



# *Honeyguide*

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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Norfolk break no 1  
7 – 10 September 2020



### **Participants**

Mel & Ann Leggett  
David & Steph Bennett  
Jill Jordan

### **Leader**

Chris Durdin. Report and lists by Chris Durdin.

Photos by David Bennett and Chris Durdin.

We stayed at the Oaklands Hotel in Thorpe St Andrew <https://oaklands-hotel.co.uk>



Holt Country Park (CD).

Cover: jay at Strumpshaw Fen, anting (DB).  
Below: the group in Holt Country Park.



Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays always tries to put something into nature conservation where we visit, and three new members for Norfolk Wildlife Trust from this small group certainly does that.



## DAILY DIARY

### Monday 7 September – arrival

I collected Jill from Norwich railway station and we had a cup of tea together at home in Thunder Lane. The others arrived by car during the afternoon and we had a sociable evening meal on the terrace of the Oaklands Hotel.

### Tuesday 8 September – NWT Thorpe Marshes and RSPB Strumpshaw Fen

We met in the Oaklands Hotel car park a little after nine o'clock. We started by walking the short distance to River Green, Thorpe St Andrew, where there were two Egyptian geese – though not what we'd gone to find. By a wall was a large plant of thorn-apple, a scarce alien in Norfolk, here both in flower and with spiny fruits. Next to it was another solanum, black nightshade.

In Whittingham Lane, on the short approach to Thorpe Marshes, ivy was flowering in masses, sweetly scented and alive with insects. As well as scores of wasps, there were two star species. The first were ivy bees, a recent colonist to the UK and even more recent in Norfolk though now well established and widespread. The second was a hornet hoverfly, a mimic of predatory or stinging insects like all hoverflies, but large and by far the most distinctive of the many hoverfly species.



Hornet hoverfly; ivy bee (DB, CD). Not to scale; they are a similar size.

We walked Thorpe Marshes on an anti-clockwise circuit starting along the bank of the River Yare, today with the tide well out. We looked at many flowers: gipsywort, marsh woundwort and the red-berried fruits of guelder rose to name just a few, plus hoary mullein across the river on the picnic site where Ann and Mel had been yesterday. A chiffchaff sang, we heard the first of several Cetti's warblers and a heron landed on the muddy edge of the river. Beyond the tidal flap we carried onto Bungalow Lane, a chance for Mel to reminisce about visits here and boating as a schoolboy. We returned to the nature reserve along the marsh path, where there were greater birdsfoot trefoil, angelica and square-stemmed St. John's-wort. In the ditch edges we looked at greater water parsnip, introduced here by the Water, Mills and Marshes project during lockdown.

It hadn't been quite as warm as we'd expected, though the temperature was picking up towards midday and dragonflies were moving – mostly migrant hawkers and common darters. After studying an open area of ditch I picked up what I'd hope to find: a willow emerald damselfly. We had an excellent view, helped by Mel's telescope, and saw others and their distinctive egg-laying scars. Then there was a rustle in the thick marshes vegetation and a fleeting view of a Chinese water deer.

Lunch was a serve-yourself salad in the garden in Thunder Lane, by which time same shade under the apple tree was welcome.

Driving in convoy the short distance (seven miles) to the RSPB's Strumpshaw Fen nature reserve worked well. I mentioned that the logs on the car park side of the level crossing are a place to look for common lizard and it was Mel who was quickest to see one, with a paler (replacement?) tail. There at the reserve to meet us was Honeyguide Ann Greenizan, who joined us for the afternoon, and site manager Tim Strudwick, also a Honeyguide leader, who gave some words of welcome, briefly interrupted firstly when

Ann G saw a hummingbird hawkmoth on a buddleia then again when another Honeyguider, Barry Madden, came past.

Half of Strumpshaw Fen's rich meadows had already had their hay cut with Highland cattle grazing a little farther over. I failed to find the single grass-of-Parnassus there that Tim had earlier located. The uncut meadow was rich with devilsbit scabious and we studied stingless nettle as we went up the steps to the river wall. Ahead of us was one of the birds of the day, albeit a common species: a jay was anting. It twisted and turned, spread its blue wing patches, shuffled to and fro on the path. David with his long lens ready clicked away; once it had flown we found the spot was crawling with ants, including drones ready to fly.

There were two calls I could put a name to: the pit-chew of a marsh tit and the squeal of a water rail. A third cry, strident yet plaintive, I didn't know, and Ann G, searching as the group moved on, found it was a frog being consumed by a grass snake.



Great white egret from Strumpshaw Fen's Tower Hide (DB).

Luckily the tower hide had no other people in it, which made it easier in these Covid-aware times for the seven of us to go in. Immediately there was a great white egret, fishing in the open water, and as we left it flew round and landed on a tall bush. A little grebe swam past, with a fine reflection in the water and with a distinct wake behind it. Ducks were mostly in eclipse plumage: lots of gadwalls, mallards and teals, and earlier there had been a single shoveler. Many more teal flew by as we continued the circuit, with pauses for many more willow emeralds and good view of ruddy darters. It was nice to chat to Honeyguider Barbara George in her garden. Then we were back at the car park, from where Mel and Ann took a detour to go home via Postwick.

On a distinctly balmy evening we met for checklists and to review tomorrow's plans at our group table before another good meal.



"A little grebe swam past, with a fine reflection in the water and with a distinct wake behind it" (DB).

### **Wednesday 9 September – Potter Heigham Marshes and NWT Hickling**

Picnics sorted, off we went and safely gathered at the large car park opposite Lathams in Potter Heigham, David & Steph having called at the M&S shop at a garage in Acle on the way through. It was dry but cloudy – no great surprise at the time though when we reached Hickling just down the road at lunchtime they reported brighter conditions all morning. We walked along Weavers Way, parallel with the River Thurne, initially behind the row of chalets until we passed the attractive converted wind pump. Ivy produced more ivy bees and we looked at various ruderal flowers, with rooks, wagtails and scores of Egyptian geese on a pasture along the way. A large flock of starlings had a wintery feel as they settled on wires.

A noise from a hidden ditch – was it a moorhen? – gave David the chance to try his BirdNET App. This picks up a sound, sends it to Germany and comes back with an answer, this time "moorhen, wild guess". Later, on a close Cetti's warbler, it confirmed the ID noting "almost certain"!

We reached the Environment Agency / NWT habitat creation project with reedbeds and open water, the latter supporting a large number of greylag and Canada geese plus, surprisingly, a single pink-footed goose. A proper sailing craft zigzagged along the river, adding to the Broadland scene. We saw our first marsh harrier and a distant hobby flew over the trees in the far distance. A dog rose had many examples of robin's pincushion, a gall caused by the larvae of a tiny gall wasp, *Dipoloepis rosae*.

The 'scrape' at the far end held two black-tailed godwits, a flock of lapwings and a single dunlin along with various ducks in eclipse plumage. Despite this morning's cloud there were regular dragonflies, all species seen yesterday, namely darters and migrant hawkers. The straight dirt road that completed the three-mile circuit took us back to Potter Heigham. A scan of a final 'scrape' revealed a greenshank and tufted ducks and we found flowering vervain by the track. The 'Flour & Bean' café was busy, so we used public loos and had a nice coffee from the burger and drinks stall.

Honeyguiders Helen and Malcolm Crowder were at NWT Hickling and they joined us for a socially distanced picnic. Anna at the reserve's visitor centre gave us a warm welcome and signed up Mel and Ann to NWT membership, before Helen help to lead us around the reserve in the warm sunshine. A willow emerald perched close to us on a patch of lesser reedmace, and all afternoon there were darters and migrant hawkers as we walked on the circuit around the reserve. On Hickling Broad itself there were large numbers of coots, though otherwise there was little new in terms of species: buzzards, marsh harrier, nice views of speckled wood and a distant snipe are a few examples.

We did the extra loop that goes to the 'raptor viewpoint' at Stubb Mill in the hope of seeing cranes reported from there earlier in the day, but no luck on that score. We did see a hare on the Heigham Holmes grazing marshes, then more with pheasants as we walked back to the visitor centre. After a chat to NWT staff and a farewell to Helen & Malcolm we headed back.



#### Thursday 10 September – Buxton Heath and Holt Country Park

Two cars went via Sainsbury's to pick up some lunch, and reached Buxton Heath car park just after Jill and me – though they did miss the great spotted woodpecker. Walking past the NWT's British white cattle, we headed up the gentle hill through the main part of the heath. Heather and bell heather were still in flower and later we added the third species, cross-leaved heath. We turned towards the centre of the heath where a gentle 'tack' sound alerted me to stonechats. We were fairly sure there were three, including a juvenile with beak flanges soliciting for food. A group of mistle thrushes flew away; linnets and calling green woodpeckers were among other birds here. A smart small copper butterfly soaked up some sun.

We retraced our steps and moved to the damper areas on the southern edge of the heath. Here the mounds of sphagnum were dotted with marsh pennywort and there were many flowering plants of marsh lousewort. Several yellowhammers settled on wires and in the same area there were bullfinches calling and occasionally landing on the same wires, probably a family party. Near the car park there was the gentle contact call of a chiffchaff, confirmed both by a sighting and David's BirdNET App. We watched a comma butterfly as it fed on an over-ripe blackberry before we moved on.

We drove north to Holt Country Park, handy for loo and a cup of coffee from Hetty's House Tea Room. Although this fine day we didn't need shelter, we ate our picnics on tables under the roofed picnic area, accompanied by a tame robin and a wood mouse that made ground ivy leaves shake. Having found our way out of the wooded area of the county park, we took a clockwise circuit of the perimeter. The heather and gorse were attractive in the sunshine and there were dozens of common darters resting on paths and sticks. However, most of the botanical interest was damper areas down the slope here in the Holt Lowes SSSI; the first of these had many plants of lesser spearwort as well as the expected four-petalled tormentil.

Walking on there was brilliant bonus, the star bird of the day: a juvenile cuckoo perching in a tall birch tree. It flew on eventually, sparrowhawk-like, though not before David's long lens had captured this remarkable sighting. The way they can navigate to sub-Saharan Africa long after adult cuckoos have departed remains one of the wonders of the natural world.



Cuckoo (DB).

Half a dozen horses came close to us, there for conservation grazing. At the same place on a sunny slope with many bare patches were hundreds of mining bees, probably the ivy bees we'd seen in several places in the previous days. Nearby was a striking yellow fungus, shining in the shade: *Fuligo septica* or 'scrambled egg' slime mould.



*Fuligo septica* or 'scrambled egg' slime mould; round-leaved sundew (CD); keeled skimmer, below (DB).

The next two wet areas had lots of sundew plants, glistening in the afternoon sunshine. Mostly these were on bare bits of peaty soil, probably usefully trampled by the horses, but also growing among sphagnum. The second of these wet patches also had blue dragonflies and we saw these well enough to confirm they were keeled skimmers. Near here siskins called and settled on distant tree-tops.

We were back at the car park in good time so opted for a cup of tea and/or ice cream from Hetty's Tea Room. Birdwatching was not yet over: there was a mixed group of siskins and goldfinches, then a flock of calling crossbills flew over. It was time to return to Norwich. Later we ran through checklists ahead of our final evening meal; departure the following morning concluded the pioneers' Norfolk break.



### The best bits

During our final evening meal at Oaklands Hotel we shared our holiday highlights, much as we do on holidays overseas.

David: cuckoo; enjoyed having eyes opened about plants; the surprise of having a Norfolk break which compared favourably to a foreign holiday.

Steph: the diversity of the sites; cuckoo; lovely to see many flowers; ivy with its multitude of invertebrates.

Ann: cuckoo; nice being in a small group; sundew; ruddy darter; ivy bees.

Mel: cuckoo; the company and the camaraderie; common lizard with its new tail.

Jill: as for Mel; the heathland day; cuckoo; small copper.

Chris: cuckoo; the week of ivy bees; anting jay at Strumpshaw Fen.

### WILDLIFE LISTS

#### BIRDS H – heard

Little grebe  
Cormorant  
Little egret  
Great white egret  
Grey heron  
Mute swan  
Pink-footed goose  
Greylag goose  
Canada goose  
Egyptian goose  
Gadwall  
Teal  
Mallard  
Shoveler  
Tufted duck  
Marsh harrier  
Buzzard  
Kestrel  
Hobby  
Pheasant  
Water rail H  
Moorhen  
Coot

Lapwing  
Dunlin  
Snipe  
Black-tailed godwit  
Greenshank  
Black-headed gull  
Lesser black-backed gull  
Herring gull  
Stock dove  
Woodpigeon  
Collared dove  
Cuckoo  
Kingfisher  
Green woodpecker  
Great spotted woodpecker  
Swallow  
House martin  
Meadow pipit  
Pied wagtail  
Wren H  
Robin  
Stonechat  
Blackbird

Mistle thrush  
Cetti's warbler H  
Sedge warbler H  
Chiffchaff  
Long-tailed tit  
Marsh tit H  
Blue tit  
Great tit  
Jay  
Magpie  
Jackdaw  
Rook  
Carion crow  
Starling  
House sparrow H  
Chaffinch  
Goldfinch  
Siskin  
Linnet  
Crossbill  
Bullfinch  
Yellowhammer  
Reed bunting



## MAMMALS

Chinese water deer  
Grey squirrel  
Brown hare  
Rabbit  
Wood mouse

## AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

Common frog  
Toad (roadkill)  
Common lizard  
Grass snake

## BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS

Large white  
Small white  
Green-veined white  
Red admiral  
Comma  
Speckled wood  
Small copper

Hummingbird hawkmoth  
Small china-mark

## DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES

Willow emerald damselfly  
Common blue damselfly  
Migrant hawk  
Brown hawk  
Emperor  
Keel skimmer  
Common darter  
Ruddy darter

## OTHER NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

7-spot ladybird  
Common carder bee  
Red-tailed bumblebee  
Ivy bee  
Hornet hoverfly  
Garden spider  
Slug *Arion ater*

## GALLS

Robin's pincushion (on dog rose), gall caused by the larvae of a tiny gall wasp, *Diplolepis rosae*  
Willow gall, from willow redgall sawfly *Pontania proxima*

## PLANTS

Some widespread and familiar species are omitted. nif = not in flower, mostly for distinctive leaves.

### Alismataceae

*Alisma plantago-aquatica* Water-plantain

### Apiaceae, umbellifers

<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Angelica
<i>Conium maculatum</i>	Hemlock
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Wild carrot
<i>Heracleum spondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Hydrocotyle vulgaris</i>	Marsh pennywort
<i>Sium latifolium</i>	Greater water parsnip
<i>Berula erecta</i>	Lesser water parsnip
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel

### Araliaceae

*Hedera helix* Ivy

### Asteraceae, daisy family

<i>Achilla millefolia</i>	Yarrow
<i>Arctium minus</i>	Lesser burdock
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Mugwort
<i>Bidens cernua</i>	Nodding bur-marigold
<i>Carduus nutans</i>	Musk thistle
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Black knapweed
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle
<i>Cirsium palustre</i>	Marsh thistle
<i>Cotula coronopifolia</i>	Buttonweed
<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>	Hemp agrimony
<i>Lactuca serriola</i>	Prickly lettuce
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox-eye daisy
<i>Matricaria matricarioides</i>	Pineapple mayweed
<i>Picris echioides</i>	Bristly ox-tongue
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Ragwort
<i>Solidago canadensis</i>	Canadian golden-rod
<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	Perennial sow-thistle
<i>Sonchus palustris</i>	Marsh sow-thistle
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	Scentless mayweed
<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	Coltsfoot nif

### Balaminaceae, balsams

*Impatiens capensis* Orange balsam

### Boraginaceae

*Myosotis scorpiodes* Water forget-me-not

### Brassicaceae, cabbage family

*Sinapis arvensis* Charlock

### Caprifoliaceae, honeysuckle family

<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder fruit
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Guelder rose fruit

### Caryophyllaceae

<i>Lychnis flo-cuculi</i>	Ragged robin
<i>Myosoton aquaticum</i>	Water chickweed
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red campion

### Celastraceae

*Euonymus europaeus* Spindle-tree fruit

### Chenopodiaceae

*Chenopodium album* Fat hen

### Clusiaceae (Hypericaceae)

<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Perforate St. John's-wort
<i>Hypericum tetrapetrum</i>	Square-stalked St. John's-wort

### Convolvulaceae

<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge bindweed
<i>Calystegia sylvatica</i>	Greater bindweed

### Dioscoreaceae

*Tamus communis* Black bryony fruit

### Dipsacaceae, scabious & teasels

<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	Devilsbit scabious
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Teasel

### Droseraceae

*Drosera rotundifolia* Round-leaved sundew

### Ericaceae, heathers

<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Heather
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	Bell heather
<i>Erica tetralix</i>	Cross-leaved heath

### Fabaceae, pea family

<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Broom fruit
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow vetchling
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Birdsfoot trefoil
<i>L. uliginosus</i>	Greater (marsh) birdsfoot trefoil
	Black medick
	Red clover
	Gorse
	Tufted vetch

*Medicago lupulina*

*Trifolium pratense*

*Ulex europaeus*

*Vicia cracca*

### Fumariaceae

*Fumaria officinalis* Fumitory



<b>Gentianaceae</b>		<i>Rosa rugosa</i>	Japanese rose
<i>Centaureum erythraea</i>	Common centaury	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Blackberry/bramble
<b>Geraniaceae</b>		<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan fruit
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert	<b>Rubiaceae</b>	
<b>Hydrocharitaceae</b>		<i>Galium uliginosum</i>	Fen bedstraw
<i>Hydrocharis morsus-ranae</i>	Frogbit	<i>Sherardia laevipes</i>	Field madder
<i>Stratiodes aloides</i>	Water soldier	<b>Scrophulariaceae</b>	
<b>Lamiaceae, labiates</b>		<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>	Ivy-leaved toadflax
<i>Ballota nigra</i>	Black horehound	<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	Common toadflax
<i>Galeopsis tatrahit</i>	Common hemp-nettle	<i>Odontites vernus</i>	Red bartsia
<i>Lamium album</i>	White dead-nettle	<i>Pedicularis palustris</i>	Marsh lousewort or red rattle
<i>Lycopus europeaus</i>	Gipsywort	<i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>	Water figwort
<i>Mentha aquatica</i>	Water mint	<i>Verbascum pulverulentum</i>	Hoary mullein
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Self-heal	<b>Solanaceae</b>	
<i>Stachys pulustris</i>	Marsh woundwort	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet / woody nightshade
<b>Lythraceae</b>		<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Black nightshade
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Purple loosestrife	<i>Datura stramonium</i>	Thorn-apple
<b>Malvaceae</b>		<b>Urticaceae, nettle</b>	
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Common mallow	<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	Pellitory of the wall
<b>Nymphaeaceae</b>		<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Stinging nettle
<i>Nymphaea alba</i>	White water-lily	<i>Urtica galeopsifolia</i>	Stingless nettle
<b>Onagraceae</b>		<b>Verbenaceae</b>	
<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>	Rosebay willowherb	<i>Verbena officinalis</i>	Vervain
<i>Epilobium hirustum</i>	Greater willowherb	<b>Monocotyledons</b>	
<i>Epilobium montanum</i>	Broad-leaved willowherb	<b>Iridaceaea</b>	
<i>Oenothera sp</i>	Evening primrose	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Yellow flag iris NiF
<b>Papaveraceae</b>		<b>Wetland vegetation and grasses (selected)</b>	
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common poppy	<b>Cyperaceae</b>	
<b>Polygonaceae</b>		<i>Carex acutiformis</i>	Lesser pond sedge
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	Knotgrass	<i>Carex paniculata</i>	Greater tussock sedge
<i>Polygonum persicaria</i>	Redshank	<b>Juncaceae</b>	
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Heath sorrel	<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft rush
<i>R. obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved dock	<b>Poaceae (very incomplete)</b>	
<i>R. crispus</i>	Curled dock	<i>Phragmites australis</i>	Reed
<i>R. hydrolapathum</i>	Great water dock	<b>Typhaceae</b>	
<b>Primulaceaea</b>		<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Bulrush/reedmace
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Scarlet pimpernel	<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	Lesser bulrush / reedmace
<i>Anagallis tenella</i>	Bog pimpernel NiF	<b>FERNS &amp; MOSS</b>	
<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>	Creeping Jenny	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male fern
<b>Ranunculaceae</b>		<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow buttercup	<i>Thelypteris palustris</i>	Marsh fern
<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>	Lesser spearwort	<i>Polytrichum commune</i>	Haircap moss
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup	<b>FUNGUS</b>	
<i>Thalictrum flavum</i>	Common meadow-rue nif	<i>Fuligo septica</i>	'scrambled egg' slime
<b>Resedaceae</b>			
<i>Reseda luteola</i>	Weld		
<b>Rosaceae</b>			
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn fruit		
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadowsweet		
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Tormentil		
<i>P. reptans</i>	Creeping cinquefoil nif		
<i>P. anserina</i>	Silverweed nif		
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn fruit		
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog rose fruit		