

Newsletter

Autumn 2018

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Wishing all of our readers a Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year!

Welcome to the New Suffolk County Council Head of Natural Environment!

Tim De-Keyzer joined Suffolk County Council on 8th October to take on the post of Head of Natural Environment, following Nick Collinson's departure to the National Trust last year. Tim comes with huge experience and a great track record of working to protect and enhance the environment, whilst delivering sustainable growth. Tim previously worked for Natural England and lives in Suffolk. A warm welcome to you Tim!

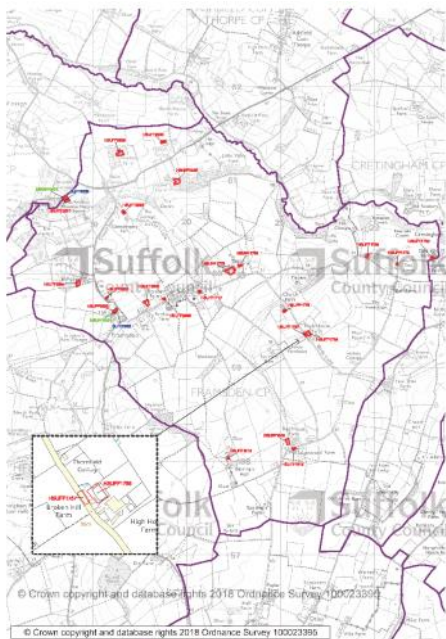
SBIS GIS (digital mapping) News

In August, GIS biodiversity data updates were made available for download by service-level agreement partners from <http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/downloads>. Users need to register first by contacting SBIS in order to have access to the relevant download section. Once registered, customers are able to download either the full update of Species and Sites (in 2 formats: MapInfo TAB or ESRI Shapefile) or the County Wildlife Site, Roadside Nature Reserve and County GeoSite updates (available as TAB or Shapefile with citations in Access, Excel or PDF formats).

Training and support for Suffolk Coast & Heaths and Dedham Vale AONBs continued with 3 MapInfo training sessions since July, and more planned for staff and volunteer placements. Other AONB work included Landscape Character Type maps for inclusion in the AONBs' "Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development" documents, and the provision of State of the AONB statistics for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan.

Update work continued on the County Wildlife Site data, including the addition of the large area of The Commons of Ilketshall St Andrew and Ilketshall St John. An analysis is currently being done to find CWS with SSSI designation, with a view to removing these double-designation sites from the register - these will retain protection as SSSI which, for forests, now covers other taxa in addition to birds. These will include the large forests of Aldewood and Thetford. Any parts of these sites which are not SSSI will be assessed for retention as CWS.

SBIS had discussions with Suffolk Records Office about the possibility of developing a SRO interactive on-line map, giving public access to layers of archive and community information across the county. The mapping system could be similar to Bristol's "Know Your Place" <https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/knowyourplace/>



Surveyor's map for Framsdan, Mid Suffolk

Work continued for Orchards East, with 57 surveyor maps now completed.

A typical surveyor's map is illustrated - that for Framsdan, 10 miles north of Ipswich in the Mid Suffolk district.

The parish is outlined in purple, the orchards previously recorded on the early 1900s Ordnance Survey map shown in red, the orchards identified by the People's Trust for Endangered Species aerial survey shown in blue and those on the current map shown in green.

East Anglian Planning and Biodiversity Seminar 2018

The annual Planning and Biodiversity seminar, hosted by Norfolk and Suffolk, is a popular, and increasingly important, event as more and more homes are built in ever larger developments. The event provides a valuable forum where those involved in the planning process, such as local authorities, wildlife charities and ecological consultants, are able to meet, exchange ideas and cooperate across the region.

We were delighted to welcome more than 120 people to the Ipswich Waterfront venue at the University of Suffolk on 22nd November. *The varied presentations included practical actions for species, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Suffolk Design Guide 2019, how green space impacts health and well-being and wildlife crime linked to developments.*

The day's host, Mike Oxford (Association of Local Government Ecologists), gave an overview of national events, including the publication of the revised NPPF which refers to the drive towards 'net gains for biodiversity', which he believes to be an immensely positive step forward. He also encouraged people to provide feedback on the new Bat Conservation Trust Wildlife Assessment Check (see p.16). Gareth Durrant, Principal Planning Officer (Major Projects) West Suffolk Council, gave an overview of the 'People Over Wind' case, Appropriate Assessments, and the implications of the case for Development Control decisions.

The design of developments came under scrutiny in two presentations. Phillip Isbell, Acting Chief Planning Officer for Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils, and Lindsey Wilkinson, Chartered Landscape Architect, jointly presented a session on the Suffolk Design Initiative which aims to ensure that new development schemes contribute to Suffolk's unique character and

identity. Lindsey showed how biodiversity can be incorporated into schemes from the start and are not 'added at the end as a tick-box exercise'. The Suffolk Design Guide will be published spring/summer 2019. Carl Petrokofsky, Specialist Adviser with Public Health England, presented solid, evidence-based research showing how good development design can promote good physical and mental health and well-being for everyone. Local authorities (amongst others) play a vital role in this process, creating and maintaining urban green spaces.

Wildlife crime can be an issue in new developments, for example, ecological surveys being done incorrectly or not at all, Protected Species being present on site or Natural England licences not being obtained. Paul Cantwell, Police Support Volunteer with Essex & Suffolk Constabularies, explained through case studies how the police work extensively in collaboration with wildlife groups, Natural England, the Crown Prosecution Service and local authorities to resolve such problems.

The seminar always has a focus on practical actions which will help wildlife - this year the spotlight was on stag beetles, birds and pollinators. Colin Hawes, a national expert based with the Royal Holloway University of London, described how a simple vertical log pile with some wood buried underground can provide new habitat for the species. David Dowding, from the charity Buglife, explained how important it is for developments to include plants for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and wasps; and Gavin Siriwardena from the British Trust for Ornithologists, described how planners can use existing bird data to facilitate planning decisions.



East Anglian Planning and Biodiversity Seminar
 Organized by Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership Service, Norfolk County Council
 in association with the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE)
 Thursday 22nd November 2018
 9:00 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.
 University of Suffolk, Waterfront Building, Ipswich IP4 1QJ

Aims:

- To provide an overview of the latest national and county-level initiatives in planning and best practice related to spatial planning, development management and biodiversity.
- To encourage an exchange of experience about biodiversity issues in planning amongst planners, consultants and ecological consultants in Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and neighbouring counties.

Topics:

- How biodiversity issues in development management and spatial planning
- Spatial planning for health - green infrastructure
- Planning for Pollinators
- Suffolk Design Guide
- Wildlife for stag beetles
- Uses of bird survey data to facilitate planning decisions
- People Over Wind case
- Wildlife crime and developments

Search available at £5.00 (per attendee only) or bring your own.

Present an abstract if possible (to meet by publication)
 Contact: Steve Clark, Norfolk County Council or Cheryl Duggan, Norfolk County Council - 01620 325200 or 01473 211212

Continuing Professional Development opportunity
 A further understanding of biodiversity in development planning
 Exchange ideas & contacts
 - www.norfolk.gov.uk

Planning & Biodiversity seminar flyer



Improving in-channel habitat at Stowmarket

Naomi Boyle, Environment Agency



Installing features on the River Gipping

The Environment Agency (EA) working in collaboration with Muntons and PPG Industries has recently completed some habitat enhancements on the River Gipping at Stowmarket.

Over two days we installed five woody debris mattresses and three flow deflectors over a 700m length of watercourse. These works will improve habitat diversity and provide additional habitat for fish in this section of the river. The flow deflectors will increase flow velocity locally thereby helping to keep areas of gravel bed clean of sediment and suitable for fish spawning. The mattresses will provide cover and habitat for invertebrates and fish, including areas of slack water during times of high flows.



Making brush bundles

Woody material has historically been removed from many of our watercourses as part of routine river management. However, there is an increasing realisation that timber, together with smaller twigs and branches, is an essential ingredient of healthy river systems. Flood risk management attitudes are changing, and now wood is only removed routinely in situations where it would cause an unacceptable flood risk.

Funding for the work was provided by Defra's Water Improvement Fund, woody brush for the mattresses and logs for the flow deflectors were provided by Muntons from their wider site. The works were carried out under a Flood Risk Activity permit from the EA.

We are always looking for landowners willing to work with us on river enhancement projects. For more information or to discuss any ideas for future projects please contact: Naomi Boyle, Catchment Co-ordinator (Suffolk), Environment Agency naomi.boyle@environment-agency.gov.uk

Pond skater survey in Felixstowe

Adrian Cooper, Felixstowe Community Nature Reserve

Throughout July and August, Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve encourages all local people to build wildlife ponds.

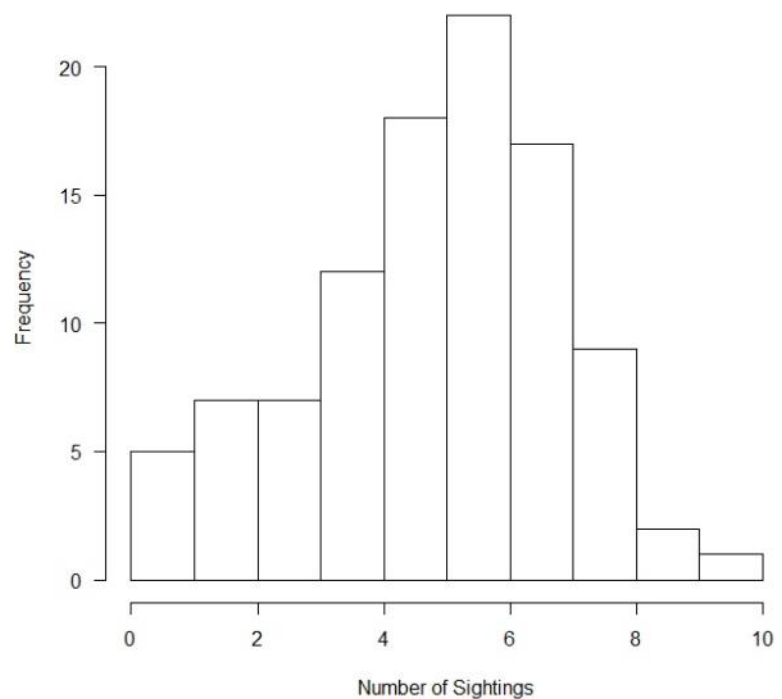
Feedback from local people shows that Common Pond Skaters *Gerris lacustris* are a particular favourite of our members.

Our Citizen Science Group therefore took a random sample from 100 of our members who have wildlife ponds and asked them how many times they saw a pond skater on 1st August 2018.

Among the highlights of this survey, we found that 9 people reported seeing 8 pond skaters, 17 people reported seeing 7 pond skaters, 22 people reported seeing 6 pond skaters and 18 people reported seeing 5 pond skaters (see histogram).

The website of our Citizen Science Group can be found [here >](#)

Pond Skater Sightings 1 August 2018

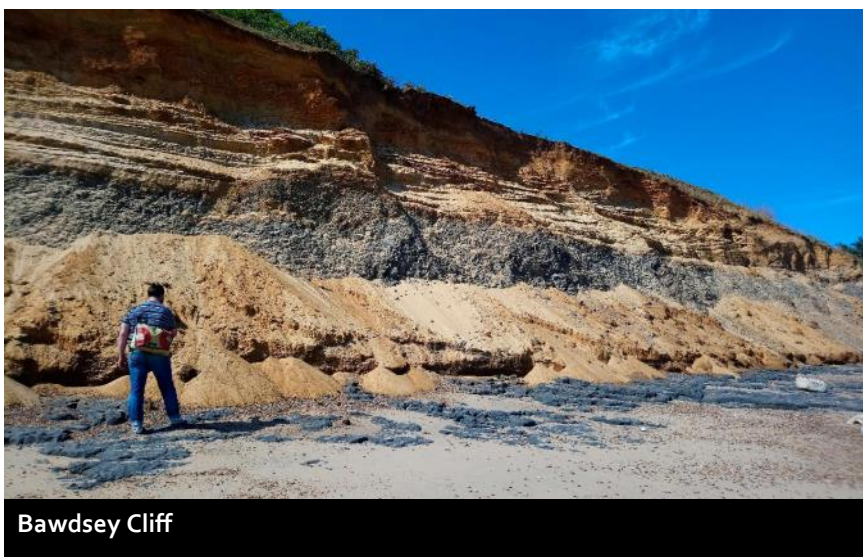


Bawdsey Cliff SSSI: Underground Economics

Bob Markham, GeoSuffolk

Bawdsey Cliff on a beautiful July day this year allowed a glimpse into our past. A 2¼ million year old sea bed, the sandy Red Crag, rests on grey London Clay, a 54 million year old sea bed. The North Sea today has eroded this fine cliff section and is depositing its own sand on the eroded London Clay platform. Landowners in south-east Suffolk will be familiar with the springs issuing from the junction of the crag and the clay - often associated with slope failure. However, the sand at the base of the cliff here is due to simple debris fall from the top of the cliff.

The crag has had many agricultural uses – spreading it on heathland at Levington in the 1700s helped lead to the Inclosure Acts; controlled experiments at Martlesham in the 1920s contributed to the Lime Subsidy Schemes. Also of course its phosphate nodule content ('coprolites') led directly to today's artificial fertiliser industry.



In Victorian times many local villages had brickyards using their local London Clay to make the red bricks commonly used in buildings here.

The geologist studying these strata in the photo would find the London Clay platform very slippery if the day was wet and his dog (not in the photo) would have all four legs going in different directions.

Bawdsey Cliff

Tree Wardens in Suffolk

Trees are important in so many ways. In addition to their generally accepted key role in maintaining biodiversity and providing a natural haven for wildlife, trees bring all kinds of environmental and health benefits. These range from absorbing carbon dioxide and reducing flash flooding to improving air quality and increasing a sense of well-being.



Tree Wardens are a national force of local tree champion volunteers who understand and promote these connections to “Make Trees Matter to Everybody”. As a result of the Great Storm of 1987, the Tree Warden Scheme was launched in 1990 by The Tree Council, a national charity which works with local authorities, voluntary organisations, parish councils and local partnerships to set up and develop Tree Warden Networks in towns, villages and countryside. Community involvement is a central aim of the scheme.

Tree Wardens act as a point of contact for all things trees in their parish, often working with their parish council or other community organisations. As volunteers, Tree Wardens get involved in local tree matters and local practical projects related to trees and woods. These projects include gathering information about their local trees by carrying out surveys on, for example, hedgerows, orchards, veteran trees and native Black Poplars, and monitoring tree diseases such as Ash die-back. Tree Wardens also get involved in planting hedgerows, community woods and orchards as well as increasing awareness of the value of trees in schools and giving guided tree walks and producing tree trail leaflets. As local people, Tree Wardens know their areas and can take the most effective action to protect and enhance their immediate environment.

Suffolk Tree Warden Network

There have been Tree Wardens in Suffolk since the early 1990’s. This scheme was very successfully run by local authority Tree Officers and increased awareness of the value of trees by Tree Wardens carrying out tree & hedgerow surveys and planting lots of community orchards and woods all over Suffolk. The Suffolk Tree Warden Network (STWN) was set up in 2017 to encourage and coordinate Tree Wardens across the county. This was in response to district council cut backs and withdrawal of organisational and training support for Suffolk Tree Wardens. Suffolk County Council is very supportive of STWN enabling us to set up a website, hold meetings & events and give training courses. There are currently about 150 Tree Wardens in Suffolk and our aim is to have a Tree Warden in every parish or group of small parishes.



Suffolk Tree Warden Network Spring Forum and AGM

Suffolk Tree Warden Network provides the training, guidance and support required for volunteers to work as Tree Wardens. We hold several events a year. This year these have included: Tree Pests & Diseases (given by the Forestry Commission in March), STWN Spring Forum & AGM (April), Woodland Management, Tree Identification & Tree Warden Roles (July & September), Tree Planting & After Care (November).

In Babergh & Mid Suffolk, the network is being organised into local groups where Tree Wardens from neighbouring parishes can get together informally to share experiences and exchange information and ideas. Tree Wardens in East Suffolk are organising get-togethers this winter (December) and winter Tree ID walks (January 2019). We do not know about many Tree Wardens in West Suffolk so it will take time for the network to develop here. The good news is that there was a large planting project on 24th November at Peacocks Farm, Wickhambrook in West Suffolk at the start of the national tree planting week.



Framsden Jubilee tree planting 1st December 2012

Winter 2018/19 planting programme

STWN are working with the Woodland Trust to supply trees for Tree Wardens to plant in agreement with landowners and their parish councils. Always planting 'the right tree in the right place'.

The trees will be delivered in early December in packs of 50 whips. At the time of writing there are still some packs available. If there is somewhere in your parish which would benefit from more trees, we would like to hear from you.



Tree planting as part of a large project at Staverton 2004



Planting a tree in memory of Ken Liddle, Tree Warden for Botesdale, Northfield Community Wood, Rickingham, 25th March 2018

Becoming a Tree Warden

New Tree Wardens are always welcome. Our website, www.suffolktreewardens.org.uk has a map of Suffolk showing which parishes have Tree Wardens who we are in contact with. The map does not show many Tree Wardens especially in West Suffolk. If your parish has a Tree Warden and is not marked green on the map, or if you are interested in becoming a Tree Warden, please contact Frances Jannaway.

More information

Contact me, Frances Jannaway (chair/coordinator STWN) for further information, I will be delighted to tell you how you can get involved. Tel: 01379 672987 or Email: coordinator@suffolktreewardens.org.uk

Our website www.suffolktreewardens.org.uk has a wealth of information on what Tree Wardens do and how to become one.

Check the Tree Council website: <http://www.treecouncil.org.uk> for general information about the work of the Tree Council and Tree Wardens in other areas of the country.



UK Habitat Classification—UKHab Working Group

The UK Habitat Classification is a free and comprehensive approach to classifying habitats, designed to provide a simple and robust approach to survey and monitoring. A Working Group of professional ecologists has developed and refined the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab), with a combination of field trials and expert consultations.

The new classification can be used in a wide range of survey types from walkover surveys of small urban sites to regional and national scale rural habitat mapping. The classification will be a valuable tool for species and habitat research, ecological impact, ecosystem services and biodiversity net gain assessments.

“Introducing the UK Habitat Classification – Updating Our Approach to Habitat Survey, Monitoring and Assessment” is available [here](#) >, with kind permission of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

The UKHab Working Group

The UKHab Working Group 2014-18 – Bill Blucher, Peter Carey, Bob Edmonds, Lisa Norton and Jo Treweek.



Acknowledgements



Beach Clean Event

A Great British Beach Clean event at Trimley Marshes foreshore saw an incredible 141 people come to help care for their local patch and wage war on the tide of plastic pollution on our coasts and estuaries. **They collected and removed an amazing 540 kg of waste!**

Outstanding Landscapes in the Future - Survey

We would like to invite you to contribute to future decisions regarding the conservation and enhancement of Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). We are producing a “**State of the AONB**” report for each landscape area in 2019, and as part of this we are seeking views from people living and working in the area and those that visit these outstanding landscapes. We would like to hear from as many people as possible. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete—please click [here >](#) The survey is open until **Friday 11 January 2019**.

Felixstowe Community Nature Reserve supports the European Citizen Science Association

The big news from Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve is that our Citizen Science Group has now been accepted as a Network Supporter of the European Citizen Science Association. That means that we are exchanging data and ideas with like-minded people all over Europe. [Here is a link to our Citizen Science Group >](#)

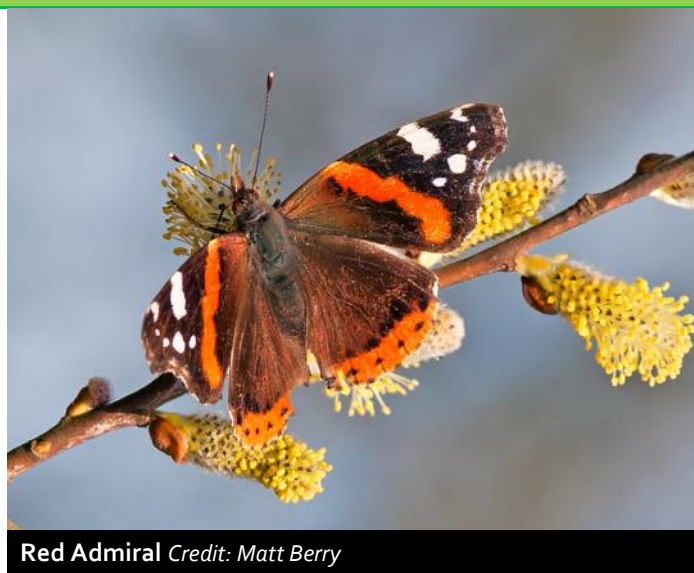
As a whole, Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve now has 1,182 active members. Together they have created over 4,300 square yards of new, sustainable wildlife-friendly green space in their gardens and allotments. That's equivalent to about 90% of a full sized football pitch.

We emphasize the theme of inclusiveness in all our work - that includes working alongside local artists and musicians. Our Autumn film is a good example of how that sense of inclusiveness works out in a practical way. [Here is a link to that film >](#)



An Unexpected Abundance of Red Admirals

Rob Parker, Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation



Red Admiral Credit: Matt Berry

2018 has been a confusing season in many ways. The early false spring tempted species hibernating as adults to fly earlier than usual, and then to be caught out by an unseasonably cold spell, followed by the long drought that parched the nettles at the time that the larvae of Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks and Commas ought to have been feeding up. All these species had their development interrupted and were hard to find in the summer months. The buddleja burst into flower on time, but the blossom was devoid of butterflies; it seemed as if 2018 would prove to be a poor season for all those species.

And yet, I can report one unexpected sighting of Red Admirals in the King's Forest. On 1st August, Sharon Hearle, our Regional Officer, assembled a field meeting as a contribution to recording a baseline species list on behalf of the Forestry Commission. It was a fine, sunny morning, and we left the Forest Lodge car park at West Stow for the northbound ride. After a few paces, we were aware that there were Red Admirals all around us, some were rising from around our feet, others were chasing in the sunny glade to our right, and plenty were settled on the trees and brambles around us. We noticed that the track on which we were walking was strewn with squashed cherries fallen from the mature cherry trees above us, although there were no concentrations of butterflies actively feeding on the cherries. There were 6 sunning themselves together on the end of an outbuilding, and another 6 on the other end. We walked a hundred yards watching this spectacle with amazement, and the sighting ceased abruptly as we walked on up the track. Two hours later, after a good search of the forest ride, we had seen 17 species, but almost no more Red Admirals. We had speculated as to

whether they would still be present on our return, and we were not disappointed. Their behaviour was as before, a cloud of them flying up from the track and chasing one another, plenty more to be seen resting all around. Another hundred yards brought us back to the car park – where there were none. Someone asked how many there had been, and I offered an estimate of at least 30, others thought more, but we did not attempt an accurate count.

I speculated that we had been lucky to walk into a mass emergence from the vigorous nettle patch nearby.

The following day, I suggested to my wife that I could take her to that spot, though I could not promise that the Red Admirals would still be present. To my great surprise, we were treated to a re-run of the same spectacle. There was an abundance of *Vanessa atalanta* in exactly the same spot, and behaving in the same way – joyous chases of 3 or 4 together, coming up from the path at our feet and circling in the sunny glade. This time, we made an organized count as we walked back through “Admiral Alley”. In that short stretch, we recorded an absolute minimum of 40. As before, they seemed fond of the cherry-strewn track, but were not seen with their probosces out. They had spread out a little though; there were a few in the car park, and a couple more flying further down the exit route.

Since then, there has been a great dearth of Vanessids, and as I write in September there is still plenty of Buddleia in flower without butterflies and excellent mounds of ivy blossom offering nectar – but not a Red Admiral to be seen!

What a confusing season!



Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* Credit: Trevor Goodfellow



Website: <https://suffolkotters.wordpress.com>

Hinderclay Meeting

Our meeting in April hosted by the Little Ouse Headwaters Project was a great success and many thanks to them for arranging everything. Over 30 people attended and heard an update from Tom Hughes on his PhD using DNA techniques, saw some of the remarkable results Arthur has been getting from his Redgrave and Lopham Fen videos, and heard updates from the other areas we work in. After lunch visits were made to sites in the area looking at otter signs.

The next meeting is at **Minsmere on Sunday 30th September** in the Discovery Centre from 10.00 to 16.00 hours, coffee from 9.30. Bring a packed lunch but there is an excellent café on site.

(To find the Discovery Centre walk back out of the vehicle entrance of the main car park and the entrance is almost opposite. You do not need to go to Reception)

Minsmere Family matters

We may not be able to recognise individuals but by counting the family groups we can assess productivity. At Minsmere since 2015 a snapshot in each June gives the following results.

2015—3 families; 2016 – 3 families; 2017—2 families; 2018—1 family;

We do not have any explanation at this time for the apparent drop in population. Fish monitoring is not carried out at the moment but there has been no dramatic decline in the other fish eaters—bitterns for example. No dead otters have been found although one sick one was collected by the RSPCA. A total of 18 cubs getting through to the break-up stage over a 4 year period would suggest recruitment is not a problem. Monitoring over such a short period does not allow us to understand if this is part of the natural fluctuation in family groups or something we should be worried about.



Key - mother +1 cub - mother +2 cubs -mother +3 cubs)

The Health of our Rivers

The biggest factor affecting otter populations in Suffolk is the fish populations in our rivers and streams. Unfortunately after the 2nd World War many of our rivers were straightened and meanders removed. In the case of the River Blyth this resulted in a reduction in the water level of about 1 metre (3') and a dramatic reduction in the variety and numbers of fish. You never see a fisherman on the banks of the Blyth. The Little Ouse Headwaters Project has been involved in some pioneer work to improve the channel on the Little Ouse and some of the damage is being undone. However the rivers continue to receive a cocktail of pollutants from agriculture, the original source of Dieldrin which decimated the otters in the 50s and 60s.

The Water Framework Directive, a piece of European legislation, is an important driver in achieving river improvements. If this legislation comes under threat post-Brexit we will need to ensure something as good takes its place. We must get ready to chain ourselves to the railings and man the barricades.

Trail Cameras

To date we have used Bushnells on most of our sites which - at nearly £200 - are a considerable investment and if anything goes wrong after the end of the guarantee period there is no after sales service! We have recently tried 2 cheap models (pictured) They are £50-£60 and have sideways-pointing sensors that wake the camera up when something is approaching from the side. They seem to perform well although they are not as robust as more expensive models and they produce massive video files. Arthur has some Browning models that he likes and they seem to have better after care service.



Otters on our Estuaries

At a recent meeting of those involved with studying otters on the Blyth and Alde/Ore estuaries the general feeling was that estuaries are not ideal hunting ground for otters. However, from our spraint analysis we know that otters do use them - crab crops up frequently. We also get rockling, flatfish and eelpout but the only estuarine species we find in any quantity is the goby which occurs in more than half the spraint samples. It quickly became clear that, apart from Meg Amsden's video of an otter foraging on the mud at Blythburgh, we have no evidence of feeding

behaviour. This, together with knowing very little about how the fish behave, leaves a serious gap in our knowledge. We



did try out an infra-red monocular, kindly loaned by the Wildlife Trust's Hedgehog Project, but were quickly convinced that scanning the wide expanses of the Blyth estuary in the pitch dark was asking too much of the equipment. However Dan, who you may have met at the Hinderclay meeting, has offered to go out on the mud, using a mud sledge, to sample the top layers, to see if this is where the goby hide at low tide. Oh the enthusiasm of youth!

Otters at Folk East

Meg Amsden, one of our avid spraint collectors on the Blyth, has put together a video "Caught in the Act" taking clips from our dedicated volunteers who monitor remote cameras at the Little Ouse, Minsmere, Westwood Marshes, Halesworth Millennium Green and Hen Reedbeds. She took this for its premiere at Folk East. Hopefully this will get a showing at the Minsmere meeting at the end of September.

National Case Study

We have been invited to take part in a research project that is being undertaken by Dr. Daniel Allen from Keele University. It will explore the relationships between fisheries, anglers, otter conservationists, policy makers and the otter. It is the first evidence-based research project to engage with national and local stakeholder perspectives relating to fisheries and predation and the protected otter in England. Somerset, Suffolk and Kent have been selected as local case studies.

Do Spraint Results Reflect Habitat Quality for Otters?

The dramatic decline of eel numbers in British waters has been well reported and they are now listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. They were always a popular food for otters being slow-moving and bottom-dwelling and they also have the highest calorific value and fat content of any fish.

Hans Kruuk's study on the lakes and rivers on the river Don catchment, published in 2014, showed an increase in bird predation as eel numbers declined (*Otters and eels: long-term observations on declines in Scotland*. Hans Kruuk. IUCN Otter Spec. Group

Bull. 31(1) 2014.) He also recorded a dramatic decrease in otter numbers during this time from three families resident in the area to otters just visiting.

Kruuk's earlier studies in Shetland also showed how poorer quality prey was taken in the spring when their usual food was in shorter supply (*Wild Otters: pp.134-6*). He particularly singled out crab as poor quality as it always had to be taken ashore to eat and contained large amounts of waste exo-skeleton.

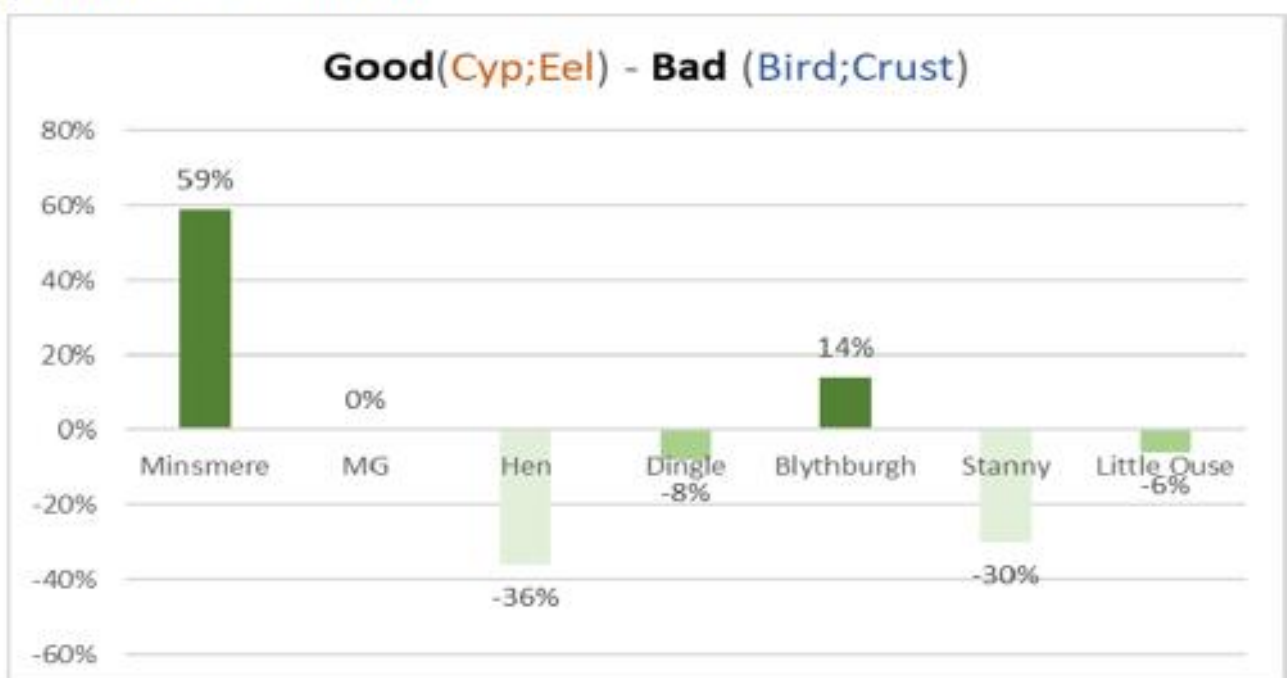


We decided to look at the relationship between "good" and "bad" quality prey in our spraint results as a measure for the quality of the habitat for otters. A simple start. On the good side of the equation we put eel, obviously, and cyprinids (the carp family). These were included on the basis that cyprinids are at the larger end of the spectrum of fish eaten by otters and the very large ones may be missed and therefore under-

represented in our spraint analysis. We defined bird and crustacean (crab; shrimp; or crayfish) as bad. Minsmere comes out best and the two estuary sites, Stanny on the Alde and Hen Reedbeds on the Blyth, come out worst. Blythburgh does well because although it is on the transition between estuary and freshwater it has a high eel percentage

in the spraint (38%). The Little Ouse suffers, as a blockage downstream prevents any eels getting through. The Environment Agency are actively involved in removing unnecessary barriers or creating bypasses on many of our rivers.

This hypothesis needs a lot more work but it would be really good if it turned out to reflect reality!



Otter

Otter enters river without a falter—what a supple slider out of holt and into water!

This shape shifter's a sheer breath taker, a sure heart-stopper—but you'll only ever spot a shadow-flutter, bubble-skein, and never (almost never) actual otter.

This swift swimmer's a silver miner~ with trout its ore it bores each black pool deep and deeper, delves up-current steep and steeper, turns the water inside-out, then inside-outer.

Ever dreamed of being otter? That utter underwater thunderbolter, that shimmering twister?

Run to the riverbank, otter-dreamer, slip your skin and change your matter, pour Your outer being into otter ~and enter now as otter without falter into water.



Words by Robert McFarlane picture by Jackie Morris
from "The Lost Words", Penguin Books, 2017

and try watching this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avYKsWhtwyU>

With grateful thanks to the Suffolk Otter Group for permission to reproduce part of their August 2018 newsletter. To find out more about the Group, [visit their website >](#)

Breckland Society Journal Vol. 2 published Breaking New Ground Landscape Partnership Scheme

As part of the legacy of the successful Breaking New Ground Landscape Partnership Scheme, hosted by Suffolk County Council and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Breckland Society announced the publication of the second volume of the **Journal of Brecks Studies** in September. The publication was also supported by a grant from Suffolk Naturalists' Society. Six illustrated papers are included: Archaeological investigation of a 'lost' prison of war camp near Eriswell (Daria Adamson); The grasshoppers of Breckland: their classification and conservation (Tim Gardiner); The Beachampwell shepherd hut: a conservation project (Peter Goulding); The demise of the Breckland lichen flora (Peter Lambley); Before the Forestry Commission: planting woodland in Breckland prior to the 1920s (Henry Kilvert); and Using large-scale citizen science to examine the importance of the Brecks for bats (Stuart Newson & James Parry)

For a downloadable copy of Vol. 1 and a details on how to obtain Vol. 2, please visit [The Brecks Society >](#)

RSPB lowering seawall to protect Suffolk's only island

RSPB

Work currently underway to lower a 650 metre section of the seawall surrounding Havergate Island by nearly half a meter will enable the RSPB to safeguard the unique Suffolk Coast nature reserve's habitats against the impact of increasingly frequent storm surges predicted as a result of climate change.

Havergate Island has been an RSPB nature reserve since 1949, after avocets were found breeding on the island in 1947. Until then, avocets had been extinct as breeding birds in the UK for more than 100 years.

Today, avocets still nest on the island and adjacent RSPB nature reserves, and it has become very important for nesting gulls, terns and large numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders. The island is home to the rare yellow-striped bear spider and starlet sea anemone along with a wealth of rare coastal plants.

In recent years, increasingly frequent tidal storm surges have taken their toll on the island's habitats and wildlife, damaging the seawall, flooding lagoons and washing away shingle banks. The solution though has been not to build up the seawalls, but to lower them in places to allow the sea to flow into the lagoons in a controlled way when storms cause unusually high tides.

The work does not stop there. The material generated by lowering the height of the seawall will be used to create a gently sloping bank inside the wall down to the lagoon, which will be sown with native coastal grass-seed. In the lagoon itself, new islands will be created for nesting waders, including avocets.

Aaron Howe, RSPB Sites Manager for the South Suffolk Coast said: "This kind of natural flood management means we can keep Havergate Island's habitats safe at the same time as contributing towards alleviating the impact of future storm surges elsewhere on the estuary. It's a win-win situation, and the kind of thing I'm sure we will see more of in response to rising sea levels impacting on people and nature on the Suffolk Coast."

This innovative project has been part-funded by the Environment Agency with a £50,000 grant awarded as part of Defra's £15m Natural Flood Management Programme, by the Landfill Tax Fund through a £46,990 grant awarded by Viridor Credits, and by the Pamela Matthews Charitable Trust.



Havergate Island saltmarsh and Alde-Ore estuary. Credit: AJM



Avocet Credit: Ben Andrew (RSPB-images.com)

Citizen Scientists Needed for Beach Project

Katie Moore, Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science

There are sporadic incidents of waxy deposits being washed up on our coastlines, but little is known about the location, frequency and nature of these deposits. Many are incorrectly assumed to be palm oil, but we have been working on a project to investigate the frequency and nature of these deposits, and to try to identify chemical composition, in order to collate information into a database.

To further develop this database and an identification tool, we need to get records of sightings and samples of the substances. For more information on the project, please contact Katharine.moore@cefas.co.uk

Planning in a Designated Landscape: Guides, Rules & Tools - Conference Suffolk AONBs

Friday 25 January 2019 9.00 am- 13.30 pm

Planning in a Designated Landscape: Guides, Rules & Tools

An outstanding opportunity to learn about planning matters in the nationally designated AONBs. Whether you work in planning, sit on a planning committee, are a developer or architect or simply have an interest in planning in the AONBs then join us on Friday 25 January 2019. The AONB team event will feature national experts on planning policy, tranquillity, use of colour in design and factors contributing natural beauty (the reason for the national AONB designation).

Venue: Waterfront building at the University of Suffolk in Ipswich.

Register your interest via email dedhamvale.project@suffolk.gov.uk

[The full programme and booking details can be seen here >](#) Only 17 places left!

Attendance at the event can count towards CPD.

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Work Parties

Neil Lister, Suffolk AONBs

The volunteers regularly undertake practical conservation work. If you would like to work outdoors in the beautiful Suffolk Coast & Heaths, help your local environment and meet some new people, why not join us? Most tasks begin at 9.30 am and finish at 3.00 pm. You work for as long as you wish and at your own pace.

Tue 15th Jan Scrub clearance at **Southwold Common**

Sun 20th Jan Coppicing and making brushwood bundles in **Butley Woods**

Tue 5th Feb Improve a geological site **Crag Pit at Alderton**

Tue 19th Feb Scrub clearance at **Tunstall Common**

For further information contact:

Neil Lister

Tel: 01394 445218

email: neil.lister@suffolk.gov.uk

Visit www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org

Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning - Wildlife Assessment Check Bat Conservation Trust

The Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning is seeking to increase awareness about the need for background biodiversity checks by local planning authorities as well as by householders and developers. The partnership, involving 18 organisations, has developed a free online tool – the Wildlife Assessment Check – to help indicate when expert ecological input is required as a part of a planning application.

The tool has been designed to help householders and smaller developers check whether their proposed site and works are likely to require expert ecological advice before making a planning application. It aims to smooth out the planning application process for applicants by encouraging them to address potential ecological impacts early on, reducing unnecessary delays and costs; and to support local planning authorities who lack in-house ecological capacity.

The partnership is now rolling out the tool and inviting user feedback over the next few months to ensure that it works well and is straightforward to use. It is available [here >](#)

Updating the database for native Black Poplars (*Populus nigra* var. *betulifolia*)

Sue Hooton, County Recorder for Native Black Poplars

As winter arrives, it is likely that some of Suffolk's mature trees may be damaged or blown over by strong winds. Although many species of trees are widespread, there are only 290 known locations for Native Black Poplars in Suffolk and only 120 are of a known genetic type. Some of these trees have not been checked for 20 years so the SBIS record may be archived unless the tree is known to still be present.

Where someone can visit the fallen tree or branch before it is removed, cuttings taken over winter usually strike roots quite easily if kept wet until the Spring; this is a common method of regenerating new saplings for one of Britain's rarest native trees and ensures this iconic species is available for planting out into the wider countryside in suitably wet and open locations.

The native Black poplar was formerly a component of floodplain woodland, but now occurs as isolated specimens in wet meadows, along hedgerows, beside farm ponds and near to rivers. It has not reproduced naturally for many centuries and its current distribution reflects the once common practise of striking cuttings around farms. It has been in decline for the last 200 years and is now rare as there are thought to be less than 8,000 mature specimens in Britain. Most surviving trees have reached old age, so mortality rates are high. Suffolk has a significant proportion of the British population, especially the rarer female trees.

Each one is precious and updating the Suffolk database relies on local eyes and ears across the county. Any losses can be reported to me as the County Recorder for Suffolk's native black poplars - I can't hope to achieve this on my own.

In the past year, the East Anglian Daily Times have kindly publicised the need for re-surveys and several readers have volunteered to check their local Native Black Poplars. However many more trees on the database need survey visits to provide an updated picture for this species in Suffolk.

A new partnership for 2019 is now planned with Suffolk Tree Wardens who are keen to assist with a project to survey known locations of the mature trees on the

county database. It will be a huge challenge but the aim is to see if the recorded Native Black Poplars are still present and alive or dead/gone or they may be growing from the base again. This project will be a big step forward for conserving this species in Suffolk and it is hoped that wherever possible, landowners will be encouraged to take cuttings from their trees before they disappear.

New saplings planted out near to mature trees are always best as this means the location is suitable for the young trees to grow to maturity. This will allow their distinctive silhouette to remain on Suffolk's skyline for, hopefully, the next hundred years.

If anyone would like to assist with updating the native Black Poplar database for Suffolk, I'd be pleased to hear from you - email blackpoplar@sns.org.uk or visit [Suffolk Naturalists' Society](http://SuffolkNaturalistsSociety.org.uk) > for more information.



Mature Black Poplar in Mid Suffolk



Sharing information about Suffolk's wildlife

Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service is the One-Stop-Shop for biodiversity information in Suffolk. Operating as an independent and objective centre for biodiversity data we collate, manage and mobilise species and site information for the benefit of Suffolk's wildlife as a whole.

News [SBIS website >](#)

Events [SBIS News / Events >](#)

Funding Opportunities Check out the SBIS web page to see if any of these funds can benefit your conservation or community wildlife project. [SBIS News / Funding >](#)

Project Fund We have a small Project Fund available to individuals and communities for research, habitat enhancement or to benefit Suffolk species. Please contact Gen Broad if you're looking for funding for your project.

We welcome species records from the public. You can make a valuable contribution to wildlife conservation - why not try out [SuffolkBro online](#)? It's easy and fun!

All records are verified via iRecord and our County Recorders and then added to our database for Suffolk (currently 4.23 million). Species records help us to understand the distribution and patterns of Suffolk's wildlife as well as informing the conservation activities of key partners and the planning process.

Follow us on Twitter [@Suffolkbis >](#) Like us on [Facebook >](#) Share photos on [Flickr >](#)

Newsletter Publication dates : Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

Deadline for Winter 2018/2019 newsletter articles: **Friday 22nd February 2019.**

If you'd like to share the work that 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

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

Another great read as always!

The newsletter is tremendous!

Contact Us

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