

The Norfolk Natterjack



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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Cover image: *Peregrine over Norwich cathedral* (Tony Howes) - See page 13

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Toad-in-the-hole....

My thanks to all contributors - the articles and images received cover Wayland Wood, new ovipositing sites for Willow Damselflies, some spring insects from Salthouse Heath, long lost Norfolk bees rediscovered, White-letter Hairstreaks, Badger 'gardeners' and general wildlife observations. There is also a mystery picture of a butterfly. Can you guess its ID? My special thanks go to Stephen Martin who again has sent in some full accounts of our excursions. If you have not joined an excursion yet, please do - they are informal and there is always something to learn and of interest to see. Please note the next '*Natterjack*' deadline is 1st October.

FF

WAYLAND WOOD

Nick Elsey and Rubyna Sheikh

This ancient woodland, on the outskirts of the market town of Watton, is one of the largest in south Norfolk and has a recorded history dating back to the 10th century. Legend has it that this wood was the setting for the gruesome 'Babes in the Wood' tale, but other places may well also make claim to that particular piece of folklore!

The management of the site involves the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and traditional coppicing techniques are used in part to benefit the local flora and fauna. It has a good mix of tree species including Hazel, Oak, Downy Birch, Sallow, Ash, Hornbeam and Field Maple and over 125 flowering plant species have been recorded.

With the continuous cool breeze and overcast skies that have plagued this Spring, Rubyna and I decided that it would be unwise to visit any open spaces and that we should seek some shelter in a wood somewhere reasonably close to home.

It's always disappointing, when upon arrival at a nature reserve the first thing that confronts you is a pile of fly-tipped rubbish in the car park. From previous experience, it seems that this location is one favoured by those who seem to have no issue with the indiscriminate dumping of their household waste. 15 minutes later and, with the help of my well-used litter picker, I'd filled a bin bag with most of the nasties but the bulk of this detritus would have to remain for others to clear, hopefully!

Our mood was soon lifted by the repeated calling of a Chiffchaff and the distant 'zit' of a Nuthatch. It seems that any possible encounter with a Golden Pheasant in this place has long since gone. A Buzzard drifted across the nearby arable field giving its distinctive mew before passing directly over our heads.

Following the wide path which leads into the centre of the wood, we soon came to an open area of recently coppiced trees. Stacks of wooden poles

were piled around the edge of the clearing along with bundles of faggots lying nearby. Clumps of Wood Anemone, with their heliotropic white flowers, shone out amongst the greys and beiges of the dried leaf litter and the freshly hewn stumps. We examined the purplish flowers, spurs and leaves of the Violets dotted throughout and deduced that they were probably Wood Dog Violet. The minute flowers of a very small patch of Moschatel were just about open and we found several Barren Strawberry plants which were producing their own tiny white flowers.

At this point, we soon realised that we had been over enthusiastic with our donning of clothing suitable for a warm Spring day and decided to retreat back to the car for a few more layers of winter garb.

Following a path which skirts the western side of the wood, and now out of the wind, we dawdled along checking for any other signs of wildlife. A few bumblebees lazily lifted from the woodland floor where they had presumably been sheltering overnight. The occasional patch of Primroses stood out in the gloom and we found the chewed leaves of a few Early Purple Orchids; probably caused by the resident Muntjac deer of which we had a couple of encounters. Because we don't tend to 'route march' on any of our excursions into the countryside we stumbled upon a few Yellow Star of Bethlehem plants, which we would have certainly overlooked had we been any more urgent in our stride.

Arriving back at the car we made sure that we would be suitably refreshed and dressed before continuing our day out. A few Bee Flies landed close to the car offering me an eagerly awaited photographic opportunity.

Knowing that the main paths form a virtual figure of eight, we wanted to explore some of the lesser used tracks on the eastern



Yellow Star of Bethlehem

Image: Nick Elsey

side. With the breeze becoming lighter and the temperature rising a degree or two we were optimistic as to what new sights we might find. We were soon rewarded with a glimpse of a Comma butterfly which upon landing 'disappeared' amongst the dead leaves on the ground. More bumblebee species were awakening from their slumber and in one secluded spot several male Hairy-footed Flower Bees zoomed over the ground flora presumably in search of a mate. She, however, was some distance away from them and was pre-occupied in obtaining nectar from a primrose. Two species of hoverfly were recorded and I almost stood on a hedgehog which had adopted a submissive pose.



Dark-edged Bee-fly
Image: Nick Elsey

This side of the wood is considerably wetter and some paths were muddy to say the least. The strong winds had certainly taken their toll over the winter months and some quite impressive trees had succumbed. In places we had to find an alternative route but this usually led us to coming across more interesting finds. Swathes of Wood Anemone adorned either side of some of these quieter pathways which, by the signs in the mud, had been created by visiting deer species. Pignut leaves rose out of the quagmire in a few spots and the emerging leaves of Wild Angelica were just about identifiable. Only two Bluebell flower-heads rose out of the hundreds of plants which will dominate this wood in a few weeks' time. Previous visits have had us trying to identify which ones are the native species or the Spanish and their hybrid.

Willow Emerald Damselflies: new tree and shrub species with egg-laying scars.

Collated by *Chris Durdin*, for *Chris Durdin*, *Ann Greenizan*, *Derek Longe*, *Richard Mason* and *Adrian Parr*.

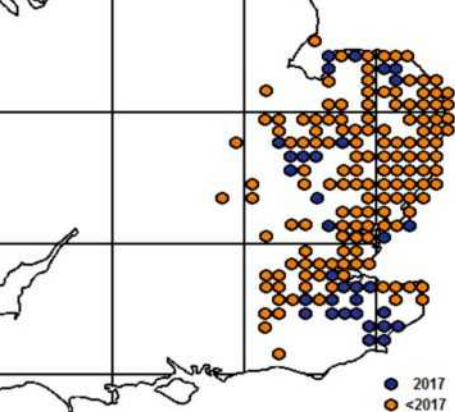
This article describes three unusual trees used for egg-laying by Willow Emerald Damselflies *Chalcolestes viridis* in the Norfolk Broads, discovered in the winter of 2017/18.

Background

The Willow Emerald Damselfly - aka Western Willow Spreadwing - is one of four emerald damselflies found in the UK. Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa* is widespread; two others, Scarce Emerald *Lestes dryas* and Southern Emerald *Lestes barbarus*, are very local.

The Willow Emerald, despite being a relatively recent arrival, is now quite widespread and locally common in parts of East Anglia and the Home Counties. It was first recorded in Suffolk in 2007 and has undergone a rapid expansion in range and numbers.

A unique feature of Willow Emeralds is that females oviposit into thin branches that overhang water. Here the eggs overwinter before larvae hatch and drop into water in the spring. They emerge as adults from about mid-July, with a peak in August-September. The ovipositing process involves



Willow Emerald distribution 2017
(courtesy BDS)

scratching a small groove in the twig or host plant and this creates distinctive marks in the form of scar tissue. With a practised eye this is fairly easy to spot. The look of the scars varies a little between tree/shrub species but at its most distinctive it creates a series of lines not unlike a tiny ladder in appearance.

These 'Willow Emeralds scars' can be seen at any time of the year but unusually it makes it especially easy to plot the presence of Willow Emeralds in winter. The British Dragonfly Society (BDS) has encouraged 'Willow Emerald detectives' to seek out and

submit new records. Overseeing this is BDS's Adrian Parr, also the county recorder for Suffolk, who received and commented on the Norfolk records noted below.

Thorpe Marshes and Sutton/Catfield Fens

Willow Emeralds have been at Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Thorpe Marshes nature reserve by the River Yare on the eastern edge of Norwich since 2013. CD

and DL have tried to keep track of their numbers and trees used for oviposition. Here that is willows *Salix* spp, Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. DL's record of the use of bramble was



Willow Emerald and egg laying scars on Crack Willow
at Thorpe Marshes
Images: Chris Durdin

unusual as the oviposting was in dead rather than the usual live stems, leaving simple puncture holes rather than a scar. That record was described in detail in a short paper in the journal *Atropos* (see references).

The RSPB's Sutton Fen nature reserve and the adjacent Catfield Fen nature reserve are in the Ant Valley. Ann Greenizan is a regular on the monthly guided walks at Thorpe Marshes and is also a volunteer at Sutton Fen, recording Willow Emeralds along with warden Richard Mason.

APPLE

In 2016 Chris Durdin noted Willow Emeralds on an apple tree next to the railway line to the north of Thorpe Marshes reserve. The tree is a

Domestic Apple *Malus pumila* gone wild: it may have originated from an apple core thrown out of a train window. In December 2017, CD found what appeared to be ovipositing scars on apple twigs. Derek Longe took photographs early in 2018 and we submitted the record to BDS's Adrian Parr.

Adrian comments: "Apple is a species that naturally can have pores and bumps on the surface of twigs, so one needs to be just a little careful in deciding what's going on. Your photo certainly looks like Willow Emerald oviposition scars, though. Congratulations on the find!! This is the first time that I've heard of Apple being used in the UK (as you say, there are probably not that many actually overhanging water), but a quick search of the literature revealed a single report from Germany."



Willow Emerald ovipositing scars on Apple Image: Derek Longe

Finding a new record for the UK prompted us to encourage Ann Greenizan and Richard Mason to submit records from Sutton and Catfield Fens. Finding a new record for the UK prompted us to encourage Ann Greenizan and Richard Mason to submit records from Sutton and Catfield Fens.

BOG MYRTLE

Richard Mason observed on 5th March 2018 approximately 30 Willow Emerald scars on one c.1cm diameter, 50cm long stem of Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale* overhanging a deep peat ditch at Butterfly Conservation's Catfield Fen nature reserve, which is managed by the RSPB.



Bog Myrtle with Willow Emerald ovipositing scars Image: Ann Greenizan

Richard writes: "I have been seeing scars on Willow and Alder in abundance across Sutton Fen and Catfield Fen and I have checked a handful of Bog Myrtle stems with no success. On Monday, I noticed scars on a few Alder stems and thought I should have a quick check of the Myrtle nearby. I checked approximately five stems with no scars before finding one with scars, I stopped searching then. Along that ditch there are many hundreds of Myrtle stems (maybe thousands) and

I am confident that a proper search would find many more scars. It would be very lucky if I found them so quickly if they weren't present in some quantity."

Photographs by Ann Greenizan were sent with the record to Adrian Parr. He comments: "This is an interesting observation, and the first report from Bog Myrtle that I've heard about in the UK. There are, however, several reports of egg-laying into this species on the continent."

He went on to say: "The Willow Emerald clearly has the ability to use a lot of trees/shrubs/herbs for egg-laying. There do seem to be preferences - with Willow, Alder and Ash clearly being preferred, but if needs be then a whole host of other species can also be used. Indeed, I recently saw a photo of a pair trying to oviposit into a steel bolt at the water's edge, so clearly there are other egg-laying cues beyond biological ones!"

HOLLY

Ann Greenizan found scarring on a Holly *Ilex aquifolium* at RSPB Sutton Fen on 28th March 2018.

Commenting on the records and photos, Adrian Parr said: "What interesting pictures! A quick check of the literature failed to find mention of Holly being

used for egg-laying, and some photos almost suggest a fungus of some sort. However, the white marks seem to often have a central hole, are suspiciously regularly placed, and do sometimes seem to be bordered by swellings where the Willow Emerald eggs would be.

My feeling is thus that these are indeed Willow Emerald egg scars, but that the Holly has reacted to the egg-laying in some way. There thus seems to be gall

formation around the wound site rather than around the eggs, and the

bark has remained quite compressed. Maybe this is an unfavourable reaction, which might explain why Holly isn't often used."

Naturally we are rather pleased to have found three new records for Britain.



Holly branch with Willow Emerald ovipositing scar and showing the overhanging nature of the tree, Sutton Fen

Images: Ann Greenizan

Could there be more trees and shrubs used by Willow Emeralds? It seems likely, with the main constraint being where they grow: it has to be young growth, open enough for the adult female damselfly to clasp and with water directly underneath for emerging larvae to drop into. We encourage others to become Willow Emerald detectives: the BDS website <https://british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/willow-emerald-watch> is a good place to start.

References

Willow Emerald Damselfly *Chalcolestes viridis ovipositing into Bramble* by Derek Longe. In *Atropos*, Issue 58, 2017.

Atlas of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland by Steve Cham, Brian Nelson, Adrian Parr, Steve Prentice, Dave Smallshire and Pam Taylor (BDS).

Caught in the Act

Hans Watson

One of my pleasures on a nice sunny spring day, is to go for a walk in some remote piece of countryside, and look for butterflies. Although I am by no means a butterfly specialist, I take great pleasure in seeing the first Holly Blue, Orange Tip, etc, of the year, and just simply watching butterflies certainly lifts my spirit.



Brown Argus



Robber-fly
attacking butterfly

On a sunny morning in May, I was watching and photographing Brown Argus butterflies, and had just framed one in the camera viewfinder. I pressed the shutter button, and as is often the case, the butterfly disappeared, and I did not see where it went. These insects have incredible reactions, and the tiny fraction of a second between pressing the button and the shutter firing, is often all the time they need to fly off. Later, when I stopped to have some lunch, I checked the images on the camera, just to see if I had caught the butterfly in flight. I was amazed to see a Robber-fly, legs spread, in the act of attacking the Brown Argus. This was particularly surprising as I had not seen a Robber-fly all morning, and certainly did not see it immediately after I had taken the photo, so can only suppose that it's attack was unsuccessful. I would have thought that a Brown Argus, although a small butterfly, is rather large for a Robber-fly to tackle, although I have heard that Robber-flies will sometimes attack butterflies, and even insects like grasshoppers. It would seem that some Robber-flies are quite ambitious when it comes to meal time.

Images: Hans Watson

Salthouse Heath Spring Gallery

John Furse



Green Hairstreak - 12/05/2018. I'd taken dozens of shots of this rather pleasing combination of colours, hoping for 'the perfect shot'. This was the last in the series, as I moved to obtain a better background, I inadvertently disturbed it and it leapt off the flower.



Birch Sawfly - 10/05/2018



Top: Thick-headed Fly - *Conops vesicularis*

Bottom: Large Red-belted Clearwing - Finally turned up to a pheromone lure after 15 visits to the heath! (25/05/2018)



The Orate Brigadier *Odontomyia ornata* This uncommon fly was seen at Weybourne 30/05/2018

Images: John Furse

Some Long Lost Norfolk Bees

Nick Owens

I have just been reading Mark Cocker's new book, *Our Place: can we save Britain's wildlife before it is too late?* The book describes our country's attempt to protect wildlife and habitats since the last war and Mark steers us skilfully through the confusing multitude of initiatives and organisations involved. He uses the Norfolk coast as one case study, showing how our famous coastline is being managed and protected. Other examples include his native Derbyshire - where many of his much loved birds have disappeared - and the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland, Britain's last remaining wilderness, threatened by drainage and the planting of conifers. Mark has the ability and knowledge to bring evidence together from a wide range of sources but, equally importantly, to weave his personal thoughts and feelings into his narrative. This combination makes a compelling case for urgently re-thinking the way we live and interact with our environment.

Our Society's contribution is fundamental to conservation since it is only through well researched evidence that we can influence decision makers. It's time consuming and difficult to keep track of how wildlife is faring, but our combined efforts can be highly effective. The urgency of our situation leads me to think that we could do even more to place our work in the public eye, perhaps borrowing ideas from national bodies such as Butterfly Conservation. Our forthcoming 150th Anniversary programme will be an excellent opportunity to move in this direction - and 2019 is turning out to be a very significant year for the whole country!

But first some good news! In my book *The Bees of Norfolk*, I attempted to summarise the gains and losses in Norfolk's bee species since the 19th Century. The distribution maps presented were very incomplete and were partly intended to encourage more recording, which it seems to be achieving. I listed 23 Norfolk bee species not recorded since the year 2000. Since the book's publication, three of these long lost bees have been re-found, all of them last recorded in the late 19thC. It seems quite likely that they have all been present but overlooked all this time: *Hylaeus pictipes* discovered by Vanna and Jeremy Bartlett in their Norwich garden in 2017 and seen there again this year.



Hylaeus pictipes female: perhaps not too surprising that it has been overlooked!
Image: J&V Bartlett

Andrena labialis discovered by Mark Welch on Weavers' Way in the Halvergate Marshes in 2017 and seen again in 2018.



Andrena labialis female taking nectar and pollen from Red Clover on Weavers' Way

Image: Nick Owens

Andrena proxima discovered by Tim Strudwick at Arminghall on the Boudicca Way footpath on Hogweed in, June 2018.

In addition, Ash Murray has discovered a new species for the county, at Leziate, namely *Andrena similis*, a scarce but widespread species. Again it's possible that this bee has been present but not noticed.

With more recording we should be in a better position in a few years time to provide a fuller picture of the state of Norfolk's bees. It's very encouraging that the list is growing. All the new records were from protected, unsprayed land or gardens. These and roadside verges seem to be providing the last bastions for much of our county's wildlife.



Can you name the mystery butterfly?

The answer is given at the bottom of page 14

Image: Francis Farrow

TRANSACTIONS

If you have a paper/wildlife report/note suitable for 'Transactions' please be aware that the deadline for submission is the end of September 2018.

White-letter Hairstreaks on Beeston Common.

Francis Farrow

On 23rd Feb 2017 storm 'Doris' struck and blew over a fair number of trees on Beeston Common, near Sheringham including a large 35-year old hybrid Japanese Elm near Caxton Park. The tree came down between two



The hybrid Japanese Elm blown over by storm 'Doris'.
Image: *Francis Farrow*

bungalows without causing too much damage although it did wreck a summerhouse. As far as the Common is concerned the loss of this tree meant the probable loss of the White-letter Hairstreak. This butterfly's caterpillars feed only on elm-type trees and suffered badly when Dutch Elm disease killed many English and Wych Elms. It has remarkably managed to survive in the wider countryside using sucker elms in hedgerows and moving across to the disease resistant hybrid elms, which have been planted to replace our lost UK elms.

The hybrid Japanese Elm along the eastern boundary of Beeston Common with the bungalow estate of Caxton Park was probably planted by the developers in the early 1980s. On 12th August 2012 Nick Owens reported seeing a White-letter Hairstreak nectaring on Angelica flowers opposite Caxton Park. During the summer other individuals were noted in the vicinity and with the only elm nearby it was suspected that this was the tree that the small colony was using. The following year White-letter Hairstreaks were noted chasing around in twos and threes at the top of the hybrid Japanese Elm, which confirmed that they were indeed using the



White-letter Hairstreak at the top of the hybrid Japanese Elm. Image: *Francis Farrow*

tree. When they first arrived is not known - had they been overlooked in previous years before Nick spotted one? There was one unconfirmed report of a sighting in 1990s, however, from 2012 until 2016 the White-letter Hairstreak could be seen either on the tree or nectaring on Bramble flowers and Canadian Golden-rod in the immediate vicinity of the elm. With the loss of the tree it was thought that the butterflies had been lost as the only elms around the Common were hedgerow Small-leaved Elms and small Wych Elms, both of which are periodically prone to Dutch Elm disease. The summer of 2017 passed with no sightings of the butterfly on or near the elms, then on 6th September, a fresh-looking individual was nectaring on Ling with a group of Gatekeepers on the south side of Pill-box Hill. This gave some hope that the butterflies had managed to find an alternative breeding site, but then again it could just have been a one-off stray.

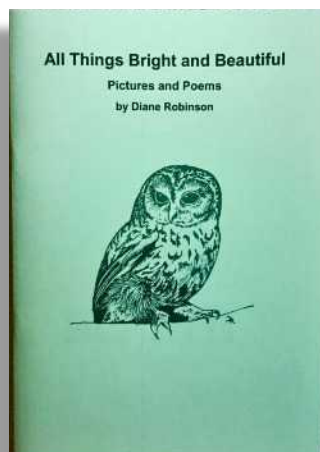


White-letter Hairstreak on Ling
Image: *Francis Farrow*

At the beginning of the 2018 season many elms were suffering from Dutch Elm disease so the likelihood of a new colony of White-letter Hairstreaks was receding, then on July 5th Mark Clements spotted 4 or 5 White-letter Hairstreaks chasing around the top of a tall Ash tree, which the butterflies will visit to feed on 'honeydew' secreted by aphids. A small 4-5m high Wych Elm was next to the Ash, which possibly serves as the breeding tree. The size of the tree means that it is vulnerable to attack by the beetle that carries the Dutch Elm disease but as it is isolated from other elms it may escape for a few years. Let's hope so as this is a delightful small butterfly that the Common's fauna would be poorer without.

In memory of Diane

'*All Things Bright and Beautiful*' is a booklet containing a selected collection of Diane Robinson's poems and pictures. Diane was a former NNNS Council member, Secretary of the Research Committee, Programme Committee member and a long-term volunteer at many indoor meetings helping with the refreshments. Four friends of Diane have organised and produced the booklet in her memory. Copies will be available at the autumn indoor meetings for £5 or can be obtained by post (£6). Cheques should be made payable to Janet Negal and sent to: 'Inishmore', Greenways, Newton Flotman, Norwich, NR15 1QJ



BITS OF THIS AND THAT

Tony Howes

Minsmere in Suffolk is always interesting, many different habitats to explore and May is a good time to go there. The waders and other water birds were not as numerous as other years the day I went, so I spent more time up on the heath, there were several Linnets busy raising their young, these colourful finches are seen less now than in previous years. A Kestrel was hunting over



Linnet



Kestrel

the sand ridge, probably on the lookout for grass-hoppers, it allowed a close approach before veering away to take up a new station further along the dunes, turning into the wind and holding steady on fast beating wings, but with its head perfectly still.

A Slow Worm was found sunning itself on the path, glistening in the bright light as if it were made of metal, this being only the second one I have been able to photograph in the open. Then later, when walking through the woodland a Muntjac crossed the track in front of me, completely unconcerned about the people passing along, I suppose they get so used to us they just take no notice.



Slow Worm



Muntjac

Images: *Tony Howes*

The Norwich Cathedral Peregrines have done well this year, at the moment (26th June) there are three youngsters flying strongly. It's a waiting game, but I enjoy the challenge of trying to catch them in flight with the camera, especially when a pigeon or similar is brought in by one of the adults. Aerial acrobatics will often finish with one youngster getting the prize, but such is their inexperience that it's often dropped as it tries to get back to the tower, but they learn quickly, and before long they will be hunting for themselves, and finding their own territories.



Norwich Cathedral Peregrines with
pigeon prey.

Images: *Tony Howes*

Barn Owl



I will finish this piece with a shot of a Barn Owl, it's probably my favourite bird. The path along Fleet Dyke at South Walsham overlooks the marshes, being elevated above the surrounding vegetation it gives views out over the grazing levels, and any barn owl (also short eared owls in winter) that is hunting there.



Were you correct? Answer to the mystery butterfly: White Admiral

Badgers and their effect on floristic diversity in Norfolk

Will Fitch - Norfolk Badger Trust

It was a few years ago now, when preparing for a dissertation that I racked my brains for a Badger related research topic.

Shying away from chasing this iconic mammal around half the night for countless weeks, I decided to combine three interests together; ecosystem functioning, badger behaviour, and plants. With some of Norfolk's larger Badger setts covering areas of over 900 square meters, amounting to many tonnes of soil being excavated alongside their rooting and snuffling behaviour, surely, they would be affecting the ground flora in some way?

Reading through Ernest Neal's Badger bible, alongside Timothy Roper's New Naturalist book entitled "Badger", it was clear that very little research had been conducted on how badgers effect botanical diversity. Associations had been made with the presence of Nettles *Urtica dioica* and Elder *Sambucus nigra* around Badger setts, but I struggled to find other literature around this subject. I pieced together a hypothesis deciding to test if and how Badgers influence the floristic diversity around their setts.

In a very brief summary, I randomly chose eight Badger setts in Norfolk to survey from a list composed of setts within broad-leaved woodland. These woodlands were characteristic of W10 *Quercus robur* within the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) system. I also completed the surveys over a short time period within a week to cut out seasonal differences in the plant species present. The surveys consisted of quadrats at regular intervals along transect lines in a north, east, south and west direction, starting at the edge of the badger sett (to avoid disturbance). The species present and their relative abundances were recorded within each quadrat.

After much number crunching and analysis, the results revealed a significant increase in floristic biodiversity closer to the Badger setts, with diversity decreasing with increasing distance from the setts.



Badger

Drawing: Julie Curl

Species such as Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* (famously favoured by bees) thrived in areas where Badgers had disturbed the ground, their light seeds easily dispersed by the wind and swift to colonise bare soil. At one sett there was a high count of Dog Violets nearby, food plant of Silver-washed Fritillary caterpillars. It seems disturbance of the ground and exposure of soil by the Badgers was providing a niche for plant species to colonise.

Quadrats further away from the sett were heavily dominated by bramble and bracken. Looking back, it would have been interesting to make further comparisons using light level readings.

More recently, just through observation, I have examined the ground flora around Badger setts within pine plantations. The heavy shade of more mature conifer woodland cuts out much of the ground flora compared to broad-leaved woods, alongside the thick build-up of pine needles preventing light reaching the ground. Where Badgers have exposed soil around setts or through their foraging behaviour, species like Foxglove and Wood Sorrel flourish.

Determining if badgers are present in large areas of woodland can be tricky in itself. However, twice recently I have been able to predict and find Badger setts based on botanical observations.

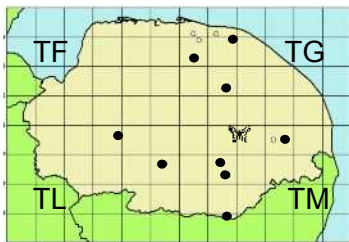


Bird Cherry Image: Will Fitch

The first example was in a large woodland, criss-crossed with a network of footpaths, woodland glades and openings. I noted many young Bird Cherry *Prunus padus* shrubs growing in dense clusters along the path edges. It was clear that they had not been planted and I came to the conclusion that they were in fact an indirect consequence of Badgers marking territorial boundaries with dung pits. Badgers, being omnivorous, can walk a good distance over the course of a night to feed from difference sources. Fruits from Bird Cherries will be consumed by Badgers, with the seeds passing through the Badger's gut undigested. The scarification caused by gut acid, followed by the depositing of these seeds within dung (typically in 6 inch-deep dung pits that Badgers dig) leads to the planting of species like Bird Cherry, Elder and perhaps even Crab Apple. Dung pits are often along territory

boundaries such as hedges and paths. With this example the shallow impressions of dung pits were still visible at the base of the young saplings. I later confirmed the presence of three large Badger setts within the woodland.

The second example was when I was actually searching for a rumoured sett, this time within a mixed pine plantation. Trying to trace potential field signs back to a main Badger sett was proving somewhat difficult, with much of the woodland lacking any shrub layer or gradient. Climbing up onto an old tree stump I scanned the area looking for the usual distinct spoil heaps. None were apparent but my gaze was drawn towards small patches of green off to one side. On approaching these patches, I soon realised they were in fact Foxgloves, still too early in the year for flower heads to be growing. Behind these plants was the Badger sett, in a small, old sand pit. The Foxgloves appeared to be thriving where the Badgers had been exposing the soil.



FOULDEN COMMON

20th May, 2018

The designation document for Foulden Common SSSI informs us that it covers an area in the Breckland District of some 137 hectares (338 acres) of varied topography, soil type and water regime, giving rise to a wide range of habitats from open water and rich fen through both acidic and calcareous grassland to birch woodland, supporting a large number of plant and animal species including some national rarities.

A group of members numbered in the low teens gathered with our leader Hans Watson initially, though not all were able to remain throughout the visit. On a beautiful sunny morning in May, with a Cuckoo calling, the group, with certain uncommon butterflies in mind, concentrated mainly on grassland sections of the SSSI immediately to the west of the Foulden -to-Gooderstone road, though a small number crossed over after lunch to the area of fen and pings to the east.

Despite unpromising reports from other visitors to Foulden a few days earlier this year, the hoped-for Grizzled and Dingy Skippers were fairly quickly spotted and photographed by our party, with the addition soon after of the Green Hairstreak. Other more common butterflies seen included Brimstone, Orange Tip, Holly Blue and Red Admiral. Among moths were Burnet Companion, Silver Y and Mother Shipton, and Graham Moates saw both Grey and Dark Gorse Piercers, appropriately on Gorse. As well as Hairy Dragonflies, Four-spotted and Broad-bodied Chasers were seen.



Grizzled Skipper (Left) and Dingy Skipper (right)

Images: *Hans Watson*



Mother Shipton, Burnet Companion & Green Hairstreak

Images: Hans Watson

Martin Collier found a good number of beetles, mainly by means of suction sampling - over 60 on the preliminary list he kindly sent me - including two nationally-scarce species of particular interest. *Pseudorchestes pratensis* is a very small 'flea weevil', so called because it has enlarged hind femora and hops rather than crawls. It feeds on Common Knapweed and though it has been recorded from Foulde Common before (in 1992), there are only three other Norfolk sites with modern records, though it is probably under-recorded because of its small size. Also found quite commonly on old cow dung was *Aliochara discipennis*, a black rove beetle with red elytra. There are old records for two other Norfolk sites, but in recent years it has been found only at Stanford PTA and there are no records for Foulde.

With the arrival of Chris Knights our tally of birds seen or/and heard increased and included Buzzard, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat, Blackcap and Yellowhammer. Hans secured a vivid sound recording of a Garden Warbler and after lunch back at the cars, returned to try to similarly capture the song of a Yellowhammer.

Probably the most noticeable wildflowers on the section of Foulde we visited were Cowslips still in their prime, Marsh Valerian, occasional plants of Gromwell and Horseshoe Vetch and, later, Butterwort. Diminutive but particularly attractive were patches of Common Milkwort with flowers of blue, pink and shades between. Our hopes of early orchids in flower seemed doomed to disappointment, but finally fairly squat Twayblades were found, difficult to spot at first but reasonably plentiful in patches here and there once one's 'eye was in', when a couple of quicksilver Common Lizards were also seen.

Phil Davison found the orange-powdery pustules of a rust fungus on Buckthorn leaf blades which Tony Leech later confirmed as the aecial state of Crown Rust, *Puccinea coronata* usually found on grasses including some cereals, but also Alder Buckthorn, and 'widespread but interesting'. Another rust, *Puccinea cladii* was found on Great Fen Sedge *Cladium mariscus*, widely recorded in the Broads by Ted Ellis between 1935 - 58 but not recorded for West Norfolk until found at Roydon Common in 2014. Tony reports that the only record outside Norfolk was from Cambridgeshire, but it has been 'now found on almost every stand of Great Fen Sedge that we have looked at' in Norfolk: in fact Tony may well have found it again (confirmation awaited) that very afternoon at Watermill Broad on moving on from Foulde, in a small patch of Great Fen Sedge, this sedge species itself being newly found there.

Many thanks to Hans and to Francis Farrow, Janet Negal and others, in addition to those mentioned above, for interesting sightings and identifications at this rich site.

Stephen Martin

CARLTON & BURGH MARSHES

9th JUNE 2018

This year's field meeting of the Society jointly with the Norfolk Flora Group and the Lowestoft Field Club was a rather novel outing in that it involved passenger-ferry crossings of the River Waveney and initially two meeting places, with most participants gathering with our leader, Arthur Copping, at the SWT Carlton Marshes Wildlife Centre south of the Waveney, but some members driving to the Waveney River Centre on the Norfolk side of the river before crossing and walking south to meet the main party. In the end I counted 19 participants including 5 Lowestoft members on a pleasant day which was bright, though not cloudless throughout.

With impeccable timing, the two groups met by a ditch not far north of the SWT Centre where the extremely rare Fen (or Great) Raft Spider *Dolomedes plantarius* was introduced to the Carlton Marshes Reserve in 2011, thousands of spiderlings having been bred in captivity for this purpose. Dr Helen Smith, former NNS President, was of course a leading figure in the introduction programme, and an account of the Society's excursion to SWT Redgrave and Lopham Fen with photographs and a brief account of the spiders she showed us there appeared in the November 2015 issue of *Natterjack* (number 131, page 25). The species had been discovered at Redgrave in 1956. On this occasion at the Carlton site, at least 2 male and 1 female Fen Raft Spiders were seen and photographed.

The Carlton Marsh Reserve is very extensive, running with contiguous Oulton Marshes to some 370 acres of grazing marsh, reed beds and some wet woodland. Arthur's list of vascular plants seen and recorded in Tetrad TM 48/92 as the party progressed through the Carlton Reserve towards Burgh Staithe, with brief diversions into the marsh and along the side of the dyke, comprises 142 taxa, 82 of them in flower and 7 in fruit. Of greatest interest were Turnip-rape fringing the path, Meadow Brome, Greater Tussock Sedge, Nuttall's Waterweed, Floating and Plicate sweet-grasses growing together, Water-violet, a single plant of the hybrid between Italian and Perennial Rye-grasses, Tall Melilot, Hairy Buttercup, Almond Willow, Brookweed, Marsh Sowthistle, Water-soldier in flower and Pink Water-Speedwell. Insects abounded, the damselflies including Azure, Large Red, Blue-tailed and

Variable, with Hairy Dragonfly, Banded Demoiselle, Broad-bodied Chaser and Brown Hawker. Common Blue and Red Admiral butterflies were seen and Peacock caterpillars on nettles. Drinker Moth caterpillars and the moth itself were recorded, not to mention mating shield bugs.

Drinker Moth / Larva

Images:

Janet Negal / Chris Adams





Peacock caterpillars

Image: Janet Negal



Large Red & Variable Damselflies

Images: Chris Adams

Birds seen and/or heard included Reed Bunting, Cetti's Warbler, swallows and martins, Heron, Jackdaw, and Avocets.

A dozen or so participants crossed the river by ferry to the Waveney River Centre at lunchtime and consumed

packed lunches before walking to part of Burgh Marshes after a short diversion to Burgh St. Peter Churchyard. The churchyard itself, being fairly closely mown in the main but with some patches of Bluebell, Ox-eye Daisy, Cowslip and Lady's Bedstraw, was perhaps of limited interest, but the same could not be said of the flint-with-some-red brickwork exterior of the church itself with its thatched roof and extraordinary 'Georgian Gothic' tower which has been described as 'a ziggurat temple in the marshes rather than Iraq', allegedly built or completed in the eighteenth century by the Rev. Samuel Boycott as his intended mausoleum.

The duration of the Burgh Marshes visit was shortened by the need to return for the 4.00pm ferry, and Arthur points out that the party was grateful that Bob Ellis and Bob Leaney had gone on ahead and were able to identify and show the others Flat-stalked and Hairlike Pondweeds. 139 species of vascular plants were listed in Tetrads TM 50/92 and TM 48/92, with 76 in flower. They included the *leersii* subspecies of Grey Sedge, Meadow Barley, Water-violet, yellow Water-lily, Hairy Buttercup, Red and White Campions and the hybrid between them growing side by side, Knotted Hedge-parsley, and Squirrel-tail and Rat's-tail fescues.

Many thanks to Arthur for his thorough and impeccably drafted plant lists (which he kindly allowed me to draw on and quote from), his contribution with Jo Parmenter towards organising a most enjoyable day out, and his readiness once more to lead the excursion. I am grateful to Jo also, and to Janet Negal and Chris Adams, for contributing photographs'.

Stephen Martin



Ferry crossing

Image: Chris Adams



Lunching before visiting Burgh Marshes

Image: Jo Parmenter

‘WILD FLOWERS REVEALED’: EAST WRETHAM HEATH

24th June 2018

East Wretham Heath SSSI, straddling the A1075 road some 5 kilometres from Thetford, will be well-known to many members as both the largest of the NWT's Breckland reserves at 141 hectares and also the oldest, having come into the Trust's ownership at the start of World War 2. It features extensive and varied Breckland grassland - acid, neutral and some calcareous - a wide range of woodland and scrub supporting an interesting variety of birds and including the long-naturalised Waterloo Pine Plantation dating from Napoleonic times, and the famous cyclically, though rather unpredictably, fluctuating waters of Langmere and Ringmere fed by rising chalk groundwater, as well as other pools with more constantly stable water levels.

Fifteen or so members of the Society and Norfolk Flora Group were met in the Reserve car park by Bob Leaney, with this Sunday in late June adding yet another sunny and very warm morning to the fine conditions our recent field meetings have enjoyed this year after the disappointments of a chilly winter and uncertain spring. In fact, the recent spell of prolonged dryness and the bleached heath ground vegetation cover at East Wretham this year made it only too clear why the Brecks are famed for early-flowering ephemeral plants. As the visit was meant to be principally botanical, though diverse fauna would also be seen, Bob introduced the site by pointing out the contrasts in the grazed vegetation cover of the heath where we were gathered west of the road, with its long history of a high rabbit population, to the somewhat more luxuriant conditions of the remainder of the Heath on the east side.

Though many of the flowering plants are dwarfed by the conditions, it wasn't necessary for the party to move more than a few yards onto the heath and rough track beyond the car park for a selection of typical species to be revealed amongst the Sheep's Sorrel, Sand Sedge and Wavy Hair- and other grasses. They included Houndstongue, Heath Bedstraw, Small Nettle, Common Storksbill, Ragwort, Viper's Bugloss, Climbing Corydalis, Smooth Hawksbeard, Little Mouse-ear, Early Forgetmenot and Birdsfoot Trefoil. Moving gradually towards the north shore of Langmere, Wood Sage, Common Centaury, Biting Stonecrop, Dark Mullein, Bog Stitchwort, Silverweed, Water Figwort, Water Mint, Marsh Speedwell, Marsh Bedstraw, Marsh Thistle, Knotted Pearlwort, Gypsywort and Corn Mint were seen among others. Tree moss *Climacium dendroides*, so called because its shoots resemble miniature palm trees, proved to be abundant round the mere, and along the flat,



Viper's Bugloss
Image: Francis Farrow



Bog Stitchwort

Image: *Francis Farrow*

grassy shore immediately above the waterline - and difficult to avoid stepping on - were hundreds if not thousands of tiny toadlets and some froglets, and a young Grass Snake swam just offshore. Eventually we reached the drier knoll topped with pines and other trees beyond the south bank where, taking advantage of the shade, we sat down and ate our packed lunches.

Bill Mitchell reports that Fine-leaved Sheep's-fescue, Heath Grass and Pill Sedge were seen after lunch, but

another rewarding piece of habitat was a crumbling, mainly vegetation-covered tarmac runway of the long-abandoned WW2 airfield, supporting the rather local Basil Thyme in both white- and pink-flowered forms, the scattered and decreasing Wall Bedstraw, and Birdsfoot, which is not infrequent in the Brecks. Also found in this area were Musk Mallow, Cut-leaved Cranesbill, Mouse-ear Hawkweed and Field Scabious. On the way back to the cars Prickly Sedge and Mossy Stonecrop were seen.

Birds seen, heard or both during the visit included two Buzzards and a Red Kite, Garden Warbler and Blackcap singing, Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, Little Grebe, and Lapwing. Butterflies included Small Heath and Meadow Brown, and among other insects were Common Blue and Red-eyed Damselflies, Banded Demoiselle, and Black-tailed Skimmer.

Many thanks to Bob Leaney for leading another rewarding 'WFR' outing and to Jo Parmenter and Bob Ellis for organising the Norfolk Flora Group participation. I'm most grateful to Bill Mitchell for his list of species found after my departure and his comments on them.

Stephen Martin



Small Heath

Image: *Francis Farrow*



The next issue of ***The Norfolk Natterjack*** will be November 2018.

Please send
all articles / notes and photographic material
to the editor as soon as possible by
Oct1st 2018 to the following address:

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

All photographs / images are very welcome, especially to accompany an article or document a record, occasionally however, because of space limitations, preference may have to be given to Norfolk-based images, or to those subjects depicting interesting or unusual behaviour, or are less commonly (or rarely) seen in print.

Membership subscriptions

The N&NNS membership year runs from 1st April to 31st March. During this time members will receive four copies of the quarterly *Natterjack* newsletter, and annual copies of the Transactions of the Society, and the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report. A full summer programme of excursions and a winter programme of talks are also organised annually.

New memberships and renewals can be made by credit card or 'PayPal' by visiting the Society's website at www.nnns.org.uk

Alternatively a cheque payable to
'Norfolk & Norwich Naturalist's Society' can be sent to:

Jim Froud, The Membership Secretary, Westward Ho, 4 Kingsley Road,
Norwich NR1 3RB

Current rates are £20 for individual, family and group memberships
(£30 for individuals living overseas).

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