

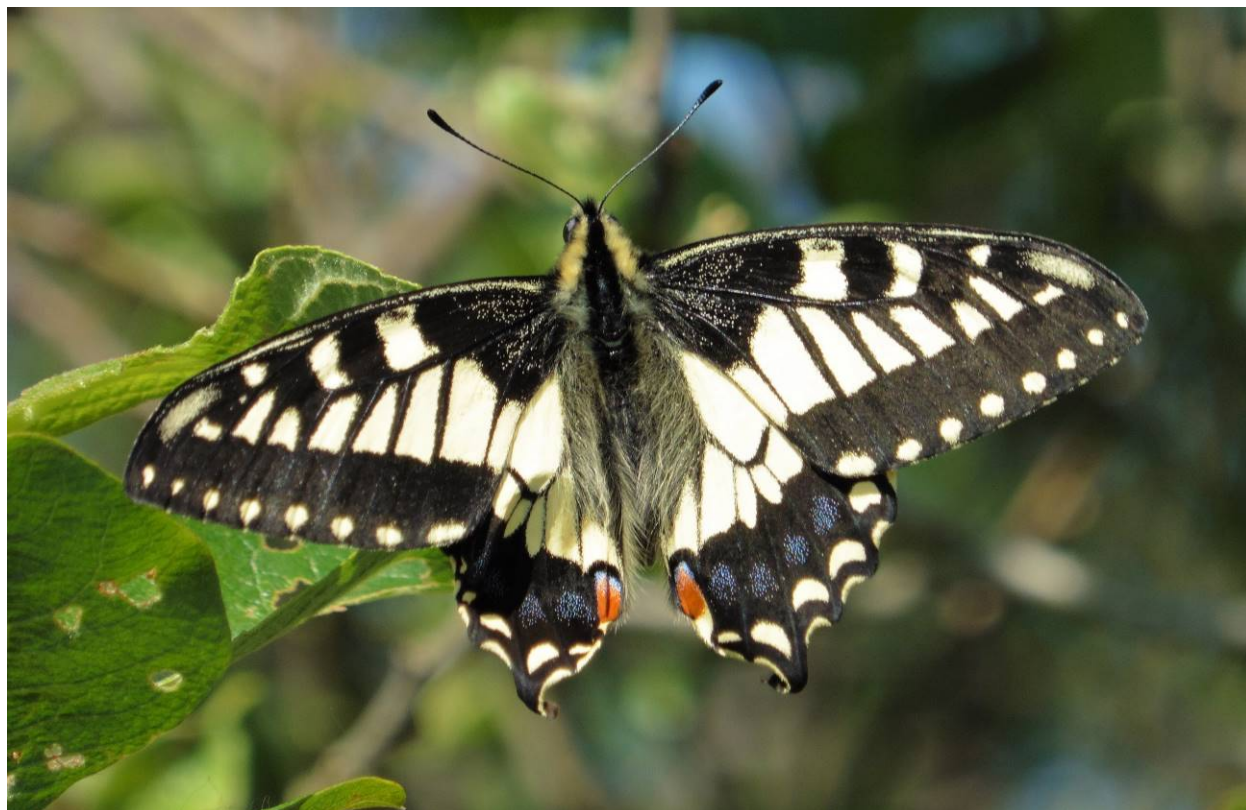
# *Honeyguide*

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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Norfolk break  
31 May – 3 June 2021



## Participants

### For the whole break

Geoff Morris and Jane Baddeley  
Jill Jordan

### Honeyguiders joining the group some days

Ann Greenizan  
Helen and Malcolm Crowder  
Fiona Pitcher

**Leader:** Chris Durdin

Three here for the whole break stayed at the Oaklands Hotel in Thorpe St Andrew

<https://oaklands-hotel.co.uk>

Report and lists by Chris Durdin. Photos by Chris Durdin or as noted.

Cover: swallowtail at NWT Hickling Broad nature reserve; the Wherry Albion sails past Upton Marshes.



Above: banded demoiselle, Thorpe Marshes. Below: the group at Hickling (Helen Crowder).



Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays always tries to put something into nature conservation where we visit, and a donation of £40 per person to Norfolk Wildlife Trust was our way of contributing this time. After adding in Gift Aid through the Honeyguide Charitable Trust and combining this group and the previous group in May 2021, we gave £400 to NWT.



## DAILY DIARY

### Monday 31 May – NWT Thorpe Marshes and RSPB Strumpshaw Fen

Geoff and Jane had arrived the previous afternoon, and found time for a quick visit to Thunder Lane and a walk to Oaklands Hotel and the railway bridge overlooking Thorpe Marshes. So that made this morning's rendezvous straightforward, with local Honeyguide Ann Greenizan joining us for a day of perfect early summer weather. Ann and I are both enthusiasts for willow emerald damselflies, and on Thorpe Marshes we showed the group their distinctive egg-laying scars. We had close views of reed buntings and spent time listening to and discussing the difference between the songs of sedge and reed warblers. Whitethroats also showed well on several occasions. In the cattle corral we looked at a spindle on which there was a 'tent' of tiny, recently hatched spindle ermine moth caterpillars.



A four-spotted chaser emerging at Thorpe Marshes. The exuvia (shed larval skin) is also visible.

Some passers-by pointed out a four-spotted chaser that was just emerging, alongside its shed larval skin. A male marsh harrier quartered the marshes, and a heron flew close to us. We'd seen a few damselflies and numbers increased near the River Yare. Some lovely banded demoiselles were particularly impressive, though brightly coloured large red damselflies also caught the eye. There wasn't so much to see on St Andrews Broad beyond some nesting swans and a great crested grebe. A King Alfred's cakes fungus on a dead ash, shiny reed beetles and many azure damselflies were among the wildlife enjoyed on the last leg of the circuit, and a rust fungus particular to alexanders was also a talking point. Then a nice surprise: a common lizard on the bottom step of the railway bridge: blink and it had gone.

Jill had arrived safely by train during the morning, and we all enjoyed a big plate of salad and other bits in my garden. Yes, after a long cold spring, at last we had weather ideal for a garden lunch. Lunch was followed by homemade lemon cake, with some other nibbles for the vegans in the group. Tame woodpigeons and a sunning juvenile dunnock kept us company outside.

Five into my car did go, we found, for the short journey to the RSPB's Strumpshaw Fen nature reserve, which was busy with visitors this warm bank holiday afternoon. Walking down 'sandy wall' various invertebrates caught our eye: red-and-black froghoppers, more spindle ermine moth caterpillars and many ladybirds. Marsh harriers were the main sighting from fen hide after we'd grasped, literally, fen or stingless nettles on the path to the hide. There were more invertebrates to study after we'd turned left alongside the fen meadow, starting with three spider species, namely furrow spider *Larinioides cornutus*, nursery web spider and large-jawed orb web spider. At last, a red-and-black froghopper *Cercopsis vulnerata* didn't hop and could be photographed. Geoff was captivated by the quivering of mating harlequin ladybirds. Two Chinese water deer were in the meadow some distance away from the Highland cattle.



Froghopper, Strumpshaw Fen.

On the third side of the square, after we'd turned at the old pumping station, we had the most amazing and prolonged view of a hairy dragonfly ovipositing into floating vegetation in a ditch. It was a view worthy of a sequence on *Springwatch*. Then on the last leg, three views of muntjacs in the wood, the last a fawn on the path ahead of us. By reception there was a song thrush singing as if to show off its talents from a relatively low and exposed song post.

We returned to Norwich via Brundall's Cucumber Lane<sup>1</sup>, and it was time for Geoff, Jane and Jill to check into the Oaklands Hotel where I joined the group on the hotel's terrace for an evening meal.

## **Tuesday 1 June – Horsey and NWT Hickling**

Ann was with us again today and the two of us collected three from Oaklands Hotel, leaving just before nine o'clock. The prompt departure was to catch Ross's boat at Horsey Mill, which he said was more-or-less fully booked for several days this half-term week. We spent just over an hour going through Horsey Mere and up Meadow Dyke, with Ross's running commentary about wildlife, history and Broadland activities. I didn't appreciate that oaks on the banks of Meadow Dyke were restricted in growth by the limited soil available, like a large-scale bonsai. Marsh harriers, reed warblers and reed buntings were with us most of the time, common terns appeared on several occasions and seeing an Egyptian goose on the apex of a thatched boat shed was fun.

We were reminded that this is a relatively quiet and exclusive part of The Broads, true on the water today though the full car park on our return suggested quite the opposite, with Horsey Mill plainly a busy attraction on a very sunny day. That didn't seem to matter for the local birds. On the far side of the water, there was a single barnacle goose, from a small feral population, with a large group of greylags. Nearer us a reed warbler was singing from a small and open oak tree by a thin strip of reeds behind the loos: you could not have asked for a clearer view.



Masks on for Ross's boat trip on Horsey Mere: will that look strange when we look back in years to come? Currant galls and oak apple, Hickling.

The café wasn't too busy, and we enjoyed a break within sight of the swallows going in and out of Horsey Mill. With a little time in hand, we walked along the footpath into Horsey Estate as far as a view over Brograve Mill; a pleasant walk without turning up much new apart from lots of climbing corydalis. Still, it gave a chance to recap on songs of willow warblers, chaffinches and more reed warblers. We then drove to NWT Hickling, past Waxham Barn and via Sea Palling. We had picnics on the benches near the reserve's visitor centre with local Honeyguiders Helen and Malcolm Crowder who were with us for the afternoon.

Rachel Frain from NWT gave us a lovely welcome with news of three close encounters with cranes from recent visitors, plus other wildlife news. There was a little egret from the first hide, though the best sightings were farther round. Ann described how the many cigar galls on reeds are not only a gall created by a fly but go on to provide homes for a range of other invertebrates. There were no cranes walking on the reserve's paths for us to see today, just a family party of greylags. Jane was first to see the swallowtail, which settled helpfully for brilliant views of a pristine, recently emerged insect. Then a hobby came over, and we saw this or maybe another several times as we continued. We'd already had good views of a golden four-spotted chaser, and now we were lucky enough to see a hairy dragonfly that landed on a bush in the sun: so often this species is constantly on the move. Towards the end of the walk, near the black-headed gullery, we heard a bittern booming several times, and there was a distant

<sup>1</sup> [www.visiteastofengland.com/attraction\\_activity/brundall](http://www.visiteastofengland.com/attraction_activity/brundall) says 'Evocative road names such as Cucumber Lane, Berryfields, Nurseries Avenue and Rosefields give clues to the use of much of the land in the past.'



cuckoo. On the open water of Brendan's marsh there were avocets, lapwing, redshank and a calling greenshank, plus our first shovelers and a late male wigeon. One moment we saw an oystercatcher chasing a crow with lapwings twisting and turning as they joined in the mobbing party.

On an arable field we found two hares, one of which came closer along a tramline. Then a muntjac appeared on the track ahead of us. In a sunny corner we found four species of damselflies, including blue-tailed and variable. It was time to say farewell to Helen and Malcolm and head back to base.

### Wednesday 2 June – Buxton Heath and Kelling Heath

Geoff opted for a quiet morning and an outing to buy a sun hat, so Jill and Jane came with me to Buxton Heath. A lady in the car park with a dog told us she'd heard a cuckoo, as did we as soon as we were on the heath. It was Jane who caught sight of the green hairstreak, which perched nicely for us, and soon afterwards we added another distinctive small butterfly in the shape of a small copper. But the most numerous butterfly species by far was brimstone: we must have seen dozens, perhaps helped by the presence of alder buckthorn, a larval food plant. Flowers included tormentil, lesser spearwort, heath bedstraw, heath milkwort and a single lousewort. It took a while to find some bell heather coming into flower.



IDs for two mud plants at Buxton Heath: water-starwort *Callitriche* sp (left) and water-purslane *Lythrum portula* (centre). Honeyguide's Chris (mothman) Gibson advises that the moth is common heath, a semi-melanic form in which crosslines are obscured.

Stonechats, both male and female, perched on gorse bushes, whizzing and clicking in their usual manner, with linnets nearby. Yellowhammer song was around much of the time, and we saw them several times on the tops of trees and bushes. A dragonfly flew past and settled; its green eyes revealed that, surprisingly, it was a Norfolk hawker, some distance from their usual Broadland haunts. Farther on, a second dragonfly, this time on a wire, was a female broad-bodied chaser. After having walked through the wood in the far corner of the heath, where we thought we heard a tawny owl but couldn't be certain, we found a second female broad-bodied chaser busy laying eggs in a dank-looking flooded area on the middle of the track, something between a temporary pond and a large puddle. The chaser went all round the pond with great energy, including close to us, distributing its eggs evenly in the shallow parts of the water body. A quick visit to the boggy bits of Buxton Heath was a chance to see the habitat type, with lots of sphagnum, but it was too early in the season for much else.



Broad-bodied chaser, female, Buxton Heath.

The drive to Holt County Park should have been an easy 20 minutes along the main road to Holt, but a road closed ahead diversion signs took us on a long detour via Melton Constable, only for us to find the

real block was at the Holt end (a car had crashed into a building). A wiggle through country lanes near Hempstead followed and it was a surprise to find Holt County Park as busy ever despite the closed road. We were just wondering if Geoff would make the rendezvous when he appeared having received helpful advice at Holt Police Station. It was time to breathe a sigh of relief and settle at a picnic table for our packed lunches, followed by a cuppa from Hetty's cabin.

Happily, the road was open once we'd finished our by now late lunch and, ten minutes later, we were at Kelling Heath. There was a lovely patch of hedgerow (or Pyrenean) cranesbill in the car park. Once across the road we found woodlarks on a bare area; they were singing high in the sky on the other side of the railway line and back in the first area on our return among some bracken shoots. We had no luck with Dartford warblers today, but did see more stonechats and a delightful view of a pair of yellowhammers on a fence (they were mentioned in holiday highlights below). Geoff helped me with some grass ID tips and we saw a similar selection of flowers to Buxton Heath plus the sometimes invasive pirri-pirri bur.

#### **Thursday 3 June – Upton Marshes and Ranworth**

Another lovely day as we met local Honeyguider Fiona for a walk around Upton Marshes in the heart of the northern Broads. At the start of the walk there was a whitethroat singing, which we found at the top of a tree, plus reed & sedge warblers and reed bunting. A bearded tit called but we had only fleeting views. A little egret showed its yellow feet as it flew, and scanning over Upton Marshes there were others with seven egrets in view at one point. Two of these were that bit bigger and must have been great white egrets, though they were very distant. There was a nesting oystercatcher on the arable on the other side of Boat Dyke and lapwings moving around. Towards the end of this stretch a meadow pipit was calling and eventually it sang and did its parachute display flight, which is something I rarely see.

As we walked alongside the River Bure it became clear that there was a special boat approaching: the distinctive shape and charcoal grey sails of the Wherry Albion, one of only two remaining commercial wherries in the Broads. It was a fine sight as it sailed past as we approached Oby Mill, an added touch of magic to the classic Broadland landscape of grazing marshes and wind pumps. On the marshes we were now by a big lagoon with calling redshanks, a pair of avocets, shelducks and a male shoveler, and beyond these a heron in a strange posture, probably sunning itself. At Tall Mill, a brown butterfly was flitting between buttercups. It took a little time to get a clear view, which confirmed it as a wall brown. We saw two or three others as we walked the next stretch, the third side of the square, plus a painted lady, my first of the year. Like other days there were also brimstones and orange tips, too. A Chinese water deer ran down the path until it saw us and detoured onto the marshes. On the final leg, Fiona found us a great spotted woodpecker as we walked along the edge of the wood and fen as we returned to the cars.

At Ranworth Staithe, Helen and Malcolm Crowder and Julie Durdin were there to meet us. The car parks there were full, so we dropped off our picnics and blankets and parked the cars near the church. The picnic was spread out on a wall and bench by the Broads Authority's centre by the time we returned. There was plenty to watch this sunny half-term day, in terms of human activity, including balls being rescued from the water and boats coming and going. Picnics were followed by a cup of tea from the Granary; next we loaded everything spare into Helen's car in the NWT car park.

The next, gentle walk took us along the edge of the Bure Marshes National Nature Reserve. An Egyptian goose was accompanied by nine half-grown goslings. Helen pointed out droppings and pellets, presumably from an owl, on the floor of a building used as a store for bundles of reeds. By the road we found field pennycress with its distinctive seedpods. On the marsh, an adult lapwing called and was plainly on guard for its big chick walking around a wet area, no doubt partly on account of the regular marsh harriers on the move. Hobbies came over and a small oak tree had an astonishing number of azure damselflies perched on leaves.

Around the corner, a scan of one of the fields on the higher ground revealed a hare. The circuit continued past the back of South Walsham Broad where the huge leaves of skunk cabbage were quite a feature. A green-veined white butterfly settled on a herb Robert flower. We looked at rough chervil on the walk back to the



Green-veined white: female GVW has a more yellow hind wing and fainter veins.



staithe, to compare with cow parsley.

We then walked the short distance up the hill to Ranworth Church – St Helen's, as Helen noted. Thyme-leaved sandwort and the leaves of calamint were just outside the churchyard, and pellitory of the wall inside. However, the main quest was to find a recently-named lichen first found here at Ranworth and therefore has a page in the book *Norfolk's Wonderful 150*. With the book in hand, we found this tiny species on a gravestone and the mortar of a buttress, both south-facing, and I showed it to some other visitors to the churchyard. Nearby, long grass was deliberate, part of churchyard conservation, with meadow saxifrage a beneficiary. Around the corner, leopardsbane and a tulip tree added interest.



Dusted yellow wall lichen *Caloplaca ruderm* (photo taken on 10 May), which features in *Norfolk's Wonderful 150*. The 20p is to show scale.

The final element of the day was a walk along the boardwalk through carr (wet woodland) and fen to NWT's floating visitor centre by Ranworth Broad. Geoff gave a splendid tutorial on ferns: broad buckler fern, marsh fern and lady fern, these then overshadowed by two large clumps of royal fern. Various warblers were in fine song, as usual. On Ranworth Broad, at least one pair of common terns had plainly settled to breed, at last, on one of the nesting platforms, though they were dominated by black-headed gulls. Great crested grebes were there in good numbers, including pairs with nests anchored on the floating barrier in the water put in as part of the Tipping the Balance project to restore clear water and the aquatic plants once common in the Broads. On the way back, Helen pointed out an orange tip's egg under a lady's smock flower.

#### **Friday 4 June – Thorpe St Andrew**

After farewell to Geoff and Jane, Jill stayed on for the morning and we started by walking around Thorpe Marshes. Whitethroat, sedge and reed warblers were all in good song and offering excellent views. Two pairs of swans had cygnets: three cygnets on the river, two on St Andrew's Broad. My first red-eyed damselflies of the year, three of them, were on a branch and lily pads in the River Yare. Yellow flag irises and ragged robin were in fine flower.

We then did a walking tour of some hidden countryside in Thorpe St Andrew. On River Green, we chatted to the boat man at Bishy Barney Boats about keeping an eye out for the thorn-apple that appeared last summer. We turned up School Lane alongside a steep-sided old pit, then through the former Pinebanks site, pausing to chat about hoary mullein (longish story ...). Then through some suburbia before turning into the old sand pit off Weston Wood Close, now a rich wildlife habitat. No Norfolk hawkers were on the wing at the marshes, but there was one here by a large patch of blackthorn. Finally, off Yarmouth Road, we turned up Chapel Lane then down into the wooded 'Dell', a former pit that is now a small woodland nature reserve.

Back in Thunder Lane, my neighbour Stuart in his front garden shouted 'honey buzzard' as he searched the sky with his telescope. It was a distant dot, not identifiable through binoculars, but it wing-clapped, the classic honey buzzard display, and Stuart identified a second dot as another honey buzzard. After lunch – during which a reed bunting was in my garden, on sunflower hearts in a feeder – Jill caught the train home.

## The best bits

Holiday highlights collected on the final evening.

Geoff pair of yellowhammers at Kelling Heath; seeing male reed bunting in full song and seeing it (in contrast to usual winter garden sightings); swallowtail spreading its wings; the Broadland tableau at Upton Marshes.

Jane seeing yellowhammers and learning their song' the wherry Albion; the lizard on the bridge step at Thorpe Marshes' distinguishing between sedge and reed warbler songs.

Jill the pair of yellowhammers at Kelling; song thrush singing its heart out at Strumpshaw Fen (*right*); green hairstreak.



Julie reed warbler in the open at Horsey Mill; eating out for once!

Chris wall browns; broad-bodied chasers, on a wire and egg-laying; Geoff's fern tutorial; the weather; good banter.

Plus home-made bread and lemon cake by popular acclaim.

## WILDLIFE LISTS

### BIRDS H – heard

Great crested grebe  
Cormorant  
Bittern H  
Little egret  
Great white egret  
Grey heron  
Mute swan  
Greylag goose  
Canada goose  
Barnacle goose  
Egyptian goose  
Shelduck  
Wigeon  
Gadwall  
Mallard  
Shoveler  
Tufted duck  
Marsh harrier  
Honey buzzard  
Sparrowhawk  
Buzzard  
Kestrel  
Hobby  
Red-legged partridge  
Pheasant  
Moorhen  
Coot  
Oystercatcher  
Avocet

Lapwing  
Redshank  
Greenshank H  
Black-headed gull  
Lesser black-backed gull  
Herring gull  
Common tern  
Feral pigeon  
Stock dove  
Woodpigeon  
Collared dove  
Cuckoo  
Swift  
Green woodpecker H  
Great spotted woodpecker  
Woodlark  
Skylark  
Swallow  
House martin  
Meadow pipit  
Pied wagtail  
Wren  
Dunnock  
Robin  
Stonechat  
Blackbird  
Song thrush  
Mistle thrush  
Cetti's warbler

Sedge warbler  
Reed warbler  
Blackcap  
Whitethroat  
Chiffchaff  
Willow warbler  
Goldcrest H  
Bearded tit  
Long-tailed tit  
Marsh tit  
Blue tit  
Great tit  
Nuthatch H  
Jay  
Magpie  
Jackdaw  
Rook  
Carrion crow  
Starling  
House sparrow  
Chaffinch  
Greenfinch  
Goldfinch  
Linnet  
Bullfinch  
Reed bunting  
Yellowhammer

### MAMMALS

Muntjac  
Chinese water deer  
Brown hare  
Rabbit

### REPTILE

Common lizard

### MOTHS

Cinnabar  
Common heath  
Garden tiger (caterpillar)  
Spindle ermine (caterpillars)

### BUTTERFLIES

Swallowtail  
Large white  
Green-veined white  
Orange tip  
Brimstone  
Green hairstreak  
Small copper  
Holly blue  
Peacock  
Red admiral  
Painted lady  
Speckled wood  
Wall brown

### DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES

Egg-laying scars of willow  
emerald damselfly  
Large red damselfly  
Common blue damselfly  
Azure damselfly  
Variable damselfly  
Red-eyed damselfly  
Blue-tailed damselfly  
Banded demoiselle  
Hairy dragonfly  
Four-spotted chaser  
Broad-bodied chaser  
Norfolk hawk



### OTHER NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

7-spot ladybird  
Harlequin ladybird  
Cream-spot ladybird *Calvia 14-guttata*  
Green tiger beetle  
Whirligig beetle  
Green dock beetle *Gastrophysa viridula*  
Reed beetle *Donacia* sp  
Red-and-black froghopper *Cercopis vulnerata*  
Splayed deer fly *Chrysops caecutiens*

### SPIDERS

Large-jawed orb web spider *Tetragnatha* sp  
Furrow spider *Larinioides cornutus*  
Nursery web spider

### LICHENS

Dusted yellow wall lichen *Caloplaca ruderum*  
Sunburst lichen *Xanthoria parietina*

### GALLS

*Taphrina betulina* fungus causing witch's broom on birch  
Cigar gall on reed, fly *Lipara lucens*  
Alexanders rust fungus *Puccinia smyrnii*  
**On oak:** currant galls: gall wasp *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*.  
Oak apple: gall wasp *Biorhiza pallida*  
Cotton wall gall: gall wasp *Andricus quercusramuli*

### FUNGI (incomplete)

King Alfred's cakes *Daldinia concentrica*  
Jelly ear *Auricularia auricula-judae*  
Birch polypore *Piptoporus betulinus*



Splayed deer fly *Chrysops caecutiens*, Buxton Heath. Furrow spider *Larinioides cornutus*, Strumpshaw Fen.  
Wall brown, Upton Marshes.



Garden tiger caterpillar, Upton. King Alfred's cakes, Thorpe Marshes.  
Large-jawed orb web spider *Tetragnatha* sp., Strumpshaw Fen.