

BADCOG NEWS.

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NATURE NOTES

Migration

With the modern tracking methods now in use the tracking of some species has shown us the amazing journeys that they endure, and the countries that they visit on route and where they subsequently spend our winter. A Turtle Dove was recorded near Aldeburgh Suffolk on 19 Sep 2014, then near Palencia Spain 26 Sep, in the Sylvo-Pastoral NP Senegal 17 Oct, SW of Bamako Mali 24 Jan 2015, Ouarzazate Morocco 29May, near Paris France 18 Jun and back near Aldeburgh Suffolk 22 Jun 2015. An outstanding 6,800-mile round trip. Many hazards on the routes can hold them up such as sandstorms and other obstacles. Whilst wintering in Senegal the Turtle doves regularly travel 10 -20 km a day to find food and water, and could roost in huge communal flocks, up to 50.000 strong. If you are lucky enough to see one in Norfolk this year, spare a thought for its amazing journey and wish it a trouble free 6,000+ mile trip before it returns to Norfolk in 2020.

BTO Garden Birdwatch

For the first time ever Woodpigeon has reach the number one spot of the annual results. Their presence has been rising steadily since the beginning of Garden BirdWatch. 1995 saw a peak reporting rate of 60.8% of gardens visited by Woodpigeons. This became 92.8% in 2018. The drop in reports of smaller species such as Blackbird, Robin or Blue Tit were possibly affected by "The Beast from the East." Smaller birds suffer more in cold weather as they struggle to find sufficient food. Smaller animals also find it more difficult to retain heat than larger animals.

Did You Know: That one of the first pieces of evidence to support the theory that birds migrate from Africa to Europe was provided by "Pfeilstorchs." These White Storks were hit by arrows while wintering in Africa but survived and were able to migrate to Europe with the arrow embedded in their bodies. The identification of the arrows as African provided concrete evidence that these birds were migrating overseas rather than wintering at the bottom of ponds or on the Moon!

Main Work Party Reports

Mar 02 - Buckenham Woods - Junction of paths near entry of site - removed pile of large stones/bricks/rocks to area east of the east path. Main area east path - coppiced sycamore using chainsaw and loppers, cut timber to woodpile. Further work to previous bramble area, roots removed using mattock, area raked and cleared to spoil heap. Steps cut in steep bank at NE corner of perimeter path. Clearance carried out on the path from Buckenham Rd to the woods. Hedge to E of path trimmed using hedge trimmer and vegetation at base trimmed. Trees and vegetation in fence between path and allotments W of path trimmed.

Mar 16 - Holly Lane Pond - Annual maintenance carried out. N roadside hedge trimmed with hedge trimmer. Main E area by pond scythed also small area at S side. All cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heap. Litter pick carried out.

Mar 30 - Jary's Meadow - Following checks for nesting birds some bramble areas by the path cut down using brush cutter. Hazel coppicing carried out by fruit tree area. Some self set oaks deer damaged cut down and stumps treated, leaving well spaced good ones. Pruned the lower branches. Removed some large poplar suckers. All cut vegetation to fire site and burnt.

Walsham Fen - Middle boardwalk to hide previous cut reed at both sides cleared to spoil heaps.

Apr 13 - Howes Meadow - Path from main entry gate to back north path and on to the sites west boundary mown. Bramble at NW corner and an area there for future planting mown. New planted hedge at E boundary - cleared growing vegetation around plants. S and N side of stream/dyke from E end to sluice - raked and cleared old cut and lying reed to spoil heap and main fire site.

Additional Work Party Reports

Feb 25 - Railway Wood - Completed the clearance of fallen trees

Mar 23 - Lingwood-Millennium Green - avenue of small leaf limes. All remaining tree supporting posts removed and lower branches trimmed where necessary. The 2 oaks to the W of the beacon checked and trimmed.

Peter's Wood/Permissive Path/Footpath FP3.- Checked all the oak trees planted on Feb 16.

Apr 13 pm - Newly planted hedge at E boundary - replaced failed plant with a hazel. At NW corner 16 blackthorn planted.

BADCOG SPRING WALK

Saturday 18th May - Starting at 10.30am

Meet at Limpenhoe Church for a 3.1 mile or a 4.8 mile walk around the local area taking in Limpenhoe and Cantley.

This walk may included stiles and other obstacles along the way.

Please wear good walking boots/shoes.

Lingwood Weather Report

Ernest Hoyos

In the September 2018 news letter I reported the facts and figures for the exceptional Summer, to the end of August.

August itself ended with 61mm of rain, slightly above average, but this only partly compensated for the lack of rain in the three previous months, which together only produced 45.5mm. The total rainfall for the first eight months of 2018 amounted to 88% of average, so it might have been hoped, at least by the water authorities, that the Autumn and Winter would have produced normal or above average rainfall. However only an inch, or 26 mm fell in September, 50% of that expected, this followed by October with 107%, November 80% and December with 113%. The total annual rainfall for 2018 at Lingwood was 565mm, or 22 1/4 inches still 88%.

Ground water aquifers are topped up during the winter, when there is little evaporation, but as I was writing this, 22nd Jan. we'd only had 16mm of rain, so we looked to be heading for a dry January. In the last week we had 27mm of rain and snow, which helped redress things a bit and we ended the month 44.5mm, 79 % .

On average June through to the end of January are all months where we expect in excess of 50mm of rain and in fact October, November and December in excess of 60mm. The months of February, March, April and May are all in the 40s mm, considerably dryer.

There have already been suggestions in the media that we should be sparing with the water we are using. Our whole environment relies on sufficient water for wildlife, farming and human needs. There's still time for levels to build up and February, normally one of the driest months, is bucking the trend a bit with well over half the month's average by the 10th. So we'll see what transpires??

As a further matter of interest, the temperatures last Autumn turned out average for September and October. November was 0.5oC above and December a mild 1oC above average. January'19 which started mild, ended below average as it was quite cold from the 17th on.

I wrote and forwarded this weather report through for publication in our March newsletter but there was no room for its inclusion. I have since then been asked to update it, so here goes:-

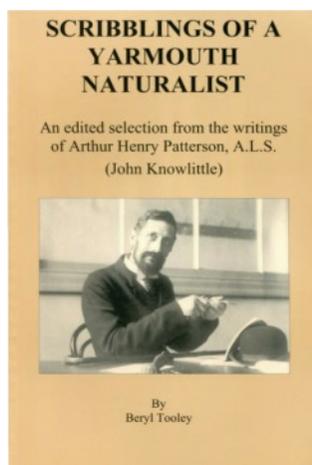
February had started quite wet with 27mm of rain by the 10th, however from that point on high pressure dominated and the remaining 18 days were completely dry, sunny and warm, or very warm for so early in the year. So February ended with a total rainfall of 26.5mm, the driest February since 2012 and with a mean temperature of 6.9oC, a whopping 2.4oC above average.

Total winter rainfall i.e. Dec., Jan., Feb. amounted to 139.7mm = 88% of average. Mean temperature was 5.8oC, 1.2oC above the average of 4.6oC.

As I write this at the end of March, the first Spring month, meteorologically speaking, it has turned out wetter than average with 54.5mm or 120% all of which again fell in the first half of the month with no measurable rain after the 18th. this means our total rainfall for the first three months of 2019 is 125.5mm, still almost unchanged at 87% of average. As for temperatures March was 1.2oC above average.

Special Offer to BADCOG members.

BADCOG has been given a number of new copies of the definitive book about the distinguished Yarmouth naturalist Arthur Patterson who wrote under the name of Kohn Knowlittle. The donation has been given so that they can be sold to boost BADCOG's funds. The book is written by his granddaughter and its 138 pages are richly illustrated by many of Arthur Patterson's drawings and paintings. It is available on a first come first served basis from David Pilch at The White House, Blofield for the discounted price of £5 (RRP £9.95).



Donald Trump's Golf Course, the Beautiful Scottish Coast and a Case of Ministerial Impropriety

By Lee Coby

One could have been forgiven for being mesmerised by the promises made by the Trump monolith when they announced plans to build a world class golf course and resort in Aberdeenshire in 2006. Trading as Trump International Golf Links, Scotland (TIGLS) and headed up, at the time, by the man who would become President of the United States of America, the announcement was made with the allure of excellent economic benefits and emphasised Donald Trump's Scottish heritage. As early as April 2006 Trump set about securing what he sought by threatening to pull out entirely should there be any delay in the application. This would be a planning saga like no other. After all, the indicative masterplan showed 9 holes were to be positioned partly or wholly within the Menie dunes at Foveran Links - a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This all-or-nothing approach to dealings is something of a trademark of Trump's, now known the world over. In July 2018 the London School of Economics made publicly available documents sent to them following a request for disclosure under the Environmental Information Regulations. The documents show that the most recent assessments carried out at the SSSI by Scottish Natural Heritage found it to be partially destroyed by the golf course that now stands there. Meanwhile, locals are questioning what became of the proposed economic benefits to the region. Aberdeenshire Council's policy had been not to allow development that would have a significant adverse effect on an SSSI unless the damage to the SSSI was 'clearly outweighed by social and economic benefits of national importance' and there was 'no alternative site for development' (Policy Env/2, Aberdeenshire Local Plan, June 2006).

Granting habitat a protected status is one of the main legal devices used across the globe to protect important areas from degradation. Typically, these protections are granted whilst allowing for reasonable exemptions. One needn't use too much imagination to envisage a scenario in which dispensation be granted to someone altering a protected site. You might consider, for instance, a scenario in which human life is at risk and interference is required to reduce that risk. If altering the habitat were the only demonstrable way to reduce the risk of harm, very few, if any persons might try argue against the need to make a change to the landscape. This is an obvious example but it is used to highlight why exemptions are included when giving a site legal protection against man-made changes. The political and philosophical view-points of those making the law will have consequences for the number and type of exceptions. The question of how exceptions to the law were manipulated in favour of development at Foveran Links endures.

The loss of a unique and, therefore by most accounts, special habitat notwithstanding there is opportunity here to learn about the fallibility of ourselves and our processes. Some will use the case as call for austere legislation. There are often vague references to more prohibitive rules with narrower qualifications and supposedly greater rigour. Changing the law is extraordinarily difficult.

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Ensuring that existing legislation is enforced dutifully as well as using existing policy to bring about favourable results is also very difficult - but it is a perfectly practicable approach in comparison, though checks and balances of decision makers need to be available for this to be successful. Viewing the Menie scenario and the actions of the various stakeholders within a dichotomous framework; one which pitched 'business' against 'the environment' makes for an interesting analysis. Donald Trump's all-or-nothing approach was calibrated to frame, from the outset, just such a narrative. He knew from his vast experience as a developer that for the application to be met without some controversy was extremely unlikely. At the genesis of what would go on to become Trump International Golf Links, Scotland (the name also given to the golf course itself) was an intention to shape the conversation about the development in terms of business vs the environment. This, accompanied with the bombast of the proposition, must lead us to ask who the narrative served and posit how things could be different as similar situations arise in the future.

Foveran Links was notified as a SSSI in February 1984. It had been recognised as a dune system that had developed over at least 4000 years and is well known for its migrant birds. In 1994 the Joint Nature Conservation Committee noted that, 'much of the SSSI has been altered by agriculture though the natural gradation from sand dune to neighbouring land soil type still occurs at Menie Links and is of considerable interest'. Scottish Natural Heritage's Management Statement says of the geology of Foveran Links that, amongst other things, it 'comprises a dynamic assemblage of sandy beach, dune formations, a large wind eroded sand plain, and a shifting sand spit complex at the mouth of the river Ythan, all of which have been developed on a base of post glacial raised beach deposits' and that it is of special interest 'as a high quality example of the dune features that characterise the sand dune coastline of North East Scotland'. There are also comments on the Management Statement under the heading Principle Factors Influencing Management which read; 'primary interest of the site relies on dynamic processes of sand deposition, erosion, stabilisation and the equilibrium between these processes [...] the beach dune system which includes the Sands of Forvie SSSI will evolve naturally in response to changes in the sediment supply, local wind patterns and relative sea-level change, together with any associated increases in wave action and storminess'. Any adjective-laden description of the SSSI beyond the above seems gratuitous but suffice to say it was a place of rare magic and worthy of reverence.

This essay by Lee Coby with continue in the July issue of the News Letter.

The Lesser Celandine

This lovely little flower of the buttercup family is one of the early indicators of spring and a good source of nectar for insects at the beginning of the year.

Here is William Wordsworth's tribute to it.

TO THE SMALL CELANDINE

Pansies, lilies kingcups, daisies,
Let them live upon their praises;
Long as there's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory;
Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story;
There's a flower that shall be mine,
'Tis the little celandine.

Ere a leaf is on a bush,
In the time before the thrush
Has a thought about her nest,
Thou wilt come with half a call,
Spreading out thy glossy breast
Like a careless prodigal;
Telling tales about the sun,
When we've little warmth or none.

WORK PARTY DATES

ALL START AT 10.30 UNLESS STATED

11th May—Jary's Meadow.

1st June—Buckenham Woods.

15th June—Lingwood Church.

29th June—Hemblington Church

13th July—Blofield Church

16th July—Blofield Church with Green Gym @ 1.30pm

Any short notice changes will be published on the BADCOG website @ www.badcog.co.uk

Dawn Chorus Comparisons

It is very noticeable, that the dawn chorus that we hear these days, is very different to the ones that we heard a decade or so ago. Of course, most people have no interest in hearing such things, and quite a few would prefer to not hear birds early in the morning, when they are trying to sleep. Other people tell me that it is my memory that is playing tricks with me, and the dawn chorus is much the same now, as in the past. However, my fears of memory loss are quickly dispelled when I listen to recordings made in past years. Not only are there far fewer birds taking part, but the species taking part have changed, with Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Robins, which were the dominant choristers in the past, seeming to be replaced by greater numbers of Wood Pigeons and Collared Doves.

In February, whilst staying at a friend's house in Thailand, I was listening to the dawn chorus, and suddenly realised that it also seemed to be dominated by doves. These were, of course, not Wood Pigeons and Collared Doves, but more exotic Zebra Doves and Red Turtle Doves. Both of these doves are small, with the Zebra Dove being smaller than a Blackbird, and the Red Turtle Dove a little larger. They are both neat and pretty little birds, and like our doves, seem to be prospering and gaining in numbers. They also like living in gardens, and exploiting humans when the opportunity presents itself.



ANNUAL ORCHID COUNTS.

Howes Meadow: Monday 17th June @ 7.00pm

Walsham Fen: Friday 21st June @ 7.00pm

Please come prepared as there may be biting insects about and it will be wet underfoot.