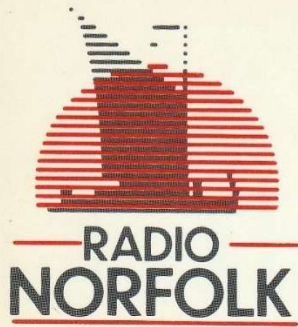
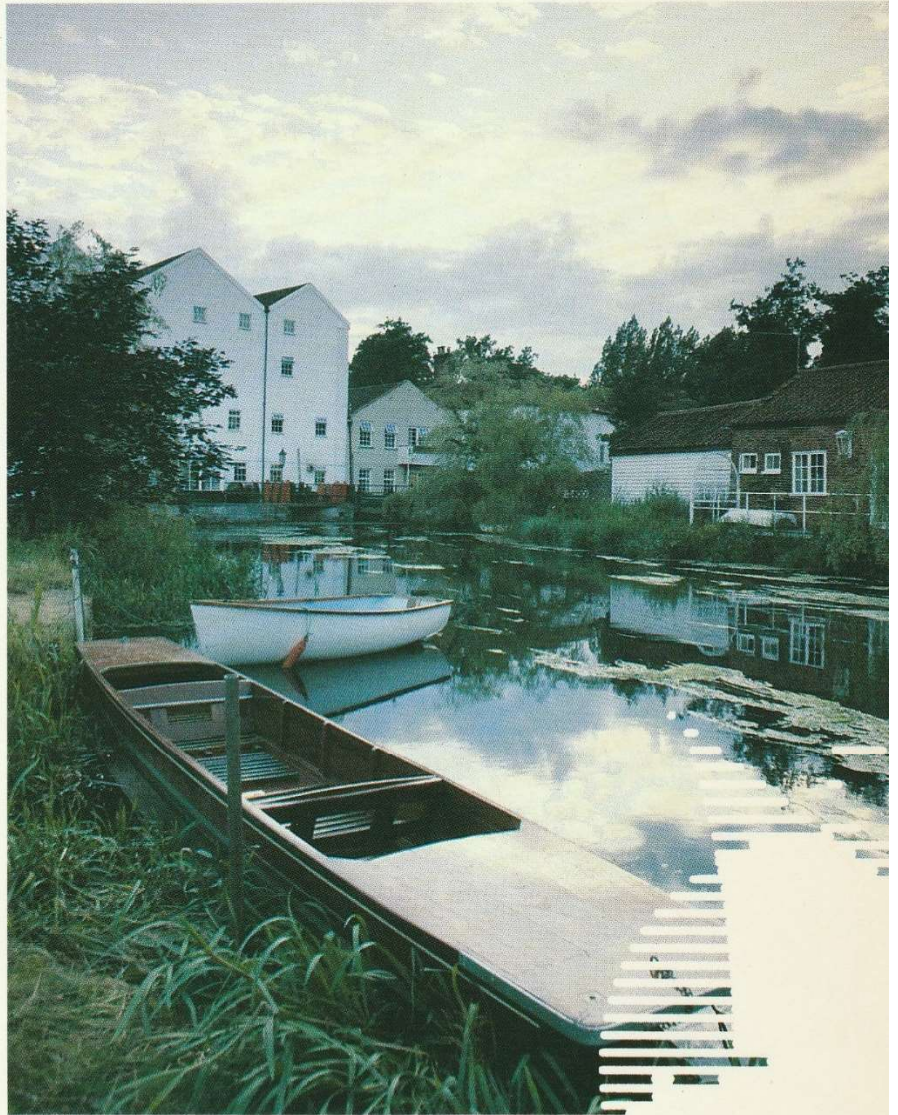


BBC



THE FIRST TEN YEARS

**SOUVENIR
BOOK**



Foreword by John Timpson

Edited by Keith Skipper

DURDIN'S FLIGHT

Chris Durdin, the 'Bird man of Cell 33', is the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' Conservation Officer for East Anglia.

He emphasises how BBC Radio Norfolk was tackling green issues long before politicians became interested. A press release in 1982 from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds reached BBC Radio Norfolk as usual, and found its way into the "Dinnertime Show" pigeon-hole.

A phone call to the RSPB's Norwich office followed. Could anyone come to the studio to speak about the society's latest appeal? I found myself on the "Dinnertime Show" for the first time, and I've been going back regularly ever since.

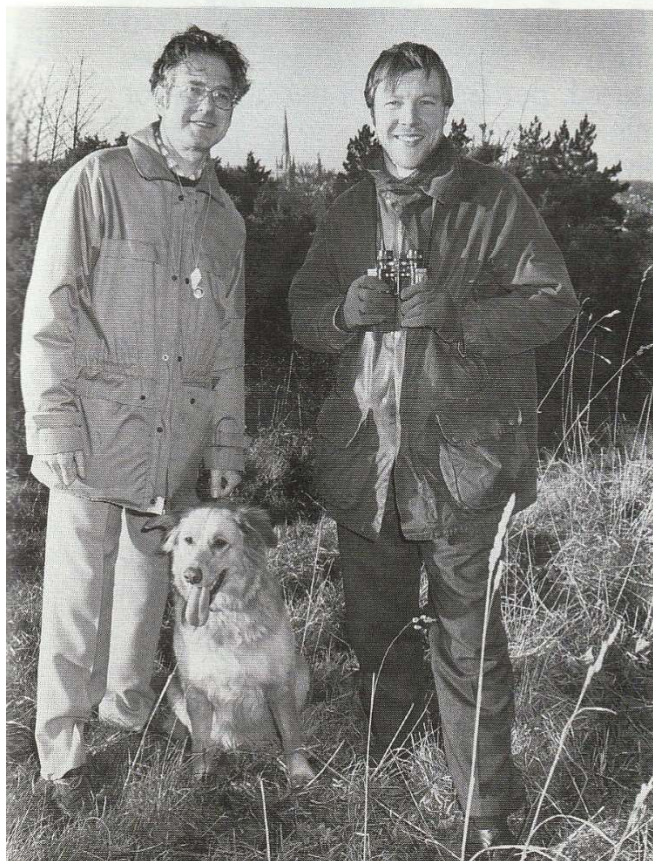
They called me 'Nature Boy' then, perhaps in case of any youthful indiscretion. This soon matured into BBC Radio Norfolk's 'Bird Man', and the nature input into the programme blossomed, with Rex Hancy and Phyllis Ellis my fellow regular contributors.

The most regular contributors of all, of course, have been the listeners. An essential feature of the wildlife thread running through the "Dinnertime Show" has been the steady flow of observations, anecdotes and questions from the Cell 33 faithful.

This growth of nature airtime is 'only natural' though; it has gone hand in hand with the growth of interest in, and concern for, our natural world. The green tinge of politics came to the fore in 1989, but its appearance there was much more by stealth than storm. BBC Radio Norfolk recognised it years ago, but suddenly the powers-that-be have realised that the public - the voters - cared too and that the environment might win or lose elections.

You can trace this growth of green concern easily enough. It has been followed by or, in many ways, led by television and radio. Youngsters nurtured on Peter Scott's "Look", "Soper at Large", or Armand and Michaela Dennis in East Africa, are now reaching positions of influence in society.

As those early trailblazing shows grew in number, and matured into classics like "Life on Earth", so the



♠ On the nature trail - Rex Hancy (left), Chris Durdin and an energetic friend check on the wildlife habitat left on the fringes of Norwich.

membership and influences of conservation organisations has grown.

When those formidable ladies founded the RSPB just over a century ago, deliberate persecution was the main concern - at that time, the slaughter of egrets for feathers to decorate hats. Trapping of birds of prey, shooting, poisoning and egg collecting followed as major concerns, and remain so to some extent today.

The emphasis shifted to the need to protect bird and wildlife habitats.

The nature reserve network got underway, but it became increasingly obvious in the 1960s and 1970s that reserves could never be enough.

Conservationists put more effort into lobbying to save the countryside from development. This has been partly successful, due to some statutory protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest. But as we know, little corners of nature keep disappearing.

It's an odd and apparently contradictory fact that Norfolk is considered to be both Britain's premier agricultural county and at the leading edge of conservation - with the first naturalists' trust, for example.

The Wash and the North Norfolk coast are very special, internationally important. So are the Brecks and the Broads, although both have suffered from lack of traditional management. But in this area, of farming and conservation, has come the biggest change of all since BBC Radio Norfolk was born.

This is nothing to do with whether or not farmers are custodians of the countryside, but it has everything to do with government policy. Gone are the grants to grub hedgerows or drain marshland; in instead are Environ-

mentally Sensitive Areas, with money to keep wildlife and the landscape through traditional farming.

But the most significant trend of all in the last ten years, and the way forward in the next ten, is recognition that conservation - saving the things we value on this good earth - must be tackled internationally.

For instance, it is our birds that get massacred in Malta and Cyprus at migration time. But then, it's our sulphur dioxide that causes acid rain in Scandinavia. Pollution of the seas and destruction of the protective ozone layer both demand the relatively rich Northern Hemisphere countries clean up their act.

These issues are centre stage in the world's political arena at last. But important though they are, they are overshadowed by the biggest continuing sin of all - the destruction of wildlife habitat. Nowhere is this more acute than the rain forests.

If you are a regular listener to "Birdtable 33", you will have heard much of this before. You will have sensed, perhaps, that I don't speak or think in terms of England or Britain. I divide the world into two - Norfolk and the Waveney Valley, and the rest. After all, London and Birmingham are as distant from most of our lives as are Kenya, Peru or Sierra Leone.

There is more to it than that. There is a connection. If you observe, then love and then want to protect your local community, it is a simple step then to want to save wildlife around the world.

Birds over the airwaves in Norfolk play a part in shaping the public opinion that makes things happen.