

The wildlife of Belstead Brook Park
– see page 10

Local Wildlife news

May to August 2021

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



Mobile photography

Melvyn Eke



Using a modern mobile phone to take photos both for reference later or publication is easier than you imagine.

A quick read through the instructions book and practice will allow great results as good as most SLR cameras. They all have zoom magnification systems and a steady hand (and patience) will allow good results as per photos attached all taken in my Belstead Road garden.

Get reading and happy snapping.



Welcome

by **James Baker** *Editor*

Welcome to the Spring and Summer edition of Local Wildlife News magazine. I've been extremely grateful that everyone involved in the production of this wonderful magazine has continued to rise to the challenge during the last, difficult year. I hope that the mix of articles and news has brought some interest and enjoyment during the lockdowns.

It's really important therefore to thank everyone involved – Colin Hullis, the 'Production editor' – which means he basically makes it happen! Without Colin contacting all the groups and contributors and providing gentle encouragement when needed, there would be nothing to read! Working with Chris Saunders who produces the artwork ready for print, and Lydia Woods who helps with editing and production, Colin always delivers 24 pages of well-illustrated, interesting and informative news.

Of course the contributors (of both articles, snippets and photos) are equally vital, and whilst for many it has been difficult to fill pages in recent months – none has failed to deliver! Normally, a long list of summer events would bring this edition to life – but with the Covid-19 restrictions and uncertainties still ongoing, there are very, very few! Hopefully in the next edition we will be able to report more sociable news and promote events once again, and we can all share in enjoying the huge breadth of local wildlife through walks, talks and practical activities.

I hope that you love this magazine as much as we do and will

join me in thanking all those who help to bring it together. It is very sad to hear of the passing of two stalwarts of local conservation – John Ireland and Dave Munday. I had the pleasure to work with John as part of the River Action Group for many years, and his kindness and willingness to help improve the Ipswich environment was plain to see to all around him. John had a wonderful calm and supportive manner, and his thoughtful input helped achieve great improvements along the River Gipping through the town.

Dave Munday was a regular volunteer with Greenways for many years – a dedicated and very hard working member of our team. He also became the chairman of Ipswich Wildlife Group (as well as the Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group) and brought an enjoyable and yet very effective style to the informal committee meetings. Dave's influence and direct impact on many of the nature reserves and green spaces around Ipswich will live on as testament to his enthusiasm and commitment. (Please see tributes on pages 6 and 12).

As I have mentioned in previous editions, the importance of the natural world, to all of us, is more vital than ever these days – so if you are able, please do help by becoming a member of conservation groups or getting involved as a volunteer – the amazing biodiversity of our area won't look after itself!!

Have a great summer of wildlife exploration!



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Ipswich Group Newsletter

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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.



Nature Lovers Quiz 2

Sheila Roberts *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

Normally, at this time of year, the Ipswich Group of the Wildlife Trust would have a busy and interesting programme of talks and visits available for us all to enjoy and learn from.

So, while we wait, the group would like to invite you have a go at Nature Lovers Quiz number 2. Instead of just answering them all yourself, why not set up a video or telephone call with some like-minded family members or friends you haven't see for a while and invite them to see how many answers they can get right?

Birds

1. Which Ipswich park shares a border with a reed bed where people saw snipe and woodcock last winter?
2. What is a group of rooks known as?
3. Many older people use the name 'hanser' for what kind of bird?
4. If, in Suffolk, you saw a King Harry bird on your feeder, what kind of bird would it be?
5. What percentage of turtle doves have we lost in this country since the 1970s?

Animals

1. What is a squirrel nest or roost called?
2. Pilot, minke and fin are all types of what animal?
3. What kind of animal was runner up in the 2021 season of the Channel 4 TV programme 'The Masked Singer'?
4. What kind of animals helped the Tailor of Gloucester to complete a waistcoat for the Mayor?
5. Bishy barnabees is a term often used in East Anglia for what kind of insect?

Trees

1. When ripe, what colour are the berries of the rowan tree?
2. In the 1970s top ten chart hit, what kind of tree had yellow ribbons tied around it?
3. How many species of native tree (deciduous and evergreen) are there in Britain?
4. Which is the only British native deciduous tree to develop cones?
5. It is thought that Britain's oldest tree can be found in Scotland and is over 2000 years old. What species is it?

Plants

1. Which species of plant is threatening the future of our native bluebell?
2. Which Wildlife Trust reserve which is a good place to see water avens and spectacular displays of marsh marigold, once provided Felixstowe with drinking water?
3. The Wildlife Trust has a nature reserve near Framsdon that is famous for having thousands of one species of plant – what is this unusual plant?
4. What colour are the flowers on the wild flower Dyer's Greenweed?
5. Which spiny evergreen shrub's yellow flowers have a distinctive coconut or vanilla scent and can be found most of the year?

Habitats

1. In which Ipswich park was a nightingale heard singing for the first time in living memory last year?
2. Which ancient woodland local nature reserve can be found in South West Ipswich?
3. What name is given to the vast expanse of heathland that used to stretch all the way up the coast from Ipswich until a hundred years ago?
4. What do the initials LNR stand for?
5. Which rare butterfly, seen only twice on Trimley Marshes, needs milk parsley for its caterpillars to eat?

ANSWERS can be found on page 6.

There's a pretty pink pest lurking over the border

Sheila Roberts *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

Just over the boundary of Ipswich, poised to march across our borough boundary is an environmental thug dressed up in finery fit for a catwalk.

The species I'm thinking of is Himalayan balsam - *Impatiens glandulifera* and, if you've ever walked along shady river banks in other parts of the country, there's a good chance that you've already seen this botanical menace. I was on holiday in Yorkshire last year and saw how it had established a dense monoculture along parts of the River Nidd that was quite shocking.

A relative of the bizzie lizzie plants we grow in our gardens, Himalayan balsam can grow up to ten feet tall. It has fleshy stems, bright pink flowers and extremely sharp serrated leaves.

It thrives in damp soil and is becoming an increasingly common invasive species along river banks, open spaces and gardens. Native to the Himalayan region, it was introduced into Britain in the 1830s as a new decorative annual plant for the growing number of gardeners who wanted to cultivate something exotic. As it seeded so freely, it quickly became popular with Victorians as an inexpensive way of creating a novel splash of colour in their gardens. Unfortunately, the plant soon spread beyond the garden boundaries and out into the wider countryside.

Its ability to grow rapidly and spread easily means that it is a big threat to natural habitats as it shades out our less vigorous native species and quickly establishes a virtual monoculture where nothing else can grow. Nothing much seems to eat Himalayan balsam so it does not play much of a role in the food chain to compensate for the loss of other plants.

Admittedly, its pretty pink flowers are popular with bees but is that at the expense of them not pollinating other native species? We may also conclude that not all pollinators are equipped to feed on the pollen and nectar of these garish blossoms so those that aren't will starve as the native species they depend upon cannot grow.



Himalayan balsam

Apart from its vigour, Himalayan balsam's success is mainly down to the seed dispersal technique. As the seed pods ripen in late summer, they gradually dry out and create a strange structure that suddenly bursts open – often on being touched. This explosive action throws the seeds far and wide. The tiny seeds can survive in water and are viable for at least two years which explains why they are dispersed so far down rivers and streams – often washed up on the banks during a spring flood so allowing them to colonise another area.

Its ability to grow rapidly and spread easily means that it is a big threat to natural habitats...

The other way this weed can escape into the 'wild' is if gardeners pull up the plants that have seeded from their plots and fly tip the debris on the local open space. What people may not realise is that doing this is actually illegal – the plant is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and it is an offence to plant or otherwise allow this species to grow in the wild. So even allowing it to grow where the seeds can



Ipswich Group Newsletter

spread outside your garden's boundary could see you fall foul of the law.

So far, there has only been one record of this invasive weed growing successfully in open spaces or nature reserves within the Ipswich borough area – along the canal in Holywells Park. But, it is already colonising large areas along the River Gipping between Ipswich and Needham Market so we Ipswich folk need to get our defences ready.

The Royal Horticultural Society suggests that the best way to curb this rampant invader is to pull up the plants before they flower and set seed. As annuals, it would seem to be easier to deal with this plant than the equally thuggish horsetail which was described in a previous article in Local Wildlife News. However, its love of river banks means that it can often set seed in places that cannot be safely reached to pull it up without a lifejacket and a boat so the message is, safety first.

Secretary's News

Wendy Brown *Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ipswich Group*

I have some sad news about the death in February of two long-standing champions of Ipswich wildlife.



Dave Munday who was a committed Chairman of the SWT Ipswich Group for many years died after a long fight with Parkinson's disease. Dave was warden at Martin's Meadow Nature Reserve and an active member and past Chairman of the Ipswich Wildlife Group.



John Ireland who edited the SWT Ipswich Group's newsletter contribution to Local Wildlife News for many years and enthusiastically supported the meetings and outings, had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Ipswich Open Garden

Celebrating Suffolk Wildlife Trust's 60th Anniversary

Saturday 26 June 10.30 – 12.30

15 Cheltenham Avenue IP1 4LN

This is a SWT member's beautiful garden. £5 including homemade refreshments.

You may also browse plant and book stalls.

There is limited street parking alternatively a no.7 Ipswich bus stops in Cotswold Avenue.

Numbers are limited. To book contact leighwilliamson@btinternet.com 01473 785600



Answers to Nature Lovers Quiz 2

Birds

1. Bourne Park
2. A parliament
3. Heron
4. Goldfinch
5. Any number between 91% and 97%.

Animals

1. Drey
2. Whales
3. Badger
4. Mice
5. Ladybird

Trees

1. Red or orange
2. Oak
3. 32
4. Alder
5. Yew

Plants

1. Spanish bluebell
2. Newbourne Springs
3. Snakes Head fritillary
4. Yellow
5. Gorse

Habitats

1. Christchurch Park
2. Spring Wood
3. The Sandlings
4. Local Nature Reserve
5. Swallowtail

Wild celebrations - Suffolk Wildlife Trust turns 60!

Lucy Shepherd *Wild Learning Officer, Suffolk Wildlife Trust*

After a year of disrupted delivery and having to dry off our pond dipping nets and down our bug pots several times, I am excited to be knocking the dust off my kit and gearing up for a return of sessions, and a month-long celebration in June for our 60th birthday.

June is always an exciting time for The Wildlife Trusts across our movement as we celebrate our biggest national campaign, '30 Days Wild', where we challenge everyone to take part in random acts of wildness for the 30 days of June. This year, 30 Days Wild coincides nicely with our 60th birthday and allows us to double the celebrations, double the acts of wildness, and double the opportunities for nature connection.

Whilst celebrating with copious amounts of cake, necessary for any celebration, I would like to celebrate Suffolk Wildlife Trust's 60th with more than just a slice of cake or two. I will be hosting different activities such as, going on night safaris looking for urban wildlife, delving into ponds, hunting for wasp spiders, searching for stag beetles, and going in search of glow worms and I hope you will join me!

As many of you might know, Suffolk Wildlife Trust has had two major projects in the town, our Ipswich Hedgehogs project where we aimed, and achieved, in making Ipswich the most hedgehog-friendly town in the UK, and our Closer to Nature project, which set out to inspire the next generation of young naturalists and connected with thousands of school children, teens and families over the three years it spanned. These past projects have fed into and shaped my current 'Ipswich is Wild' project where I am continuing to connect people with nature and celebrating Ipswich's wonderfully wild side.

I hope to welcome you to join me for a month jam-packed full of wild activities to celebrate Ipswich's fantastic array of wildlife and Suffolk Wildlife Trust's work that we have delivered over recent years in the town. All the details of how you can get involved in both 30 Days Wild, download your free 30 Days Wild pack, and for all of our birthday celebration events can be found on our website.

Further good news! The activities don't just stop after June. I will be continuing to host my regular sessions such as Wild Tots for under 5s,



Ipswich - the most hedgehog-friendly town in the UK

Wild in the Week for home educated children, Weekend Wildlife clubs, Young Wardens, Wild Teen courses and Family events throughout the summer too.

Keep an eye on the @Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Ipswich Facebook page and @SWTtipswich Instagram page for updates and exciting wildlife sightings in the town.



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Young people enjoying wild activities in Ipswich with Suffolk Wildlife Trust



© Both pictures © John Ferguson

A difficult year at Holywells

Yvonne and Andy *Friends of Holywells Park*

What a difficult year it's been for us all! The Friends of Holywells Park have not been able to run any of our regular events for the past few months, we are however, hopeful that we may be able to host our Apple Day in October. Watch this space!

Holywells Park has been very well used and appreciated by many during the lockdown months, providing a welcome space for exercise, play, and connecting with nature - many have discovered the Park for the first time.

Our regular volunteer work parties have not been able to take place, but, by the time you read this, we are hopeful that we will be back working in the orchard. February is usually the time that we prune the fruit trees, but this year, it



Fruit trees in the orchard - lost to their own devices during lockdown

has not happened. It will be interesting to see how much fruit the trees bear this Autumn, having been left to their own devices!

The beekeepers have been allowed to tend and monitor the beehives as these creatures are classified as livestock. We are pleased to say that all the hives have survived the winter and we're hoping for another good honey harvest this year.

With more visitors to the Park, we have noticed an increase in the amount of litter. Some of

the younger members of FoHP were so saddened to see their beautiful park uglyfied that they decided to be pro-active and do a litter pick. Amelia and Isabelle were amazed at how much litter they collected during their hour of picking, but happy that they had helped to improve the environment, especially for the small animals that so often meet their end in discarded cans, crisp packets etc. Well done, girls. Keep up the good work!

Over the past few months, regular visitors to the park may

have noticed the abundance of wildlife that make their homes there - muntjac deer, foxes, small rodents and squirrels. There are five pairs of Mandarin ducks on the wilderness pond and up to three buzzards are spotted daily wheeling over the trees. One afternoon in November, a Red Kite was seen in the area, a rare sight for Ipswich.

Keep an eye on The Friends of Holywells Park website, Facebook page and the notice boards in the park for updates re. events later in the year.



Friends of Holywells Park

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

Contact: fohpiptswich@gmail.com

www.holywellspark.org.uk

facebook.com/holywellsparkipswich



Mandarin ducks on the Wilderness pond



Our champion litter pickers

Project's progress under restrictions

James Baker *Manager, Greenways Countryside Project*

Sproughton Nature Reserve

Management work has continued through the winter to improve the range and quality of habitats within the reserve. Volunteers have helped to plant over 400 shrubs to form a hedge and some areas of scrub; removed large quantities of litter; constructed urban habitat piles (for reptiles in particular); put up bird and bat boxes; and pollarded riverside willows. In addition, large machinery was used for some pollarding and creating new small ponds.



Hedge planting at Sproughton LNR

Martlesham Heath SSSI

Once again, a large excavator-mounted flail was used to manage some large areas of mature gorse – increasing structural and habitat diversity. Further areas of gorse and other scrub were cleared by hand in more sensitive areas frequented by adders and other reptiles. Obviously no 'Megabash' volunteering event was possible this February, but Greenways volunteers did a huge amount of work and local volunteers burnt the arisings.



Clearing large areas of gorse at Martlesham

Kiln Meadow LNR

Each winter we cut some areas of scrub to maintain a diverse mosaic of grassland, scrub, hedge and developing



A huge dead hedge of blackthorn

woodland. This winter we had to carry out a large amount of scrub clearance along the line of underground drainage services in order that they can be adopted by Anglian Water, following the development of the Thorington Park estate some 20 years ago. A 10m wide strip about 200m long of dense blackthorn had to be cleared and made into a huge dead hedge. Incredible effort by the small number of our dedicated volunteers who have been out helping us during the lockdowns! The cleared area (and there is more to do next winter!) will be kept clear of trees and managed as meadow, so many species will benefit.

Alderman Canal LNR

Rubbish dumped into the Canal from the adjacent public car park on Handford Road included three mattresses and three sofas – all extremely heavy when full of water – so a digger had to be used to get them out for us to remove and dispose of properly. The nature reserve continues to be abused by some people with huge amounts of litter, dumped rubbish, drug waste and human and dog faeces. Those volunteers who help look after the site on the first Saturday morning of each month, deserve a medal for working here!



Removing rubbish from Alderman canal



GREENWAYS
countryside project

Scout Headquarters (next to St Peter's Church),
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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.

Paths and high usage

Like almost all of our sites this winter, the very wet weather along with a huge increase in use, led to very muddy stretches of path at Belstead Meadows. Here and around other sites, we had to try to alleviate these problems by adding gravel and other surface materials.

We are always at our busiest in the winter months doing all the habitat management work, so finding time for this work was very tricky! It's also not the best time of year to try to improve paths, whilst it is so wet! Spring and summer will be full of path surfacing and repairs to boardwalks – and it will be interesting to see if the massive increase in usage of our sites continues beyond the end of the lockdown!



Boardwalk repairs

Belstead Brook Park: the positives of 'staying local'

David Walsh

I live less than five minutes' walk from Ashground Plantation and Bobbitts Lane Meadows, two sections of Belstead Brook Park. This article reviews the wildlife I saw in the Park during 2020, reflects on the personal benefits of walking a local area during the lockdowns, and briefly mentions sightings from early 2021.

I have lived in Stoke Park since 1992 and have kept detailed notes of wildlife sightings in and from my garden since then. In contrast, my birding in and around what has become Belstead Brook Park was, until recently, mostly confined to the spring when the migrants arrived, extending into the summer for butterflies and dragonflies.

24 March 2020 marked the start of lockdown, with walking locally as daily exercise the only permitted option. I felt very fortunate to have such a range of paths to explore, not just within Belstead Brook Park but beyond the A14 into Belstead and Wherstead parishes as well, so decided to make the most of them; it helped that spring is a great time for birding! I meticulously recorded my bird sightings, keeping 'complete lists' on eBird, and inputted my other observations directly into iRecord; this became part of my daily lockdown routine. I continued these local walks throughout the year, and the data I collected enabled me to produce a comprehensive end of year 'write-up' to share with Greenways and other local birders.

Birds

Nightingale is one of the great treasures of the local area. In 2020 two singing males settled down on territories within the Park, one on the edge of Spring Wood and another in Belstead Meadows; two

others were located just across the railway line off Bobbitts Lane. With the help of a small number of other local birders, I found a grand total of 28 singing Nightingales south of Ipswich within walking distance of my home, a highly significant population which I wrote about in a recent edition of Suffolk Bird Group's *The Harrier*.

A singing Cuckoo was seen/heard between 8 and 16 May, my first patch sighting since 1 May 2010. It favoured the south-west corner of Bourne Park, but wandered as far west as Bobbitts Meadows. It sang relentlessly night and day, and was much enjoyed by a large number of local residents, not just birders.

One major task during April was to survey the warblers, and in stages I covered the whole area from Bourne Bridge to the Copdock Interchange; the totals of those considered breeding birds are detailed in the table. Willow Warbler no longer breeds but I recorded two one-day passage migrants in April. Grasshopper Warbler was a notable absentee in 2020, but a real bonus came in the form of a fabulous Marsh Warbler, a rare migrant, which sang throughout 21 May in perfect breeding habitat but sadly didn't linger; the range of mimicry was awe-inspiring!

As a result of spending so much time at home last spring, there were several highlights. A male Marsh Harrier headed over on 24 March, the first of three Red Kites appeared on 2 April and one of the local Peregrines soared high overhead on 23 April. I noted at least two Common Scoters as they flew over in the early hours of 3 April, part of a national movement detected by listening at night. Finally, a Rose-coloured Starling,



23 April 2020. Nightingale near Belstead village

another rare migrant, spent three minutes in my bird bath on 4 June, rudely interrupting an online maths lesson I was giving!

During the summer months, birds played second fiddle to insects and flora – see below – but as we progressed into autumn these included a Hobby hawking over Bobbitts Meadows on 7 August and large flocks of Redwings heading inland in October. There was a female Stonechat in Ostrich Meadow from 4-6 November, a Corn Bunting there briefly on 7 November and a female Marsh Harrier on 28 December. I had seen a pair of Bearded Tits in Bourne Park reedbeds from 4-13 April so was grieved when two males greeted me on 7 November as I collected

my very first bag of litter; the obsession has continued and at the time of writing I am up to 73 bags!

Species	Singing males
Chiffchaff	43
Blackcap	40
Whitethroat	32
Reed Warbler	23
Sedge Warbler	8
Cetti's Warbler	5
Lesser Whitethroat	5
Garden Warbler	2

2021 has continued where 2020 left off, with daily patch visits during the lockdown; it's been fun to be one of a



7 November 2020. Bearded Tits in Ostrich Meadow



25 February 2021. Water Rail Bobbitts Meadow

small but committed band of local birders sharing sightings with each other. The cold snap brought increased numbers of Teal, Snipe, Redwing and Fieldfare, plus a few Woodcock. Highlights so far have been a Great White Egret from 14-19 February, a Barn Owl which took up residence in one of the Bourne Park boxes from 15 February and a very showy Water Rail in Bobbitts Meadows.

I have mostly concentrated on the 'star' birds, but what for me, makes Belstead Brook Park special, is that on a daily walk I can nearly always notch up 40 species and sometimes even 50. Kingfisher, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Buzzard, Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers, Goldcrest, Treecreeper, Grey Wagtail and Siskin are ten of those on the majority of my recent lists. In 2020 I recorded 92 bird species in total!

Butterflies and Dragonflies

Belstead Brook Park supports an impressive variety of butterflies and dragonflies; in 2020 I recorded 26 and 18 species respectively. My butterfly highlights, in date order, were numerous Green Hairstreak sightings in late April and May, mainly in Kiln Meadow, a good tally of Brown Argus in an ever-increasing range of sites, a female Purple Emperor on 21 June in Millennium Wood, then White-letter, Purple and Brown Hairstreaks from July onwards; the latter required time and perseverance! The star dragonfly was a female Southern Migrant Hawker in Bobbitts Meadows on 3 July, a major surprise and my first ever in Suffolk! The most obvious and striking dragonfly on the patch is Banded Demoiselle; there were large numbers along the brook, another species



30 May 2020. Mating Banded Demoiselles in Ashground Plantation

to point out to interested residents on their daily strolls.

Plants

In 2020 I started to take a proper interest in plants; I carefully took photos of all those I found, did my best to identify them and sent the rest to a friend who was very helpful and patient, a human version of the iNaturalist app! I tallied 116 species, looking in Martin Sanford's *Flora of Suffolk* to see which were the more unusual. My best find was a single Green-winged Orchid in Belstead Meadows on 14 May.

Mammals

I noted nine mammal species during 2020. Water Voles were surprisingly showy along the Belstead Brook during the spring and summer and seemed to become tolerant of walkers. A Bank Vole on 13 April was

a 'patch tick' for me as was a Water Shrew along the brook in Ashground Plantation on 17 May. My stand-out highlight was watching a female Otter with two cubs for fully half an hour in Ashground Plantation at dusk on 4 November, a real privilege.

Summary

The ability to get out and about locally played a big part in helping me through the lockdowns. As mentioned in the last *Local Wildlife News* the extra footfall on the paths has caused some issues, but I have been uplifted by seeing families enjoying the wildlife on their doorstep. Once the lockdown is over, I will undoubtedly head further afield to some of my favourite spots, but I am sure that I will continue to make very regular visits to the patch which has been so important these last twelve months.



3 July 2020. Southern Migrant Hawker Bobbitts Meadow Belstead Brook Park



30 July 2020. Brown Hairstreak Belstead Brook Park

Wow, What a year

Colin Hullis *Ipswich Wildlife Group*

At the time of writing (March), all our lives have been turned upside-down by the Covid19 pandemic for a full 12 months. The very necessary restrictions on movement and personal contact have had severe and long-lasting effects on every aspect of our lives and the lives of people all around the world.

As far as our Wildlife Group is concerned, our activities have had to be drastically curtailed as invariably they involved groups of us working closely together carrying out conservation work at local wildlife sites. However, we have managed to continue with some activity with limited numbers on a strictly controlled basis. This has allowed us to carry out the important winter coppicing work in Spring Wood and to maintain the walkways at Alderman Canal.

Of course not all events have been able to go ahead and certainly the most significant of these is the annual celebration of Spring that is Spring Wood Day. Held each year



Spring Wood Day - another Covid casualty

for the past 10 years on the first Monday May Bank Holiday, IWG along with Greenways and Friends of Belstead Brook Park have welcomed other environmental groups and hundreds of local people to a day of woodland walks, practical wood-working demonstrations, music, dancing, poetry, story-telling and bonfire food. Unfortunately all such events have not happened for the past year and are unlikely to begin again until 2022.

The restrictions have allowed us to take limited exercise and this seems to have inspired many to venture into previously unexplored areas of the countryside for a breath of fresh air. This has been a good thing in many ways allowing more people to experience the benefits of our

wilder places. Of course there have been examples of some who have not showed due respect for the environment so this is an opportunity for us to lead by example with the hope of influencing attitudes.

Another positive to emerge from the isolation has been 'back garden birdwatching'. Many have discovered a previously unknown fascination with birds by having to spend so much time confined to their house and garden. Certainly I have built up an impressive list from my tiny urban garden that includes, peregrine, buzzard, sparrowhawk, loads of gulls, the resident robin, blackbird, starlings, sparrows and pigeons, migrants including swallows and swifts and even three ring-necked parakeets.

The future now looks much more positive so hopefully we will all soon be able to visit our favourite places, hug our friends and family and at long last, fill the Events pages of our magazine!

Dave Munday R.I.P.

It was with great sadness that we had the news that our past chairman Dave Munday passed away in February.

Dave was an active member of the Wildlife Group who was passionate and enthusiastic about all environmental matters and loved to be involved with all aspects of conservation work. Dave served on the committee and was chairman for many years.

Dave was also chairman of the Ipswich Group of Suffolk Wildlife Trust and was a long-time member of the local Ramblers Group. He will be greatly missed by all.



Secretary Leila Matata

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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.



Ring-necked parakeets - back garden birds!

IWG Facebook correspondence worldwide

@IpswichWildlifeGroup

The IWG Facebook pages are managed by committee member Gerry Donlon. Gerry does a great job keeping the pages up to date, answering the many questions and handing out advice to all manner of correspondents from all over the world. Here are a few of them:

Hi there, my name is Shayne Rudd, I have a community radio show in Ipswich and we are looking to bring awareness to our listeners about koalas and the low number we have left. The importance of wildlife in general. We are dedicating a segment to it on Monday 4th November and hope to have someone who can come in and speak to us. A carer who has some animals in care. If you can put us in touch with anyone. We would greatly appreciate it.

Kindest regards

P.s I was a wildlife carer for years and can ensure the studio will be reasonably quiet and animal friendly. No flash photography to scare them. We just find the best way to engage our audience is live guest. We look forward to hearing from you to raise awareness to our most vulnerable Australia's wildlife.

Ipswich Wildlife Group reply (Gerry Donlon)

Hello Shayne, thank you for contacting Ipswich Wildlife Group. Sadly we have no Koalas here, as we are in Ipswich, Suffolk UK. I hope you will find someone local to you to talk about the importance of Wildlife. Best wishes from us all, and keep up the good work

From Shynuts L L
Shynita
Hay I need someone to come
get a lizard thats been hit
buy a car. I picked it up.

*Ipswich Wildlife Group reply
(Gerry Donlon)*
Hello Shynuts, thank you for
contacting Ipswich Wildlife
Group, Suffolk UK We
suggest you contact one of
your local Wildlife groups
for advice. Best wishes, IWG

Oh s**t sorry I thought this
was Ipswich, Australia

*Ipswich Wildlife Group reply
(Gerry Donlon)*
No worries, sorry we can't
help you from here. Best
wishes and happy new year
from all of us

Same to all you guys



From Matt Lowe 22
November
hi there do you guys help
pluvers? i have one sitting
on eggs in my yard but
she's sitting in the blazing
hot sun. I was going to put a
little cover over it so it can sit
in shade but she gets upset
if I go towards her. any help
would be appreciated.

*Ipswich Wildlife Group reply
(Gerry Donlon)*
Hello Matthew, thank you for
contacting Ipswich Wildlife
Group, Suffolk UK We would
suggest you do put a little
cover over her and contact
your local bird rescue centre
Best wishes, IWG

Inspecting the 'bird-brained'...

Reg Snook *Friends of Christchurch Park*

Lock-down continues and, as for many others, my excursions are extremely limited. Any wildlife sightings in our Park come from limited sources so I have once again referred to my notebooks.

The following stories are just a sample of what the Department of the Environment Inspectors had to commit to. First of all, I must say that many keepers were extremely knowledgeable, loved their birds and respected the Inspectors but, over the course of 28 years, I had to deal with some who cared little for their



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.

charges and even less for the Inspectorate. On the plus side, however, I got to see and handle not just birds of prey but eagles, vultures and hawks from across the world. I also, thankfully, got to know several members of the Essex Police force.

Over all those years I was a Wildlife Inspector for DEFRA specialising in birds of prey. Wildlife crime can be big business and so it was that I was a member of the Global Wildlife Division. My designated area, for my sins, was East Anglia, which included Essex. My inspections took me to 'deepest' Essex which included Basildon, Billericay, Southend, Grays,



Goshawk

Ongar, Thurrock, Wickford and Leigh on Sea. For many of these visits I was accompanied by a Police Officer for, although many keepers of protected species were 'straight' and became my friends, many were somewhat corrupt and had dealings with suspect suppliers from all over Europe. Sometimes, visits to their premises were enjoyable, others put the 'fear of God' into me. I will relate one or two of these visits.

The Gos and the dustbin lid

The first supposedly normal visit was to a gentleman who had a goshawk. I was to check its ring number. Perfectly normal, or so I thought. The keeper was pleased to see me and showed me the forms relating to this captive-bred bird but then, rather sheepishly, he told me that this bird was a female and that it had not been handled for two years. It was then that I realised that this was not going to be straightforward. This

goshawk was large, it looked at me with wild eyes and it was also housed in a very large aviary. Oh dear, but at least it was the keeper who had to catch it. 'Here, Kitty, Kitty' came to mind!

The keeper emerged from a shed wearing thick clothes, goggles, a crash helmet and boots and he was carrying a dustbin lid. What had I let myself in for? He entered the cage. The goshawk went mad and flew from end to end as only goshawks can. My blood pressure rose, the keeper's probably even higher. Suddenly, as the goshawk reached one end of the flight, the owner lunged forward and pinned it to the end wall with the dustbin lid. "Come and check the ring number", he urged, "the bird cannot move, its talon is in my thumb". And so it was. The bird was pinned to the wall with one very large sharp black talon sticking out from the man's thumb with blood streaming down his wrist. I gingerly moved forward, wiped the blood from the bird's leg and with the help of pliers succeeded in easing the keeper's pain. The keeper, now free, backed off. This ungrateful hawk screamed and dived to the far end of the aviary. "Was everything okay?"

asked the keeper. "Yes", I replied, "but why do you keep this vicious bird?". The keeper wiped more blood from his hand, looked at me and said, "I simply love her, she is part of the family".

Foundling eagle

Recollecting another incident always makes me smile since it was so ludicrous. The Department had sent me into deepest Essex because a keeper had reported finding a large box on his doorstep and inside this box was, how about this, a golden eagle. You could not make it up. Of course, this gentleman said he had no idea who had left this package on his doorstep but felt it was obviously someone who did not want this bird and knew the keeper could look after it. Yeah, right! You can fool some of the people some of the time but... So I duly visited this keeper who was as 'nice as pie', an exception in this part of the world, but then he badly wanted to keep this eagle. However, he did not have that privilege as following further investigation it was decided that this bird had been taken from an eerie as a youngster.

Disappearing peregrines

Another visit was less pleasant. I was requested to witness the close ringing of two young peregrines, the product of a captive pair of adults and owned by a keeper in Grays. The keeper showed me the two youngsters to be ringed – except that there were not two birds but four, two ten days old and two quite a bit older. I was told that these four birds were from the same clutch. Now that just was not possible. I went outside, 'phoned the Police and then re-entered the premises by which time the four young birds had disappeared. The Police carried out a search and discovered the youngsters in a dustbin - 'butchered'. Unfortunately for the keeper, he had been photographed at a peregrine's nest in Cumbria earlier in the year which just happened to coincide with the disappearance of a clutch of eggs. A year later he appeared in court with me as a witness, was found guilty and banned from keeping birds of prey. However, with the Police, I was asked to search his aviaries the following year and



Golden eagle

as we approached his house were confronted by the barrel of a shotgun sticking out from his letterbox. That idea did not go down well with the Police – luckily, he did not pull the trigger.

Chicken hutch eagle

One of the saddest of visits that I made was to a dock at Harwich who had applied for a licence to keep captive bred birds of prey. It was a wet and miserable day but what I



Peregrine falcon



discovered made the day even worse. This gentleman had built an aviary, rather badly, which housed an injured hobby but sitting on a perch in a run-down chicken hutch was a lesser cape eagle. This is an African species. I had only seen two before and both on that continent but to me it was one of the saddest examples of wildlife crime that I had seen. Can you imagine a magnificent bird of prey hunched up on a perch in a wire netting enclosure dripping with rain and looking nothing like those free birds that I had seen in the wild? Where had it come from? We never found out but it was thought to have been smuggled in from Rotterdam. I have many more stories to tell but the vast majority of my visits were to keepers who were law-abiding, very pleasant and knowledgeable.

Hello to summer and goodbye from me

Tim Kenny *Leader, RSPB Ipswich Group*

The RSPB head office have, unsurprisingly, not given the local group permission to restart yet, but with the “roadmap” provided by the government giving us all renewed hope of a midsummer release date, this doesn’t feel too far away now. I use the phrase “release date” quite deliberately, as it does feel like we’ve been under house arrest (or, if you live alone like me, in solitary confinement) for eons now. Restart details will be provided to all members once known, and we will advise these in the Local Wildlife News too.



Ipswich Local Group

Group Leader Tim Kenny

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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, 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 £3 per year (£1 for Juniors). For more information see the Events Diary in this magazine, visit our website or email as per details above.

My local patch has undergone a transformation, and not in a good way. Across the Port of Felixstowe Road, stood green fields where skylarks could be heard on clear sunny days, but this land was always owned by a company who had planning permission for two huge warehouses on the site. I knew the day would come, but what I didn't expect was the effect this would have on the surrounding area. The warehouses loom over a nearby wood and the construction work currently taking place drowns out the nascent spring song of the chiffchaff, bullfinch and stock dove. The local whitethroats are in for a shock too upon their return from Africa in April.

And whilst I would never claim that this part of Felixstowe matches Minsmere for biodiversity, this does give me a worrying glimpse into a future in which Sizewell C is built. I'm happy to report that the RSPB's recent e-action "Love Minsmere" garnered over one hundred thousand signatures following a campaign fronted by Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin. If I had to be pressed for an answer I'd



© Tim Kenny

Chiffchaff, Felixstowe. A warehouse is now being built very close to where this photo was taken.

say Minsmere is my favourite place in the world, and it's certainly the place I feel at my calmest and happiest. Natural places like this are becoming increasingly rare in a nation vastly denuded of wildlife over the decades and we must do whatever we can to protect them.

The brighter days of summer lie ahead of us, and I'm particularly looking forward to the return of those signifiers of the season. Swallows and martins, cuckoos, yellow wagtails and last of all nightingales and swifts. I'm hoping my newly installed swift boxes will become attractive to passing birds, which reminds me, I need to get hold of a sound system to play the calls. I would urge anyone who is considering it to purchase swift boxes to assist in reversing the decline of this fascinating species. More details can be found on the website of our friends at the Suffolk Wildlife Trust - www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/swifts

One of my favourite groups of birds, the warblers, also return. The fluty song of the blackcaps, the scratchy DJ stylings of the common whitethroat, the heavy

bass riff of the lesser whitethroat will fill our woodlands once again, whilst the impressionists of the reedbed such as the sedge warbler and grasshopper warbler will return to our wetlands. Not forgetting the mechanical reed warbler and that great ventriloquist the Cetti's warbler, shouting his head off but staying hidden in the scrub. I really can't wait.

Finally, and sadly, I have taken the decision to step down as the leader of the local group. A leader's term is initially for five years, however I am handing in my badge a year early for personal reasons. We are intending to elect a successor at the next committee meeting.

I've enjoyed my time in charge but now I feel it's time to hand over to someone who can give the group the time and attention that it requires. I'll still be about on the occasional walk so I'm not disappearing completely. Meantime it's been a pleasure writing for you over the last four years and I look forward to keeping abreast of the Local Wildlife News in the future.



© Colin Hullis

Male blackcap

Stop/start year

Ann Havard *Friends of Belstead Brook Park*

Our last work party of 2020 in December saw us scrub bashing in Kiln Meadow parallel with Bobbits Lane. This was another Mega Bash working with Greenways and Ipswich Wildlife Group volunteers. This stretch needs to be cleared of vegetation as there is a water main underneath and the water company needs access just in case of leaks. So this necessitated us having to tackle the thicket of blackthorn which has grown up over it.

Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) looks lovely in early spring (March or April) with its clouds of pure white blossom coming out before the leaves and heralding the warmer weather to come. In the autumn the fruit – sloe berries make very good sloe gin and jam. But ... it is a very horrible bush or tree to thin or cut down as the branches get totally tangled up with each other and they have very sharp spines. It's definitely a case for using really good heavyweight gloves.



Blackthorn cutting in Kiln Meadow

Unfortunately with another lockdown due to Covid-19, we felt we had to cancel our January, February and March work parties. At the time of going to press we are hopeful that our April work party can go ahead.

If you'd like to join in the fun and can spare three hours on the second Saturday of each month, we'd love to see you. You wear old clothes and stout boots – good exercise, great company and the pleasure of knowing you've helped the environment – what's not to love?



Colin taking a break



Friends of Belstead Brook Park

www.wildipswich.org

Email: fobbp@wildipswich.org

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

Spring has sprung



Primroses



Aconites



Celandines



Bluebells

Save Our Suffolk Swifts – update

Eddie Bathgate *Suffolk Bird Group Council Member*

Progress has been, and continues to be, made ahead of the return of Swifts to the county. Donations and gift aid have allowed SOSSwifts to provide community 'sets' comprising six nest boxes and a call system, and a recent donation from Suffolk's two AONBs has provided a welcome boost to this supply.

AONBs have donated a total of 138 nest boxes and 23 call systems for installation within their boundaries. This constraint means that siting is not straightforward, as many towns and villages lie just outside the AONBs, however, we have set about distributing them to Swift enthusiasts for them to install.

The Dedham Vale AONB have supplied 15 call systems and 90 nest boxes for distribution amongst the Stour Valley Farmers, with a further set supplied to Manningtree Swift Group for use on a prominent location there.

AONB Coast & Heaths donated 40 nest boxes and six call systems. Schools in Waldringfield and Orford, pubs in Snape and Orford, a church in Shottisham along with Snape Maltings and Dunwich coastguard cottages are all recipients.

It is particularly exciting to be getting Swift sets into schools. If time permits, the children will be decorating them and Aldeburgh's Amazing Swifts have kindly offered to give talks to educate the pupils.

*With growing numbers
of nest boxes and more
locations now playing calls,
the hope is that occupancy
levels will rise...*

Hadleigh Environmental Action Team

Funded by their local authority, HEAT have been very busy both making and installing nest boxes around Hadleigh. Amazingly they are aiming to install 80 nest boxes in 20 locations around the town, each with a call system and volunteer spotter.

Nest Boxes and Surveys

It is very pleasing to have received so many enquiries from around Suffolk. Surveys have been tricky during the lockdown, involving many emailed photographs and a very limited opportunity to drive by during essential travel. However, Swift supporters in Denham, Lowestoft, Stowupland, Wetheringsett, Thurston, Knettishall, Barrow, Ipswich, Ashbocking, Kesgrave and Thornham St. Martin have all purchased nest boxes after a survey, and been advised on how to play Swift calls to attract them in to breed. Following their enquiry, Bungay Town Council are now installing nest boxes and a call system down by the Waveney river.



Nest box production line

Breeding Successes

Patience is needed with Swifts: it can take time for them to discover and make use of provided nest sites. However, they pair for life and are faithful to breeding locations, so once you have a pair, they'll return the following year and their behaviour will likely attract in others. Swifts are colonial nesters so the size of a colony is only limited by the availability of nest sites.

With growing numbers of nest boxes and more locations now playing calls, the hope is that occupancy levels will rise year on year. Furthermore, the increased awareness of colonies means that it is easier and quicker to protect them or to fit nest boxes close by when essential works affect their existing nests. SWT have a stock of nest boxes for this scenario and Woodbridge and Halesworth both had instances in 2020 when these were required.

If you would like advice, have a suggestion for a community set location, or wish to volunteer to make or fit nest boxes, please get in touch. Roll on May when our Swifts will start screaming again over Suffolk.

Meetings and Walks

After a year (at the time of writing) it may soon be possible to recommence our outdoor walks. A fundamental part of the group's activities that have been missed by many. Fortunately indoor talks have not stopped - only gone online like many other organisations. Please check our website for information on our upcoming events in the coming year.



Suffolk Bird Group

Enquiries:
info@suffolkbirdgroup.org
www.suffolkbirdgroup.org
Twitter: [suffolkbirds1](https://twitter.com/suffolkbirds1)

SBC is the Group for people interested in the birds of Suffolk, providing a network and a voice for birdwatchers in the county.

SOSSwifts Community Sets

We have a number of sets to donate to suitable locations. Pakenham Mill and Aldercarr Farm Shop have already received their sets. Schools in Occold, Rendlesham and Middleton, and churches in Barrow, Walpole and Debenham are awaiting permission. Free nest boxes have also been distributed for fitting close to existing colonies in Framlingham, Occold, Little Bealings and Woodbridge in the hope that populations will bloom there quickly. We are looking to place further community sets elsewhere around Suffolk. Prime targets are suitable gables on prominent locations on community buildings where they will be visible for the public to enjoy.

AONB Boost

The Coast & Heaths and Dedham Vale



Summer homes to let

The Dales in Springtime

Kaye Roberts *Secretary, Friends of the Dales*

Waking up from a cold and wet winter, the Dales in early March was gradually showing signs of spring with new growth popping up everywhere.

The paths have taken a heavy toll with the increased foot traffic through this popular area and one particular area of grass will take some time to repair itself.

There are several large patches of snowdrops, which may have spread from the surrounding houses and even one or two stray daffodils. The primroses are in flower as they have been since before Christmas. Some violets are also now showing and the bluebells are growing vigorously so should put on a good show when the flowers appear. The lesser celandines, which favour woodland habitat, are also in leaf and one or two flowers have opened, although they close up when the weather is dull.



Scarlet elf caps thriving on dead wood

The patches of three cornered leek are also doing well.

Scarlet elf caps are clearly visible on dead wood in among some ivy and provide a rare show of bright colour

at this time of the year. These small cup-shaped fungi can grow up to 5cm across and as they expand, the margin of the cup tends to fragment.

The cherry plum trees are in bud and a few have produced flowers which should provide a grand display as spring progresses.

There have been up to six moorhens overwintering in the main pond and it will not be too long before the frogs are back.

Two trees had uprooted and were partly blocking the top path overlooking the pond. The Council dealt with these while on site planting about 20 honeysuckle. With no work parties taking place, the

volunteers were unable to assist with these tasks.

Foxes can be heard calling during the early evenings.



Large patches of snowdrops



Lesser celandine favour woodland



Violets emerging in March



Friends of the Dales

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

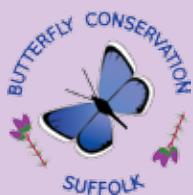
For details of the Friends Group please contact secretary Kaye Roberts kayefotdsec@virginmedia.com or find us on Facebook by searching Friends of the Dales

Purdis Heath, Site of Special Scientific Interest

Julian Dowding *Secretary, Suffolk Butterfly Conservation*

After three years of waiting, permission to work has been granted by Natural England and its new owner.

Butterfly Conservation are now optimistic about the future of the site, especially as both NE and the new owner say they are keen to get conservation going again. This should be good news for all those who care about this site with its rich variety of wildlife and particularly for its Silver-studded Blue butterfly colony.



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.



© Colin Hullis

The heather in full flower on Purdis Heath

and highlights the value of this site, right on the edge of Ipswich. David and Helen's incredible commitment is deserving of special thanks. Similarly, all of you who've helped in the past with Purdis volunteering - and especially James Baker and Greenways - deserve a big thank you too. Without you, we would be surely looking at another local extinction of Silver-studded Blue.

We're now drawing up plans for winter 2021 work parties. Quite a lot of work is needed to bring the site back into reasonable condition (gorse and scrub 'explosion' is threatening all the good work of the past) and so we'd love as many people as possible to lend a hand with volunteering next winter. Such work will be much the same as before, i.e., invasive scrub removal and scrape weeding. All of this is achievable with basic tools such as loppers and bow saws. It's also fun and friendly, and good for your health. As usual we'll provide refreshments such as tea, coffee, cake and biscuits. We also hope to carry out a few larger-scale works using machinery to

remove some of the more troublesome scrub while at the same time creating larger areas for Silver-studded Blue butterflies to colonise. Another key component will be maintaining the northern habitat link across to Ipswich Golf Course. Neil Sherman has been creating brilliant habitat on the course, and it's only right to support his work there and make things better all round for local heathland species. He's also just finished foraging some of the over-mature heathers on Purdis as part of the new work agreement. Thank-you Neil!

Finally, in spite of our own inactivity for three years, it's good to report that last year, SSB numbers increased. A count of 111 males and females was made by myself and David Basham, a week before peak population count (June 2020). This indicates a certain resilience in the colony but we believe we need to go much further to ensure its continuing presence into the future.

If you are willing to help, please contact either myself or James Baker. Thank you.

Julian.dowding@ntlworld.com
James.baker@ipswich.gov.uk



© Colin Hullis

Volunteers clearing gorse during a Purdis Heath megabash

© Matt Berry



Male Silver-studded Blue

David Basham and Helen Saunders have been collating records there for a number of years. They've collected a total of over 1,248 different species on site, including 78 birds, 114 Hymenoptera, 372 Lepidoptera, 40 lichen and liverwort and 185 plants. The diversity is staggering

Orwell Country Park through the year

Graeme Fayers

This collection of photographs is by Graeme Fayers who works for Five Castles Press, the printers of Local Wildlife News. Five Castles' premises are alongside the Pipers Vale end of Orwell Country Park and overlook the Orwell Bridge.

Graeme explains, "I just had the notion that it might be nice to snap a picture of the bridge from (roughly) the same place every month in order to see the seasons change. Obviously when I took January's shot, I had no idea how 2020 would ultimately unfold!"

Fortunately, in the pandemic year, I worked off-and-on throughout the whole year so managed to get a picture every month, at roughly the same time, and on roughly the same day of the month. I think I took one of the pictures mid-morning, the others were all about 1pm. I managed to catch a seagull in one, and I like the solitary leaf in January, although I think November is my favourite".

Wild Ipswich

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



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December

Banks for Wildlife

David Dowding *Ipswich Borough Council Wildlife Team*

Topography is a key component of any wildlife habitat. Steep sided banks have very good drainage and with the south facing aspect, really catch the sun.

This makes them great habitats for warmth-loving species and great spots for burrowing animals. They make great habitat for wildflowers - the vegetation never gets too lush as both the nutrients and moisture readily run off. As a result, they require minimal raking and a lot of the arisings blow off anyway.



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.

Up until 2019 the steep sided banks on Landseer Road were cut throughout the summer to keep them short, but after agreement with the local

councillors and Suffolk County Council, management has changed to an annual cut, in early September. This was to improve the green corridor and extend the vast array of wildflowers from Landseer Park

Mowing the banks in summer was very good for spring flowers, but summer flowers struggled. The site already had a good coverage of sheep's sorrel and fescue grass and has since been added to by the scuffing of a few patches with rakes and forks and spreading a native seed mix.

One of the limiting factors in meadows is germination opportunities, the vegetation can get very dense, but on steep, sunny banks this is rarely a problem. There is also often a great assemblage of burrowing *aculeate Hymenoptera*, which help to maintain bare ground for germination. On Landseer Road the Pantaloon bee and the Bee wolf act as soil engineers.

With such a harsh environment and a sequence of dry springs, only the most drought tolerant species have established. Salad Burnet, Birds Foot Trefoil and Lady's Bedstraw have all done well but Vipers Bugloss the 'drought master' has done best

The Northern side of the bank holds more soil moisture and nutrients so it is more difficult



Steep sided bank on Landseer Road

to achieve initial germination - less successful but a few larger plants, an ongoing project.

We have also worked on a similar bank at Derby Road rail station in partnership with Greater Anglia, and Friends of the Earth.

Shaun from the IBC Grounds Maintenance Team has a brilliant piece of kit for managing these steep banks called a 'Spider'. He has also mown some areas along Birkfield Drive and was even successful mowing steep areas at Ravenswood.

The Tump really was a test for the machine, but Shaun

had a pulley/winch system that once locked in place, enabled mowing with ease. It is paramount to cut grassland to encourage regeneration



Vipers Bugloss - 'drought master'

of wildflowers and reduce succession, but equally important is to leave areas uncut, an alternate sequence of strips cut/uncut works best when managing larger areas.



The bank at Derby Road rail station



The Spider cutting grassland on the banks of 'The Tump' at Braziers Meadow

Snippets

Earliest primrose



This photograph of a primrose in flower was taken by Gerry Donlon on Sunday 20th December 2020, during the Ipswich Wildlife Group Spring Wood monthly work party. This is the earliest recorded flowering of Primroses we know of in Spring Wood.

Badger's choice *IBC Rangers*

An artificial badger sett was put in at Sroughton Enterprise Park on one of the banks as mitigation for the development but over the last few years we have never noted any use. We knew badgers were still about as we have found prints and droppings whilst carrying out conservation work. In early March we noticed two fresh, sandy excavations right next to the artificial sett. Fox was always a possibility but on closer inspection we could clearly see badger footprints at the entrance, traces of fresh grass bedding and a well-used latrine less than 5m away.

It would seem that after all that effort, the bank itself came up trumps!



Another load of rubbish



Another load of litter and fly-tipping from Alderman Canal Local Nature Reserve. Thanks to Greenways and Ipswich Wildlife Group volunteers once again clearing rubbish instead of conservation work!

... and yet another fly-tip in Belstead Brook Park cleared up. However, volunteers still found time to carry out some proper conservation work in Millennium Wood, widening a ride to benefit wildflowers and invertebrates.



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.

Saturday 26th June 2021. 10.30am to 12.30pm Ipswich Open Garden. Celebrating Suffolk Wildlife Trust's 60th anniversary at 15 Cheltenham Avenue, Ipswich IP1 4LN. This is a SWT member's beautiful garden. Limited street parking. Numbers are limited. £5 including homemade refreshments. **To book contact leighwilliamson@btinternet.com or 01473 785600.**



Nest boxes, firewood and beanpoles for sale

Ipswich Wildlife Group have a ready supply of seasoned firewood for your open fire or wood burner, boxes for birds, bugs and hedgehogs and bean poles and pea sticks for your garden. All are made by IWG members from recycled timber and wood resulting from our woodland conservation work.

Take a look at the IWG Facebook page or at the website www.wildipswich.org where there is more information and prices. All proceeds go to Ipswich Wildlife Group, a registered charity.

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 Andy Smuk for details 01473 728907**

SECOND WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH Friends of The Dales WORK PARTY

Contact Kaye Roberts kayefotdsec@virginmedia.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**