

Main Work Party Reports

October 28 – Strumpshaw Stone Pit – Conservation area mown raked and cleared to spoil heap. Areas not accessible for mower scythed. 8 members

November 11 – Snowdrop Acre – Annual maintenance of site. Nettle and sycamore saplings cut back using scythe and brushcutter. All cut vegetation and fallen branches raked and cleared to spoil heap. A large Hazel was coppiced using chainsaw which was also used to clear 2 fallen Elm branches laying across the east boundary fence. 10 members + 1.

November 25 – Howes Meadow – Area D (SE section) plus a small part of area B (NW section) and the path North side of areas A&B all raked and cleared to fire site/spoil heaps. Vegetation previously cleared from stream and left on the bank removed to spoil heaps. 12 members +1.

December 16 – Jary's Meadow – East meadow - South bank and all areas mown on Nov 30 raked and cleared to fire sites. 9 members +1.

December 23 – Railway Wood – Annual maintenance of site. Some pollarding, coppicing and clearing of dead/fallen trees and shrubs. Cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heaps/wood piles. South entrance to site cleared and improved for better access via public footpath. Some partly fallen trees were felled using chainsaw. 10 members.

Additional Work

October 23 – Limpenhoe Church – Conservation area mown and area around gravestones scythed.

October 28/29 – Howes Meadow – A start was made on clearing the bindweed from the stream. This was left to dry out on the bank for future clearance. Approx 15metres from East end was completed.

November 03/09/17/22/29 – Howes Meadow – Continued clearance of bindweed from stream. Approx 25 metres from East end now cleared. Some of cleared vegetation removed to spoil heaps. Fallen Willow at Northwest end trimmed and cuttings removed to fire site. East end new boundary hedge started coppicing Willows.

November 15 – Howes Meadow – Area D mown.

November 06 – Limpenhoe Church – Conservation area raked into rows.

November 07 – Limpenhoe Church – Conservation area raked and cleared to spoil heap.

November 30 – Jary's Meadow – East meadow – area around main gate, East fire site and strip along bottom of South bank mown. Further areas mown – East meadow central area, West meadow up to seat and wet area between East meadow and fen.

Membership renewal!

BADCOG Membership subscriptions are now due.

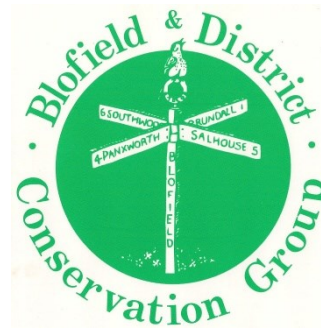
The cost for a annual membership remains the same as last year: £5 per single membership or £10 per family membership. You can pay by Bank transfer to:

Lloyds Bank. Sort Code: 30 99 97. Account No: 00642538.

Name: Blofield and District Conservation Group.

Or forward any cheques made payable to BADCOG to:

**Frances Milliken, 45 Heathway, Blofield Corner Road,
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BADCOG NEWS.

No 229: January 2024

President: Richard Hobbs

Chair: Tony McKie, Teal Barn,

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40th Anniversary Commemorative Coffee Morning

Forty years ago, following its formation a coffee morning was held at our house to publicise BADCOG. So, we thought it fitting to host a similar event this year. Accordingly on 2nd December BADCOG members and supporters both past and present along with representatives of local parish councils and the district council enjoyed a social get together. Archive material and a running slide show took us back many years when we looked somewhat younger.

The opportunity was taken to present Ernest Hoyos (pictured right) who retired as chairman at the last AGM, with a token of appreciation of the thirty-five years he has held that post. He will of course continue as a much-valued member and source of knowledge. The image in the picture dates from the inception of BADCOG and was drawn by Mike Bishop.

David Pilch



"Teaspoons" born on the Norfolk Broads.

Spoonbills have produced fledglings on the Norfolk Broads for the first time in 400 years. The new babies, known as teaspoons because of their tiny beaks, are the first in Norfolk since the spoonbill was hunted to extinction in the UK for its white feathers and meat during the reign of James I. In 2010 a colony of the large wading birds was discovered on the salt marshes in North Norfolk, thought to have made the journey over the Netherlands and France.

Now the Norfolk Wildlife Trust has announced that "teaspoons" have been sighted at Hickling Broad. With seven other breeding sites in England it appears that the species is spreading.

2023 Weather records for Lingwood.

Ernest Hoyos

The perception is that it's been wet, wet, wet and this autumn certainly has. At the time of writing 17th December we've just had four more or less dry days, the exception since mid October.

We had average rainfall in January, all in the first fortnight, thereafter there was little rain until the end of the first week in March helping farmers and gardeners as soil conditions greatly improved. Mean temperatures during this dry time were 2°C above average. Spring had come early. I planted a row of potatoes in mid February which I have never done before.

March became wet with 77mm, over 3 inches, well above the average of 45mm. Temperatures were marginally above. April was also wet with 60mm after a run of very dry days. 2018 was the last time we had comparable rainfall. May continued wet with 75mm which all came in the first two weeks, no more rain fell after the 14th. It was also a chilly month, 1°C below average. The first half of June continued completely dry. It stayed cool here to start with because of onshore breezes off a still cold North Sea. From the 11th onwards maximum temperatures stayed in the 20°Cs with a hot 29°C recorded on the 25th of the month. The second half of the month produced 16.5mm of rain, 29%. June's temperature 1.4°C above average.

So half way through the year with the ups and downs rainfall ended near average, hiding extremes. July became wet and cool with a total of 91mm of rain and 0.5°C below average temperatures, the coolest since 2012. August produced 48mm - 82% but still the wettest since 2020, with average temperatures. September rainfall was about average with 53mm but a very warm month 2.5°C above average. The 9th of the month was the hottest day of the year, 31°C or 88°F for those who prefer the old measure. October continued warm, +1°C on the average but became very wet with 138mm - 215%. November was also wet with 96.5mm - 150% and it was the coolest since 2019, 0.5°C below average.

So far to date this December we've had 46mm of rain, the average is 63.5mm which we may not make with a large high just to the south of the UK. 2023 is a wet year with 755mm or 29.7 inches, already the wettest since 2014. Our long term average rainfall is 642mm or 25.28 inches.

In memory of John Houghton born 6.3.35 died 25.10.23

John was one of our oldest BADCOG supporters and was an active working party member in earlier years as shown 3rd from the left in the photo at Jary's meadow in December 2005.

John grew up in Blofield living with his grandparents the Spantons at Flora House near the school from the ages of 5 to 18, His grandfather ran a threshing business and the house had a large area of land. Exploring this was probably what sparked John's interest in the natural world. He went on to study horticulture at Writtle College in Essex. This was to be his life's work, finally retiring as head gardener at Hellesdon Hospital but continuing to support local horticultural and conservation groups.

He had a very happy family life with his wife Brenda, who predeceased him, and his daughter Heather whom we are pleased to note will continue his BADCOG membership.



BADCOG Talks

12th January—A talk by one of our members, Hans Watson.

9th February—Garth Copeland—Slugs & Snails.

All BADCOG Talks take place in the
Strumpshaw Community Hall starting at 7.30pm

BADCOG WORK PARTY DATES

Work parties start at 10.30am and finish at about 1pm.

All welcome!

20th January—Howes Meadow

3rd February—Walsham Fen

17th February—Buckenham woods

2nd March Jary's Meadow

16th March—Holly Lane Pond

Note: 20th March—BVCG at Walsham Fen

23rd March—Walsham Fen

Check website for any changes!

Some benefits of interacting with nature.

At Vine House Farm in Lincolnshire the newest staff member, Jen Orrell, discusses the benefits of interacting with nature, as well as what you can do to get more nature in your life.

When I first started at Vine House Farm, the first thing I did was take part in a farm tour with owner, Nicholas Watts MBE. Standing in the middle of the fen, breathing in the fresh air whilst surrounded by bird song, filled me with joy and tranquillity. In an increasingly technology-orientated world, it was a pleasure to switch off and hear about the vast conservation work that happens here, as well as the contribution Vine House Farm makes to The Wildlife Trusts.

More and more people are recognising how vital green spaces like this are to us. The benefits of being more connected to nature are endless, and it has been proven in several studies that it improves both our physical and mental health. For those living in areas with high levels of deprivation and with associated poor health, the advantages of getting closer to wildlife are even more noticeable.

Having worked on projects focusing on physical and mental health in some of the most deprived wards in Peterborough, I have seen first hand the benefits of people increasing their access to nature. An example is someone who was scared even to leave the house, but by being involved in a project growing organic vegetables, it gave him the confidence to get out and meet other people in his area. Everyone's experience is different and in urban areas like this, spaces like community gardens can provide a welcome break from the hustle and bustle of the city, whilst increasing fitness, expanding social connections and improving well-being.

In 2014 the Institute of Health Equity released a report stating that "on average people living in greener urban areas were happier than when they lived in areas with less urban greenery".

This highlights that accessibility to nature can be an issue, however there are small steps many of you can take to get closer to wildlife, whether you have a garden or not.

Picture: BADCOG at Lingwood Pond 6th

Jan 2024



Lovely Birds but Ominous Indicators

Hans Watson

Few naturalists will have failed to notice the small invasion of birds from southern Europe that graced our county this last spring and early summer, and there certainly appears to be indications that this invasion will continue, and even accelerate.



Black-tailed Godwit

Trend setting Little Egrets and Mediterranean Gulls have shown the way for Great White Egrets, Spoonbills, Cattle Egrets, with signs that Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Black-winged Stilts and Bee-eaters are also gradually becoming established as breeding residents in Britain. It is probable that Squacco Herons and

Night Herons will also follow, and the number of Glossy Ibis recorded this year, indicates they may also become resident. Some authorities think that Black Kite and Great Reed Warbler are also likely to become breeding birds in the UK. All of this, together with all of the new species of insects that are gradually becoming resident, is an ominous sign that nature is responding to rising temperatures. Also, as birds move north to Britain to escape rising temperature and drought in southern Europe, so birds like Willow Warblers are moving north to escape rising temperatures in southern Britain.



Black-winged Stilts

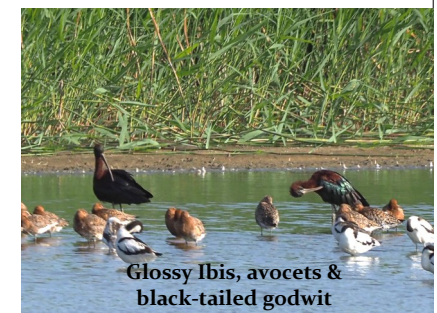
In June and July of this year, I had the privilege of being able to watch a pair of Black-winged Stilts and a pair of Glossy Ibis within a



Glossy Ibis

mile or two of my home. I even saw signs that the Glossy Ibis had set up a territory giving hope that they might nest. But this did not happen. At the same time that the Stilts and Ibis were present, unusually large flocks of Black-tailed Godwits arrived, all in lovely brick red summer

plumage, which makes me wonder if these were birds that had had an early breeding season, or were they failed or non-breeding birds. I counted 84 birds in one flock.



Glossy Ibis, avocets & black-tailed godwit

Right - A Summary of working party activity at our sites in 2023

NOTES:

Main working parties are usually on the first and third Saturday in the month and start at 10.30 am usually aiming to finish by 1.00 pm.

Additional working parties are usually midweek and are undertaken by individuals or small group carrying out such tasks as mowing in preparation for clearing at a main working party, clearing up unfinished tasks or undertaking small projects.

An Evocative winter poem Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening By Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Site	Main work party dates	Helpers	Extra work party dates
Blofield Church conservation area;	1st July	17	5th & 21st June; 3rd & 4th July; 3rd October; 10th October.
Buckenham Woods;	4th February, 13th May	15 8	
Dye's Road Trees;			18th August.
Hemblington Church conservation area;	17th June	9	9th June.
Holly Lane Pond;	18th March	9	Nil
Howes Meadow;	4th March, 15th April, 15th July, 12th August, 14th October, 25th November.	9 9 7 7 8 13	16th July; 3rd,4th,5th,6th,7th, 16th,18th & 24th August; 9th & 28th, September; 28th & 29th, October; 15th November.
Jary's Meadow;	1st April, 15th April, 20th May, 2nd September, 16th December	5 9 5 5 10	18th & 24th May 7th August 12th September & 30th November.
Limpenhoe Church conservation area;		4	23rd October 4th, 6th, 7th November
Lingwood Church conservation area;	3rd June	10	29th May 4th & 7th September
Lingwood Pond;	7th January	11	28th August 3rd September
Railway Wood;	23rd December	10	Nil
Snowdrop Acre;	11th November	11	Nil
Strumpshaw Stone Pit;	28th October	8	Nil by BADCOG
Walsham Fen	18th February 20th May 29th July	7 5 9	16th & 22nd March 15th, 17th & 18th May 20th September.
Wyngates tree planting	21st January	16	11th January.