

Watch out for hoglets  
– see page 6



# Local Wildlife news

May - August 2019

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





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Contact [james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk) or 01473 433995 / 07736 826076  
to discuss your requirements.

All produce from the sustainable management of nature reserves in Ipswich and proceeds to help fund management of the reserves and other wildlife projects.

# Welcome

by James Baker

Over the last few years we have been reporting how strong the Ipswich area is for wildlife and its care – leading to the formation of ‘Wild Ipswich’ – an informal collaboration by all the conservation organisations working in the Ipswich area, all seeking to make Ipswich as full of biodiversity as possible. The fact that the Borough Council and Greenways developed an ecological network map of the town, enshrining in planning policy the need to protect and enhance habitat and connections between them, as well as actively working to improve all the spaces that we manage, has been a major factor in the town being seen as a wildlife haven. Having the first Hedgehog Officer (Suffolk Wildlife Trust) was a major coup, as was the inclusion of Ipswich within the RSPB’s ‘Swift Cities’ lottery bid (sadly unsuccessful to date). Ipswich was also selected as one of 8 urban centres across the UK for the Urban Buzz project run by Buglife over the last 2 years. The Project officer for Ipswich, Dave Dowding, has done a fabulous job creating 100 new areas of nectar rich habitat, totalling around 25 hectares, in and around Ipswich. The project has now sadly come to an end – but the legacy will pay dividends for our invertebrate populations for many years – and I for one would like to congratulate Dave for achieving so much in such a short time. We will report more

fully on the Project’s outcomes in the next edition.

It was also fabulous to see that Ipswich was recognised as having more wildlife species recorded than any other urban area in East Anglia – a testament not only to the great reserves and open spaces that we enjoy and manage, but also to the hidden army of expert enthusiasts who spend time recording wildlife sightings.

At a time when our (global) environment is clearly ‘on the back foot’ – individual and collective efforts for wildlife really can make a difference, and amongst the inevitable doom and gloom – we must remain positive and remember our successes.

Finally, I cannot fail to mention the very sad passing of Ray Sidaway - the wonderful, enthusiastic, indefatigable and above all positive wildlife volunteer and campaigner – please see the article on page 11. Whilst he will be remembered for all the practical conservation effort he put in, on so many sites, for so many organisations – above all it is the true and enduring friendship that so many of us will miss. I like to think that the positive wildlife results in Ipswich are down to Ray and people like Ray, who give us hope for the future.



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# Committee Report

## Wendy Brown

At the time of writing this we are having a February heatwave and it will be interesting to know whether we have paid the price in the months until May. The blue tits have already looked into the bird box and bumble bees are coming out into the sunshine.

The Ipswich Group put on a good mix of talks earlier this year and it is good to report that the audiences are picking up again following our problems with where to host them in 2018.

Earlier in the year, for example, the talk by Dr. John Baker, a professional herpetologist, was extremely informative about reptiles and amphibians. Those of

us with gardens or who walk in the countryside see some of these animals but to know a little more and be able to distinguish a lizard from a newt (not as obvious as I had thought) was interesting. I still have to find out why Grass Snakes lay eggs whereas Adders and Smooth Snakes give birth to live young.

In the New Year Dennis and Anne Kell gave an illustrated talk about their trip to the Falkland Islands. Pictures of the coast line, terrain, birds and flora brought the islands to life as a much more interesting place than I imagined.

The talks that we are putting on next season are varied and are for members and non members; most of the talks are based on East Anglia and include hares, owls, bats and crime! It is always worth hearing from the Suffolk Wildlife staff who bring us up to date with their activities and next season we have

how the Trust is 'Creating Wildness' as well as hearing about one of the Trust's Nature Reserves. These talks will be enjoyable, informative and friendly so please support the work of the local group by supporting these meetings.

When you read this, the monthly walks in and around Ipswich will be starting. The walks are not all on the same day of the week or at the same time of day. Have a look at the information about them in the programme card and please take part.

All of the committee members have been giving their time very willingly and happily to our group for many years and because of increasing age the time has come that the group is in need of new volunteer assistance and a gradual takeover of some of the work that we do.

Please use the contact number on this page if you are willing to help.



### 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 or on the website, [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org).*

### Have you seen our Facebook page yet?

The SWT Ipswich group is now sharing the 'Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich' Facebook page. If you are on Facebook why not come and follow us, you will find our page if you search for:-

**@swtipswich**

If you're not on Facebook you can always look at the page by typing the following into your preferred browser:-

<https://www.facebook.com/swtipswich/>



Blue Tits nesting



Adders courting

# Dates for your Diary

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

## **Wednesday 25th September 2019**

### **Michael Strand Creating Wildness**

The Suffolk Wildlife Trust has adopted a new approach to conservation management in its nature reserves, trying to recreate areas which are as nearly as possible to what they would have been in their wild state, before the intervention of man. Michael, who is fund raising manager for the SWT, will explain how they go about this, and the benefits it provides for the wildlife.

## **Wednesday 23rd October 2019**

### **Sue Alderman (Hare Preservation Trust) Hares**

Hares, one of Britain's best loved mammals, have inhabited these islands from ancient times. Easily identified by their black tipped ears and long back legs, they can reach speeds of 45 miles an hour. But today they are under serious threat. The numbers have fallen by more than 80% over the last hundred years. Shooting and hare coursing have contributed to this decline, but now there is a serious and as yet unidentified disease, which is reducing their numbers even further.

## **Wednesday 27th November 2019**

### **Dr Hugh Hanmer (BTO) Sounds of the Night**

Hugh is a BTO research ecologist and the co-ordinator of the BTO's "Project Owl". In his talk he will discuss all the owls of the UK, their distribution and movements, the current monitoring efforts, and the many gaps in our knowledge about this often mysterious family of birds. We will learn how "Project Owl", a set of inter-related owl research schemes, hopes to help fill these gaps, and lead to a better understanding, so that we can help to conserve these elusive and beautiful birds.

## **Wednesday 11th December 2019**

### **Dr Chris Gibson An East Anglian Story**

Chris has worked for most of his life for English Nature, and now, in his "retirement" is sharing his love of the natural world through his passion for photography, lecturing, writing, and being a tour guide. He describes this talk as "A canter through 60 million years of what is now East Anglia, looking at geological, climatic, social and historical facts that have left their mark on the landscape and wildlife that we see today". I am sure you will enjoy this Christmas talk and the mince pies to accompany it.

For more information Google "About Me—Chris Gibson, Wildlife"

## **Wednesday 22nd January 2020**

### **Matt Gooch {warden} Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve**

With the help of a £4 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and many donations, the SWT has been able to purchase land adjoining Carlton Marshes, to establish a huge 1000 hectare reserve, where already more than 100 species of birds have been identified. A brand new eco-build visitors' centre with a café, walkways, hides, and a car park should make this a magnet for bird watchers too. Matt is overseeing this development, and can share his enthusiasm for this major development with us.

For more information Google "Carlton Marshes 2019- All you need to know"

## **Wednesday 26th February 2020**

### **Duncan Sweeting Bats of East Anglia**

Duncan works for Abrehart Ecology, a consultancy offering a wide range of ecological services. It advises those who find they have protected species such as natterjack toads, great crested newts, bats, water voles etc. living on their land, or in their buildings. In his role he is very familiar with the various bats, our only true flying mammals, which are found in East Anglia today.

## **Wednesday 25th March 2020**

### **Anne and Dennis Kell In the Footsteps of Shackleton**

This talk is the second part of the journey that Anne and Den took after their visit to the Falkland Islands. It weaves together the story of Shackleton's adventure in his failed attempt to cross Antarctica, with their successful trip to South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. In addition they will look at the wildlife they encountered en route.

## **Wednesday 22nd April 2020**

### **Brian Calver The Work of a Wildlife Crime Officer**

Wildlife Crime Officers (WCO) deal with a variety of issues, including destruction of habitats, poaching, shooting and snaring of animals and birds, collecting eggs, and uprooting wild plants. Every police force has at least one specially trained officer, who does this work alongside his normal police duties. Brian as a WCO, has had a wide experience in this field and will share his experiences with us. This meeting will be preceded by a short AGM.



Ipswich Group Newsletter

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



# Watch out for hoglets

**Ali North** SWT Hedgehog Officer

The warmer temperatures mean one thing for hedgehogs; it is breeding season!

At this time of year hedgehogs will be roaming far and wide – especially males – in search of mates. Females generally travel less as they scout out and build good nesting sites to rear their young. Whilst the peak for the mating season is May, breeding will continue through the summer and even into Autumn, with hoglets generally being seen out of the nest from July. Remember to be mindful of hedgehogs in your garden at this time; nest disturbance can result in hoglets being abandoned or relocated, depending on the age. Breeding nests can be most commonly found under bramble patches,



Watch out for hoglets from July



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log piles, gaps under sheds and compost heaps, so keep an eye out when pottering around the garden this summer. If you are lucky enough to have a breeding female nesting in your garden, you may see her taking her hoglets out on foraging trips!

Wild areas, leaf and log piles, wildflower patches and areas of long grass will all help provide the feeding and nesting habitat hedgehogs require. But to ensure hedgehogs can utilise this brilliant habitat,

a hedgehog-sized hole in your garden fence is critical. Across Ipswich we have recorded nearly 800 gardens that are accessible to hedgehogs, but these are widely distributed and the more gardens that can connect the gaps, the better.

Hedgehog Awareness Week is a national campaign coordinated by the British Hedgehog Preservation Society and this year it runs from Sunday 5th to Saturday 11th May. We are asking individuals, families, community groups and businesses to get creative and decorate a door frame for their hedgehog hole – the more elaborate the better! Join us at La Tour Cycle Café 1-3pm on Sunday 5th May to get crafty – we'll have the hedgehog highway frames cut and ready for you to design, paint and take home to fix to your fence (please book your space online). If you'd like to get involved but can't come on the day, then send photos of the frame in-situ by Saturday 11th May

to be entered into a prize draw!

If you see a hedgehog in your garden or local green space, or already have a hedgehog-fence hole, then please do let us know by logging your sighting or hedgehog-friendly garden on our online map: [hedgehogs.ispywildlife.org/](http://hedgehogs.ispywildlife.org/). You can also join us for a torchlight tour of the People's Community Garden in search of hedgehogs during Hedgehog Awareness Week. Book online to reserve your space: [suffolkwildlifetrust.org/thingstodo](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org/thingstodo)

Keep up to date with our hedgehog antics by following our blog: [suffolkwildlifetrust.org/blog/tag/hedgehogs-blog](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org/blog/tag/hedgehogs-blog), enthuse your neighbours by signing up as a hedgehog champion and receive our Hog Headlines newsletter: [suffolkwildlifetrust.org/volunteering-opportunities/hedgehog-champion](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org/volunteering-opportunities/hedgehog-champion), and find lots of advice on our web pages: [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/hedgehogs-action](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/hedgehogs-action).

## Events

### Sunday 5th May 1-3pm - Paint a Hedgehog Highway Competition!

Join us at La Tour Cycle Café to create your own Hedgehog Highway door decoration and enter it into our competition! Hedgehogs can roam around 2km in a night, making access to lots of gardens critical. A hedgehog-sized fence hole will do the trick, but why not make it look especially welcoming to your hogs? We'll have the hedgehog highway frames cut and ready for you to design, paint, and take home at the end to fix to your fence! Send in your photos by Saturday 11th May to enter the competition.

Location: La Tour Cycle Café. Free but spaces limited, book your space online.

### Wednesday 8th May 8.30-10.00pm - Hedgehog Torchlight Tour

Join Hedgehog Officer Ali for a night walk at the People's Community Garden in search of hedgehogs. Location: People's Community Garden, Maidenhall Allotments, Ipswich. £2 for adults, £4 for accompanied children. Spaces limited, book your space online.





# Wild Tots

**Lucy Shepherd** *SWT Wild Learning Officer*

Over the past year, Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich has been developing Wild Tots, a weekly outdoor toddler group for children in woolly hats and wellies aged 18 months to 5 years, where adults are invited to join in the fun!

The beautiful green spaces and parks in Ipswich have provided some fantastic wildlife sightings this year during our Wild Tots sessions with some of our favourites including watching Leopard slugs scoot their way across logs in Christchurch Park and watching two Tawny owl chicks that visited every week for two months, inviting us to hear their hooting recitals. Holywells Park has equally delighted our Wild Tots as we watched honeybees drink from the stream on an unusually warm week earlier in the year and muntjac deer left footprints through the park for us to track!

It came as no surprise that earlier this year it was revealed that Ipswich topped the list of urban wildlife hotspots in the town when compared to all other major towns and cities in East Anglia. With data being drawn from the National Biodiversity Network atlas, it was reported that Ipswich proudly boasts 3709 species in the town's green spaces and we certainly have lots of fun discovering them in our Wild Tots sessions.

For some, small steps are taken enjoying

their first experiences in nature with us, and for others, big leaps are made taking in the town's historic parks and wildlife in their stride. One of our favourite activities is to dig for worms, learning how to tell the difference between an adult and a juvenile worm looking for the saddle and also simply enjoying the feeling of a worm wriggling on our hands. We especially enjoyed a spot of worm grunting that we did earlier in the year, tempting worms to the surface by making vibrations through the soil. When we are not enjoying wildlife at ground level, we enjoy swinging in the woodland hammocks listening to bird song and spotting wildlife above. We have everything crossed that we will have two more Tawny owl chicks share our Wild Tots camp with us again this year!

Our focus with Wild Tots is to encourage outdoor play in all weathers with our sessions running throughout the year in all seasons come rain, snow or shine! Our hope is, that with this new provision for preschool children in Ipswich, a connection to nature will be fostered at an early age that will continue and grow, and one day our Wild Tots may well help to safeguard our nature for years to come.

Join us in Christchurch Park every Thursday and meet us at the Reg Driver Centre and Holywells Park every Friday, meeting at the Stable Block 10am – 11.30pm and book online to join us and



*Leopard slug - a tots favourite*



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[suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org)

become a Wild Tot. Booking essential, [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org) and search Ipswich green spaces for more information and to book your place.





# Cricket Bat Willows

**James Baker**

Following the felling of several large 'cricket bat' willows at Alderman Canal Local Nature Reserve at the end of 2018, we have been to see where the harvested timber was going and what happened to it in the factory!

The felled willows were supplied to J. S. Wright Ltd of Great Leighs, Essex who are the largest and oldest established company supplying English cricket bat willow.

The company produce 400,000



**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](mailto:greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk)  
[www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/greenways](http://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, East Suffolk Council and the local community.*

cricket bat blanks per year that are exported predominantly to India, Pakistan, New Zealand and South Arica, as well as a large home market in the UK. The blanks are then finished by the cricket bat companies in each country.

Most of the willows used are grown from sets (saplings) supplied by Wrights 15 to 20 years earlier. The process of converting these trees into cricket bats begins by sawing the trunk into 30-inch lengths, each of the lengths would produce approximately 10 bats. The process continues by splitting the log into rough triangular shapes then refining the shape by further sawing and stripping to a standard shape and size. There then follows a process of grading and drying before the blanks are packed into containers ready for delivery. The grading process is critical to the whole process and involves the personal decision of one company director on every single bat.

The willows taken from



*The willows are cut into 30-inch lengths*



*The finished blanks are graded by quality of the grain*

Alderman Road would each produce approximately 400 bats. Should any of them be

classified a Grade One bat, it could become the prized possession of a Test batsman.

## Orchard Pruning Training Course

**Specialist tree surgeon and 'tree guru', Paul Jackson, ran a very interesting fruit tree pruning course for Greenways and Friends of Belstead Brook Park volunteers in the Volunteers' Orchard at Thorington Hall Barn.**

The orchard was planted back in 2002, by each regular volunteer at that time picking a variety (mostly local varieties) they liked. There are around 20 fruit trees – apples, plums, and pears, along with three small nutturies, each with walnuts and cobs (hazel). There had been previous pruning, but much of dubious quality – so Paul's assistance was very much needed to equip us all to manage the site in the future, and to start looking after the local 'Community Orchards' in Kiln Meadow and Alderman Canal.

During a chilly and very windy day we learnt everything from 'why to prune' and 'when not to prune', to 'where to cut' and 'which tools are best'. There was a strong emphasis on looking at the job from the tree's point of view, and we balanced the ideas of fruit production, longevity and wildlife value.

Not all the trees were pruned on the day – any prunus family varieties have to be pruned in June, July or August to avoid silverleaf fungus infection. The remaining apple trees will mostly be pruned next winter, when we hope Paul will come back to help and give a brief 'refresher' course for us.



*Pruning under instruction*



*Paul Jackson addresses the group*



## Pond de-silting at Mill Stream Local Nature Reserve

Thanks to some grant aid from County Councillor Stuart Lawson, Rushmere Parish Council has been able to fund the de-silting of two of the ponds in the reserve. As with all ponds, nature continually tries to fill them up, and here it is assisted by sediment flowing in from the roads and surface water drains in the Bixley Farm estate – so de-silting is required more often than in a more ‘natural’ system.

We obviously manage the ponds for wildlife, but have to balance the risk of causing some disturbance against the risk of doing nothing and losing the open water. Even though these are small ponds,

it is not possible to dredge by hand, so large machinery is essential, however ‘over the top’ it might appear!

Ponds are least actively used by wildlife species through late autumn and winter – so timing is important to minimise any potential disturbance. We also don’t affect the whole of any pond – always leaving areas untouched, leaving cover and some habitat niches intact.

Both of the ponds we worked on this winter had previous records of great-crested newt, so we had to consider this when planning the work. This included having a trained ecologist to survey the ponds and prepare a method



*Essential de-silting of the ponds on the reserve*

statement, as well as being on site during the work. The ponds are also used by water voles, another European Protected Species – so their needs were also considered.

For a few years now, these two ponds should be attractive to a wide range of species – rare and common – and be great places to watch wildlife and enjoy nature!

## Scrub Clearance at Martlesham Heath SSSI

The Greenways Project has been working with Martlesham Conservation Group and the Martlesham Heath Householders Association for several years to help manage the important heathland habitat on the site.

In the last two years, this management work has had to become slightly larger scale and thus more mechanical, in order to keep pace with the very rapid rate of

growth of gorse and other invasive species that have been reducing the areas of heather and acidic grassland considerably.

A large tracked excavator has been used, fitted with a heavy duty flail head, to clear large patches of scrub. The flailed material lying on the ground has then been scraped up and taken off the SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) to help reduce the nutrient level and allow nat-



*Cleared trees are taken to the fire*

ural regeneration of heather and other appropriate species. Despite this method being used, there is still very much a place for the invaluable conservation volunteer! In many situations, large machinery cannot be used, and manual removal of scrub is very often still the best way.

This year’s ‘Megabash’ on the site saw more than 30 volunteers doing just that – selectively removing gorse, birch, pine and oak amongst

some of the decent heather areas – and having a large bonfire to deal with the arisings.

In order to minimise disruption to residents, Martlesham Conservation Group only have this one bonfire each year, and prepare a large fire pit to contain the nutrient rich ash – minimising any impact on the site. The bonfire is also useful to cook the baked potatoes for the volunteers’ lunch!



*Invaluable conservation volunteers in action*



# Neighbourhood Swift Project Marlborough Road, Ipswich

Few birds stir passion in people like the swift. On summer evenings, whether you're in your garden, sitting outside your local pub or taking a walk, the sight and sound of screeching swifts can stir the senses and stay in children's hearts throughout their lives.

Flying over 4,000 miles from central Africa, swifts spend just 12 summer weeks with us to breed. They can fly 3,500 miles in just 5 days!

Feeding on aerial insects, they eat, drink, mate and even sleep on the wing. The fastest creature on earth in powered flight, they've been clocked at 69.3 mph. They



## Wild Ipswich

All the conservation organisations working together to inspire local people to help wildlife throughout the town and beyond.  
[www.wildipswich.org](http://www.wildipswich.org)

can fly for up to 10 months non-stop without landing and can live for over 20 years.

But Swift numbers are falling rapidly due to modern building methods and our wish to refurbish and insulate

our houses without thinking about who else lives there. It's under roof tiles and in nooks and crannies high up on our houses that swifts like to nest.

Just imagine it – you head south to your winter home as summer ends, but when you and your children make the return journey the following May to your family home, you find that someone has bricked over your front door and you must start searching for somewhere else to stay. Not easy when you've come back to the same house every year

throughout your life.

So, keen birder and swift enthusiast Chris Courtney and neighbour Amanda Warren have mobilised other residents in Marlborough

neighbouring houses so swifts have safe places to rear their young this summer.

This project is an excellent example of how people can become actively involved in practical conservation and make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of our wildlife.

It will be a fascinating summer for the residents of Marlborough Road - how about doing the same in your road?

*Flying over 4,000 miles from central Africa, swifts spend just 12 summer weeks with us to breed ...*

Road to come to the aid of these iconic birds.

Swifts have been visiting nest boxes on Chris's house for a few years and now 20 more boxes have been erected on

Visit [www.suffolkwildlife-trust.org/swifts](http://www.suffolkwildlife-trust.org/swifts) for more information about swifts or contact Chris Courtney on (01473 423213), [chris.courtney@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:chris.courtney@yahoo.co.uk)



Swifts have been visiting Marlborough Road for a few years



Young swifts take a look at the world



# A Tribute to Ray Sidaway

**Colin Hullis**

Ipswich Wildlife Group chairman Ray Sidaway passed away in Ipswich Hospital on 10 January aged 71 after a short illness.

Ray had been chairman for approaching ten years and was an inspirational leader of the Group sharing his enthusiasm, passion and knowledge with everyone he came into contact with.

Ray, with his wife Jen were the main drivers behind the successful campaign to save Kiln Meadow from housing development, the site is now a Local Nature Reserve in perpetuity.

As a past schoolmaster, Ray was also passionate about including schools and involving young people in the activities of IWG. One of his legacies is that the Group now regularly visits local schools giving advice and helping create wildlife areas within the school grounds.

As well as Ray's leadership of IWG, he was also a keen volunteer with Suffolk Wildlife Trust and with the Greenways Countryside Project, every week turning up on his trusty bicycle in all weathers.

As a former promising cricketer himself, Ray was involved in coaching young cricketers at Ipswich and East Suffolk Cricket Club for nearly 20 years. He was also a talented musician and singer playing in several amateur rock and folk groups. Later he learned classical guitar and wrote his own classical pieces.

Ray will remain widely respected by all who knew him, volunteered with him or were taught by him. He was a man committed to the natural world and lived by the highest standards of all aspects of environmental conservation.

Ray will be greatly missed by everyone at Ipswich Wildlife Group.



Secretary Leila Matata  
leilamatata@msn.com  
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.*





# Bixley Heath SSSI

**Tim Page**

The IBC Wildlife and Countryside Rangers have been very busy during 2018 and into 2019 at Bixley Heath – the only SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) site within the borough.

A walk around the network of connecting footpaths will reveal a variety of conservation tasks, including removal of invasive trees, scrub removal and dead hedges, which will benefit the

site in the short and long term.

- Tree removal – As a Lowland Heath site, Bixley Heath is susceptible to invasive tree species taking over from the outer fringes.

The Rangers have been identifying and removing young Silver Birch and Oaks which spring up across the Heath, often starting at the outer fringes. If left to grow, these trees would soon begin to dominate the site, casting shade over the heather and altering the character and wildlife of the site.

- Scrub removal – if left unchecked, scrub can also



© Sarah Kishaw

*Dead hedges are a great habitat*

be a problem on the heath. The Rangers constantly monitor the gorse, broom and brambles, cutting them

- Dead hedges – these are hedge-like structures made from the cut brushings and branches produced during the scrub and tree removal. Just like hedges, dead hedges are a great habitat for nesting birds, mammals and invertebrates.

Our dead hedges can also be used to strategically guide locals away from some of the informal footpaths which have developed across the site over the last few years. These informal paths segment the heath, causing disturbance to sensitive wildlife by both people and their dogs.



© Colin Hullis

*Scrub removal areas on the heath*

back wherever necessary. Gorse and broom do complement the heathland habitat, providing nesting sites and cover, but they can easily become too 'leggy', or tall, and need cutting back seasonally.

- Sedge bed tree removal – the Rangers have removed clumps of willow from the middle of the sedge bed at Bixley. This is necessary to stop the willow spreading across the sedge bed and turning it into a boggy carr.



© Colin Hullis

*Willow removed from the sedge bed*



**IPSWICH**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Wildlife Rangers

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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.*



© Colin Hullis

*Removal of invasive tree species*



# In the Shadow of Sizewell C – a Prime Site for Lepidoptera

**Rob Parker**

The idea of dropping two new nuclear reactors into a Site of Special Scientific Interest, an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) and a prime site for butterflies and moths is (fortunately) a once-in-a-lifetime issue.

We (Butterfly Conservation) are concerned about the impact of the construction work (as distinct to worries about nuclear safety), so we took part in the extensive consultation exercise conducted by EDF. We listed the species, in particular the rare and vulnerable species that inhabit the area and considered their prospects in the face of such a disruptive project. So, we submitted a paper entitled: Butterflies and Moths of the Sizewell Area. The essence of the paper is summarized here:

Suffolk's 34 butterfly species (resident and regular migrants) are spread around the county unevenly. On average, each 2km square supports 15.3 species, but the squares around Sizewell B have 25, and are well monitored by two butterfly transects (Sizewell Belts and Upper Abbey Farm.)

**UKBAP Species.** Seven Suffolk butterflies are designated as UK Biodiversity Action Plan species. Six of the seven fly in the Sizewell area. Those of most concern are:

**White Admiral** flies in light woodland where honeysuckle flourishes. It breeds in small numbers in and around Kenton Hills and Goose Hill. It is at risk of displacement by construction work.

**Grayling** has undergone a serious decline across England and Suffolk, although it has been quite common from Kenton Hills, through Sizewell Belts and particularly amongst the grass and shingle belt between the sea and Sizewell B. The work along the sea wall could be a significant threat to this declining species.



© Colin Hullis

*White Admiral*

**Small Heath** still flies in the short grass areas around Sizewell B, but its health of population is unlikely to improve as a result of the construction work.

**Moths:** A total of 11 BAP, rare or Nationally Notable moths are found along the coast and inland to the Sizewell Belts. Many tetrads have records for over 200 species, and two have over 500, which is impressive (macro and micro moths together).

The records presented show clearly what a rich share of Suffolk's lepidoptera exist in the vicinity of the Sizewell C development. The likely impact on their populations can be considered in 3 phases:

**Preparation.** EDF plans to present its planning application early in 2020 and anticipates a wait of 12 to 18 months before the application is considered. This time is an opportunity to consider possible mitigation measures to benefit wildlife, and to implement them ahead of the construction phase. The continuation of wildlife monitoring is important, and EDF can help by allowing unhindered access to wardens and those conducting the butterfly transects.

**Construction.** There will be damage to the wild populations early in the construction phase, where new roads are built, and where car parks and hard storage areas replace natural vegetation - for example around the southern margin of Goose Hill. **Wildlife will be displaced.**



## Butterfly Conservation

**Saving butterflies, moths and our environment**

Membership Secretary

01379 643665

[www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk](http://www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk)

email: [butterflies@sns.org.uk](mailto: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.*

**Operational Phase.** In the long term, about one square kilometre will have been covered in concrete, and the disturbed areas will have been restored to agriculture/nature.

**Impact.** Three UKBAP butterfly species and 11 notable moths are presently flying in the relevant 2km squares. All of them are likely to suffer losses; most have some chance of recovering ground when Sizewell C goes operational – which is realistically 15 years from now.

Other Conservation bodies – Natural England, RSPB, SWT and the AONB Partnership have their own concerns as owners or guardians of important habitats, so we shared our study with them.



© Colin Hullis

*Grayling*



# Concerns, a rarity and a stunner

**Tim Kenny**

Our group, like the wider RSPB, has been exercised recently by the consultation phase for the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power station. We are fortunate to be within an hour's drive of Minsmere, one of the finest nature reserves in Europe, if not the world, and the current Sizewell A and B stations have been a familiar landmark in the distance for well over half a century now. As a young lad of nine, my first marsh harrier was pointed out to me by well-known enthusiast John Denny using the instruction "marsh harrier, left of the power station"!

could accelerate the natural erosion of the coastline, in an area already predicted to become an island in the next century. Add to this the campuses for the workers in rural Eastbridge, plus associated link roads and rails, the character of this quiet and tranquil corner of Suffolk could be changed forever.

This is why we're encouraging our members, and indeed anyone who considers the natural environment worth protecting, to get involved with the Love Minsmere campaign. Please consider telling EDF what you think by

barely a mile from my ancestral home, and this year I've volunteered for the local toad patrol for the first

---

*My first marsh harrier was pointed out to me using the instruction "marsh harrier, left of the power station"...*

---

time, which I've thoroughly enjoyed.

Recently an exotic visitor was found in the area - a Siberian

Unfortunately, due to high winds we were forced to cancel our March 16th walk at Alton Water, but we have had some very enjoyable trips out already this year. My favourite sighting was of a drake smew on our River Stour walk in January. This duck of the sawbill family, with his white and black plumage, really was a stunner. A hundred or so travel to spend the winter here from their breeding grounds in the taiga of Europe and Asia, where it nests in trees.

Other interesting birds encountered on the January



## Ipswich Local Group

Group Leader Tim Kenny  
Tel 01394 809236

ipswichrspliblocalgroup@yahoo.com  
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

*The drake smew on the Stour - a stunner!*

Sizewell C however would be built right up to the southern boundary of the reserve, and the RSPB has concerns regarding noise and light pollution during the construction phase. This would heavily impact those very same marsh harriers, as well as the resident bitterns and other species. Not only this, but a proposal to deliver building materials by sea

following this link: [rspb.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/love-minsmere-sizewell-c/](http://rspb.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/love-minsmere-sizewell-c/) Minsmere is such a special place and we need to fight for it together.

We're looking forward to Spring Wood Day on May 6th, where we will have a stall as usual and be taking bird walks. It's an area I've got to know well, being

chiffchaff! Greyer and with a distinctive tri-syllabic song, a few make it to Britain every year, a good 3000 miles from their breeding grounds. As a student of Russian in 1994 I spent four months in western Siberia and got to observe them on their breeding grounds - little did I think then that one would be found just down the hill from the house I grew up in!

walk included a female greenshank that habitually spends the winter behind the Co-op in Manningtree. Distinctively banded on both legs, my sources tell me she was ringed as a chick in the nest up in the Scottish Highlands four years ago. For me, knowing individuals and their life stories adds another layer of interest to the natural world.



# Megabashes and habitat piles

**Ann Havard**

At our last morning work party of the year we were once again joined by other volunteers from Greenways and Ipswich Wildlife Group for the December Megabash 2. Once again we cleared blackthorn, brambles, oak and hazel from Kiln Meadow, made a bonfire and ate potatoes with butter and cheese as a reward – yummy!



*An area of Kiln Meadow before our Megabash efforts*



*... and after the clearance of invasive species*

January saw eight people out, although unfortunately not James as he was incapacitated after a recent operation. However, Peter very kindly gave up his Saturday morning to come out and supervise us. Following the November and December Megabashes, we had a lot of material with which to create habitat piles for invertebrates and amphibians. First deep holes had to be dug – this was the hardest and longest job as 30cm down we hit very compacted sand and gravel which was best attacked with a mattock and then lifted out by spade. When we were satisfied that the hole was deep and wide enough we fitted logs in, some upright and some, either horizontal or at a low angle. The whole thing was then covered with soil again but it

still had plenty of spaces in between the logs for insects, lizards and hopefully even dormice to burrow their way in and use for shelter from the weather, predators or hibernation.

A special thanks to Peter and Wayne for helping us out at our February work party swelling our numbers to 10 people. We worked hard to clear hazel, hawthorn and willow from a glade just north of Spring Wood and under the electricity pylons. The cut material was put into dead hedges to keep dogs away from vulnerable wildlife. We saw a few blades of bluebells coming up and Scarlet elf cap amongst the rotting wood and moss. It was a lovely morning, blowy but blue sky and the great tits were beginning to tune up in earnest.

Peter told us a rare (to this country) Siberian chiffchaff had been spotted along the Belstead Brook foraging with four of our own British chiffchaffs. Also a Great egret has been seen somewhere in the Belstead Park area. So keep your eyes peeled – you never know what you might spot!

After this work party a few of us stayed a bit longer to join a family and friends walk through Spring Wood in memory of the wonderful Ray Sidaway.

We had a very different work party in March – a fruit tree pruning workshop in the orchard next to the Barn, at the end of Bobbitts Lane. This was ably led by Paul Jackson who was incredibly knowledgeable. The fruit trees in the orchard were in desperate need of



**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.*

some TLC and armed with Paul's advice, both our volunteers and those from Greenways and IWG will now feel better equipped to deal with them.



*For a habitat pile, first dig a hole*



*The proud habitat pile providers*



# A different name but still the same group

**Gi Grieco**

**At the Annual General Meeting held in February, members overwhelmingly voted in favour of changing the name from Suffolk Ornithologists' Group to Suffolk Bird Group.**

A name change had been discussed more than once by the committee in the past but on this occasion all committee members were in favour of the change and decided to put it to the members. The more recent discussions had, in part, come from recently joined members who had initially thought the group wasn't for them due to the name ornithologist and that it was more science based. Only by finding out more about the group, reading articles and *The Harrier* magazine, and consequently joining that they found that the group has a social side too.

was thought that our proposed new name would present a more welcoming face to the public at large and so make us a more attractive proposition for prospective new members.

information on our projects and surveys along with details of field trips and indoor meetings.

## **Rookery survey**

A reminder that our Suffolk Rookery Survey is up and running and we welcome all records. Counts of nests plus any extra details such as tree species, historical information, recently formed rookery or alternatively, one that has disappeared or moved, can be submitted online at [www.suffolkbis.org.uk/rookerysurvey](http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/rookerysurvey). The format for our new survey is similar to that used by Save Our Suffolk Swifts, a partnership involving SBG and Suffolk Wildlife Trust, for recording nesting Swifts.

## **Early arrivals**

During the warm February, bird life came into full song, thinking Spring had arrived. In addition, extremely early Swallows and Sand Martins arrived on the coast such



We've got a new logo; almost the same as the previous as we wanted to keep Marsh Harrier as the bird of choice – the group's magazine is still to be called *The Harrier*. We're revamping the web site to [www.suffolkbirdgroup.org](http://www.suffolkbirdgroup.org) where you can find



*Brambling seen on our visit to the Brecks*

**Suffolk Bird Group**  
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9 Heron Close, Stowmarket, IP14 1UR  
[info@suffolkbirdgroup.org](mailto:info@suffolkbirdgroup.org)  
[www.suffolkbirdgroup.org](http://www.suffolkbirdgroup.org)  
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*SBG is the Group is for people interested in the birds of Suffolk, and provides a network and a voice for birdwatchers in the county.*

Council members agreed that re-naming ourselves Suffolk Bird Group would be a far more positive and effective way of "selling" what we do and what we are all about to the general public and prospective members. In no way whatsoever should it be thought that this amounts to a dumbing down of our activities or principles. We will continue in our well-established ways – our studies, our surveys, our field trips and our indoor meetings - and indeed, expand them whenever the opportunity arises. But it

as at Minsmere; up to two to four weeks earlier than normal. The weather then turned to extreme winds but fortunately calmed down for an excellent SBG visit to the Brecks.

This annual visit for the group is always eagerly awaited and unsurprisingly there was a good turnout. Meeting at Santon Downham, the area is always a hive of birdlife with lots of activity with singing Song Thrush, Greenfinch plus many Siskin and Brambling. We were extremely fortunate to have fantastic views of two Otters. We went to a few other sites and saw some specialist Brecks birds such as Goshawk and Stone-curlew along with highlights of Red Kite and Great Grey Shrike. What was fantastic was to see Buzzards at each place we visited and in total managed to see at least 15 birds.



*Suffolk Rookery Survey up and running*



# Scouts and Rangers join in

## Sam Cork, with contributions from George Pennick

In November the Nature Explorers spent their meeting carrying out our annual bird box check, this time assisted by the 1st Martlesham Scout Troop and Girlguiding 1st Martlesham Heath Rangers.

Each year we record which bird boxes have been used to help monitor the changing populations of the bird species in the woods. The results of the survey show that most of the 35 boxes around the woods have been used which is encouraging. The Scouts and Rangers had also constructed some new boxes from sheets of UPVC plastic, kindly donated by John Parker Fixings. These designs will hopefully prove welcoming to the birds and need less attention and repairs.

Also in November, the volunteers were joined by members of the Martlesham

Heath Aviation Society to clear the area around the fuel tanks near the eastern entrance of the woods. This site was the fuel store for aircraft using the airfield during the Second World War.

December and January's working parties saw our volunteers trimming back low hanging branches, pushing back fallen, rotted leaves, and sweeping up debris from the main path through the woods. This is a job that never seems to end but keeping the track clear has always been a priority to ensure it remains accessible and safe to use.

The Nature Explorers progressed our conversion of an underground air-raid shelter into a bat habitat and one task was to ensure that the bats have a clear flight path to the shelter entrance by cutting back some



All pictures © S. Corley

*Crocus - putting on a lovely show*

surrounding trees. Primarily, our focus was the safety of visitors to the woods and metal grates were installed to ensure that no one could injure themselves falling into the shelter.

The weather for February's working party was bright sunshine and blue skies, and spring flowers were putting on a lovely show. During the morning the volunteers concentrated on cutting back the hedge along the main road. The hedgerow was shortened to encourage denser vegetation growth which will provide prime nesting sites for local birdlife.

If you haven't wandered through the woods for a while please take the time to walk along our three signposted trails. The green acorn highlights the nature walk, the red aircraft leads to notable historic features



**Portal Woodlands Conservation Group**

Enquiries: Martlesham Parish Council  
01473 612632 [www.pwcg.onesuffolk.net](http://www.pwcg.onesuffolk.net)  
or email [pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com](mailto:pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com)  
*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.*

within the woods and lastly the blue dragonfly will lead you towards the pond area.

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



*Clearing up debris from the main path*



*Hedge trimming providing prime nesting sites for birds*

**Volunteer Work Mornings** (all ages welcome - no need to book) Meet at the Education Area from 10.00am – Noon.  
Saturday 18th May, Sunday 16th June,  
Saturday 20th July. No August work morning.  
**Nature Explorers** (11 to 18 year olds)  
Meet at the Education Area from 9.00am - 11.00am.  
Booking essential, please email [pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com](mailto:pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com)  
Saturday 18th May, Saturday 20th July

**Nature Watch Club** (5 to 11 year olds)  
Dates to be announced. Please email [pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com](mailto:pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com) for more information or alternatively look at our website: [www.pwcg.onesuffolk.net](http://www.pwcg.onesuffolk.net)



# The joys of bird-nesting when I was a boy

**Reg Snook**

Being brought up on a council estate on the eastern edge of Ipswich during the Second World War meant that the countryside was my playground. I spent many hours bird-nesting in Holywells Park before migrating to and from Christchurch Park. Holywells was the wilder of the two, Christchurch Park being more cultivated. The latter held thick, towering rhododendron bushes – a guarantee of finding blackbird, song thrush and mistle thrush nests.

As naturalists mature in years, so it becomes normal to compare what is happening in the countryside now with how it was when we were young. Perhaps we tend to imagine that things were better in those days, especially for bird life – more birds, more habitat, less pressure on wildlife in general. Was it really better back then for wildlife?

It is true to say that there were far

more birds in our gardens, parks and hedgerows then, but did they have the protection that was needed? I remember the Wildlife and Countryside Act coming into effect, the first of a series of measures to save our precious natural history. A recent conversation with Steve Piotrowski, who has done magnificent work with barn owls in Suffolk, set me thinking about birds' nests, eggs and egg collecting. It was great to talk to an ex-birdnester, someone who could tell a bullfinch's nest from that of a chaffinch, recognise a cuckoo's egg in a clutch of reed warblers' eggs and identify any hedgerow nest even if it had no eggs.

As youngsters in those far-off days we would go birdnesting in 'gangs', which

meant a sitting bird would get a great deal of disturbance. As seven- or eight-year olds, we had an egg collection "only take one egg from a clutch" was the general rule. At first, we would walk hedgerows and woods and flush sitting birds from shrubs and trees but, as we became more educated, we would discover that if you observed a pair of birds in springtime then it was not difficult to find the nest. Aged nine, I gave up egg-collecting and began to make notes and drawings instead. I still have those notes. Whether it was an interest in sport or young ladies I do not know, but egg-collecting soon became a thing of the past for my gang. I carried on with the bird-nesting!

I could not afford a camera then, so I made quick sketches. The nests I found became more exotic. Imagine my excitement when I found my first

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*I could not afford a camera then, so I made quick sketches...*

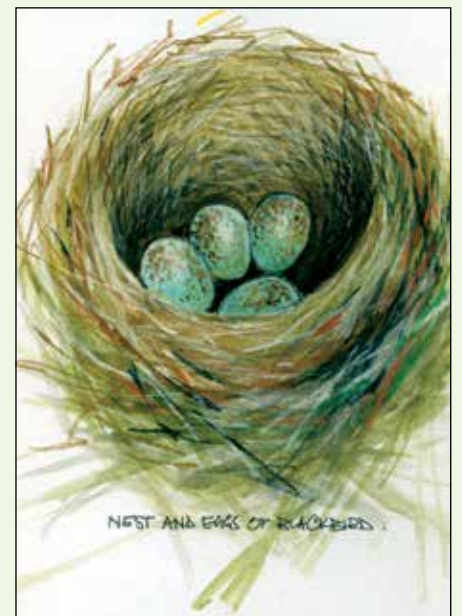
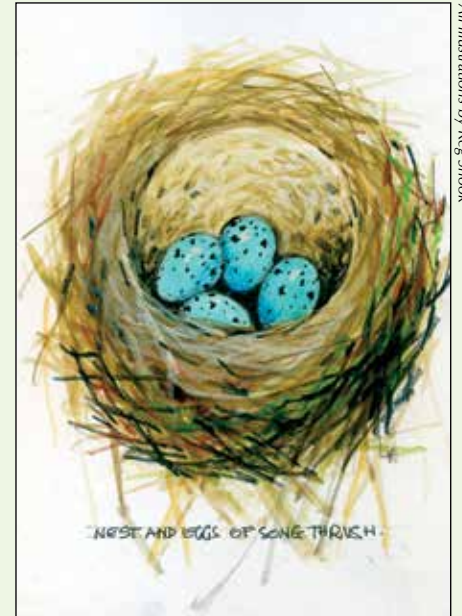
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snipe's nest or found for the first time a nightjar's clutch. Climbing up a tree to look into a hole, not realising a tawny owl was in residence and when that bird decided to leave its nest I lost my grip, descending rapidly to the ground. Next day I beat the trunk with a branch so that the owl left. I clambered up into the tree, peered into the gloom and saw four white round eggs and two dead rats. I have never forgotten that experience.

My best friend kept an egg collection, I remember a chaffinch's egg, a bright blue song thrush's egg and the most common of his eggs, those of the red-backed shrike which nested in his back garden!

Walking through Christchurch Park these days I still peer into the rhododendron bushes but, sadly there are no bulky thrush's nests. There is more protection, but fewer birds to protect.

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.



All illustrations by Reg Snook



## 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@  
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.*

more birds in our gardens, parks and hedgerows then, but did they have the protection that was needed? I remember the Wildlife and Countryside Act coming into effect, the first of a series of measures to save our precious natural history. A recent conversation with Steve Piotrowski, who has done magnificent work with barn owls in Suffolk, set me thinking about birds' nests, eggs and egg collecting. It was great to talk to an ex-birdnester, someone who could tell a bullfinch's nest from that of a chaffinch, recognise a cuckoo's egg in a clutch of reed warblers' eggs and identify any hedgerow nest even if it had no eggs.



# Spring event in the Orchard

## Martin Cant

With Spring finally appearing and shrubs starting to burst into life, it's a great time of the year to be out and about in the park. The friends held their 'Welcome to Spring' event in the Holywells Park orchard on a warm weekend in March which attracted lots of families with children who enjoyed the activities on offer.

The apple trees were starting to produce buds and the quince trees were almost full of flower buds, which should be open by now! There were primroses all over the orchard and the bees were busy collecting pollen from the trees and flowers and drinking water from the stream.



*Primroses bursting out all over*



*The children helped build the huge bug hotel*

Children were creating dream catchers and making chickens from coloured paper and then entering a quiz before taking in the woodland walk to follow the Hare Trail.

Storytellers kept the children amused with tales from the woods, before moving on and treating themselves to cake and refreshments.

The coconut shy and egg lift proved popular as always, and bug boxes, bird boxes and hedgehog houses could be made to take home and provide wildlife homes in everyone's garden.

The friends had constructed a bug hotel out of wooden pallets, but this needed to be populated with logs/fennel/



### 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](mailto:fohpswich@gmail.com)  
[www.holywellsark.org.uk](http://www.holywellsark.org.uk)  
[facebook.com/holywellsarkipswich](https://facebook.com/holywellsarkipswich)

bamboo etc. which the children (and grown-ups) helped to build during the day. We now have a great hotel ready for any passing insects to turn into a new home.

Our next event in the orchard will be Scarecrow day on 22 June, see Events pages.

## Visitors drop-in



*We were thrilled when this handsome pair of Mandarin ducks unexpectedly dropped in to water close to the orchard*



*And here is an intruder caught on a motion-activated Trail camera set up in the Apiary in the Holywells orchard. Those muntjac get everywhere these days!*



# The Dales - A delightful woodland

**Joan Powell**

February was a wonderfully warm month with bright sunlit days and blue skies - lulling us all to think that spring was on its way - well, the beginning of March has reminded us that there are a few more weeks before that happens.



## 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](mailto:jayempowell@btinternet.com) or find us on Facebook by searching Friends of the Dales

Whilst taking a walk around The Dales at the beginning of March it was interesting to be able to see more of the space that makes up this delightful woodland. The pond seemed enormous as the reeds and rushes were down, and you could see just how big it really is. Areas that had been cleared gave shelter to an unknown creature - in a pile of dried grasses, the entrance hole quite clear - I wonder what made its home there.



*Shelter for an unknown creature*

Small children kitted up in warm waterproof clothing were enjoying sliding down a muddy slope and gamely climbing up to slide again. As the weather does warm up the newly finished play area will resound to squeals of joy as they climb, slide, swing and rock on the new items that IBC have installed. Thank you very much IBC - it

looks lovely and the children will soon be enjoying themselves.

The large swathes of violets were lovely to see - this deep purple-blue flower with its heart-shaped leaves can be found scattered all around The Dales. It is considered to be both an annual and a biennial - they often self-seed and will pop up each

year in quite an unexpected location. Did you know that both the leaves and the flowers, which bloom in winter and early spring, are edible and rich in vitamins? I wonder how many of you have picked them, let them dry, painted them in egg white and dipped them in caster sugar to decorate a cake - I have.



*Large swathes of violets*

Our volunteers continue to work hard - repairing, cutting back and clearing up litter, amongst other jobs, which keeps the area much nicer to walk in. One of our volunteers has planted over 300 plants, well done to that volunteer - hope that your knees didn't ache too much at the end of the day! However, it was very disappointing to see the fly tipping of garden rubbish, including a discarded sack barrow, adding to their workload. It really is quite a selfish action, the rubbish can and should be disposed of properly - taken to the recycling centre, or for bulky items collection can be arranged. IBC offer collection of five bulky items for £37.50, and if on means



*Now the children can climb, slide, swing and rock*

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*Our volunteers continue to work hard which keeps the area much nicer ...*

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tested benefit some may be entitled to one free collection per year. Sharing the £37.50 charge with neighbours may be an idea - as would sharing the cost of a smaller skip - it will save costs all round and keep our natural spaces uncontaminated for the flora, fauna and people too.

The most exciting thing on this walk was to be shown Scarlet Elf Cup - a beautiful woodland fungus which grows on decaying wood in damp areas and beneath leaf litter, brightening up the woodland with its brilliant red colour. Although it can be widespread it is uncommon in the UK - I am told it is a delicacy to rodents and slugs and a small puffing sound can be heard as it releases spores into the air.



*A brilliant Scarlet Elf Cup*

© Lydia Woods



# Snippets

## Pied Wagtail Roost in Central Ipswich

**Richard Stewart**

On 7th January, at about 4.30 pm, I was passing the Giles statue in the middle of Ipswich, when I heard loud birdsong.

It was coming from an adjacent group of trees and although the birds were constantly in motion, before settling down for their long night roost, I estimated about a hundred were present. It was obvious from the calls, body shape and limited plumage details I could see, that these were pied wagtails. They are usually seen singly or in small numbers but the advantages of a communal roost obviously drew them together, in a location several degrees warmer than the surrounding countryside. This is an important survival factor since a winter roost can be as long as fourteen hours or more.



## Weasel spotted

**Andy Smuk**

Never a dull moment on our Wednesday Friends work parties in Holywells Park orchard.

Keen eyed volunteer Jim Davies spotted and took this marvellous photograph. The Weasel spent several minutes going in and out of a habitat pile... it looked like it was hunting. Suddenly a Magpie swooped down and mobbed it, perhaps in an attempt to steal its prey. Just goes to prove when you're being a conservation volunteer, expect the unexpected!



## Tesco Bags of Help

**Ann Havard**

Tesco have awarded Friends of Belstead Brook Park £2,000!



Thanks to everyone who dropped their Tesco shopping tokens in our slot at stores around Ipswich. This money will be used to create a new path linking into Bourne Reedbed. At the moment there is a very steep path leading down from behind Whitland Close, we will now be able to make this much safer and also create more links to the footpath network within Belstead Brook Park. We also hope to be able to create a new pond and make benches overlooking the wildlife areas. Therefore, as they say – every little really does help.

## A Minotaur Beetle first

**Su Fox**

I took this photo in Spring Wood during the March Sunday work party.



David Dowding identified the beetle as a male Minotaur Beetle. I have never seen one of these before anywhere and as far as I know, it has not been recorded as having been seen in Spring Wood before. It feeds on the dung of rabbits and deer and favours sandy soils, so it is right at home there. Maybe not so impressive as a Stag Beetle, but still formidable-looking with the three horns!



# Events Diary

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

## MAY

### Saturday 4th May 9am Suffolk Bird Group FINGRINGHOE WICK

Meet at visitor centre car park, South Green Road Map Ref: TM048193. **Leader: Ashley Gooding. Tel. 07808 044611.**

### Sunday 5th May 1pm - 3pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust HEDGEHOG AWARENESS WEEK

Join us at La Tour Cycle Café, decorate a door frame for your hedgehog hole – we'll have the hedgehog highway frames cut and ready for you to design, paint and take home to fix to your fence. **Book online at [suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org)**

### Monday 6th May Spring 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.**

### Wednesday 8th May 8.30pm - 10pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust HEDGEHOG TORCHLIGHT TOUR

Join Hedgehog Officer Ali for a night walk at the People's Community Garden in search of hedgehogs. People's Community Garden, Maidenhall Allotments, Ipswich. £2 for adults, £4 for accompanied children. **Book online at [suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org)**

*Want to join in?*

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

### Wednesday 8th May 6.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Wolves Wood RSPB reserve for nightingales and summer woodland birds. Meet at car park off A1071 TM054437. 2 hours 2 miles. Walking can be muddy. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

### Saturday 11th May 11am - 3pm IBC Rangers Spring at Murrayside

Explore Murrayside Park, one of Ipswich's traditional recreation grounds with the Rangers and make a Wildlife Home with Ipswich Wildlife Group. Murray Road/King Edward Road off Felixstowe Road.

### Sunday 12th May 1pm - 3pm Ravenswood Wildlife Group BUTTERFLY WALK

Fully accessible walk suitable for all ages. Meeting place is the junction of Elvedon close and Tunstall Walk Ipswich. Walks are weather dependent so updates can be found on our website [ravenswoodwildlifegroup.co.uk](http://ravenswoodwildlifegroup.co.uk) or on Facebook 'Ravenswood Wildlife Group'.

### Tuesday 14th May 10am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK

Pipers Vale, meet at car park at Vale entrance TM178419. **Leader Kathy Reynolds 01473 714839.**

### Saturday 18th May 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](mailto:pwgc.martlesham@gmail.com)**

### Saturday 18th May 10am - noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group WORK MORNING

All ages welcome, no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **Please email [pwgc.martlesham@gmail.com](mailto:pwgc.martlesham@gmail.com) for more information or alternatively look at our website: [pwgc.onesuffolk.net](http://pwgc.onesuffolk.net)**



### Saturday 18th May 11am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

RSPB The Lodge, Sandy, Beds for summer heathland and woodland birds. Meet at visitor car park. Travel by own car (journey approx 2.5 hours, possible car sharing available. 4-5 hours 4-5 miles. Walking easy. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

### Sunday 19th May 7am Suffolk Bird Group EASTBRIDGE – OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Meet at Eastbridge (Long walk possible). Map Ref: TM452666. **Leader: David Walsh. Tel. 07947 051223.**

### Wednesday 22nd May 6.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Newbourne Springs SWT reserve for summer woodland birds and nightingales. Meet at reserve car park. TM275433. 2 hours 2 miles. Walking can be muddy. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

### Wednesday/Thursday 29th/30th May SUFFOLK SHOW

Visit Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Ipswich Wildlife Group in the Wildlife Area throughout the two days.

### Thursday 30th May 9pm - midnight Ravenswood Wildlife Group MOTH TRAPPING

Leader: Sam Chamberlin. Fully accessible walk, suitable for all ages. Meeting place is the junction of Elvedon close and Tunstall Walk Ipswich. Walks are weather dependent so updates can be found on our website [www.ravenswoodwildlifegroup.co.uk](http://www.ravenswoodwildlifegroup.co.uk) or on Facebook 'Ravenswood Wildlife Group'.

### Friday 31st May 9pm – 10.30pm SWT Wild Learning WET YOUR WHISTLE WITH WILDLIFE

Join us to search for wildlife in Christchurch Park after dark and a drink afterwards in the Woolpack. 18 - 35 year-olds. Cost £5 please book. **Contact Lucy Shepherd 01473 890089 [suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org)**

## JUNE

### Suffolk Wildlife Trust Wild Learning events during June

#### Saturday 1st June 9pm – 10.30pm

Nocturnal wildlife family night walk. Holywells Park. Please book.

#### Tuesday 11th June 10am – 2pm Activity

day for home educated children age 6 - 10 years. Holywells Park. Please book.

#### Wednesday 12th June 10am – 2pm Activity

day for home educated children age 11 - 16 years. Holywells Park. Please book.

#### Saturday 15th June 1.30pm – 4pm Wild

afternoon tea in Holywells Park. Please book.

#### Saturday 15th June 8.45pm – 10pm Big

Wild Weekend Stag beetle hunt. Pipers Vale. Please book.

#### Sunday 16th June 9.15pm – 10.30pm

Urban wildlife after dark. Christchurch Park. Please book.

#### Friday 21st June 9.15pm – 10.30pm Glow

worm hunt. Landseer Park. Please book.

#### Sunday 23rd June 10am – 12am Bees and

beekeeping Holywells Park. 11 - 16 year-olds. Please book.

### Contact Lucy Shepherd 01473 890089 [suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org)

#### Friday 7th June 5pm – 7.30pm

**Nature Summit.** Join top speakers from the fields of environmental campaigning, practice and politics, take part in discussions and a Q&A. Dance East, Ipswich Waterfront IP4 1DW. Free event but booking is essential. **You can find more details from [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org) through which you can book a place. Places can also be booked at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nature-summit-tickets-56554835034?err=29>**



### Wednesday 12th June, RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Date and time to be confirmed. Nightjar evening at Upper Hollesley Common. Meet at upper car park TM355471. **Check website or email [smarginson@btinternet.com](mailto:smarginson@btinternet.com)**

### Friday 14th June 7pm Suffolk Bird Group MINSMERE (RSPB) RESERVE

Meet at the Reserve car park for evening walk ending with Nightjars on the heath. **Leader: Paul Gowen. Tel. 01473 311263.**



**Sunday 16th June 10am - noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group WORK MORNING**

All ages welcome, no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **Please email [pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com](mailto:pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com) for more information or alternatively look at our website: [pwcg.onesuffolk.net](http://pwcg.onesuffolk.net)**

**Tuesday 18th June 10am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK**

Christchurch Park, meet at Soane Street car park TM165448. **Leader Kathy Reynolds 01473 714839.**

**Tuesday 18th June 6.30pm Ipswich Wildlife Group WALK THE DALES**

Join us in a guided walk around this little-known Local Nature Reserve in the company of members of the Friends of the Dales. Meet at the upper entrance in Dales Road. **Details from Colin Hullis 07979 644134 [colin@hullis.net](mailto:colin@hullis.net)**

**Saturday 22nd June 9am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING**

Rushmere Common and Foxhall for summer heath and woodland birds. Meet at Heath Road, Ipswich. Park on local roads or Ipswich Buses number 5. TM197445. 2-3 hours 3-4 miles. Walking easy. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

**Saturday 22nd June 2pm - 4pm Friends of Holywells Park SCARECROWS AND BLOSSOM**

**Please check details on the FoHP website: [holywellspark.org.uk](http://holywellspark.org.uk)**



**Wednesday 26th June 6.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING**

The Grove Felixstowe for woodland and summer birds. Meet at main car park. TM303356. 2 miles. Walking can be muddy. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

**Thursday 27th June 9.15pm - midnight Ravenswood Wildlife Group GLOW-WORM SURVEYING**

Leader: David Dowding. Not suitable for wheelchair users. Meeting place is the junction of Elvedon close and Tunstall Walk Ipswich. Walks are weather dependent so updates can be found on our website [www.ravenswoodwildlifegroup.com](http://www.ravenswoodwildlifegroup.com) or on Facebook 'Ravenswood Wildlife Group'.



**Sunday 30th June 8am Suffolk Bird Group LAKENHEATH FEN**

Meet at reserve centre car park. Map Ref: TL719863. **Leader: David Walsh. Tel. 07947 051223.**

## JULY

**Suffolk Wildlife Trust Wild Learning events during July**

**Tuesday 9th July 10am – 2pm**  
Activity day for home educated children age 6 - 10 years. Holywells Park. Please book.

**Wednesday 10th July 10am – 2pm.**  
Activity day for home educated children age 11 - 16 years. Holywells Park. Please book.

**Sunday 14th July 10am – 12.30pm**  
Wildlife Photography Holywells Park. Please book.

**Wednesday 31st July 12noon – 4pm**  
Family Fun Day Holywells Park. Free event.

**Contact Lucy Shepherd 01473 890089 [suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org)**

**Saturday 20th July 9am - 11am. Portal Woodlands Conservation Group NATURE EXPLORERS**

11 to 18 year olds. Meet at the Education Area. Booking essential, **please email [pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com](mailto:pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com)**

**Saturday 20th July 10am - noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group WORK MORNING**

All ages welcome, no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **Please email [pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com](mailto:pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com) for more information or alternatively look at our website: [pwcg.onesuffolk.net](http://pwcg.onesuffolk.net)**



**Saturday 20th July 11am - 3pm ActivLives BIG GARDEN PARTY**

Food, music, activities, crafts and much more for the whole family. The People's Community Garden, Maidenhall Allotments, Halifax Road.

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

Landguard nature reserve and SSSI Felixstowe for birds and flora. Meet at Landguard Fort car park. TM285320. 2-3 hours 2 miles. Walking easy but can be exposed when windy. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

*Want to join in?*

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

## AUGUST

**Suffolk Wildlife Trust Wild Learning events during August**

**Thursday 1st August 1.30pm - 4pm** Owl pellet dissection Christchurch Park. Please book.

**Sunday 11th August 2pm – 4pm** Wild afternoon tea Holywells Park. Please book.

**Tuesday 13th August 10.30am – 12.30pm** Woodland tea party Christchurch Park. Please book.

**Wednesday 14th August 10.30am – 12.30pm** Go Wild in the woods Bridgewood, Orwell Country Park. Please book.

**Thursday 15th August 1.30pm – 3.30pm** Big Wasp spider hunt Holywells Park. Please book.

**Friday 16th August 10am – 12.30pm** Wild Whittling ages 11 - 16 years. Holywells Park. Please book.

**Tuesday 20th August 10.30am – 12.30pm** Woodland wonders Christchurch Park. Please book.

**Wednesday 21st August 9.30am – 3.30pm** Wild Holiday Club age 6 - 11 years. Holywells Park. Please book.

**Thursday 22nd August 2pm – 4pm** Nest box building Chantry Library. Please book.

**Friday 23rd August 8pm – 10pm** Ipswich's urban jungle age 11 - 16 years Holywells Park. Please book.

**Tuesday 27th August 9.30am – 3.30pm** Wild Holiday Club Holywells Park. Please book.

**Contact Lucy Shepherd 01473 890089 [suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org)**

**Saturday 10th August 8pm - 9.45pm Friends of Holywells Park BAT WALK**  
**Please check details on the FoHP website: [holywellspark.org.uk](http://holywellspark.org.uk)**

**Sunday 11th August 8am Suffolk Bird Group HEATHLAND BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES**

Meet at the Roman Road car park, Westleton Heath Map Ref: TM453695.

**Leaders: Val and Ivan Lockwood. Tel. 07505 952478.**



**Sunday 11th August 2pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING**

Wrabness Essex Wildlife Trust reserve for woodland, scrubland and estuarine birds. Meet at reserve car park, end of Wheatsheaf Lane. TM167315. 2-3 hours 2-3 miles. Walking easy. **Leader Stephen Marginson 01473 258791.**

**Sunday 25th August 7.30am Suffolk Bird Group EAST LANE, BAWDSEY**

Meet at East Lane car park, Bawdsey. Map Ref: TM357400. **Leader: Gi Grieco. Tel. 07951 482547.**



# 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.**

## **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](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.

## **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](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 01473 728674.**

## **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](mailto: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](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)**

## **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 01473 728674..**



*An impressive array of wildlife homes including Tawny and Barn Owl boxes, Kestrel and Swift boxes, homes for bats and hedgehogs, bug boxes and bug hotels – all produced by volunteers at Ipswich Wildlife Group and Greenways to fulfil an order for Suffolk Wildlife Trust*