

The ancient trees of Spring Wood  
– see page 9

# Local Wildlife news

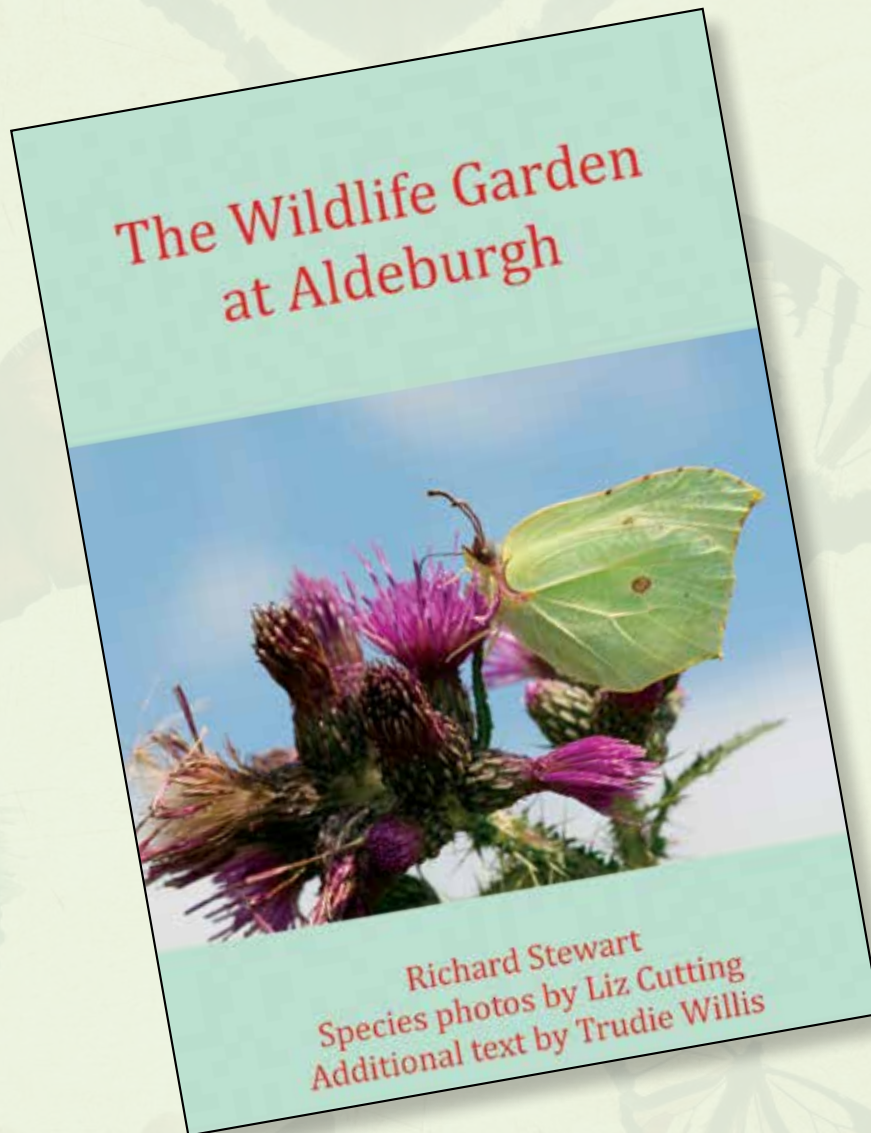
January to April 2021

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



# The Wildlife Garden at Aldeburgh

*A review by Martin Sanford, Manager Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service*



**This is the title of a new book by local author Richard Stewart. It celebrates the history and rich biodiversity of the ten acres of garden at Priors Oak on the edge of Aldeburgh.**

For many years the owner, Trudie Willis, has opened her garden to visitors with all entry fees and donations going to a wide variety of charities, including wildlife groups. The Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation, one of the beneficiaries, is funding the fully illustrated book.

All of the extensive garden is covered, from the living willow lookout across to North Warren reserve to the large wildlife garden based around a large meadow of acid grassland. The garden has a particularly extensive range of buddleia species, a long hedge of native species and an impressive list of butterflies and birds. The fast-declining turtle dove can still be heard and seen here. Mammals include hedgehog, two species of deer, badgers and a family of foxes.

The book can be purchased, price £7.50 from local bookshops and garden centres or at one of the Open Days - details at: <https://sites.google.com/site/priorsoakbutterflygarden>. Copies can also be obtained from the author at 112, Westerfield road, Ipswich, IP4 2XW. These are post free and please address a cheque for £7.50 to 'R. Stewart'.

**All profits will go to the work of Butterfly Conservation in Suffolk.**

# Welcome

by **James Baker** *Editor*

Welcome to the Winter/Spring edition of Local Wildlife News – appearing again as a hard copy magazine as well as electronic!

In very uncertain times, wildlife and the natural world have certainly provided a reliable constant for vast numbers of people – and I don't think it is an understatement to say that the enjoyment of green spaces has been key to maintaining people's wellbeing during 2020 and beyond.

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*I can only hope that more people will appreciate nature and those who spend their lives trying to protect it ...*

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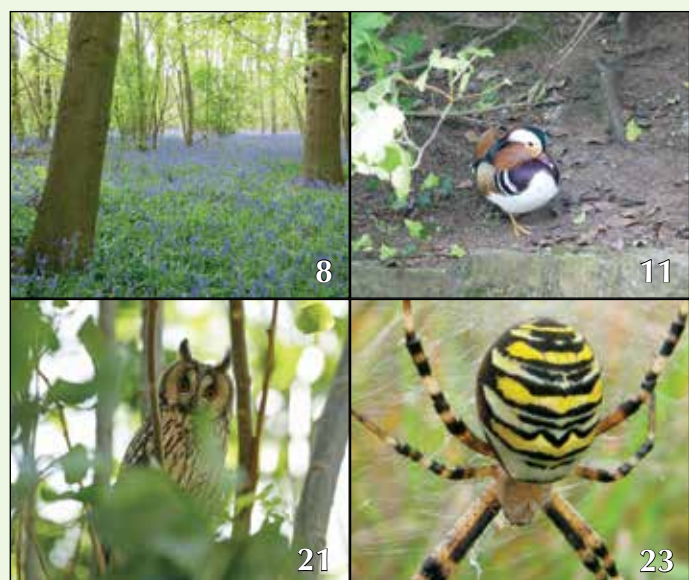
Appreciating wildlife has tended to become more something one does alone or with family, as all the organised events tailored to helping people experience and learn about nature, have had to be postponed or cancelled.

This magazine seems rather odd without several pages of up-coming events of all shapes and sizes – almost all run by the incredible dedicated staff and volunteers of our local conservation groups. I can only hope that more people will appreciate nature and those who spend

their lives trying to protect it – and that once some sort of normality returns, we will find far wider support for our work – and that it will be taken as seriously as it deserves by policy makers and purse-string holders!

Sheila Roberts' article on microplastics on page 6 not only raises a vital global issue, but also gives an idea how we can all do simple things to help even during 'lock-downs' – a simple litter pick makes all the difference by reducing long-term pollution, removing wildlife hazards and massively improving the perception of an area. I particularly like her point about picking the small bits of rubbish up – something I have always done – whether it be cigarette butts, bottle tops, torn or mown bits of plastic film – they all need to be removed from the natural world!! Local conservationist and activist Jason Alexander has set up 'UK Rubbish Walks' to highlight the ridiculous litter and waste problems we have, and has set out to collect a million cigarette butts! Unbelievably, he is already well on the way with hundreds of thousands collected – please follow his progress with this, and many other great schemes, on social media.

Keep well, enjoy wildlife and don't forget – please support your local conservation groups by being a member or a volunteer if you can!



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# Nature Lovers Quiz

**Sheila Roberts** *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*



## Ipswich Group Newsletter

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*We are the Ipswich Group of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. We offer an interesting range of monthly meetings with guest speakers. 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 on the website, [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org).*



Normally, at this time of year, the Ipswich Group of the Wildlife Trust would have a busy and interesting programme of talks and visits available for us all to enjoy and learn from. As Covid-19 means these can't currently take place, we'd like to offer instead this little quiz. Instead of just answering them all yourself, why not set up a video call with some like-minded friends you haven't seen for a while and challenge them to see if they can beat your score?

### Birds

1. One Ipswich park has a very famous resident called Mabel. What type of bird is she?
2. What is a group of goldfinches known as?
3. By what name is the Norfolk plover, thick knee or wailing heath chicken better known?
4. A 'train' or a 'clattering' is the collective noun for what kind of bird?
5. What kind of bird has a call like an angry piglet?

### Animals

1. What is a fox's tail called?
2. Pygmy, common and water are all types of what animal?
3. What name is given to the shallow depression in the ground where a hare rests?
4. What kind of animal, extinct in England since the 16th century is being reintroduced to help prevent flooding?
5. What is a baby seal called?

### Trees

1. What are seeds of oak trees better known as?
2. Horse and sweet are two species of what kind of tree?
3. Which species of English tree is suffering badly from a new fungal disease first seen in this country in 2012?
4. What kind of tree traditionally provided the timber to make cricket bats?
5. Which shrub provides the berries used to flavour traditional gin?

### Plants

1. Moschatel is a tiny flowering plant that grows in wet places including Spring Wood. Its unusual flowering spike with four flowers facing in different directions gives rise to its other common name – what is it?
2. Which kind of native lavender has no scent?
3. What invasive weed which grows five feet tall and spreads by underground rhizomes was featured in the last edition of Local Wildlife News?
4. In 2002 Plantlife ran a "County Flowers" campaign to assign flowers to each of the counties of the United Kingdom. Which flower was assigned to Suffolk?
5. What colour are the ripe berries of our native ivy?

### Habitats

1. What breed of pony does the Trust use to keep down vegetation on several of its reserves?
2. Which Wildlife Trust woodland nature reserve has been under continuous traditional coppice management since 1252?
3. What type of habitat does the silver studded blue butterfly require to thrive?
4. What do the initials SSSI stand for?
5. Which Ipswich nature reserve was home to a swimming pool between 1936 and 1979?

*ANSWERS can be found on page 6.*

# The winter's wild harvest

**Wendy Brown** *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

**At the beginning of 2021 we are looking back on a unique year with mixed recollections and we need to remember some notably good and interesting things.**

One of my outstanding memories during the autumn of 2020 was the quality and quantity of the wild fruits and countryside harvest everywhere in and around Ipswich. Much of that abundance will have fallen to the ground by now but the remaining fruits and seeds will be food for foraging birds, mammals and invertebrates over the winter and some left over for new plants germinating in the spring.

Much of the autumn harvest has gone from the hedges but in the meantime badgers will have eaten fruit and nuts and foxes can be omnivorous too and are very partial to blackberries.

The incredible abundance of ivy flowers, still flowering into November, and berries lasting the winter will be food for a great



All pictures © Melvyn Eke

*Flowering ivy provides nectar*



*Abundant hedgerow berries and hips*

variety of wildlife. Ivy when it is flowering provides nectar for many insects and most noticeably wasps. The berries as they ripen go black and look rather unappetising but are eaten by birds – thrushes, blackbirds and wood pigeons.

The hedgerow berries also provide food for the migrating redwings and fieldfares that have returned to this country in late autumn from colder countries. The redwings arrive from all over north and east European countries. Fieldfares that migrate are more northern birds flying from their breeding grounds in Scandinavia and Russia and they both feed on our hedgerow fruits in mixed flocks. Keep a look out for them in your garden.

The chestnut harvest, both horse and sweet, was more prolific than I had ever



*A prolific chestnut harvest*



**Ipswich Group Newsletter**

seen. However, not the beech mast. The horse chestnut or conker is poisonous to most animals including horses which is surprising as it has the Greek for horse in its name, but it is edible to deer. I hope that anyone making chestnut stuffing had the forethought to gather the sweet chestnuts in the late autumn but left enough for the squirrels to have a winter bonanza.

# Microplastics in the sea – what can we do

**Sheila Roberts** *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

Many of us will have watched appalled as David Attenborough talked about the amount of plastic in our seas and the impact it's having on wildlife. Some of us will have tried to do something about it – perhaps by picking up rubbish as we stroll along the beach.

As I was out for my morning walk round south west Ipswich last summer, I realised there is something else that we can do to stop plastic getting into our oceans. And that 'something' is right outside our front doors even if those doors are several miles from the sea.

What I noticed on my walks is the amount of small bits of litter that can be seen on our verges, paths and gutters. Discarded drinking straws, transparent plastic from cigarette packets and packets from every kind of treat all nestling down ready to be trodden into pieces by feet or shredded by the next visit of the grass cutting machine. As they get smaller and smaller, they are washed away by the rain into the

gutters and drains. And what you might not know is that those drains are largely not emptying into the foul sewer that leads to the water treatment plant but making their way through culverts and streams into our rivers and then out to sea.

Armed with my gardening gloves, an old plastic bag and my trusty litter picking stick, I can sometimes collect half a bag of rubbish within a hundred yards of my Ipswich house. All from an area that at first glance looks litter free. This is not a criticism of the council workers who pick litter and cut the grass – they can't be everywhere all at once and can't see every bottle top and cigarette butt from the seat of their mowers. If I didn't pick it up, there's a good chance it will be pulverised by feet, wheels or mowers and then end up in the local brook via the drains.

I'm pretty sure readers of Local Wildlife News are careful not to drop litter but, if you want to do your bit to keep plastic out of our oceans, next time you go for a walk in your neighbourhood, why not take some sturdy gloves and a bag and see what you can pick up. The secret is to not just look for the big pieces but also those smaller bits that have already started to be broken up.

But please remember, don't take risks on verges next to busy roads and, if you see

anything dodgy like needles or glass, please ring your council to get in the experts.



At the time of writing, none of us know when we will be able to resume our monthly talks programme. As soon as we have news we will send emails to all Ipswich members and update the Trust website so please do keep a look out.

## Answers to Nature Lovers Quiz

### Birds

1. Tawny owl
2. Charm
3. Stone curlew
4. Jackdaw
5. Water rail

### Animals

1. Brush
2. Shrew
3. A form
4. Beaver
5. Pup

### Trees

1. Acorn
2. Chestnut
3. Ash
4. Willow
5. Juniper

### Plants

1. Town hall clock
2. Sea lavender
3. Horsetail
4. Oxslip
5. Black

### Habitats

1. Konik
2. Bradfield Wood
3. Heathland
4. Site of Special Scientific Interest
5. Pipers Vale or The Lairs (either is acceptable)

# Signs of new things to come

**Lucy Shepherd** *Wild Learning Officer, Suffolk Wildlife Trust*

With the arrival of each new season I always declare that it is my favourite, yet come the next season, I think the same about the new season. Whilst I find it difficult to pinpoint my favourite season, I do know that I love spring and all the promise that it brings for the New Year, and one of my favourite activities is going out and looking for signs of spring just waiting to burst out after a winter hidden away.

Snowdrops are one of our earliest arrivals and whilst they look delicate in appearance, they are hardy plants containing antifreeze in their leaves allowing them to stay unfrozen and to function once snow and frost retreats. Snowdrops provide a fantastic source of nectar for our early emerging invertebrates too such as bumblebees.

Hazel catkins are another natural seasonal marker and their appearance always signals to me that warmer weather is on the way as we head further into spring.

Hazel trees are monoecious meaning that both male and female flowers grow on the same trees. The yellow catkins are the male flowers and the tiny pink flowers are female and both require being pollinated by flowers from other hazel trees. The

catkins and flowers arrive before the leaves do on the tree allowing you to see them on close inspection.

Crocuses add another colourful addition to our British spring time and as they emerge through grass patches in our green spaces, they not only add a splash of cheerful colour, but again they provide early emerging invertebrates with vital nectar sources. Queen bumblebees are particularly partial to crocus nectar and can often be found asleep or sheltering in the flowers if the weather turns on them whilst out on their early forage.

It also wouldn't be spring without the presence of frogs and toads emerging from hibernation as they return to their maternal ponds to mate. Frogs usually mate earlier in spring than toads and you can often see both species in several locations in Ipswich in their hundreds as they migrate together. Although it might seem there are good numbers when you see them migrate 'en mass', toads are facing a rapid decline suffering a 68% loss in just 30 years. If you see some crossing the road this spring, why not give them a helping hand to the other side in the same direction of travel they were going or better still, make a corner in your garden amphibian friendly.



*Snowdrops - the earliest arrivals in spring*

Although the New Year might bring some uncertainty, spring still continues and provides us with plenty of seasonal markers and signs to look out for. I know I am looking forward to seeing what I can find this spring in our Ipswich green spaces.

For more information on our work in Ipswich, why not follow our social media pages, Find us on @Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich on Facebook and @SWTipswich on Instagram.



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*Male catkins of the hazel*



*Toads are facing a rapid decline*

# Needed more than ever!

**James Baker** *Manager, Greenways Countryside Project*

If Covid-19 and the lockdowns have shown us anything, they have highlighted the importance of parks, open space and nature reserves in the maintenance of everyone's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.



**GREENWAYS**  
countryside project

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*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, East Suffolk Council and the local community.*

The only time spent out of the house for many has been to take their 'daily exercise', and the vast majority have chosen to do this in semi-natural surroundings – massively increasing the number of visitors to all of the sites managed by the Greenways Project.

Whilst we have been out working to maintain all of our 40 or so nature reserves and green spaces, we have been amazed by the increase in visitors and interest in our activities. Encouraging people to get out and explore their local natural areas in order to reap the many benefits has been a key part of our 'mission' for the last 26 years and we have tried everything from exciting events to free food (!)

to achieve it – so somewhat ironic that it has taken a global pandemic to really make a difference!

Another irony has been that the increase in visitors has been so sharp that we have started to see damage to important wildlife habitats as a result – the creation of dozens of new informal paths through woods and heaths, interference with nest boxes, removal of dead wood to make dens and fires, more dogs running free in sensitive areas, and of course, the inevitable and much publicised plague of litter!

The importance of these natural spaces is clear then – but the resources available for the essential ongoing maintenance, for people as well as wildlife, are sadly dwindling – just at the time when we are needed the most!

In October, we submitted a joint application with the IBC Wildlife Team to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund for funding to carry out a huge range of site improvements right across the wider Ipswich area, to try to increase the available resources. This fund was massively over-subscribed, and sadly our bid was not successful.

The Greenways Project receives core funding from the three remaining partners - Ipswich Borough Council, East Suffolk Council and Babergh District Council. These partners' core contributions provide about 30% of our annual costs. We then have to find the remaining 70% (around £75,000) from income generating work. Some of this work is for the funding partners, but we also regularly work for Parish and Town Councils, residents' management companies, and private landowners/businesses.

The need to perpetually seek additional income inevitably takes us away from our traditional roles which have included: providing advice and guidance on land management for wildlife; running public



*Encouraging people to get out and explore*

events; giving illustrated talks and guided walks; commenting on planning applications and local plans; helping people with learning difficulties to get involved in practical countryside management work; carrying out wildlife species surveying; conducting questionnaire surveys of site visitors; monitoring the effectiveness of our site based work; and directly involving and educating young people.

Please help by: respecting nature and natural places, and encouraging others to

do the same; becoming a volunteer and helping to look after these places and their wildlife (doesn't have to be a big commitment!); joining membership organisations such as Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Ipswich Wildlife Group, the RSPB or donate whatever you can to such causes – or direct to the Greenways Project! We'd be very happy to discuss with you what a direct contribution could fund in any of our nature reserves; or use our services for land management work to benefit wildlife in the wider Ipswich area.



*Greenways is responsible for maintaining over 40 nature reserves and green spaces*

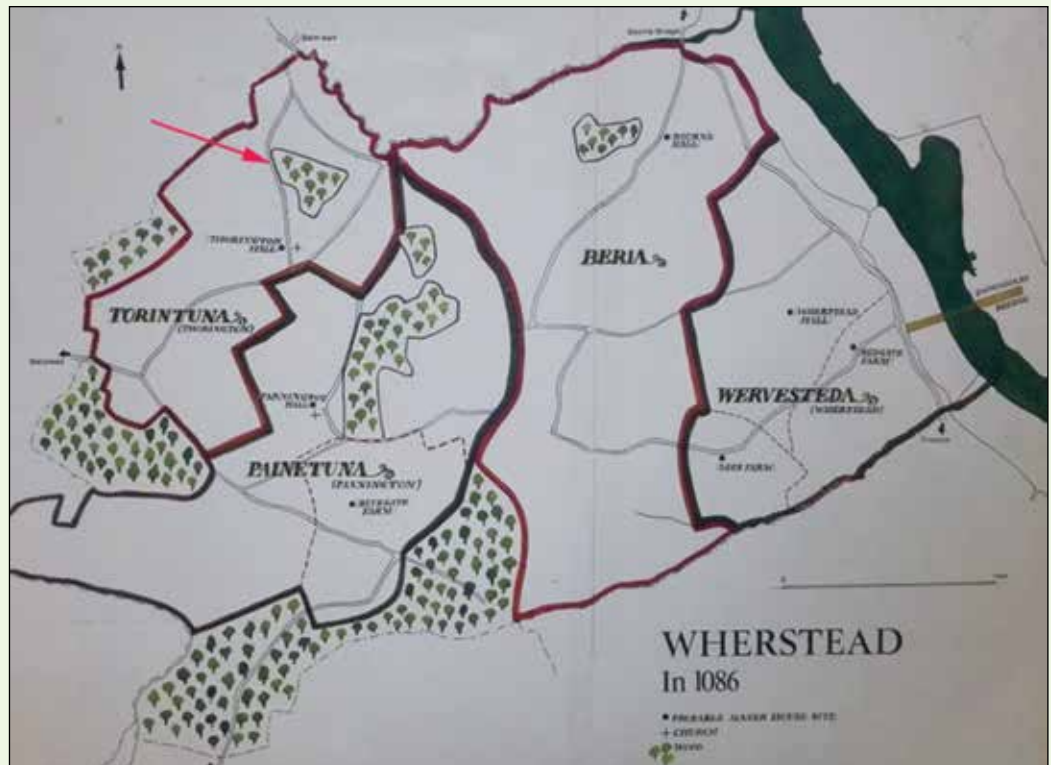


# Spring Wood – ancient trees and rope!

**James Baker** *Manager, Greenways Countryside Project*

Spring Wood Local Nature Reserve on the south-west edge of Ipswich, is a beautiful ‘Ancient Woodland’ – this means that there is direct documentary evidence that the site has been continuously wooded since at least 1600. The assumption being that no large scale planting by man is known before 1600, and thus a wood present in 1600 is likely to have developed naturally following the last ice age. Such woods are rare and unique, having developed over thousands of years and so cannot be replaced and provide vital resources for many valuable, rare and threatened wildlife species.

The Wood is also a Local Nature Reserve, meaning that the site is protected in perpetuity for the benefit of wildlife and public enjoyment and study. Further to this, it is also a County Wildlife Site, which means it is deemed to be important for nature conservation at the county level (ie, not recognised as nationally important by being a Site of Special Scientific Interest).



*Wherstead in 1086 showing Spring Wood arrowed*

The Wood has been owned by Ipswich Borough Council since 1970 when the Council bought the Thorington Hall farm estate. The Greenways Project has been looking after the Wood and its wildlife since 1994 – initially with the

help of Suffolk Wildlife Trust local volunteers and more latterly with Ipswich Wildlife Group, who have carried out much of the annual coppicing to produce a ‘crop’ of hazel beanpoles, peasticks and other woodland products.

Like most woodlands in England, the impacts of man’s activity has been dramatic and despite the ‘natural’ appearance, almost every aspect has been affected by our activities over thousands of years. From the boundary ditches and banks (unchanged since at least 1086!) and massive old coppice stools to the three pylon lines above and recently added boardwalks, gates and signs, there is evidence of continued involvement in the Wood.

Back in 2004, several flint fragments were found by our volunteers near the sewage works (a few hundred yards from Spring Wood) that were analysed by Suffolk County Council’s Archaeological service, and determined to be mostly Early Bronze Age, c2500-1500BC (possibly into Middle Bronze Age, c1500-1200BC), but with one (probably re-utilised) flake from Mesolithic or Neolithic – so even earlier. I think it is thus safe to assume that early people were living in the area



*Spring Wood in spring - a stunning sight*



**GREENWAYS**  
countryside project

and thus inevitably cutting wood in what we today call Spring Wood, for the last few thousand years!

The map of Wherstead in 1086 is fascinating in lots of ways, but shows Spring Wood (top left, just above Thorington Hall) – almost exactly the same shape as it is today, other than the tragic loss of a small part (south-east corner/tail) when the A45 was built in the late 1970s. Many of the boundaries are marked by significant ditch and bank features that have been in place for hundreds of years and would have been vital defences against grazing animals (and possibly people!) – preventing them grazing new growth from the coppice stools. Woodlands were the oil fields and builders' merchants of the day – so the produce would have been fiercely protected. They were the source of all fuel (wood and charcoal), all building

materials, some food (foraged and hunted), and many other useful products, including twine and rope made from the inner bark (or bast fibre) of the small-leaved lime tree.

Small-leaved lime is generally thought to be an 'Ancient woodland indicator species' – so its presence in a wood tends to imply (along with many other species and features) that the wood is 'Ancient'. There are several very large small-leaved lime coppice stools in Spring Wood, including one in the centre of the wood which has become known as 'the Cathedral' due to its sheer size and magnificence! Coppicing is a process where broad-leaved native trees, when cut down, naturally regenerate from dormant buds under the bark and regrow, typically in a multi-stemmed form. This re-growth tends to be very rapid due to the large root system that was supplying the tree before it was cut down, suddenly having to try to rebalance itself with the surface area of leaves to

## Spring Wood - ancient trees and rope! *continued*



*Des Pawson stripping the bark of a piece of cut small-leaved lime wood!*

photosynthesise (often leading to very large leaves on early re-growth), and produces many uniform and straight poles – ideal for future harvesting. As the old cut stem or stump rots away, the new shoots grow outwards – and as the process is repeated with hundreds of cycles over thousands of years, some coppice 'stools' become very large indeed.

In his book 'Woodlands' (New Naturalist Library 2006), Oliver Rackham discusses huge coppice stools and mentions small-leaved lime in particular, quoting one at Westonbirt Arboretum (15m diameter) and another at Goslings Corner near Wragby, Lincolnshire. He states "*Such stools have a claim to be the oldest trees in Britain and the last surviving trees of the wildwood*".

It is generally agreed (largely from pollen records) that small-leaved lime was a much more plentiful tree in the past than now, and it would have been a more significant if not dominant species in Spring

Wood a few thousand years ago. Whilst the wood is soft and easy to cut (ideal for flint axes!), it is not great as firewood (although good as charcoal) – but it would have been highly prized for the inner bark for ropemaking. Once soaked, separated and then dried, the long fibres can be twisted together to form a surprisingly strong and durable twine. Des Pawson MBE of the Museum of Knots and Sailors' Ropework on Wherstead Road in Ipswich, on a recent visit to Spring Wood, showed me how it was made (albeit a very small example piece!), and has taken some cut wood away to experiment with. Twine and rope was not only associated with maritime uses – it was of course essential for holding together poles of simple dwellings, securing loads on wagons and everything else you can imagine!

Hopefully at a future 'Spring Wood Day', Des will be there to demonstrate and we can all appreciate the massive and ancient trees that are right on our doorsteps.



*The magnificent Small-Leaved Lime 'cathedral' in Spring Wood*

# Amid the gloom, the good news

**Reg Snook** *Friends of Christchurch Park*

Too often many of us, myself included, write about the birds that we have lost in our Park – spotted flycatcher, lesser spotted woodpecker etc – so for a change let's be positive.

As a result of Covid 19 we have had two lock-downs and as a consequence many of us have been unable to visit either RSPB Minsmere or go on organised bird walks. Most of FoCP functions have been cancelled including the bird walks. Philip Murphy, the keeper of the park's avian records and I, have come up with a few of the recent 'birdie' highlights really, I suppose to cheer us up a bit.

The Wilderness Pond is a stretch of water very close to the Town Centre. It reminds me in many ways of the lake in St James Park London. When I lived very close to the Park I used to be amazed at the wildfowl that dropped in to join the resident (pinioned) waterfowl. So it is with our Wilderness Pond on a much smaller scale but it is always worth spending a few minutes seeing if one of the mallard is not, if you see what I mean. This happened a few years back when the appearance of a female goosander was the forerunner of regular winter visits by this handsome bird. The drake is a large splendid bird. Sadly with the increased global warming we may not see goosanders on our pond in the future.

The mandarins are somewhat of a mystery, numbers not being as high as expected. We know that this striking duck breeds in several locations locally but numbers are stable at around 40 birds. Could it be that there is a problem with the drakes that outnumber the females by about three to one? Perhaps disturbance at the nest prevents full clutches hatching or maybe the males pay too much attention to the females that have young or could it be that the ducklings are eaten by the large gulls?

It is difficult to be a fan of cormorants, not a very attractive bird and not glamorous like the mandarin, being dark and large with a vicious hooked bill and huge webbed feet. When the ponds were well-stocked with roach and goldfish it was quite fascinating to see a cormorant or two cruising around the two ponds, almost submerged with head held high and then upending, disappearing for several seconds before reappearing some distance away with a struggling fish. But the most iconic thing about them is to see two or three of them perched high on a nearby fir tree with wings outstretched drying off after searching for the few remaining meals.

If ever a bird delighted so many people it is our resident tawny owl. She has been present since 2008. Most



*Male and female goosander on the Wilderness Pond*

years her public had a chance to see her offspring. Much has been written about her and surely she is one of the most photographed tawny owls in the country. Mabel did not return to her oak tree for a couple of seasons but we know that young tawnies successfully fledged in that vicinity so we may be pretty sure that the owl in residence is still the same bird. However, she is back again and her arrival brought joy to many.



*Little grebe*

A first for the park this year was the successful breeding by a pair of little grebes. It was peculiar as to why they chose the Wilderness Pond when most other waterfowl – Canada goose, mallard, moorhen and mandarin are heavily predated by large gulls. Perhaps the dense overhanging vegetation was a major factor in four young little grebes surviving. Incidentally, more mallard ducklings were successful since for the first time it was noticed that when danger



**Friends of Christchurch Park**

Secretary: Sylvia Patsalides 07971 467042  
Membership Secretary: Robert Fairchild 01473 254255

[www.focp.org.uk](http://www.focp.org.uk) Follow us on Facebook@ChristchurchPark 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.*

approached (large gulls) the mallard ducklings dived below the surface. Why it should happen this year we do not know. Lesser black-backed gulls still plunder the park's waterfowl, Canada goslings being particularly targeted, and for the first time these gulls nested in our park, well, on top of the Mansion actually.

Finally, two heart-warming pieces of news – in spring a nightingale was heard singing in undergrowth near Snow Hill, a first for the Park and a pair of grey wagtails successfully fledged three young delighting onlookers as their parents fed them with insects caught over the Round Pond.



*The striking mandarin duck*

All pictures © Colin Hullis

# What IWG is all about

**Colin Hullis** *Ipswich Wildlife Group*

With much of our activity curtailed by the pandemic restrictions, it allows us time to reflect on what Ipswich Wildlife Group is all about, who we are and what we do.

We are a registered charity with the aim of promoting interest in, and conservation of, wildlife and wildlife habitats in and around Ipswich. Our members carry out voluntary work to manage these sites for the benefit of wildlife and people. We are guided by a committee of members who organise events and ensure that the constitution of the Group is upheld. We concentrate on member involvement in practical work parties rather than meetings - we are a working group, not a talking shop.

In normal times we arrange monthly work sessions at Alderman Canal where we manage and maintain the habitat and walkways around this well-hidden town centre waterway. We hold a Sunday morning conservation work party in



*Gerry leads the coppicing work party in Spring Wood*

Spring Wood to improve the ancient habitat for its diverse wildlife and to maintain it as a pleasant attraction for visitors. Over the autumn and winter we coppice the considerable stands of hazel and produce beanpoles and pea sticks for gardeners and allotment holders.

A further work party enjoys tending our allotment plot which aims to show that a traditional allotment can also work well for wildlife, particularly birds, bees and butterflies. Twice monthly we hold a barn work session at the Greenways barn where a small group use their woodworking skills to make habitat boxes for birds, bugs and hedgehogs along with any other work that needs to be done involving wood.

The big event of recent years has been Spring Wood Day when we invite the public to experience the delights of the woodland with guided walks, traditional woodcraft skills, folk music and bonfire food.

We also work closely on joint projects and events with other similar groups particularly the Greenways Project, Friends of Belstead Brook Park and the Friends of Holywells Park.

We are always pleased to welcome new members to join in the activities, contact details are on the panel alongside and you can find us on Facebook.



Secretary Leila Matata

[iwg@wildipswich.org](mailto:iwg@wildipswich.org) [www.wildipswich.org](http://www.wildipswich.org)

*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.*



*The barn work party hard at it*

# Apple Day.... Crumbled!

**Yvonne and Andy** *Friends of Holywells Park*

## What a challenging year!

The Friends have been unable to run any of our regular events. However, the orchard has been maintained and the fruit harvested. What a bumper crop it was, too!

On a Saturday in October, when the Lockdown had been eased, the Friends were able to set up a stall, socially distancing, of course, so that the local community could come along and take some fruit for a small donation. Also on sale, was Holywells honey, (our bees have had a bumper year, too), confiture made by Sarah and Chutney made by Jan - Lovely!

It was great to see so many of our regulars and also to chat with park users who were interested in learning more about the Friends group and the Park.

Looking forward to next year, let's hope we can get back to some kind of normality with our events.



In the meantime, make the most of our beautiful Holywells Park and appreciate the joys of our local green spaces.



## Friends of Holywells Park

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

Contact: [fohpipswich@gmail.com](mailto:fohpipswich@gmail.com)  
[www.holywellsark.org.uk](http://www.holywellsark.org.uk)  
[facebook.com/holywellsarkpipswich](https://facebook.com/holywellsarkpipswich)

## On The Trail of KFT7

**Yvonne and Andy** *Friends of Holywells Park*

On a rainy afternoon in October, we took a trip out to Shotley Marina, parking at the viewing point to see what was happening over the estuary and Felixstowe Docks.

Two herring gulls came along the wall to check us out, soon to be joined by a black headed gull. We immediately spotted that the smaller gull was ringed. The bird was so close, that, with binoculars, we were able to read the ring, KFT7.

Back at home, we went onto the BTO website and reported the sighting. A few days later, we had a response from Dmitrijs in Latvia, telling us that the bird was ringed on 27 June 2015, at Lake Babite, near Laci, Riga in Latvia.

The bird had not been reported since that date, five years ago. Wow! We were amazed! This really brought home to us that the common birds that we see all year round on our local patches may not be that local, but may have flown thousands of miles to get here. This gull highlights that wildlife is constantly on the move, prompting us to think internationally and act locally for our natural world.



From Riga to Shotley

*NOTE from Production editor Colin Hullis.*

In mid November I went to Shotley to photograph any passing Black-headed gull to help illustrate this story and took the photo above. Not until I viewed the shot at home on my computer did I realise that I had photographed the very same bird that Andy and Yvonne had encountered in October!

# Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies

**Sarah Kilshaw** Ipswich Borough Council Wildlife Team

We have some exciting news! One of our newly developed ponds is home to a nationally scarce damselfly species!

Very uncommon in Suffolk, the Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly has recently appeared on our Sproughton



**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.*

Enterprise Park wildlife basins. The basins are used as drainage for the site but are also a great wildlife asset. They were seeded and hand planted with



© Matthew Garham

*Immature female Scarce Tailed Blue Damselfly,*

wildflowers by the Wildlife Team in 2019 to encourage wildlife, and it certainly has!

These damselflies are one of the smallest in the UK and although they look similar to the common Blue-tailed Damselfly the immature females are a beautiful golden orange colour and the adults have slightly different black markings on the base of their tail.

The Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies prefer newly developed and seasonal ponds so the Wildlife Team are working closely with The Greenways Project who manage the new Sproughton Nature Reserve to target our management of these sites together to ensure this rare species sticks around for the future.

The basins are also home

to several other damselfly species including the Small Red-eyed Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly, Common Blue-tailed Damselfly and the Willow Emerald Damselfly. This wetland habitat is also home to ducks, gulls and other migrating water birds in the winter months. This summer, the Wildlife Team has even seen a Hobby hunting the dragonflies and House Martins over the basins!

With these damselflies being such a rare sighting across much of the UK, especially in Suffolk, the team were understandably very excited to see that our management of the basins is paying off.

Please remember that if you want to see these damselflies they are unfortunately on private land at the moment and so access is not permitted. Being so close to the River Gipping walk from Ipswich to Sproughton though, means you may have a chance of seeing these damselflies traveling between the Sproughton Enterprise Park and the Sproughton Nature Reserve over the River Gipping.



© Matthew Garham

*Male Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly,*

# Woodlands busy with visitors

**Stephen Corley** *Chairman, Portal Woods Conservation Group*

Volunteer activities continue to be understandably low level during the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. The woods, however, have been busy with visitors getting out and about for physical and mental health. Many would have enjoyed seeing a variety of butterflies, including comma (*Polygonia c-album*), gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*), ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*), speckled wood (*Pararge aegeria*) and peacock (*Aglais io*).

During the summer we said “goodbye” to Sam and George who both headed off to university. Their time with us started at the age of five when they joined the Nature Watch Club, and during the following 13 years, both have proved to be enthusiastic and valued volunteers, and holders of The Powling Cup (Nature Explorers Award). During the last few years as members of the Committee they have contributed greatly as young persons’ representatives and providing our publicity. I thank them for everything they have done for the PWCG and the local community. We now have a vacancy for a publicity officer and if you are interested please get in touch.

At the end of October, a small



*An unusual fungus found – Black Bulgar*

volunteer team ventured out to fit our new notice board. The notice board has been erected in memory of one of our volunteers Katie Webb, who so sadly passed in 2015 at the young age of 21. We thank East Suffolk Council for their grant to purchase the notice board and ex-Cllr John Kelso who supported our request for funding from the Enabling Communities Fund. We will hold an



*The new notice board is now in situ*



## Portal Woodlands Conservation Group

Enquiries: Martlesham Parish Council  
01473 612632 [pwcg.onesuffolk.net](http://pwcg.onesuffolk.net)  
or email [pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com](mailto:pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com)  
*The PORTAL WOODLANDS CONSERVATION GROUP is dedicated to conserving the woodlands west of the Suffolk Police HQ and alongside the A1214 encouraging the local wildlife to thrive while preserving historical sites of interest and inspiring people to enjoy the nature surrounding them. Volunteers meet each month to work on a variety of projects and everybody is welcome to join this friendly group. All required training and necessary tools are provided.*

official unveiling at a suitable time when Covid-19 restrictions allow.

Autumn was also a great time to explore the woods and enjoy the seasonal colours. Visitors might have noticed an unusual black fungus growing on a rotting felled tree trunk by the perimeter track. This is called black bulgar (*Bulgaria inquinans*) and is thought to be a new species in our woods. Again this year, the nationally uncommon wrinkled peach (*Rhodotus palmatus*) has been seen. Please send us your photos of any interesting fungi, or other sightings, you see in Portal Woodlands.

For more details of the Group’s events, and to check for date changes, please go to: [pwcg.onesuffolk.net](http://pwcg.onesuffolk.net) or join our members’ Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.

# Diver in the dock

**Tim Kenny** *Leader, RSPB Ipswich Group*

With RSPB local group activities suspended for the foreseeable future (March 2021 is the new restart date being targeted by headquarters in Sandy) there's nothing to report on our recent activities. But between lockdowns there were some interesting birds to be had locally.

Perhaps the most interesting of these was a very confiding red-throated diver that took up residence in the wet dock in Ipswich at the end of October. First reported on the 26th, I personally had to wait until Halloween before I could go down to the docks to take a look. Although not a particularly rare bird off the Suffolk coast in winter, the opportunity to see one at such close quarters inland could not be missed, and it did not disappoint, fishing around the moored yachts of the marina at such close quarters that, at times, it could be observed whilst under water.



All pictures © Tim Kenny

*Red-throated diver, Ipswich docks, 31/10/2020*

## A bonus bird

Often when travelling to view a bird, you get something unexpected and the bonus bird on this occasion was a juvenile shag, the smaller cousin of the familiar cormorant. A few will turn up on the Orwell every year but it's nice to see one in the dock at close quarters. As well as the smaller size, the peak of the crown is towards the front of the head on a shag, a useful field mark at a distance. The juvenile bird is a paler brown colour than the black of the adult, with its distinct greenish sheen.

With the winter ahead looking like it's

going to feel even longer than usual, now is a good time to clean any bird feeders you have and fill them up. Garden bird tables have become an invaluable resource to our avian friends and many of our smaller species won't make it to spring without the help we give them.

Let's hope next time I write this column we are back (or at least nearly back) to normal. Promising news about vaccines provides a little light at the end of a long dark tunnel and that first meeting post-Covid is going to feel very special for all of us.



## Ipswich Local Group

Group Leader Tim Kenny

Tel 01394 809236

[ipswichrspliblocalgroup@yahoo.com](mailto:ipswichrspliblocalgroup@yahoo.com)

[www.rspb.org.uk/groups/ipswich](http://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.*

In Britain, the red-throated diver breeds in the north of Scotland on small lochans, and can be seen feeding on sea lochs later in the breeding season. In the winter they migrate south and spend the winter at sea, and flocks of up to 500 birds have been seen in the past off Minster. Unfortunately this species only tends to present itself away from the sea when sick, and sadly this bird was found dead the following day, 1st November.



*Juvenile shag, Ipswich docks, 31/10/2020*



# The rich biodiversity of the old Stoke Hall estate

**Ann Havard** *Friends of Belstead Brook Park*



*Working in the woodland of the old Stoke Park estate*

We finally started back doing practical nature conservation work parties in September after five months of inactivity due to Covid-19. For both our September and our work party in October, we tackled raking the cut meadow areas in Stoke Park Wood. This Local Nature Reserve is opposite Bourne Park, off Stoke Park Drive. For a small area of only five and a half acres, it has an interesting number of habitats including meadow and woodland.

The site was originally known as Fishpond Covert, as there was a large fishpond to the north-east of the woodland area, which was part of the grounds of Stoke Hall. Bourne Park

which is opposite, is part of the old gardens of the now sadly demolished house.

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*For a small area it has an interesting number of habitats...*

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As a remnant of the old Stoke Hall estate, in days gone by, the reserve would have provided fish from the pond and cover for game as witnessed by the presence of laurel and snowberry. The majority of the reserve consists of oak, ash and sycamore with planted specimen trees including yew, Scots

pine and sweet chestnut. The presence of a number of scarce woodland plants suggests that parts of the wood are of considerable antiquity and may date back to medieval times.

With an area of grassland and scrub the whole reserve provides for considerable biodiversity in this densely populated urban area and is a good habitat for butterflies and common lizard. There are over 70 plant species of trees, shrubs and typical woodland species including: Enchanter's nightshade, wood sedge, remote sedge, bugle and dog's-mercury.



## **Friends of Belstead Brook Park**

[www.wildipswich.org](http://www.wildipswich.org)

Email: [fobbp@wildipswich.org](mailto:fobbp@wildipswich.org)

[www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/fobbp](http://www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/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.*

Management of the area is carried out by the Greenways Project and the Friends of Belstead Brook generally help with the meadow management and hedge cutting as well as collecting the large amount of rubbish which unfortunately gets dumped over the fences of adjoining properties.

Our November work party saw us joining up with the Greenways and Ipswich Wildlife Group volunteers for a Megabash to carry out essential winter work in Spring Wood and Millennium Wood. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we split into two groups with one working in Spring Wood and the other in Millennium Wood. The weather forecast was awful but in the end we had a good day without getting very wet or blown away. The main task was coppicing under the pylons and putting the cut material into a dead hedge.

Whilst working in Millennium Wood it was good to see lots of people walking with their children and dogs through the area. Let's hope that the experiences of this strange year have helped reconnect people with nature and that they continue to do so when we return to normal.



*Fungi was flourishing in Millennium Wood in autumn*

# An Unusual Spring

**Gi Grieco** *Suffolk Bird Group Council Member*

This year has had quite an impact on many groups and organisations and it will be interesting to see how much this applies to wildlife. With Covid-19 being a part of our lives in 2020 many groups have had to curtail activities and try to adapt. Suffolk Bird Group have had to cancel all outdoor trips since March. These are a fundamental part of the group; providing the ability to engage with friends, to learn and to being outdoors enjoying birds and wildlife.



*House sparrow*


allowing species to breed; for example there was news of a Marsh Harrier nesting next to a track at Minsmere. Conversely, once restrictions were partly lifted, there was a noticeable increase of people visiting the countryside. Sadly there were scenes of thoughtless behaviour, with masses of rubbish being left and thoughtless trampling – how much impact has this had on wildlife?

### **Save Our Suffolk Swifts activity**

One part of the group that has been active in 2020, is our principal project, Save Our Suffolk Swifts. SOSSwifts have been busy helping individuals with nest box requests and providing advice, walks and talks to local Swift groups; Nayland, Woodbridge, Felixstowe, Claydon,

Waldringfield and Bury St. Edmunds have been particularly active. SOSSwifts also assisted with a number of disputes centred around known nest sites. Our priority has been to protect, then expand known colonies. Resolutions have all been successful: we negotiated the removal of scaffold and netting during the breeding period to permit bird's access and sought the addition of further nest boxes to boost these colonies. Reports to me are that there has been a significant increase in the number of nest boxes occupied across Suffolk, with many more being 'banged' by youngsters. We are now planning for 2021, if you need help and wish to install nest boxes please email us at [Swifts@SuffolkBirdGroup.org](mailto:Swifts@SuffolkBirdGroup.org) SOSSwifts have raised funds to enable us to supply a number of nest boxes and call systems around Suffolk.

We have a number of community packages comprising a call system plus six nest boxes that we wish to donate to SBG members for installation on community buildings such as libraries, schools, farm shops, pubs and churches around the county. These need to be fitted prior to May 2021, ready for the Swifts' return. Please let us know if you can place a community package. Additional nest boxes are available for you to purchase if you wish to extend your colony. Swifts are communal nesters and there is no upper limit to how many nest boxes you can have in one location or along your street, you might consider giving nest boxes to your neighbours. Contact Eddie Bathgate for further information. Save Our Suffolk Swifts are here to help you help Swifts - [Swifts@SuffolkBirdGroup.org](mailto:Swifts@SuffolkBirdGroup.org)



Enquiries:  
[info@suffolkbirdgroup.org](mailto:info@suffolkbirdgroup.org)  
[www.suffolkbirdgroup.org](http://www.suffolkbirdgroup.org)  
Twitter: [suffolkbirds1](https://twitter.com/suffolkbirds1)

*SBC is the Group for people interested in the birds of Suffolk, providing a network and a voice for birdwatchers in the county.*

We're planning a full calendar of events for 2021 but all will be dependent on the restrictions at the time. The committee have discussed having risk assessments in place and being able to mitigate, such as booking by phone and arranging small groups of six people – in this case we will plan more leaders and split groups up. Keep up to date on the group's website – [www.suffolkbirdgroup.org](http://www.suffolkbirdgroup.org)

As mentioned, when the 2020 Bird Report is published next year, we may see how birds (and wildlife) have fared. When initial restrictions came in place there were many areas, such as our coast, that were less frequently visited and so had less human disturbance,

© Chris Courtney



*Swift boxes installed at Felixstowe library*

# Willing volunteers make the difference

**Kaye Roberts** *Secretary, Friends of the Dales*

A beautiful, sunny autumn day ensured a good attendance for the October work party. A cutter was used to clear the four wild flower strips of dead flower heads and the surrounding grass and this was raked off by our willing band of volunteers. A sighting of a red admiral butterfly on the nearby brambles brought some relief from our toil.

this time of the year. Both a female toad and frog were found during the work, having avoided the brush cutters. It is also hoped that wild flowers such as campion will show here next year. Everybody looked up when hearing a great-spotted woodpecker, but it could not be located, although it was easily seen the following day.



*The wildflower strips on an autumn morning*

a total of 20 that were put in at the same time. There was quite a drought after they were planted and we are lucky that this number are thriving. A local nursery regularly brings children to the log circle, so it was disappointing to see that the centre of it had been used for a bonfire and also for letting off fireworks leaving empty cans, food wrappers, etc.



*After the cut and rake*

Again there was a good attendance for the November work party on yet another mainly sunny morning. As was expected, there was considerable bracken growth during the summer and work has begun to clear this, concentrating on the areas of greatest need. On one side of the main path, an area was strimmed and the bracken raked off to create open areas to encourage new growth in the spring. This part of The Dales is particularly good for reptiles and amphibians particularly slow worm and grass snake, which will be hibernating at

Some dead vegetation was hauled out of the main pond and a significant area beyond one of the small ponds was also cleared together with the stream running down into the pond.

Bracken was also cleared from the open area opposite one of the log circles. This will give the bluebells more space when they appear. A planted crab apple sapling was revealed during the strimming. This is one of two crab apples that survived the six that were planted four years ago. Six buckthorn also remain from




*Crab apple sapling*

Two trees have fallen where bluebells were planted last year and visitors have made a detour with a well-trodden path through the planted area, so action is needed to get these trees removed and the correct path reinstated.

The entrance to the enclosed area containing two very small ponds was enhanced and the area strimmed. This is one of the best sites for butterflies in The Dales in the spring/summer.

In the spring a pair of moorhens bred successfully and produced



## 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 Kaye Roberts [kayefotdsec@virginmedia.com](mailto:kayefotdsec@virginmedia.com) or find us on Facebook by searching Friends of the Dales*



*Moorhens on the main pond*

seven young. Also two mandarin ducks paid a visit one day. In April a willow warbler was heard for a couple of days before it moved on.

A buzzard is observed overhead most weeks and a sparrowhawk several times a week. Foxes are still present.



*Ready for slow worms in the spring*

# Green Hairstreak Observations

**Kevin Ling** *Treasurer, Suffolk Butterfly Conservation*

With us all placed into lockdown, the imminent arrival of our first spring butterflies was at least something to look forward to. The challenge though would be to make our one hour of local exercise count. Butterflies can be temperamental at the best of times. Even blessed with nice weather, one is not always certain to see the intended target species.



*Green Hairstreak rely on a large number of larval foodplants*

selection of habitats including woodland rides and clearings, heathland and hedgerows. It is also unique in the large number of larval foodplants that it relies upon. These include Birds Foot Trefoil, Gorse, Broom and Dogwood.

Widespread as it is throughout Suffolk, the Green Hairstreak can also be one of the trickiest species to find, as its superb colouration provides excellent camouflage against the bright new leaves where it perches. But once located, this enchanting butterfly becomes one of the easiest to observe and photograph at close quarters.

I have two sites that have become very reliable, with fresh adults choosing the very same spots year after year. My first lockdown walk to locate them this year was on 19th April at Kiln Meadow in Ipswich. Within two minutes of searching the Hawthorn, I had already bagged my first photograph (See photo). This was my earliest ever sighting for this species.

Green Hairstreaks are territorial by nature and once disturbed, will nearly always return to the same branch. Once you have seen one, you are likely to enjoy an audience with them for some time. Another feature

that makes them so enjoyable to observe is that they are one of our most tame species. This allows one to get very close. In fact, the accompanying photographs are all taken with my i-phone.

They always rest with their wings firmly closed. Their luminous green colours change depending on their angle to the sun, producing some stunning images. It is their positioning towards the sun that is also a particular behaviour of this species. In order to regulate their body temperature, the Green Hairstreak tilts its wings at an angle.

My other reliable site for Green Hairstreak is Martlesham Common Nature Reserve. This is where I spend my lunch breaks during the spring and summer months. The habitat here is much different to that of Kiln Meadow. At my favoured spot, the Hawthorn is replaced by Gorse, with the butterflies flitting between them and bramble. Once again, the Hairstreaks were ever present each lunchtime and it was sometimes a wrench to leave them and return to work.

This really is a species that I have grown to love. Along with my other favourite, the Orange Tip, the Green Hairstreak kicks off the butterfly year in fine style.



**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.*

One species that can be relied upon is the Green Hairstreak, once you know where to look. This butterfly chooses a varied



*Colouration provides camouflage against new leaves*

# A pandemic nature diary

**Trevor Goodfellow** *Member Suffolk Butterfly Conservation and keen naturalist*

At home in Thurston, the annual Otter visits resulted in several of my fish being killed at night. Trail camera footage revealed that they were returning a day or two later to previous kills to continue eating.



*A chance sighting of a long-eared owl - a first!*

In April I was thrilled to find a Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi*) in the garden for the first time and another 'first' was a chance sighting of a Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*).

We have resident Barn Owls which were unsuccessful at breeding this year although the Little Owls did better and later in the Summer, I regularly saw them at dusk feeding on Chafer bugs.

Bats were lively from April onwards, Noctule, Serotine and Pipistrelles seen and detected. First Cuckoo was heard at the end of April, a few days later than other years and the first Swallow arrived soon after.

Frustrated that the Swallows always fly into our cart lodge and have a look around when they arrive, and before they leave at the end of the Summer too, but never nest, I have investigated why; It could be that the space is too open, so I built a 'nest box'. and mounted it in the rafters.

Spring seemed delayed as Common Frog and Toad migration stalled awaiting mild, wet nights which never came. By the time a suitable night arrived, only a fraction of the usual toad numbers was seen, approximately 55 instead of the average 300. Spawning was therefore delayed and took place in May.



*Hairy dragonfly laying eggs*

The Grass snake population recently grew so I thought this could impact the Toad numbers. I reckon that most mature adult Frogs and Toads may have decided to leave spawning to next year.

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*It seemed that Spring was just starting as Summer began ...*

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Newts seemed to fare better as record numbers were noted in their favoured ditch which only just held water in time. Both Smooth Newt and Great Crested Newt bred successfully, and a staggered maturing of the efts was noticed as many remained in the dwindling puddle that remained as the ditch dried out. Most of these young newts seemed to be at the stage where they could breathe air and not rely totally on their gills and probably only remained in the water for the concentrated food supply of water insects.

It seemed that Spring was just starting as Summer began and in May I recorded the first male Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*), then a few days later I spotted a female laying eggs on floating dead reeds in the pond. Although I am familiar with odonata, it is possible that I have previously overlooked this species thinking it was a Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*) which flies much later in the summer. This record makes a total of 19 species seen at home.

Many bees' nests were found dug up by Badgers. Five bee and four wasp ground nests were excavated over a few weeks. I believe the Badgers live a mile away and it seems they targeted our Hedgehogs as I have found Hedgehog 'husks' in recent years, finally wiping them out.



*Badgers seem to have wiped out the hedgehogs*

In June I found Six-belted clearwing (*Bembecia ichneumoniformis*) in a quite young wildflower meadow, another first for me. My moth trap caught a Knapweed Case-bearer moth (*Coleophora conspicuella*) a first for Suffolk.

Later in the year, many Wasp spiders (*Argiope bruennichi*) were seen for the first time and the welcome frequent sightings of Small Heath butterfly (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), an encouraging two broods.

Other great finds were: Tachinid fly (*Mintho rufiventris*) and Giant willow aphid (*Tuberolachnus salignus*), both nationally scarce.

All photographs by Trevor Goodfellow.

# Snippets

## Foxy caterpillar *Colin Hullis*



This impressive caterpillar was one of two found travelling across a footpath on Hollesley Upper Common in October. Identified (thanks Google) as a Fox Moth caterpillar, it was about 7cm long and apparently they are often seen basking in the sun on paths and low vegetation on heathland prior to overwintering in leaf litter and loose soil.

The caterpillars feed on a variety of food plants including Heathers, Bramble, Sallows, Bilberry, Salad Burnet and Meadowsweet. They hibernate fully grown, but emerge to bask in the spring sunshine before pupating in April.

## Wasp spider spotted *Derek Spalding*



© Derek Spalding

This wasp spider nest was spotted in Rendlesham Forest in late September on scrubby low Gorse.

The wasp spider *Argiope bruennichi* has a great defence against predators by looking just like a common wasp. Previously only found on the the continent, it is a climate change 'winner' – moving north as the climate warms, following its preferred prey – the long-winged conehead grasshopper. The photo shows a grasshopper wrapped up beside it.

Apparently mating is a serious business for male wasp spiders - as they may well end up being eaten by the female!



© Lyvra Woods

## Cheerio from Joe the Ranger



After the best part of 20 years at Ipswich Borough Council I am writing to let you all know I'm leaving for pastures new. For those of you who know me (of which there are many!), I started volunteering in Holywells Park and with Greenways in 2001 and got paid employment with IBC as a wildlife ranger in 2004. I've known many of you since the very beginning of my voluntary journey and have very fond memories of so many wonderful people. Some of you have known me long enough to remember me before I went grey!

There are so many people I'd like to say thank you to. Firstly, James Baker and Peter Scotcher who can both take credit for helping to mould me into the person I am today (if credit is the right word!). James helped me so much in the infancy of my career when I was trying to build up my skills and work experience while going through a very rough time at home. A nicer and more supportive gentleman I am yet to meet!

Peter Scotcher is also somebody deserving of a special mention from me as he was my mentor at IBC. Peter was always willing to help me with anything, taught me how to chainsaw (look out sycamore trees) and took me out on site visits to help build my site knowledge.

Sincere thanks and best wishes to all, you are all truly wonderful people.

*Joe Underwood*

## Lucky lizard *James Baker*

Whilst talking with the Parish Council Deputy Clerk in the Martlesham Community Centre car park, we spotted a common lizard scurrying across the open car park for about 50m. As it approached us it took cover under a parked car – hiding right under the wheel – virtually in the tread of the tyre! We made sure it moved safely on into natural cover on the Common before the car moved!



## Nest boxes, firewood and beanpoles for sale



Ipswich Wildlife Group have a ready supply of seasoned firewood for your open fire or wood burner, boxes for birds, bugs and hedgehogs and bean poles and pea sticks for your garden. All are made by IWG members from recycled timber and wood resulting from our woodland conservation work.

Take a look at the IWG Facebook page or at the website [www.wildipswich.org](http://www.wildipswich.org) where there is more information and prices. All proceeds go to Ipswich Wildlife Group, a registered charity.

# Events Diary

For events covering a broader range of environmental issues go to [www.wildipswich.org](http://www.wildipswich.org)

**PLEASE NOTE:**  
Due to restrictions concerning coronavirus (COVID-19) and the uncertainty surrounding this at the time of production, please check with the organisers of the events listed to see if they are still going ahead.



**Saturday 16th January 2021. 10.00am to 3.30pm Greenways MEGABASH** at Martlesham Common LNR. Help Greenways and Martlesham Parish Council to look after this lovely lowland heathland reserve – including scrub cutting, bonfire, coppicing and other tasks. Meet at the Martlesham Community Centre car park off Felixstowe Rd, Martlesham. **Contact Greenways on [james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk) or 07736 826076 for more details and to book a place (numbers are likely to be limited).**

**Saturday February 13th 2021. 10.00am to 3.30pm Greenways MEGABASH** at Martlesham Heath. Help Greenways and Martlesham Conservation Group to carry out vital heathland conservation work including scrub clearing. Meet on site, pedestrian access in from opposite the wind sock on Eagle Way (please park considerately in local streets). **Contact Greenways on [james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk) or 07736 826076 for more details and to book a place (numbers are likely to be limited).**

**Saturday 27th February 2021. 10.00am to 3.30pm Greenways MEGABASH** at Sproughton Nature Reserve. Help us to plant a new hedge, protect the plants, create new habitats and other tasks. Meet on site by the Bailey Bridge. Access via the River path from Sproughton church or Boss Hall Road (please park considerately). **Contact Greenways at [james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk) or 07736 826076 for more details and to book a place (numbers are likely to be limited)**

## 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](mailto:greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk) or call 01473 433995**

**SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH 10am – 2pm SWT Wild Learning WILD IN THE WEEK**  
Location – across Ipswich. Join us for our Wild in the Week activity day for children aged 6 - 10 years. Each month has a different theme all taking part in the great outdoors. See website for details. Price £7. Booking essential. **To book: [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org) / 01473 890089**

**SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH 10am – 2pm SWT Wild Learning WILD IN THE WEEK**  
Location – across Ipswich. Join us for our Wild in the Week activity day for children aged 11 – 16 years. Each month has a different theme all taking part in the great outdoors. See website for details. Price £7. Booking essential. **To book: [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org) / 01473 890089**

**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 Andy Smuk for details 01473 728907**

**SECOND WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH Friends of The Dales WORK PARTY**  
**Contact Joan Powell for the details [jayempowell@btinternet.com](mailto: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](http://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

**THIRD 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, Bobbits Lane, Ipswich. **More information from Martin Cant 07858 436003 [martin.cant@ntlworld.com](mailto: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 Colin Hullis 07979 644134**

**FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am Butterfly Conservation WORK PARTY (October to March)**  
**More information from Helen Saunders [helens919@gmail.com](mailto:helens919@gmail.com)**

**EVERY SECOND SATURDAY 10am – 12pm SWT Wild Learning WEEKEND WILDLIFE CLUB**  
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](http://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](http://www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/fobbp) or email [fobbp@greenlivingcentre.org.uk](mailto:fobbp@greenlivingcentre.org.uk)**

**SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 1.30pm – 3pm SWT Wild Learning YOUNG WARDENS**  
Holywells Park. Price £3. Booking Essential. **To book: [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org) or 01473 890089**

**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 Colin Hullis 07979 644134**