



# The Norfolk Natterjack

The quarterly bulletin of the  
Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society



... Researching  
Norfolk's Wildlife

[www.nnns.org.uk](http://www.nnns.org.uk)

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# Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Cover image: Short-eared Owl - Winterton Owls (Hans Watson - See page 15)

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# Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society Recorders

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	Aphids	Dr J I T Thacker, 38 Gladstone Street, Norwich, NR2 3BH. Email: jit@calopteryx.com
	Dragonflies	Dr Pam Taylor, Decoy Farm, Decoy Rd, Potter Heigham, Gt. Yarmouth, NR29 5LX. Email: pamtaylor@british-dragonflies.org.uk
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## Toad-in-the-hole...

This spring edition of 'Natterjack' has a close look at the Dandelion family, where a number of species have been found 'new to Norfolk', also another yellow flower has been found, which is again 'new to Norfolk'. It just shows that if you are observant you can find lots of interesting things, such as variants of the Eyed Ladybird in a Norwich cemetery. There is also an opportunity to look for many species on some organised bioblitz events organised at Sculthorpe Moor nature reserve. Birds, particularly Short-eared Owls, feature in this issue. The east of the county being particularly favoured this year. Also there is an interesting insite to a part of Scotland one member has made home and again with some observation many new records have been made. My thanks to all contributors and I wish all members a great summer searching out species or watching out for some new aspect of behaviour. Nature is full of discoveries that can start in your own garden. FF

## A Newcomer to Norfolk: Yellow Buttonweed

Cornel Howells

I was walking along the Attenborough Way at Cley Marshes on a cold grey day this January when a fellow walker pointed to a striking yellow flower in full bloom. It was behind a wire fence which prevented a close examination. My first thought was Coltsfoot, but upon receiving a photograph from me, Simon Harrap identified it as Yellow Buttonweed *Cotula coronopifolia*.

Also known as brass buttons and golden buttons, it originates in the Southern hemisphere and has relatively recently become established on the coastal marshes of East Anglia. Like Coltsfoot it is a member of the daisy family with large flower-heads up to 12mm across. It is a niche plant preferring shallow muddy brackish water. This suggests its spread will be relatively limited and it will not invade lanes and footpaths the way Alexanders, for example, has done. Simon believes it may be spread by contact with the wheels of vehicles used to maintain the reserve.

What most intrigues me is that a plant which botanical guides suggest flowers in late Summer/early Autumn was blooming on a cold grey January day. There may be merit in the argument put forward by one of my companions that the plant believed it was still in southern climes. A more likely explanation is that while it was not especially mild, East Anglia saw record sunshine during the month.



Yellow Buttonweed - a brackish water mud specialist / Kathrine Drakley

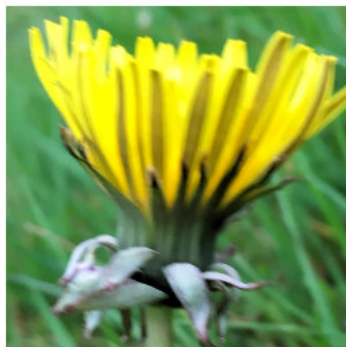


About 250 species of dandelions occur in Britain and about 100 of these are known to occur in Norfolk; over the past few springs I've been getting acquainted with them.. It turns out that Norfolk is a rich and rewarding hunting ground for the budding taraxacologist. We have a wealth of 'lesser dandelions' Section *Erythrosperma* associated with dry sunny locations, a selection of interesting wetland species and more than enough Section *Taraxacum* (the tricky ones) to keep a botanist busy. Northern and western Sections *Naevisa* and *Celtica* are poorly represented in the county which narrows down options while the county has avoided the attention of experts to the extent that it is possible to regularly find 'New for Norfolk'. I'd like to introduce you to a few of my more interesting finds...

When getting started with dandelions it is perhaps easiest to pick a single Section to look at first; in Norfolk Section *Hamata* presents the ideal combination of diversity and distinctiveness (arched bracts and basket-weave striped midribs) and several species are common everywhere here. In this section my first find 'new to Norfolk' was *Taraxacum boekmanii* on Mulbarton Common, a spectacular species with a blood-red midrib, the colour extending into some side veins. Despite being distinctive and common there were no Norfolk records until a few years ago, and I now find it most time I go out to look at dandelions; try the semi-improved edge of your local park if you want to see it. The only confusion species is *Taraxacum bracteatum* our most frequent Section *Celtica* dandelion which has duller red veins and some erect bracts. Section *Hamata* also contains species that are rare here such as *Taraxacum marklundii*, a gloriously spikey thing with purple bracts. It is frequent at Shotesham Common in marshy swards and a day botanising there with Andy Musgrove last May added this and seven other new species to Andy's list (no mean feat!) – the highlight here was another 'new to Norfolk' *Taraxacum oellgaardii* with characteristic hooded leaf lobes, a rare species primarily of western Britain – a member of Section *Celtica*.

Section *Celtica* includes arguably the most interesting species in our county's dandelion flora. Many species in the section have a strongly western distribution in Britain and those that reach Norfolk are sparsely scattered in fine moist habitats: hollows on old commons, well-grazed grazing marsh, herb-rich short fen; last year I focused on these habitats and it was very productive. *Taraxacum excellens* was the highlight of my lockdown loop of the village – growing with two other *Celtica* species on a verge at the top of the floodplain of the River Tas, however this was topped in 2020 by *Taraxacum chlorofrugale* - a remarkable looking recently described dandelion with a good population in

**Section:** Hamata  
*Taraxacum boeckmanii*



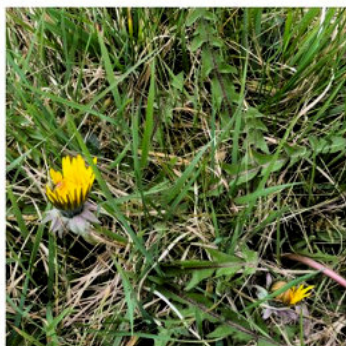
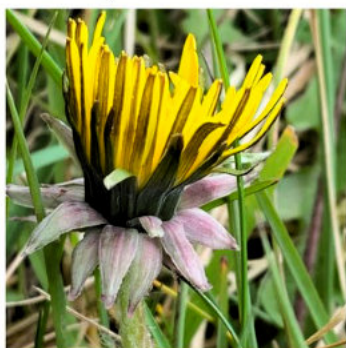
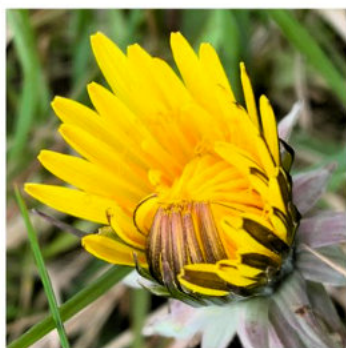
*Taraxacum marklundii*



**Section: Celtica**  
*Taraxacum olegardii*



*Taraxacum excellens*





the open grass fen at the new Broadland Country Park near Felthorpe. It was so far outside its known range (Somerset, Devon and Wales) that my first thoughts were to consult Dutch colleagues – unfortunately it was late in the season but there were lots of clocks around the single flowering plant, so I made a date to go back the next year. Revisiting *T. chlorofragale* in 2021 I found a dozen or so plants and noticed it grows with two other very fine dandelions: The first, *Taraxacum faeroense* is a neat-flowered thing with hairy, spotty wavy-edged leaves. It is Norfolk's only member of Section Spectabilia, and quite rare here despite being one of the most frequent species nationally. The second was *Taraxacum berthae* – another very fine Celtica; diminutive, colourful and very rare. As a species typically of Wales, Devon and the Lake District (and an outlier near Oxford), and one that Taraxacologists pilgrimage westwards to encounter, this was one of the last species I expected to see in Norfolk.. but in Mid-May 2021 there it was; nestled in the rushes several rosettes of distinctive glaucous leaves with small dark spots.. but no flowers! A few days later on Twitter Ian Senior posted a photo of a dandelion for ID – this time in flower. *Berthae!* I assumed he'd stumbled upon the same patch.. but no, his plants were from a second colony, this time in Norwich! We met on site as soon as we could and the plants were absolutely spectacular, dozens of them growing in a herb-rich floodplain sward. Best find of the year. Best dandelion so far!

Once you've mastered the Hamata and Celtica you'll want to look at *Erythrosperma*, those skinny-leaved 'lesser dandelions' of dry sunny locations. Breckland and the coasts are the key places for them here. In May 2021 I visited Scolt Head Island with Baz Scampion to look for these as part of his Flora of the NNR. Tides meant we only had a couple of hours there but we were delighted to find several interesting *Erythrosperma* in the dunes; county seconds and thirds were soon rolling in and then we found *Taraxacum inopinatum* in some quantity near the hut, a species with only unconfirmed records in Norfolk. It is distinctive in being the only *Erythrosperma* with spotted leaves; it also has a densely hairy scape however it is remarkably variable and I collected at least four specimens of it thinking it different things, but all found to have inconspicuous black spots.

Several of my 'New to Norfolks' are from Flordon including *Taraxacum leucopodon* which has subsequently proved to be quite frequent on eutrophic verges in South Norfolk villages. It is readily spotted on eutrophic roadsides by virtue of its massive leaves tipped with 'German helmet' shaped end lobes and huge downward-pointing teeth near the midrib. Its one you can spot and ID while driving, and a reasonable indicator of other ruderal interest. This is one of the Section *Taraxacum* (recently known as Ruderalia), the trickiest and largest of the Sections with few such distinctive species however after five years of

*Taraxacum chlorocephalum*



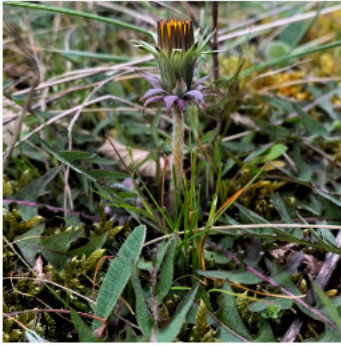
*Taraxacum berthae*





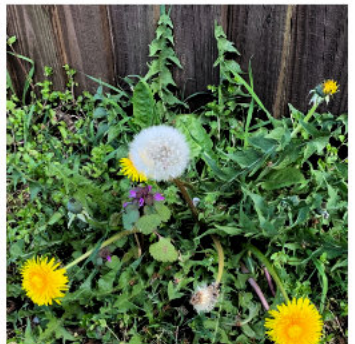
**Section: Erythrosperma**

*Taraxacum inopinatum*



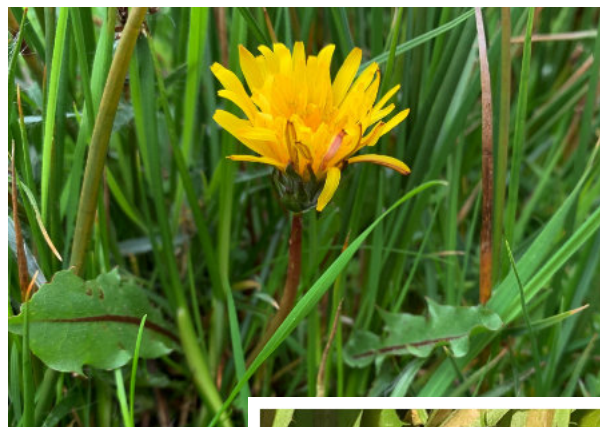
**Section: Taraxacum**

*Taraxacum leucopodon*



looking at them I can now spot an oddity (such as the *Taraxacum stereodes* outside Long Stratton library) even if my ID is regularly corrected by the BSBI referee!

Through learning dandelions I've found there are several local botanists with more than a passing interest in the group and I hope I've inspired you to look at some local dandelions this spring; if you do there are some excellent resources: The Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland published a dandelions handbook last year and much of the information in it is available via 'Plant Crib' on the BSBI website. Also I run a 'Dandelions of Britain & Ireland' Facebook group for tarax-



acologists of all levels to share plants and seek IDs and share my finds via @BrambleBotanist on Twitter, where there is a Taraxacology community developing.

**Section:** Spectabilia

*Taraxacum faeroense*

(Left)

**Section:** Taraxacum

*Taraxacum stereodes*

(Right)



Images /Alex Prendergast



# Nature Gallery

2022

Pill Beetle *Cytilus sericarius* found by  
Andy Brown during a beetle survey  
on Beeston Common 21/03/2022 /

*Francis Farrow*



A beautiful male Dartford  
Warbler from Kelling Heath  
22/03/2022 / *John Furse*



One of the first mining bees of  
the season, the Small Willow  
Mining Bee *Andrena praecox* on  
Beeston Common 23/03/2022 /

*Francis Farrow*



An early Small White butterfly from  
Beeston Common 10/03/2022 /

*Mark Clements*

## Any ideas?

John Furse

While walking around Walsey Hill, Cley (25/03/2022) I came across a strange-looking object protruding from a dead caterpillar, which was attached to an old dried Umbellifer stem. I sent a copy of the photo to Tony Irwin who has been able to supply a fascinating explanation as follows:



*I think the small shiny blob at the lower end of the larva may be a head, in which case we're dealing with Hymenoptera, rather than Diptera. Ichneumonid larvae regularly emerge from their host's skin, so that they can spin a protective cocoon. This one hasn't got that far, possibly because it has been parasitised itself. (The large black spot is often a sign that the larva has been injected with the egg of a hyperparasite.)*

*So a bit messed up, which makes identifications difficult. We'd make more progress if we knew which caterpillar it was - I'm not much good at identifying them from skins!*

*Sorry not to be more helpful - always easier with a specimen!*

*Parasitised caterpillar / John Furse*

## Gorse Seed Weevil

Francis Farrow

The Gorse Seed Weevil *Exapion ulicis* is small - 2 to 3 mm but quite a formidable enemy to its host where its destructive nature is such that it has been used as a biological control agent, particularly in California and New Zealand where introduced Gorse has become an invasive alien. The adult weevils come out of hibernation in the spring (first seen 23<sup>rd</sup> March this year on Beeston Common) and feed on new growth of Gorse. After mating the females lay their eggs in the developing pods, where the larvae on hatching start to devour the seeds until it is time to pupate. As the pods mature the sun dries them setting up tensions within the pod walls until they pop - a familiar sound on a summer's day. The popping pods expel the seeds and any weevils that are present. Sometimes damp weather can stop the pods from popping and the newly hatched weevils are trapped.



Gorse Seed Weevil /  
Francis Farrow

## A few nice finds from Earlham Cemetery - 2 *Vanna Bartlett.*

As well as the insects depicted in the February 'Natterjack' I also found the Eyed Ladybird *Anatis ocellata*, the largest species of ladybird in the UK. It is a conifer specialist where it feeds mainly on aphids. In Earlham Cemetery I have found it during the winter and early spring on gravestones below Scots Pine, Larches and, occasionally, Western Red Cedar. I have also beaten it from Larch in late summer. Usually I only find a single specimen but I have had up to three on a few occasions. 2021 was particularly interesting for this species as I found three unusually marked individuals, all in the same area. The size of the black spots varies as does the presence of pale rings around the black spots. A rare form known as a 'blind' eyed ladybird lacks the black centres to the pale marks. Conjoined or 'fused' spots are also not common so it was surprising to find three with this appearance in late November. When first seen they had practically no orange/red pigment in the elytra suggesting that they were newly emerged. I was able to find them again over several days but the colour never developed any great depth unlike usual forms. The pronotum pattern is diagnostic in all forms.



Typical form of Eyed Ladybird with pale rings around the black spots (left) and one (right) with a single 'blind' eye on each elytron (I have yet to find one with all the black spots absent).

One of the unusual Eyed Ladybirds photographed on 18/11/21 and again on 23/11/21 showing development of pigmentation. The black spots increased and merged but the typical red colour barely developed.



Two examples of Eyed Ladybird showing conjoined spots. The one on the left developed the most colour and is shown next to a Harlequin Ladybird for size comparison

Images / *Vanna Bartlett*



## Submerged Swallowtails

*Kevin Radley & Hannah Breach*



You may recognise this picture from the February 'Natterjack', only this time it is the correct way up! The image clearly shows the Swallowtail pupa underwater with a caddis fly larva sitting on it. My apologies to Kevin and Hannah for not noticing that I had inadvertently rotated the original image the wrong way! (*Ed.*)



Images / *Kevin Radley*

## Long-tailed Tit Nest Site

*Francis Farrow*

I spent many spring days in my childhood looking for bird's nests and I remember every Long-tailed Tits' nest that I found was concealed in Gorse, Bramble or other such thorny shrub, never in the open. On 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022 I found my first Long-tailed Tit nest built in the open - high in a fork of a tree on Beeston Common. Such nesting sites are a well known fact but they have previously eluded me.



Long-tailed Tit busy nest building / *Francis Farrow*



We've had some delightful wildlife experiences over the winter and early spring, which we would like to share.

First we feel so privileged to have a Hedgehog hibernate in our High Kelling garden over the winter and the wildlife camera picked it up collecting leaves. We also have a wildlife camera inside the Hedgehog feeding station and have captured some lovely munching now the hogs are rising from hibernation. It was also quite a surprise to capture wildlife camera footage of a Weasel visiting the garden.



Both Hedgehog and Weasel have visited our High Kelling garden this spring

Further afield we have visited Salhouse Heath several times in recent weeks and have been blessed with some wonderful views of Yellowhammer and on Kelling Heath we have seen Dartford Warblers. We think about 3 pairs have settled in so far this season.

Yellowhammer (male)



Dartford Warbler (male)

Images / Steve & Karin Hale

Short-eared Owls have generally been few in number this last winter, just a few scattered here and there, but at Winterton dunes several turned up during January/February, up to four were seen together at times. These charismatic birds are wonderful to watch, long winged and elegant, and those yellow eyes seem to look right through you.

I went with a friend on a beautiful sunny day, but with a strong wind blowing. The first few hours were spent walking the dunes with no owls seen, then about mid afternoon they became active and began hunting, you had to be on the ball as their deceptively slow, languid flight covered ground very quickly, one coming in from behind could be missed as a potential image on the camera.

Landward of the dunes a pair of Marsh Harriers were flying periodically over the wooded area, and on two occasions an owl was seen to fly up high and join them, flying and gliding as they circled round together, then after a minute or so it spiralled down again to continue hunting. I was not sure whether the harriers were regarded as friend or foe?.

The owls took breaks from hunting, either perching on posts, trees, or bushes, and one at least had little fear of humans, actually nodding off while perched on a post with several photographers within twenty five yards of it.

The trip was very much enjoyed, these owls are always special, there's something about them that makes your heart beat that little bit faster, a magical bird.

Short-eared Owl at rest and in hunting mode at Winterton



Images / Tony Howes

For several weeks in January and February this year, many birdwatchers were able to watch and photograph several very obliging Short-eared Owls (some birdwatchers insist that there were five ) as they put on quite a show at Winterton North dunes.

The dunes of Horsey/Winterton have been a good area to see Short-eared Owls for as long as I can remember, and one or two visit these dunes in most winters, and on several occasions have lingered until into late spring. Other favoured sites are the vast marshes of Breydon, Berney, Halvergate and Haddiscoe, as well as the North Norfolk coastal marshes. On occasions, some of these sites



have had winter groups of Short-eared Owls numbering up to a dozen or so, although they have spread themselves out, and I have not seen much interplay between them. What I found interesting about the Winterton owls this year was that they, on several occasions, gathered together in an area of

about 20 acres around the main Natterjack Ponds, and seemed not too concerned by the numerous dog walkers using the network of paths that run through this part of the dunes. I could not help wondering if this area held a greater number of voles, but did not see any other evidence of this. On one occasion in mid January when I was walking through the dunes with Sue, we watched three Short-eared Owls soaring together like Buzzards, about 200 feet up in a bright blue sky. Once or twice they seemed to joust with



Images / *Hans Watson*

one another as if playing, and when a pair of Carrion Crows arrived to mob them, it seemed as if they welcomed this, and demonstrated some remarkable agility. Sadly, as the prime reason for our presence on this occasion was walking, I did not have a camera with me to record the event.

From about the third week in January, the owls spent more of their time in the fenced-off area west of the main dunes, and were not seen together so much.

## Great Birding!

*Elizabeth Dack*

Short-eared Owls have been amazing to watch at Ludham. The first time I went hoping to see one, I saw two Short-eared Owls, a Hen Harrier, a Marsh Harrier and Kestrel all in the air together. An hour later as the sun started to drop. Two Barn Owls came out. What an air show it turned out to be. Another time I

went for a quick visit and was surprised not to see anybody else there. I suddenly I realised I was not alone. A beautiful 'shortie' came flying towards me and landed on post. It started to preen, then it turned its head right around then upside down!!! I have never seen an owl with its head upside down before!



An 'up-side-down' Short-eared Owl



Part of the aerial spectacular - Barn Owl and two Short-eared Owls





Cranes gathering in the evening at Ludham

There has also been a lot of Common Cranes flying over and landing behind the barns at the marshes, mostly at the end of the day as the sun starts to go down. I thought they may have been going to roost as I have seen them there a few times.

A trip to Cley Beach with a friend was a great photo opportunity as there was so much to see. Lots of Lapwings flying around and calling. They look so handsome this time of the year holding up their crests. I was also surprised to see several Hares running around on the shingle beach. chasing each other,

Lapwing displaying at Cley



Hares 'frolicking' on the shingle bank at Cley

playing leapfrog but not boxing. Maybe they were looking for a mate or chasing off the opposition!! Walking back to the car park after seeing the Red-breasted Goose, which was a long way off, a man asked us where it was. As we

directed him to the goose, seven lovely Red Kites flew straight over our heads. They were very low and looked beautiful in a deep blue sky. I love this time of the year. So much to see and hear.

Images / *Elizabeth Dack*



One of seven Red Kites that passed overhead at Cley

Many members will be familiar with Sculthorpe Moor, the only nature reserve in the eastern half of England owned and managed by the Hawk & Owl Trust, the national charity dedicated to conserving birds of prey. Initially it was set up because the Trust's Norfolk Conservation Officer, Nigel Middleton, discovered in the late 1990s, when they were still rare in our county, that Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* were breeding in a reedbed on the Wensum floodplain upstream of Fakenham, owned by Sculthorpe Parish. A piece of common land given to the parish to assist the poor after the Enclosure Acts, it was rough shooting by the turn of this century, with alder (for charcoal) and poplar (for matchsticks) plantations created before that. Gravel and peat had also been extracted.

Nigel persuaded the Trust to bid for the lease, which was up for renewal and secured the initial 37 acres. He has raised a veritable army of volunteers, with all kinds of skills, evidenced by the boardwalks which give access to wheelchairs as well as walkers over wet marshland to all parts of the reserve, which was set up in 2001. Volunteers have cleared large areas of plantation trees and created the opportunities for contractors to dig scrapes, ditches and wetlands. Volunteers also constructed and erected 5 observation hides over scrapes, reedbeds and woodland clearings.



Members of the Society's freshwater group conducting 'RiverFly' monitoring on the Upper Wensum as it joins the Reserve / David Harper

Many NNNS members, particularly County Recorders, have enjoyed the serenity of the landscape and the detail of the wildlife, particularly the birds. Recorders have contributed to numerous records of plants and invertebrates, so that the reserve is known as a local and regional hotspot for many species, such as Charophyte algae.

In the last few years a combined Lottery Fund grant plus appeal raised almost £2 million to purchase land either side to the initial reserve, which had been managed under Countryside Stewardship on behalf of its owners since 2007, increasing the size of the reserve three-fold and giving many more opportunities for proactive wildlife conservation and education with new boardwalks and two additional hides over wetland pools.

Covid lockdowns caused damage, as they did in many places over the past 2 years, because the reserve had to be closed losing income (non-members of Hawk & Owl Trust pay an entrance fee). It additionally suffered from river flooding during and after heavy storms, which not only overtopped several sections of the boardwalks, but also the nutrient-rich silt damaged the groundwater-fed, flower-rich meadows which had been developed through a careful grazing regime over the past decade.

Just over a year ago, the Trust was successful in another Lottery Fund administered application for 'Green Recovery' support. The majority of this money will be to house

and enclose a family of beavers on the western part of the new reserve area. The fencing will enclose a new wetland, with hides already created as part of the previous project overlooking and boardwalks alongside the fencing. The enclosure contains several tributaries and drains flowing south-eastwards towards the Wensum at Fakenham, but not the Wensum itself. Although the beavers are not the first in Norfolk - there is a family at Ken Hill as part of that estate's rewilding project and two in a wooded enclosure in the upper Glaven managed by the Norfolk Rivers Trust - they will be the first to have public viewing from the day they arrive and immediately be part of the reserve's education programme.

The latter is possible because the Trust has always been leading the way in video recording of animal activities. Sculthorpe was the first in the country to put cameras in a Marsh Harrier nest which were featured on the first BBC



A Barn Owl resting beside a lagoon dug beside the main drain the bisects the reserve bringing water down from Sculthorpe village and the A148, to hold back silt / *Jacob Kenworthy*

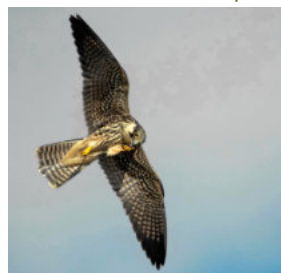
Springwatch series, yielding much new information about their feeding habits. It records Barn and Tawny owl nests on the reserve and Peregrine Falcon nests on cathedrals in Norwich and Ely. This spring it has erected a camera on a pole adjacent to a new Red Kite nest in a poplar tree (and fenced the base of the tree to prevent beaver damage!!). An artificial beaver den is being constructed with built-in camera, into which the family will be released when they arrive. Footage for a video of the beaver story has already been collected at other likely new den sites.

The Society, through its Research Committee, is now discussing with the Hawk & Owl Trust, how best to record the impact of the beavers upon biodiversity. Recording of different groups will start in the next month with an inside/outside and before/after design of sample locations. The public and Trust members are invited to participate in two 'Bioblitzes' at the end of May (28th/29th) and mid-September (17th/18th), hopefully to be repeated each year. In the longer term, it is hoped the two organisations will sign a joint Memorandum, similar to that with NNDC over Broadland Country Park and progress from there to a major Society research project. It is possible that other re-introductions of rare wetland plant and animal species might follow under the auspices of this Memorandum.



Opening up 19th Century dykes within the alder plantation where the beavers will be held, to give them a choice of flowing water habitats to work with /

*David Harper*



Hobbies are much more common on the reserve now, hunting mayflies, dragon and damselflies that emerge from the new wetland pools on the extended reserve area beside the Wensum. /

*Jacob Kenworthy*

It now being 5 years since changed family circumstances combined with house prices forced my move to somewhere more affordable, namely East Ayrshire, this is a good point to reflect on the differences between Norfolk and Ayrshire, as well as updating all those friends I have lost touch with.

I have been lucky to end up in a wonderful area, on the edge of a village on the River Ayr, with my lounge window looking out over a burn onto a wooded hillside, and open fields at the back. I get Grey Wagtails in the garden and have seen Goosander and Kingfisher from the window, while Ravens, Buzzards, Roe Deer and Foxes are regular sightings.



View through the lounge window / Paul Cobb

There are lots of ancient woodlands, especially filling the many river gorges, and they are largely connected by ribbons of woodland along riverbanks and burns - I see more Bluebells, Ramsons and Dogs Mercury here in a year than I ever saw in Norfolk! The many disused mine sites have become rich brownfield habitat or restored into community woodlands, and remaining mine roads often provide a way in to otherwise inaccessible moorland. Just a short drive away I have the hills, lochs and remote glens of the Southern Uplands. And other areas often look remarkably like Norfolk. There is so much land here that just isn't used for anything, just left to nature, and of course no trespass law so I can walk wherever I like.

In Norfolk I was pleased to get new 10 kilometre square records and just occasionally a new vice county record, but here is so grossly under-recorded that I get new vice county records all the time, scores of them. This is particularly the case with leaf-mines, a new interest I have indulged in since moving here - it's as if no-one had ever recorded a leaf-mine in Ayrshire before me.

New plants to learn range from the mundane such as the various Lady's Mantles *Alchemilla* spp., Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* and Bitter-vetch *Lathyrus linifolius* to the more exotic like Isle of Man Cabbage *Coincya monensis*, Spignel *Meum athamanticum* and Navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris*. A close look at ferns often reveals scarcer species lurking among the common ones, including Parsley Fern *Cryptogramma crispa*, Brittle Bladder-fern *Cystopteris fragilis* and Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis*.

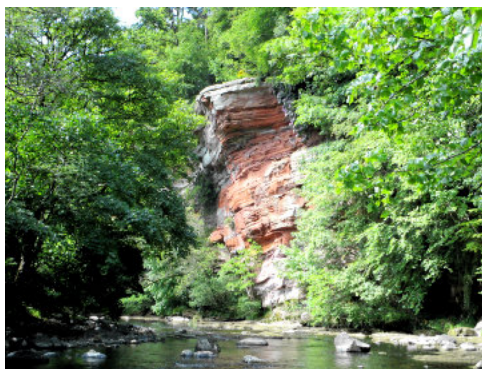
Invasive aliens are an even bigger problem here than in Norfolk. As well as the usual suspects, Fringe-cups *Tellima grandiflora* and Pick-a-back-plant *Tolmiea menziesii* (a challenge to identify these as most books do not illustrate them) smother the ground



flora of riparian woodlands, Few-flowered Garlic *Allium paradoxum* competes with Ramsons *A. ursinum*, and large swathes of sand dune are disappearing beneath Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa*. Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata* on the other hand seems to fit in without becoming a problem.

Willows and Sallows are a big problem as so many species are common here, giving rise to a huge diversity of confusing intermediates of uncertain parentage. When trying to record the host species of a gall or leafmine I often have to resort to "names" such as smooth-leaved willow or narrow-leaved willow. Roses if anything are even worse, nearly all the species are here, and I've given up trying to put names to them.

Even Oaks are not straightforward. Both species are common, and it is not unusual to find leaves undeniably of one species on the same branch as acorns that are equally undeniably the other species. Incidentally I have found that most of the gall causers and leaf miners on Oak have a definite preference for *Quercus robur*. While they can and do live happily on *Q. petraea* where that is the only oak, at sites with both oaks present they are almost entirely on *Q. robur*, with *Q. petraea* being rejected.



Bluebells in Tarbolton Wood and the River Ayr Gorge near Howford Bridge / Paul Cobb

Many familiar insect species don't make it this far north, but there are many others that are new to me. Mayflies and stoneflies are in great abundance and variety (as are caddis, but I tend to ignore those as too difficult and time consuming). Scotch Argus butterfly is often abundant, Small Pearl-bordered is the common fritillary, and Dingy Skipper can be surprisingly common on the old mine sites, while Chimney Sweeper is a common day-flying moth. All three species of the white-tailed bumblebee complex seem to be here with *Bombus cryptarum* perhaps the commonest, and *B. jonellus* is common enough to have turned up in my garden.

The supposedly rare beetle *Oedemera virescens* is ridiculously common, I see hundreds every year. I suspect it gets overlooked because of its early season and slightly picky habits, and the same may be true in Norfolk. Try looking for it in buttercup flowers on sunny days in late May and early June.

Sadly lacewings are few and far between, but there is a second alderfly, the fast water species *Sialis fuliginosa*. It is noticeably bigger than the common *S. lutaria*, so if you are familiar with *S. lutaria* you will recognise *S. fuliginosa* as being something different

should you see one. The extra length may be minimal, but it is a bulkier insect. Galls new to me include sawflies *Pontania triandrae* on *Salix triandra* and *Euura femoralis* on *Salix phylicifolia*, the gall-midge *Dasineura cardaminis* on *Cardamine pratensis*, the undescribed midge on Meadowsweet, and the very attractive fungus galls of *Gymnosporangium cornutum* on Rowan.

Leafmines, all micromoths, that are genuinely scarce rather than merely under-recorded, are *Stigmella pretiosa* on both Wood and Water Avens at many sites in the wooded river gorges, and *Phyllonorycter quinqueguttella* on *Salix repens*, plus the leaf roller *Ancylis subarcuana* also on *S. repens*.

If you're thinking of a staycation, consider SW Scotland, every bit as good as the highlands, but quieter, not so far to go, and woefully under recorded so there are tremendous opportunities to make new discoveries.

## Workshops for a wilder community

Norfolk Wildlife Trust

The NWT have a new programme of workshops and activities (April to Dec) which may be of interest to some NNNS members. The activities have been specially designed to support individuals, communities and groups acting for nature in their local area.

The programme consists of:

- **Group mechanics** – topics covered include: community grants, social media, task leadership and how to set up a 'Friends of Group'.
- **Habitat focus** – looking at managing, creating or restoring such habitats as ponds, meadows, woodlands and reed/sedge beds.
- **Skill sharing** – linking with Friends of Eaton Park coming together to help them cut their meadow.
- **Practical tool use** – workshops to develop skills in scything, peening and safe hand tool use.
- **Species focus** – including: swifts, pollinators and how to survey wildflowers.
- **Community focus** – a chance to take a tour with communities doing great things for wildlife.
- **Planning for wildlife** – webinar on how to get the best outcomes for wildlife from planning decisions where you live.

Please check dates and booking arrangements at:

[www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on) or phone 01603 628840



The next issue of 'The Norfolk Natterjack' will be **August 2022**

Please send  
**all articles / notes and photographic material**  
to the editor as soon as possible by  
**July 1<sup>st</sup> 2022** to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham,  
Norfolk, NR26 8QD. Email: [francis.farrow@btinternet.com](mailto: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 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March. During this time members will receive four copies of the quarterly newsletter, 'The Norfolk Natterjack', 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](http://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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