

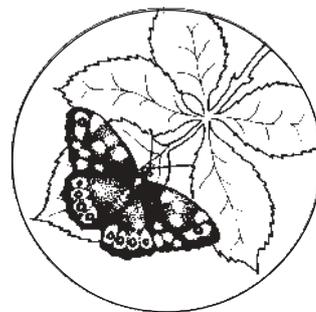
THE ESSEX FIELD CLUB

DEPARTMENT OF LIFE SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

ROMFORD ROAD, STRATFORD,

LONDON, E15 4LZ



NEWSLETTER NO. 28

February 1999

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

I and Council wish all members of the Field Club every best wish and success for 1999. We start the year with a well-grounded spirit of optimism. As you will see below, initiatives started over the last year or so are beginning to come to fruition.

A sum of money has been made available from the London Borough of Newham's Passmore Edwards museum fund to help with relocating and conserving our collections. The fund has already been called upon for materials for the long overdue conservation of our geological collections. Graham Ward has made a start on this work and also is working on the catalogue of fossils, minerals, rocks and erratics. We have established, after some hiccups, that it can be presented in Mac and IBM formats, though of course a hard copy will be available also.

Good progress has also been made with regard to our contribution to the Red Data Book. A good number of Recorders have sent in their information already and more is promised. I would particularly like to thank the Recorders for their efforts in producing this information. Jes Dagley, representing the Field Club, will take this further with Chris Gibson, Senior Conservation Officer with English Nature at Colchester, in February/March.

In the last Newsletter, Colin Plant announced that he would no longer be able to edit the Essex Naturalist. The Field Club owes him a great debt in producing the Naturalist in its present high standard of presentation and scientific content. I and Council would like to express our gratitude to Colin for his work on, and achievement with, the Naturalist. His call for a successor has been heeded and the matter has been resolved. A few of us are meeting in the middle of January to discuss our portfolio of publications and consider whether any changes or new initiatives are needed. If you have any views about our publications, please make them known to me.

We will shortly be drawing up our meetings programme for the next year. In the past I have asked you to make known to me, or any member of Council, any views you have. Do you have a view on the content of the meetings? Are they interesting enough, varied enough, have sufficient scientific content, are they too specialised? Should they be 'look-see' only or should they have a more serious purpose, such as recording? Would half-days, e.g. Saturday or Sunday mornings for field meetings, or evenings, for lectures and some field visits, be more convenient? If you have any views, please make them known. I am giving my address at the bottom of this page so that you have an easy point of contact. I look forward to hearing any views.

Peter Allen

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01992 630661 peter.allen6@virgin.net

THE ESSEX BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN - a major opportunity for the Field Club.

Essex, although a densely-populated county which has seen much destruction of natural habitats, remains a varied and special place for wildlife. The variety of life, or biodiversity, is influenced by some important features of the county such as its unsurpassed length of coastline, its large and ancient pollarded Forests and the ancientness of its farming landscape, with its old hedge-banks, meandering green lanes and straggling commons. The Essex Biodiversity Action Plan, to be published later this year, sets out a bold agenda not only to preserve what we have left but to try to reverse the losses. It also aims to involve the public in the action far more than has been managed up to now.

The Essex Biodiversity Action Plan has arisen in direct response to the UK Government's commitment that it entered into at the 'Earth Summit' in Rio in 1992, when it signed up to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Following this the Government produced a UK Action Plan in 1993 to which the voluntary agencies (RSPB, Wildlife Trusts) responded and this dialogue resulted in the production of a large number of action plans for both species and habitats in 1995. These national action plans detailed the measures required to protect sustain and, importantly, increase the threatened species and habitats.

The measures in these national action plans, to be successful, require "ownership" and action at a very local level. It was with this in mind that local authorities have been encouraged, and in the case of Essex been very keen, to develop their own county and district biodiversity action plans. Work was begun in June 1997 on preparing the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan. A steering group was set up that included a wide range of organisations and individuals and, as you'd expect, this included a number of Essex Field Club members and recorders. The resulting Plan includes a host of individual plans for species and habitats of national significance but also many that are important locally as a characteristic, but increasingly threatened, part of the county scene. Habitats covered so far include features as diverse as cereal field margins, saline lagoons, ancient woodlands and green lanes. Species covered range across many taxonomic groups from plants to molluscs and mammals. Examples of species include the Shining Ram's-horn Snail, Shrill Carder Bee, Heath Fritillary, Great Crested Newt, Song Thrush and Skylark, Dormouse and even the Harbour Porpoise.

The future and towards a county Red Data list

The Plan is not a finished document (it's actually to be published in loose-leaf format), as many more habitats and species remain to be included. Also, as sponsors and land-owners begin to make commitments to action, current plans will need updating and reviewing. As part of this development English Nature has asked the Field Club to help to compile a Red Data list for Essex.

Red Data books exist for a number of different groups of species. The idea behind the books is to list those species considered threatened or vulnerable to extinction and others subject to severe declines. You may have read recently about the sharp declines in many farmland bird species and this has led to publications by the RSPB and the BTO of new Red Data lists that now, shockingly, include species such as Skylark, Grey Partridge and Song Thrush amongst the species of high conservation concern.

The Essex list will include all species threatened nationally and, in addition, those species considered by the Club Recorders to be threatened, vulnerable or declining rapidly in the county. This involves a lot of work by our Recorders putting together lists for each of

their taxonomic groups. Progress on this has been very good so far (for which great thanks go to the Recorders - see President's Page) and by April 1999 it is hoped that draft lists will be available for all groups. English Nature is then hoping to have a small amount of funding to allow all the separate lists to be pulled together onto a large database which can be put out for wider consultation during 1999/2000.

This Essex list will be used to decide which additional species should be targeted for Biodiversity Action Plans and which might be useful for monitoring the state of health of the Action Plan habitats. Furthermore, it is hoped that the Field Club's way of marking the new millenium might be to produce an Essex Red Data book that could be an important source of reference to conservationists and naturalists for years to come.

Clearly, the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan provides a very important opportunity for the Essex Field Club to have a strong influence on conservation in the county. In addition to the production of the Red Data list there is much that members will be able to contribute in the future. Each species and habitat action plan contains lots of possibilities for survey, monitoring and direct conservation effort; a lot of volunteers will be needed for surveys, such as a new Great Nut Hunt for Dormice and surveys of farmland for arable weeds, butterflies, and birds. There should be a lot more about the Biodiversity Action Plan and what you can do to help in future Newsletters and Naturalists; so watch this space!

Dr Jes Dagley
General Secretary

Plant Galls

It has been suggested that perhaps I might write a few lines on plant galls. Some members will remember a talk given at Chelmsford last year by Jerry Bowdrey, I cannot compete with his erudition, but my own thoughts might encourage others.

I came into plant galls because I understood that Will Plant was trying hard to get a study society going. I determined to support the society marginally, not really my cup of tea, I was then a spiderman, I thought! However, a course at Preston Ponteford Field Centre opened my eyes, other people were KEEN (isn't keenness infectious?). Any natural history subject that has few adherents interests me, and plant galls do stand still.

It is possible to find galls at most times of the year, and a knowledge of botany to some extent is a help. No use looking at a fallen leaf and thinking that the pustules on it are *Hartigiola annulipes* (occurs on Beech) if the leaf is of Alder, when the pustule might be *Eriophyes axillare*. As the galls are the result of a causative organism affecting the normal growth of a plant, and most plants in our islands are most active between March and September (give or take a few days) galls are fresh and easier to find between May to September.

Not all galls are large and obvious like knopper galls on oak or the bladder-like swelling of the stems of thistle (caused by a fly) - take such a bladder home and let the flies breed out, a container with damp sand in the bottom should do the trick, then wait for the comments from the lady of the house! Some are quite small and you have to search for them, like the tiny oval, smooth swelling along the main vein of some oak leaves, *Andricus anthracina*, the Oyster gall. But most of you will be used to searching for small things, butterfly eggs, spiderlings, lichen and moss plants for example.

One thing in favour of galls, they do not require expensive collecting equipment, a pair of secateurs can be a help for twiggy growths, a pair of scissors (less damage to the host plant), a couple of plastic bags and a guide book such as the Provisional Keys and/or Redfern and Asken's "Plant Galls".

On Saturday 26th September, about seven members of the London Natural History Society (I was one) attended a visit to Grays Chalk Pit, led by Jerry Bowdrey. A list of 27 galls was made for the day, which was fortunately dry and warm. Don't expect to equal that each time, but there is always the chance of a surprise or two.

One thing I have learned over time, it is unwise to believe that a survey is exhaustive, something else is bound to turn up on another occasion. That's what makes natural history interesting! Keep looking and don't be discouraged. Jerry Bowdrey of Colchester Museum Resource Centre, 14 Ryegate Road, Colchester, will always be pleased to learn of your records. Until he knows your identification capabilities, it would be advisable to send specimens for confirmation first. Fresh in a plastic bag gives the best chance, I believe.

Our list follows:

On oak

Cynips divisa (Hartig)

Cynips quercusfolii (L.) - Cherry gall

Neuroterus quercusbaccarum (L.)

- Common spangle

Neuroterus numismatis (Geoffroy)

- Silk button spangle

Neuroterus albipes (Schenk)

- Smooth spangle

Andricus anthracina (Curtis) - Oyster gall

Andricus kollari (Hartig) - Marble gall

Andricus quercuscalicis (Burgsdorf)

- Knopper gall

Andricus fecundator (Hartig) - Artichoke gall

On Sycamore

Artacris macrorhynchus (Nalepa)

On Rose sp.

Diplolepis rosae (L.) - Robin's pincushion

Diplolepis rosarum (Giraud) - Spined pea gall

Diplolepis eglanteriae (Hartig)

- Smooth pea gall

On *Viola* sp.

Dasineura affinis (Kieffer)

On willow sp.

Rhabdophaga marginemtorquens

(Bremi)

Rhabdophaga heterobia (F. Löw)

Iteamyia capreae (Winnertz)

Pontania viminalis (L.)

On Stinging nettle

Dasineura urticae (Perris)

On Blackthorn

Eriophyes similis (Nalepa)

Eriophyes padi (Nalepa)

Pristiphora monogyniae (Hartig)

On Hawthorn

Eriophyes goniothorax (Nalepa)

On Dogwood

Craneiobia corni (Giraud)

On Alder

Eriophyes inangulis (Nalepa)

On Beech

Hartigiola annulipes (Hartig)

On Hazel

Phytoptus avellanae (Nalepa)

References

Redfern, Margaret & Asken, R.R. *Plant Galls*. Naturalists Handbook series No. 17. Richmond Publishing Co. Ltd., P.O.Box 963, Slough, SL2 3RS. (£9-61 incl. p&p)

Stubbs, F.B. (Editor) *Provisional Keys to British Plant Galls*. Obtainable at £4.50 from Peter Shirley, 72 Dagger Lane, West Bromwich, West Midlands B71 4BS.

Ken Hill

Bird Group Meeting to Hanningfield Reservoir, 23rd August 1998

Three members of the Field Club met at the reserve on a day that began dry and stayed that way to the end of the meeting in the afternoon. We started by watching a female Garganey at close quarters opposite the warden's hut. This was certainly our best view yet of this rather secretive duck. Other ducks seen included two Pintail and two female Red crested pochard amongst the more usual inhabitants.

Waders were few in number including some Lapwings and a single Common sandpiper. Migrants were still to be seen, and we recorded Common terns, Swallows and House martins over the water, with a fleeting glimpse of a Chiff-chaff/Willow warbler in the woodland which was too brief to see its leg colour. We were surprised at the large number of herons standing around, collectively known as a sedge of herons.

On returning from the bird hides where we had seen large numbers, if not a great variety of birds, we met the warden, Claire Cadman, who told us that Stan Hudgell had just found some interesting plants on a bank of top soil cleared from the temporary car park and laid along the edge of the field. We went to admire the rare sight of Corn cockle *Agrostemma githago* and Purple bugloss *Echium plantagineum* in full bloom. Presumably the seeds had lain dormant from days of previous cultivation as it seems unlikely that someone had scattered the seeds deliberately.

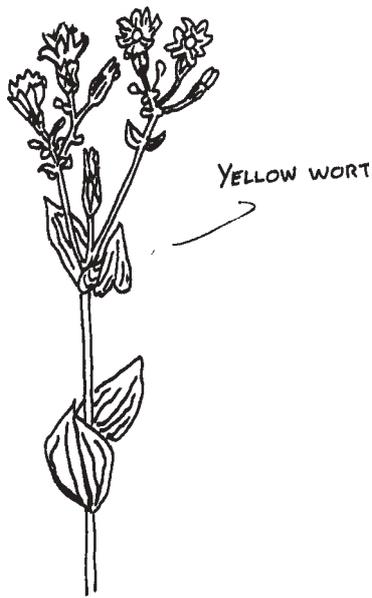
Birds recorded

Great crested grebe	Moorhen
Little grebe	Coot
Cormorant	Lapwing
Grey heron	Common sandpiper
Mute swan	Lesser black-backed gull
Canada goose	Black-headed gull
Greylag goose	Common tern
Mallard	Wood pigeon
Gadwall	Swallow
Pintail	House martin
Teal	Pied wagtail
Garganey	Common crow
Shoveller	Willow warbler/Chiffchaff
Red crested pochard	Blue tit
Tufted duck	Great tit
Pochard	Long tailed tit
Ruddy duck	

NB The Paglesham meeting on 24th October 1998 was abandoned due to persistent heavy rain.

Tony and Judith Boniface

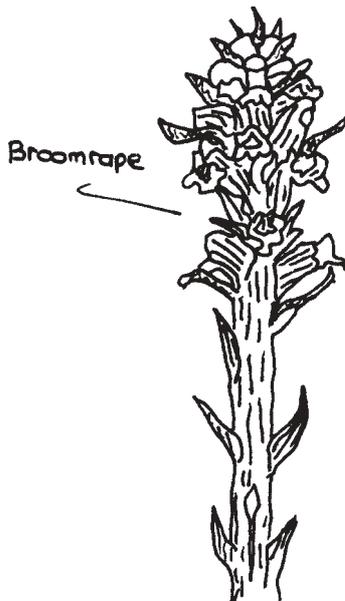
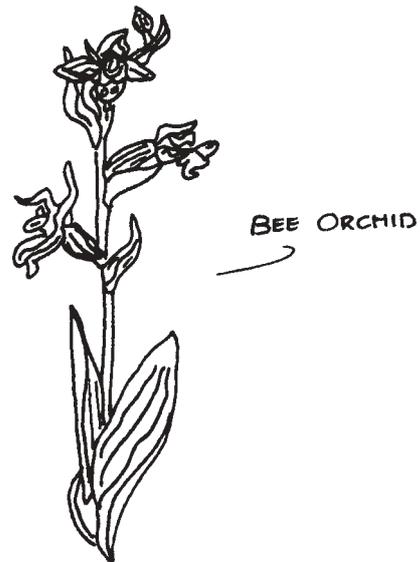
Some observations of plants at Walnut Tree Farm pit and Roxwell pit 1998



A couple of miles outside Chelmsford there are quite a few gravel pits. Some of the disused pits have been turned into fishing pits. This seems to be good for wildlife as the fishing clubs leave areas of thicket and grassland.

At Walnut Tree Farm pit I have found forty-four flowering spikes of Pyramidal orchids and three spikes of Common broomrape. On the grassy sloping sides of the pit three hundred Bee orchids grow in large groups. Common spotted orchid also grow on the pit sides and my dad and I located over two hundred. Other plants that grow in good numbers include Hop trefoil and Bird's foot trefoil.

The County Council-owned wood on the side of the pit contains plants like Wood spurge, Bluebell, Wood anemone and Pignut. Wild service trees grow at the edge of the wood.



At Roxwell pit my dad and I recorded fourteen Pyramidal orchids and over one hundred Bee orchids. Common blue fleabane grows along-side a few spikes of Yellow-wort. Perforate St. John's wort grows well in most areas of the pit. Common centuary and Hop trefoil grow sparsely throughout the pit area.

Geoffrey Wilkinson (15)

Some observations of Dragonflies 1998

On the 18th of May whilst walking along the bank of the River Chelmer at Standford Mill, I recorded my first dragonflies of the year. On many of the pieces of floating vegetation drifting slowly along the river there were Blue-tailed damselflies drifting along with them. In total I found fifteen Blue-tailed damselflies along with three Banded demoiselle, four Large red damselfly and a single Common blue damselfly.

The 19th May brought sunny and hot conditions as a trip to Lawford Lane near Writtle revealed a few dragonflies. A dazzling one hundred and six Banded demoiselle frequented the banks of the River Wid as it runs parallel to the lane. A single White-legged damselfly was found amongst the grass on the bank of the Wid and I obtained very good views of its identification characteristics.

On the same day my dad and I visited Hyland's Park and recorded fourteen Red-eyed damselflies on the fishing pond outside of the Writtle belt. We both observed the Red-eyed damselflies nearly in the middle of the pond hovering fairly low over a large patch of Broad-leaved pondweed. I've found at other sites where Red-eyed damselflies occur, they all seem to be in similar habitat - still freshwater ponds with floating pond weed and Broad-leaved pondweed.

Another trip to Lawford Lane on the 29th May produced eight Blue-tailed damselflies, four Common blue damselflies and two Azure damselflies.

Lawford Lane on the 28th May was still in pretty good form for Banded Demoiselle with over eighty-one present along the river. White-legged damselfly numbers had increased to two females and one male. The male was showing an abdomen with water colour washed out blue and prominent broad white legs with a thin black line running down their centre.

Along the Dengie coast on the 30th May I located a hawking Emperor dragonfly to reward my four mile bike ride along the sea wall.

On the 20th June my dad and I observed four Black-tailed skimmers, one Broad-bodied chaser, six Blue-tailed damselflies and six Banded demoiselle with a sprinkling of Azure damselflies.

Lawford Lane on the 21st June produced a single male White-legged damselfly with a brilliant one hundred Banded demoiselle. Bearing in mind that these dragonflies were frequenting only a half kilometre strip of the River Wid it was a good number. Most of the Banded demoiselle appeared to have been loafing males that resided in the grass.

A trip to Roxwell Pit on the 22nd yielded two sluggish Common darter clinging on to the heads of crops trying to soak up what sunlight there was.

At Standford Mill along the River Chelmer on the 24th produced a single Brown hawker along with four Emperor dragonflies and three Common darter.

Another bike ride along the Dengie coast on the 28th produced two Southern hawker, sixteen Migrant hawker, two Common darter and three Emperor dragonflies.

A warm day at Pengy Mill on the 18th August saw mild conditions which lured out 21 Migrant hawker, two Ruddy darter, four Common blue damselflies, four Black-tailed skimmers, twelve Common darter and a lone Southern hawker.

Danbury on the 2nd September produced twenty-one Migrant hawkers and a single Common darter.

Blue House Farm near Fambridge on the 6th September brought with it six Migrant hawker along the grassy areas of the seawall with four Common darter frequenting the wall.

A very windy day at Cutton Lock along the River Chelmer did not deter the few dragonflies that were around. These dragonflies took the form of three Brown hawkers, three Ruddy darters, five Common darter, sixteen Migrant hawker and one hundred Common blue damselflies.

My dragonfly year ended on the 18th October with eight Common darters and two Migrant hawker hanging around the few small bushes along the Dengie coast.

Geoffrey Wilkinson (15)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please remember subscriptions were due at the end of December. If you have not yet paid your 1999 subscription to the Treasurer, John Bath 34 Chestnut Avenue, Billericay, Essex CM12 9JF please do so a.s.a.p.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

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

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

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).

MARCH

Sat 13th **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 119**. Commence at 3pm in the Red Cross Hall, London Road, Chelmsford (car park entrance in Writtle Road). The AGM will be followed by the Presidential Address from Professor Ted Benton on "BUMBLEBEES IN ESSEX".

Sat 20th **BIRD GROUP Rookery Survey**. Meet 10am near Felstead Church TL676204. Leaders Judith and Tony Boniface (01245) 266316.

Sat 27th **GENERAL MEETING 1422 Nazeing Walk**. Meet 11am at the Sun Inn TL420066 (Lifts could be arranged). Leader Irene Buchan 0181-5296423

APRIL

Sat 10th **BIRD GROUP Rookery survey**. Meet 10am opposite the Viper public house, Mill Green TL641018. Leader David Williams (01245) 225119.

Sun 11th **GENERAL MEETING 1422 Spring flowers in Gibcracks Wood area**.
Meet 10.30am at entrance to track TL 763028. Limited parking space - lifts could be arranged. Leader Tony Boniface (01245)266316.

Sat 17th **AMPHIBIANS in Epping Forest Ponds**. Meet 10am Conservation Centre car park. Leader David Scott (01245) 361475.

MAY

Sat 8th **BOTANY GROUP Plants of Warley Place**. Meet 10.30am at reserve car park TQ 583908. Leaders Ailsa Wildig (01245) 248253 and Tim Pyner.

Sat 15th **BIRD GROUP Thorndon Park**. Meet 10am at reserve centre car park TQ608916. Leader John Bath (01277) 651890.

ESSEX FIELD CLUB PUBLICATIONS

The following publications are available, from Tony Boniface, 40 Pentland Avenue, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 4AZ. All titles are available to individuals on a cash with order basis. Please add 50p towards postage and packing irrespective of the size of the order.

Field Club notelets (illustrated in previous Newsletters) are marketed in packets of ten, two of each design, together with envelopes. They are on sale at Field Club Meetings at £1.00 per packet or by post for £1 + 75p to cover postage and packing.

THE ESSEX NATURALIST SERIES

- No. 1. **Deer of Essex** by Dr Donald Chapman.
A 50 page paperback describing the distribution and history of deer in Essex. Photographs, maps, etc. ISBN 0 905637 06 2 (published 1977) PRICE £2.00
- No. 3. **Tiptree Heath - its history and natural history** by Laurie Forsyth.
19 page booklet describing the most important heathland habitat in Essex. ISBN 0 905637 08 9 (published 1978) PRICE 60p.
- No. 5. **The Essex Field Club - the first 100 years** by L. S. Harley.
21 page booklet describing the history of the Club on the occasion of its centenary. Photographs. ISBN 0 905637 10 0 (published 1980) PRICE £1.00
- No. 6. **The Smaller Moths of Essex** by A. M. Emmet.
The most detailed account of the smaller moths ever published for any British county. Distribution maps and details of over 1000 species. Illustrations of representative moths in each major group. ISBN 0 905637 11 9 (published 1981) PRICE £5.00 (reduced from £7.00).
- No. 7. **Lords Bushes** by M. W. Hanson.
The history and ecology of an Epping Forest woodland. 69 page paperback with 8 pages of photographs and additional line drawings. ISBN 0 905637 12 7 (published 1983) PRICE £3.00
- No. 8. **The Larger Moths and Butterflies of Essex** by A. M. Emmet and G. A. Pyman.
The companion volume to No. 6. Distribution maps for every species and a complete analysis of the changing butterfly and moth fauna of Essex. ISBN 0 905637 13 5 (published 1985) PRICE £6.00 (reduced from £9.00).
Volume 6 and Volume 8 are available together for £9.00 post free.
- No. 9. **The Dragonflies of Essex** by Dr Edward Benton.
A very comprehensive and readable account of the county dragonfly fauna. It includes the results of a recent county-wide survey and much historical information. ISBN 0 905637 14 3 (published 1988) PRICE £5.95
- No. 10. **Essex Elm** by M. W. Hanson.
Elms were devastated by Dutch Elm disease. In this booklet Mark Hanson examines the role of elms in the landscape and their uses, and also gives an up-to-date account of their status in Essex today. 87 pages, 19 photographs, maps and illustrations. ISBN 0 905637 15 1 (published 1990) PRICE £3.95
- No. 11. **Epping Forest - through the eye of the naturalist** edited by M. W. Hanson.
A book chronicling the complex land-use history of Essex's most famous Forest with modern accounts of its flora and fauna. ISBN 0 905637 16 X (published 1992) PRICE £10
- No. 12. **Essex Naturalist No 12 (New series) - Journal** edited by M. W. Hanson.
ISSN 0071-1489, ISBN 0 905637-17-8 (published 1995) PRICE £5
- No. 13. **Essex Naturalist No 13 (New series) -Journal** edited by P.R.Harvey & C.W. Plant. ISSN 0071-1489 (published 1996) PRICE £5
- No. 14. **Essex Naturalist No 14 (New series) -Journal** edited by C.W. Plant.
ISSN 0071-1489 (published 1997) PRICE £5
- No. 15. **Essex Naturalist No 15 (New series) -Journal** edited by C.W. Plant.
ISSN 0071-1489 (published 1998) PRICE £5
- The Clay Tobacco-pipe in Britain** by L.S.Harley. 51page paperback covering the history and identification of these pipes. Special attention is given to pipes made in Essex and East Anglia. ISBN 0 905637 00 3 (second edition 1976) PRICE £2.50.