

Fieldfare coming soon?
– see page 18

Local Wildlife news

September to December 2024

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



Suffolk
Wildlife Trust

Produced by the



GREENWAYS
countryside project



Tell your friends

Local Wildlife News is available online at
www.wildipswich.org



If your friends and colleagues don't have a copy let them know that the latest issue along with all back issues are always free to view at the Wild Ipswich website. The site is the gateway to all the wildlife and conservation organisations in the local area where you will be directed to their website, Twitter (X), or Facebook pages.

Copies of LWN are available at all Ipswich libraries, at the Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park and from leaflet dispensers at the Stable Block in Holywells Park, from the Greenways office at the Scout Hall, Stoke Park Drive, Millennium Wood (Bobbits Lane entrance), Kiln Meadow (Marbled White Drive entrance), The Sandlings, Rushmere (Bixley Drive entrance) and Mill Stream, Rushmere (Glemham Drive entrance).



Come and Join us

Become a member of Ipswich Wildlife Group and support our work at local wildlife sites and our activities spreading enthusiasm for the nature all around us

You can just lend us your support or get involved in our activities

Your membership will help provide valuable influence when we are standing up for local environmental issues

We don't do meetings or annual subscriptions but we will keep you informed of what's going on by email each month. Just send your contact details to our secretary Leila at iwg@wildipswich.org

Welcome

by **James Baker** *Editor*

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of Local Wildlife News magazine. As ever, this issue is packed with interesting and relevant local articles and information about wildlife and around Ipswich.

With more climate and weather records being broken this year, we are reminded once again of the fragility of our wildlife populations. The wet conditions early in the year seem to have greatly hampered the progress of many invertebrate species, which in turn delayed and threatened the success of bird breeding. These additional challenges to species come on top of record drops in populations of many, faced with lack of habitat, pollution and other man-made factors. In order to try to reverse the decline of wildlife diversity and numbers, we are clearly going to need a different approach to that used in recent decades. This realisation sadly comes at a time when the available resources for biodiversity work are at a low ebb with very restricted public budgets (nationally and locally) and falling contributions to third sector organisations.

All this makes the small contributions we can each make in our own local patch all the more vital – so please continue to garden with wildlife in mind and get involved in as many of the events and activities advertised in the back of the magazine as you possibly can – to help all the local conservation organisations to achieve as much as possible! The Wild Ipswich page (page 15) this edition, is all about community action for wildlife in Felixstowe – the wonderfully simple principle of lots of people doing a little bit – adding up to a very significant benefit to wildlife.

We're always very grateful for contributions for the magazine – whether whole articles or just photographs or 'snippets' – so if you have something interesting or unusual to share, please do let us know.

Enjoy the last weeks of summer with hopefully plenty of wildlife to see, and then join in if you can with practical habitat management work through the ever shortening winter season! Happy Christmas to all!!



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Printed by The Five Castles Press Tel 01473 718719

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

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

Winter wildlife – cultivating a different mindset

Sheila Roberts *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

My grandmother always used to tell us off when we said that we didn't like the onset of winter. Whilst we used to complain about cold feet and dark evenings, she'd tell us to 'buck up and be grateful for our lot'. She firmly believed that there was nothing better than drawing the curtains against the cold wind and settling down by her log fire with a cup of tea and her favourite magazine.



© Colin Hullis



**Suffolk
Wildlife Trust**

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.

She loved the fact that her garden birds returned to the feeders for kitchen scraps and always noticed the different shapes the bare branches of trees made against the sky. And this was a woman who lived in a remote farmhouse in rural Suffolk with no central heating.

Her positive attitude came back to me the other day as a group of us started to bemoan the fact that the nights were drawing in and winter wasn't far away. Yes it's easy to use cold weather as a reason to stay indoors but increasingly we're learning that getting out into nature – even if it's only our garden or a local park – can bring positive benefits to our wellbeing.

The daylight outside can help us sleep better, it helps our bodies make vitamin D, and

looking at trees and foliage can improve our mood. If we ask a chum to come with us or join a friendly group of likeminded people for a stroll around a local open space or nature reserve, that contact can improve our wellbeing further as we make connections and share what we see.

We're very blessed in Ipswich with so much open space to enjoy – not just the wonderful parks like Christchurch, Holywells or Chantry but smaller sites with a wealth of

wildlife interest like The Dales or Belstead Brook. If you want to venture slightly further and are lucky enough to have

*... getting out into nature
– even if it's only our
garden or a local park
– can bring positive
benefits to our wellbeing.*

transport, the Suffolk Wildlife Trust has a fantastic range of nature reserves that are perfect

for a winter walk. My personal favourites are Lackford Lakes where there's always birdlife to be seen and Foxburrow nature reserve which is evolving as nature takes back control.

So as winter approaches, perhaps take a leaf out of my grandmother's book and try and see the positive side of the cooler season – there's a wealth of wildlife waiting to be discovered. Why not browse this website and plan your winter wanders? www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/nature-reserves



© Colin Hullis

June Butterfly Walk

Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group

A good number of members of the Ipswich group of the SWT visited Landseer Park and Pipers Vale in June for a butterfly walk lead by Dave Dowding and his team of IBC Rangers plus Melvyn Eke.



The warm, sunny weather was a bonus and produced good sightings of Marbled White, Meadow Brown,



Gatekeeper and Skipper plus other insect varieties, plus glimpses of White Letter Hairstreak. A fantastic

display of Silver Studded Blues on the heather patches finished the morning perfectly.

Trimley Summer Walk



We had a great walk on Saturday 06-07-24 along the "Stour & Orwell Walk" between SWT's Levington Lagoon and Trimley Marshes reserves.

The event was enjoyed by nine SWT members, and Phil Whittaker our SWT volunteer warden, despite the unseasonal weather and we raised £30 for SWT.

Along the walk we saw a great variety of birds but my personal highlight was seeing my first ever Hobby!



WE COULD HAVE.....

We could have gone practically any other Saturday in summer, when we would have been guaranteed better weather!

We could have gone a few weeks EARLIER when my wife saw a beautiful long eared owl perched above the same path!



© Ruth Cousins



Suffolk
Wildlife Trust

Ipswich Group Newsletter

We could have gone a couple of weeks LATER too, when we saw a Glossy Ibis close to the same path.



WE WILL..... try again

We're already planning another visit next year, and next time we'll stay on the Trimley Marshes Reserve and we hope to have Phil Whittaker our guide with us again. In the meantime, thank you Phil for making our birdwatching walk along the Orwell so interesting.



Suffolk
Wildlife Trust

Ipswich Group Newsletter

Why not make this autumn a time to learn a bit more about wildlife?

Three pounds doesn't buy you much these days does it? Certainly not a pint and, in most cases, not even a cup of coffee.

So how about investing three pounds on yourself in a different way? Three pounds is all you need to learn about some aspect of our natural world – and we'll even give you a hot drink and a biscuit for that princely sum!

You might be learning about polar bears in Norway or the surprising secrets of the red deer which make Minsmere their home. How about learning more about badgers or see stunning photos from Costa Rica?

All of these are the subjects of evening talks put together by the Ipswich Group of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. They're open to everyone – you don't even have to be a Wildlife Trust member (although we'll happily show you how to join if you like!).

We meet once every month from September to April in the Methodist Church off Black Horse Lane in Ipswich town centre. It's a friendly group, a comfortable, easily accessible venue and we love meeting new people.

To see dates and further details, see below or go online to www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events and use the filter button to choose events from the Ipswich local group.

Pam Ireland

Events Diary

All meetings are held at 7.30pm at Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. Entry £3 includes tea or coffee. There is easy access and the hall has a hearing loop system.

Wednesday 25 September 7.30pm - 'Autumn and the deer rut at Minsmere'.

Join RSPB volunteer Steve Everett for this fascinating talk.

Wednesday 23 October 7.30pm 'Climate Change'

An illustrated talk by Ian Hawker.

Wednesday 27 November 7.30pm 'A year in the life of the badger'

Join Adrian Hinchcliffe, from Suffolk Mammal Group for this fascinating talk.

Wednesday 11 December 7.30pm 'The land of the Polar Bear'

Join us for an illustrated talk by Chris Parfitt.

© Colin Hullis



© Alan Baldry



Ipswich is Wild – Change and Continuity

Daniel Payne *Wilder Communities Officer, Suffolk Wildlife Trust*

Nature is in constant change, and yet at the same time is in a state of continuity. Plants in a forest grow, bear fruit or produce seed, and then die back or go dormant, yet the forest remains constant. The Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich is like that. The eagle-eyed among you will notice that Lucy is no longer working in Ipswich; change, yet the Trust's aim in our town remains the same; continuity.



My name, as you can see, is Daniel Payne, and I have taken over from the superb Lucy, who has moved to a community farm over in Cambridge, working as their engagement officer, a similar role to her previous with the Trust. More change and continuity for you! As a little background to me, I have come from the National Trust at Dunwich Heath (next door to Minsmere and Sizewell) working in a very similar role, organising events and activities to engage people with nature, but without as much outreach work, which I am really looking forward to getting into and indeed have really enjoyed in the time I have been part of the Trust so far.

But anyway, enough about me, more on the nature and what's coming up in Ipswich. I was thrilled to discover that Ipswich is a hotspot for Stag Beetle activity and am looking forward to seeing more of these majestic insects as I work in town. I have seen females, but a male, or better yet two males fighting is a real bucket-list sighting that I am hopeful of! In terms of what nature has been seen and recorded, it was a slow start to the summer, but

when the sun came out in August the butterflies finally made an appearance. Gatekeepers, Painted Lady, Peacock, Comma, Large White and Meadow Brown were flitting about, which is always a joy to see. Dragonflies and damselflies were also slower to get going, but other invertebrates were unaffected by the lack of sunshine it seems.

In terms of what's coming up, by the time this goes to print I am aiming to be well on the way to re-starting Young Wardens in Ipswich, getting our young people hands on with nature in the green spaces around town and giving local wildlife a helping hand. Into the Autumn, and specifically Halloween, I am aiming to have another Spooktacular in Holywells Park. It's not often people get chance to see what nature is about in parks at night, so it will be great to showcase all the nocturnal wildlife whilst also having some spooky fun! Christmas time is still under development, so watch this space...

All that's left to be said then is here's to a beautifully colourful Autumn,



**Suffolk
Wildlife Trust**

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Stag beetle

with hopefully some interesting winter migrant species appearing before the colder months. Speaking of which, wouldn't it be nice to see some snow over winter.



The young wardens



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.

Annual Report - April 2023 to March 2024

James Baker *Manager, Greenways Countryside Project*

Introduction

This Annual Report covers some of the activities of the Greenways Countryside Project over the twelve months from April 2023 to March 2024 inclusive. It is only possible to cover a small amount of our work in this report, so if you would like any further information about any of the sites or any other aspects, please get in touch with the Project team, using the contact details adjacent.

The map below shows the approximate locations of most of the nature reserves and green spaces that we have worked on during the year. Most of our work is in the 'greater Ipswich area', but increasingly we work over a wider area, due in part to the need to generate external income to meet the budget deficit.



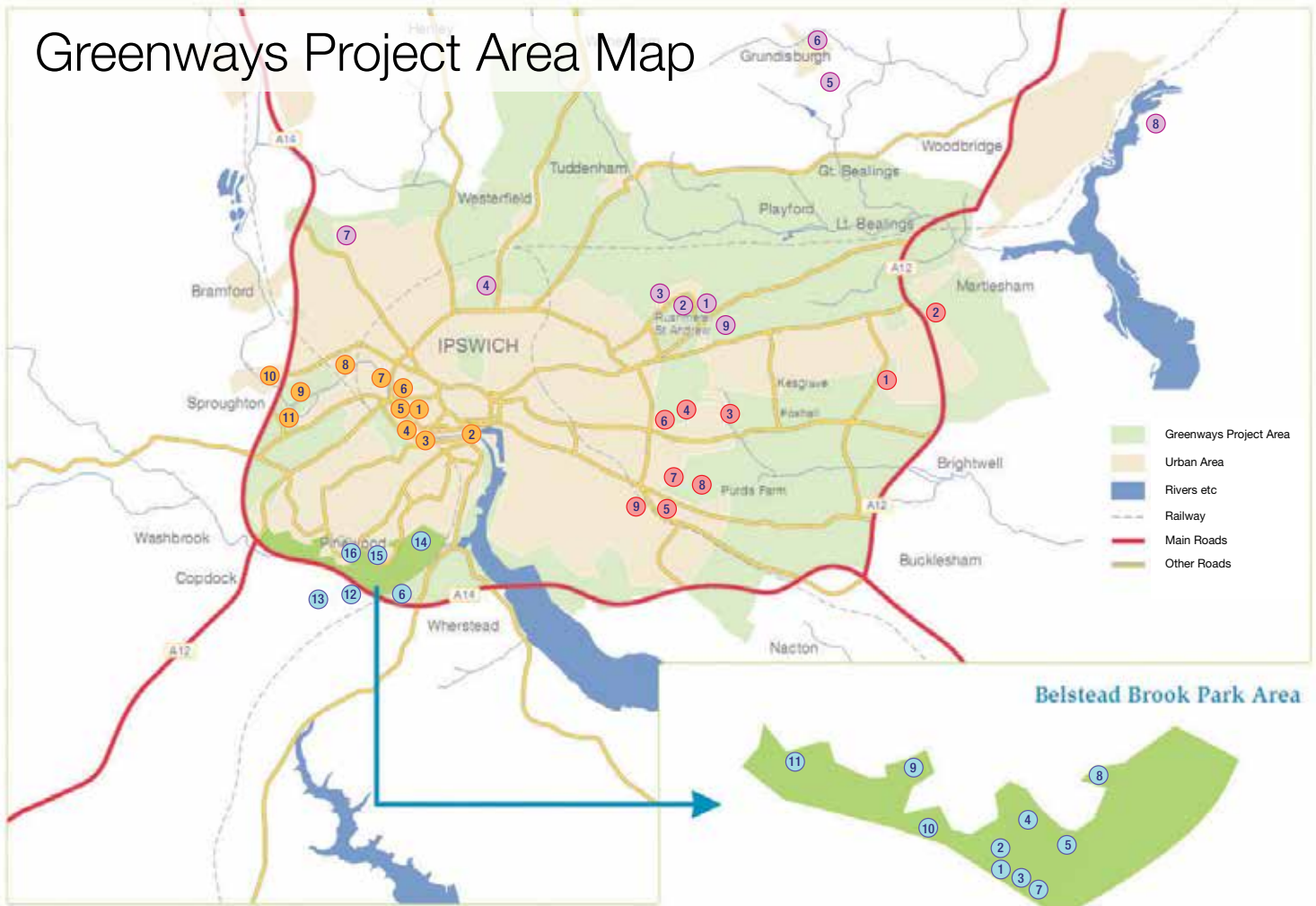
Volunteers resurfacing a heathland pathway

Partnership and Funding

The Greenways Project has been running for nearly 30 years as a local authority partnership, led by Ipswich Borough Council, with Babergh District Council and East Suffolk Council. The Project staff team are employed by Ipswich Borough Council, as part of the Parks and Cemeteries

Service. Gradually, the proportion of the annual costs covered by the partners has decreased, and the Project is now about 75% self-financing – bringing in funds from grants and by providing services to the partners and others including Parish Councils, residents' groups, third-sector organisations and others.

Greenways Project Area Map



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Volunteers and their vital contribution

As ever, this report provides an opportunity to formally thank the wonderful volunteers for all of their work to ensure the Greenways Project can continue to manage high quality nature reserves and green spaces around Ipswich. With a staff team of just two, the volunteers, who collectively contribute the equivalent time of almost six full time posts, are clearly a vital resource and allow a disproportionately large amount of work to be carried out by the Project. The role of our volunteers is very varied, with practical management of the reserves and green spaces being the main role – but it also includes attending events, surveying wildlife and people, administration, leafleting, producing this magazine, and making thousands of ‘wildlife

homes’ (bird boxes, insect homes, hedgehog houses etc) with Ipswich Wildlife Group.

Events and Publicity

During the year we attended a range of public events, often working with Ipswich Wildlife Group on our joint ‘Wildlife Homes’ initiative – from small local fetes to the Suffolk Show. As guests of Suffolk Wildlife Trust we helped families and young people to make and take home around 350 bug homes – all made from our own wood and locally harvested bamboo!

Illustrated talks have been given to various groups in the year, to promote the activities of the Project and encourage wildlife-friendly gardening and land management.

We continue to publish Local Wildlife News Magazine,



Regular volunteers joined by BT staff

again, in partnership with Ipswich Wildlife Group, three times each year. This popular local magazine is our main way of publicising what we do and forthcoming events and activities as well as providing an opportunity for many other local conservation and community groups to do the same.

Regular posts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook have also allowed us to spread the word about our achievements to a wider (and hopefully younger!) audience.

Our nature reserves and green spaces

The sites we look after and work on are spread over a 100 square kilometre area and total over 400 acres of publicly accessible, high quality, semi-natural space for wildlife and people to enjoy. The vast majority are fully open to the public, with a few small exceptions where for reasons of public safety or wildlife vulnerability, we limit access. All of the areas require regular habitat management work to ensure we are maximising their ability to support diversity and abundance of wildlife species. They also all require regular maintenance of the infrastructure associated with people visiting the sites – everything from building paths and bridges to picking litter and cleaning signs.

The work of our staff and volunteers varies dramatically through the seasons. The four short winter months – November to February – are

our busiest, with most of the habitat management work being done whilst most wildlife is dormant or less active. Main jobs include: woodland coppicing, tree felling, tree and hedge planting; heathland and meadow scrub control; and hedge cutting. Most of the meadows or wildflower grasslands are mowed and raked in the autumn months, after flowers have set seed and most insects have completed their lifecycles for the summer. Removing the cuttings from grassland is vital to prevent a build-up of nutrient in the soil and a ‘thatch’ of cut material preventing less vigorous plants being able to establish.



Mulching a new native hedgerow

The spring and summer months are dominated by looking after the facilities for human visitors! Cutting back paths; building bridges and boardwalks; surfacing paths; installing seats, signs and information boards are just some of the routine work required.

Details of work on a handful of sites follows:

List of sites

Belstead Brook Park and Southern Fringe

- 1 Spring Wood (LNR)
- 2 Kiln Meadow (LNR)
- 3 Millennium Wood (LNR)
- 4 Bobbits Lane Meadows (LNR)
- 5 Ashground Plantation and Whitland Close area
- 6 Bobbits Lane – upper area
- 7 Butterfly Ride
- 8 Stoke Park Wood (LNR)
- 9 Ellenbrook Meadow and open space
- 10 Burnet Meadow and Thorington Park area
- 11 Belstead Meadows
- 12 Thorington Hall Farm area
- 13 Belstead Heath
- 14 Bourne Park
- 15 Netley Close open space
- 16 Lynnbrook Wildlife Area

Eastern Fringe

- 1 Martlesham Heath (SSSI)
- 2 Martlesham Common (CWS, LNR)
- 3 Mill Stream (LNR), Rushmere St Andrew
- 4 Sandlings, (LNR), Rushmere St Andrew
- 5 Warren Heath (CWS)
- 6 Broke Hall School
- 7 Broke Hall Playing Field, Rushmere St Andrew
- 8 Ipswich Golf Club, Purdis Heath
- 9 Malcolm Road Wildlife Areas

Northern Fringe

- 1 Chestnut Pond, Rushmere St Andrew
- 2 Rushmere Street Wildlife Corridor
- 3 Limes Pond
- 4 Fonnereau Way
- 5 Grundisburgh Millennium Meadow
- 6 Lyttleton’s Meadow, Grundisburgh
- 7 The Beeches Primary School, Whitton
- 8 Sutton Hoo, National Trust
- 9 Woodbridge Road, Rushmere St Andrew

Western Fringe and the River

- 1 Alderman Canal (LNR)
- 2 River Path – Stoke Bridge
- 3 River Path – Princes St to West End Rd
- 4 River Path – West End Road
- 5 River Path – West End Rd to Handford Rd
- 6 River Path – Handford Rd- Yarmouth Rd
- 7 River Path – Yarmouth Rd to Riverside Road
- 8 River Path – Boss Hall
- 9 Sproughton Nature Reserve
- 10 River Path – A14 to Sproughton
- 11 Churchman Way

LNR = Local Nature Reserve
CWS = County Wildlife Site
SSSI = Site of Special Scientific Interest

Examples of site work

Hedge Planting

During the winter, our volunteers planted two new hedgerows – one at Sproughton Nature Reserve, where the new hedge will help to screen the large warehouse buildings from the reserve. The second new hedge was planted at a small new wildlife area acquired by Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council, alongside Woodbridge Road. The small area has been managed as long grass meadow for the last two years, and it is now responding well, supporting a range of wildflowers along with small mammals and amphibians – a considerable improvement on the regularly short-mown sward before. It can be difficult to persuade local residents that changing to long grass habitat is a good thing – but the habitat created here with minimal effort is a substantial and much needed boost for wildlife.



Dead wood habitat piles

Dead wood is vital to support a wide range of invertebrates and other species, but is often overlooked or 'tidied' away unnecessarily. During the year, we created our largest ever stag beetle log habitat pile – in the shape of a stag beetle from above! The 'pile' is over 50 feet long and contains around 25 tonnes of logs! The habitat is not only ideal for stag beetles



– an Ipswich area speciality – but will also be home to fungi, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. We have also installed around 50 other log habitat piles around our reserves – part of our aim to increase biodiversity. Dead wood is always fantastic for wildlife, and if part buried in the ground, the potential value increases further – so if you have room for a log pile – do it!



Sproughton River Path

After working on the river path improvements in the reserve for more than two years, our regular volunteers and other groups helped us to complete our largest ever project during the year. Almost a mile and a half of riverside path has been widened and rebuilt to allow much safer and easier access for visitors. The work has been carried out as a requirement of the planning consent for the adjacent Eastern Gateway logistics park. The work included carrying in and installing over 2500m of timber edging boards, with over 1800 timber stakes to hold them in place; 200 tonnes of surfacing material, and many more tonnes of existing surface dug and re-levelled. Most of the materials had to be carried in on foot – so this is an astonishing achievement for our volunteers.



Heathland management

Lowland heathland is one of the most valuable habitats in the area – and like all other habitats, they require considerable management in order to maintain their diversity of species. During the winter months we carried out considerable amounts of scrub clearing and other management at Martlesham Heath and Purdis Heath Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Martlesham Common, Ipswich Golf Club, Warren Heath and Rushmere Common. The rapid spread of gorse scrub is generally the main threat to these heaths, and our changing climate has greatly increased annual growth due to longer growing seasons and nutrient falling in polluted rain, onto these otherwise very low nutrient sites. Once again, our indefatigable volunteers enabled this work to be completed.



Blues and Swifts

Julian Dowding *Secretary, Butterfly Conservation Suffolk*

Silver-studded Blue numbers at Purdis Heath SSSI counted on 25th June this year totalled 194 males and 46 females. At Piper's Vale 180 males and 64 females were recorded. The counts show that the Ipswich population was approaching 'peak count' at that time.

Peak is when the total numbers of butterflies seen will be greatest but also uses an ingenious ratio of 2.5:1 males to females. This means recorders are able to time their counts at the best or most appropriate times by calculating the ratio at a given time. Within BC Suffolk, we tend to do these counts ourselves but would always be happy to welcome others to join in. Please contact us if you would like to help next year.

If you do the maths you can see that the ratios were actually 4.2 males :1 female (Purdis) and 2.8 males: 1 female (Piper's). So for the latter, the figures would have been very close to peak count of 2.5:1. A count the following day may have given precisely 2.5 males: 1 female. At Purdis, where it was 4.2: 1 on 25th, the count indicated that peak count would have been about a week later. The main flight season is very short, often around 4-6 weeks, so the ratio changes rapidly. It's true too that stragglers appear well beyond that period but when you first see a colony building up numbers and quickly peaking and then declining you realise how short their flight season really is. You also realise how beautiful they are.

... the outlook has been good. Piper's colony has nearly doubled in size since last year ...

The data gathered informs conservation decisions and practices. They help us understand if conservation techniques are working and whether a colony is growing or declining. For the two populations here, the outlook has been good. Piper's colony has nearly doubled in size since last year, 2023. Purdis numbers have nearly halved but over the course of nearly 15 years, the colony has grown from a low of just four butterflies recorded in 2009.

Holy Trinity Swifts

In February this year, work began on the creation of swift nest sites in the belfry at Holy Trinity church located at the foot of Bishops Hill, Ipswich. Permission was needed from the Diocesan Advisory

Committee (DAC) as the church and tower have listed building status. Thankfully this was granted, so by the end of April 10 nest boxes were secure within the east facing louvers. We also set up a Swift call system to increase the chances of attracting these wonderful birds to breed.

I spent many an hour watching from below or just to the side of the belfry during early morning and late evening from May through to July's end. Although there were definitely fly-over's, we've been unable to verify Swift breeding. This doesn't mean failure. Providing nesting habitat should be seen as a success in itself, since lack of nesting places for Swifts is one of the biggest drivers for their decline in this country. The other is lack of flying insects - their food. Anything we can do to help is worthwhile, even if it takes time to get breeders. As an example, I know a lady in Mersey Road, who has had three boxes on her house for six years, and it is only in this sixth year, that Swifts graced her with their nesting presence. She was overjoyed and rightly so. Her example and dedication should serve as encouragement to us all.

I must thank the following for their considerable help in all of this: Martin Cant and Ipswich Wildlife Group, Mike Raine from St Luke's, Eddie Bathgate from Save our Swifts Suffolk, and to all at the DAC, including Rev Sue Allison, the PCC and churchwarden Mark for their support and encouragement.

Finally, I have a few spare Swift boxes to be fitted under the eaves and soffits. These are suitable for any aspect of a house. Please contact me for more details. julian.dowding@ntlworld.com



Silver-studded Blue with ants



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.



The tower of Holy Trinity Church

© Phil Corley

Out and about with IWG

Martin Cant Ipswich Wildlife Group

East Anglia Children's Hospice

In January we re-visited the East Anglian Children's Hospice in Ipswich.



We made 44 bug boxes and a couple of bird and hog boxes with the families who visited the Treehouse during an event in June. We had a great day entertaining the children who all made wildlife homes. We even had a sign hand painted for us at the event, which we have obtained to use at other wildlife events – brilliant day!

Bamboo Safari

Martin, Mel, Pete and Colin have been on another bamboo safari to maintain the stocks of fillings for bug boxes as part of our Wildlife Homes project. After cutting down each bamboo has the leaves removed, is cut down to fit in the truck, then allowed to dry for a few weeks, then cut into four-inch lengths to fit the boxes. That's Martin's IWG truck just showing under the bamboo harvest!



Suffolk Show

IWG again had a very successful stand within the SWT area of the Suffolk Show this year. The photograph shows James Baker and Fred Margerum being shown the award for the Best Stand Representing Environment and Countryside by SWT's Sara Holman.



Westerfield 'Bee Day'

IWG were invited to attend this springtime event held in the meadow behind the village hall, together with many other stalls. It rained all morning as we were setting up our stall, but just as the event opened at mid-day the rain stopped.

As well as the attractions of the various conservation-related stalls, there was Morris dancing which brightened up the day - plus the tea and cakes went down well. The local Westerfield volunteers also look after the railway station wildlife area which looked magnificent. We have subsequently donated bug and bird boxes for the area.

A message from St. Luke's Church

"We had a wonderful time with our Eco-Church service at St Luke's in June. Your very kind donation of bug boxes and bamboo was so very much appreciated, and as you can see from the picture we had lots of fun. Rev. Susan

Allison led the service with a major focus on recycling and our need to care for this wonderful planet in whatever ways we can. The bug boxes fitted the bill perfectly and the children and adults are now really eager to see what creatures they will provide homes for".



Secretary Leila Matata
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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.



Where have all the Wasps Gone?

Andy and Yvonne *Friends of Holywells Park*

After last year's poor harvest in Holywells Park orchard, it looks like this year's crop will be a bumper one. We had a wet Spring which seemed to be advantageous to the trees. Usually, at this time of year, we tend to find several wasps nests in and around the orchard, but this year, there have been none brought to our attention. In the orchard, the nests tend to be underground. It has been suggested that the rain from the wet Spring may have flooded wasps nests, perhaps accounting for the shortage.

Wasps have a bad reputation, but they are an important part of the ecosystem, particularly regarding the pollination process. Every Summer, wasps in the UK capture around 14 million kilos of insects, including caterpillars and greenfly, making them important friends to



A bumper apple harvest

gardeners. A decrease in the number of wasps impacts us in many ways, leading to

reduced pollination. Without wasps, our plants are more likely to be eaten by insect larvae, which would otherwise be controlled by wasps.

Our bees have been working hard pollinating the apple trees and many other plants around the parkland and surrounding area. They have also been busy making honey, storing it in their hives to get them through the Winter and into the following Spring. As responsible beekeepers we make sure that when we take their honey, we leave them enough to get them through the winter. We now have honey for sale in the Bishop's Cafe in the Stable Block on the park and at the Cottage on the Cliff Lane entrance. All money from the sale of the honey goes to support the work of the Friends.

Friends work parties have been busy round Holywells Park keeping pathways clear of vegetation. There seems to have been an explosion of plant growth with the wet Spring. Kissing Gate Lane,



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
www.holywellspark.org.uk
facebook.com/holywellsparkipswich

which is a public footpath running opposite the school on Cliff Lane down to the canal on the Park, took several work parties to clear. Apparently, its name came from a 'kissing gate' which used to be on the path.

Before our annual 'Apple Day' event we will be harvesting the apples and preparing the orchard. As always, it's the hard work of volunteers that makes these events happen. So put the date in your diary - Saturday 12 October, Holywells Park orchard, 11am - 2pm. Hopefully see you there.



Clearing Kissing Gate Lane

The Dales - such an interesting site

Kaye Roberts Secretary, Friends of the Dales



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 or find us on Facebook by searching Friends of the Dales



© Ginny Shoemith

© Sam Chamberlin



Lunar Hornet Moth

An interesting find from the work party on 18 July was this Lunar Hornet Moth which was flying around the glade through the wet woodland path. The larvae feed internally on the wood of willows and can often be found resting on at the base of these trees after emergence.

On a beautiful day in August some of the flower meadow was cut back where there was more grass than flowers to allow more flowers to emerge before the final cut-back takes place in September/October. Numerous young frogs/toads were observed in the meadow, which looked lovely with a profusion of wild carrot, birdsfoot trefoil, mallow etc. Brimstone and Speckled Wood butterflies were also noted.

Fork Tailed Flower Bee (*Anthophora furcata*)

The wet July had certainly accelerated vegetation growth at the site, especially along the edges of footpaths. It was our work party task to push back any intruding brambles and nettles to maintain access. Our go-to

machine for the job is the brush-cutter mower which mulches the vegetation. Volunteers did a great job with hand tools along sections of paths which were inaccessible for the mower.

Along one path through a section of wet woodland, I stopped cutting as a full stand of Hedge Woundwort stood right in front of me, there was so much insect activity which had to be observed.

Over the years, we have gradually created a glade by coppicing willows to allow for greater light penetration. We have seen dividends of this work with a greater diversity of flora developing including bugle, hemp agrimony and hedge woundwort, supporting many

pollinating invertebrates.

Common Carder bees were present at woundwort flowers and numerous chestnut brown bees with a quick, darting flight with a shrill buzz. These are a type of flower bee (*Anthophora*) but not the Hairy-footed flower bee (*A. plumipes*) which is active earlier in the year. There are five species of *Anthophora* in the UK, some distinguishable by the facial marking of the male bee. Many photographs were taken, and it was confirmed that Fork Tailed Flower Bee (*A. furcata*) was present, a new site record for Ipswich. Since this sighting I have noted the species in similar habitats at Bourne and Holywells Parks.

Sam Chamberlin

© Sam Chamberlin



A male *A. furcata* at flowers of Hedge Woundwort



A. male *Anthophora furcata* showing the yellow facial markings and specially adapted tongue

© Sam Chamberlin

Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve - 9 Happy Years

Dr. Adrian Cooper

Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve was founded on 11 May 2015 – so this year, we're celebrating our 9th birthday!



This article is an opportunity to thank everyone in the Felixstowe area who has helped our growth. We have over 1,700 active members. With each member having allocated at least three square yards of their garden and / or allotment to support local wildlife, we have created new wildlife-friendly habitat equivalent in area to a full-sized football pitch.

We share a lot of information about our activities through social media, so we're always happy for people to visit our Facebook page. For local people who do not use social media, we share our news through 'Spotlight on Felixstowe' – and we want to thank their amazing team for all their support. Each article we share

in Spotlight goes to about 15,000 local homes. Felixstowe Radio has also been hugely supportive of our work.

A few years ago, we appointed Gill Atacocugu as our Schools Ambassador. Gill teaches at Suffolk New College. Part of her work has been to inspire students to express their passion for environmental sustainability through poetry, art and class-room debate. We also have an Artist in Residence, Charmaine McKissock, who shares her ideas about the connections between painting, drawing and the environment. Finally, on the education front, we have a STEM Ambassador who promotes the connections between science, technology and engineering in developing school-based wildlife gardens.

Across Suffolk, our ideas have been adapted by groups in Ipswich, Bradfield, Debenham, Newmarket and Woodbridge. Across the UK, community-based conservation projects have been established, again based on our ideas, in Brightlingsea, Burton Latimer, Calne, Cosby, Emersons Green, Fulwood, and Hitchin. In Portugal, we helped to establish the Pontos and Vida project.

Felixstowe's Citizen Science Group monitors the effectiveness of our work. They share their results locally, across the UK and across the 27 nations of the European Union.

With our roots fixed firmly in the Felixstowe area, but with our branches going almost everywhere, we will continue to support wildlife and natural habitats.

Wild Ipswich

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

www.wildipswich.org



Helping nature's decomposers

Ann Havard *Friends of Belstead Brook Park*

As I write this we are experiencing summer at last after a prolonged and very wet spring. The weather was pretty stormy too over the winter so much so that in April the Friends helped Greenways with dismantling parts of the boardwalk in Ashground Plantation which literally started floating! I understand that James has secured a grant for future path work here so I expect we will be working in the area over the summer.



Friends of Belstead Brook Park

www.wildipswich.org
Email: fobbp@wildipswich.org
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.

Our usual work party in May involved helping with the lovely Spring Wood Day event. Our task was to build a stag beetle habitat pile. This is essentially a big hole filled with upright logs then the gaps plugged with soil. With some serious muscle power from us ladies we dug a hole (it was hard work!) and then



Boardwalk renewal

encouraged by our efforts, had the help from some local muscles – big and small to haul the logs into place. Let's hope it's a question of 'Build it and they will come'.

Stag beetles are fascinating insects as they spend most of their lives underground, in fact between three to seven years depending on weather conditions. The females lay their eggs in dead wood (hence our stag beetle log pile), the eggs hatch within three weeks and then the larvae spend the rest of the time gorging themselves on dead wood.

Once big enough, they



Male Stag Beetle

© Alan Baldry

undergo complete metamorphosis from their larval to adult form. This pupation takes about 6 weeks and begins in the autumn but they stay underground until the following May or June until the temperature reaches a certain consistent level. They then burrow their way out often after warm summer rains. The adults' sole purpose is to mate and then they die and the cycle of life starts again.

If you are lucky enough to witness a male stag beetle flying, it's not something you easily forget – the sound is like a mini helicopter and they have a fairly erratic flight – the males are the big ones

with stag like horns, with the females being smaller and hornless.

Stag beetle larvae are important in the ecosystem as they are one of nature's decomposers, recycling dead wood and returning the nutrients into the soil. In the UK populations appear to be stabilising, whilst in Europe they are decreasing. This is due to our obsession with tidying everything up and there not being enough dead wood around as woodlands are turned into farmland or new housing estates. So if you can, dig a hole in your garden, put in some rotten logs and with patience you could see some of these amazing insects.



Helping with the Stag Beetle pile

Pathways and planting

Stephen Corley *Chairman Portal Woodlands Conservation Group*



All pictures © S. Corley

Foxgloves

The main task of our Volunteers has been to finish laying wood chippings on the main woodland path. Following the wet weather at the end of spring into early summer, the woodland burst into life with new green growth and lovely displays of bluebells (*Hyacinthoides*), and the best display of foxgloves (*Digitalis*) seen in the woodland to date.

The wet weather gave us the opportunity to continue our hedge planting project late into the normal planting season. Many thanks for donations of saplings from the Suffolk Tree Warden Network, and to our young Volunteer, James Forbes, who took on the planting as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Award.


However, all the rain resulted in the paths becoming extremely muddy in places, except for, I am pleased to say, where we had laid the chippings. We received reports from visitors enjoying these newly covered paths - it's great to know that our Volunteers' hard work is making a difference and is appreciated!



Loading up chippings



Path complete



Portal Woodlands Conservation Group

Enquiries: Martlesham Parish Council 01473 612632 pwcg.onesuffolk.net or email 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.

Our annual glow-worm (*Lampyris noctiluca*) survey at the end of June counted nine females glowing eerily green along the woodland paths in the evening darkness. This number is up from the previous year of five, but well below historic records.



Glow worm

Volunteer Work Mornings

(all ages welcome - no need to book) Meet at the Education Area from 10.00am – Noon.

Saturday 21st September, Sunday 20th October
Saturday 16th November, Sunday 15th December

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

Comings and goings

John Kornjaca *Suffolk Bird Group*

Following the very wet start to the year, the summer period of 2024 has been somewhat changeable with lengthy cooler and wetter periods interspersed with warmer dry spells - where temperatures have touched the low 30's centigrade – although these were not sustained.

providing more nest sites for our Swifts. The SOSS (Save Our Suffolk Swifts) program sees tremendous effort in providing nest boxes across the county, encouraging our fast-flying summer visitors to breed in greater numbers.

Additionally, having recognised the decline of our House Martin numbers over recent years, in the spring of 2024 the SBG initiated a program to assist our House Martins in a similar way. House Martin Support Suffolk (HMSS) is, at the time of writing, concluding a pilot study that shall assess the breeding success rates of House Martins in a few 3-D printed artificial House Martin nest cups that have been placed on suitable sites. If successful, the SBG shall hope to produce and distribute more nest cups to householders and volunteers hoping to attract House Martins.

More details of HMSS and SOSS are available in the 'projects' section of the SBG website.



A hand painted 3-D printed House Martin nest cup in situ.



Fieldfare

At the time of writing, many of our summer visitors are already migrating back to their winter-feeding grounds. The Cuckoo is among the first to leave the UK, after all, being a brood parasite, they have no parenting duties to perform. Most Common Cuckoo arrive in the UK in May and depart in July with only, usually, the juveniles spotted through August and into early September.

Along with our *hirundines*, there are, currently, many wading birds heading south, and our coastal marshes and rivers hold large numbers of Sandpipers through August. Common, Green and Wood Sandpipers may be observed as they pass through the county along with other species such as Little Stint, Greenshank and Ruff. They will soon be replaced by wintering Snipe, Redshank, Avocet, Lapwing and Curlew.

Inland, more migrant species are also making their way, Whinchat and Wheatear

sightings signal the approach of Autumn while Spotted and Pied Flycatchers may be seen on our commons and woodland edges.

The approaching autumn period of September and into October is an exciting time for birders. Some of our summer visitors may linger and, with early winter visitors starting to arrive, the variety and number of species of birds to be seen expands greatly.

It will not be long until we start to see the first of our winter arrivals. Wigeon will soon arrive on our coastal marshes and ponds in large numbers having bred in their subarctic habitats. How long until we start to hear and see the arrival of wintering Thrushes such as Redwing and Fieldfare?

Keep your eyes open, one never knows what may show up. The website of SBG now shows a daily list of rare and scarce birds that are seen across Suffolk.

Suffolk Bird Group

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

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

The late arrival of our *hirundines* signalled to birders what may have been a rather poor year for these beautiful summer visitors. Our Sand Martins are the earliest arrivals, with the first arrivals seen in late March, while our arriving Swallows and House Martins usually follow a week or two later. Our spectacular fast-flying Swifts start to arrive in late April and into early May. This year the local birder community, and BTO Birdtrack Data, has suggested that our visitors arrived with us slightly later than usual and, in lower numbers than in previous years.

The Suffolk Bird Group/SBG (along with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust) have, since 2014, been



Snipe

© Colin Hullis

© Colin Hullis

Christchurch Park bird sightings, March to June 2024

Philip Murphy *Friends of Christchurch Park*

March

The highlights included a report that three pairs of Tawny Owls could be present in the park. Equally interesting was the sight of a Woodcock in flight in the Lower Arboretum.

A pair of Little Grebes overwintered on Wilderness Pond. By the month's end, at least five pairs of Canada Geese were on the Wilderness Pond, where on 26th a Greylag Goose was an unexpected sight. Up to 14 Mandarin Ducks were present in early March but by the month's end only about six could be located. An early brood of nine Mallard ducklings were still present on 31st.

The now-expected spring passage of Common Buzzards over the Park peaked when up to 20 were noted drifting high eastwards. A Red Kite flew west over Christchurch Mansion on 13th and a pair of Sparrowhawks was noted on several dates.

March witnesses the arrival of summer-visiting warblers to the park; the first Chiffchaff was heard singing on 14th and the first Blackcap on 22nd.

It is rather worrying that there were no reports of Green Woodpeckers in the park this month.

The most delightful observation was that of a Goldcrest, Britain's smallest common species of bird, bathing in the stream that flows down through the Wet Meadow area into the northern end of Wilderness Pond.

April

There were reports of a Nightingale singing from the hedgerow just north of Wilderness Pond, 10th, a Tawny Owl in "Mabel's" tree, 7th and four terns.

Birds of prey were noted regularly,



Little Grebe

including two Peregrine Falcons together on both 8th and 12th. Common Buzzards with a peak of five on 14th and sightings of Sparrowhawks.

A single Cormorant was seen throughout the month although two were fishing on Round Pond, 24th. An adult Grey Heron was noted on several occasions.

There were only three sightings of a single Grey Wagtail. Also on a disappointing note, we could only locate two pairs of both Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush.

May

Perhaps the most unexpected report is that of a Cuckoo heard calling on 14th. A feature of May in recent years has been the presence of Tawny owlets in trees close to "Mabel's" tree; this year there were three owlets present which attracted a steady stream of admirers.

The two pairs of Little Grebes on Wilderness Pond had produced no juveniles by the end of May and, there had been no reports of any Moorhen chicks up to the month's end. Also on Wilderness Pond, were up to nine pairs of Canada Geese but only three pairs nested, and only one hatched out any goslings. Remarkably, the nine Mallard ducklings were all still present at the end of May.

Only two male Mandarin Ducks were on Wilderness Pond up to 9th, but totals increased, by the end of the month, at least 12 were present. Breeding birds included two pairs of both Great Spotted Woodpecker and Mistle Thrush. On 19th, two broods of fledged juvenile Coal Tits were located, but there was only one singing Chaffinch this year and only irregular sightings of Grey Wagtail. The first Swift was noted on 6th. Other sightings included six Common Buzzards, 10th, five Grey Herons 9th and a Ring-necked Parakeet, 22nd.



Friends of Christchurch Park

Chair: Peter Gray 07709 634161
Membership Secretary: Robert Fairchild 01473 254255
www.friendsofchristchurchpark.co.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.

June

A Nuthatch was seen and heard in the Lower Arboretum on June 2nd. It is also encouraging to report that the six Mallard ducklings on Wilderness Pond remained there throughout June.

There is no evidence that Mandarin Ducks nested in the park this year. Two pairs of Little Grebes were frequently seen and heard on Wilderness Pond but the only evidence of breeding involved a pair with three chicks on 5th; by the month's end only one chick could be located.

Two Red Kites flew north over the park on 9th and the maximum count of Common Buzzards involved four on 24th. It was confirmed early in the month that there were four Tawny Owlets in the "Mabel" area. Additional reports of breeding success included an adult Jay feeding a fledged juvenile, and a pair of Goldcrests with two fledged juveniles.

With many thanks to Brian Macdonald, Tony Powell and Mark Dowling without whose contributions this article would have been much shorter!



Nuthatch

© J. Humble

Exponential Growth

David Dowding *Wildlife and Education Team Leader, Ipswich Borough Council*



Well maintained pioneer Heathland overlooking the Orwell estuary at Piper's Vale



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.

After what has been one of the wettest springs on record there has been an extreme amount of growth across the town, which has led to a series of complaints relating to 'unmanaged' footpaths, but this is of course not a lack of effort, but simply the vegetation's response to the environmental conditions. Not only is there more to cut there is also more material to tidy up, so it has taken longer than usual to get around the sites.

However, there may yet be a silver lining

when it comes to the management of some of our nature reserves. Meadow management is all about maintaining a low nutrient habitat to reduce the dominance of coarse grasses and ruderal weeds to allow a high density of flowering plants. This year's increased plant biomass means more of the soil nutrients (i.e. nitrogen/phosphorous) will temporarily be locked in the vegetation.

As a result, this autumn provides us an opportunity to really reduce the nutrients of some of our meadow areas this year if the arisings can be removed, but it means an incredible amount of raking up on the horizon.

Generally speaking, there are set times for grassland management. Traditional hay meadows were always cut in June and July, which is better for plant diversity as it gets them at their peak, and stops larger species dominating, but from a wildlife point of view it can be quite destructive. Most conservationists suggest August/September cuts but as the vegetation will have begun to die off, some of the nutrients will have started leaking back into the soil.

For the best of both worlds, we suggest a range of different cutting techniques at different times of the year. We have done some small sections of our meadows in

June and July when they are brimming with life but using lower impact methods such as scything where possible. When we come back in August/September to cut the remainder, these shorter areas can then be left as overwintering habitat. We also find that these early cut areas will provide a second flush of late nectar when the rest of the meadow will have gone to seed.

Bracken

Bracken has always been a bit of a triffid on sandy soils. As with gorse and ragwort, this prehistoric plant is still an important heathland species, particularly as cover for reptiles, but needs keeping under control, or it can smother out other species/habitats.

Again, the earlier you get it the better, as once it browns off it has already started to send nutrients back into the roots. We tend to bruise the larger areas of Bracken with a roller on the back of a small tractor, but for more sensitive areas such as pioneer heathland or reptile hibernacula we have also found scythes quite effective, though the technique which weakens the plant the most is hand pulling. If you can get two hands round the stem, you can normally get enough purchase to get some of the root out which helps to weaken this rhizomatous plant. This method is very time consuming, but with a party of volunteers you can make real progress in a session.



8ft high Bracken at Pond Hall meadow



Pulling Bracken and Digging gorse (mattock) with the National Landscape volunteers in an area of more grass dominated heath.

Restore Nature Now

Tim Kenny *Leader, RSPB Ipswich Group*



© Tim Kenny

Mixed wader flock, mostly avocets and black-tailed godwits

On 22nd June, I made my way to London to participate in the Restore Nature Now march, joining thousands of like-minded folk to peacefully demonstrate our legitimate concerns with regard to the state of nature in the United Kingdom.

By almost every metric, our nation is one of the most wildlife denuded of any in the developed world, a shocking state of affairs that should shame any so-called civilised society. For those of us who have clocked up a fair few circuits of the sun, it just seems that there is much less wildlife about these days. Gone are the days when insects would pile up on car windscreens. Gone (mostly) are the familiar bird songs in our countryside, such as corn bunting and turtle dove, whilst the harbinger of spring, the common cuckoo, has declined by 34% since 1995, according to the BTO website.

On a hot sunny day, it was perhaps portentous that a peregrine falcon was seen hunting above the Houses of Parliament. Speakers such as Chris Packham, Megan McCubbin and Dale Vince took to the stage alongside Feargal Sharkey, the former Undertones front man turned water quality campaigner, demanding substantive change in the way we treat our wildlife. The hope was that an incoming government would seek to reverse these declines; sadly, it would appear that this is not high on the list of priorities at the moment, although to be

fair it looks like there is a very long list of things that need sorting out in the short term.

We are currently at the tail end of the passage wader migration season, with good numbers of black-tailed godwits and avocets gathering at our wetland sites. Among these you may be lucky enough to see something a little less common, such as green or wood sandpipers, little stints, ruffs, or maybe even a pectoral sandpiper. This latter species is annual in East Anglia, unusually for an American species. Breeding in the northeastern corner of Asia, northern Alaska and arctic Canada, they winter in South America, with a few opting for Australia and New Zealand. Western Europe would seem well off any of these beaten tracks. It is thought that the birds we see here are breeders from eastern Siberia that are heading to South Africa for the winter.

September to November is the peak time for land bird migration, when almost anything could turn up in the area. I will remember when I obtained my camera, I decided to head to Landguard Common to practise on some common species, to get used to all the settings. When I arrived, the car park was full, and a major twitch was on. It turned out that the first pied wheatear for Suffolk had arrived that morning! Despite my bridge camera having a zoom of up to 200x, the bird still didn't come close enough even for a half-decent photo.



Ipswich Local Group

Group Leader Tim Kenny
Tel 01394 809236
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<https://group.rspb.org.uk/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, get out and experience nature first hand on one of our regular field meetings. Three times a year you will receive the 'Orwell Observer' magazine. Membership costs £5 per year (£1 for Juniors). For more information see the Events Diary in this magazine, visit our website or email as per details above.

The local group held their annual general meeting in April, and I took the opportunity to inform the membership that I will be standing down as leader in 2025. I will have done an eight year stint in the chair (the usual recommended term is five years) and so it's time for somebody new to take the group forward. If you think this sounds like your kind of thing, please feel free to contact the group via email at ipswichrspblocalgroup@yahoo.com. You have until the AGM in early April 2025 to express your interest and we look forward to hearing from you.

Snippets

Jolly clever Jays *Richard Stewart*

On three days from 30th June to 2nd July we had two more examples of the intelligence of the corvid family. On the last day of June we were at the north end of Christchurch park when we suddenly heard an unusual noise from a tall oak above us. It resembled someone using nutcrackers. My wife Marie used her binoculars to identify three jays, two of them juveniles. She also could see small acorns starting to grow and we assumed the parent bird was giving the youngsters an early lesson in how to tackle heavier and larger acorns in autumn.

Two days later a pair of juvenile magpies were on our lawn and picking up individual ants. These were immediately directed towards the area where their wing meets the body. Ants eject formic acid as a defence mechanism and these magpies were using the acid to get rid of unwanted ticks, fleas and other irritants.



© Anne-Marie Stewart

Swift story 2024 *Colin Hullis*

This year my swifts arrived at their nest box under the eaves of my house on 11 May, a few days later than usual. As the box has a camera fitted I saw the first egg appear on 22 May and the third egg on 28 May. The first swiftlet hatched on 14 June and on 21 June all three were seen being fed. The weather was poor with much wind and rain making catching insects difficult. However, by 15 July the young appeared fully grown and were venturing off the nest and exploring inside the box. By 26 July they had flown. My last sighting of swift gatherings flying around the neighbourhood was 1st August - a few days earlier than the previous four years.



Another Lunar Hornet Moth

Mel Eke

Interesting seeing that these stunning and fairly uncommon moths showed up at The Dales (see page 14), as I found one in my back garden in Belstead Road in the Spring and managed to get this photo.



Sooty Blackcap project *Colin Hullis*



How do birds get to fall down chimneys? I was called by a neighbour to help with a small bird that was trapped in their wood burning stove - fortunately summertime so not lit. On opening the stove door the bird instantly flew out and into the room. Landing on a shelf, we could then identify it as a male blackcap, generally a summer migrant warbler from Africa but more frequently has over-wintered here in the UK. After a few abortive attempts to capture it with a net, the bird obligingly flew out of an open window. How it got to fall down a chimney remains a mystery.

Events Diary

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 12th September 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING
'Autumn and the Minsmere Deer Rut' Steve Everett, Wildlife Photographer and RSPB Volunteer. Rushmere St Andrew Church Hall, The Street, Rushmere IP5 1DH. Ample free parking and refreshments included. Group Members £3 Non-Members £5.

Sunday 15th September 10am to 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group SPRING WOOD WORK PARTY
Meet at the field gate at top of bridleway in Kiln Meadow. Park on Marbled White Drive. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481**

Sunday 15th September 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING
Trimley Marshes Suffolk Wildlife Trust Reserve for potential migrants. Meet at Sarsons Farm car park IP11 0UD. TM262355. Timed for 09:55 train from Ipswich, return 13:28 or 14:28. 5-6hrs 5-6miles. **Leader Tim Kenny.**

Saturday 21st September 10am to noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group VOLUNTEER WORK MORNING
All ages welcome, no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For more details of the Group's events, and to check for date changes, please go to: pwcg.onesuffolk.net/ or join our members' Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.**

Tuesday 24th September 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK
Christchurch Park. Meet at Soane Street entrance IP4 2BE. TM165448

Wednesday 25th September 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK
'Autumn and the deer rut at Minsmere'. Join RSPB volunteer Steve Everett for this fascinating talk. Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. Entry £3 includes tea or coffee. There is easy access and the hall has a hearing loop system.



Thursday 26th September 7.30pm Suffolk Bird Group TALK
'Estonia – A Tale Of Two Seasons' A presentation by Gi Grieco at Hintlesham Community Centre, Timperleys, Hintlesham IP8 3PS. Admission: £3, non-members most welcome; full-time students free. **Additional information/queries: Adam Gretton, Tel. 07799 657459**
Adam.gretton@naturallengland.org.uk

OCTOBER

Saturday 5th October 10am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING
Essex Wildlife Trust Wrabness Reserve for waders and wildfowl. Meet at reserve car park CO11 2TD. TM168315. 2-3hrs. 2-3miles. **Leader Stephen Marginson.**

Thursday 10th October 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING
'Jaguars and more - exploring the Brazilian Pantanal' Ian Barthorpe, Minsmere Visitor Experience Officer. Rushmere St Andrew Church Hall, The Street, Rushmere IP5 1DH. Ample free parking and refreshments included. Group Members £3 Non-Members £5.

Thursday 17th October 7.30pm Suffolk Bird Group TALK
'East Anglia's Rivers and Coasts: From River Snorkelling to World Heritage' a presentation by Nicola Crockford, RSPB. Please note venue: Woodbridge Community Hall, Station Road, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 4AU (Joint talk with SWT Woodbridge Group) Admission: £3, non-members most welcome; full-time students free. **Additional information/queries: Adam Gretton, Tel. 07799 657459**
Adam.gretton@naturallengland.org.uk

Sunday 20th October 10am to 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group SPRING WOOD WORK PARTY
Meet at the field gate at top of bridleway in Kiln Meadow. Park on Marbled White Drive. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481**

Sunday 20th October 10am to noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group VOLUNTEER WORK MORNING
All ages welcome, no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For more details of the Group's events, and to check for date changes, please go to: pwcg.onesuffolk.net/ or join our members' Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.**

Tuesday 22nd October 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK
Bourne Park. Meet at Stoke Park Drive car park IP2 8LT. TM152419

Wednesday 23rd October 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK 'Climate Change'. An illustrated talk by Ian Hawker. Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. Entry £3 includes tea or coffee. There is easy access and the hall has a hearing loop system.

NOVEMBER

Saturday 2nd November 10am to 3.30pm IBC Wildlife Team WINTER MEGABASH
Chantry Park. Join the Wildlife Team, Greenways and others for a day of scrub clearing from the Beechwater meadow County Wildlife Site in Chantry Park - hopefully including a bonfire. Meet in the cricket pavilion car park off London Road. **More info from IBC Wildlife Team: 07747475494 or email: wildlife.team@ipswich.gov.uk**

Sunday 10th November 8am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING
Dunwich and Dingle Marshes for late autumn and winter birds. Meet at Dunwich Beach car park IP17 3EN. TM479706. 3-4hrs. 3-4miles. **Leader Tim Kenny.**

Thursday 14th November 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING
'Operation Turtle Dove' Dr Eliza Leat, RSPB Conservation Advisor. Rushmere St Andrew Church Hall, The Street, Rushmere IP5 1DH. Ample free parking and refreshments included. Group Members £3 Non-Members £5.

Saturday 16th November 10am to noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group VOLUNTEER WORK MORNING
All ages welcome, no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For more details of the Group's events, and to check for date changes, please go to: pwcg.onesuffolk.net/ or join our members' Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.**

Sunday 17th November 10am to 3.30pm Greenways Project WINTER MEGABASH
Belstead Brook Park 1. Join Greenways, Ipswich Wildlife Group and others for a day of woodland management in Spring Wood and surrounding reserves. Meet at the field gate entrance to the wood from Kiln Meadow (near Marbled White Drive) – please park in Bobbits Lane car park or considerately on local streets. **More info from Greenways: 07736 826076 or email james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk**



Tuesday 26th November 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK
Rushmere Common. Meet at Heath Road entrance IP4 5SL. TM197445

Wednesday 27th November 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK
'A year in the life of the badger'. Join Adrian Hinchcliffe, from Suffolk Mammal Group for this fascinating talk. Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. Entry £3 includes tea or coffee. There is easy access and the hall has a hearing loop system.

Thursday 28th November Suffolk Bird Group TALK
'Birding in Sichuan, China and The Kruger Challenge, South Africa'. A presentation by Sarah Glyde. Hintlesham Community Centre, Timperleys, Hintlesham IP8 3PS Admission: £3, non-members most welcome; full-time students free. **Additional information/queries: Adam Gretton, Tel. 07799 657459**
Adam.gretton@naturallengland.org.uk

DECEMBER

Saturday 7th December 10am RSPB

Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Shotley Peninsular for winter birds, raptors, waders and wildfowl. Starting at River Orwell continuing to Harkstead & Shotley. Meet at Freston Hill upper layby car park IP9 1AA. TM174400. 3-4hrs. 2-3miles. **Leader Stephen Marginson.**

Wednesday 11th December 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK

The land of the Polar Bear'. Join us for an illustrated talk by Chris Parfitt. Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. Entry £3 includes tea or coffee. There is easy access and the hall has a hearing loop system.

Thursday 12th December 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING

Christmas Social Evening with illustrated talk 'A Winter Walk along the Orwell' by Tim Kenny, Ipswich RSPB Group Leader. Rushmere St Andrew Church Hall, The Street, Rushmere IP5 1DH. Ample free parking and refreshments included. Group Members £3 Non-Members £5.

Saturday 14th December 10am to 3.30pm

Greenways Project WINTER MEGABASH

Belstead Brook Park 2. Join Greenways, the Friends of Belstead Brook Park and others for a day of meadow scrub management at Kiln Meadow Local Nature Reserve. Hopefully including a bonfire! Meet on-site (parking available) by two metal bollards on Bobbits Lane, or park considerately in local streets. **More info from Greenways: 07736 826076 or email: james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk**

Sunday 15th December 10am to 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group SPRING WOOD WORK PARTY

Meet at the field gate at top of bridleway in Kiln Meadow. Park on Marbled White Drive. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481**

Sunday 15th December 10am to noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group VOLUNTEER WORK MORNING

All ages welcome, no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For more details of the Group's events, and to check for date changes, please go to: pwcg.onesuffolk.net/ or join our members' Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.**

Tuesday 17th December 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK

Kiln Meadow and Spring Wood. Meet Marbled White Drive Ipswich IP8 3TL. TM143417

JANUARY

Saturday 18th January 10am to 3.30pm

Greenways Project WINTER MEGABASH

Martlesham Common. Join Greenways and others for a day of heathland scrub clearing on this lovely Local Nature Reserve. May include a bonfire, wind direction permitting. Meet in the Community Centre car park, off Felixstowe Road, Martlesham. **More info from Greenways: 07736 826076 or email james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk**

Regular Events

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH 10am - 1pm SPRING WOOD WORK PARTY

Join Ipswich Wildlife Group for a morning of work in the wood. Meet at the field gate at top of bridleway in Kiln Meadow. Parking in Marbled White Drive. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481**

TUESDAYS 9.30am Greenways CONSERVATION WORK PARTY

The Project's largest weekly work party – carrying out a wide range of practical tasks across the 50 or so sites that we manage. For all Greenways work parties, volunteers need to be registered via a short informal induction prior to joining us – please contact us for further details. Work party runs from 10am to about 4pm. **Contact greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk or call 07736 826076**

WEDNESDAYS 10am Friends of Holywells Park HOLYWELLS PARK WORK PARTY

Join our small team of volunteers doing valuable work around the Park. **Contact Andy Smuk for details 01473 728907**

FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH 7.30pm - 9pm Ipswich Friends of the Earth MEETING - for venue please phone 07931 585672 or see Facebook page www.facebook.com/ipswichFOE/

SECOND THURSDAY OF THE MONTH Friends of The Dales WORK PARTY

Contact Kaye Roberts kayefotdsec@virginmedia.com

THURSDAYS 9.30am 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 7 – 8pm '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 9.30am 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

EVERY FRIDAY 9.30am 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**

FRIDAYS 10am-11.30am Suffolk Wildlife Trust WILD TOTS

Wild play activities for ages 18 months – 5 years old in Holywells Park. **Book online suffolkwildlifetrust.org**

FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am-12pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust NATURE AND NATTER

Location varies. A monthly group for those aged 60+ who enjoy the outdoors. Meet new people whilst doing a different wild activity each month. **Book online suffolkwildlifetrust.org**

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. Usually meeting at Bibb Way alongside Alderman Road recreation ground, but please get in touch to confirm location **More information from James Baker 07736 826076**

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

SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am-12pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust WEEKEND WILDLIFE CLUB

For 6 – 11 years olds. Meet new friends, get outdoors and earn awards. Join us in the beautiful, historic Holywells Park. Each month has a different wild theme. **Book online suffolkwildlifetrust.org**

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: wildipswich.org/fobbp or email fobbp@wildipswich.org**

SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 1pm-3pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust YOUNG WARDENS

For 11-16 year olds in Holywells Park. Looking for practical experience, whilst making friends? If so, Young Wardens is the group for you! **Book online suffolkwildlifetrust.org**

LAST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 11am-1pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust ECO ACTIONISTS

Location varies. A meet-up and creative session for 18-25 year-old eco actionists. **Book online suffolkwildlifetrust.org**

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**

Spring Wood Day 2026

A reminder that Spring Wood Day now takes place every other year - next date will be Monday 4th May 2026.