



Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership Newsletter Autumn/Winter 2015

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Amazing birds!



Superbly skilful flyers, Swifts drink, feed and mate in flight and they eat countless harmful insects too

To find out more about Swifts (a Suffolk Character Species), see Edward Mayer's presentation at the Biodiversity and Planning Conference on behalf of Swift Conservation (p. 19)

Fen Raft Spiders return to Suffolk

Helen Smith, Little Ouse Headwaters Project

The first discovery of the Fen Raft spider *Dolomedes plantarius* in Britain was made in Suffolk in 1956. Dr Eric Duffey famously found this big and beautiful species on Redgrave Fen, the Suffolk fringe of what is now Redgrave and Lopham Fen NNR which straddles the county boundary at the source of the Waveney. Unlike the majority of the boldly striped individuals, the one he spotted belonged, fortuitously, to the less frequent, unstriped morph, alerting him to the likelihood that it was not the raft spider species then known in Britain, *Dolomedes fimbriatus*.

The Fen's infamous history in the subsequent decades on the 20th Century, as abstraction of water from the underlying chalk aquifer progressively desiccated the surface peat, is well known. As scrub moved in, most of the site's open fen rarities declined, some to extinction. The semi-aquatic Fen Raft spiders, dependent on a year round supply of water and on open, unshaded conditions, declined too. They were lost from Suffolk in the 1980s and confined to two tiny and isolated patches on the Norfolk side of the reserve by the end of the Century.

The demise of the Redgrave & Lopham Fen population, and the discovery of only two other UK populations of this species since 1956, lay behind the translocation programme that has been actively relocating the spiders to new sites over the last five years. The aim was to reduce the risk of chance extinction in Britain by increasing the number of sites to 12 by 2020. Recovery of the Redgrave & Lopham Fen population to re-occupy its likely former range was a parallel objective.

Research and survey prior to the translocation work suggested that several restored sites in the Suffolk and Norfolk Broads were likely to provide suitable habitat for the spiders. These were predominantly grazing marshes with dense networks of very high quality ditches – similar in appearance not to Redgrave & Lopham Fen but to the Pevensey Levels in East Sussex, which hosts the largest and densest of the UK populations.



Ideal habitat for the Fen Raft Spider at Carlton Marshes



Adult female Fen Raft spider *Dolomedes plantarius* at Castle Marshes

The first two translocations, each involving introductions of thousands of small, juvenile spiders in two consecutive years, brought the spiders back to Suffolk; to Suffolk Wildlife Trust's reserves at both Castle and Carlton Marshes on the lower Waveney where it is almost inconceivable that they did not occur in the past. The spiders released there came from both the Pevensey Levels – the similar habitat – and Redgrave & Lopham Fen – the local site. These isolated populations are genetically distinct and so mixing them increased genetic variation in the new populations, increasing their capacity to adapt to future environmental change. Sufficient stock was obtained by harvesting from densely populated areas of the Pevensey Levels and by captive-rearing spiderlings from Redgrave & Lopham Fen. Over the first three months of life this increased the very low chance of survival in the wild to well over 90%.

Our research suggested that the spiders' main problem with reoccupying suitably restored habitat was their sedentary habit. Although it's still early days, the new populations appear to bear this out. Just five years after the first introduction, they are now at home and thriving on the lower Waveney Marshes – they simply need a lift down the road. At Castle Marshes the summer nursery web count is now around a thousand and the spiders have spread from the approximately 500m of ditch bank where they were released to occupy around 6.5km of ditch – most of the core of the reserve. At Carlton Marshes the population has established more slowly but the nursery web count is nevertheless in the 100s and the range is expanding.

The rapid establishment on these sites seems to be attributable to the spiders' higher productivity there. Although most take two years to mature, the proportion maturing in just one year is higher at the new sites. Productivity is also boosted by a much higher proportion of females producing two broods rather than one – the norm at Redgrave & Lopham Fen. In the long and lovely summer of 2014, there was evidence that some even produced a third brood.

A richer food supply along with a much more reliable summer water supply is likely to be behind this high productivity, but other factors are also at play. The spiky rosettes of Water soldier *Stratiotes aloides* that carpet some of the grazing marsh ditches are a favoured support for the spiders' large nursery webs in which they defend their newly-emerged young. Where water soldier is present, breeding densities are often an order of magnitude higher than in its absence. Although the spiders can clearly persist in its absence, new populations establish more rapidly where it thrives and their subsequent fortunes are likely to remain closely tied to changes in the abundance of this sensitive and inadequately researched plant. The geography of the interconnected grazing marsh ditches also has a role in the rapid expansion in the spiders' range, facilitating better mobility than in the turf pond and sedge bed habitat of Redgrave and Lopham Fen.

Beyond Suffolk, the spiders are now well established on the RSPB's mid-Yare reserve complex and, most recently, have been introduced to the Ludham and Potter Heigham Marshes NNR on the river Ant. The Ludham translocation saw a radical change in methods, made possible by the success at Castle Marshes. The spiders introduced there were harvested directly from Castle Marshes, avoiding both the need to take any further spiders from the natural populations and the very labour-intensive task of captive rearing.

Back at Redgrave & Lopham Fen, closure of the artesian bore-hole in 1999 together with an extensive programme of habitat restoration, initially failed to boost the spider population. Recently though, translocations within the reserve, in parallel with a rolling programme of turf pond creation, have helped recolonization. Here too, the spiders should soon be back in Suffolk; tantalisingly this year, they bred right on the county boundary.



Female Fen Raft Spider with egg sac



Fen Raft Spider nursery webs

As a result of the translocation programme, these magnificent spiders already seem to be re-established in Suffolk where they are able to capitalise on Suffolk Wildlife Trust's habitat restoration and Living Landscape creation. Monitoring of the populations remains a key part of the process – at least as important as any other aspect of the work, though much harder to fund! If you're interested in helping with monitoring on the lower Waveney sites, please contact me at helen.smith@wavcott.org.uk.

The translocation programme is a partnership, currently between Natural England, the Broads Authority, Suffolk, Sussex and Norfolk Wildlife Trusts, the RSPB and the British Arachnological Society. More information about the spiders and the project is available at www.dolomedes.org.uk. Their story at Redgrave & Lopham Fen, described by their artist in residence Sheila Tilmouth, and by Helen Smith, is available in a Langford Press book, *On the Margins, the fen raft spiders of Redgrave & Lopham Fen*, on sale from SWT at Lackford Lakes or from the British Arachnological Society (www.britishspiders.org.uk).



Adult male Fen Raft Spider

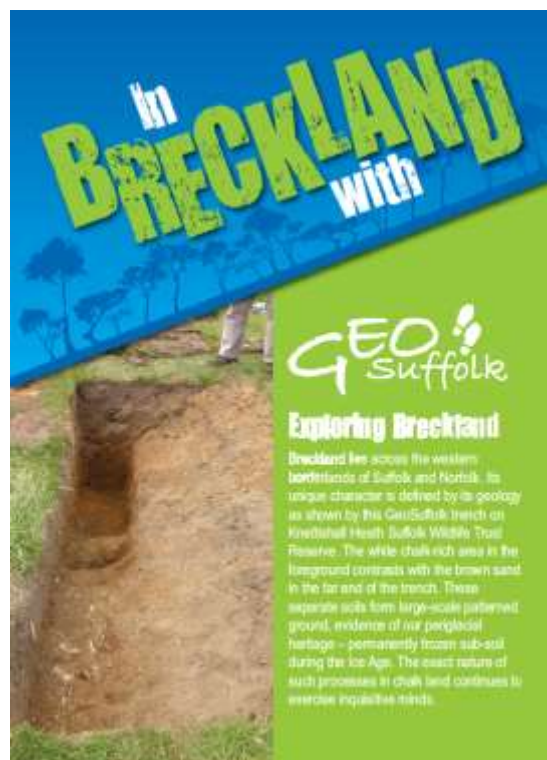
In Breckland with GeoSuffolk

Caroline Markham, GeoSuffolk

For those of us in Suffolk the name Breckland conjures up images of a unique landscape – columns of windswept pines, beady-eyed stone curlews, dramatic flint mines. We are aware of it as a cohesive region, we know what sort of place it is. This is because Breckland’s landscape is underpinned by its geology and it is this which defines it as a region – Chalk beneath with thin (often less than a metre deep) deposits of sandy or gravelly material covering it. GeoSuffolk is promoting this much undervalued aspect of Breckland with a new free leaflet ‘In Breckland With GeoSuffolk’, published November 2015 – *look for it at Breckland outlets.*

The Chalk with its thin covering of blown sand/river gravels/glacial till is very freely drained which, with the low rainfall it shares with the rest of East Anglia, gives rise to extremely dry soils and very low levels of weathering and erosion. Thus Breckland has retained landforms of times gone by – dating back to the last cold phase of the Ice Age, the Devensian between 10,000 and 90,000 years ago. There were glaciers in Scotland, and further south permafrost many metres deep pervaded the ground. Frost action sorted material of differing sizes into patterned ground and in Breckland the sandy and chalky material were churned into the polygons, nets and stripes which are still widespread today. Thetford Heath SSSI and Knettishall Heath CGS

are two excellent examples in Suffolk. From the air the patterned ground looks like giant fingerprints all over the valley sides and interfluves - its existence is evidence of an ancient ground surface, almost untouched for tens of thousands of years. This ancient landscape which is part of what gives Breckland its ‘placeness’ must have profound repercussions for the flora and fauna which have adapted to living on it during that time.





Sand heaped into mounds and ridges at Icklingham has been identified as wind-blown dunes. These are for the most part vegetated and therefore inactive now.

Many of the landforms covered in the leaflet are, like the patterned ground, subtle in nature and GeoSuffolk aims to help the visitor to recognise them, thus all of the places illustrated are on open access land or close to footpaths. Icklingham Plains SSSI is an excellent example of sand dunes, heaped up by the wind in the cold deserts of the Devensian. There are ancient pingoes on the lower-lying ground and in river valleys - evidence of ice lens formation in the frozen, saturated deposits - reduced now without their ice core to ramparted hollows and ponds. Good Suffolk examples of these are at Aspal Close CGS, Beck Row, though these have no ramparts – have these been eroded and if so are the Beck Row ‘pingoes’ *even older?* In his new book ‘Evolution of a Breckland Landscape: chalkland under a cold climate in the area of Beachamwell Norfolk’ Richard

West makes well-researched a case for taking the origins of some of these features back to maybe 150,000 years ago. This the Suffolk Naturalists’ Society’s latest publication, supported by GeoSuffolk, available at www.sns.org.uk/pages/books.shtml for £10.

The geology of Breckland is also manifest in its vernacular architecture – the fine flint flushwork buildings of Brandon and Thetford and ‘clunch’ cottages in villages such as Lakenheath and Northwold. ‘Clunch’ was quarried locally from harder strata in the Chalk, such as the Tottenhoe stone – there are many miles of chalk walls in Breckland. The leaflet give ideas on where to see them and documents some of the many interesting flint specimens to be found in local museums. And last but not least (it’s on the front page of the leaflet!) the origin of the name ‘Breckland’ in 1894 is revealed.

RSPB Big Schools’ Birdwatch

From the [Ecoschools](#) > newsletter

The RSPB’s Big Schools’ Birdwatch is a fun, educational, citizen-science activity designed for children in schools. All you have to do is spend one lesson (or lunchtime) with your class counting the birds that visit your school grounds or local green space. The watch takes place during the first half of the term after Christmas, **4 January – 12 February 2016**.

Register now at rspb.org.uk/schoolswatch to get a free ID poster for your classroom. And follow [@RSPB_Learning](#) on Twitter to see what other schools are doing for their birdwatch.

Help make this the biggest Big Schools’ Birdwatch ever!

Suffolk Biological Recording Bursary - FSC Flatford Mill

Suffolk Biological Records Centre (SBRC) and Suffolk Naturalists' Society (SNS) are offering bursaries to support individuals over 25 years of age who wish to attend some of the Natural History courses offered at the Flatford Mill Field Study Centre. The course will provide students with the skills and experience to identify and record Suffolk wildlife. The bursary will provide for up to 100% of the non-residential fees for courses.

The bursary is controlled by the SBRC Board with funding partners and the fund is administered by the Field Studies Council (FSC). The SBRC and funding partners will decide each year as to which courses at FSC Flatford Mill will be eligible for support, depending upon sufficient funds being available at the time of application.

Applicants must:

- Be over 25 at the time the course starts
- Not in full-time education

To find out more and which courses are eligible in 2016 please visit [FSC Flatford Mill >](#)

If you're over 25 and would like to learn about identifying and recording Suffolk wildlife, this may be for you!

Freshwater Revival - 25 years of freshwater conservation and beyond...

Suffolk Naturalists' Society Conference 2016

20th February 2016 at Wherstead Park, Ipswich.

The Suffolk Naturalists' Society Conference 2016
Freshwater Revival
25 years of freshwater conservation and beyond
Find out what's been happening in the world of freshwater conservation since 1990!

20th February 2016 9.30 a.m. - 4.45 p.m.
Wherstead Park, Ipswich IP9 2BJ
Cost: £10 (SNS members & students), £12.50 (non-members)
Lunch available to buy at the Café or bring your own

Topics

People, Ponds and Water, "Ghost Ponds" in Norfolk, Eel Conservation & Migration, River Restoration in Suffolk, The Return of the Natives (Aquatic mammals), Water Beetles & Conservation. **PLUS SHORT TALKS:** *Developments at Lakenheath Fen, Changing attitudes to Pond Conservation, Little Ouse Headwaters Project, Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust, 25 years of the Suffolk Invertebrate Survey and Suffolk Dragonfly Atlas.*

Speakers

Dr Naomi Ewald, Freshwater Habitats Trust; Dr Carl Sayer, University College London; Dr Trevor Bond, Environment Agency; Darren Tansley, Essex Wildlife Trust; Dr David Bilton, University of Plymouth and Dr Alan Walker, CEFAS.

See overleaf for full details of the agenda and speakers

Find out more and book at: www.sns.org.uk/pages/conference.shtml

Our preferred method of payment is by card online or you can post your cheque to SNS, c/o Ipswich Museum, High St., Ipswich, IP1 3QH.

Contact: SNS Secretary

email gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk, Tel: 01473 264308



Please join us at the SNS conference !

We have a full day of talks (long and short) on a range of topics with a fantastic array of national and local speakers. There will be stands to visit during the breaks and a wonderful café at the venue for coffees, teas, sandwiches and cake.

Summaries of the presentations and biographies of the speakers are available on the SNS website.

To find out more and to book, please visit

[Suffolk Naturalists' Society >](#)

Wherstead Park is to the south of Ipswich, just off the A137 road to Manningtree. It's a few minutes away from the A12/A14 junction at Copdock and less than 3 miles from Ipswich train station.

[Location details >](#)



*Adrian Chalkley,
speaker and
enthusiastic
freshwater ecologist*

East Suffolk Catchment Partnership

Paul Bradford and Mary Norden

We appointed our first project officer, Mary Norden, in July 2015. Since then, she has been working tirelessly to implement the East Suffolk Watershed Initiative programme (ESWI). This is an ambitious set of projects, selected by the Catchment Partnership and funded by the £31k Catchment Partnership Action Fund, designed to address two of the big issues affecting our rivers in East Suffolk; contamination by sediment runoff and loss of habitat diversity as a result of historic river engineering and drainage operations.

In the Deben headwaters, we are working with the Holistic Water Management Project and Catchment Sensitive Farming; talking to landowners about creating small, field scale, features like leaky ponds and berms. These are designed to hold onto storm runoff and release it slowly over a number of hours or days providing the dual benefit of reducing downstream flood peaks and capturing suspended sediments.

So far, seven landowners have expressed an interest in the project and the Environment Agency's flood model shows that this is enough to significantly reduce the impact of downstream flooding in Debenham. We hope to start work on the smaller features early this spring.



Potential site for temporary flood water pond upstream of Debenham

Further down river at Easton we have been working with landowners to improve in-channel and bankside habitats. In October we restored almost 1km of silted up backwater channel near Easton and we plan to fund similar works early next year at Ufford. We will be returning to Easton in the spring to install 'large woody debris' structures in the river and the water levels and improvements will be assessed over the next few months. Water Framework Directive investigations show that the Deben currently suffers from reduced fish populations. These works will help maintain stocks by providing valuable fish refuges and nursery areas. The new channels will also create habitats for invertebrates and mammals, such as water voles and otters, and by reconnecting the river to its floodplain, we hope to improve river hydrology. The Environment Agency's and Suffolk Wildlife Trust's input were key in the success of these projects.



Otter prints on newly restored back channel at Easton

We have joined forces with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the Bramford Open Spaces Group and the East Suffolk IDB, to restore old backwaters and a length of original meandering river channel at **Bramford Meadows on the River Gipping**. The old meandering channel has been isolated from the river and has silted up over the years. Ideally, we would like to fully restore the original channel, but existing permit restrictions and the presence of utility service mains mean that, for the present, we will have to make do with just a portion of the winter flow. Despite this, the project, which is scheduled to start in January 2016, is expected to provide valuable additional fish and wildlife habitats. Bramford Meadows is a popular local nature reserve and picnic site and the project will benefit large numbers of residents.



Bramford Meadows location plan

Agricultural runoff is a particular problem in the Sandlings area of Suffolk. The combination of light soils and intensive farming means that during most winters, large quantities of soil are washed off the fields, onto our roads and into our streams and rivers.



Agricultural runoff in the Sandlings

We are working with FWAG and directly with a number of landowners in the most vulnerable areas to draw up whole Farm Management Plans and to construct a number of silt traps and ponds to reduce sediment contamination. We are hoping to start construction on the first silt traps shortly after Christmas.

If you would like to know more about any of these projects, please get in touch with Mary Norden, mary@essexsuffolkriverstrust.org

European Turtle Dove joins list of species facing risk of global extinction

Sam Lee, RSPB

The European turtle dove has now joined a growing list of species considered to be facing global extinction after the latest revision on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (www.iucnredlist.org).

Turtle doves are already a Red List species for the UK due to the staggering loss of more than nine out of every ten birds in this country over the past 20 years and they have also suffered a 78% declines across Europe since 1980. As a result, turtle doves have now seen their global threat of extinction risk rise from 'Least Concern' to 'Vulnerable'. This places turtle doves in the same extinction threat category as species such as African elephants, cheetahs and red pandas.

The news of the increased threat category is not wholly unexpected by those working with the species and whilst this may seem like a bit of a blow to morale, in fact it may help actions to improve the situation for turtle doves by providing conservationists with more clout when trying to address the issues causing the species decline. Being able to say the bird is now globally threatened with extinction will help to mobilise efforts towards their conservation across their range and may

help to support a revision of the rules on hunting the species.

Conservation organisations in the Operation Turtle Dove partnership are working hard to secure a future for turtle doves in this country, but turtle doves spend two thirds of their time outside the UK so joined up conservation efforts across their range are vital to secure their future.

By now, having completed their autumn migration, turtle doves will be spending the winter in sub-Saharan West Africa. Titan, the Suffolk satellite tagged turtle dove has returned to a similar area of Mali where he spent last winter, arriving at his wintering grounds on the 6th November. Unfortunately, due to political instability making it unsafe to work there, we are unable to follow Titan himself other than by his satellite tag readings. However, RSPB and Senegalese conservation partner scientists are currently following flocks of wintering turtle doves to identify their ecological requirements on their wintering grounds and provide information to local governments of areas that may require protection for the species. One such site, the

Beer-Sheba project, is a 15 ha area of natural regeneration where RSPB conservation scientists watched a flock of 35,000 turtle doves roost earlier in the year.

Our knowledge of turtle dove ecology and causes of their decline is improving all the time with developments in tracking technology playing a key role in identify important staging areas along the species migratory route which will help to focus conservation efforts. The good news is that this all feeds into our

ability to implement practical conservation solutions and, that we have witnessed similar population declines reversed, so there is still hope. The stone-curlew came close to extinction in the UK in the 1980s with their population dropping to as few as 150-160 pairs but its fortunes reversed thanks to work by the RSPB together with landowners and conservation partners, which has seen the bird's population in the UK treble in the last 30 years.

Enhancing habitats in the River Waveney between Scole and Billingford

Will Akast, Environment Agency

A project to improve the habitat diversity of the River Waveney has recently been completed. The works have been undertaken by the Environment Agency North Suffolk Operations Team in partnership with landowners Sir Rupert and Alexander Mann (Thelveton Estate) and Andrew West (Warren Hill Farms), the Environment Agency's Fisheries, Biodiversity & Geomorphology team, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the River Waveney Trust. This work will help us achieve our Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives.

This section of the River Waveney is classed as being at poor ecological potential with improvements required to improve morphology (shape and form), fish populations, address seasonal low dissolved oxygen levels and to reduce phosphate levels before the required good ecological potential can be achieved.

Working with the River Waveney Trust and Suffolk Wildlife Trust a 2.5 kilometre stretch of the river between Scole and Billingford where habitat enhancements will help improve the ecological status of the river. The two landowners were both keen to be involved in the project and have been willing to allow us to carry out restoration works on their land for which we are very grateful for their support.

Over a two week period, and working carefully to avoid the water vole burrows that had already been identified and marked on site the steep banks of the Waveney were re-profiled in approximately 15 locations using a long-reach excavator to create a bank profile that will support more extensive marginal vegetation. The work also liberated material that was placed along the river edge to selectively narrow the channel to help increase river flow, reduce sediment accumulation and help to improve dissolved oxygen levels.



Narrowing river channel



Bank re-profiling with excavator

In addition to these in-channel works, we have been working with the landowners to identify areas within the river corridor where native trees of local provenance can be planted to complement existing tree cover. In the longer term this increased cover will provide shade for the river and will help to regulate the water temperature which is important for some fish species. Cooler water holds more dissolved oxygen so tree planting here will help address this issue too in time. Habitat diversity will also be increased through tree roots extending into the channel banks and branches hanging in the water as well as providing a natural source of woody debris.



Re-profiling work completed

We are keen to work with partner organisations and landowners in Suffolk to continue to improve river habitats and to help Suffolk's rivers achieve their WFD objectives so if you would like to talk us about improving river habitats in Suffolk please get in touch with Will Akast, Catchment Delivery Manager-Suffolk, Environment Agency, Ipswich office Will.akast@environment-agency.gov.uk

Introducing Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve

Adrian Cooper

Wildlife populations are falling all over the world – and Felixstowe is no exception.

But all is not lost! Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve offers a practical solution. Started in June this year, Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve encourages everyone with a garden, allotment or window-box to allocate part of their land for wildlife-friendly features.

If everyone in Felixstowe took part – even by devoting only a few square feet of their land – the collective effect on wildlife across Felixstowe would be amazing. It would be a fantastic patchwork of wildlife-friendly spaces – a true community nature reserve.

To start things off, we're encouraging as many people as possible to plant the following in their gardens, allotments or window boxes.

Rowan The red autumn berries of this beautiful little tree are much loved by all members of the thrush family. Our recommendation is the European Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*.

Barberry It's a deciduous shrub whose autumn berries will be greatly appreciated by many types of small birds. When its flowers are in bloom, the nectar will also be appreciated by butterflies and moths.

Firethorn It's a plant with something for everyone. Whether you've got an exposed garden or lots of shade, firethorn will always do well. Birds love the berries. Insects adore its nectar. It's an evergreen, so you can leave it to grow year after year. In its mature stages, it forms a very dense hedge which is ideal as a home-security alternative to fences or walls.

Foxgloves Plant the seeds in late summer, right after the seed pods mature. However, you can also plant them in autumn or spring and still achieve good results. When they start to emerge, thin them out so the plants are no less than 12 inches (30 cm) apart. Bumblebees love foxgloves. So do many other insects. And with insects, there will be birds to feed on them! Look for the name *Digitalis*.

Thyme These seeds are tiny! There can be up to 170,000 thyme seeds in only one ounce. For best results, plant the seeds into trays, and only plant the seedlings into your garden / allotment in early spring between 4 – 6 inches (10 – 15 cm) apart. Beetles and invertebrates love thyme. Bees love their nectar!

Sunflowers Plant the seeds after the risk of spring frost has passed. Place your seeds at least 30 inches (75 cm) apart. If you plant the sunflowers which Van Gogh painted, you risk having a variety which is low in pollen. Birds love sunflower seeds. Our recommendation is *Helianthus annuus*.

Lavender It is easiest to plant from cuttings because seeds need soil at least 70 degrees Fahrenheit to germinate – something that Felixstowe rarely sees! Also, be careful not to over or under water. Lavender always grows best in sunny and sheltered spots, such as the corner of a patio. In flower, they are a magnet to bees and butterflies.

Honeysuckle Again, it is easiest to grow from cuttings. When you take your honeysuckle cuttings try and have them about 4 – 5 inches long and with about 6 leaves per cutting. Place each cutting in its own container. Introduce the growing cuttings to the summer a few hours at a time. Warblers and thrushes love the berries. Nectar-loving insects love honeysuckle too.

Ice plant / showy stonecrop / butterfly stonecrop Although they have at least three common names, they are ideal if you sometimes forget to do the watering because they are drought tolerant! Their nectar is much loved by bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Our recommendation is *Sedum spectabile*.

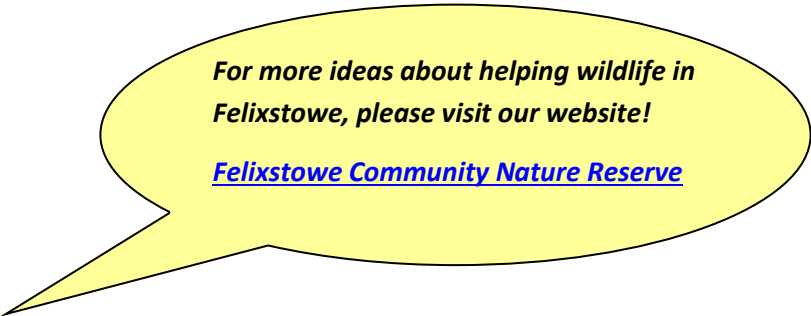
Buddleja / Butterfly bush There are about 100 species of this beautiful night-scented plant. Most of them are shrubs. Given its nocturnal perfume, moths love it. And with moths around, don't be surprised if you find bats coming after them! During the day-time, bees and butterflies will enjoy your buddleja bushes too.

Evening primrose Go careful as you choose from the 143 species of this beautiful herbaceous flowering plant because sizes can range from only a few inches in the alpine varieties, such as *Oenothera acaulis*, up to 9 feet (3 meters) such as *Oenothera stubbei*. The flowers open in the evening, hence its common name. As such, moths will love it. Bats will want to feast on the moths.

Purple loosestrife If your garden gets a bit soggy and boggy due to poor drainage, don't worry! Purple loosestrife loves those conditions. It flowers from June until the end of August, providing much needed nectar for many kinds of long-tongued insects such as elephant hawk-moth and red-tailed bumble bee.

Although these plants make wonderful additions to any garden or allotment, they come with the added advantage of helping wildlife when that help is needed the most.

Just imagine Felixstowe gardens and allotments featuring as many of these species as possible. It would create a fantastic 'green network' - a real community nature reserve - which would help many kinds of wildlife.



**For more ideas about helping wildlife in
Felixstowe, please visit our website!**

[Felixstowe Community Nature Reserve](#)

Let's get planting!

Partnership working to enhance the River Stour habitat at Great Bradley

Naomi Boyle, Environment Agency

A project to improve the habitat diversity of the upper reaches of the River Stour has recently been completed. The works have been undertaken by the Environment Agency Stour Operations Team in partnership with landowners Charles Ryder and Colin Clifton-Brown, the Environment Agency's Fisheries, Biodiversity & Geomorphology team and Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project. This work will help us achieve our Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives.

The River Stour water body upstream of Wixoe is classed as being at moderate ecological potential with improvements required to improve morphology (shape and form), invertebrates and to reduce phosphate levels before the required good ecological potential can be achieved.

Working with our partners at the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour valley project a two kilometre stretch of the river at Gt. Bradley was identified with landowners not only willing to allow us to carry out restoration works on their land but able to provide us with the wood for the project and keen to be involved in wider habitat improvements along the river.

Over a two week period approximately 55 woody debris structures were installed with the help of a 13-tonne long-reach excavator and a small team of workers. These structures took the form of flow deflectors keyed into one bank and log jams across the entire channel. The purpose of these structures is to create flow diversity within the channel which in turn increases habitat diversity.

In addition to these in-channel works, we have been working with Charles Ryder (one of the landowners) to identify areas within the riparian corridor where he can plant native trees of local provenance to compliment existing tree cover. In the longer term this increased cover will provide shade for the river and will help to regulate the water temperature which is important for some fish species. Habitat diversity will also be increased through tree roots extending into the channel banks and branches hanging in the water as well as providing a natural source of woody debris. Over one hundred trees will be planted this winter as part of a Countryside Stewardship Scheme.



Using the excavator to key wood into the bank.



Flow deflector keyed into bank and held in place with posts driven into the channel bed.

We are keen to work with partner organisations and landowners in Suffolk to continue to improve river habitat and to help Suffolk's rivers achieve their WFD objectives. If you would like to talk us about improving river habitats in Suffolk, please get in touch with Will Akast, Catchment Delivery Manager-Suffolk, Environment Agency, Ipswich office.

Will.akast@environment-agency.gov.uk



Log jam across full channel width, to create bed scour immediately downstream.



Looking downstream at a series of flow defectors to create channel sinuosity.

The Green and the Blue: Nature, Visitors, the Economy and You
Cathy Smith, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB



Research demonstrates that the natural landscape of the coast (and neighbouring areas of course!) underpins the visitor economy – almost 80% of visitors say coming to the coast specifically for a walk with a view and for the culture and natural heritage is important. Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB are working with others to use the draw of this living landscape to encourage more off-season and sustainable visits, especially as we all know that autumn, winter and spring (when visitor services have more capacity to have visitors) is best for seeing wildlife and improving habitats. Visitors to our beautiful landscape bring money which can support both the communities living in the landscape and be used to look after the land itself.

We believe that visitors who feel ‘like a local’ will show more respect for this environment and contribute to its upkeep. With funding from the Coastal Communities Fund we are running two projects to invite people to ‘come as visitors and leave as friends’. The first is Suffolk Coast Greeters. Visitors are offered the chance to enjoy a free and personal welcome from a volunteer who knows and loves their local area and wants to share their passion for their favourite topics, from heritage to wildlife, shopping to art or sports to cuisine while encouraging care of the area they are visiting and the coast as a whole.



The second project is the development of Suffolk Coast Conservation Holidays, bringing small groups of people into the area to undertake conservation activities – the first holiday, now being researched and developed by our partner Wild Days Conservation, will be offered in May 2016 (date soon to be confirmed), with further holidays later in the year... and beyond!



These two projects present you with an exciting opportunity to spend a small amount of your time volunteering in a new way. You could either become a Volunteer Greeter or a conservation and research holiday leader or both.

Volunteer Greeters are neither a guide nor a lecturer, each Greeter chooses to share what he/she loves about the village or town that he/she lives in or knows well, weaving it into a story with help, advice and general chatter for up to two to four hours, for up to 6 visitors. Volunteers will be given the chance to attend some training and will be given

information about the area and a badge. At this time we don't know what demand will be like we ask only that volunteers will try to be available at least ten times over the course of a year and when we have enquiries our coordinator will contact you to see if and when you are available. If you think this might be for you please get in touch via the website www.SuffolkCoastGreeters.org.uk, email suffolkcoastgreeters@gmail.com or call 01394 444747 for more information.

Research holiday leader are people want to share their wildlife, ecological and local knowledge, and use their leadership and management skills to inspire new people to play a greater part in wildlife conservation on the Suffolk coast. See www.wilddaysconservation.org for examples.

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB are also keen to hear from anyone with an idea of a project or task at your project/museum/reserve/society that volunteers and visitors could help with, as a one-off, seasonal or year-round opportunity – for our own Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB practical conservation volunteers and for this newer Volunteer Tourism project related activities. Please contact Cathy Smith at Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB email: Catherine.smith@suffolk.gov.uk tel: 01394 445225.

SBRC Recording Online - Invasive Non-native Species

Ben Heather, Suffolk Biological Records Centre

Suffolk Biological Recording Online has a new public online survey for 'Invasive Non-Native Species'. Developed by Suffolk Biological Records Centre in partnership with the River Stour Project Officer, the new online form allows people to record sightings of 5 of the major invasive non-native plants that occur within Suffolk. The survey also collects important contextual information including the plants proximity to a watercourse, its life stage and its coverage. **Log your records here:** www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/inns



Floating Pennywort
Crown Copyright 2011 – GBNNS



Giant Hogweed
*Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 (UK)
Licence – Tom Richards, Wye and Usk
Foundation*



Himalayan Balsam
Crown Copyright 2011 – GBNNS



Japanese knotweed
Crown Copyright 2009 – GBNNS



Water Fern
Crown Copyright 2009 - GBNNS

There's a piece missing...we need your help to build up a picture of The Brecks' wildlife!

The Brecks is an important area for wildlife both in a UK and international context. However, many of the species records come from a few well recorded designated sites, with recording often done on an *ad hoc* basis. This means that it is often difficult to detect changes in the biodiversity of the area. There is, therefore, a need for wider recording of the Brecks area and a structured programme of species surveillance and monitoring.

Led by the [Norfolk Biological Information Service \(NBIS\)](#), this project will establish a network of volunteers recording wildlife throughout the [Breaking New Ground](#) (BNG) Landscape Partnership Scheme area (supported by the Heritage lottery Fund).

Whether you're a complete beginner or a seasoned surveyor, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved, with lots of support and training. You could simply tell us what you see whilst out walking, or get involved in a specific species survey.

Pop along to an introduction session to find out more about the project. There will also be a variety of species ID courses and photography workshops on offer. Individuals and local conservation or groups are invited to join in to help conserve the distinctive wildlife of The Brecks.

The project will operate at 3 levels:

BEGINNER: Training and encouragement provided to those new to recording wildlife.

SPECIES SURVEILLANCE: Enabling people to take the next step into more serious recording of sites. This will allow a number of important sites in the Brecks to be monitored and will also help to ensure sustainable long-term monitoring of sites where work is taking place as part of other BNG projects. Data collected will feed into the [Norfolk Species Surveillance Network](#).

RIVER CORRIDOR SURVEY – Little Ouse headwaters to Brandon. This is a non-native species survey of the Little Ouse river, from its headwaters at Redgrave and Lopham Fens to Brandon.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

If you are interested in any of the following, please let us know by emailing us at nbis@norfolk.gov.uk:

I am interested in recording wildlife in the Brecks in general and would like to attend a free introductory session

I am interested in recording in a structured way – i.e. monitoring wildlife in my local area or local site/nature reserve on an regular/annual basis

I am in a local conservation group/parish group or know of one that would be interested in being involved – NBIS can come and talk to your group and tailor a special introduction session to your needs and wildlife interests.

I am interested in wildlife identification or photography training workshops.

I am interested in volunteering and would like to talk through the options in more detail.

[Visit Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow >](#)

Hangin Hill Orchard, Rattlesden

Mike Smith, Hangin Hill Allotment Association, Rattlesden

Until recently Rattlesden village (pop. c. 900) was without any allotment gardens, but this has been rectified by a local group and, with the help of the local Parish Council and Suffolk County Council, a field of 0.68 acres has been established, providing 16 plots.

Members of the Allotment Association were keen that it should press as many “buttons” as possible and not just grow vegetables, and so when one particular plot had remained unused for a couple of seasons, it was decided to establish a Community Orchard there. With the help of a grant from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and guidance from Crown Nurseries, Ufford, we have now planted 10 apple trees largely of varieties with East Anglian connections – e.g. St Edmunds Pippin, Chelmsford Wonder, and Lord Stradbroke.

At the same time we also planted 3 young oaks in our hedgerow. The apple trees have had a good first year, with no losses, although sad to report that we may have lost two of our three oaks. We are keeping an inventory of the crops and it will be interesting to see how they compare in years to come.

The field is surrounded by a wire fence on stout wooded posts and so our next project is to acquire some maiden apples trees and train them as espaliers around two of the boundaries. Thus local biodiversity will be enhanced and in 10 years time the community shop should have some varied produce to sell.

Seawall Biodiversity Handbook

Tim Gardiner, Biodiversity Officer at the Environment Agency, Rob Pilcher, Ecology Team Leader for North England at AECOM and Max Wade, Technical Director (Ecology) at AECOM, have a long standing interest in the ecology and management of sea wall habitats. Their handbook on sea wall biodiversity brings together a wealth of knowledge about this Cinderella habitat, based on the authors’ experience of both practical management and the flora and fauna of sea walls. The handbook highlights the breadth of plant and animals species living and relying on sea walls and provides practical guidance for managers of sea defences to ensure that their biodiversity value is conserved and enhanced. The handbook is published by RPS and is supported by the Essex Field Club as the hosting organisation.

A low resolution copy can be downloaded from the [Essex Field Club website >](#)

Beachwatch and the Great British Beach Clean

Lynda Gilbert, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

Beachwatch and the Great British Beach Clean (GBBC) are two of the national beach cleaning and litter surveying schemes organised by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) that are coordinated along the length of the Suffolk coast and estuaries by the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Beachwatch surveys take place at quarterly intervals and the GBBC is the flagship annual event taking place over the third weekend of September and is the UK contribution to the International Coastal Clean-Up in which over 90 counties take part.

Nationally these schemes continue to break records. Increasing numbers of volunteers are regularly cleaning and surveying beaches and estuaries around the UK. The sad news is that the quantity of litter found is also on the increase. Over the last 10 years there has been a 20% increase in the amount of litter found including plastic pieces, fishing line, food wrappers, plastic bottle caps, balloons and sewage related debris which is made up of wet wipes, cotton bud sticks, condoms, toilet fresheners and nappies.

Our marine wildlife and the environment is endangered by the litter and it is not just the obvious risk of entanglement from discarded rope and nets. Turtles mistake plastic bags for jellyfish and the bags block their stomachs, often leading to death from starvation. Seabirds mistake floating plastic litter for food, and over 90% of fulmars found dead around the North Sea have plastic in their stomachs.

Plastic never biodegrades. It just breaks down into small pieces but does not disappear. Microplastic particles are now found inside filter feeding animals and amongst sand grains on our beaches.

Litter along our beaches and estuaries is also dangerous for people and damaging to our tourism.

The data collected from beach surveys enables MCS to identify particular areas of concern. They take the evidence to government, industry and policy makers and target specific types of pollution with campaigns to raise awareness including Break the Bag Habit - Help stop single-use carrier bags blighting our beaches and countryside, Don't Let Go – What goes up must come down! Help us stop balloons and sky lanterns killing wildlife, Microplastics - What's in your scrub? Download the microbead App and sign the petition for an EU ban on microplastics in consumer products and Hang on to your Tackle - Encourage anglers to put their fishing litter in special bins around the coast.

This September approximately 20 groups including Parish Councils, BT Aadastral Park, National Trust, RSPB, The Felixstowe Society & Damco, Guides and Scouts and individuals took part in Suffolk's GBBC with an estimated 450 volunteers doing their bit along the coast and estuaries, the results for the surveys will be released next spring. Despite record numbers of volunteers attending in some locations, other areas still require organisers and more volunteers. If you are interested in becoming a Beachwatch organiser or volunteering for an existing group please contact Lynda Gilbert lynda.gilbert@suffolk.gov.uk

The AONB can help and support organisers by loaning equipment such as litter sticks, bags and gloves and providing advice on how to carry out the surveys.

This is your chance to do something positive for the environment – act locally and be part of something global! If you are unable to volunteer please remember that we can all help to conserve and enhance our natural environment by following a few simple rules. Reduce use of plastic packaging, and reuse and recycle wherever possible. Take responsibility for safe disposal of all litter items whether at home, work or on holiday. Only Pee, Poo and Paper go down the toilet!



Scouts at Trimley Marsh



Alexanders International School at Bawdsey



Linda Hawes group at Aldeburgh

Ipswich Wildlife Network—Linking Habitats Around the Town

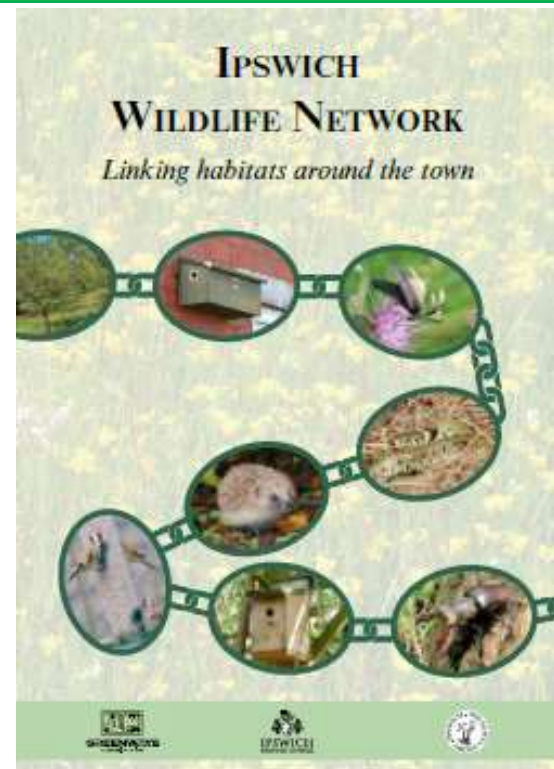
Matt Berry, Ipswich Borough Council

We are delighted to launch our new leaflet, highlighting to the public the importance of the ecological network in Ipswich, how their own land and gardens fit in, and vitally, how people can help improve the network for wildlife with some fairly simple actions.

The ecological network and this leaflet are a direct result of a wildlife audit carried out on behalf of Ipswich Borough Council by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, between 2012 and 2013. Almost 200 sites within the town were surveyed and ranked in terms of biodiversity value. This information gave us our core sites and helped identify and plot wildlife corridors on the map.

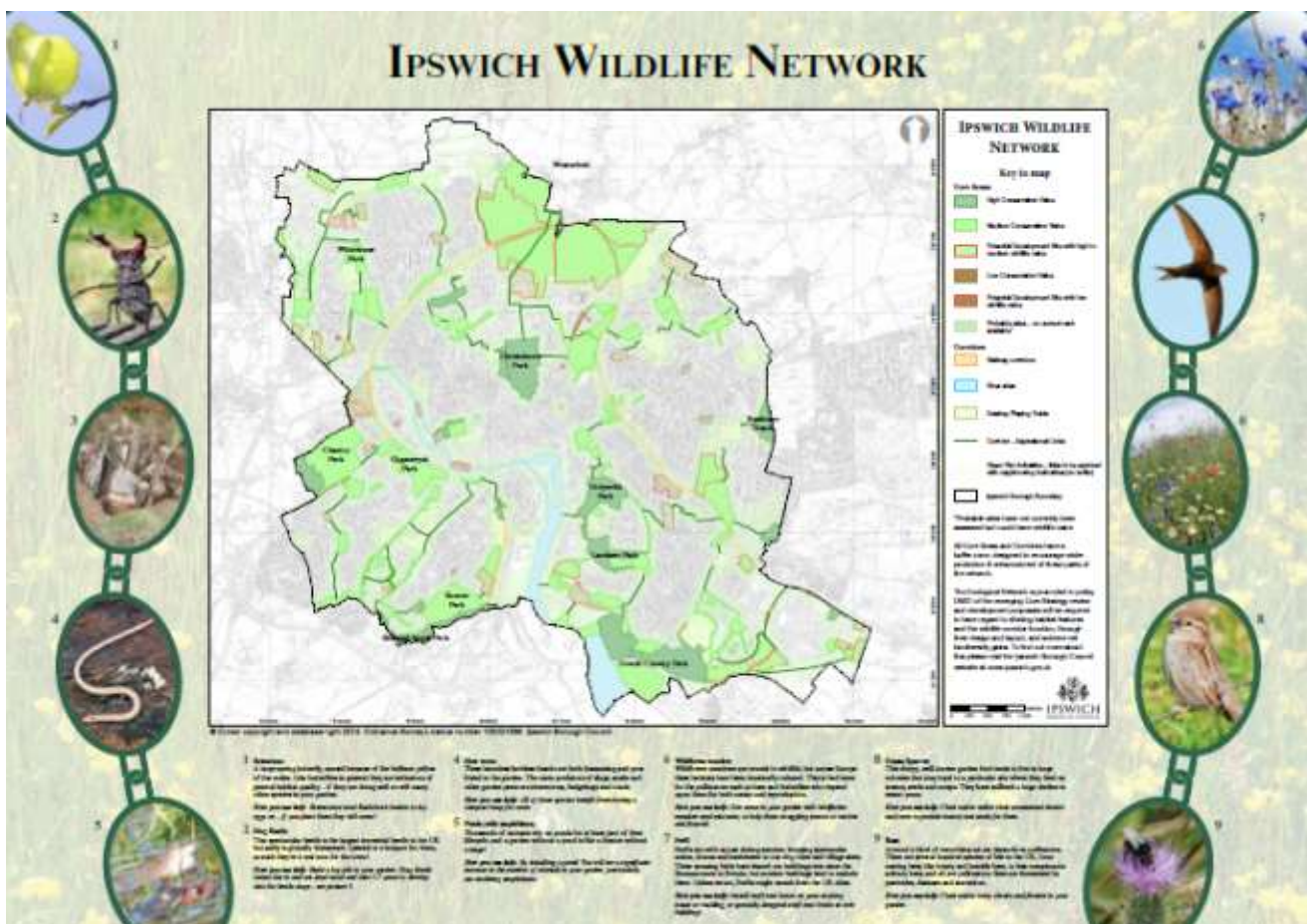
It quickly became evident that to influence the network beyond our own parks and nature reserves we had to engage the public in 'doing their bit' in their gardens. In keeping with other organisations, such as the RSPB, Ipswich Borough Council, together with Ipswich Wildlife Group and the Greenways Countryside Project, are doing just that by promoting a series of wildlife homes events across the town.

The leaflet is one way in which we hope to get our message across. We have switched the term 'ecological network' for 'wildlife network' as we feel it will resonate much more easily with the public.



For further information please contact Matt Berry at Ipswich Borough Council on 01473 433993 or email matt.berry@ipswich.gov.uk

[Download the leaflet >](#)



SUFFOLK BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP NEWS

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

Suffolk and Norfolk Biodiversity and Planning Seminar 2015 featured swifts, wildlife crime and so much more!

Organised by Suffolk and Norfolk Biodiversity Partnerships and the Association for Local Government Ecologists

What the delegates said: "*Fantastic enthusiasm (the speakers)*", "*Most speakers very engaging*", "*Brilliant, many thanks!*", "*Impressed with the quality of content and speakers*".

The annual seminar (now in its 11th year) has got better and better and this year's event was a terrific success. Hosted by St Edmundsbury Borough Council at West Suffolk House on 27th November, more than 90 planners and ecological consultants came together to hear about the latest national and regional developments and best practice for incorporating biodiversity into spatial planning and development management. The event also provides excellent networking and Continuing Professional Development opportunities. We are delighted to report that Norfolk and Suffolk delegates were joined this year by colleagues from Essex and Cambridgeshire.

The presentations are available to download from our [Planners' Page >](#) or below:

[Update on key national issues related to biodiversity in Development Management and Spatial Planning](#) *Mike Oxford, ALGE* (PDF 649 Kb)

[Wildlife crime – what do planners need to know?](#) *Chief Inspector Martin Sims, National Wildlife Crime Unit and Paul Cantwell, Natural England Wildlife Enforcement* (PDF 1.5 MB)

[Natural England licensing update](#) *Graham Irving, Natural England* (PDF 190 Kb)

[Swift nest boxes – how planners can build in success](#) *Edward Mayer, Swift Conservation* (PDF 1.6 MB)

[Norfolk Recreation Project – determining visitor patterns across Natura 2000 sites in Norfolk](#) *Anne Casey, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership* (PDF 4.1 MB)

[Developing a Biodiversity Checking Service for Planning Applications](#) *Discussion led by Sue Hooton, Suffolk County Council* (PDF 1.9 MB)

[Connecting Nature Fund – bio-offsetting in Norfolk](#) *Heidi Thompson, Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group* (PDF 3.6 MB)

Broxted Solar Farm Monitoring – a case study *Simone Bullion, Suffolk Wildlife Trust* This presentation is not available to download, Please contact Simone Bullion at Suffolk Wildlife Trust for further information simone.bullion@suffolkwildlifetrust.org

PUBLICITY

We are very grateful to John Grant from the East Anglian Daily Times, who joined us for the day and featured the event in two EADT weekend Environment Supplements:

5th Dec 2015 [Raising the Standards >](#) (PDF 898 Kb),

12th Dec 2015 [Inspiring Plea to end Swift Decline and Rays of hope for wildlife shine through as planning conditions and partnership reap early rewards >](#) (PDF 351 KB)

All change at Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership

Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership (SBP) is adapting to a new era, taking 17 years of experience to a new home within Suffolk Biological Records Centre (SBRC). SBP will cease to exist from early 2016 and all biodiversity work, including social media, the website and the newsletter will be under one roof at SBRC.

SBP has evolved since 1998 when the county-wide partnership was formed and for many years SBRC has funded and managed the role of the Suffolk Biodiversity Officer. SBRC Board members took a decision to incorporate the Biodiversity Officer role fully within the Records Centre at the autumn Board meeting.

SBRC to become Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service

To reflect this change, SBRC will become Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) in the spring of 2016. The Biodiversity Officer will become a member of SBIS staff, focusing on communication and supporting the work of SBIS.

SBIS is delighted that Suffolk's Local Authorities, Natural England and the Environment Agency support this change, enabling SBIS to provide a broader range of services in the future including:

- ◆ Close liaison with Local Authority Planning teams.
- ◆ The publication of a quarterly e-newsletter about SBIS developments, featuring the valuable biodiversity projects of voluntary organisations, Statutory bodies and community groups across Suffolk (similar to this newsletter).
- ◆ Web pages relating to biodiversity issues.
- ◆ A small project fund to support biodiversity projects.
- ◆ Information on Priority species and habitats.
- ◆ A major new project to re-survey Suffolk's County Wildlife Sites.

Work to support planners with biodiversity issues will continue and, depending upon demand, will expand beyond the annual Suffolk and Norfolk Planning and Biodiversity seminar, the *Planners' Update* and training workshops.

Thank You!

SBP has fulfilled an important role since 1998, supporting numerous partnership projects and major biodiversity initiatives with funding, time and expertise. This is an opportune time to say a huge 'Thank You' to the members of SBP Steering Group, all our numerous partners and supporters and to previous Biodiversity Officers Harriet Shackle, Johnny Turner and Mary Norden. In particular, Peter Holborn led SBP as long term chair of the Partnership and its Steering Group with commitment and vision. Natural England provided substantial financial support for the Biodiversity Partnerships from the early years until 2011.

In summary, this new development will secure the continuity of the Suffolk Biodiversity Officer role and greatly enhance the work of SBIS with its partners and clients.

Further information

Please check the SBP website www.suffolkbiodiversity for updates.

Contact Martin Sanford (SBRC) email martin.sanford@suffolk.gov.uk tel: 01473 433547 or

Gen Broad (Biodiversity Officer) gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk, tel: 01473 264308 / 078948 85337

For background information on Priority species and Habitats, see [SBP Moving On 2013 >](#)

Funding Opportunities

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 >](#)

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 >](#)

Follow us on Twitter [@suffolkbiod](#)



Newsletter Publication dates

The newsletter is published in Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

Deadline for Spring 2016 newsletter articles: **Friday 29th April 2016.**

**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 its work through Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan, please visit 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

tel: 01473 264308, Mobile: 078948 85337, email: gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk