

Main Work Party Reports

Jan 04 – Lingwood Pond – Annual maintenance carried out. S & E boundary hedges cut back, Sallow on N boundary cut back. All cut vegetation raked and cleared from site and taken to PC allotment area. Litter pick carried out and signs and PC notice boards cleaned. 9 members + members of 2nd Brundall Scout Group

Jan 18 – Jary's Meadow – E meadow – S bank cut with brush-cutter. - S boundary hedge cut meadow facing side with hedge trimmer. Bramble patch encroaching bramble trimmed back with hedge cutter. Area around apple trees and all other cut vegetation raked and cleared to fire sites. 8 members.

Feb 01 – Howes Meadow – Spoil heap E side of meadow burnt, moved the remains of fire in middle of area A to the W fire site, followed by additional rake of fire site. S and E boundary hedges cut back. Cut vegetation raked and cleared to fire sites/spoil heaps. General tidying of site carried out. A hazel was planted close to the new gate. 8 members + 1

Feb 15 – Walsham Fen – Clearance work along N stream boundary. Sallow and reed cut back Pollarded 3 willow. 2 Silver birch which were leaning over stream felled. Some ditch clearance carried out. All cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heaps. 9 members

Additional Work

Dec 20 – Walsham Fen – vegetation not cut by mower strimmed and cleared to spoil heap.

Jan 16 – Jary's Meadow – E meadow – area around apple trees, bramble patch and small section along bottom of S bank mown.

Jan 26/28/30/31 – Howes Meadow – Burning and attention to all fire sites.

Feb 12 – Railway Wood – N boundary - Medium sized Hazel leaning close towards railway track cut back to safe height.

BADCOG WORK PARTY DATES

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

All welcome.

1st March—Buckenham Woods.

15th March— Holly Lane Pond

19th March—Walsham Fen

29th March— Jary's Meadow

12th April—Howe's Meadow

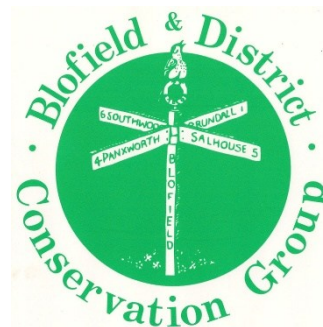
26th April—Walsham Fen

17th May—Jary's Meadow

31st May—Buckenham Woods

14th June—Hemblington Church

[Check website for any changes and cancellations.](#)



BADCOG NEWS.

No 236: March 2025

President: Richard Hobbs

Chair: Tony McKie, Teal Barn,

Vicarage Road, Lingwood,

NR13 4TT

01603 714255

www.badcog.co.uk

Chairmans Update.

The year got off to a great start, with a very productive work party at Lingwood Village Pond on the 4th January. In addition to the 9 BADCOG volunteers who turned up, we had the 2nd Brundall Scout Group helping us out. There were about 4 adults supervising the group, with about 12 Scouts, all of whom got actively involved. They made a huge contribution to, traditionally, the first work party of the year. The Scouts main task was to cut to size, all the sallow we cut back around the north-east side of the pond, so that it fitted into the trailer to take to the allotment green waste site.

This made loading and unloading much easier and quicker. Despite the cold weather, the feedback was that the Scouts enjoyed their time with us, and we very much hope this will not be a one off and they come and join us again at another work party.



On the 12th February, four BADCOG volunteers got together at Railway Wood to pollard a medium sized hawthorn tree that was leaning towards the rail track. John, who has some experience with this kind of work, used his practical skills to slowly reduce the tree, while the rest of us used loppers and bowsaws to make habitat piles around the wood. There was always only a small chance of this tree falling on to the track, but as we have seen with the issue of trees falling on to the track in Thetford forest, it's better to be on the cautious side. Anyway thanks go to John, Ernest and Pat for helping out.

In January a meeting was held with Jamie from Broadland District Council at Snowdrop Acre. One reason for the meeting was to talk about a replacement gate at this site. I'm pleased to report that BDC will organise the fitting of a new gate. Also, Jamie has been very proactive here, and had a health check carried out on the trees in Snowdrop Acre. Some have been identified as needing to be felled, and contractors will complete this job in the autumn. We will just need to do a bit of tidying up at our next work party here in the autumn.

All Saints Church, Hemblington – churchyard update and placing of a barn owl box.

Monthly surveys of wildlife seen in, nearby or over the churchyard have continued this year, and the wildlife report will be circulated shortly to Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service, the Caring for God's Acre group and local conservation groups. Although careful conservation of the churchyard has been ongoing for many years, the implementation of awards from A Rocha for "eco churches" has encouraged many to understand the importance of churchyard conservation and more sustainable living generally.

Although only little owls have been recorded in the surveys at Hemblington, the idea of placing a barn owl box somewhere near the church has been considered for some time. The Friends of All Saints therefore decided to seek advice from the Hawk and Owl Trust (based at Sculthorpe, near Fakenham - <https://hawkandowltrust.org/>). Their Conservation and Adopt a Box Officer promptly offered general information about siting, breeding habits, clearing the box if necessary, and also offered to bring along a sturdy barn owl box and erect it for us. This happened on a very cold January morning. We are most grateful to him and the Trust for organising this so quickly.

We are also very grateful to the family which owns the small copse opposite the church for allowing us to erect the box on an oak tree there. The box can be seen from Church Lane, north of the road, overlooking fields.

We hope that owls will find the box and start to use it. If you happen to see a barn owl, or in fact any owl in the area, do please let the Friends secretary* or one of the church team know.

*contact: hemblington@gmail.com / (01603)

715804.



Lingwood Weather summary—2024

My last weather report was published in the News Letter for May 2024 and covered the first four months of last year.

As a reminder February 2024 turned out to be the mildest, mean temperature 3.5c above average and the wettest with over 100mm of rain 233% of average. Neither of these extremes have been matched by any February on my records for at least 55 years and according to the EDP not since before 1836. I mentioned that with this amount of rain following the extremely wet Autumn of 2023 when I measured the height of water in our well, which we don't use, it was only 1.73m down from the brickwork, the highest I'd ever seen it. As a comparison, this year, mid February, the water level is 4.55m. Or 2.82m, over 9 feet lower. This clearly showing the fluctuations of our natural water table.

As for temperatures, Winter last year was very mild 2c above average, followed by the three Spring months, March, April, May 1c above. June, the first meteorological summer month was 1c below average and the coolest June since 2013 followed by July also a degree below average.

August was our best month last Summer, temperatures 1c above average and dry with only 14.5mm of rain making for an easy corn harvest. 13th August was our hottest day last year with a maximum temperature of 29.2c. September saw temperatures around average but rather wet with 73mm of rain 133%. October was a little drier and with normal temperatures. November saw two named storms Burt and Conall but with limited impact for us from rain or wind compared with the South and west of the UK. The month here ended with average mean temperatures and rainfall but with some extraordinary fluctuations: - Heavy wet snow fell at lunch time on Nov. 20th followed on the 21st by a partial morning snow cover still and a maximum temperature of only 1.8c that day not beaten so far this entire Winter. By Nov. 24th the Maximum temperature had shot up to 17.2c. Storm Darrah in the first week of December dumped so much rain in the Midlands and West of the UK, causing flooding. Even West Norfolk had recorded 50 to 60mm by the 8th. I recorded half that here and a total for the month of only 42mm, our driest December since 2016. Our total rainfall for 2024 was 666mm or 26.2inches, 104%. 4 inches less than 2023.

According to the MET Office rainfall in England remained well above average for most of the year leading to 2024 being the 8th wettest year on record.

Not here in Norfolk. We don't do so badly!

Ernest Hoyos

John Brown

It is with sadness we record the death of John Brown, a long-time supporter of BADCOG. John's willing practical help stemming from his work in farming was invaluable. He was a gentle, local, Norfolk man who loved the countryside. He was born in the Cantly Cock where his father was the landlord. He benefited from obligatory national service by serving in REME where he acquired his expertise with engines. This he put to good use at the garage in South Walsham and subsequently in his farming career he maintained all the machinery at Heath Farm.

The picture shows him helping at Walsham Fen in 2008.



Bad and good news of birds.

Although it is sad news of the likely extinction of the Slender Billed Curlew (the first bird extinction in mainland Europe since the 16th century) this does emphasise the importance of conservation work with other birds.

We read that Spoonbills have spread to the Cambridgeshire Fens. Since Spoonbills arrived at Holkham in 2010 over 600 "teaspoons" have fledged. At Havergate Island in Suffolk 17 breeding pairs have settled.

But it was unexpected and exciting, during a survey of White Egret chicks on the Ouse Washes in the Cambridgeshire Fens, to discover three nesting pairs of Spoonbills.

While the main colony of nesting pairs is at Holkham' others are found in Essex, Yorkshire, Cumbria and even Orkney, and some birds now over winter at Poole Harbour on the Dorset coast.

One pattern in their nesting preferences suggests that where Herons go, Spoonbills are likely to follow. Historic colonies of Spoonbills nested in trees alongside Grey Herons much in the way that Herons, Cormorants and Little Egrets do at Holkham today.

Absent Friends

Like many nature lovers, I am growing more and more alarmed at the noticeable reduction in populations of insects, birds and other forms of wildlife, particularly in our gardens. It is significant that people who are not naturalists are noticing these changes, and I regularly have neighbours asking "where are all the butterflies and birds?". The fact that numbers of birds and butterflies were once large enough to have drawn the attention of these people who now miss them, underlines the serious nature of the population reductions.



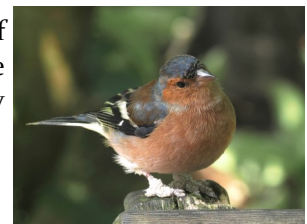
Conversations with people who have noticed the loss of birds, often reveal that it was the total absence of one particular species that first drew their attention to the reduction of all their garden birds. Often this species is the once very common House Sparrow. Fortunately, I still have House Sparrows, but very sadly I no longer have Chaffinches. The year 2024 marks the first year for at least 30 years, that Chaffinches have not bred in my garden, or brightened my day with their cheery little song. Chaffinches are one of the prettiest birds, and their nest is one of the most beautiful of all the finches. Their eggs are also lovely.



Chaffinches are often affected by the disease Trichomonosis (bottom photo). This is a deadly disease caused by a microscopic parasite that infects the mouth and throat/esophagus. Infected birds have difficulty eating and even breathing, and this soon leads to lethargy and death. Other species of garden birds can be affected, but Chaffinches seem especially vulnerable. This is a pity because Chaffinches enhance any garden with their presence. Another disease that Chaffinches are commonly affected by is Papillomatosis, sometimes referred to as Scaly leg or Tassel Foot. This appears as whitish warty growths on the feet and legs, and affected birds often appear active and in otherwise good condition, and recovery is known to occur. However, in severe cases, lameness or secondary infection can result which leads to increased susceptibility to predation, or the effects of hard weather.

I have for years practiced the cleaning and disinfecting of my bird feeders and bird baths, which are thought to be where many birds are infected by these diseases, but sadly many other bird lovers fail to do this.

Hans Watson



Water Vole Population Status

A new report from The Wildlife Trusts - The National Water Vole Database Project Report - identifies continued declines in water vole populations set against heartening increases in areas where conservation efforts have been focused.

The National Water Vole Database Project Report examines water vole distribution over ten years by analysing the number of 10km grid squares across the country where water voles are present. Statistics show overall water vole range declining – a 39% decrease in the number of areas occupied by water voles compared to the 2006 baseline.

However, when the data is examined more closely encouraging trends emerge. The Wildlife Trusts' project also looks at the concentration of water voles and has found that whilst the national picture is one of overall decline, some important local pockets of water vole populations have been increasing, with several new regional key areas identified in recent years.

We deliver a range of works across our nature reserves, within our landscape recovery projects, and services for our clients that are targeted to help water voles. Works include managing, restoring and creating wetland habitat, carrying out water vole surveying, implementing mink control, and improving water quality.

Commenting on the national report, Ali Morse, Water Policy Manager at The Wildlife Trusts, says: "The data is giving us a very clear message. The overall national picture is one of decline due to the destruction of natural habitats and predation by the non-native American mink. However, water vole populations will thrive when the right conditions are created. It's heartening to see that we can still rescue Ratty, if we all plan well and co-ordinate our efforts.

"Water voles are mini ecosystem engineers, rather like beavers, and they contribute greatly to healthy river ecology. Reversing their historic loss needs to be a key focus of our conservation efforts."



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Regionally important areas which have been newly identified, or which have expanded since the last analysis, include areas where conservation work to support the return of water voles has been undertaken:

Work in East Anglia by a partnership of conservation organisations, water managers and others has seen the formation of two new Regional Key areas of thriving populations.

In Hertfordshire, a section of the River Colne has become part of a new Regional Key Area thanks to the work of Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and its partners.

Water voles are also expanding their ranges following reintroductions by the same Wildlife Trust at the rivers Stort and Beane.

The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust's long-running water vole recovery project has led to an expansion in the areas occupied west of Oxford.

In Yorkshire, a new wetland nature reserve has connected four separate water vole populations around the River Hull, forming a new regionally important area.

In Lincolnshire, an area occupied by water voles between the Wolds and the coast has increased in size following conservation efforts.

As Ali Morse says: "Just because voles are present, it doesn't mean that they are thriving. We still need to ensure that that we provide undisturbed riverbanks, reedbeds and ponds, and remove the non-native American mink that have devastated water vole populations, to allow their numbers to build up once more. "Bringing back resilient populations requires a coordinated approach. We need to help populations expand from remaining strongholds, by ensuring that developers, land managers, farmers and conservationists all work in tandem."

BADCOG EVENING MEETINGS.

Every 2nd Friday of the month, starting at 7.30pm

Strumpshaw Community Hall, Mill Road

14th March — A talk on Bird Watching from the BTO

11th April — The Papillon Trust