

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Norfolk break no 4
28 September – 1 October 2020

Participants

Gill Page
Gail Wilson

Rob Carr
Dilys Wadman

Leader: Chris Durdin

Two of the group stayed at the Oaklands Hotel in Thorpe St Andrew <https://oaklands-hotel.co.uk>
Report and lists by Chris Durdin. Photos by Rob Carr, Gill Page and Chris Durdin.

Cover, top: Mediterranean gull at Great Yarmouth, little egret at Breydon Water (both RC).

Cover, below: Rainbows over the railway crossing at Strumpshaw Fen.



Above: common darter, the group and visitor centre at NWT's Hickling Broad and Marshes nature reserve. Below: the group in Great Yarmouth.



Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays always tries to put something into nature conservation where we visit, and five new members for Norfolk Wildlife Trust from four Honeyguide Norfolk breaks certainly does that.

DAILY DIARY

Monday 28 September – arrival

Gail arrived by train to Norwich railway station. We first confirmed that Thorpe Marshes was still flooded, following last Friday's storm, then I took her to her Airbnb. Helen and Malcolm Crowder and Julie Durdin joined the group at the Oaklands Hotel for the evening meal, a special occasion to celebrate Gill's birthday marked by a chocolate and passionfruit birthday cake provided, free of charge, by the hotel.

Tuesday 29 September – Buxton Heath and Holt Country Park

It was an overcast and often wet morning at Buxton Heath, where Dilys met us having overcome the challenge of finding the rather hidden car park. Birds were thin at first: just jays, a calling green woodpecker and a skylark flight call. Eyes downward, we found mystery holes (probably a mining bee), heathers of three species and lots of fungi, with fly agarics in textbook colours and shapes (*photo in lists*). Scores of cobwebs glistened with caught drizzle, and a close-up photo revealed the cross on a garden spider. Pausing to look at a soft rush (rushes are round, sedges have edges), Gail revealed how she could strip half of the outer layer to then push out, with a fingernail, to release a string of 'foam rubber' – latex-like material.



'Foam rubber' inside a soft rush stem; garden spider with cross showing on a wet orb web.

A single devilsbit scabious in flower – there were many more of this late-flowering species later in the boggy bits here and at Holt Country Park – prompted a question about why it is so named. The answer, courtesy of the Wildlife Trusts, is as follows: "Devil's-bit scabious gets its Latin name - 'Scabere', meaning to scratch - from its traditional use as a treatment for skin conditions, such as scabies and the sores of bubonic plague. Its common name arises from the fact that its roots look truncated, as if bitten off, legend has it, by the Devil."

We moved to the southern edge of the heath with a view to looking in the damp areas, but first birds on wires caught our eyes. Yellowhammers were there in good numbers, moving in and out of gorse thickets. Linnet and siskin calls added these names to grey silhouettes and several meadow pipits flew through. We walked through a patch of cross-leaved heath into the boggy area, with marsh pennywort growing out of large hummocks of Sphagnum bog moss and marsh lousewort still in flower. Returning towards the telegraph wires, a large flock of small finches landed: this time the light was with us and you could see they were lesser redpolls.

We moved on to Holt County Park, with just what we needed: loos, hot coffee from Hetty's tea shop and a covered area to eat picnics. The first bit of the walk, not too long, was through woods where the splendid chainsaw sculpture of buzzard and squirrel was main talking point. We paused at the pond, looking at lesser spearwort at to discuss reedmace/bulrush etymology. We walked through part of the heath to a point by the other wooden sculptures where Gill could return to the car park area, though not before we'd looked at a carpet of old knopper galls under the oaks. The rest of us continued on a clockwise circuit, heath to our right, boggy bits to our left. A recently cleared area had heath groundsel and climbing corydalis in flower. To our disappointment, the scrambled egg slime mould that had looked so magnificent only last Thursday had all but gone, but there was compensation in the form of a piece of wood stained blue-green, which Gail recognised as once used in the manufacture of Tunbridge ware, a form of decoratively inlaid woodwork, typically in the form of boxes. The jade coloration is the mycelium of the green elfcup fungus. Oak leaves here were thick with silk button galls.

We dipped into the edge of more boggy areas to look at the many sundews growing here. Alder buckthorn with berries was another nice find. By then we'd completed the circuit; we found Gill back at the car and it was time for Dilys to return home to Wells. The rest of us returned to Norwich to dry out, albeit with a slight detour approaching Corpusty due to a road traffic accident.

Wednesday 30 September – Breydon Water and NWT Hickling

Sunshine and, for the end of September, warmth to start the day at Great Yarmouth, a pleasant surprise after yesterday. The rendezvous with Dilys by the sea wall in Asda's car park worked and half a dozen paces later we were overlooking the estuary of Breydon Water, disturbing a small group of redshanks. Underneath Breydon Bridge you could see a mass of waders on the edge of the saltmarsh, their high tide roost, and we walked the short distance towards them. Avocets and shelducks were the most obvious though the grey mass of black-tailed godwits were the most numerous. A scattering of dunlins, grey plovers and lapwings added to the mix, and the best view of curlew was a closer bird on the saltmarsh. Ten little egrets were spread across the saltmarsh – the same number as for Honeyguide's group a fortnight ago. However, that group saw no golden plovers: today there were some on the roost and tight flock in flight. The biggest change in the last two weeks was a big influx of ducks, mostly wigeons in a variety of plumage, plus teals and pintails, seen best when we walked a little farther to a convenient bench.



Breydon Water at high tide. Above: wader roost with avocets, black-tailed godwits and oystercatchers.
Below: wigeons plus three pintails, bottom right.

As we emerged from under Breydon Bridge, Rob was alert to a wheatear on the small sea wall. We had good views of that, then more fleeting glimpses of the kingfisher that took off, disturbing two feral pigeons as it dashed along the edge of the saltmarsh. We popped into Asda for loos and lunch supplies.

Time was on our side so an impromptu addition the itinerary took onto Great Yarmouth's Golden Mile. There on the beach we quickly found what I hoped we'd find: Mediterranean gulls. They came even closer when I produced some bread; a dozen of these lovely birds, a mix of adults and immatures, with Gill watching us from the promenade.

We took the coastal route north, pausing on the Somerton-Horsey road to look for cranes and pink-footed geese without luck, though we did see a hare running through the fields. Another birdwatcher arrived and

showed us a great white egret in a ditch, tucked out of sight from where we stood. Moving on a short way, there was a second stop: this time we'd found a flock of pink-footed geese on a stubble field, conveniently where we could pull off the road.



Left: stretching hare (RC). Right: Honeyguiders gull-watching at Great Yarmouth (GP).

We ate picnics at NWT Hickling Broad nature reserve, entertained by the many common darters that landed on picnics tables, signs and us, especially favouring Gill's back. Entrance fees paid and after a nice welcome from NWT Hickling Rachel Frain, we were happy to set off in more warm and dry weather around the reserve's circuit, with Gill retracing her steps once we'd been in Cadbury Hide from where there was little to see apart from some British white cattle. There was a calling Cetti's warbler, marsh harrier and another flying great white egret on the next stretch: all nice though routine for Hickling. Bittern hide was at first similarly quiet until it lived it up to its name when we had a great view of a bittern flying across the reeds. There were two flying cranes in the distance on the return leg, big patches of yellow buttonweed on the habitat creation area, some swallows and a fleeting glimpse of a Chinese water deer for two of us. Another mammal, a hare lying in a stubble field, was much more cooperative. Then we were back at the car park, re-joining Gill and ready for the drive home. Dilys joined us at the Oaklands Hotel for dinner.

Thursday 1 October – NWT Thorpe Marshes and RSPB Strumpshaw Fen

Having picked up Gail from her Airbnb, Dilys then arrived at my house and, having studied rosemary beetles in my from garden (no prizes for guessing on what), we walked to the Oaklands Hotel to meet Gill and Rob. We started the rather grey morning at Thorpe River Green where the thorn-apple was admired by the fourth Honeyguide group in a row, now without flowers but instead showing seedpods opening as they ripened.

It was too gloomy for any ivy bees this week on the ivy in Whitlingham Lane, just a few wasps there. Our usual circular route around the marshes was curtailed by the flooded paths that persisted from last Friday's storm; instead we went out and back along the path by the River Yare. The houseboat that had sunk since yesterday with mute swans on its roof was an obvious talking point. Opposite that we studied willow emerald damselfly egg-laying scars on an ash twig, but it was too cool and cloudy for any damselflies to show. Two NWT staff walked past, here on chainsaw duties to deal with fallen trees. We heard Cetti's warblers, skylarks came over, a green woodpecker landed in a willow and we had a brief sighting of a chiffchaff in an elder bush. There were quite a few lingering flowers: a big patch of water chickweed, orange balsam, hemp agrimony and marsh woundwort among these. Gail was alert to a hornet flying over a richly-coloured bush of guelder rose.

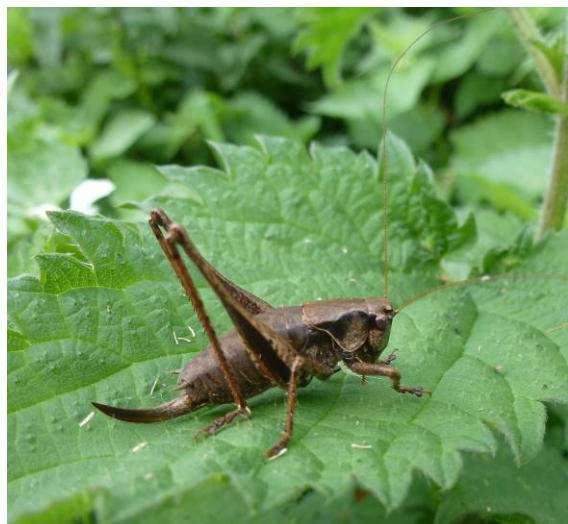
We scanned the gravel pit, St Andrews Broad, where there was a single great crested grebe and a cormorant drying its wings. Then, beyond the open water, a male marsh harrier appeared, quartering the marshes and coming in and out of view as it did so. A wisp of about 10 snipe flew around; another chiffchaff was flycatching with some success and on the way back a hobby appeared briefly in a willow on the other side of the river before dashing away in the wrong direction. I found something new for Thorpe Marshes in the shape of stingless nettle and we noted how sycamore leaves were generously marked with tar spot fungus. The mute swans were standing on the edge of the mooring basin as we retraced our steps; we could read the British Museum address on their very large BTO leg rings.

We allowed ourselves time for coffee, a longish lunch break at mine and a cup of tea before we headed off to Strumpshaw Fen. Reception was closed, a casualty of last Friday's storms. Warden Ben Lewis kindly joined us for an introductory chat, briefly interrupted by a hummingbird hawkmoth, and he pointed out death cap fungi before we headed through the wood and into the marshes. A welcome sighting here was the sun and we were lucky enough to enjoy a sunny afternoon. Having missed willow emeralds at Thorpe Marshes it was a relief when Gail spotted a damselfly, which then perched on the end of twigs in typical willow emerald style. Common darters were by then landing on the wooden edge of Sandy Wall but it was probably a higher-flying migrant hawk that was grasped by a hobby that dashed through. We then had many views of hobbies, often two at a time, firstly over Strumpshaw's fen meadows, then perched on a stump from Fen Hide (*right, RC, a juvenile from the lack of red 'trousers'*). We found a female dark bush-cricket on a nettle leaf nearby.



In between times, Site Manager Tim Strudwick came over for a chat from the other side of a ditch; he'd been on a task at the restored steam engine building, the chimney of which was evident towards Buckenham Marshes. The bearded tits said to be around didn't show themselves and even their calls were far from clear cut, unlike the squealing water rail that we heard on two or three occasions. Near the river, which was as far as we walked, a marsh tit showed well in a willow and on a burdock and wintering wigeons flew overhead.

There was some rain as we returned, then once we were back in the reception area that rain combined with the late afternoon sun to produce a particularly stunning double rainbow against grey clouds. We drove back via Postwick with an impromptu stop to look at the flowers, fruits and form of Duke of Argyll's teaplat in a hedgerow. Dilys was by now already on her way back to north Norfolk, it was soon time for Gail to catch her train leaving three of us at the final evening meal at Oaklands Hotel.



Dark bush cricket, the ovipositor (and the colour) showing it's a female. Death cap fungus, one to avoid!

The best bits

Holiday highlights collected on the final evening and by email.

Gill: guelder rose; hobbies; the company; Julie's lunch.

Rob: bittern; willow tit; hobbies; Julie's lunch.

Dilys: bittern; discovery of so many splendid reserves in Norfolk; Chris and Julie's hospitality.

Gail: hobbies twisting in flight; hospitality flowing; hare stretching; best rainbow ever; being filled with nature and a bittern flypast.

Chris: jade-coloured wood with elf cap fungus; hobbies at Strumpshaw Fen; 'foam rubber' in soft rush.

WILDLIFE LISTS

BIRDS H – heard

Great crested grebe
Cormorant
Bittern
Little egret
Great white egret
Grey heron
Mute swan
Pink-footed goose
Greylag goose
Egyptian goose
Shelduck
Wigeon
Gadwall
Teal
Mallard
Pintail
Marsh harrier
Buzzard
Kestrel
Hobby
Red-legged partridge
Pheasant
Water rail H
Moorhen
Coot
Crane

Oystercatcher
Avocet
Golden plover
Grey plover
Lapwing
Dunlin
Snipe
Black-tailed godwit
Curlew
Redshank
Green sandpiper
Mediterranean gull
Black-headed gull
Great black-backed gull
Lesser black-backed gull
Herring gull
Feral pigeon
Woodpigeon
Collared dove
Kingfisher
Green woodpecker
Great spotted woodpecker
Skylark
Swallow
Meadow pipit
Pied wagtail

Wren H
Dunnock
Robin
Wheatear
Blackbird
Cetti's warbler H
Chiffchaff
Bearded tit H
Long-tailed tit
Marsh tit
Blue tit
Great tit
Jay
Magpie
Jackdaw
Rook
Carion crow
Starling
House sparrow
Greenfinch
Siskin
Linnet
Redpoll
Yellowhammer

MAMMALS

Chinese water deer
Grey squirrel
Brown hare
Rabbit (roadkill)

AMPHIBIAN

Common frog

BUTTERFLY & MOTH

Small white
Hummingbird hawkmoth

DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES

Willow emerald damselfly
Migrant hawk
Common darter

OTHER NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

Dark bush cricket
7-spot ladybird

Devil's coachhorse
Rosemary beetle
Common carder bee
Hornet
Garden spider
Nurse web spider
Slug *Arion ater*

GALLS (selected)

Robin's pincushion (on dog rose), gall wasp *Diplolepis rosae*.
Willow gall, from willow redgall sawfly *Pontania proxima*
Taphrina betulina fungus causing witch's broom
Meadowsweet gall midge *Dasineura ulmaria*
On oak: spangle galls: common spangle gall wasp *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*.
Knopper or acorn gall: gall wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*
Silk button gall wasp *Neuroterus numismalis*
Oak apple gall wasp *Biorhiza pallida*

PLANTS

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

Apiaceae, umbellifers

<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Angelica
<i>Torilis japonica</i>	Upright hedge parsley
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Wild carrot
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel
<i>Heracleum spondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Hydrocotyle vulgaris</i>	Marsh pennywort

Araliaceae

Hedera helix

Asteraceae, daisy family

<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Ivy
<i>Arctium minus</i>	Yarrow
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Lesser burdock
<i>Aster tripolium</i>	Mugwort
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Sea aster
<i>Cotula coronopifolia</i>	Creeping thistle
<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>	Buttonweed
<i>Lactuca serriola</i>	Hemp agrimony
	Prickly lettuce

Lapsana communis

Leucanthemum vulgare

Matricaria matricarioides

Picris echinodes

Senecio jacobaea

S. sylvaticus

S. squalidus

Solidago canadensis

Sonchus arvensis

Sonchus palustris

Tripleurospermum inodorum

Tussilago farfara

Balaaminaceae, balsams

Impatiens glandulifera

Impatiens capensis

Brassicaceae, cabbage family

Sisymbrium officinale

Nipplewort

Ox-eye daisy

Pineapple mayweed

Bristly ox-tongue

Ragwort

Heath groundsel NiF

Oxford ragwort

Canadian golden-rod

Perennial sow-thistle

Marsh sow-thistle NiF


Scentless mayweed

Coltsfoot nif

Himalayan balsam

Orange balsam

Hedge mustard

Caprifoliaceae, honeysuckle family		<i>Rosa rugosa</i>	Japanese rose
<i>Viburnum opulis</i>	Guelder rose fruit	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Blackberry/bramble
Caryophyllaceae		<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan fruit
<i>Lychnis flo-cuculi</i>	Ragged robin	Scrophulariaceae	
<i>Myosoton aquaticum</i>	Water chickweed	<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>	Ivy-leaved toadflax
<i>Sagina procumbens</i>	Procumbent pearlwort	<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	Common toadflax
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red campion	<i>Pedicularis palustris</i>	Marsh lousewort or red rattle
Celastraceae		<i>Verbascum pulverulentum</i>	Hoary mullein NiF
<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	Spindle-tree fruit	<i>Veronica persica</i>	Common field speedwell
Chenopodiaceae		<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved speedwell
<i>Atriplex portulacoides</i>	Sea purslane	Solanaceae	
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Fat hen	<i>Datura stramonium</i>	Thorn-apple Fruit
<i>Oxybasis rubra</i>	Red goosefoot	<i>Lycium barbarum</i>	Duke of Argyll's teaplant
Dioscoreaceae		<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet / woody nightshade Fruit
<i>Tamus communis</i>	Black bryony fruit	<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Black nightshade Fruit
Dipsacaceae, scabious & teasels		Urticaceae, nettle	
<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	Devilsbit scabious	<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	Pellitory of the wall
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Teasel	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Stinging nettle
Droseraceae		<i>Urtica galeopsifolia</i>	Stingless (or fen) nettle
<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved sundew	Wetland vegetation, grasses etc (selected)	
Ericaceae, heathers		Juncaceae	
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Heather (ling)	<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft rush
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	Bell heather	Poaceae (very incomplete)	
<i>Erica tetralix</i>	Cross-leaved heath	<i>Phragmites australis</i>	Reed
Fabaceae, pea family		<i>Spartina anglica</i>	Cord or salt grass
<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Gorse	Typhaceae	
<i>Ulex gallii</i>	Western gorse	<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Bulrush / reedmace
Fumariaceae		<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	Lesser bulrush/reedmace
<i>Ceratocapnos claviculata</i>	Climbing corydalis	MOSSES	
Geraniaceae		<i>Polytrichum commune</i>	Haircap moss
<i>Geranium molle</i>	Dovesfoot cranesbill	<i>Sphagnum</i> sp	Bog moss
<i>Geranium pusillum</i>	Small-flowered cranesbill	FUNGI (selected)	
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert	<i>Amanita phalloides</i>	Death cap
Hydrocharitaceae		<i>Amanita muscaria</i>	Fly agaric
<i>Hydrocharis morsus-ranae</i>	Frogbit NiF	<i>Coprinus comatus</i>	Shaggy inkcap
<i>Stratiodes aloides</i>	Water soldier NiF	<i>Chlorociboria aeruginascen</i>	Green elfcup (green-stained wood)
Lamiaceae, labiates		<i>Fuligo septica</i> (almost gone)	'Scrambled egg' slime
<i>Ballota nigra</i>	Black horehound	<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>	Sulphur tuft
<i>Lamium album</i>	White dead-nettle	<i>Piptoporus betulinus</i>	Birch polypore
<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	Red dead-nettle	<i>Rhytisma acerinum</i>	Tar spot (on sycamore)
<i>Lycopus europeaus</i>	Gipsywort NiF		
<i>Mentha aquatica</i>	Water mint		
<i>Stachys pulustris</i>	Marsh woundwort		
Lythraceae			
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Purple loosestrife NiF		
Malvaceae			
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Common mallow		
Onagraceae			
<i>Oenothera</i> sp	Evening primrose		
Plumbaginaceae			
<i>Limonium vulgare</i>	NiF Common sea-lavender		
Plantaginaceae			
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	Buckshorn plantain		
Polygonaceae			
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	Knotgrass		
<i>Polygonum persicaria</i>	Redshank		
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Heath sorrel NiF		
Primulaceaea			
<i>Anagallis tenella</i>	Bog pimpernel NiF		
<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>	Creeping Jenny		
Ranunculaceae			
<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>	Lesser spearwort		
Rhamnaceae			
<i>Frangula alnus</i>	Alder buckthorn fruit		
Rosaceae			
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn fruit		
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadowsweet		
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Tormentil		
<i>P. reptans</i>	Creeping cinquefoil		
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn fruit		
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Doq rose fruit		

Fly agaric, Buxton Heath