

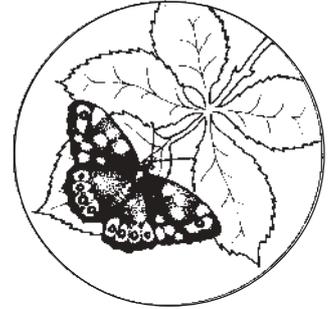
THE ESSEX FIELD CLUB

HEADQUARTERS:

THE PASSMORE EDWARDS MUSEUM,

ROMFORD ROAD, STRATFORD,

LONDON, E15 4LZ



NEWSLETTER NO. 7

August 1993

FROM THE PRESIDENT

At over 100 years old, the Essex Field Club is the senior natural history organisation in the County. Over the last century the Club has made a major contribution to wildlife recording in Essex. Looking back at the achievements of the Club and at the list of past holders of the office is a disconcerting experience for a new President charged with continuing this tradition.

One of the great strengths of the club is that we have a distinguished panel of recorders who receive and maintain records of many groups of the County's wildlife. Recently, however, we have been overshadowed by larger organisations such as Essex Wildlife Trust, whose aims are to deal more specifically with the conservation rather than the recording of the County's plants and animals. The Council feel that the time has come to raise the profile of the Club and to restore its true position in recording the natural history of the County.

We hope to increase membership by encouraging those with more than a passing interest in natural history to join the Club in addition to the conservation organisations to which they might already belong. Probably most of us will belong to several organisations, each with slightly different, though complementary aims. We also hope that the considerable number of people who would like to improve their skills in wildlife identification will be persuaded to realise that attending Essex Field Club meetings is one of the best ways to do this.

Another development will be to change the style of the journal. For the past sixteen years, each issue of the Essex Naturalist has dealt with a single topic, and this series has been much acclaimed. We intend now that the Essex Naturalist will revert to the more traditional style of natural history journal, containing a number of different articles on a variety of topics, with reports from the specialist groups and accounts of notable finds made during the previous year. In this way it is hoped that the Naturalist will give an account of the Club's activities and will provide a permanent and accessible record of the County's wildlife.

Jeremy Ison

AN APPEAL FOR RECORDS OF THE SPIDER *Nigma walckenaeri*

Last year I made an appeal for records and specimens of the spider *Nigma walckenaeri* and this resulted in a new 10Km square record for the species at Purfleet from our member John Davidson. *Nigma* is small green spider makes its web across the upperside of leaves with a concave surface and then sits underneath between the leaf and the web. Plants such as Lilac, *Forsythia* and Holly are favoured.

The spider is nationally notable, apparently confined to the London region, particularly in gardens and parks, but in recent years it has been found as far afield as Southend and Colchester. The spider may well occur elsewhere in Essex and I would urge members to look in their garden and local neighbourhood for the spider. It is now in evidence, and will be maturing soon, lasting into the early autumn.

I would be grateful for a sample specimen of any that you find, with details of the location and date, preferably also with a grid reference. An old film container or similar is excellent for safe custody of the spider, together with a leaf to maintain *some* humidity. I will gladly refund postage and let you know if the spider is indeed *Nigma walckenaeri*..

Peter Harvey, 9 Kent Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6DE

A NEW WOODLOUSE IN ESSEX

Mr Jon Daws reports in the latest Newsletter of the British Isopod Study Group the finding of *Eluma purpurascens* at Canvey Island in Essex. He visited the area in November 1992 to look for the species *Halophiloscia couchi* at a locality mentioned by Collinge, but with no success turned to a landfill site that had been capped three years previously for a change of habitat. A small part of the site was still being used as a collection site for refuse, with the rubbish being removed in skips. A search behind the furthest skip where there was an overgrown ditch and plenty of rubbish to rummage through produced a total of three specimens of *Eluma purpurascens*, together with the species *Porcellionides pruinosus* under rotten logs on a nearby embankment and elsewhere around the site.

Eluma is a pill-woodlouse, but can easily be distinguished from the common *Armadillidium vulgare* by each eye consisting of a single large ocellus. In England the species was reported from only two sites, one in east Norfolk and the other near Herne Bay, Kent, but in the last few years it has been found in about a dozen further locations in Kent (Hopkin, 1991). It occurs on coastal cliffs and inland synanthropic sites.

Woodlice are yet another under worked invertebrate group in Essex, and the fully illustrated AIDGAP key by Dr Stephen Hopkin to the 35 species of woodlice known to be native or naturalised in Britain and Ireland is very much to be recommended (Field Studies Vol. 7 No. 4 (1991)).

TWO NEW BEES FOR ESSEX

In the last two years an important site near Chadwell, South Essex has produced a very large list of rare invertebrates as well as an interesting flora. This year the site continues to turn up new and interesting species, including two bees that seem to be new to the county, the nationally rare (RDB3) species *Andrena florea* and the nationally notable (Na) species *Andrena fulvago*. I am grateful to John Felton for confirming the identification of these two species.

Andrena florea has an obligate association with White Bryony *Bryonia dioica*, the females gathering pollen from its flowers for the provision of its cells and nests are usually constructed in exposed sandy soil. Apparently the bee has never been especially common, and post-1970 records are known for only nine scattered sites in south-east England (Falk, 1991). Like many other hymenoptera the bee needs bare or sparsely vegetated sandy soil in sunny situations and the site at Chadwell is perfectly managed in this respect, consisting of a short unimproved flower-rich grassland vegetation on Thames terrace gravels which is kept open by rabbit and horse grazing. The presence of old sand and gravel faces in part of the site, the result of small scale mineral extraction, provides a rich variety of nesting opportunities. There is a very strong population at the site and the bee also seems to occur in smaller numbers elsewhere in the local area near Linford and at Mucking Heath. Searching for it elsewhere in the county has not resulted in further records.

The second bee, *Andrena fulvago*, was formerly very widespread in the south, but has undergone a substantial decline this century with only about fifteen post-1970 sites known (Falk, 1991). Females gather their pollen from yellow composites, which are well represented in the flower-rich grassland at the site. There seems to be quite a good population of this bee here as well.

Other hymenoptera species of particular note that have been found this year at this site include the nationally notable wasps *Odynerus melanocephalus* and *Sapyga clavicornis* and bees *Leucoglossum xanthopus* and *Andrena humilis*.

Falk, S. 1991: A Review of the scarce and threatened bees, wasps and ants of Great Britain, Research and Survey in Nature Conservation No. 35, English Nature, Peterborough.

Peter Harvey

ROCK ROSE IN A ROADSIDE VERGE

The Essex Spider Group held a meeting to record spiders at Garnetts Wood on the 6th June. The sight of a large quantity of bright yellow flowers on a section of verge by the side of a lane west of the wood prompted at sudden stop to look more closely. A section of verge, perhaps about 40 feet in length was covered by a fine display of Rock Rose *Helianthemum nummularium*. I believe this is a rare plant in Essex nowadays and usually only found in small quantity.

Peter Harvey

AN UPDATE ON THE BEE WOLF (*Philanthus triangulum*)

Last year the presence of this nationally vulnerable (RDB2) solitary wasp in two new Essex localities was described in Newsletter No 3. Apparently the wasp had an exceptionally good year all round with reports of the species from a number of new localities including ones in Kent and Surrey and even the Cambridge Botanical Gardens.

This year I returned to the Chadwell site in early-mid July and found many individuals, with a lot of females already active, provisioning their burrows. A visit to an old sand pit near Linford turned up another colony with hundreds of individuals visiting thistleheads for nectar.

The wasp requires sandy ground or sandfaces in which to make its nest, and a warm south facing situation. Although the weather in early July was good, the unsettled weather since then will not have helped the wasp this year.

A NOTE ON FOXES

On returning home from an evening lecture Monday 10th May, I spoke to a cat crossing the path in front of me. A little further down the road I thought I saw another cat in the gutter, but as I drew closer, I could see in the street light that it had a fine bushy tail and two large pointed ears.

The fox allowed me to approach to within a few feet, as it carried on worrying at some waste paper (fish and chip wrapping?). I watched it for a minute or so, and spoke to it (yes, I'm like that!) It paused to look at me and moved into the middle of the road with its prize, but did not seem to be gaining any food from the paper.

Vulpes vulpes, our native wild dog, was only a little larger than many cats, perhaps its long legs give it that appearance. It stayed around whilst I went in to call my wife to see it, but we thought it unwise to put out food in the street, too much traffic normally, and I thought it best to leave it to fend for itself.

It set me thinking though, several times over the last few months, I have seen a fox in the back garden (not particularly large nor secluded) and each appears to have a healthy pelage. Are we in fact seeing a change in the usual shy behaviour, a lack of persecution (hopefully) encouraging daylight foraging, or is the population growing so that it is necessary to hunt for more hours than the night can offer?

Ken Hill

MORE REPORTS OF HORNETS IN ESSEX

There has been further correspondence to Del Smith concerning recent records of Hornets in Essex.

Our president Jeremy Ison reports a specimen from Bocking, Braintree, found in a neighbour's garage that had become trapped in a jar containing paraffin.

David Scott recalls seeing odd specimens around Little Leighs over the last five years and reports the following sightings at their address at Little Leighs:

1990 - odd ones seen in garden and flying towards a small wood nearby.

1991 - a nest in garage roof - several seen working, strong colony.

1992 - 5 seen during season around garden and garage.

MONSTER FROM THE GARDEN DEEP

(reported in the Evening Echo, 18th June 1993)

A huge American bullfrog, much bigger than our average frog, is on the loose in a pond at Southend. Naturalists suspect it was sold from a garden centre after being imported as a monster tadpole. The alien amphibian caused ripples when it showed up in the Perkins back garden in Sycamore Grove.

The frog was enormous, about seven inches long, and just as big across. At first Mrs Sandra Perkins thought it was an inflatable toy but when it jumped back into the pool, it made a virtual tidal wave. She was half-prepared for the experience because she had recently seen a TV report on large foreign frogs living wild in the UK.

But where had this one come from? Behind their garden is an alley, but all it leads to is an old folks home. A spokesman at London's Natural History Museum said that the American bullfrog's giant tadpoles were occasionally on sale at garden centres. If they were put into a private pond, they would eventually grow up to become adult frogs. He pointed out that they were big enough to eat our ordinary common frog, and it would be much better if people did not import them.

Mr Tony Gent of English Nature, the Government's conservation body, said that it was not against the law to sell them, but it is probably illegal to release them into the wild. If one turns up in your pond it's best to give it to someone interested enough to keep it in captivity.

One in an indoor tank is as good a way as any to find out why the species is named bullfrog. Its deep, groaning call - br-wum, br-wum, br-wum - goes on and on to the distraction of the keeper's family.

Mr Gent would be interested to hear of any bullfrog discovered where it shouldn't be. Call him at English Nature on 0733 318300, but don't expect him to take it off your hands.

DANBURY COUNTRY PARK

Essex County Council have published the results of two surveys undertaken at Danbury Country Park by the Warden Chris Rawlings, also a Council member of the Field Club. The first report contains the results of butterfly transects for the years 1990, 1991 and 1992 and the second is of the results of a survey of the Orthoptera families Acrididae (Grasshoppers) and Tettigoniidae (Bush Crickets). Extracts of these two reports are contained below.

The Country Park totals 41 acres and comprises woodland, grassland, ornamental lakes and gardens. It is a heavily used recreational site with an annual visitor turnover of 350,000.

A native woodland area has until recently remained unmanaged for many years, resulting in high forest with a dense canopy with the exception of a network of access rides. The shading has restricted the growth of a scrub layer and of flowering plants and the woodland floor was predominantly barren.

However in the winter of 1989/1990 a coppice regime was reinstated, combined with a plan to eventually eradicate the introduced and steadily encroaching sycamore. Coppiced plots quickly developed a healthy growth of bramble, nettle and rosebay willowherb, with the majority of coppice stools also showing healthy growth. Hazel, previously absent within the park, was planted immediately after the coppicing.

Since the summer of 1989 a meadow that had been uniformly close mown for many years has had a rota mowing regime activated. This has resulted in the diversification of heights and thickness of grasses, still providing areas of recreation but also providing opportunities for butterflies and other invertebrates to thrive among the grasses and flowers. Other grassland cut once a year in autumn provide areas with flowers including an impressive colony of harebells and heath and yellow bedstraw.

In 1990 a butterfly transect was established in order to obtain information regarding species and numbers of butterflies present within the park. The same transect has thus been repeated in 1991 and 1992 in order to obtain information regarding butterfly population fluctuations within the same area.

The transect line was divided into ten sections, taking in all of the habitat diversities within the park. The rules set out for the National Butterfly Monitoring Scheme by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology were followed.

It is noted with disappointment that no such survey was carried out during the more formal years of management prior to the rota mowing and coppice regime beginning in 1989. This means that there is no quantitative comparison between the butterfly populations of two very different management regimes over a period of years on the same area of ground. It is hoped that the established routine can be continued from here on.

22 species of butterfly were recorded in the transects with the appearance in the park of the Ringlet for the first time in 1992. There were also unconfirmed sightings within the park of a Clouded Yellow in 1990 and Purple Hairstreak in 1992.

A summary of the annual totals 1990-1992 are given below:

	1990 (13 transects)	1991 (16 transects)	1992 (24 transects)
Meadow Brown	48	86	206
Holly Blue	47	2	2
Small White	19	34	167
Speckled Wood	16	16	58
Large White	14	14	245
Green Veined White	8	3	58
Small Heath	6	3	6
Small Tortoiseshell	6	22	75
Peacock	5	9	69
Brimstone	4	0	13
Hedge Brown	4	21	100
Small Copper	4	7	21
Common Blue	3	3	19
Small Skipper	3	10	103
Wall Brown	3	2	1
Large Skipper	2	8	7
Orange Tip	2	1	2
Red Admiral	2	10	11
Comma	1	0	7
Essex Skipper	0	3	68
Painted Lady	0	1	1
Ringlet	0	0	3
Total	197	255	1242

The maximum number of transects possible each year = 26

The survey of Orthoptera was undertaken to rectify the lack of records for this group within the park. The survey commenced on 27 June 1992 and concluded on 27 July 1992. The aim was to spend as much time as possible during the course of that period studying the grasshopper and cricket population within the Park. The study periods were at weekends, weekday lunchtimes and evenings, an approximate total of thirty hours.

To aid identification of the species the field guide "The Grasshoppers and Allied Insects of Great Britain and Ireland", by J. Marshall and E. Haas, published by Harley Books Ltd, Colchester, and "A Sound Guide to the Grasshoppers and Allied Insects of Great Britain and Ireland", also published by Harley Books in conjunction with the BBC Natural History Unit, Bristol and the British Museum (Natural History) London, compiled by J. Burton were used.

In order to confirm the records, species were captured and identified using an eye glass and the excellent key in the above mentioned field guide. All specimens were released alive at the spot of their capture.

The species list recorded is as follows:

Acrididae

Field Grasshopper (*Chorthippus brunneus*). First recorded on 27 June 1992 this grasshopper was abundant throughout the entire area of the autumn cut meadow and the arboretum.

Mottled Grasshopper (*Myrmeleotettix maculatus*). First recorded on 24 July 1992 a scattered population of this grasshopper existed throughout the autumn cut meadow and the arboretum.

Tettigoniidae

Roesels Bush Cricket (*Metrioptera roeselii*). First recorded on 11 July 1992 this species was restricted to the western side of the autumn cut meadow, but were abundant in number in their restricted zone.

Oak Bush Cricket (*Meconema thalassinum*). First recorded on 23 July 1992 just two of this species were seen, they were both recorded by physical appearance only as no identifiable sounds were heard. The first one was on the overhanging branch of an oak tree at the eastern tip of the lake nearest the car park. The second one was seen falling from an oak tree onto the ground beside the small pond in the woods, immediately followed by a wasp of the Vespidae family. The wasp grappled with the cricket before dismembering its legs and head, and flying off with the unfortunate cricket's head, leaving behind the dismembered torso.

Dark Bush Cricket (*Pholidoptera griseoptera*). First recorded on 27 July 1992 three individuals were singing from a bramble patch bordering the coppice plot of 1990/91 in the south west bank of the wood's pond

Two other individuals were singing from a bramble patch beside the entrance gate to the wood's car park.

NOTABLE SPIDER FINDS THIS YEAR

As part of a national survey of spiders being undertaken by the British Arachnological Society in conjunction with the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood, members of the Essex Spider Group are recording the distribution of spiders in Essex. To date 413 different species are recorded for the county including a new and as yet unnamed Oonopid spider found by Ray Ruffell north of Colchester.

Ray has continued to find individuals of this strange eight-eyed Oonopid spider (Oonopid spiders normally have only six eyes) but so far males have eluded capture. A male might help place this new spider more easily - male spiders have complex palps which are used in reproduction and their structure is important in their taxonomy and identification.

Field meetings this year targetted gaps in the coverage of the county and we are now very close to our aim of getting at least 100 species of spider recorded from every 10Km square. In the course of these meetings we have found some rare spiders.

A handful of specimens of the species of crab spider *Philodromus longipalpis* have been found in Britain. The spider has only recently been recognised as occurring in this country, but David Carr found a handsome female near Dunmow this year, making three specimens so far found in Essex. Further finds of *Philodromus praedatus* and *P. collinus* show both of these species to be much more widespread than previously thought. *Philodromus praedatus* was known in Britain from only a few specimens, but is now turning out to be widespread on oak.

Field meetings have also produced two records of the Jumping Spider *Salticus cingulatus*, which although not nationally rare, has no previous recent records in the county. We have now found it near Sturmer and near Terling in both cases on wooden fence posts covered in a layer of lichen. The nationally notable *Salticus zebraneus* occurs on tree trunks and this has also turned up in new places this year. At Thorndon Park South it is quite numerous on the trunks of old Oak and also pine trees. It has been found in several other new localities including Colchester University Park and Whetmead Nature Reserve at Witham.

We also found another Jumping Spider, the large impressive *Marpissa muscosa* on fence posts near Terling. The only recent record had been from Thorndon Park South where it was found by Roger Payne several years ago (it is still there - I saw a specimen this year on a pine trunk). There is an old record of the species occurring on fence palings in the Wanstead area of Epping Forest, but the spider has never been refound here.

At Sible Hedingham, David Carr found *Saloca diceros*, which he first recorded for the county only last year at Little Bendysh Wood. A further record was made by Ray Ruffell from Rowhedge near Colchester. Males of this little Linyphiid (Money) spider have the head furnished with a pair of horn-like tufts of hooked bristles.

Peter Harvey

WHATS ON: ESSEX FIELD CLUB

AUGUST

- Sunday 15th **Botany Group.** Strethall. Meet 10.30 am. Cross Roads at TL490405. Leaders Shirley and Charles Watson. Phone: 0279 505309.
- Friday 20th **General Meeting No. 1377.** Little Baddow for a Riverside Walk. Meet 7.30 pm at TL 763086. Leader John Bath. Phone: 0277 651890.
- Saturday 28th **Botany Group.** Little Oakley for Coastal Plants. Meet 11.00 am at TM 215284. Leader Jeremy Ison. Phone: 0376 345235.

SEPTEMBER

- Saturday 4th **General Meeting No. 1378.** Fungus Foray. Gernon Bushes. Full or Half Day. Meet 10.00 am or 2.00 pm at this Essex Wildlife Trust Reserve. TL 478029. Leader Martin Gregory. Phone: 0245 223300.
- Sunday 19th **Bird Group.** Chalkney Wood, Earls Colne for Woodland Birds. Meet 10.30 am at TL 872273. Leader John Bath. Phone: 0277 651890.

OCTOBER

- Sunday 10th **General Meeting No. 1379.** Fungus Foray. Meet 10.00 am at Epping Forest Conservation Centre Car Park. Leader Martin Gregory. Phone: 0245 223300.
- Saturday 16th **Mammal Group.** Deer Meeting in North Essex. Phone: Brian Eastcott for details. Phone: 0799 522680.
- Sunday 17th **Bird Group.** Walton-on-the-Naze. Meet 11.00 am at TM 265234. Leader John Bath. Phone: 0277 651890.

NOVEMBER

- Saturday 20th **General Meeting No. 1380.** "Gold in Scotland". Talk by Graham Ward at 3.00 pm. Red Cross Hall, London Road, Chelmsford. (Car Park entrance in Writtle Road). Tea and Biscuits provided.
- Sunday 21st **Bird Group.** Fishers Green, Waltham Abbey for Wintering Birds. Meet 10.30 am at Car Park. TL 377032. Leader John Bath. Phone: 0277 651890.
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ESSEX WILDLIFE TRUST

AUGUST

Sunday 8th **Exploring more of the River Chelmer.** Meet 11.00 am Rectory Road Car Park, Hadleigh. Leader Tim Pyner (0702 332425)

Sunday 15th **Guided walk - Upper Roman River Valley.** Meet at Oliver's Farm car park, Olivers Lane at 2.30 pm, finish approximately 5.00 pm. Leader John Thorogood.

Saturday 21st **Moth Evening at Great Holland Pits.** Walk around reserve. 7.30 pm onwards.

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 5th **Barling sea-wall Walk.** Meet at 11.00 am Barling Church. Leader Tim Pyner (0702 332425).

Sunday 5th **Howlands Marsh Open Day.**

Thursday 23rd **"Birds of Spain".** An illustrated talk by Dr Martin Henry. United Reform Church Hall, High Street, Gt Baddow. 8.15 pm.

Sunday 26th **Fungus Foray - Loshes Meadow Nature Reserve.** Map Ref. TL 873369 at 2.00 pm. Leader Martin Gregory.

OCTOBER

Friday 15th **Vivian Robson Memorial Lecture - Natural Pest Control - ladybirds as the gardener's friend.** An illustrated talk by Dr Mike Kajerus from Cambridge University. 8.00 pm Causeway House, Braintree.

NOVEMBER

Thursday 11th **Wildlife and Conservation on the Essex Coast.** An illustrated talk by Dr Chris Gibson, Conservation Officer with English Nature. Braintree Town Hall Centre, 8.00 pm.

WHATS ON IN HAVERING

AUGUST

- Thursday 5th **Pond Dipping** at Havering Country Park. Suitable for children aged 6-12. Organised by the London Borough of Havering. For booking and details ring 0708 772874.
- Monday 9th **Evening Walk around Cranham Marsh Nature Reserve** led by Havering members of the Essex Wildlife Trust. Meet at Park Drive/Argyle Gardens entrance to the reserve at 7.15 pm. For further information please contact Joy Emerson on 0708 440297.
- Wednesday 11th **Fun Day at Duck Wood.** Fun and games for children between the ages of 7 and 12 in this woodland nature reserve - pond dipping, badge making and much more. Organised by the London Borough of Havering. To book ring 0708 772874.
- Friday 20th **Go Bats at the Chase Nature Reserve.** Enjoy an evening guideed walk with the London Wildlife Trust at this fascinating nature reserve. More details and booking ring 081-593 8096
- Sunday 22nd **Country Bike Ride** at Hornchurch Country Park. A gentle bike ride through the Country Park. Discover its many hidden delights. Ideal for families keen to ride "off the road". Bring your bikes & refreshments. Organised by the London Borough of Havering. To book ring 0708 772874.
- Tuesday 24th **Ingrebourne Exploration.** Environmental fun and games including mini-beast hunts at Hornchurch Country Park. Suitable for children aged 7-12 years. Organised by the London Borough of Havering. To book ring 0708 772874.
- Thursday 26th **Track and Crack.** A treasure hunt with a wildlife theme in Havering Country Park. Suitable for children of 7 years and upwards. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Organised by the London Borough of Havering. Further details and booking ring 0708 772 874.

SEPTEMBER

- Monday 13th **"Birds of the Estuaries"** at Hornchurch Library meeting room. A talk by Bob Glover illudtrated with slides. Admission charge of 75p goes to the Essex Wildlife funds. Refreshments available during the interval and the meeting ends at 10.00 pm. More details from Joy Emerson on 0708 440297.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

Please send contributions for the next Newsletter, due out in November, to the Editor, Mr Peter Harvey, 9 Kent Road, Grays, RM17 6DE by the second week of October by the latest.