

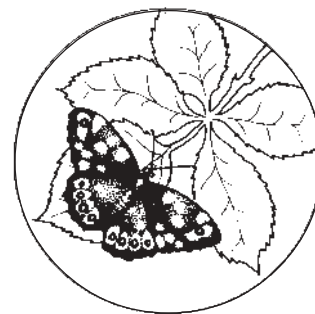
# THE ESSEX FIELD CLUB

*DEPARTMENT OF LIFE SCIENCES*

*UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON*

*ROMFORD ROAD, STRATFORD,*

*LONDON, E15 4LZ*



**NEWSLETTER NO. 27**

November 1998

## PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Over the summer months matters have been relatively quiet. Regretfully there have been two resignations from Council, of Irene Buchan and Colin Plant. Both have made useful contributions to the work of Council and it is hoped that we can call on their services again at some time in the future.

From previous Presidents' Pages you will know that past Presidents and I have been trying to give the Field Club more vitality such as by getting it more involved in sites, through contributing to the Red Data Book and co-operating with the Essex Wildlife Trust. There was also a feeling in Council that we were getting more concerned with administrative matters than the core work of the Field Club. Accordingly, I have moved discussion of sites requiring attention to the first elective item on the Council's agendas, so that such matters can be discussed fully rather than being rushed. I hope these moves will begin to make an impact. However, for this to happen, Council members, recorders and members will need to become more involved and pro-active. At the moment I feel that many of our fellow organisations have more vitality. Through our collections, the Essex Naturalist and our recording procedures we have a very important role to play in the life of the County, but we cannot afford to be complacent.

Despite what I have just said, during the winter months, I hope to turn my attention to administrative matters such as the Constitution. These are matters that need to be addressed periodically so that they remain in good order and facilitate the work of the Field Club.

Action on the Field Club's collections is still active and it is hoped that some positive developments will occur before the end of the year. Ken Adams has been exploring various avenues to ensure that the collections are properly housed and curated for the future. Meanwhile, specific attention is being paid to the geological collection and, thanks to Graham Ward, a comprehensive catalogue of the fossils, minerals, rocks and erratics will be available shortly in Mac and IBM formats. Many aspects of the geological collections are important nationally, particularly the Tertiary fossils and the Quaternary glacial erratics. These include many new records, indicating the importance of the County geologically.

Peter Allen

## WANTED - AN INTELLIGENT MEMBER!!!

Well, maybe. Or maybe the really intelligent ones will turn down this glorious offer of fame without fortune? Then again it will look good on your CV if you have such a thing.

With this newsletter you should have received the latest copy of the Club's journal - the *Essex Naturalist*. I hope you like it; if not then blame the authors - I can only print what I receive! Back in 1996, Peter Harvey and myself felt strongly that we needed to revive the journal and restore it to its former position as a journal of respect carrying peer-reviewed papers as well as an annual section on reports. Not that there was anything at all wrong with the monograph series but we felt that there should be more opportunity for publishing shorter papers on Essex natural history. However, when we volunteered for the task we declared that it was only to get things going again - not a long term venture. Predictably, nobody volunteered to be editor so I did it again the following year and then again this year. Now it has to stop. **I will NOT be editing the 1999 journal.** *This*, as they say in all the best American war films, *is not a drill!!!* This is the real thing. I am now no longer editor. OK. We therefore need (no - YOU need) a new editor. With this in mind I thought it would be helpful to detail what is involved.

### Qualifications

- A working knowledge of English grammar, punctuation etc. and an ability to spell correctly (English - not American!). If you have never heard of a split infinitive or a pendant participle then fear not - I will teach you, but you will need the basics.
- A word processor or access to one - essential (anti-virus software strongly recommended).
- A telephone.
- E-mail address would be an advantage but is not critical.
- A moderately strong personality - you may have to tell authors that their paper is no good/received too late/ etc.

### What you would have to do

After the last Council meeting of the calendar year, **check with the Treasurer** (if you were not at the meeting yourself) to see how much money Council has allocated for the journal. Then **contact Cravitz Printing** to check price increases etc and **decide on how many pages** you can have in the journal.

**Chase and receive contributions.** The first section of the journal is standard - just bully the nearest Council Member immediately after the AGM. Annual Report, Treasurer's Report, Recorders' Reports (you may have to chase some of these early in the year to get them on time). Presidents address. Some of these you may have to type to your computer. The second part contains peer-reviewed papers. You will need to chase potential authors of papers (not necessarily Club members) if you want a balance of botany, invertebrates, mammals or whatever. All papers must comprise material that is not already published elsewhere and is not being offered to another journal. All contributions must be acknowledged on Club note-paper within a few days. Start chasing in January or earlier.

Now you need to **find appropriate people** to read the papers and pass an opinion on whether or not the paper is worth publishing and if any corrections of a non-editorial nature are needed. Referees may well not be Club members - they must simply be qualified to comment on the subject area of the paper. The author then either gets a pre-printed letter from you saying that his/her paper is accepted or else you have to send it back with a courteous note asking for the referees comments to be considered (did anyone spot the deliberately split infinitive in this paragraph?). I can supply copies of all these standard letters as Word files for a PC.

Now you need to **obtain a cover photograph**. This should relate to something in the volume you are preparing. Be strong enough to tell a photographer that the photo is not actually as brilliant as he or she thinks it is!

When content-corrected papers are received you can **make editorial corrections** - to ensure that all contributions follow our house style. Attention to detail is required. By now it will be September and you need to make contact with Cravitz Printing in Brentwood, again, to warn them that things are about to be sent. If you have e-mail you can now send it all direct to Cravitz; if not, a floppy disk will need to be posted. There will inevitably be some contributions on paper as well and you will also need to post or deliver the photograph.

A few weeks later, Andrew (at Cravitz) will send you **galley proofs**. These you need to cut up and send to the authors for error correction, keeping a copy yourself so that whilst authors are checking their copies, you can be mocking up pages and looking for gaps that may require short notes or book reviews to fill them. If you find any you need to ask potential authors for such short communications. At the same time as sending the galleys, you also need to send authors a reprint order form. You need corrected proofs back by early October. When they come back, **review the corrections** and make sure that you agree with them - often I don't! Watch out for authors who add extra pages of text - not allowed at this stage unless it suits your page making. Your decision will be final so be sure of yourself. Now you send the corrected **proofs back to Cravitz** together with your instructions for the order in which articles must appear. Cravitz will respond with **page proofs** a few days later. You need to check these (for example, make sure all reviewed papers start on a right-hand page or else you will need to order more copies in order to have enough reprints). Return these, with final corrections and an official order for printing, to Cravitz and **sit back** until the journal appears. Almost finished! After publication, you need to send authors their reprints. That's it. Done for another year!

**So - volunteers please step forward.** Get in touch with me direct and then come and visit my study so I can actually show you what is what (I also edit the *Entomologists Record* six times a year so there is always something in process for you to see). It sounds a lot but if you get organised its really very easy. Full training and support will be given by me if required and all standard letters are available on my computer. I will also take you to meet the printers so you can see what's what.

Contact me - Colin Plant - by telephone or fax on 01279 507697 or via e-mail at Colinwplant@compuserve.com or write to me at 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts CM23 3QP.

### Robbers on the Edge of Swansea

*Asilus crabroniformis* is the globally threatened and declining Hornet robber fly, and it has been found at a new site on the edge of Swansea. A series of small horse-grazed heathy grass fields is similar to a well known site for this fly, not too far away. Seven adult flies were seen last September during a survey commissioned by the Countryside Council for Wales. Another new site was found on the Gower, making three sites known in the Swansea area.

It is big, for a fly, 25-30mm banded in black and yellow, and is a fierce predator mainly of grasshoppers and dung beetles. The larvae are also predatory, on dung beetle larvae. Once widespread across lowland England and Wales, its main stronghold is the Dorset heaths, only 17 sites were known localities in the recent past.

Further information about this rare and spectacular animal from David Painter or Jonathan Graham, Countryside Council for Wales, RVB House, Llys Felin, Newydd, Phoenix Way, Swansea Enterprise Park, Llansamlet, Swansea SA7 9FG.

*Editor's note* - although formerly considered extinct in the county, there are now several sites for this impressive fly in south Essex although none has any statutory protection. One, at Ferry Fields near Tilbury in Thurrock, has been given planning permission for large scale development despite the presence there of populations of **two** Priority Biodiversity Action Plan species and an invertebrate quality equal to that of SSSIs in the East Thames region. Remarkably, despite these facts being known to the Local Authority and the site's identification as a SINC by EWT, the Planning Office's Recommendations for Approval, dated 12th December 1996 and available for public examination, **contained no mention at all** of the nature conservation importance of the site.

### Dry Gardens Save Water

The sense of attempting to grow plants which need much water in dry climates has been questioned. Southwark is not desert, but has experienced several years of low rainfall and increasing demand for water. Helped by a grant from Thames Water, Southwark Council has opened a drought resistant garden in Dulwich Park. The effect is to show how an attractive garden can exist without continued recourse to hosepipe or watering-can. A leaflet can be obtained from Diane Church, Press Office, Southwark Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB  
Reflection on Local Nature Reserves

Local Authorities in Great Britain have had power to acquire, declare and manage Local Nature Reserves since 1949. With development of Local Agenda 21 these have taken added significance, increased by Local Biodiversity Action Plans. Governmental emphasis on education reinforces the value reserves have for schools.

Fifty recommendations from a 36 page review of LNRs written by Urban Forum of the UK Man and the Biosphere Committee emphasise such foci. The review suggests LNRs should be key nodes of multifunctional green networks, protected by development plan policies and given high priority even where Local Authority resources are diminishing.

A review is suggested of legislation (National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act

1949) against current needs. The Forum has no policy making nor operational role but its work has been given fresh impetus by the UK rejoining UNESCO which has developed the Man and the Biosphere programme since its inception.

### Death Plus Decay Equals Life

Dunham Massey Park, near Altrincham, on the edge of Greater Manchester, is renowned for old trees and dependent rare invertebrates and in November 1997 an event was held as part of the Veteran Trees Initiative.

Amanda Giles from English Nature said that although many old trees are respected, they are often considered a safety threat and are being felled unnecessarily, whilst many remaining are frequently suffering from inappropriate management. Dead does not necessarily mean dangerous. The National Trust's management of the Dunham Massey veterans shows what can be and should be done.

Details from Amanda Giles, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA

### Amphibians trapped in Gully Pots

Attention has been drawn to the many casualties amongst our amphibian populations as each year they migrate to and from their breeding ponds. Roadside gully pots are intended to take surface water off roads, but frequently become traps to all life that falls into them. A Great crested newt site near Wrexham has this problem. Bordered by two roads, one with 28 gully pots, the other with 18 pots, it is potentially very damaging to the newt population.

Weekly visits by the local Countryside Service using nets to remove trapped animals has proved effective but time consuming. A local group of children calling themselves 'The Toads' has designed and built an experimental ladder, made to measure for each gully pot, using a half rail with fencing wire attached, and with extra wire left at one end as an overhang to provide an escape route through the pot lid onto the road.

Five ladders were in place in June 1997, and showed promising results with fewer Great crested newts and frogs trapped than in 1996, but so far with little effect on Smooth newt casualties. The group of children are attempting a different design to help the Smooth newts. More information from Karen Bowen, Ty Mawr Country Park, Cae Gwilym Lane, Cefn Mawr, Wrexham.

### A Framework for the Future

Recently English Nature published a review suggesting that the idea of green networks carry out a wide range of functions, promoted in the past by Olmsted and others to give a framework for the future. Green networks can help to ensure wild nature can be enjoyed near to where people live.

Achievement will take time and integrated planning will need to be robust to hold a 100 year strategy on course. The report closes with 'Too many cities are, environmentally speaking, open sores which will take time, hard work and money to heal, when they should be a triumph of human existence in harmony with the natural environment.'

See "A Framework for the Future: Green Networks with Multiple Uses in and around Towns and Cities" English Nature Research Report No. 256, 40pp free from English Nature Enquiries Service, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA



## The spider *Argiope bruennichi* in Essex

*Argiope bruennichi* has always been a very rare spider in Britain, confined to within a few miles of the south coast of England in Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, with older records for East Sussex and East Kent. However it now seems to be undergoing a dramatic expansion in its range and the spider turned up last year both in the south and north of Essex.

These first county records were at One Tree Hill in S. Essex and at Alphamstone in N. Essex (see Recorder reports in the Essex Naturalist for 1996/97). Subsequently I have learnt that the father of John Lamoureux also discovered the spider at Blackshots in Grays last year. I was taken to see this population in August this year and we found *Argiope* to be present in huge numbers across a large area of rough grassland and even alongside the public footpath that runs through an arable field of wheat.

This year I also swept an immature *Argiope* in July from tall grassland alongside a ditch and hedge near Orsett and I have recently received reports of further new sightings in the area: the Trust warden of Grays Chalk Quarry Alan Sadgrove reports that the spider was found at the quarry during a recent work party and Chris Beale has informed me of the spider being found during a WATCH meeting on an area of waste ground near St. Clements Church in West Thurrock. This area of waste ground is also important for other rare invertebrates, and a number of nationally rare and scarce species are present including the RDB1 tachinid fly *Gymnosoma nitens* with its Nationally Scarce host the bug *Sciocoris cursitans*, the RDB3 Blue carpenter bee *Ceratina cyanea*, the Nationally Scarce (Notable A) spider hunting wasp *Aporus unicolor*, which preys on the purse-web spider *Atypus affinis*, itself very rare in Essex and many others.

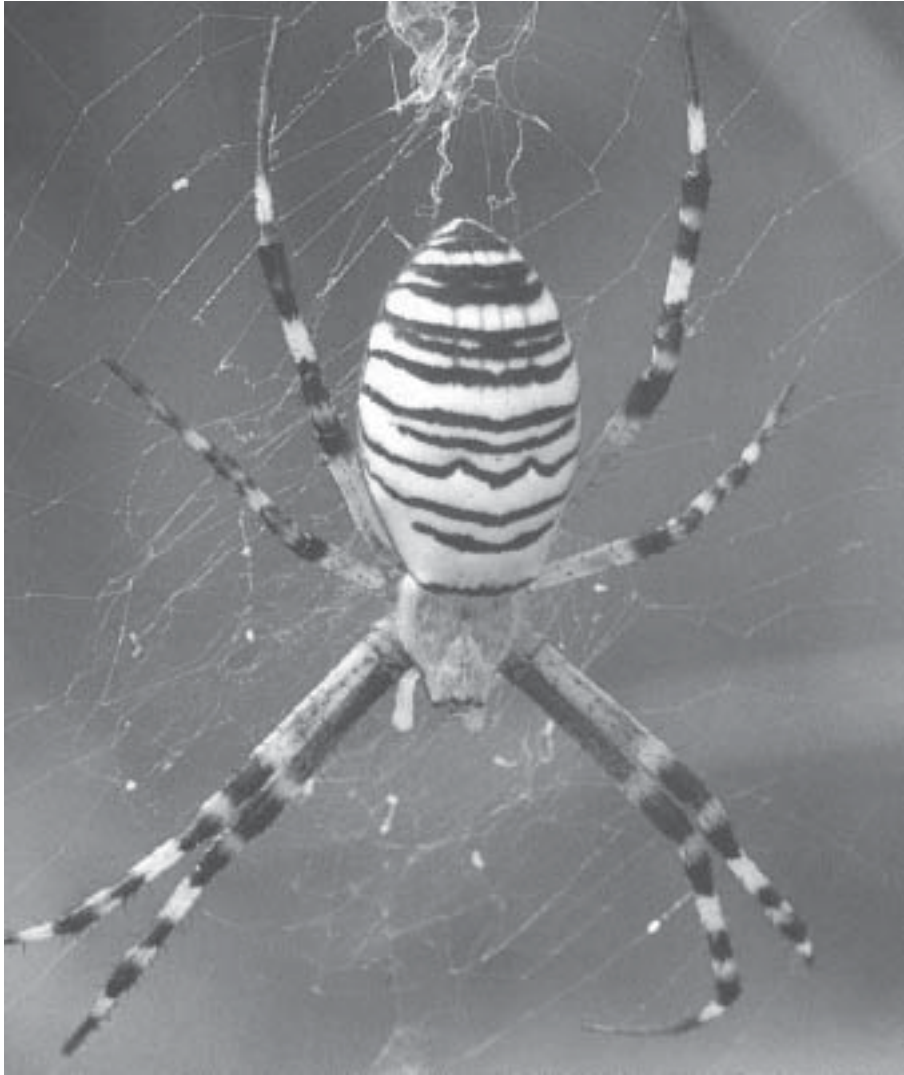
The story continues - *Argiope* has recently been found in Surrey this year (David Baldock pers. comm.) and apparently it was found in north Kent a couple of years ago (Mike Edwards pers. comm.). It now seems almost certain that the species will be found at various sites in between Essex and the south coast, and may even have spread to Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Suffolk, Norfolk and beyond.

With similar remarkable changes in the past few years to the distribution and abundance of species such as the Bee wolf *Philanthus triangulum* it seems that the longer warmer summers extending later into the autumn (even this year?!) have favoured species that are mature and active in the late summer period. The Bee wolf was formerly extremely rare (Nationally Vulnerable RDB2) and virtually confined to the Isle of Wight, yet is now to be found as far north as Lincolnshire and Lancashire, often in abundance and will nest in practically any sandy ground with reports of colonies even in the middle of a roundabout in London.

*Argiope*, like its relatives *Araneus quadratus* and the Garden spider *Araneus diadematus* matures in the late summer and gravid females and then the webs with their egg sacs will still be around at least into October. The large orb-web is a significant investment of resources on the part of the spider and it is unlikely to survive from year to year in areas which are cut before late autumn. Rough grassland still uncut into late autumn are definitely worth investigating. Although very distinctive, with the tranverse yellow abdominal stripes and the zig-zag 'stabilimentum' or thick band of silk on its web, the spider is still easy to miss amongst the tall vegetation, and it seems difficult to collect by sweeping, rapidly dropping to ground level when disturbed.

Peter Harvey

The spider *Argiope bruennichi*



**CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER**

**Please send contributions for the next Newsletter, due out in February, to the Editor, Mr Peter Harvey, 32 Lodge Lane, Grays, RM16 2YP by the end of December at the latest.**

*Remember that the production of the Newsletter depends on contributions from members.*

Many members must have wildlife news, observations or the results of fieldwork that would be of interest to others - do not underestimate the interest of your own observations!!

If text has already been typed on a standalone PC computer then a disk with the file would be very helpful but typed or handwritten notes are welcome.

**Deadline dates for the Newsletter each year**

January/February Newsletter:	deadline - end of December
April/May Newsletter:	deadline - end of March
August/September Newsletter:	deadline - end of July
October/November Newsletter:	deadline - end of September

*Readers are advised that publication of material in the Newsletter does not imply, unless indicated to the contrary, that the views and opinions expressed therein are shared by the editor or by the Council of the Essex Field Club.*

## WHATS ON: ESSEX FIELD CLUB

## NOVEMBER

- Sat 7th           **FUNGUS GROUP Fungus foray in churchyards around Chelmsford.** Meet 10.30am outside Broomfield churchyard TL706105. Leader Tony Boniface (01245) 266316
- Sun 8th           **FUNGUS GROUP Fungus foray in East Donyland Woods,** Mersea Road, Colchester. Meet 10.30am in lay-by at TM 011206. Leaders Ian Rose and Anne Guiver (01206) 392870
- Sat 14th           **BIRD GROUP Shoebury East Beach for waders.** Meet 10,30am at George Street car park TQ 942848. Leader David Williams (01245) 225119
- Sun 15th           **FUNGUS GROUP Fungus foray in Hockley Woods.** Meet 11am at car park by Bull public house TQ834925. Leader John Skinner (01702) 309270
- Sat 28th           **GENERAL MEETING 1419 "FLORA OF ICELAND".** Talk by Steve Prewer. 3pm at the Red Cross Hall, London Road, Chelmsford (car park entrance in Writtle Road)

## DECEMBER

- Sat 26th           **BOXING DAY RAMBLE Ramsden Heath and Kiln Common.** 4½ miles. Meet 11am in Mill Lane, Ramsden Heath (park carefully) TQ 708959. Leaders John and Maureen Tollfree (01708) 742206

## JANUARY 1999

- Sat 16th           **BOTANY GROUP Annual Meeting.** Review of the year and planning for the next. Commence at 3pm in the Red Cross Hall, London Road, Chelmsford (car park entrance in Writtle Road)
- Sun 17th           **BIRD GROUP Stour Wood and River Stour for wintering birds.** Meet 10.30am at reserve car park TM 189309. Leaders Judith and Tony Boniface (01245) 266316
- Sat 23rd           **GENERAL MEETING 1420 "WILDLIFE OF TRINIDAD" Talk by Geoff Gibbs.** Commence 3pm at the Red Cross Hall, London Road, Chelmsford (car park entrance in Writtle Road)
- Sat 30th           **FUNGUS GROUP Annual Meeting** Meet 3pm at the home of Tony and Judith Boniface, 40 Pentland Avenue, Chelmsford, CM1 4AZ. Details from Tony and Judith on (01245) 266316

## FEBRUARY

- Sat 13th           **GENERAL MEETING 1421 "MUD AND BOULDERS: THE ESSEX GEOLOGY COLLECTION AND ITS IMPORTANCE".** Talk by Graham Ward. Commence at 3pm in the Red Cross Hall, London Road, Chelmsford (car park entrance in Writtle Road)