

Exotic visitor causes a stir in the park
– see page 12 and 19



Local Wildlife news

May - August 2020

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



Woodland Products and Services from Greenways



Beanpoles, peasticks, firewood logs – bagged or different size loads available and other woodland produce, wildlife homes including hedgehog houses, bird boxes and insect homes. Mobile sawmilling of felled timber to your specification. Woodland, meadow and other habitat management – advice and quotations available.



Products available by appointment from the Greenways Project office on Stoke Park Drive.

Contact james.baker@ipswich.gov.uk or 01473 433995 / 07736 826076
to discuss your requirements.

All produce from the sustainable management of nature reserves in Ipswich and proceeds to help fund management of the reserves and other wildlife projects.

Welcome

by **James Baker** *Editor*

Welcome to the first ever 'electronic only' edition of Local Wildlife News magazine! At the time of writing this editorial, the country was grinding to a standstill due to the Coronavirus pandemic – so printing the magazine would have been pointless. Whether future issues are printed or not may well depend on how the world has changed following these extraordinary times. If enough of you find the e-version sufficient or even better/easier, I expect we may have to consider the printing costs against the benefits of a real, 'holdable' version.

The global slowdown due to the pandemic is likely to bring about many changes and may well help us as a society to look differently at how we all act in the future. Certainly the vast drop in fuel use and resultant drop in pollution will make us think more clearly as to whether it is necessary to travel round the world for such unimportant things as holidays and business meetings. This could be the opportunity we need to start addressing the real, main crisis affecting the planet – that of the rapidly changing climate and wildlife loss.

I suspect we will all see localised examples of wildlife re-colonising areas due to lack of disturbance or changing patterns of human behaviour – it will be interesting to see what we can report in the next edition!

In the meantime, even those of us locked in our homes can,

and I suggest must, still experience and enjoy nature every day – albeit through a window if that is all you can do. Those who can get out into their gardens or a little further afield should get the chance to spend a little longer than usual and thus see a bit more than usual. Julian Dowding's article on page 18 should enthuse us all to anticipate the re-emergence of our beautiful butterflies, and Eddie Bathgate's report on the Save Our Suffolk Swifts project, should make us excited for the return of these iconic birds.

The cancellation of events and volunteering activities will clearly be a big change for many groups (including Greenways), but hopefully everyone will save up their energy and dedication for our local wildlife until it is safe for us to all start looking after our nature reserves again.

Many of the events listed in this edition may well not take place – please do contact the organiser before setting out. Also, many of the groups included in LWN have their own social media presence, so you can follow their stories and get updates about the latest situation – as well as contributing your comments and experiences for others to enjoy.

I hope you all manage to stay well, fed and sane over the coming months and look forward to hearing interesting wildlife stories for the next edition, and seeing many of you out and about once we return to what passes for normality!

Contents

	Page
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	4
Greenways Countryside Project	8
Ipswich Wildlife Group	10
Ipswich Borough Council Wildlife Rangers	12
Friends of the Dales	13
RSPB Ipswich Local Group	14
Friends of Belstead Brook Park	15
Suffolk Bird Group	16
Portal Woodlands Conservation Group	17
Butterfly Conservation	18
Friends of Christchurch Park	19
Wild Ipswich	20
Friends of Holywells Park	21
Events Diary	22
Snippets	24



Local Wildlife News is published by Greenways Countryside Project.

Editor: James Baker greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk Tel 01473 433995

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.

Committee Notes from the Ipswich Group of the SWT

Sheila Roberts



Primroses bringing a splash of spring colour to Holywells Park



Ipswich Group Newsletter

Chairman: (Vacant)
Secretary: Wendy Brown 01473 259674
browncandw@hotmail.com
Treasurer: Tony Clarke 01473 741083
tonyclarke@2309hotmail.co.uk
jfrani.36@gmail.com

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.

In the last issue of Local Wildlife News, our secretary Wendy talked about the joys of making your garden a little more hospitable for the wealth of wildlife that makes its home in the Ipswich area. I'm sure many of us have shared her pleasure at seeing long-absent greenfinches on the feeders or watching squirrels trying to turn the lawn into a shady copse with their nut-burying antics.

But have you ever thought about how those small connections we make to the natural world might actually be of benefit to our own health?

Over the past decade a growing body of research has shown that watching wildlife and being out in the natural environment, can reduce high blood pressure, improve our zest for life, lift our mood, reduce anxiety and improve our concentration. Studies have even shown that the great outdoors can help

to prevent cardiovascular illnesses, obesity and boost our immune systems.

The good news is that we don't have to head off to impressive nature reserves or the far-flung wilderness of Scotland to gain these health benefits. Just being in natural surroundings like a local park or green space can have many of the same benefits as long as we slow down and make time to enjoy and observe our natural environment. Whilst not forgetting to take a walk at the

same time of course so that our bodies can also benefit from a little exercise.

One of my favourite summer wildlife spectacles is the solitary bees that dig burrows in the verges and between the paving slabs in a south west Ipswich housing estate. I'm no expert but I think they might be pantaloons bees. They shift a surprisingly large amount of soil leaving little sandy volcanoes that I'm sure most people think are the work of ants. Early on warm mornings, you can



Always something interesting on a walk in the woods



One of the bees that use Ipswich verges to lay eggs

watch them busily digging their nests – although you might get some funny looks from the joggers and dog walkers who rush by oblivious to the little drama right under their noses.

Another example is the new cemetery on Tuddenham Road. I wonder how many visitors have ever paused and looked around to see how wildlife makes use of this area? A little patience can often reward you with views of green woodpeckers so close you don't need binoculars to see their impressive colouring as they search for ants between the memorial stones.

I don't know if these little wildlife moments do anything for my blood pressure or boosting my immune system but they do make me smile and help me put things back into perspective. So, on



Green woodpeckers spotted in the cemetery.



Spring Wood is a great example of a natural, wildlife-rich site right on the doorstep of thousands of people in Ipswich

behalf of the Ipswich group of the Wildlife Trust, if you are able, can I encourage you to join me in switching off your telly and getting out to explore the natural world in your neighbourhood?

It doesn't matter if you don't know what you're looking at ...

It might only be a grassy verge or a small urban park but if you look carefully, you'll almost always find something of interest. Earlier this year, I was taking one of my daily wanders along a fairly yukky alleyway and found one of those slightly rubble-strewn banks that no-one seems to own which was completely carpeted with violets – something I'd never seen there before and quite a spectacle in the late afternoon sun.



Ipswich Group Newsletter

It doesn't matter if you don't know what you're looking at – things don't need a name to be lovely or fascinating to us. Of course, if you want to know more, one way is to come along on a walk with people who might know a little more. Our summer programme includes three walks around three very different habitats – woodland, wetland and coastal that might be just what you need to brush up on your spotting skills. If you can join us we'd love to see you and, as we stroll round, perhaps you will be able to share your stories of the wildlife you've found in your own garden or neighbourhood and tell us whether you think the great outdoors is beneficial to your wellbeing.

Have you seen our Facebook page yet?

The SWT Ipswich group is now sharing the 'Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich' Facebook page. If you are on Facebook why not come and follow us, you will find our page if you search for:-

@swtipswich

If you're not on Facebook you can always look at the page by typing the following into your preferred browser:-

<https://www.facebook.com/swtipswich/>



Dates for your Diary

All Meetings will be held at 7.30pm at Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. £2.50 includes tea and coffee. There is disabled access.

Wed. 23rd Sept 2020

Cathy Smith (SWT) Gardening for Wildlife

Most of us want to see more wildlife in our gardens, and as a garden enthusiast, and employee of the SWT, responsible for the wildlife garden at Foxburrow Farm, Cathy will give us ideas as to what we should do to make our own gardens a haven for wildlife. This is a good time to make your plans for next year.

Wed. 28th Oct. 2020

Fay Jones Wonderful World of Stinging Nettles

Explore the wonderful world of stinging nettles with this fun and fact filled talk. Much maligned as an unwanted weed, it possesses a myriad of uses, from food and medicine, to dyes and fibres. Find out what actually constitutes a nettle, and why this plant is so valuable for wildlife.



Ipswich Group Newsletter

Wed. 25th Nov. 2020

Sid Cooper (Forestry Commission) Pests and Diseases of Trees

Dutch elm disease, Ash die back-- our trees are in danger. This talk will give an overview of the major pests and diseases currently affecting our trees and woodlands, and how they are currently managed. It looks into what may be coming next, what damage they might do and what we can do to prevent or slow down their spread, and help preserve our wonderful woodlands.

Wed. 9th Dec. 2020

Liz Cutting (photographer) British Wildlife, Near and Far

Liz is a local photographer of distinction, with a passion for wildlife, especially birds. Her images have been widely used by the RSPB, (for whom she works as a volunteer), and by many local and national journals and magazines. This talk will focus on local wildlife, and on that from parts of the UK farther afield, in Scotland and elsewhere. Enjoy it all, and also our Christmas mince pies. To see some of her work google Liz Cutting, Photographer.

Wed. 27th Jan. 2021

Peter Maddison (Butterfly Conservation) Wildlife of Costa Rica

Costa Rica, a small country in central America, has a great diversity of both habitats and species, from the Caribbean coast, with its turtles, to the cloud forest with its illusive quetzal. There are iguanas, sloths, horn bills, and caymans to name just a few. Come and enjoy this feast of wildlife on what is likely to be a cold winter evening.

Wed. 24th February 2021

David Carlin (CEPHAS) Protecting our Marine Habitat

CEPHAS is a world leader in marine science and technology, providing innovative solutions for the aquatic environment, biodiversity and for food security. David is the science director, and will be able to explain, amongst other things the problems faced by our seas, and the dangers of plastic, and other waste, to marine life.

Wed. March 24th 2021

Meg Amsden (Suffolk Otter Group) Otters (Film and Talk)

Meg will show a short film, compiled from sightings of otters at different sites around the county, followed by a talk. The otters in Suffolk had suffered a near extinction in the 1960's and 70's. due to agricultural pesticides, but they are now found widely throughout the county. The Suffolk Otter Group is investigating the numbers, feeding habits and breeding successes of these charismatic animals.

Wed 28th April 2021

Hawk Honey Wasps. Malicious or Misunderstood?

We all know what a wasp is. Or do we? Come along and find out more about these amazing creatures, and see if they are your friend or your foe. This talk is preceded by a short AGM

A full listing of all Groups' events can be found from page 22

Wild Reads walking book club in Ipswich

Lucy Shepherd *Wild Learning Officer, Suffolk Wildlife Trust*

This Year, Suffolk Wildlife Trust has partnered up with Suffolk Libraries launching a new project called Wild Reads to connect the natural world and the written word through a range of different events and activities across our reserves and Ipswich's green spaces.

A collection of ten Wild Reads have been selected creating our Wild Reads booklist including books by Isabella Tree, Melissa Harrison and Kate Humble to name a few.

When tasked with how we could create events engaging with the public to celebrate these books and the natural themes running through them, several different ideas were developed inspiring a programme of different events such as guided walks on our reserves, evenings with the



SWT and Suffolk Libraries launch Wild Reads

authors and for Ipswich a Wild Reads Walking Book Club, the first of its kind for the Trust.

Kicking off in February I hosted our first session and met a group in the beautiful setting of Christchurch Park for an amble around the park discussing our first book of the collection, *The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn taking in all of the wildlife around us as we went. After what was a rather fresh walk, we then headed to The Woolpack for cups of coffee and hot chocolate to warm up and for further discussions. Before we knew it, it was the end of the session and it was a shame to end conversations knowing that we could have spent several more hours chatting away.

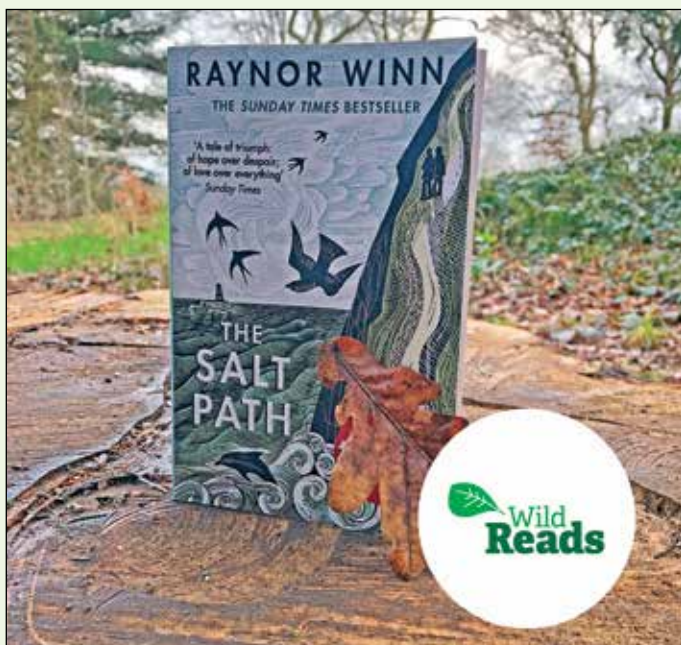
Our walking book club meets every other month on the last Thursday of the month, meeting in Christchurch Park at 1pm – 2.30pm. Our next book is *Meadowland* by John Lewis-Stempel and is available from Ipswich Library as well as Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft Library, look out for our Wild Reads logo!

Whether you have never attended a book club before, or are part of one already, our walking book club is a great way to share your enthusiasm for literature and wildlife with others and get fresh air, enjoying the changing seasons and nature in one of Ipswich historic parks as you go. For those not

**Suffolk Wildlife Trust**

Brooke House, Ashbocking, Ipswich
IP6 9JY
01473 890089
info@suffolkwildlifetrust.org
suffolkwildlifetrust.org

able to join us on the walk, we are encouraging you to join in with the discussions on social our social media channels creating an online book club. Search @Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich for Facebook and @swtipswich for Instagram.



Join us for our upcoming Wild Reads events. Booking is essential and costs £4 per person. See our Suffolk Wildlife Trust website for more information.

- Thursday 30th April – 1.00pm – 2.30pm Christchurch Park – *Meadowland* by John Lewis – Stempel
- Thursday 25th June – 1.00pm – 2.30pm Christchurch Park – *The Wild Places* by Robert Macfarlane
- Thursday 27th August 1.00pm – 2.30pm Christchurch Park – *Overstory* by Richard Powers
- Thursday 29th October 1.00pm – 2.30pm Christchurch Park – *Nature Cure* by Richard Mabey
- Thursday 26th November 1.00pm – 2.30pm Christchurch Park – *Wilding* by Isabella Tree.

Sproughton – a new Nature Reserve

James Baker *Manager, Greenways Countryside Project*

Over the winter months, the Greenways Project has started work on creating and managing habitats at a new nature reserve in the grounds of the former sugar factory site at Sproughton, on the western edge of Ipswich.



GREENWAYS
countryside project

Scout Headquarters (next to St Peter's Church), Stoke Park Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk,
IP2 9TH Office:

01473 433995

greenways.project@ipswich.gov.uk

www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/greenways

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.

Ipswich Borough Council owns the site and is currently developing the site for a range of employment uses, in line with Babergh District Council's Local Plan. As part of the planning permissions that have been granted, a wildlife mitigation and compensation area was required. The Greenways Project prepared a management plan for the 15 hectare (38 acres) site and has started implementing the plan to maintain and increase biodiversity.

The reserve includes a roughly 9 hectare 'island' between the original and canalised courses of the River Gipping. This part of the reserve will not have open public access due to being too important for breeding birds and having



32nd Ipswich Cubs and other volunteers planting a new hedge to screen buildings and security fencing

several potentially dangerous ponds and lakes. Access to the island will be possible by arrangement for organised events and educational visits – or, of course, by being involved as a volunteer!

Our wonderful volunteers have already been involved in a wide range of activities on the site from meadow cutting and hedge planting to litter picking and dead-hedging.

Two new ponds have been created on the island, designed

to be ideal for amphibians. These relatively small and shallow ponds are quite different to the large lakes which have good populations of fish, which tend to eat young amphibians. The new ponds will hopefully not be so good for fish, allowing frogs, toads and newts a chance to thrive.

A considerable amount of coppicing has been necessary along the southern edge of one of the lakes, to allow light to the water to increase oxygen

levels and encouraging more diverse wildflowers along the bank. Established willow pollards, a classic river valley landscape feature in Suffolk, have been re-pollarded to prolong their lives and make more gnarly growth – increasing opportunities for different species. Bat boxes and a wide range of bird nest boxes are also being installed throughout the reserve.

The island and much of the rest of the land making up the reserve were in fact managed



New 'amphibian-friendly' pond



Coppicing of willows to let light to one of the lakes

as a nature reserve by British Sugar, when the factory was operational – the company took great pride in winning awards for having the most bird species breeding on an industrial site in the country. Species highlights at the moment include water vole and otter, peregrine falcon, kestrel, common lizard and grass snake – although more detailed biological surveys will be undertaken by relevant experts over the coming

few years to improve our knowledge of the species using the reserve. We hope to see a wide range of birds this spring and summer, using the mosaic of open water, reeds, river, trees, scrub and grassland.

The new reserve (to be declared a Local Nature Reserve in the coming years) is located along the River Gipping between the Norwich line railway bridge and the A14 – and can be accessed



Volunteers constructing the wider river path through the reserve

on foot, along the Gipping River path from Sroughton Millennium Green (by the church) (half a mile) or from Boss Hall industrial estate (off Sroughton Road in Ipswich) (three quarters of a mile).

The Greenways Project volunteers have also been carrying out some significant improvements to the river path through the reserve over the last few months – also part of requirements connected with

the planning permissions for redevelopment of the site. So far we have rebuilt two sections totalling around 120 metres in length as a trial, in the hope that we will be asked to complete the remainder of the almost mile-long path during the coming spring and summer. It is a mammoth task as there is only one access point with materials and tools having to be carried by hand for 900 metres in one direction!

Chestnut Pond, Rushmere St Andrew

Several years after a major draining and de-silting of this village pond, it is now starting to reap the benefits with clearer water and the return of wildlife.

Previously, a very large number of ducks and geese lived in and around the pond due to unnatural feeding by people. The artificially high population caused several problems, but most notably it resulted in almost all the other pond life (invertebrates and amphibians) being eaten! In addition, the excess unnatural feed (bread etc) rotted in the water, along with the high level of faeces, causing high nutrient levels and low dissolved oxygen – further reducing the biodiversity of the water body. Another serious problem was uneaten bread attracting large numbers of

rats to the area, which in turn led to demands on the Parish Council to control them, using poison. Inevitably, rat poison kills other small mammals and then works its way up the food-chain into predators such as foxes and owls. A concerted effort to change the situation began, with explanatory signage and articles in the Parish magazine.

Now, several years on, the pond is very different – you see an occasional duck and a moorhen, but mostly you are aware of dragonflies and damselflies and, in the spring – a good and growing population of frogs and toads. This spring saw good number of toads migrating to the pond, but tragically a number being killed whilst crossing the road.

The area round the pond has

benches and a new picnic table and there is a dipping platform built out across the pond to help you spot and enjoy the wildlife. A new interpretation board has just been installed to draw attention to the importance

of this classic village pond for local wildlife.

The pond is managed by Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council and is situated on The Street, just opposite Chestnut Close.



The new interpretation board at Chestnut Pond, Rushmere St Andrew

A tree for Ray

Colin Hullis *Committee Member, Ipswich Wildlife Group*



A good turnout on a miserable day for a great bloke



Secretary Leila Matata
iwg@wildipswich.org
www.wildipswich.org

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.

Together with Greenways volunteers and members of Ipswich Wolsey Rotary, we planted a tree in memory of our chairman Ray Sidaway who passed away in early 2019. The tree, a Bramley apple, a favourite of Ray's, was planted on Kiln Meadow which is a special place for Ray and his widow Jen who joined the rather wet and windy ceremony in February.

Rubbish around the canal

A recent monthly work party at Alderman Canal spent the entire three hours collecting discarded rubbish from around the canal from the Alderman Road recreation ground to the canal junction with the river Gipping at the West End Road sluice, a distance of around 500 metres. The photograph shows the incredible, disheartening story, our thanks to the stalwart litter-pickers Ann, David, Su, James, Karl, Clive and Colin.

Wildlife Homes in action

Martin Cant and his band of merry men have been glad to have been invited to a few indoor events during the rather rough weather of the past few months.

We were inundated with exceptionally keen families in the comfort of the Holywells Orangery during schools' half term. This was our contribution to the national Bird Box week initiative and we were kept busy helping the young visitors assemble boxes as fast as we could keep up.



We also had a productive evening with the 24th Ipswich Scout Group where Martin, James, Lilly and Colin helped the scouts make bug boxes which they went home with and are hopefully now installed in back gardens.

We are very keen to work with young people and Wildlife Homes is an excellent opportunity to create involvement and instil interest in wildlife and the wider environment.



A great morning's work



Brilliant birds visit the feeders

A great bunch of box-makers

Colin Hullis *Committee Member, Ipswich Wildlife Group*

This photo shows some Suffolk Wildlife Trust Young Wardens on their recent session with members of Ipswich Wildlife Group and SWT's Lucy Shepherd making bug boxes." They were a great bunch, said IWG's Martin Cant, very able and enthusiastic". The group made a dozen bug boxes from scratch and took several away which Lucy hopes to donate to local care homes where residents can hopefully get some enjoyment from them.



Allotment attraction

During the winter months the local birds have been attracted to our extensive feeders on the allotment.

On occasions we have counted six blue tits on one feeder at the same time and they are usually in the company of great tits, long-tailed tits, coal tits, dunnocks and a robin - brilliant.

We have also planted more flowering shrubs with insects in mind. Peter has planted Mahonia, Hypericum and Forsythia. Here comes the Spring.



Peter plants new shrubs

Suspicious Finds

Matthew Garnham Ipswich Borough Council Wildlife Team

The Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) is a small species of sawbill duck, native to North America. There have been several escapees dotted all over the British Isles but on the other hand, some wild ones have made it across the Atlantic Ocean on their own.



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.

Males show diagnostic breeding colouration and are mainly black with brown flanks and sections of white on the wing and breast. They have a large crest with a large white patch in the middle. During the non-breeding season the male looks more like a female which has more brown/grey plumage, still showing the crest. Both have a toothed, slender bill which is where the name sawbill originates.

A Male Hooded merganser has recently taken up residence in Christchurch Park and become a bit of a local celebrity and due to his characteristic crest, nicknamed Elvis. First spotted in the River Gipping, he has been spotted traveling between Christchurch Park and Alderman Canal, following and displaying to other species of duck.

We were asked if it would be possible to introduce him a partner (named Priscilla) with a valentine's day press



Elvis the male Hooded Merganser

...it appears Elvis has left the pond.

release. Initially we were quite sceptical regarding the release of a non-native species, but after some consultation and discussion we went ahead with the idea. The Wilderness pond is already an ornamental ecosystem with Mandarins and Carp and was historically stocked with waterfowl back in the 1990's. She was purchased from a local breeder near Needham Market.

To help Priscilla acclimatize to the park we have added a duck feeder especially for her. They are a tree nesting species



Ranger putting the duck feeder onto the island

using holes about 2-8 metres above ground.

Unfortunately, since

introducing Priscilla to the park it appears that sadly, ladies and gentlemen, Elvis has left the pond!



Priscilla the female Hooded Merganser

Clearing and planting

Kaye Roberts *Secretary, Friends of the Dales*

With contributions from Sam Chamberlin IBC Ranger



Pollarding selected trees improves the site

Additional volunteers attended the February work party and assisted in carrying out some essential clearing works.

An area near one of the log circles exposed an abundance of bluebells struggling to break through. Laurel, a non-native species, that had been cut to near ground level last year had started to grow again and these short, shrubby stems were trimmed back to ensure they are kept in check. Removal of sycamore saplings is an ongoing task. A cherry tree that had fallen over one of the paths was removed. The paths are currently very wet and care needs to be taken on the higher, muddier sections. There is now a fair amount of dead wood and fallen or

felled trees, which should provide excellent habitat for insects, including stag beetles.

In another cleared area, trees have been planted including buckthorn, hawthorn and hazel.

Further nest-boxes have been mounted and these now total 16 plus two open-fronted ones. Two bat boxes have also been added. Small logs with holes appropriate for solitary bees have been attached to suitable trees. The English bluebells planted in November are now starting to peek through and should provide plenty of colour.

Frogs have appeared in the two ponds that have recently been cleared. A fox

is seen regularly both in The Dales and in surrounding gardens and muntjac deer footprints have been observed on Bridge Path, which is the first sign of deer for several months.

A recent walk produced a variety of common birds including wren, goldcrest, robin, chaffinch, blackbird, song thrush, blue tit, great tit, jackdaw, crow, wood pigeon and buzzard.

At least 100 wood pigeons roost in the Dales and these are often disturbed by a sparrowhawk.



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



Sweet Violet



Stag beetle larva

Why not volunteer and join a work party.
We meet on the second Wednesday of the month.

For further details contact Kaye Roberts
kayefotdsec@virginmedia.com

It's an Ill Wind . . .

Tim Kenny *Leader, RSPB Ipswich Group*

Before we begin, a short message for any staff of the Met Office who might be reading. Giving your storms names does not make them any cuddlier or more welcome.

As I write there is another one coming (Jorge, they call it) and it's getting boring now. Three straight weekends (Ciara, then Dennis, then Jorge) that high winds and cold rain have made the attractions of the warm fire and sofa greater than getting out and seeing wildlife. Not that the birds are too keen on the weather either, hunkering down and sheltering and only feeding if they have to.

Storms, and indeed weather in general, do have their place for us birders. A storm from the west can blow in something

Storms from the east, similarly, have the potential to bring rarities over from the continent, and combined with migration season can get the pulses racing amongst our twitching brethren! In November 2015 I happened to have just bought a new bridge camera and decided to take it to Landguard one lunchtime to practise on common species, like magpies and dunnocks. But the weather had brought in a pied wheatear, a species whose nearest breeding grounds are by the coast of the Black Sea in Bulgaria and Romania, a first Suffolk record. So I joined the crowds and got to see it, although it was too distant for my new camera.

February 2020 though was very much the opposite of the perfect storm (sorry) for birdwatchers. Migration has not yet begun in earnest, and the winds have been coming from the south, resulting in very few vagrant species arriving. Not only this, but there has been a marked lack of winter thrushes such as fieldfares and redwings, due to an unusually warm winter over in their breeding grounds in northern Europe. Moscow did not see its first snow of the winter until December 30th! A green Christmas, or it would be if the Eastern Orthodox Church didn't celebrate it on January 7th. Why bother flying over Europe if the conditions where you are still allow you to feed, drink, and not freeze to death? There has also been a paucity of the enigmatic waxwing this winter for the same reason.



Birding at Landguard

On the few occasions I have managed to venture out, it's only been as far as my local reserve at Landguard. It's hosted a couple of snow buntings, a pair of rock pipits, and purple sandpipers. The purple sandpipers are small waders and are seen in small numbers around the east coast during the winter. Typically this species can be found hanging around rocks and sea defences like the individual below. It was a very confiding bird, probably due to the biting wind that was blowing across the North Sea that day. Soon they'll be heading back north to the Arctic to breed, before returning in the autumn.

And yet, as I write, March 1st approaches, the start of meteorological spring. A warm wet winter is, remarkably, nearly over. It was about this time two years ago we were hit with The Beast From The East which badly hit birds that had started to breed earlier than normal after a mild winter. The Cetti's warbler, a familiar sound around damp scrub at Minsmere, was reduced from around 100 pairs around the reserve, to an estimated two. Thankfully numbers are recovering; nature always finds a way back if you let it.



Ipswich Local Group

Group Leader Tim Kenny

Tel 01394 809236

ipswichrspliblocalgroup@yahoo.com

www.rspb.org.uk/groups/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, or (throughout the year), get out and experience nature first hand on one of our regular field meetings, visiting some of the best spots for wildlife in the area. Three times a year the 'Orwell Observer', keeps readers abreast of the latest developments at nearby RSPB Reserves as well as news of Group activities, along with members' photographs and accounts of birding exploits from home and abroad. Membership costs £3 per year (£1 for Juniors). For more information see the Events Diary in this magazine, visit our website or write as per details above.

exotic across the Atlantic, like in October 2011 when Hurricane Katia delivered a first Sandhill crane to Suffolk. This large bird was tracked down the east coast from Scotland before it roosted for the night at Boyton Marshes. Fortunately I had taken a day off work the following day, a Monday, as had my friend Paul, so there was only one place we were going. At Boyton for first light, we were treated to a flypast of two spoonbills but there were no crowds. A peek through the binoculars revealed hoards of twitchers, about a mile away across a field. We found our way to the correct location and got good, if distant views, of only the fourth record of Sandhill crane for the UK.



Purple sandpiper at Landguard Point, Felixstowe.

© Colin Hullis

© Tim Kenny

Woodland working and greener living

Ann Havard *Friends of Belstead Brook Park*

At our work party in November we joined up with volunteers from the Greenways Project and Ipswich Wildlife Group for Mega Bash 1 in Kiln Meadow. We were basically trying to keep parts of it as a meadow rather than allowing it to become woodland and scrub.

It's always great to work with other volunteers as not only do you learn a lot but with a fire to burn all the brash it means we get to feast on baked potatoes and cheese at the end of all the hard work! They say an army marches on its stomach I'm sure the same can be said of volunteers!



December was Mega Bash 2 where we were doing the same type of work but in Millennium Wood. Another good day ending with baked potatoes cooked in the fire – yummy!



Dave busy with the loppers

At the start of 2020 in January we had a record 11 people come to help in Stoke Park Wood. We cleared paths, cut bramble, litter picked, the tall hedge by the footpath at the



Chris clearing the fence line



Peter with the rubbish and commode

top of the site by the path was cut by chain saw and we made dead hedges with the cut material.

We had so much fun in Stoke Park Wood in January that we decided to go back for more in February! This time amongst the usual cans, bottles and dog poo bags we found an old commode that someone had thrown over the fence – such a waste as it

had a phone number to call for someone to collect when finished with. Various jokes were made about this – the new volunteer's mobile toilet facilities perhaps?

Join us in helping to manage the wildlife areas around the Belstead Brook Park. We meet on the second Saturday of the month, 10am till 1pm and always stop for a coffee, biscuit and a chat.



Friends of Belstead Brook Park

www.wildipswich.org
Email: fobbp@wildipswich.org
www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/fobbp
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.

Five Tips for Greener Living

- 1 Leave the edges or a patch of your lawn uncut – you never know what might grow there and the long grass is sure to be a good home for insects, frogs, newts and even slow worms if you are lucky.
- 2 Sow some wild flower seeds – scratch off the top soil, scatter and water. In the summer you'll have some colourful flowers that are perfect for pollinators.
- 3 Try to plant native species in your garden from local suppliers – they will thrive much better than exotic imports and benefit the native wildlife.
- 4 Cut a hedgehog sized hole (13 x 13cm) in your fence to enable the gardener's prickly friends to wander between gardens in search of slugs and snails to munch.
- 5 Put a variety of food out for the birds. Habitats are under threat from development, agriculture and climate change with increasingly extreme weather including drought, extreme cold and flooding.

Two Major Projects

Gi Grieco *Suffolk Bird Group Council Member*

Suffolk Bird Group has two major projects running at present. The Suffolk Rookery Survey - see the poster below for details on how to get involved and Save Our Suffolk Swifts - the following is written by the lead volunteer for the project, Eddie Bathgate.

an efficient, air-tight built environment with minimal heat loss and sound transmission reduces the nesting opportunities for wildlife. Meanwhile, renovation and conversion of older buildings results in loss of existing nest sites. Nesting locations are not legally protected outside the breeding season and so can be lost whilst the Swifts are away. The Swift population in SE England halved between 1994 and 2007, with a further third of remaining birds lost between 2009 and 2016. Swifts are in serious trouble and are now 'Endangered' as a British breeding bird.



© Bill Baston

Swifts arrive here late April/early May

There are currently two places to log sightings. The Suffolk Swift Survey website, hosted by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (suffolkbis.org.uk/swifts) plays a vital role locally because it can influence local planning decisions. Suffolk County Council has classified Swifts as a Suffolk Priority Species in their Biodiversity Action Plan. The Swift Mapper app, available to download free for smartphones, also logs your records and location and helps provide a nationwide picture. The app is being updated ready for the new Swift season and will automatically transfer any data to a new interactive RSPB Swifts website, also under development. Once this website is launched, hopefully in early May, SOS Swifts will be given access rights to the data, so that any Suffolk records logged via the app or the new website can be transferred and stored on the Suffolk Swift Survey database

as well. So please use the Suffolk Swift Survey if you can, but using the app will also capture your Suffolk records too.

Local groups have had remarkable successes. SOS Swifts helps local groups build on best practice. Groups in places such as Hasketon, Framlingham, Beccles and Bungay are growing in support and there is still space for more!

If you would like to join or start a local group, please get in touch. If you would like to put Swift boxes on your own property or sponsor boxes in your community, again, please make contact. Finally, if you have contacts within a church, school or public building that might be interested in supporting Swifts, please put us in touch. Email swifts@suffolkbirdgroup.org for more information, we're here to help.





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.

SUFFOLK ROOKERY SURVEY

Please help the Suffolk Bird Group with our 2019-21 Rookery Survey. Look out for Rooks and rookeries when you are out and about and count the nests and submit your sightings online at <http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/rookerysurvey>. Please submit your records online.

The Suffolk Bird Group (SBG) provides a network and a voice for anyone with an interest in the birds of Suffolk. For further information and details about SBG please email info@suffolkbirdgroup.org.

Saving Suffolk's Swifts

Historically, our Swifts nested in natural nooks and crannies in cliffs and tree holes, as indeed they still do in some northern and eastern areas of their range. Since Roman times however, they have taken advantage of the built environment to find nest sites in the eaves and beneath the tiles of buildings and in church towers. In Suffolk, as elsewhere in the UK, Swifts have become a communal urban nester.

Modern building techniques do not favour Swifts. The requirement to achieve

encouraging and supporting the establishment of local Swift groups. Support includes surveys of suitable nest sites and recommendation of appropriate call systems, as well as education and advice about Swift protection, to expand existing colonies and create new ones.

Groups are encouraged to put up Swift nest boxes ahead of the arrival of the birds; to play Swift calls as the birds arrive in May to advertise the sites; and then to log sightings of these distinctive, entertaining 'screaming parties' of birds – and their actual nest sites.



© Colin Hullis

Swifts nest boxes on Shottisham church

Cake and Gales!

Stephen Corley (Chairman)

with contributions from Sam Cork and George Pennick (Nature Explorers and Young Volunteers)

It has now been 20 years since the Portal Woodlands Conservation Group was created following the hard-fought battle to save the woodlands from being concreted over to become the Martlesham Park & Ride.



Our Volunteers took the opportunity to celebrate this significant milestone at our Christmas work morning in December, when they enjoyed special festive refreshments including a splendid 20th Anniversary cake covered in wonderful woodland-themed icing decorations.

had been used, about the same as last year. Particularly pleasing was the new-style boxes constructed from waste UPVC plastic proved popular with the birds, with 5 out of the 6 new boxes having been used. With several more of the original wooden boxes having deteriorated beyond repair, I expect we will be replacing them with these new plastic ones. At the time of writing, the woods are showing all the signs of spring – with a good display of violets, snowdrops and daffodils. Birds have been seen pairing up with mates and checking out the bird boxes and other potential nesting places in trees.

A main theme over the winter has been maintenance of the trees. Our regular checks find a few potentially hazardous trees and branches that have



Path maintenance a priority after the storms

become diseased or dead, but this was compounded by the exceptional stormy weather which caused extra disruption to the woods and the Group's normal operations. First, Storm Ciara took out a few trees, with one tree badly splitting and causing one of the paths to be closed until we could attend to make safe. Then Storm Dennis hit, forcing us to abort a Volunteer work morning due to safety concerns. Our other work has been the usual maintenance of the paths, Bronze Age burial mounds, wartime features and hedges. Thank you to our wonderful Volunteers and local supporters who have helped to look after the woods, encourage the wildlife and make Portal Woodlands a place for people to enjoy for the past 20 years – and hopefully this will continue for many years to come!



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.

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.

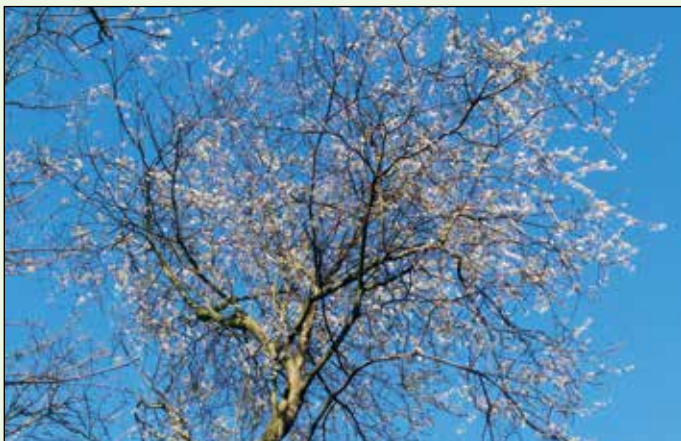


80% of the bird boxes had been used

The new decade started for us with the annual survey and clean out of our bird boxes. Overall, 80% of the boxes



Trees damaged in the storms



Spring is in the air

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

Saturday 16th May, Sunday 21st June,

Saturday 18th July, No Work Morning in August.

Nature Explorers (11 to 18 year olds)

Meet at the Education Area from 9.00am - 11.00am.

Booking essential, please email pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com

Saturday 15th May, Saturday 18th July.

Look out for early flyers

Julian Dowding *Secretary, Suffolk Butterfly Conservation*

What can we hope to see in our gardens and local green spaces this spring? Well, the first of our overwintering butterflies (that is, winged adults as opposed to eggs or caterpillars) who have spent all winter tucked away in some sheltered hedge, shed or among ivy cover, have already begun to emerge from hibernation in brief periods of warmth and sunshine.



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.

These will continue to grace us with their presence as the year moves on into summer but for now, it's worth having a look on sunny days to see what turns up. Such species include Brimstone, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma. These species have stockpiled reserves during summer to see them through winter but with spring approaching, become hungry and look for any available nectar; things like ground ivy, red deadnettle, dandelions, sallow and cherry blossom for example. Males are usually first out, as they generally are smaller than females and therefore run out of stored food reserves sooner. They also need to find females to mate and are very quick off the mark!

If very lucky, you might see the sulphur coloured male Brimstone fluttering around thick cover such as ivy or a hedge, trying to find a mate.

Comma and Peacock will be doing pretty much the same. The frequency of feeding flights will increase as the weather improves. One March I witnessed a pair of Small Tortoiseshell courting by our log pile, the pair fluttering up about 12 feet into the air, then flying back down again many times, until she was ready for the male, who began tickling her with his antennae. Later in the day, they disappeared back into the pile. The next day, presumably the same female was seen laying her batch of eggs on the underside of a nettle leaf. She appeared motionless for about 45 mins while doing this. This species loves to use very short nettles growing in a sunny spot.

Another favourite spring species is Orange Tip. It appears a little later, usually April, and again, it's often males which are seen first, their bright orange wingtip colours very visible, even in flight. Orange tips spend winter as pupae, as opposed to imago. Hatching is probably triggered by increasing warmth and day length. These lovely butterflies will again nectar on pretty much anything available, and are fond of spring flowers such as bluebell and red campions. They also use cuckoo flower and garlic mustard, both of which are also chosen for egg laying. Another species to look for is Holly Blue. This species overwinters in its pupal stage, and its new spring brood generally lay their eggs on Holly, hence the name. Other shrubs like Buckthorn are also used. Buckthorn of course is the larval hostplant of Brimstones, but did you know that it also will attract Green Hairstreak? These also spend winter as pupae. They're little gems, dashing about in their sparkling emerald livery. When settled they can be hard to spot, their colour matching perfectly any tree or shrub. They are quite territorial,



Orange Tip Male

and favour hawthorn particularly, though they do use other shrubs. Males occupy a favoured perch from which to see females and to fight off other males and so you can sometimes see two males spinning around in the air just by the bushes, then returning to their post. It happens fairly quickly so keep alert but is one of the best ways to find them! When they land, of course they 'disappear' but if you take note of roughly where they were and approach cautiously, you can often find them.

Green-veined White is another spring beauty which uses cruciferous plants for egg-laying, much like its close relative, the Orange Tip. Also look out for Speckled Wood, and Ringlet. The former is another very territorial butterfly, with males patrolling patches of sunlight under the tree canopy. If you pay attention, you can see a lovely iridescent turquoise green colouration on these otherwise brown and gold butterflies. Ringlet is another somewhat understated species, but with its chocolate brown wings, golden ringed eyespots and silvery white wing edges, is nonetheless appealing, if you can get up close!



Green veined white



Small Tortoiseshell

Over the years, there have been changes...

Reg Snook *Friends of Christchurch Park*

As I was entering Christchurch Park through the gates on Westerfield Road, I met a fox leaving our park with a squirrel in its jaws. I tipped my hat to the fox who ignored me and carried on with his journey.

Foxes are newcomers to this area; they breed under sheds in the larger, nearby gardens and as long as they continue to keep grey squirrel numbers down, then I will support them. Although they do have a tendency to dig up my garden in the spring. Why do they do that?

Coming face to face with a fox is not a dangerous encounter and nothing like that of a friend who, on his first visit to the USA, encountered a crocodile on the footpath on which he was walking. He told me that he was overcome with panic but his American friend told him not to be afraid "just position yourself behind the croc as these fearsome reptiles find it difficult to turn around quickly." We do not have crocodiles or alligators in our park but we do have a few red-necked terrapins which were no doubt discarded by someone bored with keeping creatures that really don't "do very much". Still, many people like seeing these reptiles basking on a fallen tree, although they don't really do much else!



Terrapin

Over the years there have been changes in the wildlife of Christchurch Park. Besides the 'boring' terrapins, we apparently have American signal crayfish in the Wilderness Pond. These animals are seemingly everywhere in our country. I am told that they have had a devastating effect on the native crayfish, but they are good to eat. Perhaps the terrapins will find the signal crayfish to their taste. Lesser black-backed gulls are also relative

newcomers to our park and, as they breed on buildings in and around Ipswich and are scavengers, then of course they eat the ducklings in our park. It wasn't all that long ago that ducklings and goslings could be admired as they plodded along the footpaths and grassy areas adjacent to the Wilderness Pond. Not any more. Gulls, foxes and free-running dogs have put paid to that. A recent visitor to our pond, an escaped hooded merganser had such an effect on members of the IBC that a female merganser was purchased for him. Will they produce hooded ducklings? Who knows but no doubt the large gulls will be licking their lips so to speak.

... as long as they continue to keep grey squirrel numbers down, then I will support them .

In the past, about 50 years ago, there was a rookery in the Park adjacent to the Bethesda Chapel. Since then we have also lost hawfinch, spotted flycatcher, tree sparrow, nuthatch, lesser spotted woodpecker, cuckoo and turtle-dove and before that nightingale and wryneck. Are the newcomers to our park compensating for the loss of these songbirds? Not really, but it is a situation that is happening all over the country. It is very easy to shed a tear for our losses but not easy to raise a smile for most of the newcomers which include cormorant and ring-necked parakeet.

Which brings me on to a happy event, not connected immediately to our Park but an event that happened just outside the park in Tower Street, a mere hundred metres or so to the tower of St Mary le Tower, the civil Church of Ipswich. Volunteer gardeners had noticed bits and pieces of bird carcasses strewn on the flowerbeds beneath the Church spire. Everyone was delighted that the culprit was a peregrine falcon which had chosen this spot in which to rip its victims to pieces. My long-standing friend, Peter Merchant, was called in to survey the tower to see if it was feasible to place a nesting tray there to encourage these falcons to breed. Peter is a renowned peregrine expert and has persuaded peregrines to nest on Ipswich docks, Orwell



Peregrine falcon



Friends of Christchurch Park

Secretary: Sylvia Patsalides 07971 467042

Membership Secretary: Robert Fairchild
01473 254255

www.focp.org.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.

Bridge, Felixstowe Docks and latterly the BT Tower at Martlesham. What fun we had trying to get this tray up to the tower; the old stone, spiral turret of a stairway was too narrow so, despite it being windy, the tray was hoisted up the outside by ropes which was very successful. This was despite the police arriving thinking that someone was about to launch themselves off the tower! We will have to wait a while to see if Peter's efforts are successful. Incidentally, amongst the avian remains were those of three woodcock. These birds usually migrate a night. Unfortunately for them, while most of us sleep, Ipswich is well illuminated.

Finally, a lovely tawny owl is back on show in Mabel's roost in the park giving joy to all who pass by! Has Mabel returned? We shall never know.

What are Megabashes?

James Baker *Greenways Countryside Project*

Megabashes! Not the prettiest word, but the Greenways Project's large annual winter volunteer work parties have now become firmly established with this title!

For the first time ever, we ran six of these events this winter attracting well over 100 volunteer days of effort and achieving a huge range of tasks from hedge planting and coppicing to scrub clearing and litter picking.

Sproughton Nature Reserve

October saw the first 'bash' on the new Sproughton Nature Reserve at the former sugar factory site (see more info on page 8). Here, despite the rain, a hardy group of 12 volunteers cleared some scrub and built an impressive dead hedge to prevent unauthorised access onto the island part of the reserve.

wild Ipswich

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

Belstead Brook Park

In November, the first of the Belstead Brook Park bashes saw more than 20 volunteers tackling the ever growing invasive scrub on Kiln Meadow Local Nature Reserve along with some scything and raking of the most interesting wildflower areas.

In December, the second BBP bash was in Millennium Wood LNR – the now very well-established new woodland, where 18 volunteers coppiced an area of the wood and built a dead-hedge round the perimeter. A bonfire kept spirits up in the rain and mud as well as cooking the baked potatoes for lunch!

Martlesham Common

January's bash was also at a new venue – Martlesham Common LNR (since Purdis Heath, where the megabashes first started, is not currently able to be worked on due to uncertain ownership etc). Here, more than 30 volunteers helped to surface a well-used section of path along with scrub clearing, dead-hedging and litter picking – a very successful first event for the reserve.

Martlesham Heath

In February, we visited Martlesham Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for bash number five! Here, over 20 regular volunteers and local people turned out to clear gorse and other scrub from the valuable heathland habitat. A large bonfire kept us busy all day with many trailer loads of cut material being carted to the fire from all ends of the heath. Once again, the bonfire-cooked potatoes were very good and helped to make up for the prickly gorse stuck in gloves, hair, coats and worse!

Sproughton

The last bash of the season on the 1st of March was a return to the new Sproughton reserve where over 20 volunteers and Cubs from the 32nd Ipswich Scout group, planted 400 trees and shrubs, collected litter and removed old fencing and dangerous barbed wire.



Creating a new surface for a well-used path



The large turn-out on Martlesham Heath



Scything the wildflower area on Kiln Meadow



Baked potatoes from the bonfire



Building the dead hedge on Sproughton Nature Reserve

Holywells Orchard - January to March

Andy Smuk and Yvonne Westley *Friends of Holywells Park*

Holywells Orchard sprang back to life on 5 January with our traditional 'Wassail' to awaken the fruit trees. A good crowd gathered in the Walled Garden to make Wassail sticks, we then went down to the orchard in procession, accompanied by tunes from Poppy and her recorder. It was good to see the trees in their winter starkness, slumbering, but soon to be awoken with our chanting and stories.

A week after the Wassail, the Young Wardens Group, run by Lucy of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, very ably pruned and refurbished the Willow Tunnel. This much-loved feature provides such

enjoyment for youngsters attending our Friends events throughout the year.

February saw the Friends' volunteers gather on a Saturday to take on the task of pruning the trees. We're looking forward to another bumper crop this year.

... we have a thriving Apiary in the orchard, inhabited by nine honeybee colonies.

March saw the Wednesday morning work party remove



Refurbishing the willow tunnel

a diseased pear tree and replace it with a young Victoria plum tree.

As you know, we have a thriving Apiary in the orchard, inhabited by nine honeybee colonies. The orchard is also home to several species of solitary bee. One of the first to emerge in Spring, is the Hairy- Footed Flower Bee (*Anthophora plumipes*). Although these little creatures are solitary (with no workers or social structure) they often nest in large groups, which can be quite noisy. The picture shows a fine example of a



**Friends of
Holywells Park**

The Group aims to work in partnership with Ipswich Borough Council to improve and promote the Park.

Contact: fohipswich@gmail.com
www.holywellspark.org.uk
facebook.com/holywellsparkipswich

male bee...the females look completely different. Note his hairy little legs and feet!



The Wassail procession to the orchard



Removing the diseased pear tree



Hairy Footed Flower Bees



Events Diary

For events covering a broader range of environmental issues go to www.wildipswich.org

PLEASE NOTE: Due to restrictions concerning coronavirus (COVID-19) and the uncertainty surrounding this at the time of production, please check with the organisers of the events listed to see if they are still going ahead.

MAY

Wednesday 6th May 6.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Rushmere Common for spring birds. Meet at 6.30pm at Heath Road entrance. Park on local roads or take Ipswich Buses number 5. TM197445. 2 hours 2 miles. Walking easy. Led by Stephen Marginson **Contact** ipswichrsblocalgroup@yahoo.com

Saturday 9th May 9am - 1pm Suffolk Bird Group FINGRINGHOE WICK

Meet at visitor centre car park, South Green Road. Map ref: TM048193 **Leader Ashley Gooding Tel 07808 044611**

Saturday 16th May 8am RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Upper Hollesley Common for sandling heath birds. Meet at upper car park. TM275433. 2 hours 2 miles. Walking easy. Led by Stephen Marginson **Contact** ipswichrsblocalgroup@yahoo.com

Saturday 16th May 9am – 11am Portal Woodlands Conservation Group NATURE EXPLORERS

Meet at the Education Area. 11 to 18 year-olds. Booking essential. **More information from** pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com or pwcg.onesuffolk.net

Saturday 16th May 10am – 12noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group WORK MORNING

Meet at the Education Area. All ages welcome. **More information from** pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com or pwcg.onesuffolk.net

Sunday 17th May 7am – 12noon Suffolk Bird Group EASTBRIDGE/DUNWICH/ MINSMERE

Long walk possible. Meet at Eastbridge (leave Eastbridge on the Minsmere road and park beside road just before the sharp right into Minsmere itself) Map ref: TM452666 **Leader David Walsh Tel 07947 051223**



Tuesday 19th May 10am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK

Pipers Vale. Meet at car park at Vale entrance, TM165448. 2 hours. Led by Kathy Reynolds **Contact** ipswichrsblocalgroup@yahoo.com

Wednesday 20th May 6.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Newbourne Springs SWT reserve for spring birds. Meet at reserve car park, TM275433. 2 hours 2 miles, walking can be muddy. Led by Stephen Marginson **Contact** ipswichrsblocalgroup@yahoo.com

JUNE

Tuesday 16th June 10am RSPB Ipswich Group MIDWEEK WALK

Christchurch Park. Meet at Soane Street entrance TM165446. 2 hours Led by Kathy Reynolds **Contact** ipswichrsblocalgroup@yahoo.com



Wednesday 17th June 6.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Felixstowe Ferry and River Deben for summer birds. Meet at Ferry Boat Inn car park, TM328377. 2 hours, 2 miles. Walking easy. Led by Stephen Marginson **Contact** ipswichrsblocalgroup@yahoo.com

Wednesday 17th June 8.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING (date and time to be confirmed)

Nightjar evening at Upper Hollesley Common. Meet at Upper car park TM355471. **Check website for updates** (www.rspb.org.uk/groups/ipswich) or email smarginson@btinternet.com

Friday 19th June 7pm – 10pm Suffolk Bird Group MINSMERE

Evening Nightjar walk. Meet at RSPB Minsmere reserve car park. **Leader: Paul Gowen Tel 01473 311263**

Sunday 21st June 10am – 12noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group WORK MORNING

Meet at the Education Area. All ages welcome. **More information from** pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com or pwcg.onesuffolk.net

Saturday 27th June 9.15am - 2.45pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group WALK

Orfordness, meet at Orford Quay to catch the first boat across for a guided tractor trailer tour. It will go to all areas including those not normally open to the public. If you wish to spend longer you are free to explore afterwards. Bring suitable clothing and your own food and drink. Toilets available. Post code: IP12 2NU. Booking Essential. Cost – National Trust members £20, non-members £27.50. **Contact: Leigh Williamson, leighwilliamson@btinternet.com Tel 01473 785600**

Sunday 28th June 9.30am – 12noon Suffolk Bird Group RIVER GIPPING

Short walk trip. Meet at Needham Market car park. Map ref TM094546 **Leader Gi Grieco Tel 07951 482547**

JULY

Thursday 9th July 1pm Ipswich-Arts TALK - HIDDEN IPSWICH Less well-known parks and wild places

An illustrated talk by James Baker of the Greenways Project, exploring some of Ipswich's less well-known parks, open spaces and nature reserves – and showing how they contribute to the wildlife network. From former landfill sites and allotments to historic gardens and recent new spaces – you will be surprised by the variety and diversity of the town's open spaces. Tea and coffee from 12.25 – 12.55pm. Museum Street Methodist Church (entrance in Black Horse Lane), Ipswich IP1 2EF. **www.ipswich-arts.org.uk/events for more information.**



Friday 17th July 10.30am – 12.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group WALK

Bradfield Woods. Giles Cawston, Reserve Manager will be our guide. Bradfield is a special place, and ancient woodland which is traditionally managed by coppicing and is a haven for wildlife. Why not bring your own picnic to enjoy afterwards. Toilets available. Members and non-members welcome. Booking Essential, £3 donation to SWT. Post code: IP30 0AQ. **Contact Leigh Williamson leighwilliamson@btinternet.com Tel 01473 785600**

Saturday 18th July 9am – 11am Portal Woodlands Conservation Group NATURE EXPLORERS

Meet at the Education Area. 11 to 18 year-olds. Booking essential. **More information from** pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com or pwcg.onesuffolk.net

Saturday 18th July 10am – 12noon Portal Woodlands Conservation Group WORK MORNING

Meet at the Education Area. All ages welcome. **More information from** pwcg.martlesham@gmail.com or pwcg.onesuffolk.net

Wednesday 22nd July 6.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING

Landguard Nature Reserve and SSSI Felixstowe for birds and flora. Meet at Landguard Fort car park. TM285320. 2 hours 2 miles. Walking easy but can be exposed when windy. Led by Stephen Marginson **Contact** ipswichrsblocalgroup@yahoo.com

Saturday 25th July 11am – 3pm ActivLives COMMUNITY GARDEN FUN DAY
Food, music, activities, crafts and more for the whole family. The People's Community Garden, Maidenhall Allotments, Halifax Road. www.activlives.org.uk/activgardens

Sunday 26th July 9am Suffolk Bird Group SANDWICH BAY OBSERVATORY
Sandwich Bay Observatory and Oare Marshes (Kent) Meet at Sandwich Bay Observatory car park, Guildford Road. Map Ref: TR354574 **Leader Adam Faiers Tel 07708 521852**

AUGUST

Saturday 8th August 8pm – 9.45pm Friends of Holywells Park BAT WALK
Bookable event. **More details at www.holywellspark.org.uk/events**

Wednesday 12th August 6.30pm RSPB Ipswich Group FIELD MEETING
Levington Creek and River Orwell for autumn waders. Meet at car park TM237389. 2 hours 2 miles. Walking can be muddy and exposed. Led by Stephen Marginson **Contact ipswichrspblocalgroup@yahoo.com**

Saturday 15th August 11am – 1pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group WALK
Carlton Marshes by train or car. Come along and see what's happening at the newly improved Carlton Marshes. Why not come by train from Ipswich to Oulton Broad South. The 9.17am train from Ipswich will arrive in time for the start of our 2.5 mile walk. The start is a 20-minute walk from the station. Afterwards enjoy the new visitor centre opening this spring. Return to Ipswich at your leisure. Book your own train tickets or come by car. £3 donation to SWT. Post code: NR33 8HU. Members and non-members welcome. **Contact Leigh Williamson leighwilliamson@btinternet.com Tel 01473 785600**

Thursday 20th August 11am – 4pm THE TUMP FUN DAY
Join the IBC Rangers, Ipswich Wildlife Group, Ravenswood Wildlife Group and others for a day of fun and wildlife at the Tump, Ravenswood. **Contact wildlife.team@ipswich.gov.uk or 01473 433998 for more information.**

Sunday 23rd August 10am – 12.30pm Suffolk Bird Group RIVER DEBEN
Melton, short walk trip. Meet at Riverside car park, Melton. Map ref: TM288503 **Leader Gi Grieco Tel 07951 482547**

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday 23rd September 7.30pm Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich TALK
Cathy Smith (SWT) Gardening for Wildlife. Most of us want to see more wildlife in our gardens, and as a garden enthusiast, and employee of the SWT, responsible for the wildlife garden at Foxburrow Farm, Cathy will give us ideas as to what we should do to make our own gardens a haven for wildlife. This is a good time to make your plans for next year. Museum Street Methodist Church, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. £2.50 includes tea and coffee. **Contact browncandw@hotmail.com**

Regular Events

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH 10.30am - 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. **Details from Gerry Donlon 07733 968481**

TUESDAYS 10am 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 01473 433995**

SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH 10am – 2pm SWT Wild Learning WILD IN THE WEEK

Location – across Ipswich. Join us for our Wild in the Week activity day for children aged 6 - 10 years. Each month has a different theme all taking part in the great outdoors. See website for details. Price £7. Booking essential. **To book: www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org / 01473 890089**

SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH 10am – 2pm SWT Wild Learning WILD IN THE WEEK

Location – across Ipswich. Join us for our Wild in the Week activity day for children aged 11 – 16 years. Each month has a different theme all taking part in the great outdoors. See website for details. Price £7. Booking essential. **To book: www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org / 01473 890089**

WEDNESDAYS 10am Friends of Holywells Park HOLYWELLS PARK WORK PARTY

Join our small team of volunteers doing valuable work around the Park. Meet at the Stable Block located down the driveway from Cliff Lane. **Contact Martin Cant for details 07858 436003**

SECOND WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH Friends of The Dales WORK PARTY
Contact Joan Powell for the details jayempowell@btinternet.com

EVERY THURSDAY/FRIDAY 10am – 11.30am SWT Wild Learning WILD TOTS
Outdoor adventure and play for tots age 18 months – 5 years and their carers. Christchurch Park Thursdays, Holywells Park Fridays. Cost £4. **Please book at suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089**

THURSDAYS 10am 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 9 – 10pm '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 10am 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

FRIDAYS FORTNIGHTLY 10am 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, Bobbits 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. Meet at Bibb Way alongside Alderman Road recreation ground. **More information from Colin Hullis 07979 644134**

FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 10am Butterfly Conservation WORK PARTY (October to March)
More information from Helen Saunders helens919@gmail.com

EVERY SECOND SATURDAY 10am – 12pm SWT Wild Learning WEEKEND WILDLIFE CLUB

Holywells Park. Join our wildlife themed club to explore the park, learn about wildlife, meet new friends and earn awards as you go. Age 6 – 11 years. Cost £3. **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: www.greenlivingcentre.org.uk/fobbp or email fobbp@greenlivingcentre.org.uk**

SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH 1.30pm – 3pm SWT Wild Learning YOUNG WARDENS

Holywells Park. Price £3. Booking Essential. **To book: www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org or 01473 890089**

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**

LAST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH 10am - 1pm Ipswich Wildlife Group WILDLIFE ALLOTMENT

Come and lend a hand to help create our wildlife friendly plot. **More information from Colin Hullis 07979 644134**

Snippets

Not so 'Little' Owl



This Little Owl was found in a ditch near Saxmundham unable to fly.

It was taken to Suffolk Owl Sanctuary at Stonham Barns where it was found to be a third heavier than normal healthy weight for this species. It was concluded by staff that it had eaten so well during the mild winter, it had seriously over-indulged and was too heavy to fly! After a fortnight being on a strict diet and returning to full fitness, it was returned to the wild.

Unlucky Weasel *Colin Hullis*

This most unfortunate creature was found with its head stuck in the access hole of a Dormouse box in Priestley Wood.



Now mummified, this is the grisly evidence of its desperate attempt to get at the tasty contents of the box. The fate of any inhabitants is unknown, although no remains were found!

**CORONA VIRUS MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS HAVE
AFFECTED PLANNED EVENTS.**

**PLEASE CONTACT EVENT ORGANISERS
FOR DETAILS.**

MABEL or MATILDA? *Words and photos by Chris Courtney*

Photograph 1 is Mabel photographed in Christchurch Park December 2015, Photograph 2 is Mabel again, December 2016. Mabel (sex never actually determined), then disappeared for a few years but last autumn a tawny owl once again began to roost in the same old tree.

The Ipswich Star ran a competition to name the new owl, having concluded it was one of Mabel's chicks. The name 'Matilda' won the poll.

Photograph 3 is this 'new' Tawny Owl photographed in Christchurch Park on 5th February 2020. It must be said the plumage is incredibly similar to the original Mabel, so much so, that it can't be ruled out that it is the original bird? If true it would mean Mabel, first spotted autumn 2007, would be at least 12 years old. On average Tawny owls live for around 5 years, but the BTO's record from ringing is for an individual that lived 23 years, 5 months, 27 days. What do you think? If it is Mabel she's certainly a wise old bird by now, and we could go on spotting her for a good many years to come.

