

was the first time we had recorded this plant at a Norfolk farmland pond. The next day saw us find the fantastic fox at three further North Norfolk ponds, two tiny marl pits in East Beckham that we had restored two years previously and a medieval fishpond at Baconsthorpe Castle. The four new *A. aequalis* records fall in three new monads and three new tetrads. Maybe the highly unusual weather patterns of winter-spring 2021 created perfect hydrological conditions for the fox to do its thing? Or maybe, due to its rarity, we have somehow missed this species in past surveys? Either way we hope to hunt this attractive grass down in a few more sites next year. But we also ask others of the NNNS – was this the year of the fox?

#### References:

Hawkins, J. 2019. The discovery and conservation of rare stoneworts in Suffolk's farmland ponds 2019. Transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists Society, 55: 109-125.

Sayer, C.D. & Parmenter, J. 2020. Resurrection of a Norfolk pond gem: Grass-poly *Lythrum hyssopifolia* L. Transactions of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society, 53(1): 71-74.

### A chance observation and a third English record Tony Leech

When Milly Kenward was recording fungi in Broadland Country Park (for the NNNS Research Committee project), she photographed a Hoof Fungus *Fomes fomentarius* adorned with cocoon-like objects. I was unable to tell her what they might be but passed the photo on to Tony Irwin in the hope that he might be able to tell us what order of arthropod had made them. He did better than that, replying that he thought they might be the cocoons of a fungus gnat. He had noticed a larva in the photograph which looked to him like that of *Sciophila rufa*, a species occurring in the Scottish Highlands.

Tony passed the photograph to Peter Chandler, the national fungus gnat expert, who confirmed that they were indeed the cocoons of *S. rufa* and that this was in fact the second Norfolk record (the first was from Thompson Common in 2019 by Judy Webb) and only the third occurrence in England.

*Sciophila rufa* cocoons on Hoof Fungus, BCP Sept. 2021 / Milly Kenward



The Hoof Fungus, a parasite of birch trees, is very common in Scotland and the north of England but did not make an appearance in Norfolk until 2008. Since then, it has become widespread, especially in the north and west of the county.

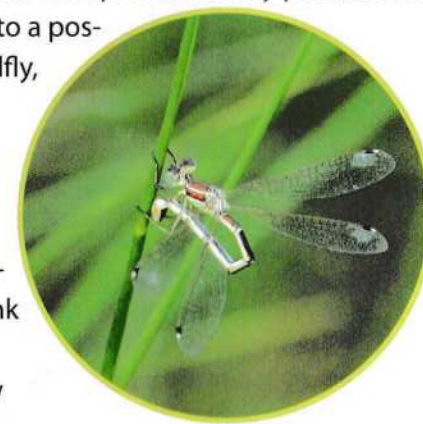
Larvae of *Sciophila rufa* make webs on the *Fomes*, and apparently feed on the spores (some other web-forming fungus gnat larvae are predatory). The bright orange adults are on the wing May to September.

The morals of this tale are: be observant, take a camera and share both ignorance and knowledge.

### Another Unexpected Find

Francis Farrow

At around 4pm, 19<sup>th</sup> August, I was walking along a path on the east side of the central marsh at Beeston Common when I noticed a pale damselfly perched on a rush stem. As I watched it drew itself up into a position that suggested oviposition. The damselfly, obviously a female, looked unfamiliar and I checked the pterostigmata (small coloured panels at the outer top edge of the wings). They were two-tone ie half black and half white. This immediately registered as something I had seen in a book but could not think which of the rarer damselflies it could be. I managed to get some pictures before it flew off into the marsh. I checked as soon as I returned home and confirmed my suspicions that it was indeed a rare damselfly, the Southern Emerald *Lestes barbarus*. Next day I re-found the damselfly and managed to get some further pictures. This was another unexpected find and a new species for me.



Southern Emerald Damselfly / Francis Farrow

Southern Emeralds were first found in Norfolk at Winterton in 2002, when they were also new to Britain. Geoff Nobes found three males between July 30<sup>th</sup> and August 7<sup>th</sup>. It is thought that they may have come from the Netherlands as they have been doing well in dunes on the western coast. Over the last 20 years the damselflies have been recorded almost annually, mainly at coastal sites between Sussex and Norfolk and generally as singletons although breeding has occurred.