



# Beccles Bird Society

Formed in 1973

A wildlife appreciation society



## WINTER 2020 NEWSLETTER

OFFICERS:      Nina Roffey (Chairwoman)      01502 715118  
                      Chares Fortt (Secretary)        01502 471094  
                      Mervyn Aldis (Treasurer)        01502 710354

### Introduction

*Nina Roffey*

HELLO all, I didn't know what I was going to write here until on looking out of the window on October 12th a flock of 30+ fieldfares landed in the apple tree and stayed to clean up all remaining apples. So that was a highlight.

I hope, like me you've all managed to find some highlights to brighten the times in which we live too. We can find something if we look hard enough and don't expect too much.

I've probably said before, but for many years grey wagtails have visited during October, my little pond and waterfall. This year it didn't happen until on November 4th when one turned up. It makes me sad when only one calls in but two came together later on the 15th.

I suspect that many of you have had many flowers continuing to bloom even now: salvias, roses, geraniums and many more? So more highlights. I've taken my daily walk towards the end of the day lately so I can see the best of the sunsets or moon rising and have heard the last noisiness of the blackbirds before dark and the gentle goodnight songs of the robins. It ends the day on a high note.

While we have been locked down our volunteers have religiously kept the reserve in beautiful shape, so on behalf of you all, a big thank you to you all, Mervyn, Chris, Anne, George, Lindy, Richard, Derek, Toby, Malcolm, Michael, Don, John, Sophie, Annie, and Charles.

Also thanks to the meetings held in some way by Charles, Mervyn, Chris and John and sometimes Ben to keep any business updated during this time.

Today, November 21st means it's one month until the winter solstice and days will begin to lengthen and I wish you all a healthy and contented Yuletide. Until next year.



*A nice but not unusual visitor to Nina's garden, grey wagtail. [Nina Roffey]*

*Sadly, through ill-health, Richard Ling has decided not to renew his membership of the Society.*

*Richard has been a long-standing member of the Society but now, at age 96, with poor health and eyesight has decided to leave. He wished to thank the Society for the enjoyment he has had and wished it well for the future.*

### What the Coronavirus Pandemic means for our AGM

*Charles Fortt (secretary)*

YOU may recall that in her introduction for the autumn newsletter, Nina expressed hope that the club might be able to put on some small group field trips before the winter, if it was safe to do so.

Sadly, of course, that wasn't possible, and now we have another national lockdown until December 2nd, so at the time of writing we are unable to make plans for any normal bird club activity, including the AGM which is due in February.

Unfortunately, it appears the long-hoped for vaccine won't be widely available until the spring, so I am not optimistic about an early resumption of normal society business.

When we could have indoor meetings of six people, your committee met in October to consider how we should manage Beccles Bird Society during the pandemic restrictions. We have decided that in these extraordinary times extraordinary measures

are called for, and so we shall continue as we are until we are able to hold an AGM.

Although the present committee's term of office expires at the AGM, every office-holder and committee member is willing to carry on until such time as elections can be held.

Apart from elections, the other main business of the AGM is to set the subscription and we have decided to keep it at £5 for 2021. Customarily, and for convenience, the Treasurer aimed to collect the subs in cash at the AGM but alternative arrangements will need to be made for 2021 if we cannot meet in February.

Accordingly, we would like you to post or deliver your payment to Mervyn Aldis at 104 The Street, Gillingham, NR34 0LA. Please remember to state clearly who the payment is from. If you would prefer Mervyn to collect your subscription from you, he can be contacted on 01502 715615.



*Wishing all our members a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year*



FOR some time now I'd been thinking that the name "Beccles Bird Society" doesn't really reflect what the Society is about these days.

Many of our indoor meetings (if only we could have them!), have varying subject matter and certainly they're not often totally bird oriented, in fact, I personally think they are more interesting if they are varied.

It is also the case that a "bird society" can, and has been, misconstrued as referring to caged birds. At the other extreme, Joe Public believes that as a bird society we *must* be twitchers for, to many people, if one is a birdwatcher then you are a twitcher. This in itself may put people off becoming involved. Also the Waveney Bird Club is very active and attracts the very

keen birders, most of whom are unlikely to join us. Thus in offering a different option we may attract new members.

Bearing all this in mind, I broached the idea to the committee and asked the question: "*I wonder if we should consider a name change, further suggesting "Beccles Wildlife Group"*". Happily, they were all in favour and thus we intend putting this before the AGM to see what the members think.

Obviously, we don't know at present when the AGM will be, but then there's no rush to change. If agreed, we would also have to tick a few admin boxes and because our signs at North Cove are quite new, we'd likely run the two names together for a while. When and if we do change our name, perhaps it would be a good opportunity to promote the club to a wider audience at that time.

## Snippets

I AM constantly amazed at what the World Wildlife Fund achieve. Each quarter, when their magazine drops through my door, they begin by reporting on their biggest achievements – and they are really big achievements.

No doubt many of you are already members but I have to say that if I was limited to supporting just one wildlife organisation it would be the WWF.

Netflix are screening David Attenborough's *A Life on our Planet* and WWF urge us to put pressure on the UK government to introduce tougher laws that safeguard nature both at home and abroad. [wwf.org.uk/naturelaw](http://wwf.org.uk/naturelaw). If you're not a member then there's one thing you can do is sign the petition. [JT]

*I WAS walking towards Ness Point in mid-October with a man and his two dogs. The dogs chased any birds but as we reached the gap in the wall, I saw a tiny bird just sitting there. On closer inspection it turned out to be a goldcrest (see photo on P5). I picked it up and warmed it in my hands. It was tired as the winds were strong and there had been rain in the early hours. There were no trees around so I took it to cover away from the path. I checked a few days later and hopefully it had continued on its journey once recovered. [DH]*

I DON'T have anything to offer on the bird front except how delighted I am that a large flock of sparrows has suddenly taken up residence in my neighbour's hedge and how I enjoy the racket they make.



I thought the members may like a look at one of these old tiles my daughter came across. I wonder how many have heard these name before? [Don Russell]

- As well as Harnser, the heron has had more than 30 local names in Britain, including hegrie (Shetland), moll hern (Midlands), frank (from the bird's call – Suffolk), longie crane (Pembroke). [via Richard Mabey - Ed]

*I AM obviously no exception but early on, I counted 28 peacocks on the three buddleia at my front then, when I went in my shed there were three more fluttering at the window trying to get out. There were obviously others at the buddleias at the front which I did not check up on.*

*My daughter later visited and was fascinated every time a car went by and a flock of butterflies rose up over the fence. Later she said, look, there is a green one. It was a brimstone. Two hawk dragonflies also visited with one laying eggs in my pond but I was unable to id them. I haven't been completely cut off it seems. [JW]. [Sadly, this was to be Jimmy's last entry - Ed]*

I HAD a call this afternoon from a friend having building work done. She had crossed over a 6' footing trench and luckily spotted a small hedgehog stuck in the wet mud upside down. It fell in probably the previous night so we had to get it out. I took my grabber rake and was careful to steer it to the plastic.

The high ground was very unstable and I did not want to end up by the hedgehog's side. I managed to grab it and it was coated in wet mud. I rang the Coastline Vet and took it there straight away. They took it and were going to wash and dry it before putting it in a heated area.

They know someone who cares for hedgehogs so will pass it on. I wanted to give a donation but they refused it. So a happy ending for a young hedgehog. Now I have to clean the mud from my door handles and clothes. [DH]

Two local hedgehog rescues are:

[Greenstedthedgehogrescue.com](http://Greenstedthedgehogrescue.com) Tel: 01986 788952 and  
Toft Monks: Linda Holland, The Moorings, TM, 677563

*LIKE most, I'm very familiar with the Meadow Brown butterfly, it is very common after all and easily identified by its eye spots – black with a white centre - near the tips of the forewings.*

*Butterflies are very obvious to birds that might eat them, thus deflective spots could be helpful. It has been suggested that the spots did serve to deflect attacks but the trade-off was that they make the butterfly more obvious when sitting still.*

*What I didn't realise was that as females spend more time sitting still than the males, they don't have those spots, preferring to try and remain anonymous. I never knew that.*

*Fascinating, I must remember to look next summer. [JT]*

ANOTHER fact I didn't know (amongst many!), was that many species of duck routinely try to lay their eggs in the nests of others if the opportunity arises. With ducks having large clutches of eggs, the odd extra one or two in a nest is not going to be noticed. This also happens with swallows where the females visit other partners, thus the males end up bringing up another's chicks which no doubt others are doing likewise elsewhere. Evidently great reed warblers also do this as do other species. [JT]

*WE all know that cuckoo-spit left on long grass is the frothy secretions of red and black froghopper bugs but what I didn't know was that when they're disturbed, they can leap from a standstill to an astonishing 4,000 metres per second equivalent, evidently to 400 G's.*

*For more facts such as these plus if you're into insects, treat yourself to A Buzz in the Meadow by Dave Goulson – there is much to learn. [JT]*



DESPITE the Covid pandemic, the North Cove reserve volunteers have managed to continue to attend and complete tasks. We were able to keep within Government guide lines and have followed all the necessary protocols. However, we have had to curtail our social gathering.

After a long hot summer, we managed to cut the ride and meadow with a walk-behind auto-scythe we borrowed from the Falcon Meadow Trust. The machine was easy to operate and it made light work of cutting the hay. The hay was gathered in and some of it was taken by the Waveney Meadows Restoration Project and spread on other meadows further up the Waveney valley.

The bulk of it was stored in piles around the reserve ready for path maintenance. Tarpaulins were used to drag the hay to the storage points after which the tarpaulins were used to cover the hay in an effort keep it dry. This year we didn't have extra

helpers to bring in and stack the hay so a

big thank-you to the North Cove volunteers for their hard work and the extra days they put in. Luckily, we completed the task just before the rains started.

A large, storm-blown ash tree was cut up into useful sized pieces for use around the reserve. Part of the trunk was converted into stools for social distance seating at coffee breaks. Much of the ash has been processed ready to make corduroy for path maintenance.

The Decoy has been cleared of encroaching reeds, This task was made less arduous by George lending his long handled, extendable saw that cut through stubborn rhizomes. A welcome rainy spell raised water levels, mixed with the sludge and

made clearing the dykes of vegetation and debris much less arduous.

Work has commenced to cut back encroaching vegetation to the east of the Summerhouse Ride fen meadow. Some tree felling has been necessary to remove the shade and open the canopy for new sapling growth. This should result in improved habitat suitable for a richer diversity of species, particularly birds and invertebrates.

The reserve has lost a few volunteers in the past few years and with it much expertise, in particular the use of the chainsaw and brushcutter. We have therefore arranged for two volunteers to go on training courses to fill these gaps.

The Decoy hide has been given a new coat of preservative and painting of the Summer House hide has been started. This should make them last many more years.



*Socially distant tea break. [Chris Adams]*



*Ben tackles one of the willows.  
[Charles Fortt]*



*Chris, Anne and Charles - you tell me what they're doing (answers on a post card!).*

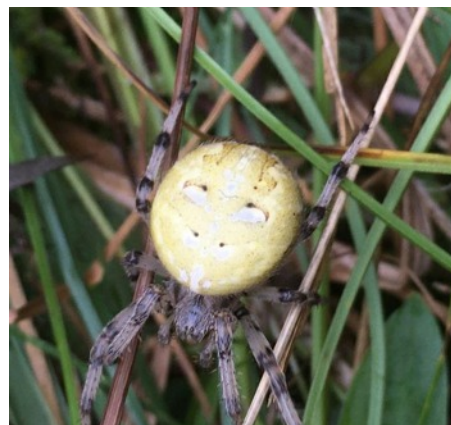
*[Mervyn Aldis]*

## North Cove Spiders



*Four spot orb weaver - Araneus quadratus.*

*These two were taken during our haymaking at North Cove, one by Katie Utting, the other by Chris Adams.*



AS I've said previously, I can struggle for tawny owls here in Suffolk so it was a great surprise when, in late August, I heard one calling (albeit very briefly) across in Norfolk near Castle Mill.

A few days later I added another bird to my river wall list when a couple of linnets were perched in a tree at the bottom end of Castle Marsh. A kingfisher looped away from the river towards the staithe, I guess the amount of boats about frightened him away from the river.



On August 2nd, I bumped into Mel Darkins who confirmed he'd just photographed a raft spider on the river - a "first" I gather (see P8). Once again I spotted a grass snake but, like before, disappearing down a hole. Further back the same day, I was surprised to catch a bank vole out in the open and managed a few pics

and a short video whilst successfully keeping Meg in the "stay" position.

Into September and two little egrets circled and landed in Aldeby - the first I'd seen for some months. Paddle boarding seems increasingly popular this year with quite a few paddling up and down the river.

Hobby sightings had been few this summer so it was nice to see one over Castle on the 10th and another a few days later. A kingfisher flew up river on the 15th and a week later, when I was fishing up from the staithe, I had quite a few sightings during the day. I don't see them very often when walking, undoubtedly sitting still is better. Two hobbies were hunting over Castle marsh the day after and two great spotted woodpeckers flew over to Norfolk.

Near the end of the month it was becoming really autumnal and it was nice to have the weather perfectly still with not a ripple on the river. Six Egyptian geese flew over, the first I'd seen for some months. A water rail squealed though still managed to avoid being seen despite being very close. A Cetti's warbler called and a green woodpecker flew over.

In early October my strangest sight was that of a paddle boarder, lying on his board paddling with his hands - perhaps he hadn't read the instructions properly. Four late house martins flew over the following day and the day after, some ten swallows were hunting around the cattle.

A few swallows remained the following day and it was nice to see two or three stonechat on Castle's fences. There was a good flock of siskins on the alders on the way back to the car. Greylag numbers remained very high and, in another area, some 60 Canadas. A green woodpecker flew over on the 11th, as did three Egyptian geese. Two skylarks were over Castle.

Bearing in mind how far the river wall at Castle is away from Costa Coffee, it was annoying to see a carton discarded just off the wall. It really does beggar belief that someone can carry the carton from either Lowestoft or the garage at Gillingham and then discard it. Grrrr!

Looking at the weather on-line, 5% chance of rain - excellent. Bright sunny morning, no wind, grey wagtail on the staithe - all going well. Further down the wall, a bittern flew past (my first of the year) giving a really nice view and landed in the reeds. Soon after I'd walked past, it flew up again as if to ensure I had a really good view (which I did, thank you). Had I had my big camera with me, I could have had a photo but hey, you can't have

everything. Parasols were in abundance just beyond Castle and now they were nicely open, time to get some photos.

On turning round, beyond the mill, a lovely rainbow in the sky. "Funny", I thought, "there wasn't supposed to be any rain". Wrong! Down it came and for the third time in the last week it caught me with just a body warmer on. I did spy a couple of Egyptian geese through rain spotted specs on the way back.

A water rail called on the 20th and the day after some 30 fieldfares flew over (winter has arrived!). A great white no doubt straying from Carlton flew across Castle on the 24th, landing in Aldeby. A green woodpecker was on the river wall the same day and my first snipe of the season flew over.

Walking back towards the staithe, a rucksack appeared on its own against the BA sign, but as I approached, a young lady climbed up the steps in a wetsuit after having a dip in the river. I stood chatting for a moment but when the wetsuit started to be removed I thought it was best to move on.

The great white flew back across the river and three little egrets were in Aldeby. A kingfisher flew off from one of the angling pegs as I approached. At the end of the month, a small group of fieldfares flew over in early November, three stonechat were on Castle.

A treecreeper was a nice surprise in the riverside willows as I walked along to go fishing one day. Apart from an additional kingfisher they were the highlights of my day, certainly there were

no fish! A little egret in with the flock of sheep had me going - thoughts of cattle egret! Some 25 fieldfares flew over on the 11th and around 40 lapwing the day after. Another kingfisher flew up on the 18th while I was chatting - sitting still is the best way to spot kingfishers!

Meg "did what it says on the tin" when she put up a woodcock for me on the 20th (she's a *cocker* spaniel if you didn't know). There was a nice group of siskins and goldfinches on the wall but try as I may, I couldn't see a redpoll in amongst them; as usual, I seem to have the sun in my face.

A great white flew across from Norfolk on the 25th and we found a common shrew alive and kicking on the wall. A single black-tailed godwit on the 29th was a nice surprise. Five barnacle geese flew over and two stonechat were just beyond Castle.

The last day of October and decidedly iffy weather saw me on a change of venue down the river wall at Worlingham, and what a good decision it turned out to be. A few hundred yards along the river I spotted five goosanders flying upstream. On reaching the big bend I could see the two males in the river so tried to get a photo. Unfortunately, I didn't spot the three females up against the bank and thus spooked the lot.

Further up towards the swing bridge, in the calm water I notice a ripple way off upstream. It was difficult to spot the cause of it through the many tree branches along there but I suspected otter.

Thus I gave up on glimpses I'd had and shot up to the old swing bridge in the hope that, waiting there, it would come to me. Sure enough my hunch was spot on. The otter came upstream and passed right in front of me. Once it was very near, however, it spotted or had a whiff of me, dived and disappeared into the bankside vegetation but I was well satisfied with the sighting.





MY report will cover the birding highlights seen for the three monthly period September to the end of November.

As per normal, my main focus will be on the area comprising a five mile radius of Beccles but will conclude with some of the highlights further afield in Suffolk.

Sadly, due to a lack of local sightings received from members, this report will of necessity be rather on the short side.

September was a very quiet month with the main highlight being a family of spotted flycatchers seen by Neville Loth at Beccles marshes. I personally had a hobby and a marsh harrier over the same marshes on the second and a marsh harrier at Ellough on the fifteenth. Two tawny owls were heard calling from my Beccles garden on the thirteenth.

Into October now with the fourteenth seeing a ring ouzel over Bungay, and at the end of the month, a cattle egret over Castle Marsh. Paul and Helga have enjoyed mixed flocks of redwing and fieldfare at Ringsfield bullfield, Ringfield Hall and Ikletshall St Andrew Great Common. Neville has spotted redwings over Ellough Road, fieldfares at Castle Marsh and a lone brambling at Beccles marshes.



John T. managed to be at home when this 'pecker arrived (he's usually not there on the rare occasion they do pop in).

The November highlight was up to four hawfinches showing at Sotterly Park plus up to four nuthatches. On the final day of the month, John T saw five goodsanders on the Waveney between Worlingham and Beccles and, as a bonus, spent some time watching an otter.

Other reports include 15 swallow over North Cove marshes, 70 linnets on the Ellough fields plus regular buzzards no doubt worming on those same fields. John T has eleven collared doves in his garden, well up from the usual three or four. Around 140 fieldfare were reported in the Ringsfield area.

I have house sparrows roosting again in the laurels at the bottom of my garden and Daphne has enjoyed goldcrest and coal tit on her Beccles town feeders.

A bit further afield in Suffolk, highlights have included three ravens at Minsmere and Dunwich, pectoral sandpiper at Hazelwood Marshes; red-backed shrike Bawdsey; two wood warblers at Shingle Street and Havergate; a barred warbler at Lowestoft; hoopoe at Saxmunden; marsh warbler Trimley; 7 Lapland buntings at Kessingland; two grey phalarope Benacre; black-browed albatross Southwold, rustic bunting Lowestoft; great snipe Languard; 6 great grey shrikes Southwold, Benacre, Woodbridge, Hollesley, Leiston and Timworth.

Three red-breasted flycatchers at Lowestoft and Languard; wryneck at Lowestoft; booted warbler Sizewell; 4 Radde's warblers Gunton, Southwold, Minsmere and Languard. A Steppe grey shrike was at Benacre; red-throated pipit, Havergate; little bunting Aldeburgh; five Pallas's warblers were in the Lowestoft area and at Minsmere.

Three dusky warblers were at Minsmere, Southwold and Lowestoft, 40 crossbills Dunwich, 11 twite Dunwich, six glossy ibis Dunwich and Carlton Marshes. Two black-necked grebes Lackford; three eastern yellow wagtails Dunwich and Carlton. Glaucous gull Minsmere; greater yellowlegs Dunwich, Hume's warbler Gunton; red-necked grebe Wherstead; two shorelark Kessingland; Richard's pipit, Hollesley.

**Please send reports to Tony by email ([twitchbut@gmail.com](mailto:twitchbut@gmail.com)) or telephone 712649.**



Sotterly favourite, hawfinch.



Daphne managed to photo this just-arrived goldcrest at Ness Point.

### Nice photo of a sparrowhawk from Chris Adams

*"It seem to me that, perched in full view of the bird table, it was naïve. Therefore, I assume it be a juvenile. Also I'm sure it knew we were looking and me taking a photo through the kitchen window didn't faze it. It sat there for about 15 minutes. The birds in the bushes around the bird table seem to be laughing at it as they darted back and forth to the feeders. Not seen it since."* [CA]

[ED]: I showed it to my wife Doris who immediately noticed it didn't have an amber eye. Thus I looked it up and came up with:

*"The colour of a sparrowhawk's eye depends on its age and gender. Typically younger birds have greenish-yellow eyes which become brighter yellow within the first couple of years. In some older sparrowhawks, the eye colour can become orange or, occasionally, red."*



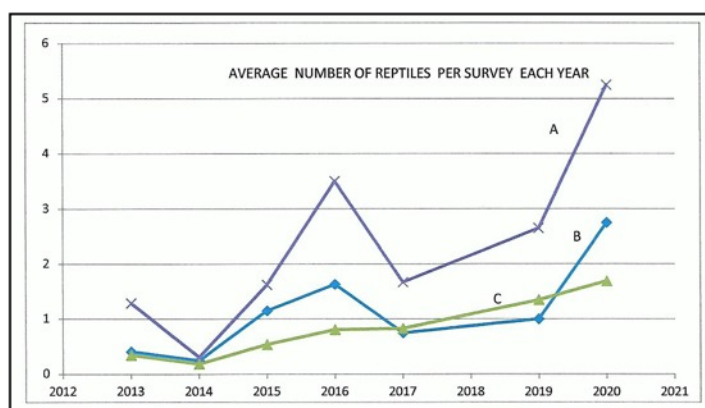
## Reptile Survey of North Cove 2020

Derek Howe

As in previous years nine observation sheets were used, some of corrugated sheet metal and some corrugated rubber. The results are given below and are combined with those of previous years. Note that no survey was carried out in 2018.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	2020
Grass snakes	7	4	15	26	9	20	44
Slow worms	22	5	21	56	20	53	84
Lizards	6	3	7	13	10	27	27
Number of weeks used for survey:	17	16	13	16	12	20	16

In order to more clearly see if there is a trend in population numbers the graph below has been plotted using the figures above.



**OBSERVATIONS:** During the 2020 survey six female grass snakes were seen which compares with one in 2019. Field vole, shrew and ant nests also featured under the observation sheets.

**COMMENT:** Due to a change in the mowing regime on the meadow, the position of two of the observation sheets were changed during the survey period but not dramatically so.

A= Slow Worms B = Grass Snakes C= Lizards.

## My Fascination with Fungi

Garry Nicolau

At this time of each year I find myself inexorably looking out for the fruiting bodies of fungi in the hope of finding perfect specimens that I can photograph, and in some cases, take home to prepare and eat.

In addition, at this time of the year I find myself asking the same question 'what is it about fungi that I find so interesting?'

Is it the fantastic diversity of form, colour and aroma, or the fact that they are not classed as either plant or animal, but as a separate kingdom that are decomposers, not producers, do not possess chlorophyll and who are heterotrophic, releasing enzymes into their surroundings and absorbing nutrients back?

Or maybe the fact that they can grow in the soil and undergrowth to become one of the largest organisms on the planet, yet remain unseen until the fruiting bodies appear mainly at this time of the year as toadstools, bracket fungi and puffballs?

Or could it be to do with the fact that my primary school in London backed onto an ancient Oak woodland (Coldfall Woods in Muswell Hill)?

On our weekly Thursday afternoon woodland walks at this time of the year, I and my class mates were exposed to the characteristic smells, sounds and sights of the woods at autumn and could come across fantastic specimens of a range of fungi – experiences that have been locked into my psyche for good?

(I'll have to ask my old class mates if they are also obsessed with fungi if and when I see them at a future school reunion!).

Whatever the reason for my fascination, and there may be none, of the 15,000 or so species present in the UK, I have a few favourites. Fly Agaric – red cap with white 'spots' which can be



Shaggy ink cap. [JT]

so photogenic, Shaggy Ink Cap, white and torpedo-shaped as it emerges from the ground but then deliquesces and drips 'ink' from the borders of the cap as it matures, and Parasol Mushroom – with a 15-25cm cap that is delicious when fried in garlic butter and laid on a slice of hot buttered toast!

This year, autumn has put on a spectacular show of form and colour, and with the wet weather in early October conditions have been good for fungi. I hope you enjoyed it and wish you well as we face up to the second Covid lockdown period.



## Garry's Garden



*Brown long-eared bat.*

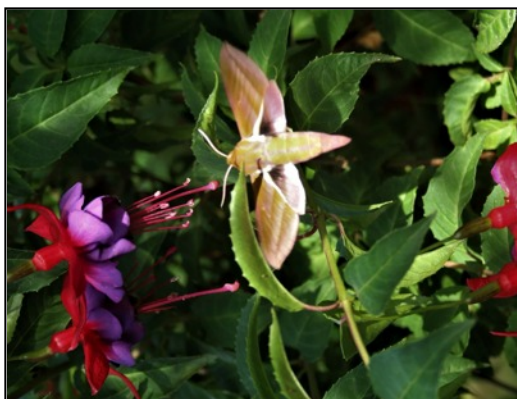
I have attached two pictures of hawkmoths leaving plants. You will note, as might the rest of the group, that these are not day-flying moth species so how can this be ?

I've taken to trying the technique of placing the moths from my moth trap onto plants that they may frequent either to feed (Honeysuckle for the Eyed Hawk Moth), or that are the caterpillar's foodplant (Fuschia for Elephant Hawk Moth). Before these moths can fly off they have to 'wind up the engines' by flapping their wings frantically and with increasing speed to warm up their flight muscles, I suppose.

At a certain point they become 'flight ready' and start to move away from the plant. At this point I take a series of pictures in the hope that I can get at least one that has the moth and the plant in the picture, in focus, and that looks vaguely natural.

As one can see I've still got some way to go but I enjoy the challenge even though this has been done during the day. As I get more proficient I will try it out at dusk, just as the moths become more active again and will then need to use the flash gun.- GN

• My thanks to Garry for some excellent photos and info to go with them, I'm sure members will find this of interest and even in this strangest of years, he's found plenty of interest in the garden.- Ed

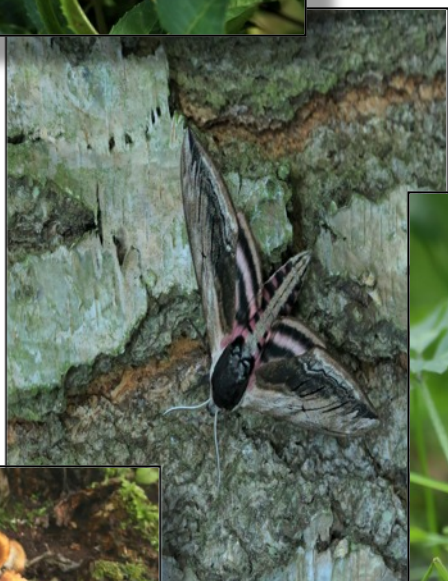


*Elephant Hawk Moth leaving Fuschia*



*Eyed hawkmoth.*

*Privet hawkmoth.*



*Coprinus lagopus.*



*Bay Polypore (Polyporous badius).*

*Mycena polygramma.*



Apologies: In the last edition, Garry's initials "GN" were put against the pictures of Oak Beauty, Lobster, Chinese Character and Dotted Chestnut. I omitted to amend the credits after "copying and pasting". These photos were from Antony Wren. [JT]

## A Visit to Carlton Marshes

Charles Fortt

At the time of writing in early November, it wasn't known what effect the second national Coronavirus lockdown would have on visits to the new visitor centre at Carlton Marshes, but John Trew and I were pleased to take advantage of the fine afternoon weather before it took effect on the fifth.

It was my first visit to the new centre and I was impressed by its design and spaciousness and the smart new paths emanating from it onto the reserve. We didn't have time to try out all the trails so we kept to the main path out to the river wall and returned by the alternative route.

It wasn't long before we noticed a grey heron guarding the path ahead of us, as if taking a break from fishing in the scrapes. Our approach put up several more heron that were hidden from view on the scrape and it was nice to get such a close up sighting.

Many of the scrapes seemed to be empty or sparsely occupied, but we speculated they will be very popular next spring. Even so, with binoculars we could just make out a solitary redshank, groups of cormorant and shoveller.

A pair of goldfinch flew out of the hedge and veered off into the air, providing a brief flash of colour against the grey-ish sky. Then it was back to searching the scrapes again where we saw several little egret and a great white egret spread about. Greylag geese were in good number.

Having reached the river wall, looking towards Oulton Broad we saw a great flock of lapwing coming in to land on the water, and then, on our way back towards the visitor centre, a fine view of a marsh harrier gliding towards us from the distant tree line.

While some of the paths were a bit muddy and wellington boots advisable, the reserve promises to provide a great habitat for waders and other species right here on our doorstep.



*One of the new hides at Carlton.*

## Jimmy Woodrow

George Batchelor

I am so sad to hear that Jimmy has passed away, we got on so well together.

A month or so ago he was taken into James Paget Hospital with a bad lung infection, but ended up at home because he could not take the staff shortages there, ending up in care back at home on the Waveney Gardens Estate.

This was typical for him as he had a very strong mind. He also had bad cancer.

He was my cousin-in-law being married to my cousin Margery. Margery in her young days lived at Blindmans Gate Railway Crossing house.

When they married he was then a Police Constable and his main patch was Bungay, living near the Church.

I can remember my sister Sheila and I cycling there to visit them and he taught me how to eat salad, by folding up the lettuce leaf so much that it was a small enough parcel to put in your mouth.

On the North Cove Reserve he worked with Roy Moore on Thursdays cleaning out the main dyke keeping it clear of Duckweed. First they would section off a piece of water then cleaning it, proceeding section by section along the dyke. Their work party was Thursday because on Wednesday he was the curator of Beccles Museum keeping it clean and explaining to visitors about everything around the area and in the Museum. He was a very keen person with a good personality.

I shall miss him very much.

## Raft Spider on the Waveney

Mel Darkins, from Lowestoft, whilst perched on an angling peg at North Cove with his wife Susan, spotted and photographed what is believed to be the first sighting of a raft spider along the River Waveney.

In his email to George, he states: *"I have enclosed pictures of the spider I saw, which I believe is the fen raft spider. Pictures were taken on the August 12th 2020. I took the pictures by the River Waveney whilst sitting on the last fishing peg near the North Cove Reserve. I believe it is number 42, the one near the power cable warning sign."*

*"We sat and watched the spider for at least two hours (it managed to catch and eat two pond skaters in that time). When the river rose it 'ran' off on top of the water in the direction of Beccles."*

This confirms that the fishing spider reintroduced to Castle Marshes by Dr Helen Smith in 2010 has spread into the River Waveney.

Helen has confirmed that it is the rare spider and doing everything she hoped for. [GB]



*Photo:  
Mel  
Darkins.*