



# *Honeyguide*

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Telephone: 01603 300552

[www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) E-mail: [chris@honeyguide.co.uk](mailto:chris@honeyguide.co.uk)



Norfolk break no 3  
21 – 24 September 2020



## Participants

Jill Jordan  
Jean Dunn

Peter & Caroline Chamberlain  
Len Tebbutt

**Leader:** Chris Durdin

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



Report and lists by Chris Durdin. Photos by Chris Durdin and Jean Dunn.

Cover: common darter on bracken, Buxton Heath.

Above: keeled skimmer at Holt Country Park (JD); the leaves are bog pimpernel.

Below: the group at Holt Country Park.



Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays always tries to put something into nature conservation where we visit, and an additional member for Norfolk Wildlife Trust – now five from three Honeyguide Norfolk breaks – certainly does that.



## DAILY DIARY

### Monday 21 September – arrival

I collected Jill from Norwich railway station and we had a cup of tea at home in the warm afternoon sunshine. The rest of the group arrived during the afternoon and we enjoyed a convivial evening meal on the terrace of the Oaklands Hotel.

### Tuesday 22 September – NWT Thorpe Marshes and RSPB Strumpshaw Fen

We started by strolling to River Green where the River Yare comes close to the road in Thorpe St Andrew. Two Egyptian geese and a pied wagtail on a wire were a good start, though the main reason for coming here was to admire the spikey fruits of thorn-apple growing near the red day boats.



A spikey fruit of thorn-apple and the adjacent scene at River Green, Thorpe St Andrew.

In Whitlingham Lane, which leads to NWT Thorpe Marshes, we took time to study the insects coming to flowering ivy. A hornet appeared along with countless wasps, then we all had good views of what we were seeking: ivy bees, which have been a real star of these early autumn 'Norfolk breaks'.

Over the bridge we started a study of umbellifers with upright hedge parsley, later finding hogweed and angelica plus lesser water parsnip in flower in a ditch. It was warm, almost hot, as we took an anti-clockwise circuit alongside the River Yare. Orange balsam was of particular interest and other flowers included marsh woundwort, water mint – popular with common carder bees – and re-growth of hemp agrimony. Migrant hawkers were around good numbers. Cetti's warblers sang on several occasions and chiffchaff was the other warbler we heard. A fine buzzard moved through – once scarce, in recent years a routine sighting almost anywhere in Norfolk, then a kestrel. We noted a range of wetland vegetation, including the seed heads of greater water parsnips introduced this summer.

We saved the best ditches until last to give the willow emerald damselflies here time to get going. We started with males perched against the light, then about four fluttering gently around. Here, as earlier, we also studied their distinctive egg-laying scars.



Orange balsam; willow emerald damselfly (JD); snails on a reed. All are at NWT Thorpe Marshes. The lower snail is copse snail *Arianta arbustorum*, the upper two white-lipped snail *Cepaea hortensis*.

Lunch was a help yourself salad spread with homemade bread in my garden, the routine for the opening day of the new 'Norfolk breaks'. After a cup of tea everyone returned to the Oaklands Hotel from where we organised a convoy of cars to negotiate the Postwick Interchange and onto the RSPB's Strumpshaw

Fen nature reserve. Site Manager Tim Strudwick – known to three of the group from Honeyguide holidays – joined us for a chat, reflecting on the number of species only recently arrived in Norfolk that he has been seeing at his home and allotment in Brundall.

We strolled along 'sandy wall', pausing to enjoy the huge number of galls on small oaks studied and named by Mervin in last week's group. From Fen Hide it was quiet, just a marsh harrier and a group of gadwalls flying around. We went as far as the river where the high tide was overtopping the platform at the water's edge. With the afternoon already disappearing we took a different return route through the meadow, pausing for ragged robin, a calling group of siskins and long-tailed tits. There was a tricky view of a female bullfinch in the wood on the way back to reception. The convoy drove home a slightly different route.

### **Wednesday 23 September – Winterton Dunes and NWT Hickling**

Yesterday's equinox proved to be the end of the long 'Indian summer' of dry and warm, often hot, weather and today started with rain, which was quite heavy as the group came out of Sainsbury's having bought two days of sandwiches. Happily, it had blown over by the time we reached the car park at Winterton Dunes. There a scan of the sea revealed a red-throated diver, which drifted south to be replaced by another offering surprisingly good views ... and a 'write-in' for checklists. There were at least three divers out there, along with a scattering of cormorants and the heads of several grey seals in today's calm North Sea.



Red-throated diver (digiscoped), sheep'sbit and hobby (JD) at Winterton.

It remained dry as we pottered slowly onto Winterton Dunes National Nature Reserve, enjoying sheep's-bit flowers and lots of common polypody among the heather, marram grass and patches of grey-green lichen. We noted grey-hair grass and lines of sand sedge. We took a gap through the dunes to walk onto the beach, past several plants of sea holly, then used notes from last week's group's seashore expert, Mervin, to appreciate the many pieces of dry hornwrack, looking at first sight like a dry seaweed but actually the remains a cluster of tiny marine animals. Mervin's brief also helped us name some seaweeds though we all knew razor shells. A hobby flew past with a flash of red 'trousers'; sometimes they are just a distant shape, but this was a good view before it disappeared somewhere over the dunes. We made it along the shoreline at high tide then past the Duke of Argyll's teaplat and to the beach café for a hot drink.



Hornwrack (centre), the animal cells visible, plus seaweeds, examined today with the help of Mervin's summary from last week.



We made a stop on the Somerton-Horsey road in the hope of cranes or pink-footed geese, but no luck, though on the way to NWT's Hickling Broad nature reserve Jean noticed a small herd of red deer. After a picnic on the outside picnic tables, Rachel Frain from NWT Hickling gave a nice welcome, signed up Jean as a member and dealt with entry fees. Every wooden post and sign seemed to have a cluster of common darters using the wood's warmth and one nearly landed on Jill's hair. From Bittern Hide there were scores of teals and many mallards but little else.

As we approached the viewpoint over Hickling Broad twice there were bearded tits calling, plus a brief flypast, and a great white egret flew around. But the main event was the start of quite heavy rain, causing me to regret my remark to Rachel that the weather at Hickling always seemed to be good. We sheltered for a while under trees and brollies then retreated to the hide. Sometimes watching and waiting is the best thing, and we did that: not just the rain as gadwalls had joined the other ducks, a kingfisher flew past and two great white egrets in flight gave us better views than before. The flock of teals took to the air, the cause being a cruising marsh harrier. Once the rain had eased, we returned to the visitor centre and car park and headed home. The convoy system worked well until an ambulance on the A47 prompted Peter and Len to pull into the side of the road; they made it back to base after a delay and a detour.

Back at Oaklands Hotel it was our first evening meal inside; welcome in view of the change of the weather though the acoustics were challenging.

#### **Thursday 24 September – Buxton Heath and Holt Country Park**

Rain first thing had cleared by the time we reached Buxton Heath, after a slightly later 9:15 start as no shopping was needed on route. We strolled through the dry bits of the heath first, with some heather, bell heather and cross-leaved heath in flower as well as western gorse. Lots of fungi had emerged during the last week on account of the recent rain and time of year. A small flock of mistle thrushes took off from a stag's horn oak and settled in another tree. We saw buzzards off-and-on all morning and green woodpeckers too on occasions. Returning towards the car park, three invertebrates caught our eye. The first was a minotaur beetle, a kind of dor beetle found on heaths. The second was an approachable common darter on an autumnal bracken frond (cover photo). The third was an orange coloured ichneumon wasp; there are many ichneumons so a completely confident ID is a challenge though *Heteropelma amictum* matches what we saw.



The group at Buxton Heath (JD); minotaur beetle.

The reserve's Dartmoor ponies were near the car park and we found the other reserve grazers, British white cattle, when four of us then explored the damper bits of Buxton Heath. Mounds of vegetation and patches of sphagnum bog moss gave this area a very different feel. There were many round leaves of marsh pennywort and lots of marsh lousewort.

We reached Holt Country Park in good time, with most of us picking up a coffee from Hetty's rustic kiosk to go with the picnics we ate under the covered picnic area. We then walked a short distance through the wood down to the pond before starting an anti-clockwise circuit of the outside of the large heath here at Holt Lowes SSSI. This took us alongside the adjacent boggy areas, and we were soon finding many rosettes of sundews. We set off in a near cloudless sky, so it was a surprise to have a brief shower of rain, from which we sheltered under brollies and an arch of gorse over the path. The rain over, it was a surprise when Caroline found a sundew – 'red Catherine wheels' as she put it – with a flower stalk with

many buds – elsewhere the flowers were long gone. Devilsbit scabious was still in fine flower, there were many strands of bog pimpernel leaves and a patch of creeping jenny in one place.

We continued around the perimeter path, negotiating trip hazards with varying degrees of success. In an open area there were four smart-looking small coppers. Once in a wooded area there was a particular fungus on our mind, prompted by its strange name on checklists: scrambled egg slime mould. It was Jill who spotted it first and brave group members confirmed how slimy it is to the touch.



Scrambled egg slime mould, a much-enjoyed find; climbing corydalis with carder bee.

Six buzzards were in the air, four in one direction, two in another, though it was a kestrel that was close enough to make it to 'holiday highlights.' The next wet area produced a surprise: for the third Honeyguide 'Norfolk break' in a row, there was a male keeled skimmer, considerably later in the year than I'd expect, soaking up the afternoon sunshine. A cleared area produced many patches of climbing corydalis (pictured above) and rosettes of heath groundsel. By then we'd nearly completed the circuit of the heath's edge and we turned up and through the heath to the belt of tree at its edge. Hundreds of knopper galls were scattered on the path under the oak trees. We admired two wooden sculptures before returning to the car park, where we just caught Hetty's House Tea Room before she closed. As we enjoyed tea and ice creams, we watched a big mixed flock of goldfinches and siskins in the tree tops.

Rained kicked in and this evening our table was in the breakfast room which worked well for a sociable final evening meal, during which we collected the holiday highlights noted below.

### The best bits

Jean: willow emeralds; keeled skimmer; fungi including shaggy inkcaps at Strumpshaw Fen; small coppers.

Jill: Holt Country Park; small copper; fungi; kestrel at Holt Country Park.

Caroline: orange balsam; orange ichneumon at Buxton Heath; fly agarics and other toadstools; mistle thrushes; siskins.

Peter: Holt Country Park; scrambled egg slime mould; hobby at Winterton; mistle thrushes, great to see so many.

Len: lunch at Chris's; seaside and the seals; orange balsam; spindle; Hetty's at Holt CP.

Chris: Caroline's sundew with flower buds on a long stalk; minotaur beetle; keeled skimmer; autumnal common darter on bracken.

## WILDLIFE LISTS

### BIRDS H – heard

Red-throated diver  
Great crested grebe  
Cormorant  
Great white egret  
Grey heron  
Mute swan  
Greylag goose  
Canada goose  
Egyptian goose  
Gadwall  
Teal  
Mallard  
Marsh harrier

Buzzard  
Kestrel  
Hobby  
Red-legged partridge  
Pheasant  
Water rail H  
Moorhen  
Coot  
Lapwing  
Black-headed gull  
Lesser black-backed gull  
Herring gull  
Feral pigeon

Woodpigeon  
Collared dove  
Kingfisher  
Green woodpecker  
Great spotted woodpecker  
Swallow  
Pied wagtail  
Wren H  
Dunnock H  
Robin  
Stonechat  
Blackbird  
Mistle thrush



Cetti's warbler H  
Chiffchaff  
Bearded tit H  
Long-tailed tit  
Blue tit  
Great tit  
Nuthatch H

Jay  
Magpie  
Jackdaw  
Rook  
Carriion crow  
Starling  
House sparrow

Chaffinch  
Goldfinch  
Siskin  
Linnet  
Bullfinch  
Yellowhammer

## MAMMALS

Grey seal  
Red deer  
Grey squirrel  
Rabbit

## AMPHIBIAN

Common frog

## BUTTERFLIES & MOTH

Large white  
Small white  
Peacock  
Speckled wood  
Small copper

Small china-mark

## DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES

Willow emerald damselfly  
Common blue damselfly  
Migrant hawk  
Brown hawk  
Keeled skimmer  
Common darter

## OTHER NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

7-spot ladybird  
Harlequin ladybird  
Devil's coachhorse

Minotaur beetle  
Common carder bee  
Ivy bee  
Hornet  
Ichneumon wasp *Heteropelma amictum*  
Garden spider  
Slug *Arion ater*



Carder bee on water mint.

## GALLS (selected)

Robin's pincushion (on dog rose), gall caused by the larvae of a tiny gall wasp, *Diplolepis rosae*.

**On oak:** spangle galls: common spangle gall wasp *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*.

Knopper or acorn gall: gall wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*

Silk button gall wasp *Neuroterus numismalis*

## PLANTS

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

<b>Alismataceae</b>	
<i>Alisma plantago-aquatica</i>	Water-plantain
<b>Apiaceae, umbellifers</b>	
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Angelica
<i>Conium maculatum</i>	Hemlock NiF
<i>Torilis japonica</i>	Upright hedge parsley
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Wild carrot
<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>	Sea holly
<i>Heracleum spondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Hydrocotyle vulgaris</i>	Marsh pennywort
<i>Sium latifolium</i> NiF	Greater water parsnip
<i>Berula erecta</i>	Lesser water parsnip
<i>Apium nodiflorum</i>	Fool's watercress
<i>Peucedanum palustre</i>	Milk parsley NiF
<b>Araliaceae</b>	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<b>Asteraceae, daisy family</b>	
<i>Achilla millefolia</i>	Yarrow
<i>Arctium minus</i>	Lesser burdock
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Mugwort
<i>Bidens cernua</i>	Nodding bur-marigold
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Black knapweed
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping 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>S. sylvaticus</i>	Heath groundsel NiF
<i>Solidago canadensis</i>	Canadian golden-rod

<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	Perennial sow-thistle
<i>Sonchus palustris</i>	Marsh sow-thistle NiF
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	Scentless mayweed

## Balaminaceae, balsams

<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	Himalayan balsam
<i>Impatiens capensis</i>	Orange balsam

## Boraginaceae

<i>Myosotis scorpiodes</i>	Water forget-me-not
----------------------------	---------------------

## Brassicaceae, cabbage family

<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>	Hedge mustard
------------------------------	---------------

## Campanulaceae, bellflowers

<i>Jasione montana</i>	Sheepsbit
------------------------	-----------

## Caprifoliaceae, honeysuckle family

<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Honeysuckle
<i>Viburnum opulis</i>	Guelder rose fruit

## Caryophyllaceae

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

## Celastraceae

<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	Spindle-tree fruit
---------------------------	--------------------

## Clusiaceae (Hypericaceae)

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

## Convolvulaceae

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

## Dipsacaceae, scabious & teasels

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

<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	<b>Droseraceae</b>	Round-leaved sundew	<i>Verbascum pulverulentum</i>	Hoary mullein
<i>Eleagnus rhamnoides</i>	<b>Eleagnaceae</b>	Sea buckthorn fruit	<i>Datura stramonium</i>	<b>Solanaceae</b>
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	<b>Ericaceae, heathers</b>	Heather	<i>Lycium barbarum</i>	Thorn-apple
<i>Erica tetralix</i>		Bell heather	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Duke of Argyll's teapant
		Cross-leaved heath	<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Bittersweet / woody nightshade <i>Fruit</i>
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	<b>Fabaceae, pea family</b>	Black medick		Black nightshade
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>		Red clover	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	<b>Urticaceae, nettle</b>
<i>Ulex europaeus</i>		Gorse	<i>Urtica galeopsifolia</i>	Stinging nettle
<i>Ulex gallii</i>		Western gorse		Stingless (or fen) nettle
<i>Ceratocarpus claviculata</i>	<b>Fumariaceae</b>	Climbing corydalis	<i>Verbena officinalis</i>	<b>Verbenaceae</b>
<i>Centaurea erythraea</i>	<b>Gentianaceae</b>	Common centaury		Vervain
<i>Geranium pusillum</i>	<b>Geraniaceae</b>	Small-flowered cranesbill		
<i>Hydrocharis morsus-ranae</i>	<b>Hydrocharitaceae</b>	Frogbit		
<i>Stratiodes aloides</i>		Water soldier		
<i>Galeopsis tetrahit</i>	<b>Lamiaceae, labiates</b>	Common hemp-nettle		
<i>Lamium album</i>		White dead-nettle		
<i>Lamium purpureum</i>		Red dead-nettle		
<i>Lycopus europeus</i>		Gipsywort		
<i>Mentha aquatica</i>		Water mint		
<i>Stachys pulustris</i>		Marsh woundwort		
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	<b>Lythraceae</b>	Purple loosestrife		
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	<b>Malvaceae</b>	Common mallow		
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	<b>Onagraceae</b>	Greater willowherb		
<i>Oenothera sp</i>		Evening primrose		
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	<b>Papaveraceae</b>	Common poppy		
<i>Limonium vulgare</i>	<b>Plumbaginaceae</b>	Common sea-lavender		
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	<b>Plantaginaceae</b>	Buckhorn plantain		
<i>Polygonum persicaria</i>	<b>Polygonaceae</b>	Redshank		
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>		Heath sorrel		
<i>R. obtusifolius</i>		Broad-leaved dock		
<i>R. hydrolapathum</i>		Great water dock		
<i>Anagallis tenella</i>	<b>Primulaceae</b>	Bog pimpernel NiF		
<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>		Creeping Jenny		
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	<b>Ranunculaceae</b>	Meadow buttercup		
<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>		Lesser spearwort		
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	<b>Rosaceae</b>	Hawthorn fruit		
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>		Meadowsweet		
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>		Tormentil		
<i>P. reptans</i>		Creeping cinquefoil		
<i>Rosa canina</i>		Dog rose fruit		
<i>Rosa rugosa</i>		Japanese rose		
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>		Blackberry/bramble		
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>		Rowan fruit		
<i>Sherardia laevipes</i>	<b>Rubiaceae</b>	Field madder		
<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>	<b>Scrophulariaceae</b>	Ivy-leaved toadflax		
<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>		Common toadflax		
<i>Odontites vernus</i>		Red bartisia		
<i>Pedicularis palustris</i>		Marsh lousewort or red rattle		
			<b>Monocotyledons</b>	
			<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	<b>Iridaceaea</b>
				Yellow flag iris NiF



Round-leaved sundew, Holt Country Park.

#### Wetland vegetation, grasses etc (selected)

<i>Carex acutiformis</i>	<b>Cyperaceae</b>	Lesser pond sedge
<i>Carex arenaria</i>		Sand sedge
<i>Carex paniculata</i>		Greater tussock sedge
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	<b>Juncaceae</b>	Soft rush
<i>Juncus inflexus</i>		Hard rush
<i>Ammophila arenaria</i>	<b>Poaceae (very incomplete)</b>	Marram
<i>Corynephorus canescens</i>		grey hair-grass
<i>Glyceria maxima</i>		Reed sweet-grass
<i>Phragmites australis</i>		Reed
<i>Typha latifolia</i>	<b>Typhaceae</b>	Bulrush / reedmace
<i>Typha angustifolia</i>		Lesser bulrush/reedmace
<b>FERNS, MOSSES, LICHEN</b>		
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>		Male fern
<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>		Common polypody
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>		Bracken
<i>Polytrichum commune</i>		Haircap moss
<i>Sphagnum sp</i>		Bog moss
<i>Cladonia portentosa</i>		Lichen, Winterton
<b>FUNGI (selected)</b>		
<i>Amanita muscaria</i>		Fly agaric
<i>Coprinus comatus</i>		Shaggy inkcap
<i>Fuligo septica</i>		'Scrambled egg' slime
<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>		Sulphur tuft
<i>Leccinum scabrum</i>		Brown birch bolete
<i>Piptoporus betulinus</i>		Birch polypore