

Spectacular scene on Purdis Heath  
– see page 11

© Mark Brewster

# Local Wildlife news

May to August 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](mailto: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 spring/summer edition of Local Wildlife News – full, as ever of interesting stories, reports and future events for the wider Ipswich area.

Despite the rather pessimistic background news about our natural environment, there is plenty within the following pages to bring a degree of hope that all is not yet lost! What is abundantly clear is that the actions we are able to take, either as individuals or as part of local groups, and however seemingly small, we can make a positive difference. From making and putting up a nest box (pages 7 and 12), to maintaining heathland habitat (pages 10 and 11), the effort of local people to help wildlife in their gardens, farms and local green spaces, can and is helping to stave off the wider declines.

So all of the local people who volunteer and get involved are local

‘Green Heroes’! It was great to see Ipswich Wildlife Group’s Martin Cant put forward for the Green Hero award (see page 12) – a very well deserved plaudit. Jason Alexander (Rubbish Walks) won the award this year – equally well-deserved – as he has dedicated so much of his time to clearing litter and dumped rubbish, including encouraging dozens of others to do the same through direct support, social media posts and his work as an ambassador for Keep Britain Tidy.

If you half fancy getting involved with one of the groups in the Ipswich area, but haven’t got round to it yet – do make the jump and get active – I can almost guarantee you won’t regret it!

Enjoy the spring and summer and the wide range of wildlife sighting opportunities they bring!

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# Why not come on a stroll with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust?

**Sheila Roberts** *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

After the success of the summer social strolls last year, the Ipswich Group of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust is proud to unveil an even bigger and better range of events – and you are invited.



**Suffolk  
Wildlife Trust**

## Ipswich Group Newsletter

Chairman: (Vacant)

Secretary: Wendy Brown 01473 259674  
browncandw@gmail.com

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*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](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org).*

These events offer a chance to have a lovely trip out into parts of Suffolk that you may not know. Don't worry if you are coming on your own – we guarantee you'll soon find someone interesting to talk to as you enjoy your walk. These aren't trips aimed at hardcore, wildlife experts – they are designed to let everyone enjoy their surroundings with the added bonus of having some interesting plants, birds, butterflies or other creatures pointed out to you as you stroll. And you can enjoy the views without having to worry about getting lost!



*Expert guides lead the walks*

You don't have to be a member of the Wildlife Trust or any other conservation group to book a place on one of these events – everyone is welcome.

The season kicks off with two opportunities to join a birdwatching trip to Orfordness on 3rd and 10th May. It continues on the morning of Wednesday 14th June with 'A Dawdle down the Deben' for a two hour birdwatching walk returning to the pub for lunch with guide Melvyn Eke. On Wednesday 12th July Trimley Marshes nature reserve is the venue for a walk to also take in Levington creek with the site warden and Melvyn Eke.

There may also be a chance to visit a very special wildlife-friendly farm in August. As local wildlife news goes to press, details are still being finalised but you can find full details on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust website – see below.

Prices vary from £5 for a walk to £20 for the Orfordness trip which includes transport around the site. All the profits are donated to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

If you have any questions about the summer events programme, please email [m.eke@btinternet.com](mailto:m.eke@btinternet.com)

All have to be pre-booked via [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events) – just use the filter button and select 'Ipswich Group' to find the full list.

And finally, the indoor talks will resume on 27th September at 7.30pm at Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF.

Adam Burrows from Natural England is going to speak about East Anglia's Changing Coastline. The coast of East Anglia is the most dynamic in the UK. Longshore Drift, storms, and



*A tour by trailer on Orford Ness*

now sea level rises due to global warming have all played their part. Dunwich, once a thriving port, is mostly under the sea. Cromer was once a mile from the shore, and Happisburgh has lost 20 houses, which have fallen over the cliffs. Everyone is welcome, the price is only £3 which includes tea or coffee. There is a hearing loop and easy access to the building.



*Always on the lookout for wildlife*



*Summer butterflies on woodland walks*

© Melvyn Eke



# Strange snowball spotted in Spring Wood

**Sheila Roberts** *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

Seeing the cover photo of the autumn 2022 edition of Local Wildlife News reminded me of one of my more unusual wildlife spots a couple of years ago.

Whilst wandering through Spring Wood in SW Ipswich I thought I spotted a snowball stuck to the side of a log. Except it was April and had been mild for days. I gently touched it and this 'thing' wasn't cold.

I'd never seen anything like it. Was it some unfathomable art installation? Or a very odd bit of litter?

I took a photo and sent it to my friend Sue who knows about these sorts of things. She sent it to someone called David who appears to be an even higher authority on such matters.

His reply was interesting – he said it looks like cauliflower slime mould – also known as the false puffball. I'd once encountered the dog vomit slime mould (the species on the cover mentioned above) at Fingringhoe Nature Reserve – looking a lot less attractive than the specimen found at Portals Woodland - but I'd never seen the cauliflower version.

Slime moulds turn out to be fascinating. For example, they are not fungi as some people think and they can actually move. They have a very complicated life cycle - starting out as microscopic amoebae that move around feeding on other microorganisms like bacteria. As they mature they turn into a giant amoeba called the plasmodium. They fruit and produce spores so the whole cycle can start again.

The 'slime' bit of the name comes from the part of the lifecycle where it is moving around the soil. They are thought to play an important role in breaking down organic matter in the soil so helping plants to thrive.

The more I read about slime moulds, the more I realised how fascinating they are (and notoriously difficult to identify). There's a species called the many-headed slime mould that scientists have shown can make tricky decisions. By laying out a maze containing oats at certain places in the maze, the organism can find the shortest route to the oat food source – making decisions at junctions about which way to move and retract. Scientists also found that they have some kind of 'memory' - by repeatedly making the

test environment of a specimen cold and dry for 60 minute intervals, the slime mould eventually appeared to anticipate the pattern by reacting to the conditions it was expecting even when the scientists didn't change the environment. Pretty impressive for something without a nervous system or brain eh?

Most excitingly, it is now thought the many-headed variety is able to manufacture some kind of anti-viral substance which has potential for developing a way of preventing crops being infected with diseases like tobacco mosaic virus which can affect food crops

like pepper, beans and tomatoes.

All this just makes me realise that our natural areas – especially old woodlands - are so much more than just the trees and pretty flowers that most of us notice.



**Suffolk**  
Wildlife Trust

**Ipswich Group Newsletter**



*Cauliflower slime mould*

© Sheila Roberts



**Suffolk**  
Wildlife Trust

Ipswich Group Newsletter

## Events Diary

### May

#### **Wednesday 3rd and 10th May. 10am Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group OUTDOOR EVENT**

Bird Watching on Orfordness with a tractor trailer ride to access some of the best vantage points. £20. Note – this trip will focus on the wildlife and will not visit the military buildings. Places must be booked in advance via [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events) - just use the filter button and select 'Ipswich Group'

### June

#### **Wednesday 14th June 10am Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group WALK**

"A Dawdle down the Deben" £5. A two hour morning birdwatching walk with guide Melvyn Eke in Felixstowe returning to the pub for lunch (not included in price) Places must be booked in advance via [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events) - just use the filter button and select 'Ipswich Group'

### July

#### **Wednesday 12th July 10am Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group WALK**

A guided walk round Trimley Marshes nature reserve and Levington creek with the site warden and Melvyn Eke. £5. Places must be booked in advance via [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events) - just use the filter button and select 'Ipswich Group'

### August

#### **Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group (Date to be advised)**

The chance to visit a very special, wildlife-friendly farm. As Local Wildlife News goes to press, details are still being finalised but you can find full details on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust website events page

### September

#### **27th September 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group TALK**

Adam Burrows from Natural England speaking about East Anglia's Changing Coastline

The coast of East Anglia is the most dynamic in the UK. Longshore Drift, storms, and now sea level rises due to global warming have all played their part. Dunwich, once a thriving port, is mostly under the sea. Cromer was once a mile from the shore and Happisburgh has lost 20 houses.

**If you have any questions about the summer events programme, please email [m.eke@btinternet.com](mailto:m.eke@btinternet.com)**



*A dawdle down the Deben*



# Nextdoor Nature

## - A new project and approach for Suffolk Wildlife Trust

**Faye Alexander** *Wilder Communities Assistant, Suffolk Wildlife Trust*

© Cad Taylor



Faye (left) and Lucy (right) outside The Hive on Norwich Road

**Nextdoor Nature is a £5 million National Lottery Heritage Funded project, taking place across forty-six Wildlife Trusts nationally.**

This project is the first of its kind, in that we are taking a community organising approach, helping communities to gain the skills, knowledge, and motivation to take their own action for wildlife where they live and work. By truly listening to the communities' ideas and the direction they would like to take, the hope is that they will feel inspired and enabled to make the changes they wish to see and with that will come self-sustaining environmental projects, dotted throughout the town. Suffolk Wildlife Trust is facilitating Nextdoor Nature in Ipswich, where we are working with communities in areas with limited access to greenspace.

Since starting the project, we

(Lucy Shepherd and Faye) have begun working with some incredible communities in the town, each with varying levels of space which they can dedicate to nature and wildlife. These communities are taking it upon themselves to create 'wild' spaces to benefit both people and wildlife. From 'Lucy's Unwrapped and Refill' shop on Woodbridge Road encouraging the local community to install swift boxes on the building, to 'The Hive' on Norwich Road, hoping to open their garden to the local community and create a haven of greenspace on one of the longest and most nature-deprived roads in Ipswich.

We are currently working with six different communities across the town. South Street Kids is one of them. They are a group of 7–12-year-olds who live on or around Norwich Road. The focus

of this group is to support individuals and build their resilience through creative activities. Based at The Eastern Angles Centre, Gatacre Road, Suffolk Wildlife Trust has been working with South Street Kids to improve the community centre's grounds for wildlife.

Back in December, we met with South Street Kids for the first time at the Eastern Angles Centre. We got them outside and asked what species they would like to encourage onto the grounds and how they could do that. They were incredibly knowledgeable and did not hesitate to tell us all about the invertebrate hotels, compost bins, flowers for pollinators and hedgehog homes that they would love to make happen. In February, we were able to get them thinking about the wildlife that is already on their doorstep, through exploring local spaces. The first time was at the Eastern Angles Centre and the other at Broomhill Park, a local greenspace, which a few of the young people and adults involved in South Street Kids, had not visited before. It was great to get them engaged with local wildlife.

We discussed topics from pollination and seed dispersal to looking for signs of local species, including mammal footprint identification. Between these two meetings, they took it upon themselves to keep with the theme of the environment, by completing a litter pick on the Eastern Angles site, with hopes to make this a more regular occurrence. They collected three bin bags full of litter! They also spent time creating some amazing poetry and drawings about local wildlife.

Going forward, we are hoping to complete further listening exercises with other groups who use the Eastern Angles Centre (including a team of volunteer gardeners), to hear

what they would like to make happen too. An enormous part of this project is to ensure that as many people from the local community contribute in whatever way they feel they can. By truly listening to as many people from the local community as possible, we hope to get more people involved and taking action, benefitting wildlife and people.

Nextdoor Nature has very quickly taken off in the last few months, with incredible action being taken across Ipswich. We are still in the early stages of the project and are excited for the warmer months ahead, as communities begin to physically create these wild spaces.



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[suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org)

If you would like to keep up to date with our Nextdoor Nature project and all our other work in Ipswich, follow us on Instagram @swtipswich and @Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich on Facebook. For all of our sessions and events, check out our website [suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events)

### **Nature and Natter**

We also have an exciting new group called Nature and Natter, for people aged 60+. On the first Saturday of the month, in various parks and green spaces across Ipswich, Nature and Natter will feature a different wild activity each month. For more information, please check our website (above) or call us on 01473890089.

# Conservation action in meadows, rivers and heathland

**James Baker** *Manager, Greenways Countryside Project*

© David Wright



Kingfisher at Bobbitts Lane Meadows (photo David Wright)

## **Bobbitts Lane Meadows update**

Following on from the article in the last edition of Local Wildlife News about recent pond and wetland management work in Bobbitts Lane Meadows, we're delighted to report an early success with sightings of kingfishers using the perches we installed for them just in front of the viewing mound! Thanks to David Wright for the superb

photographs to prove it!

Not far away, in neighbouring Ashground Plantation, David also discovered a firecrest and managed to capture another stunning photograph!

## **River Clean-up, Guided walks and Educational events**

During the last year, we have run a series of activities and events along the River Gipping corridor through the town – to engage more people with their local environment – thanks to financial support from Ipswich Borough Council's Area Committees (North West and Central).

Most recently, we worked with the unstinting Jason



Firecrest photographed in Ashground Plantation by David Wright

Alexander (Rubbish Walks UK) and around 20 local volunteers to remove litter and rubbish that had accumulated along sections of the path over the winter months. Around a tonne of rubbish was removed including a colourful armchair, traffic cones, bicycles, clothing, thousands of smaller items and the inevitable shopping trolleys! A small rowing boat was used to access litter caught in the reeds, whilst others scoured the river banks and neighbouring green spaces, streets and car parks. It is obviously sad that so much time and effort has to be spent clearing up after a minority of people who don't care about the environment they live

in – but those who give their time to clear it up are always wonderfully enthusiastic and positive! A huge amount of plastic and other rubbish prevented from getting into the river and sea!

Through last summer, we ran a series of family activities along the river including a bug hunt, looking at all the interesting invertebrates that inhabit the banks and areas of grassland and scrub around Riverside Road. The 'Dipping in the Gipping' event looked at the life within the river itself, giving young people and families the chance to find out about the fish, plants and insects using the river. The River Gipping is facing



**GREENWAYS**  
countryside project

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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.*



The hardy River Rubbish Clean-up volunteers

© David Wright





*Family bug hunt along the river bank*

many serious challenges these days, primarily the very low water flows due to water abstraction at Sroughton to help fill Alton Water for human consumption. This in turn leads to low dissolved oxygen (vital for much aquatic life) and increased surface weed growth. During the very dry and hot summer of 2022, the problem was exacerbated and we were disappointed at the event (but not surprised) to only find small numbers of once common aquatic invertebrate species and very few fish.

There were also guided walks both up-river to Sroughton Nature Reserve - including access to the island part of the reserve which is usually closed to the public - and down-river towards the town centre. These walks, led by the Greenways Ranger, Peter Scotcher, explored some of the wildlife of the river, along with the history of the navigation and the river's links with the town.

Our regular work looking after aspects of the river corridor continues with our regular volunteers cutting vegetation along the path, removing litter and carrying

out various conservation tasks throughout the spring, summer and autumn months.

#### **Heathland management work**

During the short winter months much of our time is spent helping to look after the vitally important lowland heath habitats around the eastern side of Ipswich. This habitat has suffered massive losses of area over the last century – once extensive tracts of open heath and acid grassland stretched from



*Dipping in the Gipping*

Ipswich right along the coastal strip to Southwold and beyond. Now, only small and often isolated remnants remain.

The Greenways Project has carried out scrub clearing and other habitat management work on many of the heathland fragments around Ipswich for 28 years! It's an endless task with our volunteers essentially doing the work of the sheep and other grazing livestock that created and maintained the heaths for hundreds of years!

Our work on Martlesham Heath started about 10 years ago when the Martlesham Heath Householders Ltd managed to get Countryside Stewardship grant funding for maintaining and improving this Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Martlesham Conservation Group have been working on the site for decades but required some extra help. Initially we organised a winter 'Megabash' volunteer event – trying to pull together conservation volunteers from different



*Corse removal on Martlesham Heath*





*Conservation management at Ipswich golf course*

groups in the area to make a big difference in one day. These events are extremely successful, sometimes attracting up to 50 volunteers. More recently, we have also carried out regular mid-week work parties to clear invasive gorse scrub and have arranged for further clearance using an excavator mounted flail.

Overall, on all the heaths, the biggest single issue tends to be the rapid growth and spread of gorse. Whilst gorse is a perfectly natural element of the heathland habitat mosaic, without grazing livestock it tends to spread until it dominates the area, preventing heather, grasses, lichens and other plants from surviving. This challenge has become increasingly difficult during the lifetime of the Greenways Project due to our changing climate. Twenty-five years ago, winter was about half of the conservation year, now it has been cut short by at least a month at each end to just four short months. This generally increased temperature means that the gorse (being evergreen) can continue to grow for much longer each year, resulting in an overall increase in volume of material each year 50% greater than 25

years ago. Coupled with this, the addition of fertiliser (effectively) in the form of polluted rain, has made heathland soils, which are naturally very nutrient-poor and free-draining, much more fertile, allowing the gorse to grow unchecked.

On many of the heathland sites around Ipswich, there is also a problem of large tonnages of dog poo being deposited across the sites – also acting as a fertiliser, and dramatically changing the soils and thus the plantlife. Removing dog poo from heathland sites is very important due to the low nutrient nature of the habitat – but sadly many people do not clear up after their dogs in these areas, perhaps not realising the harm that is being done.

Purdis Heath, another SSSI, looked after by Butterfly Conservation (see article on page 11), suffers particularly from this problem, with the first thirty metres or so from the entrance now being dominated by trees and bramble rather than heathland species. It's also obviously very unpleasant for other people visiting the site and working to maintain it – it's no surprise that our volunteer have nick-named the site 'Turdis Heath'!

For the last two winters, Greenways staff and volunteers have also been working at Ipswich Golf Club, which abuts Purdis Heath. The golf course has a stunning list of wildlife species due to many years of exceptional management to benefit wildlife as well as golf. The club has won many

awards for its environmental work, which are richly deserved, as the site is a wonderful part of the local ecological network. As well as huge areas of heathland, the course also has woodland, grassland and substantial ponds and wetlands.

Martlesham Common Local Nature Reserve is another important heathland remnant which we have been maintaining for more than 25 years. After some large and serious fires in the mid 1990s, the site has gradually recovered a more mixed mosaic habitat. Our work has recently focussed on reducing the dominance of bracken – another highly invasive

plant in heathland areas. Bracken has a very complex and deep root system, and once established, comes to dominate other plants quickly by smothering the ground with a thick layer of dead stems and leaves in a relatively short number of years. This bracken 'litter' can be as much as a foot thick and acts as a mulch suppressing everything other than the bracken itself which pushes up its shoots from energy stored in the roots deep below.

Part of the work to reduce bracken has included scraping the litter layer off with a digger, to get back to the sandy soil below. The scraped up material is usually mounded into banks that provide opportunities for many other species including invertebrates and reptiles (especially on south-facing banks). In some of these 'scrapes' we also scatter heather seed or heather cuttings to encourage recolonisation. An accidental by-product of this process which we have noticed is that the heather cuttings (from other local heaths) can reintroduce invertebrates, most notably the Silver-studded Blue butterfly (a heathland specialist), which overwinters as an egg. We believe that it is by this method that the butterfly, lost in the big fires, has now been recorded on the Common again.



*Mechanical scraping exposes the sandy soil*



# Purdis Heath SSSI update

**Julian Dowding** *Secretary Suffolk Branch Butterfly Conservation*



© Mark Brewster

*Clearing the gorse at Purdis Heath*

Butterfly Conservation Suffolk and Greenways held volunteer work parties at Purdis Heath in the latter months of 2022 and again in Feb 2023. A large amount of gorse and other scrub was cleared with hand tools. The aim was to improve conditions for Silver-studded Blues (SSB).

Efforts also targeted renovating a 'link' for SSB to fly over to Ipswich Golf Course where Greenkeeper Neil Sherman has also been creating suitable habitat from scratch. This landscape-scale conservation is something which should also help bolster the species in and around Ipswich.

The subspecies which inhabits the Suffolk Sandlings has specific habitat requirements; principally, 1) young, healthy bell heathers that supply abundant nectar, 2) plenty of sandy soil in between and 3) an abundance of black ants. Ants are needed to tend the larval, and pupal stages. They also tend the adults when they hatch and up until they take their maiden flight. SSB also require, 4) warmth, 5) shelter and roosting places for the adults. This habitat structure can be created simply using hand tools (for

removal of tall and invasive scrub) and forage harvesting the heather by machine. In the past, livestock grazing, accidental and deliberate fires, or harvesting heathland vegetation by locals would have created the right conditions. My father tells me that as a boy, he used to gather furze (gorse) to fire up the bakery ovens before he went to school. How times change!

Neil has also therefore been cutting heather across the heath to improve heather structure for SSB. Cutting encourages regeneration from ground level, whilst leaving other areas tall which is ideal for roosting and for providing shelter and warmth.

Thank you to all volunteers who helped with this vital work. Last year's SSB transect at Purdis recorded over 500 butterflies. Whilst it's safe to say that Purdis has a good colony, things can change drastically if work isn't done to maintain habitat. Therefore, if you would like to help please let me know and I'll contact you once we start winter work all over again.

Purdis has a lot of other wildlife besides rare butterflies. David Basham has been compiling a database for Purdis which now includes some 1,300 species recorded there. (Thanks David). If visiting, please stick to the paths during bird nesting season (Mar-Sep) and if you have a dog, please keep it under control on a short leash. Be mindful of everything.

## Upcoming events

For a list of Suffolk butterfly events, see the Events section in this magazine or visit our webpage.



## Butterfly Conservation

**Saving butterflies, moths and our environment**

Membership Secretary

01379 643665

[www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk](http://www.suffolkbutterflies.org.uk)

email: [butterflies@sns.org.uk](mailto: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.*



*Silver-studded Blue (male)*

© Colin Hulls



© Mark Brewster

*Val taking a break from tending the fire*



# News from Ipswich Wildlife Group

**Colin Hullis** *Ipswich Wildlife Group*

## Green Hero Award

IWG's Martin Cant was nominated in the Green Hero category of Suffolk County Council's Creating The Greenest County 2023 Awards. The nomination recognised the outstanding contribution Martin has made to the Group specifically involving his leadership of our Wildlife Homes project. The nomination reads: "Martin is the inspirational leader of a group of volunteers responsible for producing over 7,000 nest boxes in the past nine years. The Wildlife Homes project produces kits for making bird and mammal boxes from recycled and locally sourced timber from nearby woodlands".



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.*

"These kits are taken to events organised by Ipswich Borough Council Rangers and Suffolk Wildlife Trust, plus each year at the Suffolk Show, where visitors make the boxes with hammers and nails supplied. Visitors are then encouraged to take the boxes home and put up in their gardens. Martin also takes kits to schools, scout packs and other groups to help engage young people with nature conservation".

"Not only does he lead the weekly work party but he also sources wood such as pallets and fencing panels from local businesses for recycling into box



Mel, Martin and Gerry were kept busy helping visitors make nest boxes at the 'Love Nature' event in Christchurch Mansion.



Suffolk's Green Hero finalists with Martin extreme right and Jason Alexander centre

kits. He continues this sustainability by helping process new timber from local woodlands and sawn into planks by the Greenways Countryside Project's mobile saw mill. All transported in Martin's personal truck".

The ultimate winner of the Green Hero award was Jason Alexander whose initiative, 'Rubbish Walks' raises awareness about littering, recycling and waste in general, across Suffolk.

## Annual General Meeting

At the 2022 Annual General Meeting held in January we were pleased to welcome two new committee members, Ellie Patrick and Melvin Eke. We now have a full complement of committee members but are still operating without a chairperson. Also at the meeting it was agreed to make a donation of £1000 to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust Martlesham Wilds appeal.

## Martlesham Wilds Reserve tour

Following our donation to Suffolk Wildlife Trust's appeal to raise funds to complete the purchase of this site, several members joined a conducted tour of the site led by SWT's Michael Strand and Charlie Zakss.

The reserve covers around 300 acres adjoining Martlesham Creek and was formerly organic farmland. IWG's Peter Locke was able to contribute some historic detail as he worked on the farm as a teenager in the 1960's. The varied habitat includes woodland, saltmarsh, reedbeds and pasture which is to be left to grow wild. It was a fascinating tour, we and future generations are privileged to have such a valuable, protected area on our doorstep. Full details of the project are given on the SWT website.



IWG members joined a tour of SWT's Martlesham Wilds Reserve

## Website update

The wildipswich.org website has recently been redesigned and updated as a portal for all local environmental/conservation groups and the IWG site is reached from here, just click on the logo or go direct to wildipswich.org/iwg



## Regular conservation work

Our conservation work parties help to make a difference for the benefit of wildlife and people in and around the town. Come and join us at Alderman Canal on the first Saturday of the month and/or in Spring Wood on the third Sunday of the month. We are also making wildlife homes nest boxes every Friday. For full details and contact information see the Regular Events section.



# The Cobbold connection

**Yvonne and Andy** *Friends of Holywells Park*

The Cobbold family have had a major influence on Ipswich for 300 years. From brewing beer, to the football club, they have left their mark on the town.



*Joe, Nick and Yvonne planting another Black Poplar*

Holywells Park owes its existence to the Cobbolds - they initially took water for brewing beer from the Holywells Springs and then later, built their family home there. To mark this occasion, there will be a Celebration of the Cobbolds' 300 years involvement in our town on Saturday 24 June. This will be held in Holywells Park from 11am-6pm (see 'Events' for further details).

Around 150 years ago, along the canal path, the Cobbolds planted an avenue of Black Poplar trees. These

are now reaching the end of their life, sadly some have already fallen. Working with the Parks' conservation team we have been planting replacement Black Poplars to ensure this majestic feature will be there for future generations to enjoy.

Black poplars are a declining species in the UK, it is becoming increasingly rare. It grows best in boggy conditions near ditches and floodplains. It is the foodplant for the caterpillars of many moths, including the hornet, wood leopard, poplar

hawk and figure of eight. The catkins provide an early source of pollen and nectar for bees and other insects, and the seeds are eaten by birds. In folklore it is said that the fallen red male catkins are Devil's Fingers and will bring bad luck if picked up!

## Pruning training in the orchard

Our thanks go to Dr Anna Baldwin, of Suffolk Traditional Orchards Group who gave a day's training in Holywells orchard on pruning and tool maintenance. We covered pruning techniques, pests and diseases. The training was attended by a dozen volunteers, mainly from the Wednesday morning work party, who have a special interest in the fruit trees. The main pruning of the orchard takes place in January or February each year, for the apple trees. Our summer fruits, i.e. greengages, plums and damsons, need pruning in the summer, so we are delighted that Anna has agreed to come back to the orchard around early August to give us some tuition on Summer pruning.



*David and Charles planting a Black Poplar by the Park canal*



## Friends of Holywells Park

*The Group aims to work in partnership with Ipswich Borough Council to improve and promote the Park.*  
Contact: [fohpipswich@gmail.com](mailto:fohpipswich@gmail.com)  
[www.holywellspark.org.uk](http://www.holywellspark.org.uk)  
[facebook.com/holywellsparkipswich](https://facebook.com/holywellsparkipswich)



*A lesson in Pole Saw pruning*



# Springtime in the Dales

**Kaye Roberts** *Secretary, Friends of the Dales*

Work has continued over winter around the ponds. Overhanging branches have been removed from some trees at the back of the main pond to allow more light. The moorhens have remained and mallards are also showing interest in the area. The frogs have been busy and produced plenty of frogspawn.

Volunteers were out again



## 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](mailto:kayefotdsec@virginmedia.com) or find us on Facebook by searching Friends of the Dales

in February cutting back regrowth on laurel and sycamore, an ongoing task. For those of us who are a bit wary about cutting the wrong sapling, one of our more experienced members of the team explained the difference between sycamore and ash: black tip to the bud for ash and green tip for sycamore.

We were all looking forward to the increasing signs of spring. Scarlet elf caps with their welcome bright colour can be found on dead wood if you search diligently in the right areas. A large display of snowdrops was visible in February just off the main path with further drifts beyond the higher paths.

Primroses appeared in full bloom and the first shoots of bluebells were coming through, which provide a colourful display as spring progresses. The cherry plum trees that edge the meadow are in full of flower, a sure sign of spring.



*Cherry Plum blossom*



*Plenty of frogspawn*

The Dales is alive with birdsong and there is much activity with blue, great and long-tailed tits together with wrens, dunnocks, blackbirds and song thrushes.

The first chiffchaffs have been heard calling with their distinctive sound. A buzzard is frequently heard mewing above, perhaps searching for a suitable nest site.



*Main pond after branch removal*



*Primroses*

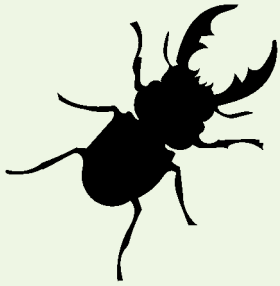


# Ipswich - Brilliant for Beetles and Bumblebees

## Giant Stag Beetle coming to Ipswich!

James Baker of Greenways reports: Ipswich is a hot-spot for stag beetles – the UK's largest beetle – which is why it became the logo of Wildipswich!

Throughout the town's nature reserves, parks and green spaces – special log habitat piles have been built over the last 30 years to provide opportunities for the species to continue to thrive here. The beetle spends most of its life (5-7 years) as a white grub, eating dead wood, before eventually metamorphosing into the spectacular flying machine that can be seen in May and June evenings. Due to the



length of time taken for the beetle to develop, there needs to be a continual supply of dead wood available and the half buried piles (simulating a tree stump) allow the larva to move deeper down in hot or dry weather, or upwards when very wet.

This summer, a large new stag beetle habitat pile is going to be constructed by the Greenways Project, in partnership with Ipswich Wildlife Group, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the Friends of Belstead Brook Park and others. The feature

will be in the shape of a stag beetle and will be big enough to be visible in the future from on-line maps and aerial photographs.



*Conventional stag beetle pile*

## Help for Queen Bees

Well-known local naturalist and Hymenoptera (insects - sawflies, bees, wasps, ants) enthusiast, Dave Basham, is planning a study of bumblebee behaviour

and the possible benefits of specialised nest boxes.

"The project is very much only at the planning stage, says Dave, but it is hoped that I can work with Ipswich

Wildlife Group, whose volunteers can make the boxes, and Suffolk Naturalists Society and get some bumblebee nest boxes made so we can study how effective they are at attracting nesting bumblebee queens".

"The boxes will be 'baited' with mouse droppings and hay, as the bees we are interested in usually use an old mouse's nest just on or below ground, and put out around fields a couple of minutes drive outside Ipswich. Any knowledge gained from the project will be put towards future bumblebee conservation work, particularly in relation to arable agricultural environments."

If the project gets a green light, in due course Dave will be providing more information and some results as and when they happen.



*Bumblebees*



*All the conservation organisations working together to inspire local people to help wildlife throughout the town and beyond.  
[www.wildipswich.org](http://www.wildipswich.org)*



*BumbleBox built by Martin Cant of IWC*

**Catch up with our new website at [www.wildipswich.org](http://www.wildipswich.org)**



# Making a difference in Kiln Meadow

**Ann Havard** *Friends of Belstead Brook Park*

We joined with Greenways and Ipswich Wildlife Group in Kiln Meadow for Mega bash No. 2 in December 2022. It was a very frosty day but with bright sunshine so despite the cold feet and finger tips it was a pleasure to be working outside. A dozen people were out helping cut down small birch, hawthorn and oak trees on what is meant to be a meadow but has become rather overgrown.



## Friends of Belstead Brook Park

[www.wildipswich.org](http://www.wildipswich.org)

Email: [fobbp@wildipswich.org](mailto: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.*

We made a real difference and opened up a big area of meadow again. Although it can sometimes seem wrong cutting down trees when everyone else seems to be planting them, it's a case of right plant – right place, and a meadow benefits other varieties of wildlife to a wood. Nothing is wasted as the cut

material makes a wonderful dead hedge which acts as a deterrent to dogs (and people) making unofficial tracks across the meadow.

A dead hedge despite its name is also a fantastic wildlife habitat and corridor for small mammals, reptiles and insects to move along, eat, hibernate in and reproduce. Some of the cut material also was burnt on a bonfire which had the added advantage of cooking baked potatoes at the end of the day – nothing tastes better than hot, buttered, cheesy potatoes eaten in the fresh air with good company. I'm afraid we only have potatoes from the bonfire at our work parties in November and December but the good company we can guarantee every month – why not come along and try us one day?

Unfortunately our January work party was cancelled as the weather forecast was predicting torrential rain all day, it just shows you can't believe a weather forecast as although it wasn't the best of days it really wasn't that bad.

On a dull but dry February day we spent the morning in Kiln Meadow building a dead hedge with material already cut by a group from BT. The hedge went across an unofficial path which people had created but which unfortunately cut across an area of the meadow which will hopefully be used by ground and scrub nesting birds. The less disturbance – the better.



*Hazel catkins herald in the Spring.*

We spent our March work party in the lovely Spring Wood sorting out piles of coppiced hazel into bean poles and making a dead hedge to keep out unwanted paws and feet from the newly cut area. By the end of the morning the Greenways truck was piled high with bundles of bean poles ready for sale and also some firewood and old tree guards. There were plenty of signs of spring and the birds were singing – a great morning well spent.



*Nothing like a warming bonfire on a winter work party.*



*James bundling newly coppiced hazel beanpoles.*



# Volunteers cherish the woodland

**Stephen Corley** *Chairman Portal Woodlands Conservation Group*

© J. Oliver



*A carpet of snowdrops*

The main job of our volunteers over the winter has been hedge maintenance, carried out while the plants are dormant and ahead of the bird nesting season to avoid disturbance.

Cutting back the hedges helps to thicken them at the lower levels, creating a better natural barrier and an improved habitat. It also lets more light into the woods. They also did a great job repairing several dead hedges, creating additional valuable wildlife habitats. Our volunteers got into the holiday spirit at our December work morning enjoying a festive buffet after all their hard work during the past year.

Another important job ahead of the nesting season was to get the bird boxes ready. The boxes were checked to see if they had been nested

© S. Corley



*Christmas buffet al fresco*

in during the past year, then cleaned out and given a lick of protective paint – wildlife friendly of course. We were very pleased to find that over 80% of the boxes had been used, continuing the upward trend over the years. Appropriately, one of our volunteers spotted bird nests of another kind – the highly unusual common bird's nest fungus (*Crucibulum leave*).

These are tiny cups, less than a centimetre in diameter, containing white egg-like nodules that contain the spores.

With the return of the rain, the pond is almost full again and looking in good shape after its muddy excavation last year. Indicating the changing of the season, visitors have enjoyed seeing



## Portal Woodlands Conservation Group

Enquiries: Martlesham Parish Council  
01473 612632 [pwcg.onesuffolk.net](http://pwcg.onesuffolk.net) or  
email [pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com](mailto: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.

carpets of snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis* – meaning 'milk flower of the snow'), with a few crocuses (*Crocus*) dotted in and around.

© J. Oliver



*Common bird's nest fungus*

© P. Davies



*Pond refilled and in good shape*

## Volunteer Work Mornings

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

Saturday 20th May  
Sunday 18th June  
Saturday 15th July  
No work morning in August

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



# The joys of the Annual General Meeting

**Anne Wright** *Suffolk Bird Group*

There's little doubt that every organisation's AGM is widely regarded as their least interesting event of the year, a necessary evil which all but the most committed members generally find a good excuse to avoid!

business' can be conducted as speedily as possible.

We can then move on quickly to more interesting things – such as a review of the year's events and the best bird sightings of the year, followed by socialising and a quiz!

So, starting with the events; a total of 19 outdoor events were held during 2022. These ranged from local shorter walks, such as to Melton and Martlesham Creek for the huge range of waders on the Deben, and to Bradfield Woods for Spotted



© Ci Chieco

*Little Ringed Plover at Abberton*

the more central areas of Sudbourne, Levington, and the Wantisden Valley where we were lucky enough to have wonderful views of Woodlarks and Treecreepers, then to the eastern extremes, Carlton Marshes, Kessingland, Orfordness, Landguard Bird Observatory, Westleton Heath for Nightjars and finally Eastbridge and Minsmere with Sand Martins, Stone Curlew and nine close sightings of Bittern amongst the myriad of birds seen.

We even managed a few out-of-county trips – to Walton-on-the-Naze in Essex and then Fingringhoe and Abberton for Nightingales, Little Ringed Plovers and innumerable other summer visitors and last but not most definitely not least, a weekend stay at the wonderful Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory in Kent!

For our indoor events we now have a fantastic new venue at Hintlesham Community Hall (which not only has very comfortable facilities but also a bar!) and our 2022 talks included brilliant presentations on a range of subjects from 'Conserving Curlews in the Brecks' and the 'Mysteries of Migration', both by renowned BTO experts, through to 'Birds of Chalkney Woods', 'Suffolk Raptor Studies', about Birding in both Catalonia and the French Atlantic Coast, and on Rewilding.

Suffolk's 2022 'Birds of the Year' presentation showcased the many excellent photos sent in by members, which included Crane, Wood Sandpiper, Bee-eaters, Yellow-browed Warbler, and the clear favourite for 'Bird of the Year', the Alpine Accentor which had a 'mini-break' at Slaughden.

This was followed by a superb bird quiz compiled by Ben Moyes (no doubting that he's a teacher!!) and the AGM was wrapped up with the draw for the raffle, which was generously supported because of the excellent range of prizes on offer, not least being a stunning picture donated by Ed Keeble, as well as numerous books and assorted food and drink goodies!

All in all, a splendid evening which appeared to be thoroughly enjoyed by all - in spite of the AGM!



**Suffolk Bird Group**

Enquiries:  
[info@suffolkbirdgroup.org](mailto:info@suffolkbirdgroup.org)  
[www.suffolkbirdgroup.org](http://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.*

© Sally Nelson



*Spotted Flycatcher at Bradfield Woods*

At Suffolk Bird Group (SBG) we do our level best to ensure that such expectations remain unfulfilled by making papers available for members to read whilst waiting for the meeting to start, thus ensuring that all the necessary 'official

Flycatchers and butterflies, then longer walks to a variety of habitats throughout Suffolk - in the west to Lakenheath Fen looking for Cranes, and Santon Downham on the annual quest for Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, to



*Our visit to the wonderful Staverton Thicks in the Wantisden Valley*



# Christchurch Park Bird Report Nov 2022 to Feb 2023

**Philip Murphy** *Friends of Christchurch Park*

## November

An unexpected addition to the list of bird species was recorded when Brian Macdonald (Upper-Arboretum-gardener-cum-ace-birder!) noted a female or immature Goldeneye on Wilderness Pond. The Goldeneye is a diving duck which breeds in northern Europe and a winter visitor to Suffolk, principally to the Stour and Orwell Estuaries, not in town-centre parks!



*Goldeneye*

Late October to mid-November often sees significant southerly movements of Wood Pigeons, sometimes totalling tens of thousands on a single day. It was of interest to note that flocks of up to 600 were seen flying high over the park, just after first light.

Four adults and a juvenile Little Grebe remained on wilderness pond throughout the month. Although the juvenile was by now almost three months old, and perfectly capable of finding his own food, it was noted on several occasions approaching an adult giving its food-begging call – the reward for its efforts was to be vigorously chased away!

The monthly maximum of Mandarin ducks was only seven. An adult female Mute Swan on wilderness pond is the first site record since February 2011. Unfortunately, it was found dead on December 3rd and its body removed by Park Rangers. The resumption of Mistle Thrust song was noted on 26th.

## December

A spell of much colder weather had the Wilderness Pond frozen over. Totals of Mandarin ducks increased from six rising to 26 on 18th.

Additional sightings during the spell of colder weather included Redwings being well in evidence and 16 Fieldfares flew over the upper Arboretum as did three Lapwings. It was surprising to discover that these were the first Lapwings to have been recorded over the park for 16 years!

Milder weather prevailed from 18th and Mandarin Ducks totals had reduced to 18. A pair of Mandarin ducks was noted copulating on 26th. Other reports include a Peregrine Falcon over the Lower Arboretum, a pale-bellied Common Buzzard in the Upper Arboretum/ Wilderness Wood area from the 15th onwards into 2023 and a wintering Chiffchaff on the Wilderness Pond woodland on Christmas Day.

## January

Perhaps the most unexpected sighting during the first two weeks of the month involved not a bird, but a small bat, presumably one of the three species of Pipistrelle, flying around over the Upper Arboretum early in the afternoon of the 5th; at one stage it was chased by a Magpie which could not match the bat's acrobatic skills. A Goldcrest was singing in a cedar tree close to the Mansion and 19 Mandarin ducks were present on Wilderness Pond.

Colder weather set in and Mandarin Ducks increased to 27. Also witnessed was the year's first drumming by a Great Spotted Woodpecker and the Common Buzzard, first noted in December was in the trees behind the former croquet lawn - feeding on grey squirrels and brown rats?

Additional sightings include up to four Little Grebes, a breeding plumaged Cormorant and two Grey Wagtails plus a Chiffchaff in the Wilderness Pond woodland - same bird as on Christmas Day?

## February

An ornithological feature each February in the park is the pre-emigration gathering of Redwings, a winter-visiting thrush, principally from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. These birds search for food, mainly invertebrates, the aim is to rapidly build up their energy resources prior to the long flight back to the breeding areas. There were about 100 on 24th,

at least 65 still present on 28th.

While the Redwings were preparing to depart, Lesser Black-backed Gulls were arriving, probably from wintering sites in Iberia or north-western Africa.

By mid-month, two pairs of Little Grebes (the overwintering birds) were well established on Wilderness Pond. One of the grebes was seen with nesting material on 26th. Counts of Mandarin ducks peaked at 19 on 19th but on 24th only ten were present, comprising five distinct male/female pairs.



## Friends of Christchurch Park

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

[www.friendsofchristchurchpark.co.uk](http://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.*

There were at least six sightings of Common Buzzard during this month, two were giving their distinctive, mewing call in flight.

By mid-month, both Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers were vocal in the open parkland area. Additional sightings included a Long-tailed Tit with nesting material, two singing Song Thrushes, singing Goldcrests, up to four Mistle Thrushes, Grey Wagtail, singing Chaffinch, Peregrine Falcon and Grey Heron,

As ever, many thanks to Brian MacDonald and Tony Powell for providing much of the information upon which this article is based.



*Mandarin*



# Amazing amphibians

**David Dowding** *Ipswich Borough Council Wildlife Rangers*

The term "Amphibian" comes from the Greek meaning 'two lives' as these air breathing animals spend a significant part of their life in water and, as larvae, have gills.



**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.*

Amphibians are declining nationally but we still have some good populations of the four widespread amphibians here in Ipswich. Most of the year they are tucked away in long grass or under logs and dead leaves but in the spring, they make their way to breeding sites where they are more readily observed particularly at night.

Last winter here in Suffolk was interesting, having some cold temperatures reaching minus 7c, spawning and egg

laying started a couple of weeks later than last year. We had one of the driest Februarys on record, March was relatively wet but many ponds were still quite low, save those fed by ditches and streams.

For some species low water levels are not always a bad thing. Frogs are the masters of shallow, seasonal pools, and puddles. In larger ponds they often spawn at the very edge amongst marginal vegetations but there are many cases of frogs spawning in bird baths and buckets in peoples gardens instead of a seemingly preferable 'tailor made' wildlife pond.

While this might seem suicidal, there is method in the frogs' madness. The key predators such as newts and dragonfly larvae are absent from these temporary areas and their primary food source of algae will still appear. The shallow water is also warmer, meaning the spawn can develop quicker. It's a high-risk strategy, but for the species, the lack of predators must outweigh the risk of desiccation.

Toads favour deeper water than frogs, but the tadpoles are distasteful to fish (though newts seem unfazed by their toxins) so can thrive even in lakes and fisheries. There are some good populations in Ipswich and at certain sites



Toad 'Mating Ball' at The Dales Local Nature Reserve

they can still be seen in their hundreds.

Great crested newts also require larger water bodies as the larva have a voracious appetite and are highly cannibalistic, but their typical behaviour of cruising around the surface of ponds

means they are easy prey for fish. As a result, ponds that dry out occasionally, such as every 3 or 4 years, are best as fish are naturally removed. Smooth newts are a bit less susceptible to fish predation as the larvae are more secretive and hide away at the bottom of the pond.



Great crested newts caught during a SARG training session (note the significantly smaller smooth newt below)



Beautifully marked common frog relocated whilst managing wetland habitat /Horsetail in Holywells Park. Horsetail is a very dominant/ somewhat invasive plant which often smothers wildflowers, but the dense carpets of the fern seem to be a favoured habitat for frogs and toads.



Torch surveying in Orwell Country Park 17th March 2023



# The very welcome notes of spring

**Tim Kenny** *Leader, RSPB Ipswich Group*

Finally, spring is here and there is a sudden upsurge in birdsong all around us. We welcome back our summer visitors such as warblers, the cuckoo and the nightingale, after making their way back from Africa, but our resident blue and great tits, wrens, dunnocks and robins are now ramping up their territorial songs as the days get longer.

A recent trip to the west of the county saw displaying goshawks, the males soaring high above the forest to impress the larger females, whilst drakes in their nuptial finery are wooing ducks on ponds throughout the country.

Here in Ipswich we have been treated to a flock of waxwings in the middle of town. Five (sometimes six) individuals were seen regularly in the area of Blanche Street and the St John Ambulance centre in Samuel Court. These birds tend to be more numerous in the UK when the weather is harsh in northern and eastern Europe, their more usual wintering grounds. They breed in coniferous forests of the boreal taiga of Eurasia and North America, and understandably move to warmer climes in winter. They have been observed to become intoxicated after feasting on their favourite foods of rowan berries, cotoneaster, juniper and haws, sometimes fatally.

This is a species that tends to bring out the birdwatchers thanks to its flamboyant plumage and normally tame disposition. They certainly brought a dash of exoticism to the centre of town until their last



*Waxwing, Ipswich*

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*... walks planned  
including a first ever  
dawn chorus outing in  
Christchurch Park.*

---

reported sighting on March 11th.

With the warmer weather approaching thoughts turn to our interesting programme of outdoor meetings, with walks planned including a first ever dawn chorus outing in Christchurch Park. This takes place at 7.30am on Saturday 13th May, meeting at the Soane Street



## Ipswich Local Group

Group Leader Tim Kenny  
Tel 01394 809236

[ipswichrspblocalgroup@yahoo.com](mailto: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.*

entrance (see Events). If, like me, you are more of a night owl than a lark, don't forget that there is also an evening chorus provided by our avian friends, so a post-dinner stroll around your local area should be just as productive.

A regular summer highlight is the nightjar walk, which is always very much dependent on the weather, but this is currently scheduled for 14th June (see Events). Please keep an eye to our website for any updates on this and indeed all of our forthcoming events. We would be delighted to welcome you along.



*Nightjars perch close to heathlands to make their churring call*



# Snippets

## Good news from Joe Underwood

A Wildlife Homes Hog box Joe made at last year's Spring Wood Day with his children, had a hibernating hedgehog in it last winter! A thrill for all the family.



## Spot the **two** Snipe photographed on a recent visit to RSPB Titchwell *Colin Hullis*



## Bang in the nails *Mel Eke*

4th Ipswich All Hallows (my old scout group), recently had a session assembling IWG bird box kits. Using a completed box for reference, each team had to plan assembly unaided. They made a great job of every bird box which they then took home together with an RSPB bird identification sheet. Best comment was "it was great to bang in the nails".



## In times gone by *Su Fox*

My family came from around East Bridge/Theberton and I was looking to see what local information was in the library. I came across this in The Chronicles of Theberton. It's a wonder there were any birds or wildlife left in the countryside if money was to be got by this sort of thing!

Extract from *The Chronicles of Theberton* by Henry Montagu Doughty (1910)

It had been enacted in the reign of Elizabeth, (1st), that two honest and substantial persons in each parish should be named "distributors of the provision for the destruction of noyful fowells and vermyn". They were authorised to pay:

For 3 Crows, Choughs, Pies, or Rook heads	1d
For every 6 eggs or young birds	1d
For every 12 Starlings eggs	1d
For the heads of other ravenous byrds and vermyn, as or hereafter in this acte mentioned that is to say: -	
For everye head of Martyn, Hawke, Furskett, Mold Kytte, Busard, Schagge, Cormorant, Ryngtayle	2d
For every 2 eggs of theirs	1d
For everye Yron (Erne) or Osprey's head	4d
For the head of every Woodwall, Pye, Jay, Raven or Kytte	1d
For the head of everye bird that is called the Kyngfisher	1d
For the head of everye Bullfynche, or other byrd that devourythe the blowthe or frute	1d
For the head of every Fox or Grey (Badger)	12d
And for the head of everye Fytchene, Polecat, Wesell, Stott, Fayrebode or Wyldecatte	1d
For the head of everye Otter, or Hedgehogg	2d
And for the heads of 3 Rattes, or 12 Myse	1d

A small payment was also to be made for the heads of Moles.

NB According to the editor of Bell's Chaucer, the Woodewale is the Oriole/ Golden Oriole. Ryngtayle – Hen Harrier. Mold Kytte – Black Kite? Fytchene – Pine Martin?

## 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

## MAY

### **Wednesday 3rd and 10th May 10am Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group OUTDOOR EVENT**

Bird Watching on Orfordness with a tractor trailer ride to access some of the best vantage points. £20. Note – this trip will focus on the wildlife and will not visit the military buildings. Places must be booked in advance via [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events) – just use the filter button and select ‘Ipswich Group’. **If you have any questions, please email [m.eke@btinternet.com](mailto:m.eke@btinternet.com).**

### **Saturday 6th May 9.15am Suffolk Bird Group OUTDOOR EVENT**

Fingringhoe Wick. Meet at visitor centre car park, South Green Road. Map Ref: TM048192. **Leader: Ashley Gooding. Tel. 07808 044611.**

### **Saturday 13th May 7.30am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING**

Ipswich in Song - Birdsong in Christchurch Park. Meet at Soane Street entrance. TM165448. **Leader Stephen Marginson.**

### **Wednesday 17th May 10.30am - 12.30pm Butterfly Conservation MARTLESHAM WILDS**

A morning walk at SWT's new reserve for early butterflies. New members and those wanting help with butterfly identification are most welcome. Meet at St Mary's Church Car Park, Martlesham. **Leader: Peter Maddison 01473 736607, Email: [prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk)**

### **Wednesday 17th May 6.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING**

Newbourne Springs Suffolk Wildlife Trust Reserve for Nightingales. Meet at reserve car park. TM276433. 2hrs. 2miles. Can be muddy underfoot. **Leader Stephen Marginson.**

### **Saturday 20th May 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: <http://pwcg.onesuffolk.net/> or join our members' Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.

### **Sunday 21st May 10am to 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group/Friends of Belstead Brook Park SPRING WOOD WORK PARTY**

A morning of valuable woodland management. Meet at the field gate at top of bridleway in Kiln Meadow. Park in Marbled White Drive. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481.**

### **Tuesday 23rd May 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK**

Kiln Meadow and Spring Wood. Meet at Marbled White Drive Ipswich. TM143417

### **Saturday 27th May 8am Suffolk Bird Group OUTDOOR EVENT**

Kings Forest. Meet at Kings Forest car park. (Long walk possible). Map Ref: TL825749. **Leader David Walsh. Tel. 07947 051223.**

## JUNE

### **Sunday 4th June 11am - 3pm Butterfly Conservation BRAMPTON WOOD NATURE RESERVE**

Brampton Wood Nature Reserve nr Huntingdon for Black Hairstreak. Meet at the car park. **Leader: Peter Maddison 01473 736607 Email: [prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk)**

### **Thursday 8th June 7pm Suffolk Bird Group OUTDOOR EVENT**

Upper Hollesley Common Meet at the upper car park for an evening walk on the heath. Map Ref: TM335470. **Leader: Dave Pearsons Tel. 07913 620665.**

### **Wednesday 14th June 10am Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group WALK**

“A Dawdle down the Deben” £5. A two hour morning birdwatching walk with guide Melvyn Eke in Felixstowe returning to the pub for lunch (not included in price). Places must be booked in advance via [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events) – just use the filter button and select ‘Ipswich Group’. **If you have any questions, please email [m.eke@btinternet.com](mailto:m.eke@btinternet.com)**

### **Wednesday 14th June 10am - 12noon Butterfly Conservation GREEN FARM BUTTERFLY WALK**

Guided tour of a 30-acre former dairy farm, including meadows, lake and arboretum. **Contact: Trevor Goodfellow Email: [trevor@greenfarm.org.uk](mailto:trevor@greenfarm.org.uk) mobile 07900 696960. Please book in advance.**

### **Wednesday 14th June 7pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING**

(Date and time to be confirmed). Nightjar evening at Upper Hollesley Common. Meet at upper car park for heathland birds or 8:30 for Nightjars. TM335471. **Check website for updates or email: [smarginson@btinternet.com](mailto:smarginson@btinternet.com)**

### **Saturday 17th June 9am - 12noon Butterfly Conservation PURDIS HEATH**

Come and look at the SSB colony and the recent habitat work carried out. Meet:Lay-by on Bucklesham Road. **Leader: Julian Dowding Email: [julian.dowding@ntlworld.com](mailto:julian.dowding@ntlworld.com) Mob: 07910170609**

### **Sunday 18th June 10am to 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group/Friends of Belstead Brook Park SPRING WOOD WORK PARTY**

A morning of valuable woodland management. Meet at the field gate at top of bridleway in Kiln Meadow. Park in Marbled White Drive. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481.**

### **Sunday 18th June 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: <http://pwcg.onesuffolk.net/> or join our members' Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.

### **Tuesday 20th June 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK**

Rushmere Common. Meet at Heath Road entrance. TM197445

**Saturday 24th June 10am - 1pm Butterfly  
Conservation HOLLESLEY UPPER COMMON**  
For Silver Studded Blues, suitable for all abilities. Meet at the car park. **Contact: Kev Ling. Email: [kevingling2013@aol.com](mailto:kevingling2013@aol.com)**

### **Saturday 24th June 10am Butterfly Conservation LANDSEER PARK**

For Summer Butterflies. Meet: Landseer Park car park, Landseer Rd, Ipswich. **Leader: Julian Dowding Email: [julian.dowding@ntlworld.com](mailto:julian.dowding@ntlworld.com) Mob: 07910 170609**

### **Saturday 24th June 11am to 6pm Friends of Holywells Park COBBOLD 300 CELEBRATION**

Anthony Cobbold Book launch, Cobbolds history display, refreshments, including beer tent, live music, Morris dancing and other various attractions in the Park.

## JULY

### **Saturday 1st July 10.30am - 12noon Butterfly Conservation NORTHFIELD WOOD, ONEHOUSE**

Woodland species including Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral. Meet at Community Centre, Forest Road, Onehouse. **Contact: Mark Brewster - Mobile 07759024440, Email: [mark.ian.brewster@gmail.com](mailto:mark.ian.brewster@gmail.com)**

### **Saturday 8th July 10am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING**

Landguard Nature Reserve and SSSI Felixstowe for birds and flora. Meet at Landguard Fort car park. TM285320. 2hrs. 2miles. Walking easy but can be exposed. **Leader Stephen Marginson.**

### **Wednesday 12th July 10am Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group WALK**

A guided walk round Trimley Marshes nature reserve and Levington creek with the site warden and Melvyn Eke. £5. Places must be booked in advance via [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events) – just use the filter button and select ‘Ipswich Group’. **If you have any questions, please email [m.eke@btinternet.com](mailto:m.eke@btinternet.com)**

### **Friday 14th July to Sunday 6th August Butterfly Conservation BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT**

For more details visit Big Butterfly Count ([butterfly-conservation.org](http://butterfly-conservation.org))

### **Saturday 15th July 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: <http://pwcg.onesuffolk.net/> or join our members' Facebook Group by messaging Duncan Sweeting.

### **Sunday 16th July 10am to 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group/Friends of Belstead Brook Park SPRING WOOD WORK PARTY**

A morning of valuable woodland management. Meet at the field gate at top of bridleway in Kiln Meadow. Park in Marbled White Drive. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481.**

### **Tuesday 18th July 10.30am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK**

Landseer Park. Meet at Clapgate Lane middle entrance. TM183425



**Saturday 22nd July to Sunday 30th July  
NATIONAL MOTH WEEK**

Each year, thousands of new moth photos are posted during National Moth Week. Although you can post photos on the national website, for Suffolk, recording should be via Suffolk Moths [www.suffolkmoths.co.uk](http://www.suffolkmoths.co.uk) **More information at [www.nationalmothweek.org](http://www.nationalmothweek.org)**

**Sunday 23rd July 8am Suffolk Bird Group  
OUTDOOR EVENT**

Minsmere Meet at the reserve centre car park. Map Ref: TM470672. **Leader: David Walsh. Tel. 07947 051223.**

**Sunday 30th July 10.30am - 4pm Butterfly  
Conservation GARDEN OPEN DAY**

An invitation from BC member Mrs Trudie Willis, to visit her 10 acre garden, including a Buddleia and Honeysuckle collection. Park at Prior's Oak, Leiston Road, Aldeburgh (B1122 Leiston to Aldeburgh Road)

**Contact; Peter Maddison Email: [prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk) 01473 736607**

**AUGUST**

**August (Date to be arranged) Suffolk  
Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group FARM VISIT**  
The chance to visit a very special, wildlife-friendly farm. Details are still being finalised but you can find full details on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust website events page.

**Tuesday 1st August 10.30am - 1pm Butterfly  
Conservation RENDLESHAM FOREST**  
Butterflies of Rendlesham Forest, with particular focus on Grayling. Meet: Butley Corner Car Park on B1084, 600m west of the main entrance to Rendlesham Forest Centre. **Leader: Peter Maddison mobile 01473 736607 Email: [prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk)**

**Sunday 20th August 8.30am Suffolk Bird  
Group OUTDOOR EVENT**  
Slaughden and Aldeburgh Marsh Meet at free car park along the Slaughden sea wall. Map Ref: TM464555. **Leader: Gi Grieco. Tel. 07951 482547.**

**Sunday 20th August 9am RSPB Ipswich  
Group FIELD MEETING**  
RSPB Minsmere for passage waders and early autumn migration. Meet at reserve car park. 4-5hrs. 4 miles. Walking easy but can be muddy. Please note admission charges apply for RSPB non-members.

**Sunday 20th August 10am to 1pm Ipswich  
Wildlife Group/Friends of Belstead Brook  
Park SPRING WOOD WORK PARTY**  
A morning of valuable woodland management. Meet at the field gate at top of bridleway in Kiln Meadow. Park in Marbled White Drive. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481.**

**Tuesday 22nd August 10.30am RSPB  
Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK**  
Christchurch Park. Meet at Soane Street entrance. TM165448

**27th September 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife  
Trust Ipswich Group TALK**  
Adam Burrows from Natural England speaking about East Anglia's Changing Coastline. Venue - Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. Everyone is welcome, price £3 includes tea or coffee. There is a hearing loop and easy access to the building. No need to book.

# 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://wildipswich.org/fobbp) or email [fobbp@wildipswich.org](mailto: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**