



# Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership

## Newsletter

### Spring 2015

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# Haverhill SWT Wildlife Group's Bat Box Project

Lorraine Walker, Haverhill Wildlife Group

In August 2014 The Haverhill SWT Wildlife Group started a project to create 40 bat boxes after securing funding for the materials from the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership. HMP Highpoint was very keen to get involved in the production of the boxes, as were The Friends of East Town Park.

The boxes were erected in April at East Town Park with the help of members of Suffolk Bat Group. There were previously no boxes within the Park, although a survey had been carried out during the summer of 2014 and five species of bat were recorded, which included the Soprano and Common Pipistrelle, Serotine, Barbastelle and one of the Myotis bats.

With bat populations decreasing, bat boxes can help secure their future in East Town Park and Haverhill. It is hoped that the installation of the bat boxes will provide new roosting space for these bats and hopefully encourage additional species to roost as well as to forage within the local area.

Bringing awareness to the local community is also high on the agenda with Suffolk Bat Group providing bat walks and educational talks. Bat box checks will be carried out on a regular basis to monitor and record all bats that may be using the boxes. The results will then be submitted to Suffolk Biological Records Centre. This bat box project will also provide the potential for local people to get involved and to see bats close up as well as learn more about these fascinating species.

To bring this stage of the project to a close, a talk on bats has been provided to HMP Highpoint so that they are able to see how the boxes they have created will be put to use and how important the role of bats are to our environment.



1. Bat boxes arrive from HMP Highpoint



2. The Friends of East Town Park making more bat boxes.



3. The group getting ready for action at East Town Park



4. Having decided on the location, the group makes a start on putting up boxes



5. Lorraine siting one of the bat boxes



6. After erecting all 40 bat boxes it's time for home!

## Information for those working on Coastal Defences

### Environment Agency

Sea walls, river walls, flood walls or whatever name given to raised clay embankments that have been built to defend coastal areas from tidal flooding, are a fantastic habitat for a great number of species. In Suffolk there are around 200km of coastal embankment providing a near unbroken corridor of unimproved grassland habitat. Sea walls represent a narrow strip of transitional habitat ranging from saline on one side to terrestrial and freshwater on the other and support a range of specialist wildlife species many of which can be found nowhere else.

The narrow mouthed whorl snail *Vertigo angustior* is one such rare and protected species that has a restricted range with notable populations on walls in some Suffolk estuaries and the aptly named Wall Brown butterfly *Lasiommata megera* which has suffered significant decline in recent decades seems to be holding on at a few locations along our coast.

In addition to a number of coastal specialist plants and invertebrates, reptiles, grassland birds and small mammals will also make their home on our sea walls.

For the most part it is the responsibility of Environment Agency to manage the condition of these walls and maintain their flood defence function. However, in some circumstances landowners and local communities carry out works themselves. When undertaking any sea wall work, whether it is routine maintenance or major rebuilding it is essential to consider impact on wildlife. It also necessary to have written consent from the Environment Agency and, in some cases Natural England, before work can begin.

Following a number of incidents over the past year where works had been proposed with inadequate consideration or even awareness of significant ecological constraints, staff at EA have put together a factsheet to help project managers, engineers, contractors and landowners.

The factsheet identifies ecological features likely to be the most significant and the potential impact that construction work can have. It also suggests possible measures to reduce this impact. Information about the consenting process is also included, who does what, relevant legislation and consequences of getting it wrong.

The Environment Agency have been working on changes to their own routine maintenance schedules in order to accommodate wildlife interest. Simple changes to timing of works or introducing rotational grass cutting can have major benefits to wildlife.

A sea wall biodiversity handbook is also currently being produced by EA in collaboration with RPS consultants and hosted by Essex Field Club. This full-sized volume will include detailed background information, research, management appraisals and monitoring techniques.

The factsheet can be downloaded at:

<http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/Projects--Partnerships/works-on-sea-walls-ecological-factsheet-SUFFOLK.pdf>

Further information can be obtained directly from EA, contact: [ANGEASTFRB@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:ANGEASTFRB@environment-agency.gov.uk)



## Little Tern Project

Jesse Timberlake, RSPB

As April turns to May the winds whipping off the North Sea start to die down, the coasts and heaths become a little more inviting for a morning stroll, and fences start popping up on your favourite beach. All this can only mean one thing; the imminent arrival of Suffolk's little terns.



Little tern chicks.

Photo: Jesse Timberlake, RSPB

These amazing little birds (a fully grown adult weighing in at only 70 grams) travel from West Africa each year to nest on the beaches of the British Isles, and of course here in Suffolk. The little tern, or *Sternula albifrons* (the Latin referring to the white on their forehead), is one of the 'sea' tern species, which are pale grey and white with a black cap during the breeding season.

Last year they had their most successful breeding season since 2008 in Suffolk, with 18 fledglings starting their long migration back to West Africa at the end of August. Although this number may not sound impressive, you have to remember that the plight of the little tern in Suffolk has been bleak.

In the last two decades their numbers have plummeted by 90%, and the breeding colonies of these ground nesting shorebirds have been reduced to a small handful scattered along the coast from Lowestoft to Felixstowe. In the rest of the UK, their numbers are at around 1,482 breeding pairs according to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. Already one of Britain's rarest seabirds, the little tern is facing many tough obstacles to successfully breed in this county.

The Suffolk Little Tern Project, funded by EU LIFE, involves many partner organisations including the National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and the local councils. Last year we were fortunate to have three full-time wardens working up and down the Suffolk coast during the breeding season. Our work focussed on enhanced management at breeding sites, monitoring nesting little terns, and engaging with the public to increase awareness and support for this threatened ground-nesting bird.

The most productive site was at the Pakefield to Easton Bavents SSSI, where a total of 12 nests successfully hatched, with 15 fledglings eventually recorded, giving a productivity estimate of 1.25 chicks fledged per pair, and a mean clutch size of 1.95 eggs per nest.

Going into 2015, we have learnt much from the previous season, and are optimistic that we can improve upon their productivity at the different sites. Look out this year for little tern 'decoys', painted, plaster tern models that we hope will entice migrating terns to nest in fenced and protected areas.

Last year was the first attempt to colour-ring both adult and juvenile little terns in East Anglia, with many successfully ringed from the Norfolk colonies. This year we will be looking out to see if any of these ringed birds return to their original colony or whether they appear at other locations, giving us important information on their dispersal and breeding habits. You can help us by keeping your eyes peeled for little terns and reporting if you see any colour ringed little terns in Suffolk this summer. These birds are protected as a Schedule 1 species, so please note it is an offence to disturb little terns, their eggs, or their young while on or near a nest. For more information on the EU LIFE + Nature Little Tern Recovery Project please go to [www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/projects/details/370840-little-tern-recovery-project](http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/projects/details/370840-little-tern-recovery-project)

Our wardens cannot be everywhere at once, so information from the public will help us to protect these rare shorebirds. Please report any sightings of little terns along the Suffolk coast to Jesse Timberlake at: Email: [jesse.timberlake@rspb.org.uk](mailto:jesse.timberlake@rspb.org.uk)

Mobile, call or text: 07718 579107



Fenced colony. Photo: Jesse Timberlake RSPB

## Possible new Biosecurity Measures to combat Freshwater Invasive Non-native Species

Adrian Chalkley, County Recorder Freshwater Invertebrates

It is well known that the threat from freshwater invasive non-native species (FINNS) to the biodiversity of our native flora and fauna is both serious and likely to increase. Long established problem species like Mink have been augmented by newer invasions from plants such as Giant Hogweed or Himalayan Balsam or animals like Zebra Mussels and Killer Shrimp, and the list of these new threats seems to get ever longer.

The problem with the newer threats lies not only with their natural spread through the waterways but also with the ease by which they can be spread unknowingly by a host of human vectors. Sailors, Canoeists, Anglers, Gardeners, Farmers, Water Companies etc. can all spread both flora and fauna as tiny plant fragments or immature individual animals in small crevices in clothing such as their boots or in equipment like paddles, boat hulls or tyres. And, yes, us naturalists contribute to the problems with our nets, waders etc. etc.

Hence the standard biosecurity procedure which is hopefully followed by all people in 'risky' pastimes is Check, Clean, Dry. So on finishing sampling at a site I will check my nets, boots etc. and clean them with water from that site. On return home cleaning some more if necessary before drying them all, outdoors in the sunshine if possible, minimises the risk I hope. However those reading this who may possibly spread invasives because of their pastimes may be interested in reading a new paper which explores how effective hot water is at killing invasive species hitching a ride on our equipment. The paper by Lucy Anderson and her colleagues finds that the use of hot water at only 45<sup>0</sup> C for 15 minutes in the 'Clean' stage of the national Check Clean Dry biosecurity awareness campaign would greatly enhance biosecurity efforts. The hot water caused 99% mortality across all tested species. I just measured the water from our hot tap at 48<sup>0</sup> C, heated for free by electricity from our solar panels, so this looks like an extra biosecurity measure I will be using this summer on my equipment.

The paper is freely downloadable with open access at: <http://t.co/k2OUFsPoQQ> and I'd recommend it to all water users. Adrian Chalkley - email: [aquatics@sns.org.uk](mailto:aquatics@sns.org.uk)

## Construction of New Turf Ponds at Oulton Marshes Increases Biodiversity

Adrian Chalkley, County Recorder Freshwater Invertebrates

Turf Ponds are shallow pools created by stripping off the top layer of turf and peat from fens and other marshy areas, rather like scrapes. There are many records of their creation on a small scale in Victorian times, especially in the Broads. The areas where they were dug now tend, botanically, to be the most species rich areas. Turf Ponds re-created by the Broads Authority since 1983 indicate that, once they are left to recolonise, these shallow peat diggings could still be a valuable method of providing a richly improved, diverse fen vegetation.

The SWT Reserve at Oulton Marshes has a history of turf pond digging and in 2011 a grant from the Million Ponds Project through Biffaward provided for the creation of four experimental turf ponds. Monitoring of the earlier Broads Authority ponds had only been concerned with botanical surveying and so in September 2012, I was invited to have a brief look at the invertebrate colonisation of the year old ponds. The results were good enough to prompt both the digging of six more ponds and a more methodical survey of the site.

So during 2013 and 2014 twenty one sites across the reserve were sampled, comprising the four original turf ponds described above, six more dug at the end of 2013, two older ponds in the middle of the reserve and nine sections of drainage dykes. The methodology followed Natural England's ISIS handbook. Almost 1000 records were made comprising 174 distinct invertebrates, belonging to 19 orders of which 5 species were new county records.



Turf pond just dug



The same pond 1 year later

The results show that of the 174 species recorded:

- ◆ Only 61 species (35%) were found solely within the dykes sampled.
- ◆ 34 species (20%) were only recorded from the new turf ponds, indicating that the construction of the turf ponds has provided additional habitat niches which these freshwater invertebrates have utilised.
- ◆ Of course 75 species (43%) were recorded from all habitats, for these the new diggings have simply increased suitable habitat availability.
- ◆ An earlier survey from 2010, carried out just after the reserve was acquired by the Trust, found 38 species in the dykes compared to 136 recorded in 2014.

So the construction of the turf ponds provided new habitat which some existing invertebrates were quickly able to occupy but was distinct enough to provide a niche for additional species. The invertebrate communities in the turf ponds would seem to be recruited only in part by dispersal from nearby dykes or from across the reserve in general, the remainder having arrived from elsewhere, that is from outside the reserve.



*Hydaticus transversalis* - a new beetle record for Suffolk

The biodiversity of the site has therefore been increased by the provision of the Turf Ponds. Comparison with the species list provided by the earlier 2010 survey does of course, show that on-going management by Matt Gooch and his team has also increased biodiversity.



*Agraylea sexmaculata* - a micro caddis larva. Another new county record.  
Photo: Adrian Chalkley

An analysis tool called the Community Conservation Index developed by the Environment Agency was applied to the results of the 2010 survey and to the results of all 21 sites surveyed in 2013 – 2014. CCI results categorise sites in terms of the conservation value of their freshwater invertebrate community, based both on water quality and the rarity of the individual species. In 2010 all sites were of only moderate conservation value. However in 2013-14 all 21 sites exceeded moderate; 4 were fairly high and 9 were rated as high. 4 turf ponds and 4 dykes were rated as of very high conservation value which equates to the rating an SSSI should achieve.

Maintaining the more diverse invertebrate community of the turf ponds may well mean a management strategy which monitors the speed of succession, then implements a programme of digging new turf ponds at intervals. These original turf ponds will gradually be subsumed into the general marsh, providing an area of improved, diverse fen vegetation. Future turf ponds would then provide dispersal sites for those invertebrate species requiring the shallow, open habitat which such ponds have provided for the 34 additional species mentioned above. Whatever future program is decided upon it is clear that these new wetland habitats and also the general management of the last 5 years has increased both the biodiversity and conservation value of the reserve. Comparing the analysis results with other sites in the county shows that Oulton Marshes, part of the Suffolk Broads, surely ranks amongst the best freshwater habitats in Suffolk.

Adrian Chalkley email: [aquatics@sns.org.uk](mailto:aquatics@sns.org.uk)

## Water Vole survey

### People's Trust for Endangered Species

The People's Trust for Endangered Species is launching the first [National Water Vole Monitoring Programme \(NWVMP\)](#) across Britain to establish where water voles remain and how many there are. The knowledge gained will guide our best conservation efforts. Anyone can take part to help water voles- no experience is required but you will need to learn how to identify field signs. There are nearly 900 locations across England, Wales and Scotland for you to choose from to survey once each May. [Take part today!](#)

## Suffolk Wader Strategy

### RSPB Minsmere

In March, the RSPB hosted an important conference on the future of Suffolk's waders. The launch of the Suffolk Wader Strategy was a collaborative event, organised by the RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Natural England, and bringing together land managers from across East Anglia to identify ways to improve breeding productivity for wading birds in Suffolk.

The Strategy's key aims are to encourage waders to nest at more sites around the county, with less dependence on nature reserves and a few successful HLS schemes, and to improve productivity within existing sites.

By sharing information between partners it is hoped to identify priority sites where wader-friendly management can be encouraged and partnership working promoted.

One of the limiting factors for the breeding success of waders such as lapwing, avocet, snipe and redshank is maintaining a suitable sward height during the spring. Another is predation, and Dr Jen Smart, from the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science, explained that



Lapwing

Photo: Chris Gomersall

predator exclusion, through fencing to keep out foxes and badgers, is more effective than control.

The workshop also highlighted examples of recent successful management for breeding waders, including RSPB Hollesley Marshes and sites managed in partnership around the Norfolk Broads.

For more information about the Suffolk Wader Strategy, contact Ben McFarland at RSPB Minsmere on 01728 648085 or email [ben.mcfarland@rspb.org.uk](mailto:ben.mcfarland@rspb.org.uk)

# Seasearch East marine and brackish water species colonisation project

Dawn Watson, Seasearch East

Seasearch East has been working with Herriot Watt University and the Natural History Museum (NHM) on a research project to find the order in which species first colonise marine and brackish water sites in East Anglia, and which survive long term. Clean surfaces are colonised by a succession of species, many of which are overwhelmed by others over time.

A successful pilot experiment used some DIY plates held in place with fishing lead and empty drinks bottles in the Blackwater estuary and on shallow wrecks around Sheringham in 2014. The program has now expanded to cover three sites around Orford Ness National Trust reserve and a further site adjacent to a *Sabellaria* reef in the Wash, assisted by the local Association of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA).

The project uses squares of black Perspex, 6" x 6" and places them in the sea, or in areas of brackish water. The changing populations can then be observed and recorded photographically over time. This work is undertaken by members of Seasearch, a local volunteer dive survey team, who regularly monitor the colonisation plates.

The arrays holding the plates in position were made from a selection of building materials found on the reserve - air bricks make ideal weights, sliced up drainage pipes make nice visible floats and blue water pipe is neutrally buoyant and makes a really good framework. Possibly too good, as the bryozoan crusts prefer it to the perspex! National Trust volunteers made up the arrays and helped to place them. Members of Seasearch currently go across once a month to the Ness to photograph and record growth on the plates, but soon the volunteers will be able to do that too.

Once the plates appear to have reached the same state of growth as their surroundings, they will be removed, dried and fed into an electron microscope at the NHM

to record hard encrusting species, such as bryozoans, which are otherwise very hard to identify.

The Orford Ness plates have been in place since December 2014 and are just beginning to show signs of growth in early May. Several plates have been placed at different depths around the ferry pontoons, an area known to have high biodiversity. All are just starting to show delicate patterns of growth, but one array directly beneath the walkway is already completely festooned with the pink 'flowers' of the oaten pipe hydroid - a relative of jellyfish and anemones. Although these grow naturally on the pontoons, they are usually quite sparse and very small, suggesting that they are generally held in check by competition.

This is a system that could be used to record underwater succession and growth rates in most situations where a volunteer with a camera is available. Almost all the plates on Orford Ness can be accessed from the shore or pontoon and the only cost involved was for the Perspex itself.



The team monitoring the colonisation plates on Orford Ness jetty



Saline lagoon plate array, showing materials used and position of bryozoan colony on the underside



Colonisation plate completely covered in the hydroid known as Oaten pipes.



Very tiny hydroid colony possibly *Clytia hemisphaerica* (and orange anemone - *Diadumene cincta*) colonising a plate.



## A tree-mendous Day on the Gipping

Naomi Boyle, Environment Agency

Members of the Environment Agency's Suffolk Flood and Coastal Risk Management and Fisheries Biodiversity and Geomorphology Team carried out tree planting on some of our land along the River Gipping in Ipswich between the Handford Road Bridge and Norwich Railway crossing.

We previously consulted with the Gipping Angling Preservation Society (GAPS) and the Greenways Countryside Project about the planting locations so as not to compromise good angling locations or areas of existing good habitat for invertebrates and reptiles.

Approximately 70 native trees and shrubs were planted including Alder, White willow, Goat willow, Hawthorn, Crack willow, Black poplar, Buckthorn, Spindle, Dogwood and Hazel.

The benefits of planting trees alongside watercourses are numerous; they provide valuable shade which helps to keep the water cool, this is especially important for fish such as brown trout which are vulnerable to high water temperatures. The provision of shade is also useful in controlling excessive growth of some plant species such as Bur reed which can become a problem in some watercourses.

Tree roots are also important in helping to stabilise banks and provide excellent in-stream habitat for fish. Insects falling from the canopy provide a source of food for fish and accumulated leaf litter is an important food reserve for some macro-invertebrates. Overhanging branches and falling limbs can provide valuable habitat and can help with morphological diversity by varying the flow and shape of the channel, which in turn creates habitat for many species of plants, invertebrates and fish.

Under the Water Framework Directive (a piece of European legislation looking to improve the quality of our waterways) the River Gipping is classified as a heavily modified waterbody for the purpose of flood protection. It is currently at poor ecological potential. In order to achieve good potential by 2027 we will have to address issues relating to water quality and flow as well as improving floodplain connectivity, increasing in-channel morphological diversity and enabling fish passage.

The planting of trees at this location will help to improve the river's ecology as well as adding to the visual character of the area.



Tree planting in action



Members of the EA's Flood & Coastal Risk Management and Fisheries, Biodiversity & Geomorphology Teams at the end of a successful day.

## Swift Progress at Worlington

Judith Wakelam

Worlington is a small village in West Suffolk South West of Mildenhall. It has a population of approximately 550, no shop and no school, but it does have something that is fast becoming the envy of other villages. A thriving population of swifts, a sight that is becoming all too rare in our towns and villages and it's all thanks to a dedicated group of swift enthusiasts.

I have lived in the village since the 1980s and every year in late April a flint and pantiled cottage in Church Lane, close to my home, had attracted my attention as I awaited the arrival of the first swift to return from Africa to breed under its roof. This event for me has always represented the first day of my summer even

though it is technically spring. I have a particular interest in the species as I have been rehabilitating young and injured swifts since 2002 and I confess to being totally besotted with them.

In 2008 I was shocked to see a demolition application appear on the cottage and immediately began a search for help and advice in order to prevent Church Lane from losing these precious birds.

After much searching I came across a small group of people who at that time went under the guise of "*Concern for Swifts*". I am now very pleased to be a part of the group, now called "*Action for Swifts*" (AfS). I learnt that they had installed swift nest-boxes in St Mary's Church in Ely, resulting in a very successful breeding colony, so I contacted them to see if it would be possible to do the same in Worlington's All Saints Church.

After inspecting the tower with its louvred windows, they thought it could possibly work. Permission was granted and in February 2009 ten boxes were installed in the tower behind the louvres. A CD of swift calls was played at intervals from a small pair of speakers from 06.00 to 21.00, to attract the birds. This is just loud enough for the swifts

to hear, but not loud enough to annoy any neighbours. (The sound system has since been upgraded).

When AfS inspected the boxes in September 2010 for any signs of interest we were amazed to find an adult swift with two well-grown chicks in one of the boxes. I don't think we could have been more elated had we had a large lottery win. Since then the number of breeding pairs has increased year on year and more boxes have been added. The latest box check in 2014 revealed an almost 100% increase on the previous year with the total number of breeding pairs having risen to twenty.



Swifts around All Saints Church, Worlington



A swift entering one of the boxes behind a church louvre

Dick Newell, the leading light of AfS, had suggested putting cameras in a couple of boxes with television screens in the rear of the church, enabling the progress of the breeding birds to be viewed. This has proved to be very popular. In 2013 we hosted an evening “Swift Festival” inviting anyone that might be interested to see what had been achieved, and observe the swifts in their nest-boxes and wheeling around the 13<sup>th</sup> century church tower.

It was a lovely summers evening and the swifts performed beautifully and in large numbers. The event was far more successful than we could have imagined, attracting close to 200 people. We have had numerous requests to repeat the event so we are hosting another swift evening this year on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July. More cameras will have been added by then and it is hoped we will once again be able to observe the swift’s behaviour in the nest boxes.



Swift leaving my nest box

Edward Mayer of “Swift Conservation” London, an inspirational speaker, will update us on the projects going on around the country and the sterling work being done to help conserve our swifts. Dick Newell will also speak on the various closer to home projects, and the progress that AfS is making.

Several households in both Worlington and Freckenham have now put up nest boxes of various designs but not nearly enough, we need more of you to do so, please! Swifts are losing nest sites each year due to renovations and demolitions and need all the help we can give them. Speaking to people I have found a number who would love to put up boxes but there seems to be a shortage of people to actually install them. Not everyone is keen to climb a ladder! Any volunteers on that front would be most welcome.

I would love to see swift accommodation compulsory on all suitable new buildings. Several councils around the country have taken this on board and installed various types of swift bricks with great success, Cambridge City Council and South Cambs District Council being good examples of what can be achieved. I very much hope that my own council will in the future make recommendations to builders to incorporate nest boxes in new builds and to protect existing colonies.



Two young swifts getting ready to leave my box

Nearby Herringswell Church has installed boxes as has the village of Beyton, nearer to Bury St Edmunds, but we have yet to see results. Sometimes it can take a few years to get the first pair of swifts breeding. I’m very much hoping other Churches will follow suit.

AfS have tried several experimental nest boxes including a pipe box, two of which can be seen in Church Lane. Both of these have been inhabited by sparrows; another species in trouble, but one of them in its third year of being installed has attracted a pair of swifts and it is hoped they will return this year to breed.

Another of AfS experimental boxes, with a double layered roof to prevent overheating, was erected on the south facing gable end of my own bungalow in Church Lane on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2013. Much to my amazement, I saw a swift enter the box on 12<sup>th</sup> June, only 25 days later, which resulted in a successful rearing of two chicks.

The following year 2014 I had a camera installed and a television placed in my kitchen so I could observe and record what went on. Much to my delight, the pair returned and reared a further two chicks. This resulted in little work being done and hours of swift viewing. I have been able to record a lot of data and hope to be able to compare notes in 2015. I now have a further three permanent boxes built into the gable end and am hoping to have them occupied in 2015.

Examples of all of these projects can be seen on both the AfS blog and Swift Conservation website <http://actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk/> and <http://www.swift-conservation.org/>

**Do please come along to our “Swift Festival” on 17<sup>th</sup> July!** We would love to see you and hope the evening will enthruse you all enough to go home and start your own swift colony or at very least put up a swift nest box. John Stimpson from Wilburton will be with us on the evening with a varied selection of bird boxes including swift boxes for sale. We look forward to welcoming you to Worlington.

[See p. 23 to find out about the Suffolk Swift Survey >](#)

## Narrow mouthed whorl snail on the Suffolk coast

Rosie Jackson, Abrehart Ecology

A series of surveys have been undertaken on the coast of Suffolk to determine any changes in the distribution or population size of Narrow-mouthed whorl snail *Vertigo angustior* in response to the tidal surge and flooding events of winter 2013/14.

Narrow-mouthed whorl snail is a tiny pulmonate member of the Vertiginidae family. This minute snail is a litter-dwelling species found in the UK in marshy habitats with high, stable humidity which may be periodically flooded. In Suffolk, the snail is distributed within coastal habitats such as grassy transition zones along the upper edge of saltmarsh and seawalls, and within coastal grazing marshes. The snail is regarded as threatened across Europe and is protected under the European Habitats Directive (Annex II). The snail is included in the latest Suffolk’s Biodiversity Action Plan Species and Habitats list.

A series of surveys were undertaken in May, November and December 2014 in a selection of coastal locations previously known to support populations of the snail. Using comparable sampling strategies to those used in previous surveys in 2002-2011, several sites on the Deben, Alde-Ore and Blyth Estuaries were surveyed for

narrow-mouthed whorl snail using a standard recording technique.

Comparison of the survey results with data from the surveys prior to the flooding events of winter 2013/14, revealed changes in the distribution and density of the snail at the sites over the time period. At two sites on the Deben Estuary, the surveys indicated reductions in population sizes of 60% and 92% from 2010-2014 and similar scale reductions in the area of suitable habitat for the snail.



Near to Chillesford, at the edge of the Butley Creek branch of the Alde-Ore Estuary, there was barely a remnant of the previously healthy population at the investigated sites found in 2008.

On the other hand, along the southern edge of the Blyth Estuary, a healthy population of narrow-mouthed whorl snail was recorded in the transitional grassland where they were previously found in 2002. Interestingly, at this site the snail was recorded higher up the transition zone and further from the edge of the saltmarsh.

Despite a lack of more consistent monitoring of the populations of narrow-mouthed whorl snail on the Suffolk coast, this brief investigation indicated changes

in the size and distribution of populations. There were reductions in populations within transitional grassland habitats particularly at the lower elevations, which suggests that the snail has been affected by the increasing frequency and magnitude of inundation.

This little snail cannot claim to be an ecosystem engineer or provide our coastlines with notable and quantifiable ecosystem services. However, it is part of fragile ecosystems on the Suffolk coastlines which are under pressure from rising sea levels and, in many places, a lack of adjacent habitat in which to take refuge. Work is on-going to establish the presence and extent of populations in estuary 'hinterland' which may become suitable for the snail in the future.



## Yellow-striped Bear Spider found at Orford Ness

Duncan Allen

The Priority Species Yellow-striped Bear Spider *Arctosa fulvolineata* was found during a survey on Havergate Island in May 2013. During a night search, a single female was found on exposed shingle on the eastern shore of the island. The species is a saltmarsh specialist and has been recorded from Hampshire, north Kent, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.



Yellow-striped bear spider.  
Photo: Duncan Allen

## Suffolk Bat Group wins Greenest County Highly Commended Award

Sue Hooton, Suffolk Bat Group



Some of you will remember that Suffolk Bat Group (SBG) was nominated “in secret” for the Landscape & Biodiversity category of the Creating the Greenest County Awards and we knew nothing about this until I was told we’d been shortlisted for our work !

We were invited to send 4 people to the Awards ceremony at Snape Maltings on 15th April and asked to help make a short 3 min video about SBG for an audience to watch before the winner was announced. Lots hit the editing floor including Arthur’s tale about a bucket full of bats! We hope to add the video to the SBG website soon for everyone to watch.

Unfortunately SBG lost out to Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project (well done them!) at the CGC awards ceremony BUT we bagged a photo of Arthur, Dennis, Anne and myself with guest speaker and BCT President Chris Packham!

We also got a special mention from the judges and a Highly Commended certificate is on its way so we didn’t really feel like losers after all. I was very glad I didn’t have to make a speech and it was all great publicity for bats!

Check out the Greenest County Awards on [www.greensuffolk.org/awards2015](http://www.greensuffolk.org/awards2015)



Left to right: Sue Hooton, Chris Packham, Arthur Rivett and Anne and Dennis Kell



## Identify and Record Shield Bugs App

Field Studies Council

There is a new Field Studies Council app to identify and record shield bugs which sends records direct to iRECORD. It is compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. The app has been developed with Invertebrate Challenge funding. It is available on [i-Tunes >](#)

## Minsmere's Adder Trail

RSPB Minsmere



Adder, March 2014

Photo: Sue Stephenson-Martin

In recent springs adders have become a popular attraction at RSPB Minsmere. This year, to make watching them easier and minimise disturbance to the adders, a temporary dedicated adder viewing area has been established.

The Minsmere Adder Trail is located midway between Bittern Hide and Island Mere, in an area close to a known adder hibernacula. Temporary interpretation has been provided with tips on how to spot adders more easily, and RSPB volunteers are often in attendance.

Two adder watching training courses were run by experienced adder surveyors to give the volunteer guides more confidence and knowledge for talking to visitors about adders. Four reptile guided walks were also advertised for the public – and proved very popular.

On sunny days in March the adders were easy to locate, with the aid of binoculars and the

guides, basking under low thorn bushes. As courtship began in April, they became even more visible, if a little less predictable, as they engaged in their impressive courtship dances. The adder trail has proved to be a big hit with visitors, many of whom have reported seeing adders for the first time. Many have been able to take good photos too. The trail will remain open during the spring, until the adder courtship season has finished.

## Scattered Orchard Project in the AONBs

Emma Black, Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB

The Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast and Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) have received funding from the Sustainable Development Fund and Amenity and Access Fund to set up a scattered orchard project. The overall aim of this scheme is to invest in the future landscape of each Parish by re-instating traditional fruit trees, in particular the rare Suffolk / Essex varieties.

This will not only enrich the biodiversity of the area, but will provide opportunities for future generations of foragers to enjoy the harvest from these trees as well as enabling us to engage with the local communities in each AONB parish on a more regular basis.

Suffolk and Essex once had many traditional orchards. Local varieties are now becoming scarce and orchards are disappearing from the landscape and being replaced with a modern viticulture style of fruit growing which has limited benefit to wildlife.

Planting small clumps of traditional fruits and nuts in publicly accessible land means local people can benefit from the trees from enjoying seeing the blossom in the spring to eating their fruit / nuts in the autumn. These trees will also provide habitats for a wide variety of wildlife. This Project will bring villagers together on a local community project on their doorstep which will be there for future generations to enjoy.

We will be contacting all parish councils, village hall committees, allotment associations, schools and churches to find out if they would like to plant 5 fruit or nut trees on their sites. We will then consult the Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group regarding local fruit tree varieties.

Site visits will be undertaken to assess the best locations for planting and local people encouraged to be involved. Articles will be published in local Parish Magazines to call for help and posters put up to promote the scheme. Tree wardens will also be contacted to help with the organisation and tree planting. The main activity will be the tree planting which will be done by local people with support from the AONB Volunteers.

If you would like to know more about this project, be involved or know of a suitable site please contact:

Emma Black, Dedham Vale AONB: [emma.black@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:emma.black@suffolk.gov.uk) or Neil Lister, Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB: [neil.lister@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:neil.lister@suffolk.gov.uk)

## Hedgehog Surveys

Suffolk Wildlife Trust



**As you may have seen, hedgehogs are waking up and at the Trust we are gearing up for another year of action for hedgehogs in our towns and countryside.** Our 2014 campaign to record hedgehog sightings was one of the largest localised hedgehog surveys in the country - with more than 8000 records submitted. We are looking to build on this in 2015.

Of particular importance this year is information about road kills. Last year survey participants recorded more than 1300 hedgehog road kills in Suffolk alone – this is significantly higher than was previously thought. By continuing to collect this information in 2015 and beyond we can begin to see if there are hot spots for road deaths, both in terms of the time of year and location, and if high road kill numbers represent strong populations near to where they are recorded.

We also need to continue to collect live sightings of hedgehogs. When you come to log your live sightings on our website you only need tell us the earliest date you saw the hedgehog (an approximation is fine). You do not need to record every sighting if you are regularly seeing them in the same place – although another record at the end of the season with a summary of activity would be useful.

Alongside the survey we will be looking at areas of the county that have recorded good numbers to direct on the ground conservation advice to communities and individuals. We know joined up landscapes are better for hedgehogs – so simply creating a small hole under a fence or leaving plenty of nesting material in your garden really can make all the difference. Take a look at the advice on our website to help make your garden and local green spaces more hedgehog friendly.

To record a hedgehog sighting please visit [suffolkwildlifetrust.org/hedgehogs](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org/hedgehogs). If you are unable to log your sighting online, please call us on 01473 890089 and we will be happy to take the details for you.



## Site Management at Orford Castle Pit CGS

Caroline Markham, GeoSuffolk

The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has a varied and often unique geodiversity, and GeoSuffolk has designated 18 County Geodiversity Sites (CGS), all with public access, within the AONB (there are also 25 geological SSSIs). Many of the exposures are in active marine cliffs, but 6 of the CGS are disused crag pits and these require some management as faces degrade and talus builds up over the years. This winter GeoSuffolk, with SCH AONB volunteers, refreshed the Coralline Crag pit at Orford Castle. Permission was needed from English Heritage because Orford Castle and its associated earthworks is a Scheduled National Monument and this took some doing as the documents had to go all the way up to the Secretary of State, but with EH's help we achieved it with 36 hours to spare!

The work was undertaken on November 6th, a beautiful sunny day, and 16 volunteers assembled at the Castle at 9.30am with spades and rakes to tackle the vegetated talus build-up in the Coralline Crag pit south of the Castle. Work was undertaken along a section of the quarry face, exhuming several small and overgrown exposures. By the end of the day, a 3m Coralline Crag face, displaying some large scale current bedding structures in the creamy-yellow limestone, had reappeared from its accumulated debris and vegetation. Thank you SCH AONB volunteers!

Coralline Crag is unique to Suffolk - it is a 4 million year old limestone and the upper bed, locally known as the 'rock bed' has been used as a building

stone in the past. Coralline Crag is used in the fabric of Orford Castle and it is likely that it was sourced in the pit, also the well in the Castle basement would have been dug through this rock to access the water table held up on top of the London Clay at depth. Thus the refreshed sections of the pit will help interpret the building and its site as

well as providing a most attractive addition to the area by the earthworks.

This site management day was so successful that, at its Committee meeting in March 2015, GeoSuffolk made the decision to upgrade the official condition status of this CGS from GOOD STEADY to GOOD IMPROVING. English Heritage has been notified and also Suffolk County Council for its Defra Single Data List 160 record.



Orford Castle Pit 1  
Photo: Caroline Markham



Orford Castle Pit 2  
Photo: Caroline Markham

# Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project—Report for 2014

Steve Piotrowski and Alex Hillier

Note: This is an extract from the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project Report for 2014. The full paper can be read online: <http://www.sogonline.org.uk/scbop-report-for-2014/>

## Summary

Suffolk's Barn Owls had declined to around 51-95 pairs at the turn of the Millennium and was therefore designated as a Suffolk Character or Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species. An ambitious project was launched by Suffolk Ornithologists Group (SOG) and LBAP targets were set to achieve both a significant increase in the range and population of Barn Owls in Suffolk. The Results show that all targets were exceeded.

## Introduction and Background

### The Problem

The Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) has long been a familiar and much-loved Suffolk bird and country folk, especially those living in more rural areas, often still refer to it as the "white owl" or "screech owl". Suffolk's breeding population was estimated to be around 345 pairs in 1932, but by 1985 its numbers had dropped by 57% (Shawyer 1998). This dramatic dip in the population was largely due to the loss of grassland, which resulted in a corresponding loss of feeding opportunities. Nesting sites too were becoming few and far between as old mature trees were removed as a result of Dutch Elm disease and, in some cases, as a preventative measure to prevent crops being shaded. And many old farm buildings, which were formerly used for nest sites, were demolished or converted to houses and offices. A survey of raptors and owls completed from 1995-1998 revealed that the Barn Owl population had declined further to around 51-95 pairs (Wright 2001). The Barn Owl was designated as a Local Biodiversity Action Plan Species (LBAP) in an attempt to halt the decline in Suffolk and manage a significant recovery in Barn Owl range and population.

### The Two-part Solution

#### 1 Agricultural changes aid partial recovery

To sustain good Barn Owl numbers there must be enough prey, year round. Field or Short-tailed Voles (*Microtus agrestis*) need a particular type of habitat - rough, tussocky grass that they can move through in tunnels and that provides their own source of food and nesting habitat. This habitat, in close proximity to a suitable nesting site, provides the ideal conditions for the owls to breed successfully.

Set-aside was introduced by the EU in 1988, a scheme that was to become compulsory in 1992. Its aim was to help reduce the large and costly surpluses produced in Europe under the guaranteed price system of the Common Agricultural Policy. Although environmental benefits were not its principal objective, it did help with the recovery of the Barn Owl as feeding opportunities increased when new large areas of grassland (as set-aside) became available. Their cause was further helped by the introduction of agri-environment schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (1987) and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (1991).

Both schemes were superseded by Environmental Stewardship in 2005 and this year will change to a new scheme again under the heading of Countryside Stewardship! There is provision within these schemes for payments to farmers who are willing to establish grassland habitats by way of grass margins at field edges, rough grassland in awkward field corners and scrub management. Such habitats are ideal for small mammals; in particular Short-tailed Voles.

## **2 Nest site provision completes the recovery**

With more feeding opportunities becoming available it was time to look at the other ingredient to help re-establish a sustainable breeding population. That was the provision of nesting opportunities. The project decided to install specially designed Barn Owl nest boxes. Initially, our ambitions were quite modest as it was planned to install only 90 specially-designed nest boxes during the period 2006-2011. However, the willingness and enthusiasm of landowners and of the general public was vastly underestimated and, by the end of the project's first year, around 250 boxes had been either fixed or inherited. Boxes were built using sustainable timber and the work contracted to a local charity (Special Objectives for the Local Disabled – SOLD), providing work for disabled people and later to a local prison. The boxes were installed by professional tree surgeons. By the start of this 2015 monitoring season the project was monitoring 1,698 boxes, mostly in Suffolk and a few just across the county borders in Norfolk and Essex. Sites hosting good feeding opportunities for Barn Owls were chosen such as nature reserves, farmland and community spaces like village greens and school grounds. By providing a connected network of good habitat and nest sites we can give them the fighting chance they need to thrive.

The Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan targets set in August 2007 were as follows:

By 2010, the Barn Owl's range should be consolidated with densities increased in NE Suffolk. Its range should expand from its current tenuous footholds away from coastal regions. The county's Barn Owl breeding population should be consolidated and increased to around 250 pairs in association with the anticipated range.

By 2015, the Barn Owl's range should be further consolidated and densities increased throughout East Suffolk and parts of West Suffolk (e.g. Breckland) with all suitable habitats being utilised by breeding pairs. The county's Barn Owl breeding population should be consolidated and increased to around 300 pairs in association with the anticipated range expansion as detailed above.

By 2020, the Barn Owl's range should be further consolidated and densities increased throughout Suffolk, with all suitable habitats being utilised by breeding pairs. The county's Barn Owl breeding population should be consolidated and increased to around 350 pairs in association with the anticipated range expansion as detailed above.

### **The Project**

SCBOP is dedicated to the conservation of Barn Owls. Originally managed by Suffolk Ornithologists' Group (SOG), the project passed to Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) and has now been returned to SOG for management. The principal partners are SWT, SOG and British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), but a number of smaller independent projects also fall under the SCBOP umbrella including those administered by Dedham AONB and Stour Valley Project, Thornham Owl Project and Suffolk Owl Sanctuary. The project provides advice on habitat enhancement and nest box siting to land owners who have suitable habitat and a monitoring service for the boxes. This system of raising awareness, creating nesting opportunities and managing suitable nearby habitat is having a positive effect on Barn Owl populations across Suffolk.

The project involves the whole community and the boxes are made by local organisations and monitored by an army of expert volunteers each year. The county has been divided into thirteen areas each with a coordinator. These coordinators manage the 120 monitors who hold permits entitling them to disturb the schedule 1 listed Barn Owls for the purposes of data gathering. A large proportion of the Barn Owls monitored are ringed by BTO trained and licenced ringers enabling the birds to be individually identified and their movements tracked.

**This is a project of which all Suffolk people can be truly proud.**

## Results

The effectiveness of the project is shown by the two maps displaying the distribution of all Barn Owl occupied boxes in 2007 and 2014 in Figures 1 and 2 respectively.

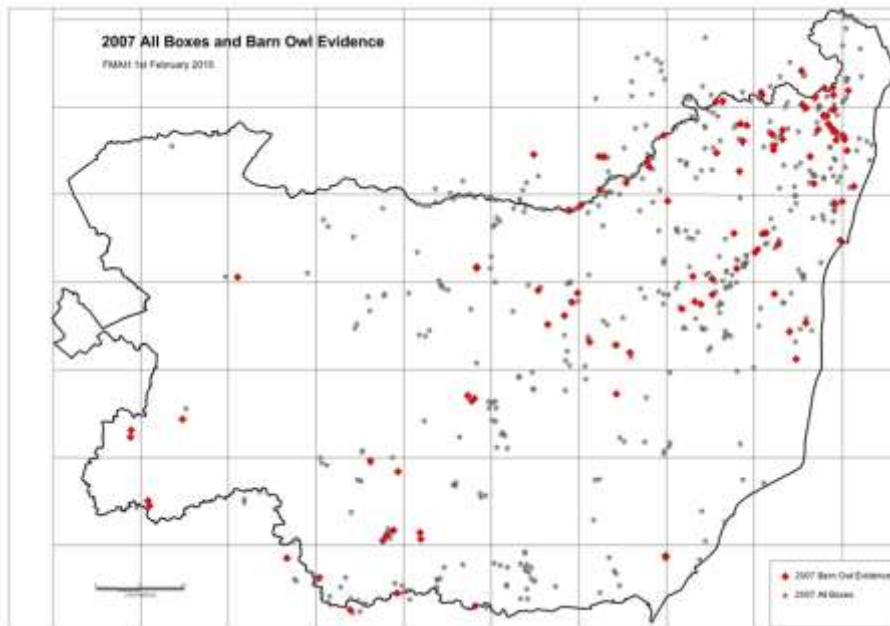


Figure 1 Barn Owl Box Locations and Activity 2007

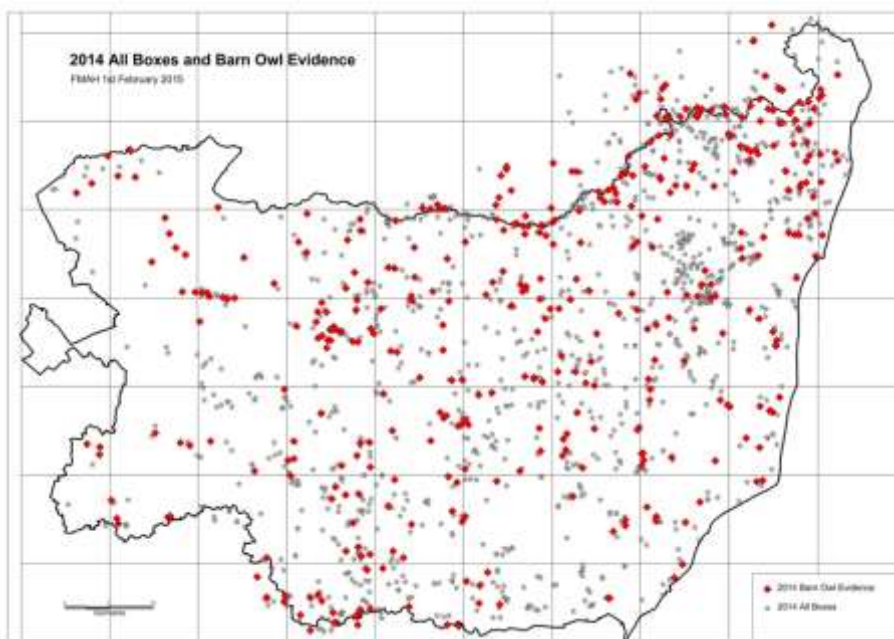


Figure 2 Barn Owl Box Locations and Activity 2014

## Monitoring results

The previous report in the Harrier showed that the number of boxes and the number of Barn Owls increased year on year showing a great success rate. The tabulation extends the information to 2014.

The sudden drop in Barn Owl presence in 2013 is noticeable. Table 1 also shows that the nest sites provided by the boxes are used by other wildlife with Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*), an amber listed species, being particularly assisted.

Number of Sites	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Barn Owl Pellet	11	25	53	40	54	36	37	30
Barn Owl Adult	12	34	57	55	50	76	151	57
Barn Owl Egg	0	17	3	5	4	12	13	14
Barn Owl Egg Failed	9	19	23	13	16	19	10	9
Barn Owl Young	77	102	123	149	201	289	66	297
Barn Owl Young Failed	4	4	3	4	6	12	4	5
<b>Barn Owl Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>412</b>
Tawny Owl	8	13	21	25	22	21	11	22
Little Owl	1	16	18	16	11	12	8	15
Kestrel	12	23	24	25	17	20	14	21
Stock Dove	71	112	239	253	317	263	325	289
Jackdaw	63	83	141	177	189	206	176	266
Grey Squirrel	6	12	17	8	9	25	28	13
Empty	90	117	199	239	289	236	340	325
Not Checked	203	167	117	163	104	187	353	306
Other	4	0	11	9	7	4	9	4
<b>Number of Active Sites</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>1049</b>	<b>1181</b>	<b>1296</b>	<b>1418</b>	<b>1545</b>	<b>1673</b>

**Table 1: Nest Site Occupancy for 2007-2014**

### 2013's poor breeding season

As is so often the case, winter weather influences Barn Owl populations and was the main cause of the 2013 decline, the winter and the spring of 2013 being 0.6 and 1.7 degrees colder than average. This put a great stress on the Barn Owls and on their preferred prey the Short-tailed Vole. Mortality was extremely high and reports of dead owls were reaching the BTO of up to 19 per day. These figures involved only ringed birds that were reported, so we were seeing just the tip of the iceberg with a significant proportion of the UK's population perishing. Many of the birds which did survive were poorly fed and only a few females were able to reach breeding condition.

### 2014 Bounce Back Year

The winter and spring of 2014 were warmer than average, so the Barn Owls were less stressed by the winter weather and then the warm spring yielded an early growth of grass which encouraged a swift recovery in the vole populations, thus providing a much-needed food.

This meant that Barn Owls could begin nesting earlier than in normal years. Shawyer (1998) has pioneered the development of an ageing technique for nestlings which involve the measurements of the seventh primary feather recording the distance from feather tip to the point of emergence from the waxy feather sheath, or where the feather has not yet emerged the length of the pin. These measurements can be compared with a table and the pulli's age plus or minus one day can be calculated.

### Movement

Most of the Barn Owl pulli and some adults monitored by the project are ringed. This provides us with an insight into their movements. Young Barn Owls are known to disperse from their natal areas soon after fledging and studies have shown that 37% of pulli ringed move more than three kilometres from their nest sites within two weeks of fledging (Bunn *et al* 1982). In 2014, 42 of the 68 adult barn owls handled were already carrying rings, giving the Project a series of family trees as well as tracking their movements between boxes.



Patrick Barker holding the two barn owl pulli ringed at Lea Farm.  
Photo: Katie Smith

One notable movement involved a Suffolk-ringed chick in 2013. Project Area Coordinator, Patrick Barker, ringed a brood of two pulli at Lea Farm, Great Ashfield, near Stowmarket on 7th August 2013 and one of these (a female) was found incubating a clutch of eggs in a box in Muston, North Leicestershire on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2014, a distance of 136 km. She raised three pulli in her newly adopted county. Jim Lennon, of South Notts Ringing Group (who monitor boxes in North Leicestershire on behalf of the Vale Barn Owls Project), said *“This was the first time in five years that the box has been used; we had several instances of this in 2014. The female was not moulting when caught, and we checked for a second breeding attempt which did not happen in that box, but chicks seem to have got away okay”*.

### **LBAP Targets Achieved**

The results show that the LBAP targets were exceeded. By the end of 2010, presence of Barn Owl were found at 266 sites (target was 250) and by the end of 2014, over 400 sites were occupied (target for the end of 2015 was 300). The project is already exceeded the target set for 2020 which is 300 pairs. The Barn Owl is once again a familiar sight throughout Suffolk.

### **The Project celebrates its 10th birthday**

This year SCBOP will be 10 years old and plans are already underway to celebrate its success by holding a series of special events. The programme, launched to a full house at the Fisher Theatre, Bungay, on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015, will no doubt develop as the year progresses. Further SCBOP events have been planned as follows:

8<sup>th</sup> July – live Barn Owl ringing at a suitable Barn Owl nesting site with Waveney Bird Club

11<sup>th</sup> July SWT’s Lackford Nature Reserve Centre – all-day workshop for Barn Owl enthusiasts by Steve Piotrowski (please contact Leslie Walduck of SWT, Brooke House, Ashbocking, for further details)

23<sup>rd</sup> September, Stowmarket Church Hall – joint SOG/Stowmarket SWT Group lecture by Steve Piotrowski

19<sup>th</sup> October, The Cut, Halesworth – a fund-raising party including a special lecture by Dr Colin Shawyer, UK’s leading authority on Barn Owl conservation and author of *The Barn Owl* (1998).

### **Recognition**

This year SCBOP was nominated for a Greenest County Award in the Landscape and Biodiversity section. The Project was very proud to receive the award at the Greenest County ceremony at Snape Maltings on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2015.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to thank the hundreds of people involved in this project including the box owners, area coordinators and monitors. We would also like to thank our many charitable organisations that have provided the necessary funds to ensure that this project was such a remarkable success.

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## New Research provides farmers with techniques to help Turtle Dove recovery

RSPB

A new research study, conducted on six farms across East Anglia, has recommended a new agri-environment management option that could help in the recovery of UK turtle dove populations. The study, carried out by the RSPB and part-funded by Natural England (through its Species Recovery Programme), found that cultivating grown seed with a mix of plant species in the autumn creates a habitat rich in seed that is easily accessible – ideal for turtle doves, which feed on seeds present on, or close to, the ground. The authors also suggest that light cultivation or cutting during spring would better prevent the plots from becoming too overgrown and, therefore, unsuitable for turtle doves.

UK turtle dove populations have fallen 88% since 1995, with one cause for this decline thought to be the lack of seed from arable plants, which historically formed the bulk of turtle dove diet during the breeding season, resulting in a much shorter breeding season with fewer nesting attempts.

This latest research into the management of bespoke seed mixes to provide food for turtle doves is under consideration as a part of a modified version of the nectar flower mix option under the new Countryside Stewardship scheme and could be pivotal in providing food for turtle doves on farmland across the UK.

Patrick Barker, an arable farmer in Westhorpe, said: *“It’s been great to be involved in this research and to find out how we can give turtle doves a hand. What was particularly striking was that the areas they prefer don’t look as you’d expect. For example, we learned that bare patches on the ground amongst the vegetation give them space to land and move around. I hope that our work here will encourage other farmers to do the same, and that this will help turtle doves return to the countryside.”*

This new management option is part of a wider ‘turtle dove package’, deployed within the Higher Level Stewardship scheme agreements on farms supporting turtle doves (or with turtle doves nearby), which seeks to provide foraging habitat in proximity to nesting turtle doves. The other options in this package include cultivated margins, fallows that promote seeding plants, and scrub and hedgerow management for nesting. The options a farmer selects will depend on local land characteristics and farming practices.

**Tony Morris, Senior Conservation Scientist, RSPB Centre for Conservation Science said:** *“Agri-environment schemes offer the best and perhaps last hope for this iconic species. We’re hopeful that, together with farmers and our partners in [Operation Turtle Dove](#), we can reverse the decline of this bird and secure its long-term future in Britain.”*

## The Suffolk Swift Survey



The SBRC have developed a survey with Suffolk Wildlife Trust, for their project with Suffolk Ornithological Group, ‘SOS Swifts’ (Save our Suffolk Swifts). Anyone can access the survey to log sightings of screaming parties or known nest sites and see what others have recorded so far.

Take part here: [www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/swift](http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/swift)



# Get Online Recording with Suffolk BRO

[www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/suffolkbro](http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/suffolkbro)

## INTRO:

Suffolk Biological Recording Online (or Suffolk BRO for short) was officially launched in April and users can now apply for an account to enable them to start using our online recording forms. The system, which uses the familiar Indicia toolkit as seen on websites such as iRecord, allows users to create and submit their biological records to the Suffolk Biological Records Centre (SBRC) online. Users can take advantage of a variety of inputting forms, that with integrated tools such as the NBN (National Biodiversity Network) species dictionary, calendar based date capture and google maps (grid reference generating) interface, make submitting records both uncomplicated and more accurate. Users can also view what else has been recorded online and even join or apply to create a recording group between fellow interested parties. This is ideal for community recording groups and species interest groups to create and share a bank of species data between members. Records made on our website will also appear on the iRecord (national BRC) system and it is here where we are making use of their growing number of experts to verify your data. Data recorded on our website will also be downloaded and made available for further verification and record centre use through the established dataflow channels (as with all records collected by the SBRC).

## CREATE AN ACCOUNT:

Creating an account is easy. Simply navigate to [www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/suffolkbro](http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/suffolkbro) and click create new account on the left hand side. Here you can set your name and input your email address. (If you already have an iRecord account and you want the records you make on our site to sync with those on iRecord simply make sure you register using the same email address and the hard work will be done for you).

Once your application has been approved you will receive another email inviting you to log in and set your password. Once you have done this you are ready to record!

## HOME PAGE:

The screenshot shows the Suffolk BRO home page layout. On the left, there are four callout boxes with arrows pointing to specific sections:

- SELECT A FORM TO START RECORDING WITH**: Points to the 'Select a form' section.
- EXPLORE WHAT YOU & OTHER PEOPLE HAVE SUBMITTED**: Points to the 'What's been recorded online?' section.
- JOIN A RECORDING GROUP**: Points to the 'Recording Groups' section.
- FIND LINKS TO USEFUL PAGES AND RESOURCES**: Points to the 'Links & Resources' section.

The main content area includes:

- Suffolk Biological Recording Online**: A welcome message and instructions on how to use the site.
- Terms and Conditions**: A link to the site's terms.
- Traditional Recording**: Information about downloading spreadsheets for data export.
- Recording News**: A section for the latest news, including a link to 'Recording Groups on Suffolk BRO'.
- Email County Recorders**: A sidebar menu with links to contact various county recorders.

At the bottom, there are two callout boxes with arrows pointing to the 'Recording News' and 'Email County Recorders' sections:

- SEE THE LATEST RECORDING NEWS**: Points to the 'Recording News' section.
- EMAIL A COUNTY RECORDER**: Points to the 'Email County Recorders' sidebar.



## Screen Shots:

### Submit a list of sightings

What Did You See? Where Was It?

Date:

Recorder Name:

Enter the recorder's name, if different.

Please enter all the species you saw at one site on a single day and any other information about them. Then move to the **Where was it?** tab before submitting your records.

Species	Certainty	Quantity	Sex	Stage	Identified By	Comment	Sensitivity	Add photos
slow worm					Bloggs, Joe		Not sensit	select a species first
Slow-worm - <i>Anguis fragilis</i>								
reptile								

Enter species names. If you have sensitive records to input please use the Enter a casual record form.

SUBMITTING  
SIGHTINGS

### All records

New report Filters: Select filter... [Apply filter](#) [Create a filter](#)

ID	Source	Species	Common name	Taxon group	Site name	Grid ref	Date	Recorder	Images	Auto check
1912939	Suffolk BRC   General records	Passer domesticus	House Sparrow	bird	gainsborough sports centre	TM18804180	30/04/2015	Underwood, Joe		
1912740	Suffolk BRC   General records	Scilla granulata	Meadow Saifrage	flowering plant		TM09147943	08/05/2015	Miller, Meg		
1912739	Suffolk BRC   General records	Myosotis discolor	Changing Forget-me-not	flowering plant		TM09227935	08/05/2015	Miller, Meg		
1912738	Suffolk BRC   General records	Myosotis ramosissima	Early Forget-me-not	flowering plant		TM09187934	08/05/2015	Miller, Meg		
1912716	Suffolk BRC   General records	Erophila verna	Common Whitloigrass	flowering plant		TM09217933	08/05/2015	Miller, Meg		

EXPLORING  
SIGHTINGS

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS:

As we are able to manipulate the code behind the webpages, the SBRC are able to adapt Suffolk BRO over time adding new recording forms, surveys and tools to help users submit records in Suffolk. We are hoping to attend several bioblitz events during 2015 to help log sightings and we are also keen to develop several species specific survey forms to try and encourage some surveys with mass-participation. The SBRC is also keen to work with other organisations who need help hosting and developing online recording for particular projects and have already worked with operation Turtle Dove in Suffolk to create a bespoke survey form, the Ipswich Parks & Open Space Team and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust with recording group pages.

Species	Common name	Status	Taxonomic	First record date	Last record date	Records
<i>Agriolais caudata</i>	Long-tailed Tit	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Alcedinidae	2013-04-27	2013-05-02	2
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mandarin Duck	IRD	Animalia > Anseriformes > Anatidae	2013-03-02	2013-01-02	1
<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Kingfisher	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Alcedinidae	2013-04-27	2013-04-27	1
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Nalard	IRD	Animalia > Anseriformes > Anatidae	2013-01-02	2013-01-02	1
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Habitat Bird	IRD	Animalia > Anseriformes > Anatidae	2013-04-27	2013-04-27	1
<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Common Buzzard	IRD	Animalia > Anseriformes > Anatidae	2013-03-02	2013-01-02	1
<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	Great Tit	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Fringillidae	2013-04-27	2013-03-02	2
<i>Certhia aluco</i>	Small Tit	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Fringillidae	2013-04-27	2013-04-27	1
<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>	Dive	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Fringillidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Pouter	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Columbidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Chloroceryle alpestris</i>	Black-headed Gull	IRD	Animalia > Charadriiformes > Laridae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Pouter	IRD	Animalia > Columbidae > Columbidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Pouter	IRD	Animalia > Columbidae > Columbidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common Crow	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Corvidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Jackdaw	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Corvidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common Crow	IRD	Animalia > Corvidae > Corvidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Cyanus cyaneus</i>	Blue Jay	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Corvidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Salix alba</i>	White Willow	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Salicaceae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Dendrocygna nigripennis</i>	Black-winged Stilt	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Podiceps	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Eurynotus alpestris</i>	Robin	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Sturnidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1
<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Kestrel	IRD	Animalia > Reptalia > Falconidae	2013-03-02	2013-03-02	1

ID	Species	Record type	Observer	Date	Time	Location	Images	Notes
190101	Suffolk SRC 1 Common Murrelet	Common Murrelet	Colin Bay	2013-03-02	10:00:00	190101	1	
190112	Suffolk SRC 1 Common Murrelet	Common Murrelet	Colin Bay	2013-03-02	10:00:00	190112	1	
190113	Suffolk SRC 1 Common Murrelet	Common Murrelet	Colin Bay	2013-03-02	10:00:00	190113	1	
190114	Suffolk SRC 1 Common Murrelet	Common Murrelet	Colin Bay	2013-03-02	10:00:00	190114	1	

## REGISTER NOW & START RECORDING:

Visit [www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/suffolkbrc](http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/suffolkbrc) now to find out more and create an account.

Or visit a few of the 'open' public survey forms to have a go:

<http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/mammal-recording>

<http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/turtledove>

<http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/stagbeetlesurvey>

## New Community Challenge Fund for groups making a difference for wildlife

### Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Throughout the summer Suffolk Wildlife Trust will be awarding grants of £250 to the best projects that enter their new Community Challenge competition. Anything that benefits wildlife will be considered, the more innovative and creative the better.



Entries for new plans from existing projects are welcome as well as groups who are looking to take their first step. Examples of projects that will be considered include:

- Creating new or improving existing habitat (must have public access - churchyards, villages greens etc.)
- Initiatives to undertake species recording - a BioBlitz, wildlife audit or ID training
- Innovative ways to use a community green space - this could be through a one-off event or regular use
- Making a practical and meaningful change within a community to reduce your carbon footprint
- Improving freshwater or coastal habitat - from beach cleans to pond clearance

Entrants are asked to send details of their project in no more than 500 words to [info@suffolkwildlifetrust.org](mailto:info@suffolkwildlifetrust.org).

Winners will be chosen by Suffolk Wildlife Trust's team of community conservation advisers. Winners and criteria can be found at [suffolkwildlifetrust.org/communitychallenge](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org/communitychallenge). Funding for the community challenge is from the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the four year Networking Nature initiative. Now in its final year the project has enabled the Trust to work with communities in more than 80% of Suffolk parishes.

## Defending the Directives - urgent help needed to protect Suffolk's most precious sites

Ben McFarland, RSPB

As wildlife enthusiasts we are facing one of the biggest challenges and I'm asking for your urgent support today.

For the last 30+ years, the Nature Directives have been the bedrock for some of the most important achievements of the conservation movement. They provide the very best level of protection for our most important wildlife. Without them, defending our most precious natural places and the wildlife they support would have been a far more difficult or even impossible task. For example, without them, would we have achieved the remarkable recovery of the bittern? Today, the Suffolk Coast and its most precious sites are under pressure more than ever from development.

The Nature Directives are now being subjected to a 'Fitness Check' under the EU's Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT). This will assess whether they are doing the job which they were intended for – to protect European important habitats and species. There is a real concern across the EU that this process will weaken the Nature Directives.

The RSPB believe that the Nature Directives *are* fit for purpose, and that rather than weakening them, the European Commission should be focusing on improving how they are implemented across all European countries. We believe they are better for wildlife, better for business, and better for people. 100 voluntary organisations across the UK have joined forces to call for the protection of Europe's natural environment, for example RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the National Trust. For further information see [Suffolk Wildlife Trust website >](#)

We have launched our campaign to defend the Nature Directives, and we're asking you all to support this campaign in 3 simple ways:

1. **Create a show of force** - take 2 minutes for the one-click action through our [website](#).
2. **Get active on Social Media** – Post on Facebook or Tweet/retweet a link to our [website](#).
3. **Create a movement** - share this with your friends, family, contacts, associates... talk to them about the places and wildlife that you and they love, and ask them to take action now by going to our [website](#).

If every person reading this could get friends and family to support the campaign we could get many thousands of voices of support. We're asking for just a few minutes of your time - please help us win this battle. **Please act, and act today!**

# SUFFOLK BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP NEWS

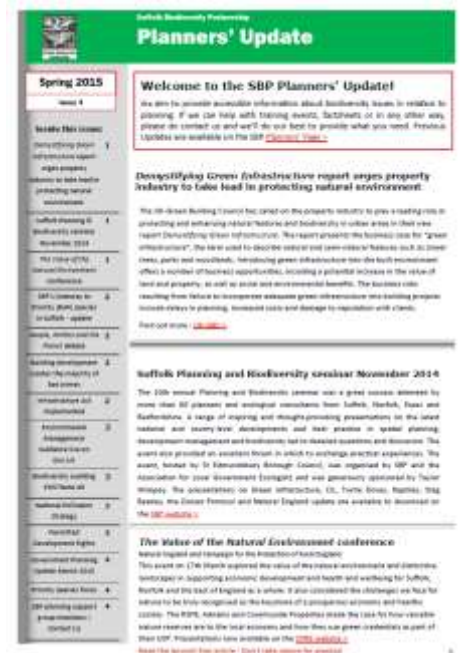
**Our aim : To provide guidance on Suffolk's Priority Species and Habitats for Local Authorities, community groups and schools**

## SBP Planning Group Achievements

The Planning Group was set up more than 10 years ago in response to a demand for support with biodiversity issues for Local Authority Planning staff and other bodies with planning responsibilities. We have achieved some great successes over those years. Here are just a few of them:

- Planners' Update**

The update is published twice a year, in the spring and autumn, and is one of the outcomes from a workshop in the summer of 2013, following a request by planners. Issue 4 available now! [Visit our Planners' Page to download the Spring 2015 Update](#) > Contents include: Demystifying Green Infrastructure report urges property industry to take lead in protecting natural environment, Suffolk Planning & Biodiversity seminar, Building development creates the majority of bat crimes, Infrastructure Act, National Pollinator Strategy and more.... *The update highlights new reports, legislation and useful sources of information, helping planners to stay up to date in a rapidly changing field. The easy to read format ensures that no time need be wasted on irrelevant issues, but further information can be followed up if wished.*

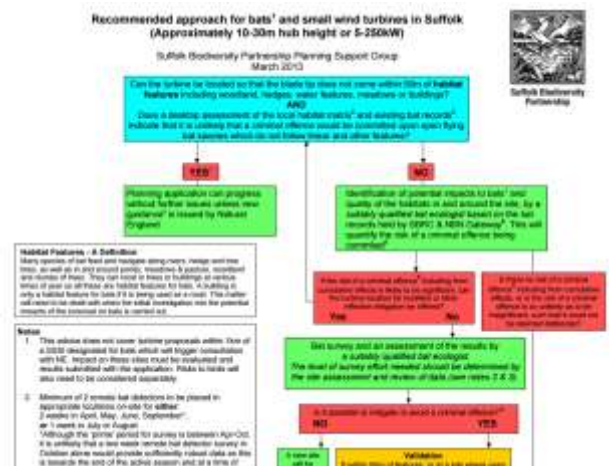


- Suffolk Biodiversity Validation Checklist.**

The checklist provides planning application guidance on Protected and Priority Species for which Survey and Assessment will be required; Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and other biodiversity features and geodiversity features where Survey and Impact Assessment will be required and; information on identifying the appropriate survey season by species type. *The guidance has proved invaluable for the individual Local Authorities and can be found through our website at [www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/planning-and-development.aspx](http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/planning-and-development.aspx)*

- Small Wind Turbine Guidance Note**

This Recommended Approach flowchart was produced in response to numerous wind turbine planning applications and some confusion about best practice. There was wide consultation before on-line publication in March 2013 ([www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/default.aspx](http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/default.aspx)). We even had an enquiry from the Bombay Natural History Society who asked permission to use the flowchart! *The guidance greatly simplifies the process of assessing small wind turbine planning applications.*



- **Annual Biodiversity and Planning Seminar**

In 2014 we celebrated the 10th anniversary of this popular Suffolk & Norfolk event. A packed agenda included up to the minute issues for both spatial planning and development management and the day also facilitated networking for planners from Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and Bedfordshire. For the first time, ecological consultants were able to join on payment of a fee, to the benefit of both planners and consultants. The presentations can be downloaded from our [website >](#) *The seminar has become a well established feature of the planners calendar providing numerous benefits including exchange of information with planners in other organisations and information on a wide range of biodiversity issues in planning.*



- **Consultants seminar on Delivering the British Standard for Biodiversity and Development**

The seminar was delivered to over 40 consultants following the publication of the British Standard for Biodiversity and Development BS42020. *The seminar helped consultants to understand better the ecological information required for determination of planning applications and to improve the standard of ecological data submitted.*



Simone Bullion, SWT, leading one of the discussions at a workshop.

- **Validation training workshops 2009 and 2013**

These workshops have helped planners by providing hands-on practice in assessing applications which affect biodiversity, such as potential bat roosts, great crested newts and County Wildlife Sites. *The workshops provide a training environment in which planners can receive one-to-one support with the specific biodiversity issues which frequently arise in Suffolk.*

The Planners Group comprises representatives from Suffolk County Council, RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Forest Heath District Council, St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Natural England.

## SBP Species Factsheets

Two species factsheets are now available on-line - the [Turtle Dove >](#) and [Tassel Stonewort >](#). See what these species look like on [SBRC Pinterest >](#) The 23 habitat factsheets are in draft and will be published soon after consultation with partners such as the Environment Agency, the RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

## Are you looking for funding?

Check out the SBP web page to see if any of these funds can benefit your conservation or community wildlife project. [Please visit SBP News / Funding >](#) Also, SBP has a small Project Fund. Please contact Gen if you're looking for small amounts for community or research projects, or for match funding for larger projects.

**What's On** is on our website under [News / events >](#)

## Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership - Moving Forward

To find out about our new services, what's happened to the UK and Suffolk BAPs and how we can help you, please visit our website at [www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/](http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/)

**Publication dates**

The newsletter and updates are published in Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.  
Deadline for Summer 2015 newsletter articles: **Friday 31st July 2015.**

**Thank you to our readers for supporting this newsletter,  
all feedback is welcome!**

**If you'd like to share what you or your organisation / group is doing to protect biodiversity in Suffolk, please send your article (with photos) for inclusion in the next newsletter to:**

**Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Officer (contact details below).**

## About Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership

SBP is a partnership comprised of conservation organisations, statutory bodies, local authorities, businesses, not-for-profit organisations and community groups working together throughout Suffolk to protect biodiversity. To find out more about SBP and it's work through Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan, please visit [www.suffolkbiodiversity.org](http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org)

### Partnership members

Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council, Center Parcs–Elveden, Environment Agency, Suffolk FWAG, Essex & Suffolk Water, Forestry Commission, Forest Heath District Council and St. Edmundsbury Borough Council (West Suffolk), Ipswich Borough Council, National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Suffolk Biological Records Centre, Suffolk Naturalists' Society, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council, Suffolk County Council.

### Contact us

**Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Officer**  
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