	159	164	142	
Griston (Lynda Piercey's garden)	19	11	16	
Griston (near farm)	29	19	90	
Gillingham (north & south)	62	82	82	
Great Plumstead	43	47	45	
Great Yarmouth (Caister Road)	5	10	6	
Gorleston (Hall Farm)	3	16	21	
Gayton	-	-	80	NEW
Gestwick	-	-	26	NEW
Guist	35	40	38	
Gaywood	-	33	30	
Horsford (Church Lane)	87	161	157	
Haddiscoe (Thorpe Road)	-	60	68	
Hockering	14	22	21	
Horsham St. Faiths	-	66	68	
Hethersett (Church and nearby)	-	46	40	
Hethersett (Hall/Farm shop)	122	134	87	
Hethersett (Whitegates Fire HQ)	-	31	12	
Halvergate	40	42	40	
Honingham (2 sites)	-	33	30	
Honington	-	-	15	NEW
Hillgay	-	80	155	
Hingham (near church)	20	22	10	
Harleston	26	49	37	

Location	2011	2012	2013	Comment
Hoe (Manor Farm)	-	-	144	NEW
Hoe (near church)	-	-	7	NEW
Hoe (Cross roads)	-	-	11	NEW
Ingham (near church)	20	26	22	
Ingham (near village)	30	32	30	
King's Lynn (Hardwick)	-	12	12	
King's Lynn (roundabout)	7	12	20	
King's Lynn (Town centre)	26	30	20	
Kirstead	-	227	217	
Kimberley (near B1108)	-	-	5	NEW
Letton (Gordon's Plantation)	-	-	80	NEW
Letton (Norton's Grove)	-	-	95	NEW
Ludham (near church)	25	29	27	
Larling (near Public House)	-	120	110	
Langham	40	44	42	
Lenwade	-	40	38	
Lingwood	6	6	6	
Little Melton	-	66	64	
Little Plumstead	-	55	56	
Middleton (near church)	20	25	24	
Middleton (church)	40	42	50	
Magdalen	-	14	11	
Martham	150	162	170	
Mulbarton (off Long Lane)	-	22	12	
Mattishall (Church)	-	-	26	NEW
Mattishall (South Green)	-	-	67	NEW
Methwold	82	85	78	
Methwold (no. 4 Main Road)	-	12	10	
Methwold (The Globe)	-	163	150	

Location	2011	2012	2013	Comment
Marsham (Plough Inn)	20	24	22	
Mautby	20	24	21	
Mileham	14	16	14	
North Ructon	-	38	60	
North Tuddenham	18	38	27	
Norwich (UEA)	10	24	28	
Narborough	55	96	90	
Nar Valley Fisheries	-	-	75	NEW
North Walsham (4 sites)	35	35	33	
North Wooton	29	55	47	
Necton	20	20	18	
Oxborough	-	-	68	NEW
Oxborough (oakwood – A10)	-	-	18	NEW
Postwick (2 sites)	41	28	75	
Potter Heigham	15	20	10	
Podmore	-	-	10	NEW
Pentney	-	-	40	NEW
Pulham	20	20	32	
Pickenham	-	47	50	
Reedham (church)	48	55	100	
Reedham (near)	-	-	11	NEW
Reepham	-	20	12	
Rackheath	-	17	15	
Runcton Holme	-	-	5	NEW
Ryston	-	20	20	
Shipdham (Blackmoor Wood)	16	20	53	
Stanford (Curlew Cottage)	-	-	53	NEW
Stibbard	116	142	137	
Somerton	30	36	33	
Scole	30	36	33	

Location	2011	2012	2013	Comment
Sheringham (A149)	10	14	11	
Sheringham (Weybourne Road)	-	4	4	
Shotsham	-	15	33	
Sutton (London Road)	-	32	28	
Snetterton	52	192	160	
Swannington	-	-	8	NEW
Shouldham	-	-	25	NEW
Straddsett	-	40	42	
Setchy	-	30	30	
Seething	-	15	21	
Scratby	35	43	25	
Swanton Morely	-	80	53	
Southey	-	5	4	
Spixworth	90	158	152	
Somerleyton (near station)	45	46	42	
Somerleyton (east of station)	-	60	32	
Somerleyton (opposite Post Office)	-	30	32	
Swaffham (church)	20	16	15	
Saxlingham Nethergate	-	37	34	
Swainsthorpe	-	34	32	
Thurlton (north end)	30	75	70	
Thurlton (lower)	51	113	114	
Thorpe-next-Haddiscoe	54	120	115	
Thurton (A146)	52	42	46	
Thurton (Vale Road)	-	-	15	NEW
Taverham (Hall grounds)	50	180	140	
Taverham (Beech Avenue)	-	-	64	NEW
Taverham (behind school)	-	16	12	
Tottington (St. Mortimer's Range)	-	-	70	NEW

Location	2011	2012	2013	Comment
Tibbenham	12	10	11	
Tasburgh	51	40	43	
West Tofts (roadside)	-	-	63	NEW
West Tofts (Alder carr)	-	-	44	NEW
Wheatacre (behind church)	46	64	44	
Wood Dalling	110	128	122	
Wormegay (Priory Farm)	-	160	225	
Wormegay (new site)	-	-	35	NEW
Watton (Beaufort Park entrance)	25	26	21	
Watton (Cadman Way)	-	-	4	NEW
Watton (Bluebell Close)	-	8	10	
Winterton	13	40	36	
Winfarthing	21	26	24	
Watlington	-	20	42	
Wickhampton	-	-	15	NEW
Wortwell (behind Goodwin's Garage)	24	27	25	
Wortwell (Mill Lane)	6	4	5	
Wortwell (Sayes Farm)	16	18	25	
Wortwell (opposite Bell Inn)	9	9	5	
West Winch	-	34	32	
Wreningham	-	-	14	NEW
Wreningham (near)	-	-	8	NEW
Westland	-	-	5	NEW
Worlingham	-	-	60	NEW
Wretton	-	-	30	NEW
Wereham	18	22	15	
Wendling	60	62	58	
Whimbotsham	-	-	20	NEW
Winch Holm	-	-	16	NEW

Location	2011	2012	2013	Comment
Weston Longville	60	56	50	
Waxham	13	16	14	
Wymondham (rear Feather's Pub)	-	-	25	NEW
Wymondham (Becket's Well)	-	-	5	NEW
Wymondham (near car park)	-	-	20	NEW
Wymondham (near Mid-Norfolk rail stn)	-	-	20	NEW
Wymondham (along River Tiffy valley)	-	-	46	NEW
Totals	4115	8243	10095	

For the Record....

Nick Elsey

It appears that it is in the DNA of some human beings' to have a compulsion to collect things or 'stuff'. For some it could be beer mats, thimbles, autographs or the ubiquitous locomotive engine number. In the past, for the natural historian, it has been birds' eggs, butterflies or plants. Some tick bird sightings or have lots of folders containing digital photographs covering all kinds of wildlife, some of which are never fully identified.

My compulsion seems to be one of collecting data. It started back in early 2000 with the recording of the birds that visit my garden throughout the year. These were duly logged onto the paper forms provided by the BTO for their Garden Birdwatch (GBW) scheme. Thankfully, this project has coincided with the rapid progression of computer technology and my submissions are now made in a matter of minutes, which can readily be updated or altered as necessary. It is now possible to record a number of different taxa on this one website.

As my interest in different groups of wildlife has expanded, I have taken part in a number of surveys which have been incorporated into the soon-to-be-published Atlases, notably for the BTO and the British Dragonfly Society.

These organisations and others need data so that when all the facts have been collected, they can be studied and scrutinised and eventually may be used to influence local, or even national, government's decisions about the possible development of our countryside. Without reliable constant observation and recording, it can prove impossible to verify any anecdotal evidence of the current status of our wildlife.

In my garden, I've been able to find a wide variety of mini beasts which with the help of digital photography, the internet and some very patient County Recorders, I've been able to identify. These details are then easily recorded to such sites as OPAL, NBIS and our local recorders.

When considering whether to record or not, some people have said to me that no-one would be interested in their 'common' finds on their travels. Your 'common' species might just be a first **record** for Norfolk, because nobody else has reported it.

I always think about the humble House Sparrow which seemed to slip off our radar without a second thought. Nowadays, a visit from one of these into my garden is a red-letter day.

When it comes to recording...every little helps!

Norfolk & Suffolk Bryological Group Meetings 2013 - 2014

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 (a sub-group of the British Bryological Society) 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.

Sunday 24 November 2013 – Redgrave & Lopham Fen – an extensive area of spring-fed valley fen, managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust. We will be visiting the Suffolk side of the reserve. Turn east off B1113 at TM 041798, continue about 1km, park in reserve car park.

Saturday 7 December 2013 – Dinosaur Adventure, Weston Longville. Turn south off the A1067 at the crossroads in Lenwade, then take first left into signed Dinosaur Adventure at TG103177. Park in main car park.

Saturday 4 January 2014 – Holmes Wood – mixed woodland north-east of Hindolveston. Turn north off the minor road at TG 046296 and park at the end of this track, called The Dyes, at TG053301 on the southern edge of the wood.

Sunday 19 January 2014 – Microscope workshop at Wheatfen in the Study Centre – TG 324056. Please bring material along. There will be help from experienced microscopists on cutting and viewing sections as well as other relevant identification techniques.

Saturday 1 February 2014 – Thetford Heath - open Breckland grass heath which is of considerable importance for its periglacial 'patterned ground'. Some areas of pine and oak woodland as well as grass and lichen heaths. Turn onto Elveden Road off the A11 and then left towards the Gorse Industrial Estate at TL 849794 – park in the pull-in near the entrance. Joint meeting with Cambridge Bryologists.

Sunday 16 February 2014 – Old Buckenham Mere and Fen. Initially meeting at Scales Farm TM056908 to move onto park nearer the Fen, but exactly where may depend on water levels on site.

Saturday 1 March 2014 - Pynkney Estate at Helhoughton, to survey areas of the estate not visited last year. Wet and dry woods, wet grassland. Park on field margin on north side of road just west of woodland at TF 854273.

Sunday 16 March 2014 – Minsmere RSPB reserve, Westleton, Suffolk. Reedbeds, lowland wet grassland, shingle vegetation and lowland heath (and a café). Meet in main car park.

Saturday 29 March 2014 – Swangey Fen. Spring-fed fen, wet woodland and grassland. Very limited parking on site, so meet at The White Lodge, London Road, Attleborough NR17 1AY at TM 027929 to squash into as few cars as possible and then go on. Please park in the SW corner, to keep out of the way.

British Bryological Society Recorders:

Robin Stevenson, 111 Wootton Road, King's Lynn PE30 4DJ. 01553 766788. crs111@talktalk.net (West Norfolk)

Mary Ghullam, 5 Beech Drive, North Walsham NR28 0BZ. 01692 402013. mylia@btinternet.com (East Norfolk)

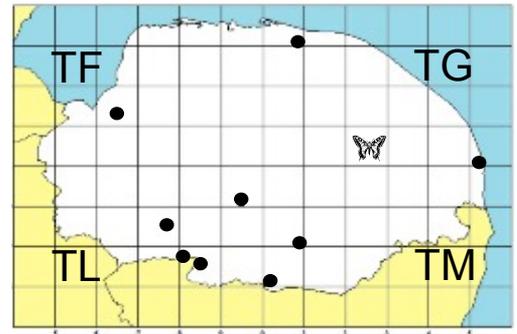
Richard Fisk, 35 Fair Close, Beccles, Suffolk NR35 9QR. 01502 714968. richardjfisk@waitrose.com (Suffolk)

Programme: Chris Roberts, 21 The Street, Burgh-next-Aylsham NR11 6TP. 01263 732772 chrisroberts_500@hotmail.com
Mobile: 0788 7914047

Excursion

Reports

● 2012-13 Field Meeting location
St. Andrew's Hall
Eaton



Wild Flowers Revealed: North Denes, Great Yarmouth

Sunday 7th July, 2013



14 people gathered along the sea front on a glorious summer day to explore the flora of the dunes, under the expert leadership of Bob Leaney. As a taster Bob led the group to the end of the prom onto an area of consolidated sand to illustrate the differences between two of the subspecies of Radish, conveniently growing together. Sea Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp. *maritimus* had much more constricted seed pods and leafier rosette than the commoner ssp. *raphanistrum*. Having noted in passing how to distinguish Spring Vetch *Vicia lathyroides* from the deceptively similar Common Vetch *Vicia sativa* ssp. *nigra*, both in flower and fruit, the hunt was on to find the illusive Suffocated Clover *Trifolium suffocatum*, probably our rarest clover in Norfolk. Eventually the bright emerald-green leaves with the tight clusters of tiny flowers nestling in the centre of the basal rosettes were spotted.

Bob gave a brief introduction to the character of the North Denes shore, highlighting the acid nature of the dunes and their lack of even a few shrubs. Then typical sand dune species were noted on the walk to the fore dunes, such as Grey Hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens*, which can often look pinkish, Sheep's-bit *Jasione montana* with its ability to exude salt and water from the hydathodes on the edge of its leaves and Spiny Restharrow *Ononis spinosa* with its two rows of hairs along the stem, distinguishing it from Common Restharrow. At the edge of the fore dunes, while Bob explained the mechanism of their development and the role of Marram *Ammophila arenaria* in stabilizing the sand and in moving the fore dunes forward, some of the group sought out typical strand line plants. Among the Frosted Orache *Atriplex laciniata*, Prickly Saltwort *Salsola kali* and Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima* were a few plants of Sea-holly *Erygium maritimum*. Hiding among them and at first glance almost indistinguishable from the Sea-holly was a small plant with largish blue-grey leaves. Janet Negal immediately identified it as Sea-kale *Crambe maritima* (see photos of both species). This is a plant which does not seem to have been seen further east in Norfolk than Mundesley, since Nicholson's Flora of 1914¹! This is despite EL Swann's optimistic prediction in 1975 that "we may confidently expect an increase along our coast"². After much searching an even smaller plant than that in the photograph was found – certainly a real find, although how these two plants will survive winter storms is uncertain.

As it was getting close to lunch time and the lunch spot was still far in the distance, the group moved off slowly towards the café noting butterflies and plants as it went. Among those which caught the eye were a few tiny plants of Mossy Stonecrop *Tillaea crassula*, Purple Marram x *Calammophila baltica*, a grass sometimes introduced to help bind the sand, and the very 'woolly' Hawkweed *Hieracium lanatum*, an European introduction. At lunch the group was privileged to enjoy the expertise based on his previous research of the area and aerial photographs of the coast that Rob Driscoll provided. One of the most striking images of change was how there was now access round the far end of the Britannia Pier, unthinkable in the 1950s.

Samples of Marram and the aptly named Purple Marram, conveniently growing at the picnic spot, were also passed round to show the differences in the hybrid, with the hairs in the florets intermediate between its parents - longer than those in Marram and shorter than Wood Small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos*.

After a brief diversion to admire Rustyback Fern *Asplenium ceterach* (see photo) growing on the sea wall, one of the few spots it grows in Norfolk, Bob led the party inland to the boating lakes. Here there was more *Hieracium lanatum* to see (see photo) as well as two species of Fleabane *Conyza sumatrensis* and *C. canadensis* to examine. Before looking for some other small clovers on the lawn edges of the lake, one plant of *T. suffocatum* was found in the paving cracks, where the clover had been recorded in 1995. The heavily mown grass was very dry, making finding Knotted Clover *T. striatum* a challenge. It was easier to fish out Fennel Pondweed *Potamogeton pectinatus* from the lake. A few of the group stopped to look at an intriguing tree planted near the lake and full of tiny yellow sweet-scented flowers and narrow silver leaves, with amazingly ribbed bark. After much head scratching, it was identified as Oleaster or Russian Olive *Eleagnus angustifolia*.

Heading to the 'new' cemetery, there was a chance to look at various ferns growing on the high flint walls, such as Black and Maidenhair Spleenworts *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum* and *A. trichomanes* as well as more dry grassland species- the cemetery having been established on old duneland. Some members of the party then split off, following the track of the old M&GN railway, while others returned to more directly to the cars. It had been a very varied and interesting day.

Mary Ghullam

¹ Nicholson WA 1914, *A Flora of Norfolk*, London: West, Newman & Co.

² Swann EL 1975, *Supplement to the Flora of Norfolk*, Norwich : F Crowe & Sons Ltd.

The following periodicals are available free to members (although a small donation to NNNS funds would be welcome). Please contact: B.W. Ribbons, Beech Bank, Buckenham Road, Lingwood, Norwich, NR13 4BL.

THE GARDEN (=Journ. Roy. Hort.Soc.) 102/1977 - 138/2013 continuing
RHS Extracts from Proceedings 117-128 (1993-2004)

Gardening from Which? 1982-1999. WHICH? 1957-2012

Bulletin Alpine Garden Society 46/1978-81/to date

KELLING HEATH

Sunday 21st July, 2013



Some 22 members and friends gathered in the car park at the western extremity of Kelling Heath for this walk that was in part a follow-up to the excellent talk to the Society about the Heath and its wildlife given by Nick Owens the previous November. Considering the spells of sunny weather in the preceding and following weeks of July, the cloudy, coolish, breezy conditions of the twenty-first were a disappointment, as they were bound to restrict the species and numbers of insects to be seen. The conditions also seemed to slow the Common Lizards we saw, enabling the careful temporary capture of one for display in the cupped hands of a member for general admiration.

Botanically, there was no such weather problem and the dry sparse grassland area immediately adjacent to the car park, itself a former car park, was fairly rich in flowers, many of them untypical of the heath beyond. The pleasant pink-flowered member of the gentian family, Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, was particularly notable, if only because growing in real quantity. Perhaps less welcome to some eyes was the mat-forming perennial from Australia and New Zealand, Pirri-pirri-bur *Aceana novae-zelandiae*, first seen at Kelling Heath in 1928 some time before it had spread in southern England sufficiently widely to be considered an undesirable invasive alien. It came in imported wool and its spherical heads of hooked seeds are still spread by sheep, though dogs and the footwear and clothes of human beings are more than adequate to the task at sites such as Kelling. It gained some popularity in cultivation as an 'alpine' plant, so that garden throwouts also account for a number of its occurrences in the wild. Also seen near the car park was Flixweed *Descurania Sophia*. On the Heath proper, the reddish stems of the rootless parasite Common Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum*, bearing rounded heads of white-tinged-pink, bell-shaped flowers, threaded their way over and through more than one low-growing bush of Gorse. Everywhere in flower was Bell Heather *Erica cinerea*, the food plant of the Beautiful Yellow Underwing moth, *Anorta myrtilli*, which Hans Watson photographed, as he did also male and female solitary bees, *Panurgus banksianus*, gripping the petals of catsear flowers with their mandibles, and a Silver-studded Blue Butterfly *Plebejus argus* captured by a Comb-footed Spider *Enoplognatha ovata*. This was a poor day for seeing the Blue in flight, though the species has done well this year with a maximum count of 560 on the site ten days before our visit. We were also taken to see a single Maiden Pink *Dianthus deltoides* flower in bloom close to the road and near to plants of the French Cranesbill *Geranium endressii*. The latter occurs as a fairly frequent garden escape, which status some ascribe also to the Kelling *Dianthus*, though it did once grow at Cley, not a huge distance away.

The advantage of being able to draw on Nick's expertise, and indeed that of others present, was most strongly apparent on the barish sandy patches and eroded gullies characterising one part of the Heath, where the small holes and tunnels of burrowing insects proliferated amazingly. The most visually impressive find was

probably a (deceased!) male Minotaur Beetle *Typhreus typhoeus*, a large glossy-black dung beetle of sandy grassland and heathland that feeds on rabbit and other dung, which it also drags to its tunnel-nest with its strong front legs as food for its larvae. The impressive 'horns' of the male facilitate usually-effective defence of the nest! Of note among other sightings were the Leaden Spider Wasp *Pompilus cinereus*, the flightless wasp *Methochia ichneumoides* which parasitises the larvae of green tiger beetles, and mating small wasps *Mimesia equestris* which take leafhopper prey.

After lunch back at the cars, those who remained traversed the railway crossing to an open area that was turned into an airstrip by the Americans in the Second World War before second thoughts arose and they dug trenches across it to deter German - or indeed any other - aircraft from landing. This disturbed area did subsequently recover through the years before a fierce and extensive fire some 3 years ago, caused by a passing steam train, inflicted considerably more damage. However it's an ill wind, and new and interesting, or at least different, vegetation cover is developing apace including quantities of the stickily-downy and slightly foetid Heath Groundsel *Senecio sylvaticus* and some Pill Sedge *Carex pilulifera*. Three grasses new to the Kelling Heath list were found, the most interesting being Mat-grass *Nardus stricta* on the disturbed area to the east of the road, which species Bob Ellis points out as relatively scarce in Norfolk, being limited to small quantities in small areas.

Butterflies, both here and elsewhere on the Heath were reasonably in evidence given the conditions and included Gatekeeper, Small and Essex Skipper and Ringlet, and we saw or heard Yellowhammer, Goldfinch, Chiffchaff and Greenfinch among other birds. Nick and Bob Ellis saw a Hobby after most of us had departed and a flock of Crossbills passed over earlier, but the avian disappointment of the day on the other hand was our failure to see the Dartford Warbler here at its most northerly site in the world. Two pairs have nested with two broods reared here this year, so the bird has done well to survive the cold winters of the last two years.

Many thanks to Nick for a fascinating day.

Stephen Martin

SANTON DOWNHAM

Sunday 1st September 2013

Some 15 members gathered in the Santon Downham Forestry Commission HQ Car Park, to be met by Nick Gibbons, the former Conservation Officer and our leader for the day, in what were to turn out to be fairly pleasant weather conditions. After an informative and interesting briefing by Nick we set off along the narrow public road across the bridge over the Little Ouse and the railway level crossing beyond, passing poplars intended for matchsticks when planted in 1952-3 but mostly still surviving unfelled - though not all unfallen! - as good habitat for Lesser spotted Woodpeckers and Nuthatches. A vigorous patch of Goldenrod near the road was probably a garden throwout or escape.

Immediately beyond the railway we turned right, to the south-east, along an open track, once the public road, crossing a dry grassland area which is now a reserve and part of 600 hectares formerly set aside by the Commission. Perhaps surprisingly, there are few rabbits in this area and a nice selection of plants not untypical of this kind of Breckland habitat was seen as we slowly progressed, including Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Crested Hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha*, Buckshorn Plantain *Plantago coronopus*, Haresfoot Clover *Trifolium arvense*, Viper's Bugloss *Echium vulgare*, Wild Mignonette *Reseda lutea*, Mouse-ear Hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*, Dark Mullein *Verbascum nigrum*, Common Eyebright *Euphrasia nemorosa*, Narrow-leaved Hawkweed *Hieracium umbellatum* (with Geoff Nobes, I think, finding a mason bee *Osmea leaiani* thereon), and the nationally-scarce Tower Mustard *Arabis glabra*. A stretch of land between the track and the railway line is rotavated in some years to encourage the persistence of this last-mentioned 'very local and decreasing' biennial plant and fairly large numbers are seen in some years. The plants were well past their May-July flowering but the ramrod erect and straight stems remained very characteristic and fairly easy to spot and Nick seized the opportunity of marshaling a number of the botanists present into walking the strip in line abreast, calling out their individual additions to the rising group total of plants seen as they progressed. The final count was, I think, 163 specimens.

The planted trees huddle more tightly and draw closer to the track as one progresses east and, pointing to some Scots Pines, Nick talked of the Red Band Needle Blight *Dothistroma septospermum* which causes needle loss in pines, eventually much weakening or killing the trees. The Woodland Trust reports that 70% of Corsican Pine stands inspected in Britain were found to be infected. Larch, Douglas Fir and Scots Pine have been preferred recently for forestry planting, with the Scots Pine thought to be much less prone to infection, but the Trust indicates there may be some evidence of an increasing susceptibility, arousing fears for the future of the native Caledonian Scots Pine population.

Just before one gets to the short pedestrian 'tunnel' under the railway, giving access to Santon and to All Saints Church - 'one of England's smallest churches' - the most interesting wooded area is reached. On a previous field meeting of the Society held earlier in the season some years ago, we had admired Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* just in flower and, on the lip of and inside an old ex-sand or marl pit among trees, a spread of Lily of the Valley *Convallaria majalis* very much in bloom. The latter, probably originally a planting, garden escape or throw-out, still thrive today, and we found a fair scattering of the helleborine too, even close to the mouth of the railway subway. There had been uncertainty on the part of some botanists at the time about the persuasiveness of the 1990's records of a number of the nationally-scarce Green-flowered Helleborine *E. phyllanthes* growing close to or among the Broad-leaved at this site. Because the season's growth had lost its freshness and the flowers had turned to fruits by the time of our visit this year, and we had limited time to spare, we tried to decide quickly whether two distinct species survive at the site purely by trying to distinguish plants with the upper leaves more-or-less spirally arranged up the stem (Broad-leaved) from any with leaves 2-ranked up the stem (Green-flowered). Perhaps we succeeded in finding a couple of *E. phyllanthes*, but it was difficult to be certain.

Any slightly furrowed brows were soon smoothed when Nick led us to a plant species that nobody else in the party had seen previously at this site. Three short, pale-yellowish spikes of the chlorophyll-lacking Yellow Birdsnest *Monotropa hypopitys*, difficult to spot

at first in the leaf litter of the woodland floor, prompted the deployment of a battery of cameras, despite the drooping flowers having given way to erect fruits. This species has always been characterised as a saprophytic perennial living on decaying vegetable matter, but our own Simon Harrap in his excellent *Harrap's Wild Flowers* cites recent research that 'shows..it is..epiparasitic, using fungi of the genus *Tricholoma* to extract nutrients from living trees'. It isn't a rarity as such, but one doesn't see it every day: it appears in Breckland mainly in pine plantations but only 'erratically', and Nick first reported finding it at Sanford in 1987.

With ample and varied expertise present, the morning yielded much in addition to plants; my list includes Meadow Brown, Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood, Grayling and Green-veined White Butterflies and, derived from people calling out their dragonfly identifications all around, Common Darter and Brown- and Migrant Hawker, with Southern Hawker added in the afternoon session. Nick drew our attention to the solitary bee *Andrena fuscipes* which takes the pollen only of Heather, we saw Roesel's Bush-cricket, and as regards birds we heard a Green Woodpecker and saw a Kestrel and later 5 Crossbills, probably a family group, as we sat on the riverbank eating our packed lunches. Later a male Kingfisher was seen perched on a fallen willow. Martin Collier was kept busy throughout, recording 25 beetle species, including three of note. *Magdalis memnonia* is a weevil breeding on damaged pine branches and is a relatively recent arrival in Britain. It is spreading north, having reached Suffolk in 2010 and Norfolk in 2012. *Anisoxiia fuscata*, a small nationally-scarce melandryid beetle breeding in dead twigs and branches was found on a dead broom bush - the 4th Norfolk record - and one specimen of *Chrysolina marginata*, a nationally-scarce leaf beetle feeding mainly on Yarrow, was found dead beside the track. Nick Elsey saw various hoverflies, including *Melanostoma mellinum*, *Platycheirus fulviventris*, *Meliscaeva cinctella*, *Helophilus pendulus*, *Syrirta pipiens* and *Sphaerophoria* sp.

Having had to leave after lunch when the remaining members of the party continued north of the railway track to St. Helen's Well, I am indebted to Nick and to Rubynah Sheikh for the following resume. Above the Well, the steep (or even precipitous and precarious!) bank down to the railway holds two Breckland specialities: the grass Purple-stem Catstail *Phleum phleoides* and Breckland Thyme *Thymus serpyllum*. The latter was reintroduced to the bank, after some clearance work, in the form of seedlings raised from seed gathered from another Breckland population near Thetford, as part of a Natural England project, and the presence of Wild Thyme *Thymus polytrichus* growing along the top of the bank enabled Nick to compare the two, also telling the party the differences from Large Thyme *Thymus pulegioides*, itself not present on the site. Also found were Ploughman's Spikenard *Inula conyzae* and Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acer*. At the Well itself the recent prolonged spell of dry weather had caused the spring to stop running, but Nick reports that Golden Saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* was still plentiful and what little water there was allowed the party to scent, literally, the 'strange and strong, nutty smell' of the Whirligig Beetles.

It was a privilege to be able to draw on Nick's extensive and detailed knowledge and experience of the history, natural and otherwise, of the Santon Downham area and we are most grateful for his thoughtful and untiring contributions to setting up and conducting an enjoyable and rewarding day. Thanks also to those members who contributed records and comments, and added to the friendly atmosphere that prevailed.

Stephen Martin

PLEASE NOTE CHANGES BELOW



The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be February 2014. Please send **all articles / notes and photographic material** to the editor as soon as possible by

January 1st 2014 to the following address:

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

Simon Harrap who has been our picture editor since the beginning of Nats' Gallery (2006) has reluctantly given up the post due to pressure of work.

Our thanks go to him for all his time and his excellent presentations.

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 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 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.

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