

Megabashers in full swing
– see page 19



© Lydia Woods

Local Wildlife news

January - April 2019

A news and events diary from wildlife and conservation groups in the Ipswich area



Snippets

Skulduggery in the park



This 'skull' was discovered by Yvonne Westley among autumn leaves in Holywells Park.

Yvonne, a member of the Friends of Holywells Park, was with the weekly work party group based in the orchard when she made the discovery. Closer inspection of the find revealed that it was not a human skull after all but in fact, a Parasol mushroom that had been partly chewed, probably by mice.

It's not only mice who enjoy Parasols, they are delicious fried in butter and served on toast - the mushrooms not the mice!

The Friends meet in the Leaf-yard at 10am every Wednesday, then make their way to the Holywells Orchard to carry out conservation tasks. Over the winter months, this will include coppicing, pruning and building dead hedges.

An Owl Box to remember

Martin Cant of Ipswich Wildlife Group has responded to an unusual request to build an owl box.



The box is to serve as a memorial in remembrance of a regular visitor to Chantry Park. After consultation with the people concerned, Martin built a Tawny Owl box and attached a memorial plate to it. The box was installed by an Ipswich Borough Council parks team and can now be seen high up in an oak close to the Sue Ryder Home.

Great Bealings, great frog

Lilly Baker



During Greenways' annual mowing and raking of a County Wildlife Site meadow in Great Bealings, we found this unusually large frog!

Lucky little hog

David Dowding

At the end of October I was alerted by one of the Ipswich Borough Council gardeners to a small hedgehog he had seen in the toilets on Bourne Park, so went to have a look.



Weighing just 85 grams I was a bit concerned as to whether it had been weaned, but it seemed very healthy and was quick to demolish a handful of woodlice and earthworms. After five weeks in my care he had grown to 300g and was getting towards a weight where his chances of surviving the winter are much better. Hopefully he will be released and tucked up for the winter by the time you read this.

Welcome

by James Baker

Welcome to the Winter and Spring edition of Local Wildlife News, packed, as ever, with a wide variety of interesting news stories and reports of the activities of local conservation groups, along with dozens of events for the coming months.

One theme repeated throughout this edition and highlighted on the front cover, is the central importance of volunteers – not only to the effective running of all of the groups represented herein, but for the very survival of some of our favourite species and biodiversity in general. As you will see from all the photographs, volunteers are of all ages and abilities – and importantly, everyone can do something to help! So if you've been thinking about getting involved with one of the groups (or all of them!), please give it a go. I can guarantee a sense of satisfaction on completing a session and realising you have done something definite to actually help your local wildlife.

Some examples of great ways to get involved are the two Greenways 'Megabashes' – at Alderman Canal on the 19th of January and Martlesham Heath on the 16th of February, along with the Bobbitts Lane toad patrol introduction evening on the 21st of February (all details in events section).

There are a huge range of events and activities across the area and the months, and please don't forget all the 'regular events' on the back page – there is something going on almost every day!

There are two photographic competitions introduced by groups in this edition – another fantastic reason to get out there (yes, even in the winter!) and enjoy the spectacular range of species and habitats that we are lucky enough to enjoy in this area.

Finally, to hopefully transport you to the start of spring – don't forget Spring Wood Day on the Bank Holiday Monday 6th May (details on back cover).

Mailing lists – Please note

Some who are members of several conservation organisations may well receive more than one copy of the newsletter. If this is the case we would be very grateful if you could pass on the spare copy. If you don't receive LWN regularly please consider joining one of the groups that distributes LWN to its members. LWN is available online at www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/greenways/



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Printed by The Five Castles Press Tel 01473 718719

Paper produced from well-managed forests certified by the Forest Stewardship Council

The opinions expressed in Local Wildlife News are not necessarily those of the Greenways Project.

Wildlife photography with Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich

Lucy Shepherd *Wild Learning Officer*

Ipswich is wild! Over the past year Suffolk Wildlife Trust has hosted several Teen Wildlife Photography courses in Ipswich with award winning wildlife photographer Kevin Sawford visiting the historic parks and green spaces that Ipswich boasts. From swathes of British bluebells and cowslips in Chantry Park, to striking wasp spiders in its iconic zig-zagged web in Holywells Park to the charismatic grey squirrel with their chestnut bounties stuffed firmly in their mouths in Christchurch Park, we have snapped our way across the town photographing them all.

In the coming year, we are excited to be able to offer new opportunities for both young people and adults in the wonderfully wild spaces in Ipswich. We have courses for adults, young people and a chance for both parents and carers to participate with their child on a wildlife photography course together, sharing the experience and excitement of wildlife photography as part of our new Wild with your Child Photography course.

Young people aged 11 – 16 will have



© Kevin Sawford

Grey squirrel - wildlife photography by Kevin Sawford

the chance to take part in our Wildlife Photography Mentorships where they can join us and Kevin Sawford across the seasons on a set of four courses building up a portfolio across the year where we invite young people to join us with their smart phones, tablets or cameras learning how to capture urban wildlife at its best.

The mentorship allows for photography skills and techniques to be built across the courses, progressing from a beginners level to an intermediate level course with a unique opportunity to have their portfolio critiqued at the half way mark and at the end of the mentorship offering them a chance to be further guided by Kevin, a wonderful opportunity for any budding wildlife photographer!

To further celebrate the wild spaces of Ipswich and to welcome such an array of courses to the town next year, we are giving participants an 'extra bite of the cherry' in our photography competition 2019.

Photographs submitted to the competition that have been taken in Ipswich on our courses will be entered into their own exclusive prize giving category within the competition in addition to the other categories of your choice.

Book your place and join us to celebrate Ipswich's wild side and capture urban wildlife in all its glory.

Please go to our website, suffolkwildlifetrust.org for more details.



Brooke House, Ashbocking, Ipswich IP6 9JY
01473 890089
info@suffolkwildlifetrust.org
suffolkwildlifetrust.org

Photography mentorship scheme:

Sunday 20 January 10am - 12.30pm
Christchurch Park

Saturday 18 May 10am - 12.30pm
Chantry Park

Sunday 14 July 10am - 12.30pm
Christchurch Park

Sunday 27 October 10am - 12.30pm
Holywells Park

To take part in the mentorship, join us across all four sessions for £35. Courses can be booked individually for £10 per child as standalone courses.



© Kevin Sawford

Small Skipper - wildlife photography by Kevin Sawford



Ipswich Group Newsletter

Chairman: (Vacant)

Secretary: Wendy Brown 01473 259674 c&wseadrake@timetalk.co.uk

Treasurer: Tony Clarke 01473 741083 tonyclarke@2309hotmail.co.uk

Newsletter Editor: John Ireland 01473 723179 jfrani.36@gmail.com

We are the Ipswich Group of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. We offer an interesting range of monthly meetings with guest speakers which take place usually on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. in the Museum Street Methodist Church, Blackhorse Lane. Trust members and non-members are equally welcome. During the summer months we offer a variety of trips, some local, others by coach. Details of these and our monthly meetings can be found in our 'Dates for your Diary' section which follows, or on the SWT website, www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org.

IPSWICH GROUP of Suffolk Wildlife Trust Committee Report

The autumn, now very much in the past, was spectacular for the colours in the trees and the lateness of the fall. Garden flowers continued to blossom, making the winter period feel shorter. However, by the time this is read it will be a very different story.

The Ipswich Group of SWT got off to a good start with an interesting talk about the benefits of the world of fungi. It was our first meeting in the Methodist Church, and I am pleased to say that a good-sized audience found the new venue and enjoyed the welcome, warmth and the excellent screens and acoustics. The October talk by the West Suffolk Reserves Manager, Will Cranstoun of Lackford Lakes, made us enthusiastic to see it for ourselves. We hope to organise a guided tour at Lackford next summer.

We should all be aware that Suffolk Wildlife Trust is working as part of the Greener UK coalition, that includes the Wildlife Trust, RSPB, WWF and others, to ensure the country benefits from strong and ambitious environmental protections after Brexit. The draft of a new Environment Bill is expected to be announced in Parliament before Christmas and promises to build on the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, supporting its pledge to be 'the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than it found it'.

The Trust is campaigning for the Bill to contain three important elements:

1. Locally delivered Nature Recovery Network maps that will improve access to nature, detail conservation priorities and identify opportunities to join, create and restore habitats.
2. An independent environmental watchdog that will effectively hold the Government and local authorities to account.
3. Legally binding environmental targets for nature's recovery – with mandatory progress reporting.

The Trust is working to ensure these priorities are presented to Suffolk MPs and will help members to meet and lobby their MP to tell them that strong environmental protections are important and necessary. Meeting an MP or sending an email will stress how important environmental issues such as clean air, access to nature and plastic pollution are to the community.

For more information and, we do urge you to get involved, please visit suffolkwildlifetrust.org or call the Trust on 01473 890089 and speak to Kerry Stranix or Ali North.

Wendy Brown

SWT Coach Trip to Sculthorpe Moor Nature Reserve and Gooderstone Water Gardens, Norfolk. 25th May 2019

The Ipswich Group's Coach Outing this year will be to Sculthorpe Moor, a nature reserve owned by the Hawk and Owl Trust, followed by an afternoon visit to Gooderstone Water Gardens and Nature Trail.

Sculthorpe Moor is located in the beautiful Wensum Valley, close to Fakenham.



reserve with a rich variety of wildlife in its woodland, fen and reed bed habitats. It is one of the most accessible nature reserves in the country as there is boardwalk access throughout the entire reserve. The woodland loop walk is just under a mile, and the walk to the river is also just under a mile - so it is nothing too strenuous! There are many bird feeders and nest boxes sited along the way and there are viewing platforms, places to sit and relax, and five hides for watching the wildlife. Two of the hides are elevated, giving spectacular views over the fen and reed bed.

Hopefully at this time of year there should be cuckoos, butterflies, damselflies, buzzard, marsh harrier, hobby, tree creeper, nuthatch, bullfinch, kingfisher and willow tits - you may even be lucky enough to spot a water vole!



There is a small café at Sculthorpe with a drinks machine and a small selection of snacks available. A packed lunch is recommended.

Our next stop takes us to Gooderstone Water Gardens, near Swaffham, West Norfolk. This is a beautiful and peaceful 6-acre garden with a natural and rare chalk stream (with brown trout), four ponds, waterways, thirteen bridges, lovely borders and mature trees and shrubs. There is also an 8-acre nature trail winding through wet woodland and



wildflower meadows. There is one bird hide overlooking a large pond, a scented arbour, bamboo grove and a butterfly garden. There are many benches to sit and enjoy the peace and quiet.

There is a café at Gooderstone selling sandwiches, cakes and a selection of drinks.



**Suffolk
Wildlife
Trust**

Ipswich Group Newsletter

It opened in 2001 when the Hawk and Owl Trust leased the land from a local trust, primarily to protect the marsh harrier, but also to protect the surrounding fenland for the other species that inhabit this part of Norfolk. It is a 45-acre

BOOKING FORM

Coach Outing to Sculthorpe Moor and Gooderstone Water Gardens

25th May 2019 8.30am

Please reserve

..... adult places at £30

Total £.....

..... places for 16 years and under at £15

Total £.....

Total sum enclosed

Total £.....

Join coach at Crown Street or Ipswich Village Car Park (delete as appropriate).

Name

Address

Postcode Telephone Mobile

Email address

Please return this form together with a stamped addressed envelope and cheque made payable to Suffolk Wildlife Trust to: Susanne Renshaw, 51 Brookhill Way, Ipswich, IP4 5UL. Tel 07720604842. If you give an email address you do not need to enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Dates for your Diary

All meetings will be held at 7.30pm at Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Blackhorse Lane, Ipswich, IP1 2EF. £2.50 includes tea or coffee. There is disabled access.

Wednesday 23rd January 2019

Anne & Dennis Kell Natural History of the Falkland Islands

The Falklands is made up of a large number of islands in the South Atlantic. With rugged terrain, ferocious winds and nutrient rich waters, they are home to a wide variety of plants and animals, and a huge number of sea birds. A good number of the plants are found nowhere else on this earth. Come and hear about this naturalist's paradise from Anne and Dennis who visited it just a few years ago. For more information search the internet for "Flora and Fauna of the Falkland Islands".

Wednesday 27th February 2019

Dr John Baker Amphibia and Reptiles of Britain

John is an independent consultant for projects concerning Amphibia and Reptiles. These animals are usually fairly secretive and often not easily identified by the general public. John, as county recorder, has a vast knowledge and experience of working with this fascinating group, which he will share with us. Only 4 of our 7 native reptiles are found in Suffolk. Can you name them?

Wednesday 27th March 2019

David Dowding Ipswich Urban Buzz

David is the Urban Buzz Conservation Officer for Ipswich. This project, sponsored by Bug Life, is aiming to produce 25 new hectares of pollinating habitat in the Ipswich area. 97% of our flowering meadows have gone, together with their flowers and pollinating insects. Urban Buzz is creating new habitats on verges, roundabouts, parks, waste land etc., by planting them with flowers and it is coordinated here in Ipswich by David. For more information search the internet for "Urban Buzz Ipswich".



Wednesday 24th April 2019

Tony Copeman Malt and Wildlife Walks

Muntons, a malting firm operating in Stowmarket for more than 70 years, is dedicated to sustainability. It uses eco-friendly products and aims to reduce its environmental impact and its carbon footprint. Only half of its 45-acre site is used in manufacturing, the rest has been converted into a wildlife area, with wildlife walks for the staff who work there. Tony will tell us about the company's vision, and the wildlife walks they have created. For more information search the internet for "Muntons Sustainability Wildlife Walks". (This meeting is preceded by a short AGM)

Saturday 25th May 2019 8.30am to 6.00pm

Coach Trip to Sculthorpe Moor, Norfolk - Booking Essential

Details and booking form on previous page.

How Mushrooms Can Heal the Planet

Our speaker in September, Matthew Rooney, a forager and grower of mushrooms of many types, opened our eyes to the activities of a very special group of organisms, the Fungi.

Fungi are much less well known and understood than the other two kingdoms of living organisms, the plants and the animals, and yet, as we are beginning to realise, they do have an essential and far reaching effect on other living things, and they may well outnumber plants by six to one. Of the estimated three billion species of Fungi only about 120,000 have been described, and yet the largest living organism ever recorded is a species of honey fungus, *Armillaria*, in the Blue Mountains of Oregon, which is 3.8 km across.

The mushrooms we see are only the fruiting bodies of these fungi, but below the soil surface there is a massive network of tiny threads known as hyphae, and many species of these, which are known as mycorrhizal fungi, are able to establish an intimate symbiotic relationship with the roots of plants. The fungal threads massively increase the surface area for the absorption of water and mineral salts, thus producing a larger and healthier plant, more able to withstand drought and disease. But more surprising than this is that they form an underground network, linking plants together and redistributing nutrients and water from the healthier plants to those in distress, while the fungus benefits by obtaining carbohydrates from the plants. These mycorrhizal fungi can greatly increase the yield of cereal crops and are sometimes added to seed before sowing. They are also used when planting trees, increasing their growth rate and productivity.

Matthew brought along an impressive selection of fungi he had grown and some he had foraged in his local woods. As he explained, as well as benefiting plants, it is believed that many fungi have a beneficial effect on our immune system, and may well give hope for future health.

A full listing of all Groups' events can be found from page 22

Long Tailed Blue in the Smoke

Sarah Kilshaw

On the 18th October, the Ranger team began our winter work on the heathland at Bixley Heath. Heathland is dependent on human intervention to prevent trees and scrub growing. As a result each year we remove any saplings that have popped their heads up above the heather and reduce the amount of encroaching scrubland. Over winter we often burn the vegetation in small controlled fires at designated points across the heath.

is likely that she came across in strong winds earlier in the month and as a result of her travels her wings were rather dishevelled and tatty, but her characteristic long tails were visible. She is a first record for Bixley. Interestingly there were no records of this butterfly in Suffolk for 32 years between 1982 and 2013, but 2013 was a great year for this butterfly. Since 2015 there has been one record a year in Suffolk, this year's record was our female at Bixley Heath.

During the half an hour or so we spent watching her, she rested on the ground, on heather and eventually settled on the flowering gorse. Much to the amazement of the wildlife team she sat there and posed whilst we observed her and even photographed her closely with mobile phones!

Unfortunately these small, striking blue butterflies are unable to withstand our cold winters in the UK and so are currently only migratory. Therefore we have been very

lucky to witness this little butterfly before the cold of winter sets in.

There have been breeding records in the past across the UK and so there is potential for these butterflies to become ever more common with the warmer summers we are experiencing each year.

Hopefully we will be seeing more exciting wildlife this winter as we continue our winter heathland work on this site.



IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Wildlife Rangers

Office : 01473 433998

park.rangers@ipswich.gov.uk
Stable Block, Holywells Park,
Cliff Lane, Ipswich IP3 0PG

The Wildlife & Education Rangers are responsible for the management of wildlife areas within the town's parks and other green spaces. As well as carrying out practical management, the team runs an events programme and works with many local schools to engage and inspire the public about the wildlife Ipswich has to offer.

One of the perks of working on the beautiful green spaces in Ipswich is that we often see interesting wildlife.

At Bixley this includes a wide variety of fungi, and invertebrates as well as birds such as Water Rail and the occasional flyby from a Hobby. We have even heard rumours of wolverines and otters from local residents.

This year we were treated to a rare sighting – a female Long Tailed Blue Butterfly! Also known as the 'Pea Blue' in Europe, where this species is a pest on pea crops, the Long Tailed Blue is a rare migrant to the UK. This individual was an unusual find because she is the first record for Suffolk in 2018. It



A rare sighting - a female Long Tailed Blue Butterfly

© Sarah Kilshaw

Many hands make light work

George Pennick, with contributions from Sam Cork

It has been a busy few months - fortunately, many hands have made light work and the Group's brilliant volunteers have been busy clearing the tumuli in order to maintain protected status under English Heritage guidelines. On both tumuli, volunteers have tried to ensure plant roots did not become re-established in the mounds, which could damage the structure and any of their contents.



Chipped path

The Group has also been able to clear a path along one

edge of the woods that backs onto local residents' gardens. As well as preventing potential damage to fences from encroaching trees, the area is of interest to the Fire Service for access in the event of a fire and so was a priority for the Group at the start of the new season.

Finally, the laying down of bark chippings on the most used paths of the woods has been an ongoing project. This is in order to ensure that they don't become waterlogged and unsuitable for use – the mulch ensures that a distinctive path remains throughout the woods on our waymarked routes.

The Nature Explorers have also been hard at work, getting a whole variety of conservation know-how, including clearing out of the tool store as well as the fitting of a new metal door which will, hopefully, deter any repeat occurrences of theft. Unfortunately, Nature Explorers are a little thin on the ground at the moment, so if you're 11-18 years old and



Autumn woods

have an interest in wildlife or conservation, you'd be very welcome at a work party.

A reminder to take care to look out for hibernating hedgehogs if working in your garden over the winter, and to put out some water for garden creatures if temperatures reach freezing.

If you are interested in joining the Group, a new pair of hands is always appreciated and you would be making a real difference to the local area.



Portal Woodlands Conservation Group

Enquiries: Martlesham Parish Council
01473 612632 www.pwgc.onesuffolk.net
or email pwgc@martlesham.org.uk

The group was formed to conserve the woodlands west of the Suffolk Police HQ and alongside the A1214. Volunteers meet each month to work on a variety of projects. Anybody is welcome to join this friendly group. Training and tools are provided.



Tumulus clearance

Volunteer Work Mornings (all ages welcome - no need to book) Meet at the Education Area from 10.00am – Noon.
Saturday 19th January, Sunday 17th February,
Saturday 16th March, Sunday 28th April

Nature Explorers (11 to 18 year olds)
Meet at the Education Area from 9.00am - 11.00am.
Booking essential, please email pwgc.martlesham@gmail.com
Saturday 19th January, Saturday 16th March

Nature Watch Club (5 to 11 year olds)
Dates to be announced.

APPEAL

Unfortunately, over the summer the Group's tool store was broken into and many of our tools have been stolen. As a result, we're a little short of equipment for volunteers to make use of; if anyone has any old gardening tools that they no longer need and would be happy to donate, please let us know.

They would be very much appreciated.

Cricket Bat Willow Harvest

James Baker

After a surprisingly short life, the extremely fast growing cricket bat willow trees at Alderman Canal Local Nature Reserve have recently been harvested to be made into – you guessed it – cricket bats! Over the last 20 years, the trees grew from a ‘set’ – a cutting about an inch and a half thick and 10 feet long, simply jammed into a hole in the ground – into large trees up to three feet in diameter and 70 feet tall!

Cricket bat willow is a unique

variant of white willow called *Salix Alba Caerulea* - and it can only be grown from cuttings as it does not produce true seed. The willow has particular properties including flexibility and lightness – making it ideal for cricket bats, as well as artificial limbs!

Specialist contractors felled the willows using a unique technique used only for this species, which ensures there is no cracking or tearing of the wood fibres – maximising the number of bats that can be made from each tree. The main trunk is the only useful part for making bats, so these are extracted using a large Volvo loader to be carted away by lorry.

Our trees are going to be made into cricket bat ‘blanks’ by J S Wright of Chelmsford, and will then be sent to various countries around the world to be finished into actual bats. Almost all cricket bat willows are grown in Britain – from Wiltshire to Kent and up to southern Scotland!

A previous crop of willows was harvested back in the late 1990s, so there is now something of a ‘tradition’ of them growing here – so we will be replanting a small number. Whilst the bat willows provide general interest, from a wildlife and habitat management perspective they are damaging the biodiversity of the reserve. This is mostly due to two issues – the vast amount of water that they remove from the wet meadow



Cricket willow knocked for six



Moving logs made easy

and the very considerable shading of the meadow flowers. The wet meadow at Alderman Canal is one of the most important wildlife habitats, and should now benefit massively from the lack of shade and leaf drop nutrient. In order that we at least replant as many trees as were felled (14), we have also planted a small ‘orchard’ of Suffolk fruit varieties next to Bibb Way as part of Buglife’s Urban Buzz project – adding

additional nectar sources for pollinating insects – but not creating the same amount of shade or water use!

Now that the useful trunks have been removed, there is a huge amount of branch wood and log left on site for us to clear up!! Some will be used to make habitat piles around the reserve, but much will be chipped and removed and larger logs may be able to be sent for biomass power station use.



GREENWAYS
countryside project

Scout Headquarters (next to St Peter’s Church), Stoke Park Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP2 9TH Office:
01473 433995 greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk
www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/greenways

The Greenways Countryside Project exists to protect and enhance the countryside, landscape and open space across an area of about 100 square kilometres in and around the town of Ipswich, and home to around one quarter of the population of Suffolk, for the benefit of wildlife and local people. The project relies on volunteers to complete much of its practical conservation work.

The Greenways Project is a very successful and well-established partnership between Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and the local community.



Another one bites the dust



Howzat !

River Clean-Up – low tide mud special!

Following a request from the Ipswich MP, Sandy Martin, Greenways organised a clean up of some of the tidal parts of the River Orwell in town, to tie in with the Marine Conservation Society's beach clean weekend. As well as attendance and very active involvement of Sandy, Ipswich Borough Councillors David Ellesmere, Carole Jones and Collette Allen also attended and got stuck in! In fact some nearly did get stuck – in the mud!



Sandy in the thick of it



Volunteers raring to go

The usual array of traffic cones, bicycles, and trolleys were removed along with dozens of other items from televisions to hoovers! This part of the river can only be safely accessed when there is a good low tide in the daytime, and every item has to be painstakingly brought up the steep and slippery concrete sided river bank – usually on a rope to minimise

the risk of volunteers slipping.

Many of the items brought out were, surprisingly, being used as 'wildlife homes' – an old hi-fi was full of dozens of crabs and a traffic cone had an impressive colony of mussels! All sea life was carefully returned to the water – and it highlights our concern about removing too much from the

river bed – as wildlife does tend to move in given half a chance!

Around 20 enthusiastic volunteers worked through the morning until the tide rose too high to continue! It was very hard to stay clean, so most were impressively covered in estuary mud – with its own unique smell! Massive thanks to all who took part!



Notes from The Dales Local Nature Reserve

Joan Powell

At this time of the year this delightful haven of tranquillity is starting to show us its bare bones as the leaves start to fall from the trees - it gives us briefly a bright showing of autumnal colours.



Friends of the Dales

The Dales is a small Local Nature Reserve situated off Dales Road in Ipswich.

For details of the Friends Group please contact secretary Joan Powell jayempowell@btinternet.com or find us on Facebook by searching Friends of the Dales

The leaves are in shades of reds and oranges with dashes of yellow to delight the eyes and are still hanging on until a cold night and a gust of strong wind strips them off and scatters them underfoot. The ears also have their share of delights as you can hear but not always see, as the Bullfinch sings proudly yet elusively from within an old plum tree by the five-a-side football pitch. Or as you wander around and you hear a rustling in the brambles and a brief glimpse of ... it was too quick to identify, but you stand there and hope to see what got your attention.



One of our volunteers was extremely fortunate to both see and quickly take a snap of a fox and as you can see it was looking directly at her! It is these unexpected moments that make such places as The Dales a pleasure to walk around.

The Wildflower Meadow has now been cut and raked in readiness for winter when in the next few months and with guidance from the Buglife Urban Buzz Project and Ipswich Borough Council, fresh wildflower seeds and plants will be added to the strips that were created last year. All of which will be beneficial to the bugs, beetles and butterflies again next year as it was quite a sight this summer and the area will certainly have more to show.

Several species of butterfly have been spotted and the general diversity of invertebrates encountered has been extremely positive. Butterflies observed late

some of the volunteers I stumbled across a few fungi species, I was a little disappointed that I didn't have a camera with me. However our intrepid volunteer photographer was on hand and took a snap of a wonderful specimen called Dryad's Saddle. The scientific name is *Polyuporus Squamosus* meaning 'many spores', which grows in overlapping clusters on dead wood of broad leaved trees. Insects quickly devour these large brackets and it can disappear in a few days.

We have two new benches installed by the football pitch and were skilfully inscribed with the words 'Donated by the Friends of the Dales'. This is a testament to the splendid and committed work of our volunteers.



Friends bar-mowing and raking the meadow.



A watchful fox looks out among the wild flowers.

summer and autumn of note include Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Holly Blue, Small Copper, Common Blue and Painted Lady.

Whilst taking a walk with

The benches in the wildlife meadow have had new supports made and this offers a peaceful place to sit and look and listen, so please come and visit us and explore this naturally beautiful and diverse open space.



A new benchmark for the Friends of the Dales

Out and about with IWG

Colin Hullis

Jean Merry

It is with sadness that we report the passing of the Group's longest-serving member Jean Merry.

Jean along with her late husband Bernard were founder members of the Group and Jean was a member for 28 years. During that time Jean served as Secretary for many years and as editor of the very early issues of the Group newsletter 'Local Wildlife News'.

Committee members Colin Hullis, Peter Locke and Gerry Donlon attended the funeral service for Jean in September and were pleased that Jean's involvement with IWG was featured in the service. It was also fascinating to learn that one of Jean's daughters, Caroline, was the designer of the IWG logo.

Our thanks to Jean's family for arranging donations in Jean's memory to Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Ipswich Wildlife Group.

Jubilee Walk

On a beautifully sunny autumn morning in October, 17 members and friends joined James Baker of Greenways for a guided walk around this diverse Local Nature Reserve.

Situated in the Rushmere St Andrew area of town the walk passes through Rushmere Common and the Sandlings and Mill Stream Local Nature Reserves. The two mile circuit includes areas of heathland, woodland, flower meadows and ponds. These various habitats are home to a range of plants, invertebrates, birds and amphibians. James explained the history of the site and detailed much of the wildlife that lives there. In particular James pointed out an impressive line of old oak trees that support a host of insects and fungi.

River Clean-Up

Back in September we joined volunteers from Greenways, other conservation groups and several Ipswich Borough councillors together with Ipswich MP Sandy Martin to help clean-up a stretch of the tidal river in town.

This was part of the Marine Conservation Society Beach-clean weekend and efforts were concentrated on the river from Stoke Bridge to the railway station. Being low tide there was plenty of mud to cope with which didn't make the job any easier. Despite that a couple of trailer loads of various debris were taken away, helping to make the area a better place.



Chairman Ray Sidaway getting stuck in.

Whitton Youth Partnership

The partnership plays host to local children during school holidays providing play and educational opportunities. David Dowding from Bug Life and Colin from IWG got the children busy making wildlife homes and David took them on a nature walk. However the star of the show was the very young hedgehog that David is caring for.



More wildlife homes in the making



Chair: Ray Sidaway 01473 259104
www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/iwg
facebook.com/ipswichwildlifegroup

Ipswich Wildlife Group is a registered charity, relying entirely on volunteers, that promotes interest in, and conservation of, wildlife and habitats in and around Ipswich.

Events

Throughout the autumn we have been busy visiting Handford Hall primary school giving advice on their wildlife area; holding a Wildlife Homes session with the disabled members of Avenues East; many members joined in the Friends of Belstead Brook Park megabashes and our monthly work parties in Spring Wood and Alderman Canal and on our allotment plot continue. We are always pleased to greet more members at our events, contact Ray for details.



Old oaks on the Jubilee Walk are host to many and varied wildlife.



The wild flower area on the IWC allotment is coming along just fine.

I have questions but no answers

Reg Snook

I am sure that no one interested in nature is happy to see the decline of our songbird population but there is no doubt that many species of our favourite birds are less common than they once were.

Many British songbird species are, in my opinion, fighting a losing battle, with some once common birds now rarely found in Suffolk. I could make a long list of birds that are disappearing year on year, including in our Park, yet it is difficult to give a precise reason for such a catastrophic loss. Can we halt this decline? What can be done to bring our beloved feathered friends back to something like their previous numbers? I would love to be an optimist but I am not. We hear or read about 'climate change'; some of us know what this means, some do not but surely we can all agree on loss of natural habitat which is reducing rapidly placing yet more pressure on our wildlife.



population of muntjac judging by the road kills of this small deer. Occasionally I find a roe deer carcass and once this year I even came across a dead red deer.

We don't often find dead animals in Christchurch Park. Grey squirrels abound but are no match for the terriers, especially when owners are walking them 'out of hours'. Any deceased squirrel can be quickly hidden in a waste bin. All of this brings me to the question of culling. Should we cull deer which are obviously a problem with most species rapidly expanding. We are aware of badgers being officially culled to prevent the spread of bovine TB. Foxes? Should foxes be culled? Are there too many foxes out there? Have we the right to cull any animal? When I was a boy house sparrows were so common that they were considered to be a pest and sparrow traps were sold to rid us of "spudgers". Now house sparrows have disappeared from much of their former habitat. I well remember starling roosts being blasted by men with shotguns because they thought that starlings made a mess. I used to care for wild disabled birds of prey and I had to find food for them. Day old chicks were expensive so I tried to feed them on road kill. After a starling roost shoot I was presented with over 700 starlings for my birds of prey. Really! It is too easy to say we must kill.

The question of whether we should cull or not arises when certain species of wildlife become too plentiful for their environment causing problems for habitat and other creatures that share that space. Increasing numbers of deer destroy habitat with some species such as muntjac being able to eat almost anything. Of course, an added advantage to culling deer is that venison is becoming an increasingly popular meat. Pheasants

are different. They are a game bird and are a sporting delight to many. Although personally I find the idea of breeding birds just to be shot obnoxious, what about birds and animals that prey on other species? So much has been written about hen harriers versus grouse. It is illegal to kill any bird of prey but it still goes on. Harriers are destroyed on moorland (or should that be grouse moors) because they prey on young grouse and, unfortunately, it looks as though the grouse shooters are winning.



Grey squirrels abound in the park

Taking our Park as an example, there are far too many corvids and grey squirrels. Should we cull? Can we cull? What an outcry there would be if we started ridding our Park of "vermin"! Corvids take the eggs and young of our songbirds but such a cull would cause public, and possibly conservationist, outrage. Mind you, badger culling still goes on.



Friends of Christchurch Park

Secretary: Sylvia Patsalides 07971 467042

Membership Secretary: Robert Fairchild
01473 254255

www.focp.org.uk Follow us on Facebook@
Christchurch Park and Twitter@ChristchurchPk

The sole purpose of the Friends Group is to help look after the Park for the public good, and to promote its welfare. Anyone who shares this aim is welcome to join. For a small annual fee of £10 you can join in Friends activities all year round, including Illustrated talks and discussions, Guided Park walks and Practical conservation work. You will also receive an informal seasonal newsletter.

For many, the only connection with wildlife today is when a carcass lies by the roadside. When my family were young we used to play 'I spy' in the car to make the trip more interesting; possibly some children still do this by perhaps counting the number of dead animals they can see. Actually animal RTAs can be a way of indicating the status of certain species. Do not count pheasants though – so often on my travels I find newly-released pheasants waiting either to be 'shot' or run down by a vehicle. I used to frequently find squashed hedgehogs but not so nowadays. Hedgehogs are in decline. However, it is surprising to find so many dead badgers, more so than foxes. Perhaps foxes are more nimble. We also seem to have an increasing

The virtues of Holywells in winter

Robin Gape *Chair of FoHP*

The season of mists and mellow fruitfulness gives way to blow, blow thou winter wind, not necessarily a happy thought. It's perhaps time to remind ourselves of the virtues of spending time outside both generally, and in the 27 hectares of Holywells Park in particular.

There's not much sun about in winter, but such as there is won't improve your vitamin D from indoors. Nor will staying indoors improve what is nowadays known as SAD, seasonal affective disorder, or, colloquially, being down in the dumps because it's gloomy and sunless. And then there is the delight that is serendipity, such as coming across a flock of small, very noisy birds in an urban tree, just at dusk. And then the intellectual delight of eventual identification as long-tailed tits. I must remember to carry the pocket bird book!

Now that the big Holywells Park restoration project, including the five year support, has come to an end, we,



Mandarin and other ducks in winter

the park users, the hard-working IBC park staff, and the Friends of Holywells Park (FoHP) return, as it were, to business as usual. The restored heritage assets are not only here to stay but seem spontaneously to generate new uses for themselves. If the Government delivers on its promise



Spectacular winter scene in the park

to liberalise wedding venues, perhaps we shall see couples tying the knot in the Holywells Conservatory in the near future. Meanwhile it is a very photogenic occasional celebratory location.



Hornbeam in winter

In the previous notes, we were concerned with the possible consequences of the big river crossing of the proposed upper Orwell crossing scheme. As we go to press, there is still no news, but there has been plenty of time to think. It has been suggested that the access roundabout on the east side, which would abut Holywells Park, would be at an elevation of some four metres, 13 feet, above local ground level to allow the bridge to clear existing buildings. Instantly, one thinks of pollution in the form of noise, vibration, particulates and gases, not forgetting light, now launched from an aerial platform towards the local populous both residential and visiting. And then, on further consideration, one struggles to imagine just how this would look in three, rather than two, dimensions.

Each approach to an elevated access roundabout would require a length of 40 metres, about 130 feet, of slope to avoid an excessive gradient for cyclists and pedestrians. Imagining, to reach the roundabout in the sky, either a classic earthen embankment or concrete roadway on pillars is not a pretty thought.



Tree Fungus



Friends of Holywells Park

The Group aims to work in partnership with Ipswich Borough Council to improve and promote the Park.

Contact: fohpswich@gmail.com
www.holywellspark.org.uk
[facebook.com/holywellsparkipswich](https://www.facebook.com/holywellsparkipswich)



Robin in winter

Nor, in passing, would it be cheap, even if practicable. It would, also, be hard to argue that such an approach is in line with the County Council's proud policy for Suffolk to be the Greenest County.

On a happier thought, Holywells Park has something to see at any time of year, and there is a café. The opening hours of the Stables Café are fewer during winter, though so are the hours of daylight.

There will be events in the park during 2019, please check with the FoHP website, and do come along!

Calendar competition open to all

Tim Kenny

Is it really that time of year already? The John Lewis advert is on television so I guess it must be. The shorter days and longer nights don't leave a lot of time for birding, but we did have a welcome reminder of the warmer days of summer at our November meeting when Martin Tickler spoke to us about house martins. To think that the birds that bred under Martin's eaves this year are (hopefully) thousands of miles away in Africa, having navigated the Sahara Desert, always amazes me. Not bad for a bird that weighs roughly the same as a pound coin.

This year, we have produced an exclusive 2019 Ipswich RSPB Local Group desk calendar, featuring photos of birds taken locally. We've done a run of fifty, so we might have sold out by the time you read this, but please feel free to email me at tim_kenny2001@yahoo.co.uk for availability if you'd like one. Priced at £8 each (plus £2 postage and packing if required), all profits are ploughed back into the local group. Some of the photos that feature are displayed here.

For the 2020 calendar we're going to have a photo competition open to all. Rules:

1. All photos must be of birds, or feature birds as the main component of the image
2. All photos must be taken in Suffolk (for the purposes of this competition, the rivers on the county borders are considered as wholly within Suffolk. A swimming duck in the Stour counts; however, a wader on the Essex bank of the Stour would be disqualified!)
3. All photos must be taken in 2019
4. Only .jpeg format photos will be considered.
5. Entrants can submit as many images as they like, but no photographer will have more than two images included in the final calendar.
6. You must own the copyright to anything you produce and implicitly allow us to reproduce it
7. Closing date is August 31st 2019
8. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.



Kingfisher, Levington Creek

The prize is to have your photo(s) included in the calendar, and a free copy. Send your photos to tim_kenny2001@yahoo.co.uk

badge for ten years service, whilst Mick and Judy Cook have clocked up thirty years each, earning them the gold bittern long service



Barn swallow, Minsmere

The last weekend in January sees the annual Big Garden Birdwatch and I hope many of you take part. This is the largest exercise in citizen science in the country and helps build a picture of the changing face of the nation's avifauna. It has alerted us to the decline of such species as house sparrows and greenfinches, so it really does make a difference.

Our group is lucky to have some very experienced volunteers and I have been honoured to present long service awards. I myself received a silver puffin pin

award. Also our esteemed membership secretary Rosemary Milner achieved the golden eagle award after forty years of voluntary service to the group. My heartiest congratulations to them and for their combined century of dedication and commitment to our group. Volunteers really are the lifeblood of the RSPB, and we are always grateful to welcome more. If you are interested, or you want to join the group, please contact us on ipswichrspliblocalgroup@yahoo.com.

Happy birding and hang on in there, it will soon be spring...



Ipswich Local Group

Group Leader Tim Kenny
Tel 01394 809236
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www.rspb.org.uk/groups/ipswich

Ipswich RSPB Local Group is for everyone interested in birds and other wildlife in the Ipswich area and beyond. Come along to our indoor talks, held monthly between September to April at Rushmere St Andrew Church Hall, or (throughout the year), get out and experience nature first hand on one of our regular field meetings, visiting some of the best spots for wildlife in the area. Three times a year the 'Orwell Observer', keeps readers abreast of the latest developments at nearby RSPB Reserves as well as news of Group activities, along with members' photographs and accounts of birding exploits from home and abroad. Membership costs £3 per year (£1 for Juniors). For more information see the Events Diary in this magazine, visit our website or write as per details above.

© Tim Kenny



Pintail drake, river Stour

© Tim Kenny

© Tim Kenny

A very active year for Suffolk

Julian Dowding

We held our AGM in November marking our 25th Anniversary year, with some cakes depicting Purple Emperor and Silver-studded Blue. Our Treasurer Dom Hill stepped down and has been replaced by Kev Ling. Thank you, Kev, for offering your services and Dom, for your work over the past four or five years.

The Branch had a very active year holding 23 events and another round of Brimstones and Buckthorn. 600 Buckthorn whips were given to members of the public and it is hoped that in the next two or three years, Brimstones will be attracted to the plants. Other insects use the bushes too so they're worth planting to improve biodiversity all round. *Lasioglossum sexnotatum* the Ashy Furrow Bee is one example which has been recorded in Ipswich on the bush. This bee is generally restricted to East Anglia. Green Hairstreak and Holly Blue also utilise the bush when flowering in summer, the bushes are alive with hoverflies and other species.

We held an Action Day in March at Blaxhall Heath to coincide with the anniversaries. Here, Silver-studded Blue has expanded its range. Volunteers pulled scrub to keep the habitat open, making good use of our tree poppers for the work.

Purdis Heath SSSI had a good year. Transect walkers David Basham and Helen Saunders recorded 99 Silver-studs on transect, indicating that the colony has had its best year for many. Unfortunately, the site's ownership is now hazy. Until we have clarification, we're unable to work there without permission from Natural England. The good work we've done there with Greenways is at risk as a result.

Indications from Suffolk records are that butterflies had a varied year. As we all know, butterflies are in serious



The scythes are a continental design, manufactured in Austria

decline due to climate change, habitat destruction, pesticides and local weather conditions but some species fared quite well, e.g. summer butterflies such as Small Copper, Hairstreaks and Common Blue. Others suffered the effects of the Beast from the East, e.g. overwintering species (Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Peacock and Brimstone etc) emerged in the false spring in Feb but were shocked and probably suffered casualties because of the Beast. Small Tortoiseshell, normally seen readily in gardens, had its worst year since the 1970's. One more bad year and the situation could become even worse. The long drought had an effect too. Much of the nectar normally available dried up. A lot of heather at heathland sites disappeared, removing food for butterflies. Some sites suffered more than others so it will be interesting to see how Silver-studded Blue fares next year. Furthermore, much of the heathland grasses favoured by Grayling also showed signs of desiccation and records



Butterfly Conservation
Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Membership Secretary
01379 643665
www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk
email: butterflies@sns.org.uk

Butterfly Conservation is dedicated to saving wild butterflies, moths and their habitats throughout the UK. All Butterfly Conservation members who live in Suffolk are automatically members of the branch and receive our newsletter, the Suffolk Argus, three times a year. The Suffolk branch is run by volunteers and we would be very pleased to hear from you if you would like to get involved.

submitted so far for the species indicate it had a very bad year. Thanks must go to Bill Stone, Suffolk Butterfly Recorder for his considerable work in collating the important recording data which runs into tens of thousands of records each year.

Finally, a positive note. Some of our members attended a scythe training day in Sept, led by Ipswich Urban Buzz, and Dave Dowding. It was a memorable day which took all the mystery out of scything and was an encouragement to those attending. Some, who simply will not use petrol driven brush cutters because of the heavy weight, noise, fumes and health risks, were happy to find that there is a readily available alternative, and one which costs a lot less. We all now feel confident to scythe meadows and grasslands to good effect.



The scythes are lighter than the English variety and offer blades for different types of vegetation

SOG Rook survey

John Grant

Here's the chance to have something to crow about – by taking part in our county-wide Rook survey.

SOG is calling on individuals and organisations throughout the county to join in its easy-to-carry-out census of the familiar and fascinating species, recording online the locations of rookeries and the number of nests in each one.



Membership Secretary Kevin Verlander,
9 Heron Close, Stowmarket, IP14 1UR
info@sogonline.org.uk
www.sogonline.org.uk
Twitter: [suffolkbirds1](https://twitter.com/suffolkbirds1)

SOG is the Group for people interested in the birds of Suffolk, and provides a network and a voice for birdwatchers in the county.

producing a booklet - *The Rook in Suffolk* - which was a landmark publication for SOG that brilliantly summarised members' fieldwork, with a total of 15,850 nests in 929 rookeries being recorded.

More than 40 years on, and after a more recent re-visiting of the subject in less extensive but still illuminating work by group chairman Gi Grieco and others, SOG is returning to the rook in a very big way. In what promises to be one of the group's most extensive projects to date, we are launching our own two-year rook survey to establish the species' current Suffolk population and distribution. The project is being seen as a golden opportunity to engage with members of the public – individuals, community organisations and especially young people via schools and Scouts and Guides groups – and to inspire them to become more connected with nature.



© Ashley Cooding

respected naturalist and conservationist Gathorne Gathorne-Hardy, Fifth Earl of Cranbrook.

It is hoped the two-year study, one of the most ambitious projects yet undertaken by the group in its nearly 50-year history, will accurately reveal Suffolk's population of this characterful member of the Crow family. It is also hoped involvement in the citizen science survey will bring people closer to wildlife and inspire them to engage ever more closely with nature.

Deserving of far more than just a cursory look, the Rook is an engaging and engrossing species that was first studied by SOG in 1975 when members carried out an exhaustive and exemplary survey in the county as part of a national British Trust for Ornithology census of the species. The group's painstaking survey work culminated in SOG stalwarts Michael J F Jeanes and Reg Snook



© Flammation | Shutterstock

The survey will record rookeries

The survey has been enabled by generous funding from Suffolk resident Jenifer Bridges-Adams and is being established with invaluable support from the highly

Gi Grieco said: "Rooks enliven Suffolk landscapes that are often bereft of much other wildlife. Our survey will enable people to really connect with nature, perhaps for their first time in a meaningful way, and to enjoy making a valuable contribution to a worthwhile study.

"Rookeries are easily monitored, clustered as they usually are in the crowns of trees and established as they are early in the year before leaves make them difficult to observe, and the online survey will be very user-friendly."

Easy to use and beginning in January 2019, a Rook survey webpage will be hosted by the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service, allowing the location of each rookery to be recorded along with its number of nests.

Further information will also be available on SOG's website, www.sogonline.org.uk. The survey webpage can be accessed at www.suffolkbis.org.uk/rookerysurvey.

Rooks are members of the Crow family – but they differ from their close relative the Carrion Crow in that they are generally far more social birds. Emphasising this fact, there is an old rural East Anglian adage: "If yew see one Rook, tha's a Crow, if yew see lots of Crows, that'll be Rooks."



© Gi Grieco

Rookery at Wortham

Volunteers do their stuff

Ann Havard

In August nine of us returned to finish trimming the A14 tree belt left over from our July work party. We spent the morning cutting back hawthorn, hazel, brambles and nettles whilst James wheeled the brush cutter up and down the path.

For our September work party we had 10 people join us for a slightly different morning. The Belstead Allotments field in Bobbitts Lane held an open day to raise funds for the Greenways Project – which was lovely of them!



James with the bar mower

James used the bar mower around the entrance to the field and the team raked up the grass and moved gravel to fill low spots in front of the allotment gates and in the entrance to the car park in Bobbitts Lane.

We then had a look around the Ipswich Wildlife Group allotment plot which was coming along nicely with wild flowers. Several of us walked around looking at other plots



Toadlet



Froglet

and admired the swelling apples. After a coffee we continued raking Millennium Wood Meadow with James using the bar mower in front of us. With the recent rain and warmth, the grass, nettles and thistles had all grown apace. The cut material was put at the edges of the area to rot down whilst providing a cosy habitat for reptiles. We saw a toadlet and a froglet.

A group of seven turned out for a hard work party in October. Earlier, Greenways had cut some overgrown vegetation around the edge of the play area at Burnet Meadow. To start with it didn't look as if it would keep us going for long but no sooner had we started than we realised that most of the vegetation was tall stuff – either rosebay willow herb, tall grass or long bramble tendrils. It was also on a slope with the cut vegetation having to be taken up hill each time. The wooden rakes were no match for bramble, so we resorted to using pitch forks.

Fairly soon after we had started, a young man came running along and did a few circuits of the exercise equipment before asking James what we were doing. After James had explained, the young man said "I'm jealous", to which James replied that there was no need to be as we had enough tools for him to join in. And join in he did, staying for an hour, working really hard and declaring it to be "a good workout". With



Paul with a forkful

his help, by the end of the morning we had towering heaps of vegetation.

November saw us join forces for Mega Bash 1 with Greenways and other local groups to make a real difference in the wonderfully wild Belstead Brook Park woodlands and meadows. One group carried on with



Ellie still smiling



Friends of Belstead Brook Park
www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/fobbp
 Email: fobbp@greenlivingcentre.org.uk
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/fobbp
 Friends of Belstead Brook Park (FoBBP) was set up in 2002 to help look after the 250 acres of informal country park on the south-western fringe of Ipswich. The group runs practical work parties, helps raise funds for improvements and acts as 'eyes and ears', passing information back to the Greenways Project.

the winter coppicing work in Spring Wood, whilst the rest of us started clearing the scrub vegetation that is creeping into Kiln Meadow. There was the usual bonfire with baked potatoes and cheese at the end of the day to reward us for all our hard work.



Lydia getting a forkful



Stoking up for the baked potatoes

Helping the hedgehogs of Ipswich

Ali North *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Hedgehog Officer*

As the evenings become longer and the temperature slightly warmer, hedgehogs are emerging and looking to replenish their reserves ready for the mating season. Hedgehogs are omnivores and opportunists, but the bulk of their diet consists of macro-invertebrates like beetles, caterpillars, slugs and worms.

Growing wildflower patches, letting grassy areas to grow long, keeping leaf litter on the ground and leaving wood to rot down will all help create the varied micro-habitats hedgehogs need to survive.

Although not a replacement for wild foraging habitat, a bowl of meaty cat or dog

food and a shallow dish of water can be placed on the patio as a supplement to their natural diets, and their regular visits can provide hours of enjoyment! Feeding stations can help exclude competitors – like the neighbourhood cats – if made with a large clear plastic storage box and a tunnel using bricks, to cover the food bowl.

As we progress further into spring, hedgehogs will be roaming far and wide as they seek out mates for the breeding season. Access to many gardens will be critical. Hedgehog champions in Ipswich have been actively creating Hedgehog Highways through their streets by visiting their neighbours gardens to help create their own hedgehog-sized holes with our drilling equipment. These drills can make neat holes in both wooden fences and walls and have been a great way of bringing groups of neighbours together for this common cause.

Get in touch if you would like to become a drilling volunteer or have a group of neighbours that are keen to be involved! Email hedgehogs@suffolkwildlifetrust.org for more information and follow our project blog here: www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/blog/tag/hedgehogs-blog



Here is just one example of the beginnings of a hedgehog highway created in Ipswich with our drilling equipment.

Toad Patrol

Leila Matata

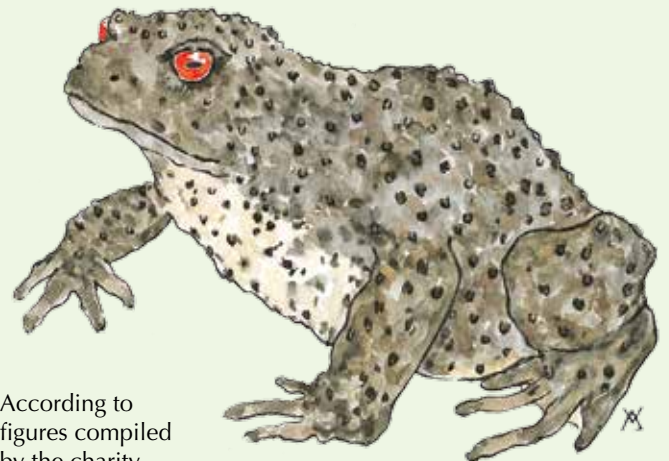
wild Ipswich

All the conservation organisations working together to inspire local people to help wildlife throughout the town and beyond.
www.wildipswich.org

I first got involved in the Bobbits Lane toad patrol in February 2018 and I'll admit to not really knowing what to expect. I didn't know anything about toads or their habitat, I didn't know how I could help. It turns out you don't need to be a herpetologist to get involved. It really is as simple as helping a toad cross the road and believe me, right now every toad we help really counts.

In the 2018 introductory meeting we were shown the numbers that patrols from previous years had logged, starting with figures from the 2010 patrol, where there was a total count of 6,889. But the numbers fall rapidly, just two years later the patrol counted 2,696 toads and in 2016 it was down to only 733. This year, we counted just 521 toads. Unfortunately, we don't know why the numbers are declining so drastically. Are the grass snakes which feed on these amphibians increasing in Kiln Meadow? Maybe the weather played a part this year? Just as we kicked off the patrol we were hit with the Beast from the East and temperatures plummeted.

As toads generally don't fancy getting out of bed if it's less than six degrees, this must have had an impact.



Common Toad illustration by Lydia Woods

According to figures compiled by the charity FrogLife, the declines we are seeing in our patrols are in line with those across the country, with an average of 68% drop in common toad numbers over the last 30 years.

Will the long, hot summer have been good or bad for our toads? There's only one way to find out, please come and help

us with the 2019 Toad Patrol. You don't need to have any previous experience or even any knowledge about toads in general. We'll be having an introductory meeting on the 21st February 2019 at the Scout HQ on Stoke Park Drive. Why not stop by for a cuppa, cake and chat about helping toads cross the road?

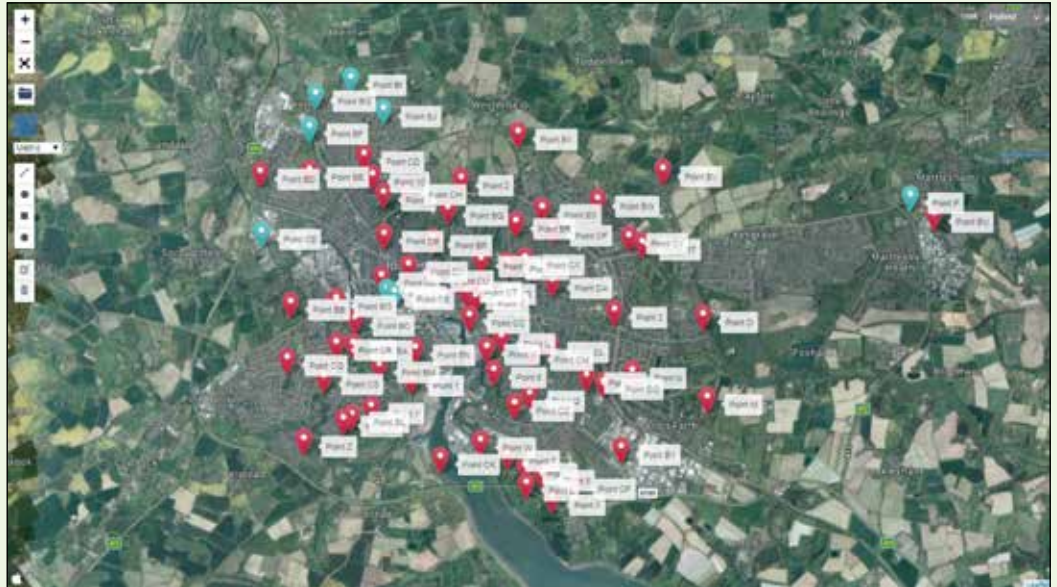
Urban Buzz Ipswich

David Dowding

Now into the final quarter of Urban Buzz Ipswich we are very busy with habitat creation. With 70 sites completed the project is on track to reach the 100, but it will be a very busy last four months.

These 70 sites consist of 35 parks and nature reserves, nine schools, six roadsides, five allotments, 10 Community sites and various others. This has been a majority of grassland and wildflower meadows supplemented with a few woodland, wetland and formal plantings as well as nesting habitat.

Altogether this totals around 18 hectares of pollinator enhancements. As expected the more urban sites are smaller in size but provide valuable



Breakdown of sites completed (red) and identified sites (blue)

stepping stones through the town. We have been doing lots of monitoring throughout the summer and have had some

great finds such as the Brown banded carder bee, a specialist of flower rich grasslands and the first record in Ipswich for 25 years.

We have recently looked at a few sites with the University of Suffolk, who have just set up a Wildlife Conservation degree, one of the sites is the green roof atop the James Hehir building. Currently just sedum, we are going to add drought resistant wildflowers such as Viper's bugloss and will monitor pollinator activity at altitude.

If you have any sites where you would be keen for pollinator

Wild Ipswich

All the conservation organisations working together to inspire local people to help wildlife throughout the town and beyond.
www.wildipswich.org

improvements in and around Ipswich, please contact me soon before the project's conclusion at the end of March.
david.dowding@buglife.org.uk



Brown banded carder bee - the first record in Ipswich for 25 years.

Sidegate Wildlife Ambassadors hard at work

The Wild Ipswich partnership (SWT, BugLife, Greenways, Wildlife Rangers, IWG and others) have extended the

Wildlife area at Sidegate school by another 40 metres.

As well as planting more

wildflowers the wildlife ambassadors built a large hibernaculum in the corner to encourage reptiles and

amphibians. We were also pleased to see stag beetles making the most of the forest school seating area!



Stag beetle larvae discovered under the seat



The hibernaculum under construction

Events Diary

For events covering a broader range of environmental issues go to www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/diary/diary.php

JANUARY

Thursday 10th January 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING

'Wildlife in Dedham Vale and the issues it faces' Darren Tansley, Essex Wildlife Trust. Sponsored by Bypass Nurseries Capel St Mary. St Andrews Church Hall, Rushmere St Andrew IP5 1DH. **More information from Tim Kenny 01394 809236.**

Tuesday 15th January 10am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK

Holywells Park (including Conservation Area). Meet at Stable Block off Cliff Lane. TM176432. **Leader Kathy Reynolds 01473 714839.**

Saturday 19th January 9am - 11am Portal Woodlands Conservation Group NATURE EXPLORERS

11 to 18 year olds. Meet at the Education Area. Booking essential, **please email pwgc.martlesham@gmail.com**

Saturday 19th January 10am - 3.30pm Greenways Countryside Project MEGABASH

Alderman Canal Local Nature Reserve. Join Greenways, IWG and other groups to make a real difference in a day. We will be clearing felled cricket bat willow tops, making habitat piles and preparing branches for chipping. No bonfire possible on this site, so no baked potatoes – but there will be special refreshments! All welcome – ideal for families or those new to practical conservation work. Meet at entrance to reserve on Bibb Way (parking will be available on-site).

Contact Greenways 01473 433995 or 07736 826076 for more details.

Want to join in?

Take a look at Regular Events on page 24

Saturday 19th January 10am - noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group WORK MORNING

All ages welcome - no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For details contact pwgc.onesuffolk.net**

Sunday 20th January 10am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Manningtree and Mistley for waders and wildfowl on River Stour. Meet at Manningtree Maltings. TM109319. 2 - 3hrs. 2 - 3 miles. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

Wednesday 23rd January 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK

Anne and Dennis Kell, 'Natural History of the Falkland Islands'. With the rugged terrain, ferocious winds and nutrient rich waters, they are home to a wide variety of plants and animals, and a huge number of sea birds. Museum Street Methodist Church, Blackhorse Lane, Ipswich.

Monday 28th January 7pm Ipswich Wildlife Group AGM and SOCIAL EVENING

All members and prospective members are welcome to this social evening and short AGM at the Thomas Wolsey pub, St Peters Street. **Further info from Ray Sidaway 01473 259104.**

FEBRUARY

Wednesday 6th February 6pm - 8pm SWT Ipswich Hedgehogs HEDGEHOG CHAMPIONS

Become a Suffolk hedgehog champion! Learn from our Ipswich hedgehog project and how to become a Hedgehog Champion for your street or parish. Learn about hedgehog ecology, how to detect hedgehogs and sign up as a hedgehog representative and point of contact for your local area. **Book online at suffolkwildlifetrust.org**



Saturday 9th February 1.30pm - 3.30pm SWT Wild Learning YOUNG WARDENS

Hands on practical conservation skills, surveying techniques and citizen science projects. Holywells Park. Age 11 - 16. Cost £3. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

Sunday 10th February 7.30am SWT Wild Learning MAMMAL TRAPS AND BREAKFAST BAPS

Christchurch Park. Discover urban wildlife including encounters with mice and voles as we check mammal traps in and around the park. Warm up afterwards with a breakfast bap and hot drink at the Woolpack. Adults. Cost £10 includes breakfast. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

Thursday 14th February 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING

'Nature Our Way' Jim and Fred Price photographers. Sponsored by Collins Waste Solutions. St Andrews Church Hall, Rushmere St Andrew IP5 1DH. **More information from Tim Kenny 01394 809236.**

Saturday 16th February 9am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Levington Creek and River Orwell for waders, geese and wildfowl. Meet at car park. TM237389. 2 - 3hrs. 2 - 3 miles. Walking can be muddy and exposed. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

Saturday 16th February 10am - 3.30pm Greenways Countryside Project MEGABASH

Martlesham Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest. Join Greenways, Martlesham Conservation Group and other groups

to help make a real difference to this nationally important habitat, in one day! We will be clearing gorse and other invasive scrub to help maintain the open character of the heath – so vital to so many rare species. There will be a big bonfire and baked potatoes! All welcome – ideal for families and those new to practical conservation work. Enter the site (on foot) opposite the old windsock on Eagle Way – there will be signs from the metal gate. **Contact Greenways, 01473 433995 or 07736 826076 for more details.**

Sunday 17th February 10am - noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group WORK MORNING

All ages welcome - no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For details contact pwgc.onesuffolk.net**

Monday 18th February SWT Wild Learning CREATE A BUZZ

10am - 11.30am Bourne Park. 1.30pm - 3pm Christchurch Park. Join Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Urban Buzz Ipswich to create wildflower plots for our local pollinator species and other wildlife. Families. Free but donations welcome. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

Tuesday 19th February 10am - 3pm SWT Ipswich Hedgehogs TRAINING COURSE

Hedgehog ecology and management for practitioners training. A People's Trust for Endangered Species and British Hedgehog Preservation Society course aimed at people involved in the management of public spaces or private amenity land. Run by Senior Conservation Adviser Simone Bullion, and Hedgehog Officer, Ali North. Covers hedgehog ecology, threats and mitigation methods. Ipswich Museum, £50. **Book online at suffolkwildlifetrust.org**

Tuesday 19th February 10am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK

Chantry Park. Meet at car park near toilet block (Hadleigh Road). TM138443. **Leader Kathy Reynolds 01473 714839.**

Tuesday 19th February 10.30am - 12.30pm SWT Wild Learning NEST BOX BUILDING

Join us to build a nest box as part of National Nest Box Week and take home your creation. Chantry Park. Families (3 years old+). Cost £10. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**



Wednesday 20th February 10.30am - 12.30pm SWT Wild Learning TOTS AND TEEPEES

Come along to our activity morning for all the family. Activity is aimed for Tots, with older children welcome to join in the fun. Christchurch Park. Age 18 months and over. Cost £4 child, £2 adult. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Thursday 21st February 7pm Greenways
TOAD PATROL BRIEFING**

If you would like to help with this year's toad patrol in Bobbits Lane or just learn more about toads and frogs do come along to get expert advice. The Scout Hall, Stoke Park drive IP2 9TH. **For more information call 01473 433995 or toads@greenlivingcentre.org.uk**

**Friday 22nd February 10am – 12.30pm
SWT Wild Learning BUSHCRAFT SKILLS**

Learn wild skills, light fires and build shelters. Holywells Park. Age 11 – 16. Cost £10 child. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Wednesday 27th February 7.30pm Suffolk
Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK**

Dr John Baker, 'Amphibia and Reptiles of Britain'. John, as county recorder, has a vast knowledge and experience of working with this fascinating group, which he will share with us. Museum Street Methodist Church, Blackhorse Lane, Ipswich.

MARCH

**Saturday 9th March 1.30pm – 3.30pm SWT
Wild Learning YOUNG WARDENS**

Hands on practical conservation skills, surveying techniques and citizen science projects. Holywells Park. Age 11 – 16. Cost £3. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Thursday 14th March 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich
Group INDOOR MEETING**

'Birds, their Hidden World' Peter Holden MBE, ex RSPB, writer and lecturer. Sponsored by The Oddfellows. St Andrews Church Hall, Rushmere St Andrew IP5 1DH. **More information from Tim Kenny 01394 809236.**

**Saturday 16th March 9am - 11am Portal
Woodlands Conservation Group NATURE
EXPLORERS**

11 to 18 year olds. Meet at the Education Area. Booking essential, **please email pwgc.martlesham@gmail.com**



**Saturday 16th March 9.30am RSPB Ipswich
Group FIELD MEETING**

Alton Water for water and woodland birds. Meet at Lemons Hill Bridge south car park. TM136374. 2 - 3 hrs. 3 - 4 miles. Walking easy. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

**Saturday 16th March 10am - noon Portal
Woodlands Conservation Group WORK
MORNING**

All ages welcome - no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For details contact pwgc.onesuffolk.net**

**Tuesday 19th March 10am RSPB Ipswich
Group MIDWEEK WALK**

Bourne Bridge area and park. Meet at Bourne Park car park (Bourne Bridge entrance). TM161419. **Leader Kathy Reynolds 01473 714839.**

**Wednesday 27th March 7.30pm Suffolk
Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK**

David Dowding, 'Ipswich Urban Buzz'. David is the Urban Buzz Conservation Officer for Ipswich. Museum Street Methodist Church, Blackhorse Lane, Ipswich.

APRIL

**Wednesday 10th April 10.30am – 12.30pm
SWT Wild Learning WILD TOTS TURN
EGG DETECTIVES**

Become an egg detective and find out about the weird and wonderful eggs in the natural world and eggsplore Christchurch Park with us this Easter. Families, 18 months +. Cost £4 child, £2 Adult. £2 older sibling. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Thursday 11th April 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich
Group INDOOR MEETING**

AGM plus 'The All Year Garden Birdwatch Survey and its Importance', Claire Boothby BTO Garden Birdwatch Development Manager. Sponsored by Mid-Suffolk Fencing Needham Market. St Andrews Church Hall, Rushmere St Andrew IP5 1DH.

More information from Tim Kenny 01394 809236.

**Friday 12th April 9.30am – 3.30pm SWT
Wild Learning WILD HOLIDAY CLUB**

Discover Holywells Park's wild side through exploration, games and wild activities. Age 6 – 11. Cost £15. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Saturday 13th April 1.30pm – 3.30pm SWT
Wild Learning YOUNG WARDENS**

Hands on practical conservation skills, surveying techniques and citizen science projects. Holywells Park. Age 11 – 16. Cost £3. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Sunday 14th April 2pm RSPB Ipswich
Group FIELD MEETING**

Felixstowe Ferry and River Deben for wildfowl, waders and farmland birds. Meet at car park. TM328377. 2 - 3hrs, 2 - 3 miles. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

**Monday 15th April 1.30pm – 3.30pm SWT
Wild Learning WILD TOTS TURN EGG
DETECTIVES**

Become an egg detective and find out about the weird and wonderful eggs in the natural world and eggsplore Chantry Park with us. Families, 18 months +. Cost £4 child, £2 Adult, £2 older siblings. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Tuesday 16th April 9.30am – 3.30pm SWT
Wild Learning WILD HOLIDAY CLUB**

Discover Holywells Park's wild side through exploration, games and wild activities. Age 6-11. Cost £15. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Tuesday 16th April 10am RSPB Ipswich
Group MIDWEEK WALK**

Bridge Wood. Meet at Orwell Country Park car park. TM188408. **Leader Kathy Reynolds 01473 714839.**

**Wednesday 17th April 10.30am – 12.30pm
SWT Wild Learning EASTER GEOCACHING**

Eggsplore Chantry Park and find hidden caches. Age 11-16. Cost £10. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Wednesday 24th April 6.30pm RSPB
Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING**

Kiln Meadow and Spring Wood for woodland birds and early summer visitors. Meet at Marbled White Drive. TM143417. 2hrs, 2 - 3 miles. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

Want to join in?

**Take a look at Regular
Events on page 24**

**Wednesday 24th April 7.30pm Suffolk
Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK**

Tony Copeman 'Malt and Wildlife Walks'. Muntons, a malting firm operating in Stowmarket for more than 70 years is dedicated to sustainability. It uses eco-friendly products, and aims to reduce its environmental impact and its carbon footprint. This meeting is preceded by a short AGM. Museum Street Methodist Church, Blackhorse Lane, Ipswich.

**Sunday 28th April 8am - 1pm SWT Wild
Learning WILD WITH YOUR CHILD –
WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY**

An opportunity for parents and children to learn together the secrets of successful wildlife photography. Christchurch Park. Cost £55 per adult and child; £20 per additional child or adult (max one). **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

**Sunday 28th April 10am - noon Portal
Woodlands Conservation Group WORK
MORNING**

All ages welcome - no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For details contact pwgc.onesuffolk.net**

**Sunday 28th April 11am - 3pm Ipswich
Wildlife Group BEANPOLE DAY**

Calling all gardeners and allotment-holders. Come along and buy all your beanpoles and pea sticks produced from coppicing in Spring Wood. Park at Bobbits Lane car park IP9 2BE. Beanpoles and pea sticks will be available for sale from January. **For further details call Gerry Donlon 01394 547263, Ipswich Wildlife Group on Facebook or see www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/iwg**

MAY

**Monday 6th May Bank Holiday 11am - 4pm
SPRING WOOD DAY - FAMILY EVENT**

Join the Greenways Project, Ipswich Wildlife Group, Friends of Belstead Brook Park and many others for a celebration of this wonderful area of Local Nature Reserve. Guided walks, woodland crafts, family activities, demonstrations, music, food and much more. Parking at Bourne Park off Stoke Park Drive with free minibus to the event on Kiln Meadow. **More information from 01473 433995 or 07736 826076 on the day and at Ipswich Wildlife Group on Facebook**

Regular Events

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH 10.30am - 1pm SPRING WOOD WORK PARTY

Join Ipswich Wildlife Group and Friends of Belstead Brook Park for a morning of work in the wood. Meet at the field gate at top of bridleway in Kiln Meadow. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481**

TUESDAYS 10am Greenways CONSERVATION WORK PARTY

The Project's largest weekly work party – carrying out a wide range of practical tasks across the 50 or so sites that we manage. For all Greenways work parties, volunteers need to be registered via a short informal induction prior to joining us – please contact us for further details. Work party runs from 10am to about 4pm. **Contact greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk or call 01473 433995.**

WEDNESDAYS 10am Friends of Holywells Park HOLYWELLS PARK WORK PARTY

Join our small team of volunteers doing valuable work around the Park. Meet at the Stable Block located down the driveway from Cliff Lane. **Contact Martin Cant for details 07858 436003**

SECOND WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH Friends of The Dales WORK PARTY

Contact Joan Powell for the details jayempowell@btinternet.com

EVERY THURSDAY/FRIDAY 10am – 11.30am SWT Wild Learning WILD TOTS

Outdoor adventure and play for tots age 18 months – 5 years and their carers. Christchurch Park Thursdays, Holywells Park Fridays. Cost £4. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

THURSDAYS 10am Greenways CONSERVATION WORK PARTY

A smaller group than on Tuesday, but operates in the same way – please see details above for Tuesdays Work Party.

SECOND THURSDAY OF THE MONTH 9 – 10pm 'Green Drinks' Dove Inn, Ipswich DRINKS AND CHAT

Join us at the Dove Inn for a drink, a chat and a bit of networking with other environmentally-minded people. Look out for the 'Green Drinks' sign on the table. All welcome.

FRIDAYS 10am Greenways CONSERVATION WORK PARTY

Another opportunity to work on the 50 or so sites managed by the Project – please see the details above for Tuesdays Work Party.

FRIDAYS FORTNIGHTLY 10am Ipswich Wildlife Group/Greenways BOX KIT MAKING

Come and join in making the kits for bird, hedgehog and insect habitat boxes for our Wildlife Homes project. Only the most rudimentary of woodworking skills needed. Thorington Hall Barn, Bobbitts Lane, Ipswich. **More information from Martin Cant 07858 436003 martin.cant@ntlworld.com**

FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am - 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group RIVER WORK PARTY

A joint work party with the River Action Group along Alderman Canal and the River Gipping, maintaining footpaths and making these splendid waterways areas to be proud of. Meet at Bibb Way alongside Alderman Road recreation ground. **More information from Ray Sidaway 01473 259104.**

FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am Butterfly Conservation WORK PARTY (October to March)

Meet at Purdis Heath to help restore the heath for the benefit of butterflies and other wildlife. Use the lay-by in Bucklesham Road. **More information from Helen Saunders helens919@gmail.com**

EVERY SECOND SATURDAY 10am – 12pm SWT Wild Learning WILDLIFE WATCH

Holywells Park. Join our wildlife themed club to explore the park, learn about wildlife, meet new friends and earn awards as you go. Age 6 – 11 years. Cost £3. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

SECOND SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH 10am - 1pm Friends of Belstead Brook Park CONSERVATION WORK PARTY

Come and join us for a morning working in the fresh air. **For further details visit our website: www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/fobbp or email fobbp@greenlivingcentre.org.uk**

MOST SATURDAYS 10.30am - 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group Northgate Allotments WOODCRAFT & WILDLIFE

Get involved in coppicing and woodland skills at the Wildlife area. **Call Geoff Sinclair to confirm dates 07860 595376**

LAST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH 10am - 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group WILDLIFE ALLOTMENT

Come and lend a hand to help create our wildlife friendly plot. **More information from Ray Sidaway 01473 259104.**

Spring Wood Celebration Day



A free event for all the family to enjoy the wildlife and nature of Spring Wood and Kiln Meadow

Fun activities and storytelling for kids • Folk music and dancing
Have a go at ancient woodcraft • Guided walks in the woods
Make your own bird box • Refreshments or bring a picnic

**Bank Holiday Monday 6th May
11am to 4pm**

Parking at Bourne Park off Stoke Park Drive with free minibus to the event.

Please come on foot, by bike or bus if you can.

Pedestrian entrance to Kiln Meadow off Marbled White Drive, Pinewood.

For further details call 07733 968481 (on the day 07736 826076).

Email greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk or www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/greenways

