

Hummingbird Hawk Moth
– see page 22



Local Wildlife news

January to April 2023

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



Come and Join us

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



Learn how to coppice hazel



Create homes for stag beetles and holts for otters



Build hibernacula for amphibians, reptiles and insects



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

Make nest boxes for bugs, birds and hedgehogs



Promote IWG at local wildlife events



Help maintain pathways in woodlands and by waterways



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

We don't do meetings or annual subscriptions but we will keep you informed of what's going on by email each month.

Just send your contact details to our secretary Leila at iwg@wildipswich.org



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

Welcome

by **James Baker** *Editor*

Welcome to the winter and spring edition of Local Wildlife News magazine – full of local news, articles, events and activities – to hopefully brighten these dark days of winter!

Throughout this edition, there is a noticeable theme – the fact that looking after our wildlife, and the habitats that it depends on, requires considerable effort! The continued presence of species-rich natural places is not something that happens by accident, nor even often by simply letting nature take its own course – to maintain the habitats that have been here for hundreds of years, and the species that have evolved to call them home – we have to continue the management work that humans have been traditionally carrying out.

So woodlands need to be coppiced to allow light in to the ground so that wildflowers and invertebrates can thrive for a few years before the trees grow up again (page 12); meadows need to be cut and raked to prevent nutrient build up in the soil (page 9); wetlands need to be dredged to maintain open water (page 10); and heathland needs to be kept relatively free from invading scrub (page 11). Suffolk Wildlife Trust's new 'Nextdoor Nature' project for Ipswich recognises this and invites local people to be part of the solution to the biodiversity crisis by getting involved directly (page 7) – something which all the organisations involved in this magazine wholeheartedly support!

So if you can do anything to help wildlife in our local area – please do!

Contents

	Page
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	4
Greenways Countryside Project	8
Butterfly Conservation	11
Ipswich Wildlife Group	12
Friends of Holywells Park	13
Friends of the Dales	14
Wild Ipswich	15
Friends of Belstead Brook Park	16
Portal Woodlands Conservation Group	17
Suffolk Bird Group	18
Friends of Christchurch Park	19
Ipswich Borough Council Wildlife Rangers	20
RSPB Ipswich Local Group	21
Snippets	22
Events Diary	23



Local Wildlife News is published by Greenways Countryside Project.

Editor: James Baker greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk Tel 07736 826076

Production Editor: Colin Hullis colin@hullis.net Tel 07979 644134

Production Assistant: Lydia Woods

Artwork production: Chris Saunders chris@brokehall.plus.com Tel 01473 721550

Printed by The Five Castles Press Tel 01473 718719

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

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

What are your favourite signs of spring?

Sheila Roberts *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

I must confess I love spring – the way our countryside changes colour so quickly, the cacophony of bird song and those tantalising glimpses of colour as spring flowers poke their buds out of winter soil and twigs.



**Suffolk
Wildlife Trust**

Ipswich Group Newsletter

Chairman: (Vacant)

Secretary: Wendy Brown 01473 259674

browncandw@gmail.com

Treasurer: Tony Clarke 01473 741083

tonyclarke@2309hotmail.co.uk

We are the Ipswich Group of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. We offer an interesting range of monthly meetings with guest speakers. Trust members and non-members are equally welcome. During the summer months we offer a variety of trips, some local, others by coach. Details of these and our monthly meetings can be found in our "Dates for your Diary" section or on the website, www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org.

Everyone I know has their own take on what they look out for as the first sign of spring. A quick poll suggests many think of the call of the cuckoo, the arrival of bluebell flowers or hazel catkins.

For me it's when the crocus flowers suddenly appear. I know they aren't native wildflowers but not only do they cheer up a rather drab garden at a time when not much is flowering but, more importantly, mine seem to provide a welcome pit stop for bees of all kind that appear on those lovely warmer days spring sometimes delivers.

Another of my favourite

signs of spring is the arrival of the bee flies. These are rather smart, extremely speedy, fluffy little insects with a long proboscis and a very surprising life cycle. The females flick eggs into the burrow openings of solitary bees where the larva develops and feeds on the bee larva in a fairly gross way. I see them in my small suburban garden every year feeding on various flowers or just buzzing around looking adorable.

In the past, I've always thought of the brimstone as the first butterfly of spring although with our increasingly mixed up seasons, in recent years in my

meanderings around Ipswich, I have seen more peacocks – my first for 2022 was as early as 17th March warming itself in Stonelodge Park.

As a child, we always thought of frog spawn as an exciting sign that spring had arrived. These days, it would seem our changing climate sees some frogs thinking it's the breeding season as early as January. All very worrying.

What's your favourite natural sign of spring? We'd love to hear what you always look out for – especially if there's a local link. Who knows, perhaps in next year's spring edition we can feature some of the best ones.



Cuckoo @Chris Courtney, Other pictures ©Colin Hullis

Success at the Ness

Melvyn Eke *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

I organised an exclusive 24 person, first trip to Orford Ness with the National Trust for one day in August, such was the popularity and demand the trip sold out for three consecutive weeks. What a hat trick!

All the visitors enjoyed a fantastic tour of the island with informative and enthusiastic wardens and guides from the National Trust, brilliantly organised by Nicola Treadgold. The mixture of secret history and current conservation resulted in a richly enjoyable day.

Blessed with the beautiful blue skies and summer heat, thankfully cooled ever so slightly by the coastal onshore breeze, our group of SWT and NT members assembled at the quay in anticipation of our ferry trip to Orford Ness (the island of secrets).

After a short river crossing we were escorted by our NT guides to the specially converted trailer and begun our guided tour on a set series of routes to enlighten and inform us of the history of the island.

Having started as a WW1 military air base for pilot training and bombing practice and continuing through the whole of

WW2, it developed into its main importance featuring the top secret testing work during the Cold War period. The various buildings all had a story to tell which was delivered in a very knowledgably manner by the NT wardens acting as our guides.

The balance between the conservation and bird watching aspect and the mostly derelict buildings proved intriguing and I was astonished by the overall size and landscape of the Ness - an almost surreal atmosphere surrounded you from all directions. The buildings proved excellent viewing opportunities overlooking the site so what was once a bomb trajectory measuring block became a viewing tower for our benefit.

After a four hour tour with a combination of trailer travel, short walks, lunch break and building inspections, we returned for a ferry trip back after a delightful, informative and impressive visit. Did we



learn any secrets? That we cannot say!

A £200 profit from the days was sent to the SWT Martlesham Wild fund. Look out for more Orford Ness 2023 dates!



Suffolk
Wildlife Trust

Ipswich Group Newsletter



Logs 'r' Us

I have used some old logs around the base of a holly tree in my back garden to create an inviting home and feeding ground for insects, frogs, toads and bees. All the rotting wood and flaking bark and maze of little gaps between the logs is heaven for a wide range of wildlife including mice, snails, woodlice and many other 'creepy crawlies'. It's easy, just make one!





Suffolk
Wildlife Trust

Ipswich Group Newsletter

Leisure learning for everyone

Every month between September and April, the Ipswich Group of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust hosts an evening talk on a topic linked to our natural environment. These are growing in popularity as people realise they offer an affordable and friendly way to find out more about wildlife in Suffolk and beyond. Coming up soon, there's a

chance to hear about some of north Suffolk's wonderful nature reserves, the surprising wealth of wildlife in Ipswich, learn about an Essex reserve famous nationally for its nightingales and find out how one lady decided to explore the natural history of our county by walking from Lowestoft to Flatford. All the talks are illustrated with

beautiful photographs and the admission price of £3 includes a hot drink in the interval. For the talks, no booking is necessary.

Also coming up are some visits to nature reserves where guests will be accompanied by wildlife experts. So far we have organised visits to Bradfield woods for bluebells

and Orfordness for spring birds with an exciting programme being prepared for the summer as well. These visits do have to be booked in advance.

Details of these can be found in our Events Diary below and via www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events Please do consider coming along – you can be assured of a warm welcome..

Events Diary

All meetings will be held at 7.30pm at Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. £3 includes tea and coffee. There is disabled access..

Wed. 25th January. Jamie Smith, Wildlife of the North Suffolk Wildlife Reserves

Jamie is the warden of the North Suffolk Coastal Nature Reserves, including the magnificent Hen Reed Beds. This area, until 1999 a region of degraded grassland, was brilliantly restored and is now providing breeding habitats for a wealth of coastal birds, including the bittern, the marsh harrier, bearded tit and many others. The project, as yet in its infancy, to introduce ospreys to the area, may well be delayed due to bird flu.

Wednesday 22nd February. Lucy Shepherd, (SWT Wild learning officer) Weird and Wonderful Wildlife in Ipswich

It is usual for us to think we have to venture into the countryside to see wildlife, but this is not necessarily so. In Ipswich's magnificent parks and even in some of its more urban areas it is possible to see an amazing variety of wildlife. Lucy will show some of the items she has found and hopefully encourage you to go and look too.

Wednesday March 22nd. Alex Long, (Essex Wildlife Trust) Fingringhoe Nature Reserve

This area, several miles south of Colchester, on the Colne estuary was for the first half of the C20th a busy industrial area for the extraction of sand and gravel sent by boat to London. Essex Wildlife Trust obtained the land and converted it to a rich mosaic of habitats, and it is now considered to be the best reserve in Essex. A wealth of plants (350 species), butterflies, dragon and damselflies, birds, especially the nightingale, badgers, adders and so much more can be found there. You may well be inspired to pay it a visit.

Wednesday 26th April. Pam Evans, A Walk through Suffolk.

Local wildlife enthusiast Pam Evans decided to explore the natural history of our county by walking from Lowestoft to Flatford, investigating the Deben and Waveney estuaries on her way, and then the following year she completed the walk in the opposite direction, by a different route. This talk should bring back happy memories of our lovely county for some, and inspire others to explore it for themselves. This meeting will be preceded by a short AGM

Thursday 27th April – Guided Tour of Bradfield Woods

Your Ipswich Group is heading to one of SWT's most famous nature reserves for a guided tour with the warden of the site, Alex Lack. We've timed this event to (hopefully) coincide with the bluebell flowering season. Please pre-book via www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events

Wednesday 3rd and Wednesday 10th May – birdwatching trailer tour of Orfordness

Following the huge interest in this site last year, we've arranged two more opportunities to visit this fascinating coastal nature reserve – this time with the emphasis on seeing its varied birdlife from the vantage point of a trailer. Places must be pre-booked via www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events

Nextdoor Nature

- A new project and approach for Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Lucy Shepherd *Wilder Communities Manager, Suffolk Wildlife Trust*

Over the years Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich has delivered a series of projects in the town, from our Ipswich Hedgehog project aiming to make Ipswich the most hedgehog friendly town in the UK, to our Closer to Nature project inspiring the next generation of young naturalists.

From each of these projects we have achieved and learnt a great deal, and each of our past projects help to inform new bids, enabling us to deliver new projects in the town whilst incorporating and building upon past projects.

Earlier this year, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts approached each trust in our 46-trust strong movement, to write a bid for a new nationwide project, Nextdoor Nature, a first of its kind project.

This new cross country collaborative project, that kick started in April, aims to bring communities together to help nature flourish where they live and work. Thanks to £5 million funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Nextdoor Nature, delivered by Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich, will provide communities with the advice and support they need to take action for nature on their doorstep, and leave a lasting

natural legacy in honour of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Action could include establishing wild habitats and green corridors in nature-poor areas in the town, naturalising highly urbanised or unused areas, or building on work already undertaken needing a new lease of life.

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and research shows 85% of people in nature-deprived areas say more natural spaces would improve their quality of life. The majority also say that having access to local natural spaces is more important post-pandemic. Nextdoor Nature will enable people to make this happen and in doing so, take steps to tackle the nature and climate crisis whilst also addressing important health and wellbeing needs.

It might be that so far in reading this, you're think this all sounds a little old hat

and 'been there done that', but this Nextdoor Nature has a very different approach. First and foremost, we are listening. Through a series of listening exercises and community consultations, we are listening to communities, being led by them and coming away from our traditional engagement methods, turning to community empowerment instead.

If we are to tip the scales in the current climate emergency, we need all the help we can get to take action for nature, and this means facilitating and empowering communities, which will only come when communities are listened to. We need communities to take action for themselves, with us there to support and give advice from the side-lines and behind the scenes, and in turn, this more hands off approach will allow us to expand our reach and impact for people and wildlife alike across the town, and our fellow Trusts across the country.



Suffolk
Wildlife Trust

Brooke House, Ashbocking, Ipswich
IP6 9JY

01473 890089

info@suffolkwildlifetrust.org
suffolkwildlifetrust.org

So, whether there's a dull, barren patch of land that could be colourful and buzzing again, or a space that could be a wild but safe area to visit or play in – the Nextdoor Nature projects will help everyone to take action for nature.

If you would like to keep up to date with Nextdoor Nature, and all our events and other work in the town, follow us on Instagram on @swtipswich and @Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich on Facebook. Check out our suffolkwildlifetrust.org website for all our sessions and events in Ipswich.



Wildflower grassland management

James Baker *Manager, Greenways Countryside Project*



© James Baker

Tractor mounted flail-collector mower



GREENWAYS countryside project

Scout Headquarters (next to St Peter's Church),
Stoke Park Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP2 9TH
Office: 07736 826076
greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk
www.wildipswich.org
Twitter: @greenwaysproj
Instagram & Facebook: @greenwaysproject

The Greenways Countryside Project exists to protect and enhance the countryside, landscape and open space across an area of about 100 square kilometres in and around the town of Ipswich, and home to around one quarter of the population of Suffolk, for the benefit of wildlife and local people. The project relies on volunteers to complete much of its practical conservation work. The Greenways Project is a very successful and well-established partnership between Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, East Suffolk Council and the local community.

Almost all of the 40 or so nature reserves and green spaces that the Greenways Project manages include areas of long grass habitat. So each year, the management of these areas is a huge task that dominates our work during the late summer and autumn months.

Whatever you call it – long grass; wildflower meadow; grassland; pasture – they are all full of wildflowers (grasses are wildflowers too!) and are great for a very wide range of wildlife species from butterflies and moths to small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. With the bulk of media attention these days focussed on trees and woodlands, grassland tends to be forgotten and somehow thought to be less valuable – but it isn't!

Permanent pasture has been shown to store more carbon than planted woodlands, and also stores water very effectively, helping to reduce flooding. In general terms, properly managed grasslands also support a wider range of wildlife species and often a greater number or biomass. So it is vital that we value these habitats and do not make the mistake of planting trees all over them just because we think it is a good idea! We always use the motto: 'Right tree, right place' – and no trees are really in the right place on a meadow or a heath or near a pond or wetland! Ironically, nature establishes trees naturally on these sites, all too effectively! So much of grassland management is about retaining the habitat in its current form, which includes preventing too many trees and shrubs growing on them, as this will eventually shade out all the smaller plants,

and all the species dependent on those will be lost too.

Management of grassland generally involves an annual cut, and critically, the cuttings are left, they tend to form a layer of 'thatch' which makes it difficult for less vigorous plants to grow through, thus limiting diversity in the sward. It also means that all the cut material rots down, enriching the soil – again favouring more vigorous (and generally more common) ruderal species. Grassland management is really the opposite of farming or gardening – we want to make the soil as nutrient-poor as possible!

The main methods of management we use are tractor mounted flail-collector mowers and volunteers! Large tractor mounted machines that can cut and collect the material are obviously quicker, but there are some disadvantages – it is likely that much of the wildflower seed is sucked up into the hopper along with the other debris. Also, and perhaps more worryingly, we think that this method probably results in more 'collateral damage' to wildlife – but that said, not managing the grassland at all would have more serious consequences for species.

Wherever possible, we use

pedestrian reciprocating bar mowers (like the old Allen Scythes) to cut the grass, followed by our wonderful, hard-working volunteers with wooden hay rakes and pitch forks – making habitat piles with the cut grass in less sensitive areas of the reserves. These habitat piles are essential as a means of disposing of the cut material in the least environmentally costly way, but also do provide homes for invertebrates, hibernating amphibians, breeding reptiles and small mammals and fungi, amongst others.

Some people sometimes complain that wildflower/long grass areas look untidy, or present a fire risk, or are full of litter and dog poo. Generally we try to mow round the edges of our long grass areas to make it clear it is deliberate habitat management, and to keep paths clear etc. Sadly, litter that is dropped in parks etc tends to blow about until it gets trapped in long grass areas; and when dogs poo in these areas, the owners sometimes say they cannot clear it up – none of this is the fault of the long grass and nor, frankly is the suggestion of fire risk!

Grassland is great, in every way – and in my opinion, we all need to come to love it more than we do and value all of the benefits for our natural world!

The Beeches Primary School, Whitton

James Baker *Manager, Greenways Countryside Project*

Following on from helping to revitalise a wildlife garden at the school last year, we returned with our volunteers this summer to re-create a vegetable growing area for the pupils along with a range of other wildlife homes around the school.

The vegetable garden has new raised beds alongside rustic benches to allow teaching in the garden. We also installed a new compost bay and several bug boxes scattered around the garden. Organic mushroom compost from Capel Mushrooms will be spread on the beds to deter weed growth over the winter, and will be ready to dig in ready for crops in the spring.



The Beeches Bug Bench

As part of the school's plans to become more wildlife friendly, we also installed a new bespoke 'Bug Bench' – made entirely from local wood. The legs and seat are sweet chestnut – a very durable hardwood – from trees coppiced in Belstead Brook Park. Under the

seat, there are logs of various different trees (including oak, elm and birch) with holes drilled in them to encourage use by solitary bees and other invertebrates. The main uprights also have holes drilled in and slots for butterflies and moths

to potentially survive the winter. Blocks of bamboo pieces also provide opportunities for yet more species to nest or hide. A lovely sign attached to the bench explains the importance of dead wood for wildlife, explaining the fascinating life cycle of stag

beetles and how they might use the nearby 'Stag Beetle Pyramid' that we have also installed. Hopefully some of the pupils and parents will enjoy sitting on the bench and will learn a bit more about dead wood – without being put off by the bugs within!!



Stag beetle pile at The Beeches school

In the heart of Belstead Brook Park, Bobbitts Lane Meadows are a vital part of the very varied habitats that this 250 acre informal country park provides. The meadows range from dry grassland near the Lane itself, through wet grassland and reedbed to ponds and ditches. There are also patches of scrub, including blackthorn, that are home to nesting birds and brown hairstreak butterflies, whose tiny white dot eggs can be spotted by the keen-eyed, on the young blackthorn suckers.

For almost the last 2 decades, since the creation of new ponds on the reserve, a large population of common toads has been a notable feature of the site, although in recent years the numbers helped across Bobbitts Lane by Toad Patrol volunteers at breeding time, has dropped sharply. We believe this is largely due to predators finding the new ponds with their growing amphibian population, and taking their toll. There may be other factors reflecting national downward trends in numbers, and local issue such as pollution and irregular water levels in the ponds.

In December, work started in the meadows to de-silt some of the existing ponds and deepen others, as well as the creation of some new ponds to increase the diversity of wetland habitats across the reserve. There are shallow scrapes, ditches and hollows, and deeper, larger lakes – which will hopefully retain some open water for several years. Ponds and wetlands require considerable management effort – nature basically tries to fill in ponds by growing reeds and other floating rooted plants initially which help to dry out the pond and fill it with decaying vegetation at the end of each year.



Creating new ponds in the meadows

Eventually, trees will grow in the 'peat' that is filling the pond – especially willow species initially – which further dry out the pond and turn the habitat to wet woodland. So as well as using a large excavator to de-silt ponds and create new ones, some tree and scrub management is also required to maintain the rich variety of species across the site. In previous years, we have built log otter holts with the logs from tree work in the more undisturbed parts of the site. It was pleasing to see whilst working there this year, that at least some of those otter holts have been actively used – so we will keep building them!

Views into the ponds and wetland from the viewing mound in the meadows and metal tower in neighbouring Ashground Plantation, have been improved by the work – so not only will more species of birds and other wildlife enjoy the site – local people will hopefully see more too!

NEWS

Any old iron!

Every so often, the Greenways Project gets rid of all the scrap metal that its volunteers have collected as litter and from fly-tips – everything from beer cans to bikes, trolleys and car parts! In November, a tractor trailer load was taken away from the Greenways base!



This represents about 16 months' of collecting – a vast amount of effort. We estimate around 35000 beer cans were included, almost all collected along the river path through the town!

Spring Wood Day

Please note that the Spring Wood Day event will not be taking place this year. Ipswich Wildlife Group, the Greenways Project and the Friends of Belstead Brook Park who organise and fund the day have decided to run the event every other year to reduce costs and give the hard working volunteers a rest!! We look forward to welcoming you to the 2024 event!

Notes from Butterfly Conservation Suffolk

Trevor Goodfellow and Julian Dowding

Trevor Goodfellow *News Editor, Suffolk Butterfly Conservation*

2022 was a tough year for wildlife, including butterflies. Their larval stage was directly affected by the drought – shrivelling their foodplants and influencing pupal development.

It was good therefore, that I had a good 'compressed' summer show of butterflies at home in Thurston. Meadow Browns did well, so did Small and Essex skippers, although Gatekeepers were not so good. It was a bumper year for Clouded Yellow sightings and I not only had my first home sighting in July but also at King's Forest. It was quite good for Painted Ladies too, another migrant that is always a treat to see.

The mild autumn lured Red Admirals, Peacocks and Tortoiseshells from their hibernacula to feed again, ready for the colder weather. Certainly, my garden still has flowers for them: Tobacco plant, Hebe, Campanula, Verbena plus other wild flowers. I have heard of many more Hummingbird Hawk-moths sightings this year and I have personally seen the odd one just about everywhere I surveyed.

My running total of moth species is at 747 and a total to the end of November of 348 species, which is above average, although I believe numbers are down, variety seems to be ok.

Purdis Heath SSSI - Silver-studded Blue conservation work

Julian Dowding *Secretary, Suffolk Butterfly Conservation*

Suffolk Branch restarted work at Purdis to help save the rare Silver-studded Blue (SSB). It's the best site in and around Ipswich for the butterfly.



© Mark Brewster

Valuable conservation work at Purdis

This year's transect recorded over 500 individual butterflies, a 30-year high. Volunteer work has focused on clearing gorse between breeding areas to enable the species to fly more freely between them and also across the site to reach new habitat.

Our session on 26th November removed gorse, bramble and birch at the northern end of the site using hand tools, to create a landscape link from Purdis Heath to Ipswich Golf Course, where the greenkeeper has been creating suitable habitat for the species there. This will help provide long term security for SSB, if work continues. The eastern fringe of Ipswich was once one of the best places in the country for SSB but alas, most heathland has now been developed for housing, retail and industry, and just a few somewhat isolated pockets remain.

Work and studies over the past 12 years at

Purdis have enabled us to understand more clearly what Silver-studded Blue require to flourish there. In short, a mosaic of open heath with small 'building' heathers, interspersed with slightly larger heather and open sandy areas. The butterfly also requires nectar (usually from bell heather and birdsfoot trefoil) and black ants, which tend the young stages of the butterfly). By helping create the correct conditions, the colony has grown from a low of 4 in 2009, to the 500+ seen this year. If left to itself without any intervention, heathland becomes overgrown and the habitat needed for SSB soon deteriorates. In the past, heathland fires and grazing removed the taller plants, opening up the soil for the cycle to begin again. Thus, the need for manual work.

If you are interested in helping at Purdis, please email julian.dowding@ntlworld.com



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Membership Secretary

01379 643665

www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk

email: butterflies@sns.org.uk

Butterfly Conservation is dedicated to saving wild butterflies, moths and their habitats throughout the UK. All Butterfly Conservation members who live in Suffolk are automatically members of the branch and receive our newsletter, the Suffolk Argus, three times a year. The Suffolk branch is run by volunteers and we would be very pleased to hear from you if you would like to get involved.



Clouded Yellow



Male Silver-studded Blue with ants

Spring Wood in tip-top condition

Gerry Donlon *Ipswich Wildlife Group volunteer warden Spring Wood*

It's a pleasure to be the volunteer warden of Spring Wood. With work parties at least once a month throughout the year, it's a chance to watch the 'wheel of nature' turn, as one season follows another. The commitment of our wonderful volunteers ensures that Spring Wood is in tip-top condition, and welcoming all year round.

The traditional practice of coppicing is carried out from November to March. Coppicing is an ancient woodland management technique that involves felling trees at their base to create a 'stool' where new shoots will grow.

These days, coppicing is primarily a way of improving the health and biodiversity of a woodland area by opening it up to the sunlight and allowing a wider range of plants to flourish. In Spring Wood we coppice the hazel which provides local allotment holders and gardeners with wonderful beanpoles and pea sticks.



Bluebells

flora and fauna. Considered one of the best woods in the country for its Bluebells, Spring Wood is also a must for Anemones, Red Campion, Stitchwort, Wood Spurge, Ramsons and Primroses.

During a work party on 20th December 2020, I photographed Primroses in flower, this is the earliest flowering Primroses we have recorded in Spring Wood, the last earliest recorded was on 15th January 2012.

The song of the Chiffchaff welcomes us in March, and we then eagerly await the song of the Nightingale, as we prepare for the longer days ahead.

Our thanks to Martlesham Fencing

Fencing contractors, Martlesham Fencing, have donated two loads of old feather edge boards for use by IWG to produce hedgehog homes as part of our Wildlife Homes project.

Leader of the Wildlife Homes work party Martin Cant said, "They have been brilliant and very helpful, even delivering



panels to us using their own transport. We are extremely grateful for their support".

The guys at Martlesham Fencing are very supportive of local wildlife conservation and intend to continue supplying us with fencing that we can recycle for the benefit of wildlife.



Secretary Leila Matata

iwg@wildipswich.org www.wildipswich.org
Facebook@IpswichWildlifeGroup

Ipswich Wildlife Group is a registered charity, relying entirely on volunteers, that promotes interest in, and conservation of, wildlife and habitats in and around Ipswich.

When I first joined Ipswich Wildlife Group, we coppiced from October until April each year, maybe we are also witnessing climate change in action.

Spring is a very special time for woodland



Volunteers enjoying a Sunday morning coppicing session



Fencing to be recycled as Hog homes

Apples, birds and children make park life richer

Andy and Yvonne *Friends of Holywells Park*

In October our first Apple Day since all Covid restrictions have been lifted was very well supported. It was great to see so many new faces as well as people who had been coming since our first Apple Day in 2005.

As well as juice pressing and the legendary apple fritters, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Ipswich Tree Wardens, Greener Ipswich and Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group (STOG) all had stalls. STOG were busy identifying fruits, considering there are over 2000 recorded in the UK, it's not an easy task. We only eat a few varieties unlike the Victorians who ate many more varieties, and used to have apple tasting evenings to show their sophistication and palates, just as we have with wine tasting evenings.

The loss and decline of animal and plant species is of major concern. Record keeping is an important tool to be able to measure this accurately. Whilst looking back in the Friends archives I came across a booklet 'Birds of Holywells' by Ray Waters. This was a survey of bird species in Holywells Park carried out between 1984 and 1989. Over that

period 95 species were recorded, 40 present all year and 26 confirmed breeding on the site. Of the regular breeders Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Spotted Flycatcher stand out. Both species certainly don't breed in the park anymore and are nationally in rapid decline. One bird that's absent from the survey that is now common is the Little Egret, a clear indicator of climate change. Another bird of note is the Cuckoo, a regular visitor in the survey



Serving pure apple juice



Storyteller, Gerry Donlon, enjoying Apple Day



Andy and Yvonne tell the tale of the bees



Friends of Holywells Park

The Group aims to work in partnership with Ipswich Borough Council to improve and promote the Park.
Contact: fohpswich@gmail.com
www.holywellspark.org.uk
facebook.com/holywellsparkipswich

but rarely heard in the park nowadays. It would be very interesting to update the survey. Any volunteers ?!

Engaging and involving young people in conservation and wildlife is vital for all our futures. We were delighted to welcome Cliff Lane School nursery for a talk on pollinating insects and how important they are. It was a very wet morning and a group of twenty children trooped down to the orchard. The children learned about solitary bees, honey bees and how important insects are for pollinating. The children looked inside a virtual bee hive and had a walk around the orchard.

We look forward to continuing to engage with the youngsters of Cliff Lane School and hope to welcome them back to the orchard in the Spring.

Busy volunteers in the Dales

Kaye Roberts *Secretary, Friends of the Dales*

Four volunteers carried out an extensive litter-pick in August in the 'wilder' area of the Dales and discovered that somebody had built a small den. This was not too much of a surprise, but the pair of steps nearby was.



Friends of the Dales

The Dales is a small Local Nature Reserve situated off Dales Road in Ipswich.

For details of the Friends Group please contact secretary Kaye Roberts kayefotdsec@virginmedia.com or find us on Facebook by searching Friends of the Dales

With the very dry summer, the flowers on the meadow had finished their season by early September and the decision was taken to cut the meadow that month and not leave it until October as is usual. There was less growth to mow and the resulting cut vegetation was cleared by lunchtime by a willing band of volunteers. No field voles were found this year during the cut, but there were many toads including several fully-grown adults. These were moved to the edge of the meadow to prevent any injuries from the mower. Some plants were left standing as they contained wasp spiders. Other volunteers cut down the summer growth on the area which slow worms tend to use.

The main job for the October work party was to remove the large tree (willow/sallow of unknown species) that had fallen over a path. It is thought that this tree was one of the oldest in the Dales so it is sad to see it go. Over the past month nettles and brambles had grown over several paths and some of the volunteers set about cutting these back. Others trimmed and removed vegetation from the two very small ponds, although there was no water present at the time.



The small pond can now see the light

A well-attended work party in November resulted in many pre-winter tasks being completed. The IBC rangers used a pole-cutter to remove branches that were overhanging the main path. The area beyond the smaller pond was cleared and old branches, leaves, etc were removed from that pond as much as the volunteers were able to. Undergrowth was also removed from the area where primroses will emerge in the spring. Brambles and nettles



Parasol Mushroom

which were surrounding the rowan trees were also removed. On a positive note, some ragged robin was planted in suitable habitat and also a couple of honeysuckle to augment those already present. Following the long-awaited rain, fungi made an appearance and several parasol mushrooms were found.

Common Blues at the Dales

Sam Chamberlin, Ipswich Borough Council Ranger

The current trend of a mild wet winter followed by a cooler dry spring meant that the wildflower meadow 'peaked' later than in recent years. However, along the lower elevation of the site the underlying topography which consists of a high percentage of moisture retaining clay and chalk has been advantageous for flora and fauna during the drought of 2022.

July into August was the best time to see the meadow in its optimum flowering period and volunteers were able to undertake the annual cut and rake in mid-September. During the task we were very happy to note the presence of Common

Blue butterflies (*Polyommatus icarus*). I can't comment on the previous site records for this species but two males and one female were recorded on that day.

If site compatibility allows, this species can produce three generations through to the adult stage from May – October.

It would be likely that this observation would be the second generation.

The latest record of this species I have noted was on 28th October 2018 at Piper's Vale LNR (third generation).

Since the wildflower habitat creation and the establishing caterpillar foodplants of common bird's-foot trefoil (main), white clover and black medick available, the species will hopefully colonise. The butterfly is able to travel small distances and new patches of habitat tend to be colonised quite quickly. It will be interesting to monitor this species in years to come and continue to maintain the meadow for overall site biodiversity value.

© Sam Chamberlin



Adult toad crossing the meadow



Common Blue butterflies

© Peter Howard

© Sam Chamberlin

Lions, bears and wolves in ancient Ipswich

Caroline Markham GeoSuffolk

Worsdell Close in the Stoke area of Ipswich gives access to a small open space of roughly mown grass bounded by shrubs and a few trees. It was part of the railway sidings on the south side of the rail tunnel and was not built-on when Abbey Homes developed the rest of the area 12 years ago because it protects fossil treasure.

It is part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest designated to protect the interglacial lake-bed deposits first discovered when the railway tunnel was dug in the 1840s. These have been dated at approx. 210,000 years old and have yielded a variety of vertebrate fossils, many of which are in Ipswich Museum. These include mammoth, lion, freshwater tortoise, bear, wolf, deer and horse – all living here during this warm phase in the Ice Age.

GeoSuffolk has set up an information board at the site using images of some of the fossils to tell the story of 'Lake Ipswich' as it might have been 210,000 years ago when visited by these animals. The interglacial lake-bed is not large in extent and so this area has been set aside for study in the future – it is



The Worsdell Close open space with Hillside School in the background, and the railway cutting between the two

called a 'Finite Buried Interest SSSI'. Who knows what 23rd century science will be able to achieve?

In February 2021 GeoSuffolk was asked by Natural England to check and report the condition of the entire Stoke Tunnel Cutting SSSI which involved visiting the Worsdell Close open space, assessing the railway cutting itself and also Hillside Primary School on the other side of the railway line. More fossils were discovered at Hillside School when it was built in the 1940s and so part of the playing field is also a 'Finite Buried Interest SSSI'.

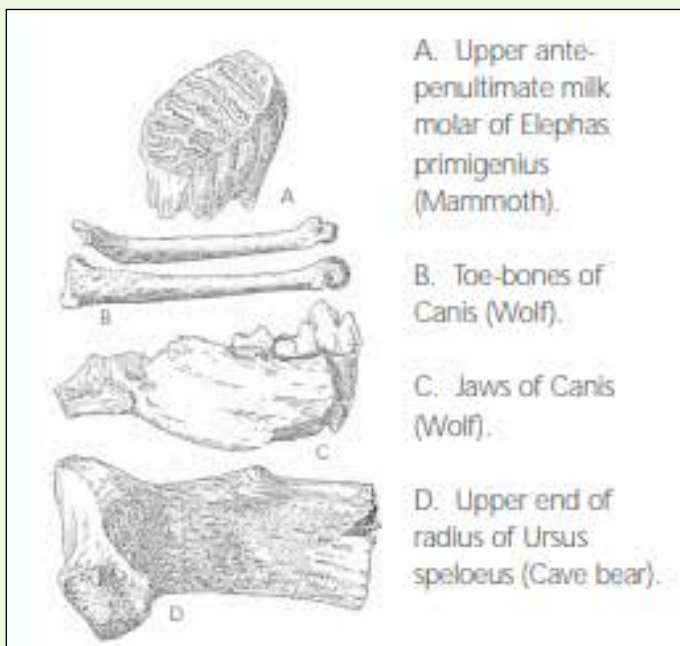
Covid-19 (we waited for our first vaccinations before visiting) and snow (remember February 2021?) notwithstanding, we found the school to be extremely diligent in its protection of the fossil site with no equipment needing foundations and few large trees (which damage the geology with their roots) in the area. Similarly, the Worsdell Close area passed muster – grassed over, with trees/shrubs limited to the periphery. The cutting itself was more difficult to see – though Network Rail was very accommodating and offered track visitor permits and even a tunnel visit – at night between 01:30 and 4am! We settled for photographs of the cutting from the top of the tunnel entrance on Luther Road, also from the track access gates at the back of Worsdell Close.



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



GeoSuffolk promotes the understanding and appreciation of the landscape and geology of Suffolk
– see www.geosuffolk.co.uk
and contact us on caroline.markham1@btinternet.com



Illustrations of mammoth, wolf and bear fossils found at the site by Nina Layard in the early 20th century (originally published by the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia)



The GeoSuffolk information board

© Colin Hullis

Worthwhile work summer and winter

Ann Havard *Friends of Belstead Brook Park*

As we all know it was a very hot, dry summer, so working in the shade in August along the boardwalk in Ashground Plantation was a welcome relief. Several patches of the boardwalk here are beginning to show their age, so the team of volunteers set to and made some much needed repairs to a few bits.

It was still a hot day in September when several volunteers set to mowing and raking Burnet Meadow. This is only a small site hidden behind a cul-de-sac off Marbled White Drive, but it has some children's play equipment and outdoor exercise equipment too. The site is grassland with some scrubby edges, all of which support many butterflies and insects. The grassland is mown yearly to help reduce some of the more dominant species and to give smaller, rarer species a chance.



Friends of Belstead Brook Park

www.wildipswich.org

Email: fobbp@wildipswich.org

Friends of Belstead Brook Park (FoBBP) was set up in 2002 to help look after the 250 acres of informal country park on the south-western fringe of Ipswich. The group runs practical work parties, helps raise funds for improvements and acts as 'eyes and ears', passing information back to the Greenways Project.

More mowing and raking took place in October this time in Millennium Wood at the northern end and along the ride edges. As usual the mown grass was all heaped into big habitat piles by the volunteers using pitchforks to gather up and take as much grass as possible – at times they looked like moving haystacks! One of our volunteers also gave the information board near the Bobbitts Land end a really good clean as some annoying person had decided to spray paint it. Fortunately this came off with some cleaner and a lot



Hot work on the boardwalk

of elbow grease – well done.

November of course is Megabash time! A dozen volunteers from Ipswich Wildlife Group, Greenways and Friends of Belstead Brook Park turned up at Millennium Wood on a dull, drizzly morning to help open up a new coppice area. To everyone's relief the rain stopped about 10am, the sun came out (it always shines on the righteous!) and we had a very productive day. Carl was busy with the chainsaw while the rest of us used either loppers or bow saws to process the big trees he was felling and also to cut down the smaller trees. All the wood was or will be used – a lot went in the dead



A clean-up for the Millennium Wood information board

hedges around the coppiced area, with some being put to good use to define the paths in Spring Wood which has been rather trampled on over the

last couple of years. Hopefully people will now know where the paths are and stick to them so that the bluebells can flower again



Carl gets to work on the bigger trees

How woodlands cope with weird weather

Stephen Corley *Chairman Portal Woodlands Conservation Group*

As the heat struck during July, like many other woodlands in our area, Portal Woodlands had a hard time with the lack of water.

© K. Corley



Hairy curtain crust fungus

The trees invoked their coping mechanism by shedding leaves, in the same way they do in the autumn. This left a rather peculiar scene, with a summer green canopy above a ground covering of discarded brown leaves. Despite the heat, a small team of volunteers headed out to clear the northern tumulus. Suitably hydrated they made good progress, making the most of the shade from the trees.

© K. Corley



Cyclamen

A rare benefit of the drought resulted in the pond's water level being the lowest it had been for many years. This gave us the opportunity to clear much of the overgrowth of bulrushes and other plants, and to dredge some of the accumulated mud to return

the depth to what it should be. It was a wet and muddy job but vital for the long-term health of the pond and its wildlife. The timing was lucky as the rain came with a vengeance in the days and weeks following. The pond

is already well on its way to being refilled.

As the woods turned increasingly brown, there was some colour to be spotted by the keen-eyed visitor, such as the bright pink colour of

cyclamen (*Cyclamen*) bursting through the autumn leaves. The new moisture, combined with the unseasonal warmth, brought out some impressive fungi, including parasol (*Macrolepiota procera*) and hairy curtain crust (*Stereum hirsutum*).

© J. Oliver



In the muddy pond

© P. Davies



Clearing Tumulus



Portal Woodlands Conservation Group

Enquiries: Martlesham Parish Council
01473 612632 pwcg.onesuffolk.net or
email.pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com

The PORTAL WOODLANDS CONSERVATION GROUP is dedicated to conserving the woodlands west of the Suffolk Police HQ and alongside the A1214 encouraging the local wildlife to thrive while preserving historical sites of interest and inspiring people to enjoy the nature surrounding them. Volunteers meet each month to work on a variety of projects and everybody is welcome to join this friendly group. All required training and necessary tools are provided.

Volunteer Work Mornings

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

Saturday 21st January
Sunday 19th February
Saturday 18th March
Sunday 16th April

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

A Guide to recording birds In Suffolk

Gi Grieco *Suffolk Bird Group*


The foundation stone of any report is the data upon which it is based. Unless we all submit our records diligently, and in a usable form, then the Suffolk Bird Report will not be a comprehensive account of the birds recorded in Suffolk..

north-east, south-east and west.

Observers are reminded that Suffolk works to Watsonian vice-county boundaries (VC25 and VC26), taking in areas that are now administered as Norfolk, Cambridgeshire or Essex. The most significant area affected is that of Lothingland, the northern limits of which follow the River Yare and include the south side of Breydon Water. We have retained these original boundaries as we feel that sensible comparison of data can only be made from year to year if the recording area is kept constant.

the County Recorder to be considered by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee (BBRC), whose decisions are accepted by SORC. A full list of species that are considered by the SORC follows. The committee may also request further details regarding any

other species that, in the opinion of the committee, is out of context in terms of season, habitat or numbers. Species are categorised as below – with the species list and corresponding number found on the SBG web site.



Enquiries:
info@suffolkbirdgroup.org
www.suffolkbirdgroup.org
Twitter: [suffolkbirds1](https://twitter.com/suffolkbirds1)
SBG is the Group for people interested in the birds of Suffolk, providing a network and a voice for birdwatchers in the county.

Key

1	National Rarity – detailed description required.
2	County Rarity – notes detailing observation will always be required.
3	All records requested – supporting notes may be requested.
4	Specific records – records of breeding, large counts, earliest/latest dates, unusual inland records or migration/weather-related movements requested.

All observers are requested to submit their records monthly

The system

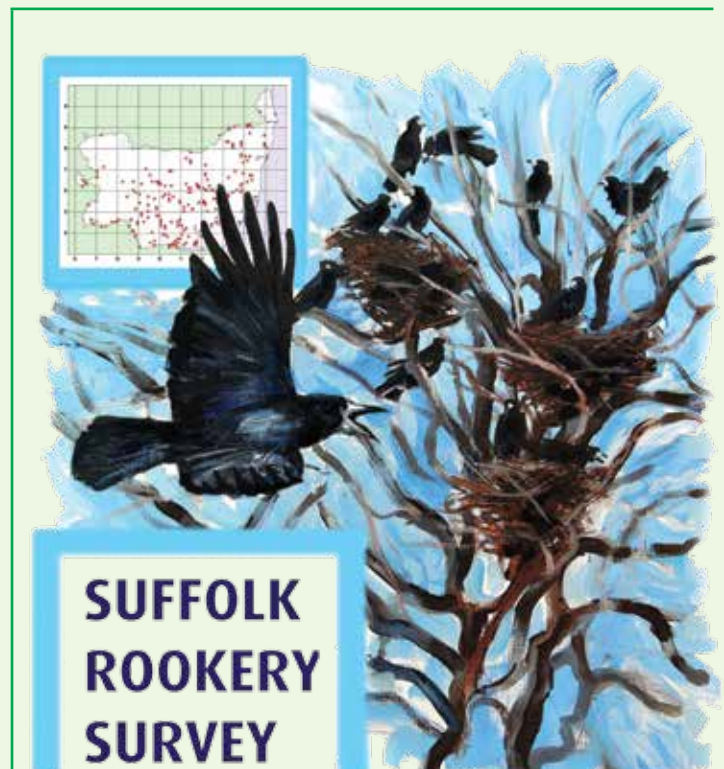
The recording of the county's avifauna is the responsibility of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society (SNS), working in close co-operation with the Suffolk Bird Group (SBG). The linchpins of the system are the Recorders, who are the initial point of contact for all records. Because of the volume of records in Suffolk the county has been divided into three areas –

Submission of records

All observers are requested to submit their records monthly. The deadline for submission is January 31st of the following year. Details of species, location, date, sex/age, abundance and other relevant comments. A spreadsheet is available for submitting records and can be downloaded from the SBG website. This can be sent electronically to the Recorders. The other method is to use the BTO BirdTrack system – these records are passed on to each area recorder.

Assessment of records

All records come under the scrutiny of the Suffolk Ornithological Records Committee (SORC) and for rare or scarce species, verification is sought – i.e. photographs, field sketches, witnesses, sound recordings (for calling or singing birds) and (most importantly) written descriptions. The SORC's policy for vagrants, classified as national rarities, is clear; records should be channelled through



We established the SBG Rookery Survey with a plan to record all the rookeries in Suffolk. The results of the survey are to be incorporated into a SBG publication once the fieldwork had taken place. Unfortunately, due to Covid and restrictions in movement, recording has been hampered during the principal breeding period. As such, we'd like to complete the survey next year, so would all members participate to cover as much of the county as possible.

We do have funds to pay for fuel – details will be on the SBG website.

The easy-to-use rookery survey webpage, hosted by the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service, allows the number of nests in each rookery to be recorded, with location mapping down to an accuracy level of 10 metres. The survey page to enter details can be found here – <https://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/rookerysurvey>.



Christchurch Park Bird Report July to October 2022

Philip Murphy *Friends of Christchurch Park*

Two pairs of Little Grebes bred on Wilderness Pond and by late August had hatched nine chicks, of which three survived to maturity.

Noisy fights between the two pairs involved much chasing. When accompanying their youngsters, the adults could be very aggressive, despite their small size, to chase away Mallards, Moorhens, and even Canada Geese! One adult-sized juvenile was still on the pond in late October, as were two adults.

Monthly maxima of Mandarin Ducks were July: 24, August: 27, September: 28 (highest site total since September 2021 when 33 were present) and October: 23.

Only six Mallard broods were noted this year, totalling 38 ducklings of which only eight are thought to have survived. The maximum count of Mallards was 55 on August 19th. Three pairs were observed copulating on October 25th, although copulation this late is probably not functional. A common Buzzard which flew over Wilderness Pond at tree-top level on October 10th created much noisy panic amongst the Mallards.

Irregular Sparrowhawk sightings in June had hinted that a pair was breeding either in, or in the immediate vicinity of, the park. On July 6th an adult with prey in its talons was seen to fly into the pinewood adjacent to Wilderness Pond, and such behaviour was noted on three occasions before July 19th on which date two juveniles could be heard food-begging; these juveniles were heard regularly up to August 3rd after which date it is assumed that they fledged. One of the adults was noted high over the park on July 18th being mobbed by Swifts. Other sightings of the birds of prey included a pair of Peregrines August 23rd, three Common Buzzards on October 31st and singles of Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard all noted over the park on September 5th.

There were sightings in September and October of up to three Cormorants on the ponds, and nine circling high over the park on September 5th.

By late September sightings of adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls were becoming irregular, leaving one, maybe two juveniles but these had departed by mid-October. Whether these gulls move elsewhere within southern England or migrate to the Iberian peninsula/north-western Africa is not known. The first returning Black-headed Gull was noted over the park on July 15th.

Single, and typically noisy, Ring-necked Parakeets were seen and heard on August 18th and October 4th. Swift totals started to decline from July 26th onwards and none was seen over the park after two on August 26th. Neither Swallows nor House Martins are known to breed within the park's immediate vicinity, so sightings of up to two Swallows on four dates in late August/early September, and three House Martins on August 23rd clearly relate to passage birds.

A pair of Green Woodpeckers was seen on two occasions in July with two juveniles and a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers bred successfully in an oak tree close to the park's northern Bridleway entrance. On July 2nd a juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker was watched ground-feeding in the manner of a Green Woodpecker.

A resplendent male Grey Wagtail was noted almost daily in the first week of July as it was collecting insects on an area of short-cut grass near the Boer War Memorial. Hopefully it helped in a successful nesting attempt nearby. Sightings of at least two Grey Wagtails in the vicinity of the park's ponds in late October probably refer to birds that had bred, or been bred, further north in Britain.

The devastating effects of trichomonosis on Greenfinch



© Colin Hulils

Female Mallard coming in to land

populations are well documented. For the first recorded time, this formerly abundant species was not located in the park during the breeding season.

The first Redwings (4) flew west over the park on October 3rd with subsequent totals involving 30 on 10th, 40 on 17th and 30 and 27th. No Chiffchaffs were seen or heard after September 26th apart from one in the Lower Arboretum on October 31st; by this late date it is likely that this individual arrived further east in Europe intending to overwinter in Britain.

Undoubtedly the most unexpected sighting during this period was that of two male Ringed Teal on the Round Pond on October 11th. This species of duck originates from central South America but these two had undoubtedly escaped from a wildfowl collection!



© Colin Hulils

Ring-necked Parakeets showing more often



Friends of Christchurch Park

Chair: Peter Gray 07709 634161
Membership Secretary: Robert Fairchild
01473 254255

www.friendsofchristchurchpark.co.uk
Follow us on Facebook@Christchurch Park and
Twitter@ChristchurchPk

The sole purpose of the Friends Group is to help look after the Park for the public good, and to promote its welfare. Anyone who shares this aim is welcome to join. For a small annual fee of £10 you can join in Friends activities all year round, including Illustrated talks and discussions, Guided Park walks and Practical conservation work. You will also receive an informal seasonal newsletter.

With many thanks to Brian Macdonald, Mark Dowling, Tony Powell and Andrew Revitt for providing much of the information upon which this article is based.

Historic Realm of the Elms

Ipswich Borough Council Wildlife Rangers

This winter Ipswich Borough Council joined volunteers from Ravenswood Wildlife Group and Ipswich Tree Warden Network during National Tree Week (26th November – 4th December) to begin rebuilding the historic Elm Avenue at Gainsborough Lane, Pipers Vale, Orwell Country Park.



IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Wildlife Rangers

Office : 01473 433998

park.rangers@ipswich.gov.uk
Stable Block, Holywells Park,
Cliff Lane, Ipswich IP3 0PG

The Wildlife & Education Rangers are responsible for the management of wildlife areas within the town's parks and other green spaces. As well as carrying out practical management, the team runs an events programme and works with many local schools to engage and inspire the public about the wildlife Ipswich has to offer.

The lane runs from Sandy Hill Lane to Pond Hall Farm, sandwiched between Pipers Vale to the north and Bridge Wood to the south of the Orwell Bridge. In the Middle Ages, Pond Hall Farm was part of the 'Manor de Alnesbourne et ponds' held by the prior of the nearby Alnesbourne Priory. The farm has long attracted visitors for its beautiful views over the Orwell estuary, in fact in the Victorian era many postcards were produced of the farm to advertise this beauty spot.

The farm was divided in 2020,

and the farmhouse and a large field south of the Orwell Bridge being sold, with the remainder of the land incorporated as an extension to Orwell Country Park. The country park extension is managed for locally important species including Slow Worm, Common Lizard, Skylark and Barn owl.

The lane leading to the farm was traditionally famed for its large elm trees but with the arrival of Dutch Elm Disease in the 70's, all but a handful of the mature elms have perished. Although the *Ulmus* has regenerated as suckers, these will never become mature specimens and will eventually succumb to the disease. On the plus side there are increased amounts of standing deadwood, one of the UK's rarest microhabitats.

This year, thanks to a joint IBC bid to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, we were able to plant 10 new Disease Resistant Elm (*Ulmus dodoens*) to start to restore the avenue. The fund supports tree planting to replace those lost through disease such as Dutch Elm Disease or Ash Dieback. A selection of other high wildlife value species will also be planted including Rowan, Goat Willow, and Crab Apple.

The White-letter Hairstreak is one of our more-elusive butterflies as it flits high in the treetops, often appearing as a dark speck against the sky. It gets its name from the letter "W" that is formed from a series of white lines found on the underside of the hindwings.



White letter hairstreak

Elm is the sole foodplant for this species and with the onset of the disease it was thought the butterfly might become extinct in the British Isles as happened with the Large Tortoiseshell (another elm specialist).

Surviving colonies were subsequently looked for, with Gainsborough Lane still supporting a small population utilising the younger elm

specimens. There has been a concerted effort to find disease-resistant elms that exhibit the appropriate qualities to support this butterfly (such as flowering at the right time of year, since young larvae generally rely on flower buds as a food source). *Ulmus dodoens* was the hybrid selected for the planting, and as it also flowers in March and April it should be well received by the butterfly.



Elm planting



One of the elms planted and protected

Little good news then a rarity shows up

Tim Kenny *Leader, RSPB Ipswich Group*

This isn't an easy column to write. There seems to have been so little good news of any kind around at the moment, and I say that having taken the difficult decision to turn the heating on for a few minutes.

One thing that may have been hidden amongst the other measures in the autumn budget was the reiteration of the government's support for the construction of Sizewell C. The RSPB position on this is unchanged; in the present form, EDF's plans will cause significant disturbance to the site at Minsmere during the decade-long construction period. I say decade-long, if other recent infrastructure products are any guide, this timeframe is very likely to extend much further.

I also write this on the day that a proposal for an eleven mile tidal barrier across the Wash has been officially launched. This would include a container port, turbines to generate power from the tides, and a road across the top. Great news if you are looking for a short cut from Hunstanton to Boston, but far from it if you are a migratory wader feeding on the rich mudflats of the area. Yet another internationally important conservation area potentially under concrete. It appears that there is no wilderness in this country that is safe from the eye of the developer. Such areas are increasingly seen as only good for development, the value only monetary, which is a sad state of affairs and a poor reflection of us as a nation in my opinion. Some benefits in life you can't put on a balance sheet.

The great thing is that we are all members of the RSPB, 1.1 million people who have a considerable voice in the nation's conservation efforts. I would encourage contact with your local MP to make your point known to them. It might feel like a completely pointless exercise but we must continue to try.

We had a visitor to Suffolk this autumn in the form of Suffolk's third **alpine accentor** that spent a couple of days at Aldeburgh at the end of October. The news broke on a Thursday night and, by sheer coincidence, I had the Friday off work, so it was an early start to be there at sunrise. There was already a considerable throng of twitchers in attendance and before long the bird was found, offering occasional distant views from my position at the back of the scrum. As the crowd crept forward, unnecessarily harrying the bird I felt, I wondered to myself if it was just me who had grown up with the mantra that



Alpine accentor at Slaughden

'the welfare of the bird is of paramount importance' and made preparations to leave.

At that moment, the bird flew over the heads of the scrum and landed about twenty feet from me and another observer. Quickly I grabbed some photographs, whilst behind me a thunder of footsteps reminiscent of the Grand National grew louder and louder. Almost instantly my opportunity had passed but I did manage to get some workable pictures. The **alpine accentor** is a close relative of our **dunnock** that is found, as the name suggests, on high mountains. It differs in having bright chestnut on the flanks and underparts, and a row of bright white spots on the wings. This particular individual had taken a wrong turn somewhere and found itself at sea level in Suffolk, much to the delight of many. For me, it was a life tick, something that becomes more and more difficult in this country the older I get!

I pushed my luck a little and ventured north to try and add **dusky warbler** to my life list, as one had been found at Southwold the previous day. Sadly a two hour stakeout did not produce the aforementioned **warbler**, although there were plenty of **dunnocks**. It isn't very often that one can see two accentor species in a single day in the UK.

As a committee we are on the lookout for members to assist us in the running of the local group. On indoor meeting nights we are keen to recruit for the



Ipswich Local Group

Group Leader Tim Kenny
Tel 01394 809236
ipswichrspblocalgroup@yahoo.com
<https://group.rspb.org.uk/ipswich>

Ipswich RSPB Local Group is for everyone interested in birds and other wildlife in the Ipswich area and beyond. Come along to our indoor talks, held monthly between September to April at Rushmere St Andrew Church Hall, get out and experience nature first hand on one of our regular field meetings. Three times a year you will receive the 'Orwell Observer' magazine. Membership costs £5 per year (£1 for Juniors). For more information see the Events Diary in this magazine, visit our website or email as per details above.

tea roster, so if you can assist please let one of us know. We are also looking for somebody to serve as an indoor meetings secretary; this involves putting together the schedule and booking the speakers for the coming year. Again, if you think this is something you would like to do, please contact me or one of my fellow committee members. Finally, don't forget that all of our positions on the committee come up for election at the AGM every April, so if you wish to put yourself forward for this please can you let us know and we can put you on the ballot.

Happy birding in 2023 and I hope to see you at one of our events soon

Snippets



Even swans falling victim to the dreaded Bird Flu

Spring Migration Squit



The Nightingale has journeyed far
Over lands where shotguns are,
Across the choppy grey North Sea
To light down on a high gantree.
He welcomes the Sou-Eastly blow
That brings him safe to Felixstowe -
Skirts the nets of the B.T.O.,
Catches his breath to onward go.
He sets his course all to the good
Ten miles more, back to Spring Wood.
He has, indeedy, journeyed long,
Will soon delight us with his song:
But not just yet, he need a rest,
He must refuel to sing his best.
Each note more rich than vintage port
Drunk at Windsor's royal court.
He lures a mate into his tree,
Spied on by R.S.P.B.
We're incidental to his tradition,
But blessed are we who stand and listen.

Thanks to Su Fox for writing this delightful piece.

Hummingbird Hawk moth

Richard Stewart

We have over fifty nectar sources in our wildlife garden at Westerfield Road, Ipswich. Consequently we get a few visits each year from the migratory Hummingbird Hawk moth. However in 2022 we had at least sixteen visits from the middle of June to the last week of August. Nectaring was observed on Buddleia, Verbena bonariensis, Valerian, Plumbago and Marjoram. On several occasions visits were on early evenings with no sunshine. One visit to Valerian was timed and an incredible forty florets were visited in just one minute. One further sighting was within the Urban Buzz wildflower strip at the north end of Christchurch Park, feeding on Viper's Bugloss.



© Trevor Goodfellow

Winter can be a tough time for wildlife

Andy Smuk

So it's not surprising that some creatures take advantage of our houses. Spiders in particular find sanctuary at this time of year. This fine specimen is a noble false widow lurking on our ceiling. First recorded in this country in 1870s, likely a stowaway on cargo ships from its native Madeira and Canary Islands, it only gained a foothold in the UK in the 1980s. Yet another sign of climate change? It is one of only 12 spider species in this country, recorded biting humans, out of 650 species. So enjoy the spiders that we share our houses with but look out for the ones that might bite!



Spring Wood Day 2024

A reminder that Spring Wood Day now takes place every other year
- next date will be May Spring Bank Holiday Monday 2024.

Events Diary

JANUARY

Saturday 7th January 9am Suffolk Bird Group OUTDOOR EVENT
Mersea Island. Meet at Victoria Esplanade. (Long walk possible). Map Ref: TM021124.
Leader Ashley Gooding Tel. 07808 044611.

Thursday 12th January 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING
'Havergate Island, History and Wildlife'
Steve Everett, Wildlife Photographer and RSPB Volunteer. Sponsored by Bypass Nurseries Capel St Mary. St Andrew Church Hall, The Street, Rushmere IP5 1DH Group Members £3 Non-Members £5.

Saturday 14th January 9.30am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING
Manningtree and Mistley for waders and wildfowl. Meet at Manningtree Maltings. TM109319. 2hours, 2-3miles. View from cars if weather adverse. Walking easy.
Leader Stephen Marginson.

Saturday 21st January 10am to 3.30pm Greenways Project WINTER MEGABASH
Martlesham Common. Join Greenways and other groups to help maintain the vital heathland at this Local Nature Reserve, including scrub clearing and a bonfire (wind direction permitting!) Please bring your own food and drink. Meet in the Martlesham Community Centre car park off Felixstowe Road. **More info from Greenways on 07736 826076 or email james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk**

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

Tuesday 24th January 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK
Christchurch Park. Meet at Soane Street entrance. TM165448.

Wednesday 25th January 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK
Jamie Smith, Wildlife of the North Suffolk Wildlife Reserves. Jamie is the warden of the North Suffolk Coastal Nature Reserves, including the magnificent Hen Reed Beds. Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. £3 includes tea and coffee.

Thursday 26th January 7.30pm Suffolk Bird Group TALK
'The Mighty Eagles: Raptor Migration in Batumi and the Birds of the High Caucasus'
Chris Courtney. Hintlesham Community Centre, Timperleys, Hintlesham IP8 3PS. Admission £3, non members welcome.

Sunday 29th January 8.30am Suffolk Bird Group OUTDOOR EVENT
Levington and Trimley. Meet at Levington Marina. Park along the approach road. (Long walk possible). Map Ref: TM247382.
Leader Dave Pearsons Tel. 07913 620665.

FEBRUARY

Sunday 5th February 9am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING
Hazlewood Marshes, Aldeburgh for winter waders. Meet at Suffolk Wildlife Trust car park. TM442582. 3-4hrs, 3-4miles. Walking can be muddy. Leader Tim Kenny.

Thursday 9th February 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING
'Hot and Cold European Breaks - Cyprus and Estonia' Drew Lyness, World Birder and former RSPB Officer. Sponsored by Collins Waste Solutions. St Andrew Church Hall, The Street, Rushmere IP5 1DH Group Members £3 Non-Members £5.

Saturday 11th February 10am to 3.30pm Greenways Project WINTER MEGABASH
Martlesham Heath. Join Greenways, Martlesham Conservation Group and others to help maintain this SSSI heathland site, including scrub clearing and a big bonfire! Please bring your own food and drink. Meet on the heath – pedestrian access via track from Eagle Way opposite the windsock (please park considerably in local streets). **More info from Greenways on 07736 826076 or email james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk**

Sunday 19th February 10am to noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group VOLUNTEER WORK MORNING
All ages welcome, no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For more details of the Group's events, and to check for date changes, please go to: pwcg.onesuffolk.net or join our members' Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.**

Tuesday 21st February 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK
Bourne Park. Meet at Stoke Park Drive car park. TM152419.

Wednesday 22nd February 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK
Lucy Shepherd, (SWT Wild learning officer) 'Weird and Wonderful Wildlife in Ipswich'. In Ipswich's magnificent parks and even in some of its more urban areas it is possible to see an amazing variety of wildlife. Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. £3 includes tea and coffee.

Thursday 23rd February 7.30pm Suffolk Bird Group ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Followed by trophy presentations, SBG and BINS Review of the Year, a raffle and Mystery Bird Quiz! Please bring any unwanted bird books/magazines to exchange or donate for Save Our Suffolk Swifts. Hintlesham Community Centre, Timperleys, Hintlesham IP8 3PS Admission free.

Saturday 25th February 9.30am Suffolk Bird Group OUTDOOR EVENT
Martlesham Creek. Meet at Martlesham Church car park. (Expected walking distance 2.5 miles). Map Ref: TM261469.
Leader Steve Fryett Tel. 07593 382082.

Saturday 25th February 10am to 3.30pm Greenways Project WINTER MEGABASH
Purdis Heath. Join Greenways and Butterfly Conservation for a long awaited return to this delightful heathland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the edge of Ipswich. Scrub clearing and possibly a bonfire. The day is subject to an extension of the Natural England licence for the work, so please contact us before attending. Meet on site next to the informal parking laybys on Bucklesham Road. **More info and confirmation of the day going ahead from Greenways on 07736 826076 or email james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk**

MARCH

Thursday 9th March 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING
'RSPB Minsmere - 75 years of Conservation Success' Ian Barthorpe, Minsmere Visitor Experience Officer. Sponsored by The Oddfellows. St Andrew Church Hall, The Street, Rushmere IP5 1DH Group Members £3 Non-Members £5.

Saturday 11th March 9.30am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING
Melton and River Deben for waders and wildfowl. Meet at Melton Riverside car park. TM288503. 2-3hrs, 2-3miles. Walking can be muddy and exposed. Leader Stephen Marginson.

Saturday 18th March 10am to noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group VOLUNTEER WORK MORNING
All ages welcome, no need to book. Meet at the Education Area. **For more details of the Group's events, and to check for date changes, please go to: pwcg.onesuffolk.net or join our members' Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.**

Saturday 18th March 10am to 3.30pm Greenways Project BIG RIVER CLEAN UP
Along the River Gipping in Ipswich. Join Greenways, UK Rubbish Walks and others for a day of litter picking and general clearing up along the river path and associated open spaces. Please bring your own refreshments. Meet by the river at the Boss Hall Road car park (near the railway bridge). More info from Greenways on 07736 826076 or email james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk

Tuesday 21st March 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK
Holywells Park. Meet at Stable Block off Cliff Lane. TM176432.

Wednesday 22nd March 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK
Alex Long, (Essex Wildlife Trust) 'Fringinghove Nature Reserve'. Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. £3 includes tea and coffee.

Thursday 30th March 7.30pm Suffolk Bird Group TALK
'Birding on the roof of Africa: The Birds and mammals of Ethiopia' Nigel Redman. Hintlesham Community Centre, Timperleys, Hintlesham IP8 3PS Admission £3, non members welcome.

APRIL

Thursday 13th April 7.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group INDOOR MEETING

AGM followed by 'An East Anglian Wildlife Photographer's Year' Kevin Sawford, Wildlife Photographer. St Andrew Church Hall, The Street, Rushmere IP5 1DH Group Members £3 Non-Members £5.

Sunday 16th April 10am to noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group VOLUNTEER WORK MORNING

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

Tuesday 18th April 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK

Gippeswyk Park. Meet at Hawthorn Drive entrance. TM150435

Sunday 23rd April 9am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

RSPB Wolves Wood, Hadleigh for spring birds and flora. Meet at reserve car park off A1071. TM054437. 2-3hrs, 2-3miles. Walking easy but can be muddy. Leader Tim Kenny.

Wednesday 26th April 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK

Pam Evans, A Walk through Suffolk. This talk should bring back happy memories of our lovely county for some, and inspire others to explore it for themselves. This meeting will be preceded by a short AGM. Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. £3 includes tea and coffee.

Thursday 27th April Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group GUIDED TOUR of Bradfield Woods

Your Ipswich Group is heading to one of SWT's most famous nature reserves for a guided tour with the warden of the site, Alex Lack. We've timed this event to (hopefully) coincide with the bluebell flowering season. Please pre-book via www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events.

Thursday 27th April 7.30pm Suffolk Bird Group TALK

Two short talks: 'Suffolk Turtle Dove Update' and 'Confessions of a Learner Birder' Eliza Leat and Anne Wright. Hintlesham Community Centre, Timperleys, Hintlesham IP8 3PS Admission £3, non members welcome.

MAY

Wednesday 3rd and Wednesday 10th May Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TRAILER TOUR OF ORFORDNESS

Following the huge interest in this site last year, we've arranged two more opportunities to visit this fascinating coastal nature reserve – this time with the emphasis on seeing its varied birdlife from the vantage point of a trailer. **Places must be pre-booked via www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events**

Regular Events

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

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



TUESDAYS 9.30am Greenways CONSERVATION WORK PARTY

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

EVERY TUESDAY AND FRIDAY 10am - 11.30am SWT Wild Learning WILD TOTS

Outdoor adventure and play for children aged 18 months – 5 years in Holywells Park. £4. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

WEDNESDAYS 10am Friends of Holywells Park HOLYWELLS PARK WORK PARTY

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



SECOND WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH Friends of The Dales WORK PARTY

Contact Kaye Roberts kayefotdsec@virginmedia.com

FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH 7.30pm - 9pm Ipswich Friends of the Earth MEETING

- for venue please see Facebook page www.facebook.com/ipswichFOE/

THURSDAYS 9.30am Greenways CONSERVATION WORK PARTY

A smaller group than on Tuesday, but operates in the same way – please see details above for Tuesdays Work Party

THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH 7 – 8pm 'Green Drinks' Dove Inn, Ipswich DRINKS AND CHAT

Join us at the Dove Inn for a drink, a chat and a bit of networking with other environmentally-minded people. Look out for the 'Green Drinks' sign on the table. All welcome

FRIDAYS 9.30am Greenways CONSERVATION WORK PARTY

Another opportunity to work on the 50 or so sites managed by the Project – please see the details above for Tuesdays Work Party

EVERY FRIDAY 9.30am Ipswich Wildlife Group/Greenways BOX KIT MAKING

Come and join in making the kits for bird, hedgehog and insect habitat boxes for our Wildlife Homes project. Only the most rudimentary of woodworking skills needed. Thorington Hall Barn, Bobbitts Lane, Ipswich. **More information from Martin Cant 07858 436003 martin.cant@ntlworld.com**

FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am - 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group RIVER WORK PARTY

A joint work party with the River Action Group along Alderman Canal and the River Gipping, maintaining footpaths and making these splendid waterways areas to be proud of. Usually meeting at Bibb Way alongside Alderman Road recreation ground, but please get in touch to confirm location **More information from James Baker 07736 826076**

FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am Butterfly Conservation WORK PARTY (October to March)

More information from Helen Saunders helens919@gmail.com

EVERY SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am - 12pm SWT Wild Learning WEEKEND WILDLIFE CLUB

For children aged 6 – 10 years in Holywells Park. Join our wildlife-themed club to explore the park, learn about wildlife, meet new friends and earn awards as you go. £4. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**

EVERY SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 1pm - 3.30pm SWT Wild Learning YOUNG WARDENS

For teens aged 11 – 16 years in Holywells Park (and other Ipswich locations). £5. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089.**



SECOND SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH 10am - 1pm Friends of Belstead Brook Park CONSERVATION WORK PARTY

Come and join us for a morning working in the fresh air. **For further details visit our website: wildipswich.org/fobbp or email fobbp@wildipswich.org**

MOST SATURDAYS 10.30am - 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group Northgate Allotments WOODCRAFT & WILDLIFE

Get involved in coppicing and woodland skills at the Wildlife area. **Call Geoff Sinclair to confirm dates 07860 595376**