



Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership Partners' News November 2009

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Partners News

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PARTNERS NEWS

Update from the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project

A challenging year for Barn Owls

In the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley, we have been monitoring the 70 Barn Owl boxes in the area to check on the success or otherwise of this important species.

The results this year in the Stour Valley were disappointing with low clutch sizes, poor hatching percentages and a low survival rate for the chicks that did hatch. In total, 14 fledglings were ringed, all of which were found in locations with extensive areas of rough grassland habitat. This highlights the importance of managing high quality habitat for the small mammals on which the Barn Owl relies for its food supply, and more work is planned over the coming months to promote habitat creation for the benefit of the Barn Owl. Several farm visits have already been undertaken by the Landscape and Biodiversity Officer to offer advice on improving habitat management.



Neil Catchpole,
Landscape and
Biodiversity Officer
monitoring the barn owl
population

Stour Valley Volunteers helping to manage County Wildlife Sites

The Project continues to actively assist with the management of 5 County Wildlife Sites (CWS) in Suffolk. It is hoped that the expertise developed over several years with the Stour Valley Volunteers can be extended to assist with managing other similar sites in the area. Over the summer, several 'cut and rake' tasks have taken place to secure the continued positive management of sites valued for their wildlife rich grassland. In September, the volunteers returned to Clare Fisheries, where in the previous month, no less than 260 early marsh orchids were recorded. Work has also taken place to manage sites valued for uncommon sulphur and strawberry clover.

To contact the Project, please call 01473 264263.



Stour Valley Volunteers on a cut and rake task at Buntry Lane, Kedington, CWS.

New amphibian breeding ponds in Haverhill

Colin Jakes, St Edmundsbury Borough Council ranger

In late September, two new amphibian breeding ponds were created at East Town Park in Haverhill, and despite the dry conditions already hold a viable depth of water. The pools are surrounded by rank grassland and adjacent to mature hedgerows and will be planted up with a range of native aquatics, both frogs & toads are expected to use them once the planting is established. Water shrew, harvest mouse and grass snake have all been recorded in this part of the park and could also benefit as the new habitat matures.



Creating a new pond at East Town Park, Haverhill

The addition of a BCS power-scythe is proving a great help in maintaining the fine balance between grassland and light scattered scrub at County Wildlife Sites (CWS) in Haverhill. St Edmundsbury Borough Council rangers are using the new machine to manage important reptile sites at East Town Park's Sturmer Meadow, and on the Millfield's Way CWS. The machine has also been used to manage meadows at the Saxongate Gt Crested Newt reserve in Bury St Edmunds.



Sturmer Meadow, East Town Park, Haverhill

Following a recommendation in the wildlife audit carried out by Suffolk Wildlife Trust on behalf of SEBC, part of the Millfields Way CWS is to be used as a new educational resource for schools in Haverhill. A new pond, small mammal table, reptile refuges and guided trail has been created by the "Go Wild" project, for young volunteers aged 9 -19 years run jointly by Haverhill park ranger team and the Haverhill Volunteer Centre over the last two years. Outside sponsorship has funded much of the work including site interpretation and packs of field equipment for schools to use on their visits. A teachers' guide is in preparation, and schools are now able to use the new education area and explore the wider regions of the CWS for free. The CWS holds exceptional numbers of Common Lizard and Slow-worm and has some interesting flora such as sulphur clover and restharrow.



The Go Wild Project Haverhill

"Snakes, slow worms and orchards"

Paul Read

A new definition of a traditional orchard has now been released by JNCC: one characteristic listed is that they frequently have other nationally important habitats embedded in, or associated with, them such as ponds, grassland and ancient trees.

The Suffolk survey is now just six months into its three year timetable and several interesting associated species have been mentioned repeatedly by orchard owners to our surveyors. In particular, grass snakes (a recent addition to the conservation list) and also slow worms are mentioned. Many old orchards are very close to houses, especially old farm houses, but are often relatively undisturbed and lightly managed, sometimes simply left alone until the crop is harvested with the grass cut just once in summer. As one surveyor puts it, "there is sometimes quite bit of junk about, compost heaps, nettles, and piles of old cuttings" - perfect for the grass snakes!



"there is sometimes quite bit of junk about, compost heaps, nettles, and piles of old cuttings" - perfect for the grass snakes!"

Suffolk orchard surveyors list the features of each orchard they find intact; for example, associated ponds, and now we ask about the wildlife the owners know to be there. This is when snakes tend to be mentioned. We have considered recommending a sheet of corrugated iron in a sunny nettle patch to attract snakes in spring and autumn, so that they can be recorded, but this may generate more concern than necessary in some owners! However several surveyors have reported that some owners know about this and do it already - adding to the junk!" (I too have sheets of corrugated iron in my orchard!).

Meadows flourish with flowers, but farmers reject low productivity hay crop

Hannah Gray, Conservation Officer (Trinity Broads & Lound), Broads Authority
hannah.gray@broads-authority.gov.uk; 07711 439180

The partnership project at Lound Lakes, between Essex & Suffolk Water and the Broads Authority, has achieved many of its aims over the past four years. One of the key vision statements in the Management Plan (Oct 2005) is:

- *Restoration*: Achievement of transition from neglected, degraded habitats to thriving grassland, woodland and aquatic habitats naturally representative of the area, which support a larger diversity of flora and fauna.

This summer, the lowland hay meadows were in their best condition since the project began, with the best display of orchids for many years. Orchids rely on low nutrient grassland where they can compete with grasses and other flowers more successfully. The meadows at Lound are cut in the summer and again in November, and the cuttings are taken away to continually reduce the soil nutrient levels. The prolific display of orchids visually demonstrates the success of the meadow management.

Other habitats are benefiting from similar management, for example, our areas of rush pasture were studded with the delicate pink flowers of Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) and the tiny blue flowers of Heath Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*) as well as ubiquitous orchids and heathers.



Bog pimpernel

The management of these meadows comes at a cost. Despite receiving Countryside Stewardship Scheme grant funding, the grassland management contract set up at Lound exceeds this funding, and the deficit is covered by Essex & Suffolk Water. In previous years, we have reduced costs by encouraging local livestock farmers to cut and bale the most productive meadows at no cost to us or them. This has been a mutually beneficial arrangement, although it has meant many days of volunteers pulling ragwort in advance of hay cutting.

This summer, one of our regular farmers decided not to cut and bale the hay as usual because the sward was not long or dense enough to justify the time taken to carry out the work. No doubt this was partly due to the dry summer, but there is no doubt that year on year the fields are less productive as a result of the twice yearly cuts and removal of cuttings. After all, this was the aim of the management! An unforeseen result is that we now have to bear the cost of cutting all the meadows through our grassland management contract, and also have no outlet for the cuttings, which are currently being habitat piled on site. How many more years we will be able to cover the cost of this management is unknown, and we are hoping to meet with our Natural England advisor to discuss soon. Perhaps when we move into HLS we will have more flexibility.

Bringing biodiversity back often comes at a price, one we are willing to pay where at all possible at Lound. However, other less sympathetic landowners may simply give up. If anyone has had similar experiences in the past and can advise us on how to move forward with managing low-productivity, high-biodiversity meadows, we'd be keen to hear from you. Grazing is not an option for us at Lound due to the proximity of the meadows to a potable water supply and therefore the potential for parasites to enter the watercourse.

Dog Awareness Campaign for the Suffolk Coast and Heaths

Neil Lister, Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit

'Dog owners across the Suffolk Coast and Heaths and from further afield are very welcome in our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB). That will be the key message of a responsible dog ownership Campaign to be launched next year by the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit.

National research shows that between a third and a half of countryside visitors have a dog with them. The UK's 6 million pet dogs provide many social and health benefits, such as making people feel more confident and motivated to go out for a daily walk in all weathers, but there are understandable concerns about problems caused by irresponsible owners.

A recent study concluded that uncontrolled dogs are one of the biggest causes of disturbance to birds on the Stour and Orwell estuaries. [Wildfowl and wading bird disturbance research >](#)

At Sutton Heath, research over the last two summers has found that many dog walkers ignored, or were unaware of 'Open Access' restrictions that require dogs to be kept on a lead during the bird breeding season.



'I'm a Good Dog!'

If we wish to influence the behaviour of dogs and their owners in the AONB, the AONB team and land owners and managers need to communicate with dog owners in a way that is relevant, engaging and accessible. Information needs to be clear, consistent, credible and offer alternatives and be – **“Pro-responsibility”, rather than “anti-dog”.**

The AONB Unit and some its key partners are currently planning an innovative campaign to advise dog owners and help minimise the impact on the wildlife of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths. We will keep you updated as things progress.

Eye Wildlife Survey Group

Sue Hooton

The Eye Wildlife Survey group held its first meeting in February 2009 after nearly 40 people expressed an interest in the Parish Plan questionnaire to get involved with finding out what wildlife existed in the parish. To learn from each other and encourage children whenever possible, organised events are free and open to all ages, with new members welcome to join at all times. Some may require booking to limit numbers but if there is enough interest, repeat events may be possible.

The aims of the group are

- To take a closer look at wildlife locally
- Find out what wildlife is in Eye and record the results
- Identify wild areas and species which need help
- Bring people together to take action and look after wildlife areas
- Find out about wildlife trends e.g. decreases/increases in populations
- Meet up with like-minded people and have fun!

Did you know there are recent records of Kingfisher, Spotted Flycatcher, Black Redstart, Treecreeper and Waxwing in the middle of Eye? You don't need to be an expert and most people can identify some common garden birds. The RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch lists these as the most common garden birds: Blackbird, Blue Tit, Chaffinch, Coal tit, Collared Dove, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Great Tit, Greenfinch, House Sparrow, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Robin, Starling and Woodpigeon. The information needed is simple too – which birds you see, either a grid reference (if you're good with maps) or the address/post code and a date. A template is available to fill in if anyone wants a copy but simplified it looks like this:

| Common Name | Location | Grid Reference/Postcode | Recorder | Date |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Little Egret | Town Moors Woodland | TM 143734 | Sue Hooton | 23 Nov 08 |
| Goldfinch | Dove Lane | IP23 7BA | Sue Hooton | 9 Jan 09 |

Eye residents are encouraged to join in by recording the wildlife in their gardens and send sightings to wildlifeineye@btinternet.com or you can drop your lists off either at the collection point in the Eye Bookshop or at 20 Lowgate Street, Eye. All records are sent to Suffolk Biological Records Centre at Ipswich Museum to help build up a picture of wildlife in the county.

Wildlife surveys undertaken by the group so far have included:

- Torchlit pond survey for amphibians
- Early morning bird walk
- Plant survey at the Pennings Local Nature Reserve
- Bat walk around local footpaths
- Moth trap on National Moth Night
- Live mammal trapping

It is hoped to link up with the results of the Hedgerow Survey Group and future events could include repeat mapping of 1980's Countryside Survey, pond mapping and maybe practical conservation work to improve public sites in Eye for wildlife.

Some "Springwatch" moments noted by members of the group this year included

- *"A magnificent fox nonchalantly crossing a farm track"*
- *"I had four swallows who flew the nest last week and maybe they will bring off another brood like last year"*
- *"A Humming-bird Hawkmoth zipping about feeding on my Soapwort"*
- *"Whilst sipping my tea this morning, I saw that the heron is back"*

All this and a blackbird with a white head - this is wildlife in Eye !

If you are interested in getting involved with the Eye Wildlife Survey Group, please contact Co-ordinator Sue Hooton on 01379 871494.

North Warren & Aldringham Walks Nature Reserve Butterfly Report 2009

Rob Macklin, RSPB

This year has been extraordinary with several species posting their highest ever transect indices: **Peacock**, **Comma**, **Speckled Wood**, **Grayling** and **Ringlet**. After a run of poor years **Large Skipper** performed well while all three common whites had good seasons, especially **Large White**. Two male **Brimstones** appeared in spring and a small influx of **Clouded Yellows** arrived at Aldringham Churchyard in July.

There was also a slight upturn in the fortunes of **Small Tortoiseshell**; a **White Admiral** was found at River Hundred in July; and the year was marked by a **Painted Lady** invasion from mid-May. **Wall Browns** made a welcome re-appearance at the Warren after being absent in 2008 and another **White-letter Hairstreak** colony was found at Aldringham Churchyard.

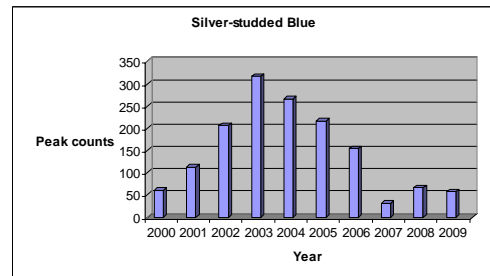
Some species, particularly the blues, continued to struggle with a low peak count - only 58 **Silver-studded Blues** at Aldringham and just three sightings of **Holly Blue**. Both **Small Heath** and **Green Hairstreak** were found in low numbers.

The CEH butterfly transect was carried out weekly from April to September with all results being recorded on Transect Walker and sent to CEH/BC. The reserve systematic list stands at 36 species. A total of 30 species were recorded in 2009.

Species results are described individually in the full report. A brief summary and the index graphs (2000-2009) for the four BAP species are shown below.

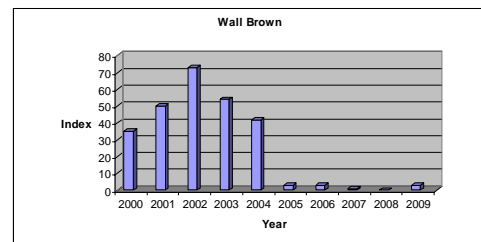
Silver-studded Blue *Plebejus argus*

A very similar scenario to 2008 with a peak count of just 58 in late June.



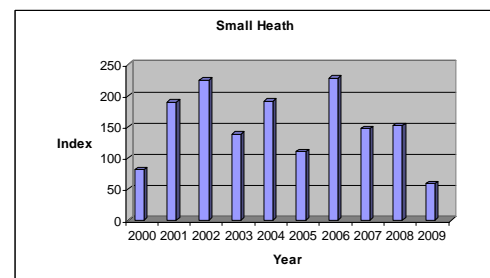
Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*

After no sightings in 2008 there was a very slight upturn in fortunes in 2009 with four sightings.



Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

A very poor year indeed for this grassland species which may well have suffered from the prolonged drought throughout August and September. The recorded transect index of 59 was the lowest since 1997.



Grayling *Hipparchia semele*

A veritable explosion in the population to the highest ever recorded transect index of 472. This may be partially explained by extensive bracken and scrub clearance along transect section ten which has allowed heathland grasses to flourish with large areas of bare ground. Even so numbers were well up elsewhere on the transect route.



Butterfly Monitoring in Dunwich Forest **Rob Parker, Butterfly Conservation**

The transition of Dunwich Forest from coniferous plantation to broadleaf conservation woodland will take years, and progressive monitoring of flora and fauna is an important part of getting things right. With four UK BAP species present as healthy breeding populations, the butterfly element needs particular attention. With this in mind, SWT set up a transect training day for volunteers ready to assist in walking two butterfly transect routes from 1st April next year. They assembled at Dunwich reading rooms on 19th September for a briefing on transect procedures, and went on to the forest to walk the routes under the guidance of Dayne West (SWT warden) and Rob Parker (Butterfly Conservation). In brilliant September weather, the session was a great success. A dozen volunteer walkers are ready for 2010.



White letter Hairstreak is one of the scarce butterflies to be found in Dunwich Forest in July. It sometimes comes down from the canopy of elms to take nectar from bramble or thistle.

Suffolk Biological Records Centre reaches a Major Milestone **Martin Sanford, Suffolk Biological Records Centre**

After 20 years of computerising information on Suffolk's wildlife, the SBRC has recently made over 1 million records available for use on the internet. This contribution is one of the largest single datasets that can be accessed on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway site <http://data.nbn.org.uk/> a portal where nearly 44 million records can be searched – a massive resource for anyone interested in UK biodiversity. Sharing this data is the most important achievement in the 25 years that I have been running the SBRC.

The Suffolk records, which relate to nearly 12,000 species occurring in the county, are available at 10-km resolution for general public use. This ensures that locations of rare and protected species are not revealed. Registered users of the Gateway can apply to SBRC for access at better resolutions. Organisations such as Natural England can integrate the web data with their computer mapping software (GIS) to ensure that conservation decisions are based on accurate and up-to-date information.

Improvements in software at the Records Centre have enabled further expansion. Since uploading our data to the Gateway, we have been able to add a further ½ million records to the database. It is likely we will have over 2 million records by the end of 2010.

[Further information \(metadata\) on NBN Gateway describing the Suffolk data >](#)

Bringing Barn Owls back to the Borough **Laura Whitfield, Ipswich Borough Council**

Ipswich Borough Council Wildlife and Education Rangers, with the sponsorship of Barnes Construction, are working on a project to encourage barn owls to breed within the boundaries of Ipswich. We are linking with the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project's ongoing work across the county to provide suitable artificial nesting sites for barn owls.

Bourne Park was chosen as the most appropriate site as barn owls have already been spotted in the area. Bourne Park is relatively low in conservation value and will benefit greatly from the addition of a large area of long grassland, barn owl boxes, and reptile hibernacula. Future small mammal surveys and nest box monitoring will measure the success of the project. In addition to this we are improving public access and recreation in the area by replacing a footbridge, putting in extra seating areas, installing interpretation boards and maintaining wide mown paths.

The Rangers consulted over 2,000 residents who lived nearby. It was a very valuable exercise in identifying any issues or concerns people had about the project. Another positive outcome was that we had many people expressing an interest in volunteering in the Park.



A barn owl from the Raptor Trust

The project was launched on 22 September. The day began with falconer, Kathy Bole from the Raptor Trust, giving a talk about owls to a group of children from Halifax Primary School. She brought along three owls, including a barn owl for the children to look at. We then walked through the soon-to-be long grass area whilst I explained to the children the importance of rough grassland in providing habitat for the barn owls main prey, the short tailed field vole. This led the group to the tree surgeon, Paul Jackson, who was in the process of installing two barn owl boxes and Steve Piotrowski of the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project spoke to the children about barn owls and their nesting habits.

The launch was a great success and we plan to complete the project over the next three years. Hopefully barn owls will breed on the site.



Installing barn owl boxes in Bourne Park

Since the project launch, the school children have been doing watercolour paintings, classroom displays and even a presentation in their school assembly. The Rangers have organised a follow up activity next year to dissect owl pellets with the children. We are also going to develop an activity pack so schools can go to the site independently to learn about barn owls and their habitat requirements. The next stage is to install barn owl boxes on other sites. Another area suitable for breeding barn owls is on the other side of the River Orwell in Orwell Country Park, and it is possible that the project will be extended to this part of the town in the near future.

Fighting with New Zealand Pygmyweed to Restore Pillwort at Lound Lakes

Holly Berwick, Hydrological and Conservation Officer (Lound Lakes)
Broads Authority working in partnership with Essex and Suffolk water
07795 460 866, holly.berwick@broads-authority.gov.uk

Pillwort (*Pilularia globulifera*) is a small aquatic fern found in areas where the water level fluctuates. It was found at Lound Lakes, but as reported in the previous article 'Is Pillwort losing the fight at Lound' we have been unable to find any in a recent marginal plant survey.

There are two main reasons for the decline of this species. Firstly, the lakes have been invaded by the non-native, invasive species *Crassula helmsii*, commonly known as New Zealand Pygmyweed. This plant unfortunately prefers similar conditions to pillwort and it appears to have successfully out-competed it.

Secondly, the Lakes are used for water abstraction and due to a local decline in water requirements, the water levels have been consistently high, potentially jeopardising the species' required habitat conditions.

In a bid to restore the pillwort population, the project has successfully acquired funding through SITA to extend part of the bank to create the beach-like draw down zone that pillwort requires. Additionally, we are going to use black plastic to starve the New Zealand Pygmyweed of light during the winter months to reduce its ability to compete. We hope this will give the pillwort a fighting chance to re-establish from the seed bank.



Barn Owl Guards Lound Lakes Wildlife Garden

Holly Berwick, Hydrological and Conservation Officer (Lound Lakes)
Broads Authority working in partnership with Essex and Suffolk water
07795 460 866, holly.berwick@broads-authority.gov.uk

The newly developed wildlife garden at Lound Lakes has recently welcomed a new arrival; a Suffolk LBAP species called Oscar The Barn Owl. Oscar was created by a local sculptor for the Trinity Broads and Lound Lakes Project in partnership with Suffolk Wildlife trust to raise the profile of their Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project. His first destination was the Suffolk Show where he was perched atop of a first-class, premium barn owl box hand-crafted by a local community group.

Oscar has since flown the nest and now resides on a perch of the finest oak overlooking the beautiful Lound Lakes wildlife garden. His new domain also houses the BAP species cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*) and pheasant eye (*Adonis annua*). Both of these plants are annuals which require bare soil to establish and were historically very successful on arable land. However, changes in farming practices have led to their decline.



Oscar The Owl at Lound Lakes wildlife garden

A mixture of cornfield annuals has been planted in areas of the wildlife garden and I personally believe it is one of the most rewarding additions to the garden. It not only looks superb but a plethora of invertebrates are attracted to it. Interestingly, it has become the best place to carry out butterfly species surveys across the whole site.

Oscar the Owl can also enjoy views of a newly created traditional orchard. Old variety fruit trees were planted in the orchard alongside a varied native hedgerow by the Friends of Lound Lakes volunteer group. The volunteers have been busy throughout the reserve putting up their hand-made bird boxes. These were developed to encourage the common species such as great tit, robin and wren, but will hopefully also entice BAP species such as the willow tit, spotted flycatcher and lesser spotted woodpecker.

Other barn owls in the area are regularly sighted and can be heard across the reserve, however out of the eight nest boxes installed within the site, none have been found to contain young barn owls. However, this can be viewed as a positive sign, demonstrating that there are enough natural sites in which to breed. Perhaps if we gave Oscar a polish, he'd attract a few more of his friends to the area!

Update on Crayfish Ark Project

Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership

The 2009 field work for Suffolk's innovative native white clawed crayfish 'ark' project has now been successfully completed. A population of 185 individuals were moved into the private lake site in August, having been checked first for good health, measured and recorded. Animals with soft shells, having just moulted, and very small young animals were left at their home site.

Early this year, the Environment Agency, Farming and Wildlife Group (FWAG), Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership joined forces to move a native crayfish population into a suitable 'ark' site well removed from non-native American signal crayfish. These invasive animals out-compete our native species and also carry the lethal crayfish plague.

The lake was prepared by providing crayfish refuges around the shore in the shape of broken up land drain pipes, bundles of branches tied together (faggots) and custom-made 'panpipes'.

The project attracted considerable media attention, which helped to both raise awareness of the plight of Suffolk's native crayfish and also encourage landowners to contact us with potential 'ark' sites for the future. The group is now assessing a range of proposed sites with the aim of designating a new 'ark' for the 2010 field work. The Crayfish Ark project is very much pioneer conservation, so we are still feeling our way with it. Not only will we learn from our experiences and from it modify the way that we carry out future projects, but we can help other counties plan their own translocations.

We hope that our 'ark' crayfish will breed and grow into healthy populations, and maybe one day we will be able to restock Suffolk's rivers with native white-clawed crayfish from our arks.

The project would like to say a big 'thank you!' to all landowners who have offered us future sites, and particularly to the owner of this year's 'ark' who has been extraordinarily helpful and generous.

As a footnote, we are delighted to report that a crayfish was spotted (and photographed) using one of the panpipes when a short visit was made to the lake in October!



Faggots and panpipes provide refuges for native crayfish in their new lake site. Photo: Diane Ling



BBC and ITV camera crews filming the crayfish 'ark' project. Photo: Gen broad



A translocated crayfish making good use of a panpipe refuge. Photo: Diane

Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership News

❖ **5th annual Norfolk and Suffolk planning seminar September 2009**

This annual event has become increasingly useful to planners because it provides a valuable overview of the latest developments and best practice related to spatial planning, development control and biodiversity. It also provides an arena for networking and fostering an exchange of experience between the two counties. This year, we incorporated an exercise providing practical experience of applying a biodiversity checklist appropriately during planning decisions and using the 1 App standard application form.

Mike Oxford of the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) updated delegates on key biodiversity issues and described the new ALGE Biodiversity Toolkit. Norfolk and Suffolk Biological Record Centres, Forest Heath District Council's ecologist and GeoSuffolk gave brief updates on their biodiversity work. We finished with a presentation on the delivery of Green Infrastructures from Natural England.



5th annual Norfolk and Suffolk planning and biodiversity seminar 2009.

Photo: Sue Hooton

We had some very positive feedback on the day, including:

- *“Very good. Very informative, building upon an impressive day last year, but expanding upon or covering new topics.”*
- *“Very informative for a planner – much more aware of significance of biodiversity and ecology.”*

‘Thank you!’ to South Norfolk District Council for generously hosting the event in 2009.

❖ **Brecks Biodiversity Audit**

The Biodiversity Audit was commissioned in July this year. A huge momentum has already been achieved, with nearly half a million species records collated and over 80 recorders and specialists contacted to participate in this unique collaborative effort. The aim of the project is to build an ‘evidenced-based’ conservation model for the Brecks which can make recommendations for management.

This partnership project is led by UEA in collaboration with Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service, Suffolk Biological Records Centre, the Norfolk and Suffolk Biodiversity Partnerships, the Forestry Commission, PlantLife and Natural England. A key aspect of this project is to draw together the knowledge and expertise of the large number of local specialists, both amateurs and professional natural historians, who can make an invaluable contribution to improve our understanding of conservation in this internationally important site.

Two highly successful workshops were held in October. The first brought together taxonomic group specialists with the aim of obtaining expert views on the completeness and accuracy of the species database and the interpretation of species ecology. The second brought together site managers and natural historians to discuss the effectiveness of management practices for various groups of species with different ecological requirements.

To find out more about the project, visit the SBP website to view the [Breckland Biodiversity Audit Progress Report 14th September 2009 >](#)



The 'botanical table' at the taxonomic workshop. Photo: Gen broad

❖ ***“Putting Biodiversity First for Over a Decade!” 26 November 2009***
A conference organised by Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership and Creating the Greenest County (CGC) at Wantisden Valley, near Woodbridge

The aim of this celebratory event was to review progress and achievements for biodiversity in Suffolk since 1997, when the Partnership was first formed, and to look ahead to future challenges.

We were delighted to welcome over 80 delegates from across Suffolk, from a wide range of organisations including district, borough and parish councils, government agencies such as Natural England, the Forestry Commission, and the Environment Agency; non-government organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT); businesses such as Center-Parcs Elveden, Essex & Suffolk Water and British Energy; and community groups including Charsfield, Benhall & Sternfield and Debenham.



Over 80 people attended the SBP 2009 “Putting Biodiversity First” conference. Photo: Malcolm Farrow

Our six local speakers all gave superb presentations which illustrated how species and habitats have fared over the past 11 years and described some of the work being undertaken across the county including how wildlife has gradually moved into the mainstream with the Creating the Greenest County project. A range of projects were described, from species and habitats to community initiatives and landscape-scale projects. Together these provided a picture of Suffolk's strong commitment to biodiversity conservation and showed clearly the creative ways in which people have raised awareness of the importance of biodiversity since the late 1990s.

The highlight was the powerful presentation by our keynote speaker, Chris Packham, well-known to television audiences as one of the presenters of the BBC's Springwatch and Autumnwatch programmes. Chris spoke about the importance of biodiversity including the need for hands-on wildlife education for our young people and the vital role that biodiversity plays in human lives, for example in food security.



Left to right: Brian and Patrick Barker (winners of the NFU's Silver Lapwings Award for farming and conservation), Cllr Paul West (Portfolio holder for Greenest County), Chris Packham, Iain Dunnet (CGC Manager), Peter Holborn (Chair Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership). Photo: Malcolm Farrow



Chris complimented Suffolk on the wide range of biodiversity work that has been achieved over the past 11 years, but warned that there remains much to be done! He referred the audience to SBP's new leaflet, launched at the conference, which describes many of the projects and looks ahead at our Priorities for the Future. The day ended in the fresh air with a choice of two guided walks: Staverton Park's ancient woodland or Wantisden Farm.

The day was judged by many delegates to be both entertaining and inspirational, typical comments included:

- *"I will be bolder having seen the opportunities and the now urgent need to ensure that modern day Suffolk is built around and not on top of biodiversity."*
- *"Chris Packham was entertaining, thought-provoking and suitably controversial (!); and the guided site visit was a delight."*

Thank you to all of the people who contributed to the success of this landmark event and members of the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership, who continue to work together for the benefit of Suffolk's diverse wildlife.

The Peter Berry Book of Condolences (Babergh District Council):

Peter, from all your close friends in the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership who will miss you so dearly. You were a founder member of our Partnership and did so much to promote wildlife conservation in Suffolk. Thank you for support and friendship over many years."

INFORMATION and NEWS

Newsletters and reports available on the SBP website:

- [Orchard Matters, Newsletter of the conserving and restoring traditional orchards England Project >](#)
- [Suffolk Sandlings Annual Report 2008 >](#)
- [GeoSuffolk Times December 2009 >](#)
- [Green Infrastructure newsletter East of England Region, Autumn 09, Natural England >](#)
- [Speckled Wood newsletter Autumn 2009 >](#)

Pond Conservation Newsletter September 2009 now available

Includes news about the first ponds created at Gallow's Bridge Farm for the Million Ponds Project and a look at some misinformation about looking after ponds.

[Pond Conservation Newsletter September 2009 >](#)

World will miss 2010 target to stem biodiversity loss, experts say (15 October 2009)

The world will miss its agreed target to stem biodiversity loss by next year, according to experts convening in Cape Town for a landmark conference devoted to biodiversity science.

The goal was agreed at the 6th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in April 2003. Some 123 world ministers committed to "achieve, by 2010, a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the local, national and regional levels, as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth."

"We will certainly miss the target for reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 and therefore also miss the 2015 environmental targets within the U.N. Millennium Development Goals to improve health and livelihoods for the world's poorest and most vulnerable people," says Georgina Mace of Imperial College, London, and Vice-Chair of the international DIVERSITAS program.

"Yet changes to ecosystems and losses of biodiversity have continued to accelerate. Since 1992, even the most conservative estimates agree that an area of tropical rainforest greater than the size of California has been converted mostly for food and fuel. Species extinction rates are at least 100 times those in pre-human times and are expected to continue to increase."

However, she adds, "the situation is not hopeless. There are many steps available that would help but we cannot dawdle. Meaningful action should have started years ago. The next best time is now."

For the full article, go to [ScienceDaily >](#)

Woodland Heritage 'Wood Talk' Forum can be used to ask questions or post information that might be of interest to others. [Woodland Heritage >](#)

Soils, butterflies and beetles respond to changing pressures on the UK environment (6 November 2009)

The first major review of trends in terrestrial ecology at twelve key sites within the UK Environmental Change Network between 1993 and 2007 is published in the journal *Biological Conservation*. Soils, vegetation and animal communities all show indications of responses to environmental change over the study period.

Butterfly species characteristic of warmer regions tended to increase at northern, upland sites, consistent with an effect of increasing temperatures. In contrast, ground beetles associated with cooler northern and upland areas showed declining populations. Wetter weather in more recent years may explain a decline in short-lived 'weedy' plants at lowland sites, reversing an increase associated with drought in the early years of monitoring. However, there was no clear evidence of changes in plant communities in response to decreased soil acidity.

Examples of species changes over the first 15 years of ECN monitoring

Many British butterflies are at the northern limit of their range and may, therefore, be favoured by current climate change trends. Species that appear to be increasing in numbers at some upland ECN sites include the peacock (*Inachis io*), green-veined white (*Pieris napi*) and dark green fritillary (*Argynnis aglaja*).

Some examples of ground beetle species that are declining at upland sites include *Calathus melanocephalus*, *Patrobus atrorufus* and *Calathus micropterus*.

At five of the seven lowland ECN sites, data indicate a decline in chickweed (*Stellaria media*), Annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*) and Common mouse ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), all 'weedy' (ruderal) plant species.

Pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus sensu lato*) have shown an overall increase across the network and at some individual sites, in line with similar results from National Bat Monitoring Programme surveys.

Lead author Dr Mike Morecroft, Principal Climate Change Specialist at Natural England said, 'Climate change is one of the major contemporary issues in ecology and presents the most profound challenge for conservation in the coming decades. The need for reliable monitoring of environmental change, both physical and biological, is greater than ever.' He added, 'Our analysis does suggest that climate change is starting to influence some aspects of the ecology of the UK. It also shows that climate change must be addressed in the context of a wide range of other environmental issues, such as changes in air pollution.'

[Read the AlterNet article >](#)

On a wing and a prayer: the story of how the large blue butterfly was restored to Britain

Twenty-five years ago this June, large blue butterflies flew again in England after becoming extinct in 1979. In a feature in NERC's Planet Earth magazine, CEH Fellow Professor Jeremy Thomas, whose painstaking experiments led to their successful reintroduction, reflects on the species' return and the sea change it wrought in insect conservation.

[Visit the AlterNet website to download the pdf >](#)



In announcing the release of the report Wildlife Minister Huw Irranca-Davies said, "“England's countryside is constantly changing, and this survey gives us a detailed snapshot of where we are right now - making it easier to pinpoint what we're doing right, and which areas need the most urgent attention. There's some good news in the survey - an increase in food for farmland birds and butterfly caterpillars, the same richness of plant species in our most common habitats and less acidic soils. But there are some big challenges for everyone involved in protecting our countryside. We need to work together to get our ponds into better condition, to maintain our iconic drystone walls, and to ensure carbon stays in the soil where it belongs, rather than contributing to climate change. We'll be working with conservation groups, local authorities and communities right around the country to put these right.”

[Read more on the AlterNet website >](#)

Provision of Standing Advice for Protected Species in relation to Planning Applications, Natural England

Natural England has issued standing advice for planning applications which may affect protected species in the East of England region. The aim of the standing advice is to assist Local Planning Authorities in the protection of species, streamline the determination process and secure the best outcomes for the natural environment. This standing advice will replace individual consultation responses for applications and should result in fewer objections and appeals against non determination or refusal.

[The standing advice is available on Natural England's web site >](#)

The Marine and Coastal Access Bill received Royal Assent on 12 Nov 2009

The Marine Conservation Society said:

“The UK Marine & Coastal Access Act commits the UK to an ambitious new approach to managing the marine environment that will include establishing Marine Conservation Zones, a Marine Planning system, inshore fisheries reform, streamlining of licensing, establishment of a Marine Management Organisation (for England and UK matters) and coastal access provisions.

- A network of Marine Conservation Zones will be established that will protect nationally important habitats and species such as eelgrass beds, seahorses and sea fans. Vote for where you want a site at www.yourseasyourvoice.org
- A Marine Planning system will enable forward planning of all marine activities for the first time. A UK Marine Policy Statement will be produced and regional marine plans throughout UK waters.
- Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities will replace Sea Fisheries Committees and they will have improved regulation tools.
- A Marine Management Organisation is being established that will be responsible for Marine Planning, licensing and fisheries. It will be based in Newcastle.
- Licensing will be reformed and simplified making it easier for industry and civil servants.
- Coastal Access will be provided with one footpath around the whole of England. This will primarily be along the open coast.

For further information about the new Marine and Coastal Access Bill, visit
[The Defra website >](#)
[Marine Conservation Society website >](#)

Biodiversity in the East of England

To find out what's going on in our region, check the websites for the county Biodiversity Partnerships forum:
[Norfolk, Bedfordshire and Luton](#), [Essex](#), [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough](#).

WHAT'S ON

9 January EEAOP Formative fruit tree pruning workshop

Morley St. Botolph, near Attleborough. Norfolk (10.30 a.m. – 2.00 p.m.)
email: info@appesandorchards.org.uk, tel: 01328 838403.
[East of England Apples and Orchards Project >](#)

12 January and 1 February Traditional Orchards Winter Workshops

(National Trust, Natural England, Countdown 2010)

The Conserving & Restoring Tradition Orchards, England Project is offering a series of orchard management workshops aimed at all staff and volunteers connected with the Orchard Project. These dates are for Cambridge and Norfolk. Contact: Kate Merry kate.merry@nationaltrust.org (Orchard Workshops in subject line), tel: 01458 253752.

21 January Brecks Local Action Group (LAG)

BTO, Chapel Room, The Old Chapel, The Nunnery, Thetford, Ip24 2PU

27 January Waveney Local Action Group (LAG)

Venue to be confirmed

For further information about the LAG events contact the Rural Development Programme, Rural Enterprise Hub, Easton College, Easton, Norfolk, NR9 5DX.
email: rdp@easton-college.ac.uk, tel: 01603 748844

30 January East of England Bat Conference

Ickworth House near Bury St Edmunds

To book on-line go to: http://bats.eventhq.co.uk/east_of_england_regional_conference

30 January EEAOP Formal fruit tree training workshop 11.00 a.m. – 2.30 p.m.

Audley End House walled kitchen gardens, near Saffron Walden, Essex
email: info@appesandorchards.org.uk, tel: 01328 838403.
[East of England Apples and Orchards Project >](#)

30-31 January Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Conference

Hinckley, Leicestershire

Details and booking form on [Pond Conservation website >](#)

2-3 February World Wetlands Day 2010

Deafblind UK Conference Centre, Peterborough

Wetlands, Biodiversity and Climate Change

The aim of the conference is to bring together the UK wetland community, to explore the 2010 Ramsar theme of looking at wetlands and biodiversity in the context of climate change by considering coastal, lowland and upland wetlands and the links (or lack thereof) between policy, research and practice.

To find out more visit <http://www.coastms.co.uk/conferences/428>

27 February EEAOP Organic fruit tree management

Audley End House walled kitchen gardens, near Saffron Walden, Essex.
(1.00 a.m. – 2.30 p.m.)

email: info@appesandorchards.org.uk, tel: 01328 838403.

[East of England Apples and Orchards Project >](#)

12 & 13 March Deer Management 2010

Organised by The Deer Initiative Partnership
Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth, CV8 2LD

Includes Poaching and policing, Lead bullets – reviewing current research, Deer on the roads, Non-native species, Shooting out of season and at night, The role of predators in deer management, Urban deer management, Immuno-contraception and wild boar.

[The Deer Initiative >](#)

21 April Floodplain Meadows conference

The Open University Campus, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes,

Speakers from across Europe on species-rich floodplain meadows: research, management, policy and restoration. Registration before 21 Feb £20, after that date £25. Contact Michelle Duke email: m.duke@open.ac.uk

24-28 May, 7-11 and 21-25 June, 5-9 July 2010 Roof barn construction workshop

Monday – Friday 9.00 – 4.30 £400 for 5 day course

Practical experience of traditional roof construction at Orchard Barn, professional tuition with Rick Lewis of Traditional Oak Carpentry

Contact Sarah Partridge 01473-658193 / 077660-54042, email

sarah@orchardbarn.org.uk. www.orchardbarn.org.uk

Various wildlife events - [Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#), [National Trust](#), [RSPB](#)

SBP INFORMATION

If you would like to share information on how your organisation is benefiting biodiversity in Suffolk, please send your article to Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Officer (tel: 01473 264308, Mobile: 0789 4885337, email: gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk)

Deadline for January 2010 newsletter: Friday January 29.

SBP is a partnership comprised of conservation organisations, statutory bodies, local authorities, businesses and not-for-profit organisations working throughout the county of Suffolk on behalf of wildlife. The UK's Biodiversity Action Plan is delivered at a local level by members of the Partnership – for further information visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Biodiversity.

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| Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership consists of: Babergh District Council, Center Parcs–Elveden, Environment Agency, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Forestry Commission, Forest Heath District Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Natural England, RSPB, St. Edmundsbury Borough Council, Suffolk Biological Records Centre, Suffolk Naturalist's Society, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Waveney District Council. |
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