



## BADCOG NEWS.

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### Bird Box Surprise

During February I set about cleaning out bird boxes, a job I would normally undertake earlier. During this process I discovered one which had fallen from a tree, its attachment having failed. Otherwise, it looked sound. On closer inspection, however, the entrance hole seemed to be partially occluded. When I took the top off the box, I found that about half the box was filled with a somewhat spongy material which was quite firmly adherent to the box and having a surface a little like corduroy. The picture (Right) shows this appearance of what I subsequently discovered were the cocoons of the bee moth (*Aphomia sociella*). The adults started to emerge at the beginning of May and indeed one flew out from the "Secimen" as I was showing it at a BADCOG committee meeting.



This moth (left), also known as the bumble bee wax moth, is a small moth of the family Pyralidae and subfamily Galleriinae. Its body and forewings are typically reddish brown, tan, or dark green in colour and females have a dark spot in the centre of each

forewing. Sexually dimorphic species, the male more brightly coloured and patterned than the female. The larvae feed on the comb inside bee and wasp nests.

Norfolk status: Fairly common and widespread.

Habitat: Woodland, fens, grassland, heathland and scrub.

First Recorded: 1957.

Last Recorded: 2022.

Recorded in 67 (91%) of 74 10k Squares.

*David Pilch*

## Far from Home

Thought to be the only albatross of its kind in the Northern Hemisphere, a black browed albatross nick-named Albie has been seen this year at Bempton Cliffs on the Yorkshire coast. These cliffs are host to Britain's largest mainland sea bird colony and each summer the cliffs are crowded with gannets, puffins, guillemots, kittiwakes and more.

Albie is known to have overwintered in the Baltic Sea around Denmark and Germany since 2014, after being blown off course from the South Atlantic ocean. He has remained ever since, making occasional forays across the North Sea to Bempton where he was seen in the summer in 2017, 2020, 2021 and this year when for the first time he arrived in the spring.

Albie is an impressively large seabird with a wingspan of up to two-and-a-half metres and a dark grey saddle and black upper wings. The species is distinctive from other albatrosses by the nostrils on the side of the bird's large bill. The bird's peach-coloured beaks are made up of between seven and nine plates that help them to filter salt from the ocean water.

Black browed albatrosses, also called mollymawks, mate for life. They breed in the islands of the South Atlantic and build unusual nests that look a bit like chimney pots. Made out of mud and guano, these nests measure about 20 inches high. An albatross lays just one egg, in early October, into a shallow hollow dug into the top. This egg is fiercely guarded from marauding predators like skuas, and after an incubation of nearly three months, both parents care for their single large white chick for over four months. Sadly this species is in decline, with breeding pairs thought to be decreasing each year.

Albie is thought to be only about eight years old. It is possible that changes in habitat and warmer temperatures may have something to do with him straying so far, or it may have been related to his relative immaturity. Sadly, the prevailing winds prevent him making a return, and unless a female arrives under similar extraordinary circumstances, Albie is destined to spend the rest of his lifespan of up to seventy years alone.

## The Human Ichneumon

Shortly after Christmas I was walking round Strumpshaw RSPB when I encountered a man with an electronic gadget, a probe and earphones. He was sticking the probe into bits of dead wood. Clearly he was playing with his Christmas present, but what was it for? I couldn't resist asking and was told simply that he was listening for insect noises. It struck me that the activity had a parallel in the natural world where some ichneumon wasps are able to detect larvae in wood and lay their eggs in them.

Ichneumon wasps have some of the longest ovipositors of any insect. Females of some species wander over logs, listening for the sound of larvae crawling inside. Different species of Ichneumon wasps seek the larvae of different insects. Those that lay their eggs in beetle grubs have the ability to locate the exact position of the grub within the log. When they have located a larva, female wasps insert their long ovipositor through the wood and into the grub and lay their eggs. Sensory receptors on the ovipositor enable the wasp to determine when it is inserted into the larva. The eggs that they lay hatch into parasitoids that gradually consume the larvae as they moult, and eventually crawl from the nearly dead larvae and pupate. Males also wander over the same logs, waiting for virgin females inside to crawl out.

Scientific name: *Ichneumonidae*

Size: Up to 40mm long

Distribution: Found throughout the UK

Months seen: April to November

Life span: Up to 10 months

Habitat: Hedgerows, woodland rides, parks, gardens, and meadows

Food: The larvae feed on other insects. The adults feed on nectar and aphid honeydew.

Special features: Ichneumon wasps are solitary insects which are closely related to bees and ants. Most ichneumons are parasitoids. The females lay their eggs into, or onto, the young of other insects and spiders, and the young which hatch out feed on that host insect. The host is eventually killed and consumed by the larva just before it pupates.



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Some 2,500 or so different Ichneumon species are found in the UK. They vary in colour, shape and size, but some species look very similar and require detailed examination with a microscope for an accurate identification.

One of our largest ichneumon flies is called *Rhyssa persuasoria*. It can be recognised by its orange-red legs and distinctive pattern of white spots along the entire length of its body. It has a long egg-laying tube (ovipositor) which it uses to inject its eggs into the larvae of wood wasps.

*David Pilch*

### **Unexpected Owl in Robing area . . .**

Hemblington's All Saints church is one of the many round-tower churches to be found scattered across Norfolk, and sits surrounded by fields a little distance from the community of Hemblington. Being a round tower church of Saxon origin, it is simple in design, and the clergy taking services will use the private space in the base of the tower as their robing room prior to service.

At a recent Sunday service, the Revd. Sue Shillam, who regularly takes services at Hemblington, was more than a little startled when robing for morning service. She was faced with an owl quietly gazing at her from across the small circular room! The owl, which was a beautiful adult Barn Owl, seemed unconcerned even though evidence around the room indicated that it may have been there overnight. Fortunately, one of the congregation was able to provide a large soft rug and the owl, which remained perfectly calm

throughout the encounter, was gently scooped up and taken outside. The rug was carefully opened, the owl looked around, took his time to consider his position then took off to float silently across the gravestones and into the open countryside.

The owl had probably entered the church via the wooden louvres in the bell tower, and then it may have had difficulty in leaving due to the downward facing slats of these louvres.



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A small gap where the tower-ladder enters the bell space then allowed the owl to descend to the robing room at the base of the tower where Rev Sue had her surprise Sunday morning encounter!

*Peter Mackness*

\*\* Hemblington Church is probably well known to readers as one of several sites where BADCOG has regular work parties.

### Annual Orchid Counts

This years annual orchid counts took place on Monday 20th June at Howes Meadow and Friday 24th June at Walsham Fen.

Unfortunately, only four members turned up for the count at Howes Meadow, and as most are aware, to do a proper count at this large site we need about ten counters. Even with ten, the count can take a couple of hours to complete. As it was going to be very difficult with just a small number of people, it was decided to do just a cursory count of the South West section, the best part of the site. The total count was 798, which compares with previous years as follows:

2017—1822

2018—1270

2019—496

2020—No count (Covid)

2021—372

For the count at Walsham Fen, we had five counters, which is not ideal, but okay. The count in areas D & E was easy due to the low vegetation, but much more difficult in area G due to the very high reeds. It was for this reason that about 1/3 of the area was not counted. It was also noted that there were no orchids along the edge of the boardwalks where we would normal have some. The total count was 249, which compares with:

2017—326

2018—605

2019—333

2020—No count

2021—962

In Jary's Meadow, 12 orchids were recorded.

## **Eclectic Reflections from musing through past BADCOG newsletters.**

**1983** – a group get together to restore Holly Lane Pond. This group becomes BADCOG.

**2023** – will be 40yrs later. And we are still going strong.

**From Oct 1985:** This is the first of a new-style newsletter for BADCOG which will be distributed every two months. Its aim is to provide a means of keeping members in close touch with our activities and we hope enable a greater involvement in them. It will consist of a rolling calendar of events with small articles of interest.

**From April 1986:** Norfolk County Council has decided to designate an area next to Panxworth as its first Nature Reserve and ask BADCOG to manage it. Walsham Fen is a very interesting 3½ acre area of fen and scrub bordering a stream and is contiguous with Walsham Wood. Also: We've planted a wide variety of native trees and shrubs at sites in Shack Lane (Blofield), Braydeston Church, Blofield's Poor Land and Moulton Sandpit, to name but a few.

**From Dec 1986:** from a report of a talk given by Dr David Bellamy. Of the myriad plants so far catalogued, less than 1% have 'economic' value today and, bearing in mind his definition of 'a weed is a plant whose virtues have yet to be recognised', who knows what the future may hold, provided we do not wantonly destroy plants and habitats, living creatures and the food chains that support them, by unbridled greed or sheer thoughtlessness or ignorance.

**From April 1987:** We lost 4000 miles of hedge each year in the 1980's compared with 2600 miles a year in the 1960's. A total of 190,000 miles of hedgerow have been grubbed up in all – enough to stretch almost eight times round the world!

**From Aug 1987:** We have been most active on Walsham Fen where we have dug a pond and mown selected areas, which have responded well this year with a fine crop of southern marsh orchids. There is obviously a lot of potential on this site, which will respond to appropriate management.

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**From February 1988:** It is 15 years or so since major work was done on Lingwood Pond, and naturally in that time willow scrub has invaded open water and the surround-hedge has overgrown, shading the pond. We hope that our work will restore the pond to a better condition.

**From June 1989:** BADCOG have recently received a Shell Better Britain Award of £250 and a framed certificate for our Walshem Fen project. This site is due to be opened officially as a nature reserve on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> June. We've recently made and erected a couple of reed screens there with the objective of concealing people more effectively from any wildlife on the Fen.

**From August 1991:** All our summer work parties are concentrated on mowing our various grasslands sites – chuchyards first followed by Howes Meadow and Walsham Fen. All follow the same pattern of mowing using scythes, brush cutters or reciprocal mowers, and raking off to retrain nutrient build-up. 95% of our herb-rich grassland has either been ploughed up or 'improved' by drainage and application of fertilisers during the past 30 years. What little is left is still disappearing unless grazed or cut in traditional ways.

*Beryl Ogden*

### **Spring Walk—Saturday 28th May.**

In perfect walking weather, six BADCOG members enjoyed a 4 mile walk through Tyrrel's Wood and beyond. Tyrrel's Wood is managed by the Woodland Trust and is classified as ancient woodland and has many spectacular mature trees. The walk then took us to ancient commons with ponds, all of which attracts wildlife and interesting flora.

Continuing along quiet lanes, with the verges full of wildflowers, we ended up back at the car park to then go on to have lunch at Goodies.

### **BADCOG Work Party Dates**

2nd July—Howes Meadow

16th July—Blofield Church

30th July—Walsham Fen

6th August—Walsham Fen

20th August—Jary's Meadow

3rd September—Howe's Meadow

Work parties start at 10.30am and finish at about 1pm.

All welcome!

## Work Party Reports

**May 07 – Buckenham Woods** – Main open area -west side – scythed around newly planted trees. Sprayed a large area of sycamore. Scythed and cut back bramble and sycamore around buddleia. Cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heaps. 8 members

**May 21 – Walsham Fen** – Raked and cleared to spoil heaps all cut vegetation from boardwalk areas mown on 14<sup>th</sup> May. Wheelbarrow and new 2m x 2m sheets used. Prior to WP bracken regrowth in Jary's Meadow, west meadow was cut and cleared. 3 members + 1

**Jun 11 – Lingwood Church** – Conservation area raked and cleared and removed by trailer to village allotment spoil site. 9 members + 1

**Jun 18 – Hemblington Church** – Conservation area raked and cleared to spoil heap. 8 members +2.

## Additional Work Carried Out

**May 08 – Jary's Meadow** – West meadow – West end of south boundary hedge – weeded around the new hedge planted on 22 Feb 22.

**May 14 – Walsham Fen** – Boardwalk network – area mower width, mown on both sides.

**Jun 07 – Lingwood Church** – Conservation area mown.

**Jun 13 – Hemblington Church** – Conservation area mown. Scythed around gravestones.

**Jun 15 – Buckenham Woods** – Main area – dip section raked and cleared to pile. Conditions unsuitable for burning.

**Jun 23—Howes Meadow—**North west section of meadow mowed along with the path network around meadow. Large spoil site on the north section of meadow, burnt.

## Church Service in remembrance of David Cullen

Sunday 10th July 2022 at 2.30pm

Lingwood Church

David was a keen and active BADCOG member who passed away during the Covid lockdown, and due to the restrictions, we didn't get the chance to say a proper farewell to him. For those who remember him, this is our opportunity.