

Main Work Party Reports

May 17 – Jary’s Meadow\Walsham Fen – JM- Path network raked and cleared to fire sites. **WF-** Boardwalk network – vegetation at edge of boardwalk missed by mower cut with Brush cutter. Both sides of boardwalk raked and cleared to spoil heaps. Area A2 fire site -ash pile removed and some bramble and overhanging vegetation around path network cut back. 9 members.

May 31 – Buckenham Woods – Raked and cleared all areas mown at AWP on 29th May. Cut back vegetation on causeway and inside west gravel pit creating new spoil heap. 7 members + 1

Jun 14 – Hemblington Church – Conservation area raked and cleared to spoil heaps. 4 members + 4 others (2 from NWT).

Jun 28 – Lingwood Church – Conservation area raked and cleared. Some clearance carried out around oaks along FP3 and permissible footpath from Peters Wood. 8 members.

Additional Work

Apr 26 – Walsham Fen – PM -Area A2 fire site -attended to fire started at morning WP.

Apr 27/28/29/30/May 01 – Attention to fire site twice daily.

Apr 29 – Peters Wood- Footpaths FP3 – Repair work to Oaks damaged during farmers winter hedge cutting.

May 02 – Walsham Fen – Area A2 fire site broken down and spread out. Later re-stacked and checked for any hotspots. Raked round to clear up, heap now mostly ash.

May 10 – Jary’s Meadow – path network and area around main gate mown.

May 10 – Walsham Fen – boardwalk network- a 1.5metre strip on both sides mown.

May 19 – Jary/s Meadow – Signs erected warning of dangerous hanging branch on boundary between the meadow and fen.

May 29 – Buckenham Woods – area between steps-either side of path network from steps to main gate and around bike racks and PC sign-around the seats and access routes to spoil heaps and the footpath by the allotments all mown.

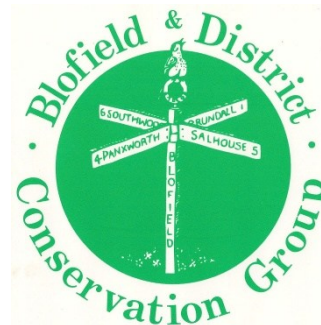
May 30 – Jary’s Meadow – SW meadow- bracken pulled in new section and along hedge line.

Jun 09 – Hemblington Church – preparation for main WP, conservation area mown, areas around gravestones cleared.

Jun 23 – Lingwood Church – conservation area mown.

Jun 23 – Lingwood Pond – areas around pond mown.

Jun 30 – Howe’s Meadow – Path Network cut.



Chairmans Update July 2025

BADCOG NEWS.

No 238: July 2025

President: Richard Hobbs

Chair: Tony McKie, Teal Barn,

Vicarage Road, Lingwood,

NR13 4TT

01603 714255

www.badcog.co.uk

Summer is always busy for BADCOG volunteers, managing the five Churchyards under our stewardship. The first churchyard on our schedule is always Hemblington, which was cut on the 9th June. For this we were joined by Lucy, the coordinator for the NWT Churchyard Conservation Scheme and Denzil, who filmed our activities. The film footage will be used to promote this important and very worthwhile scheme. Lucy and Denzil also returned for our main work party at the Church on the 14th June to do some more filming, and help us with the raking and clearance, of the churchyard. This was a great help, as numbers were a bit low for this normally popular work party.

On the same day as the work party at Hemblington, the BADCOG Display was set-up in the Margret Harker Hall in Blofield, for the NCC Atoobetter Roadshow. The aim of this roadshow was primarily to promote sustainable transport, however local groups were invited to highlight their activities. It's unclear how many looked at the unattended Display, but it could be said that some publicity is better than none at all.

A big thank you goes out to all who helped with our Orchid Counts this year. At Howe's Meadow on the 23rd June, the count was 1171 orchids, which is much lower than the 10-year average for this site, and it's becoming increasingly more difficult to do the count in the North Section of the meadow. It's recognised the best form of management here would be grazing, but this will never happen, so the only solution is more management. However, more management here would result in less management elsewhere, presenting a difficult balancing act for the committee responsible for these decisions. The results at Walsham Fen on 27th June were disappointing, with only 5 orchids found compared to 962 in 2021. The cause is unknown, but increasing reeds might be a factor. I've emailed the orchid count graphs to members and will include them in the next Newsletter.



ALEXANDERS—(*Smyrniium olusatrum*)

Swathes of tall, green, umbelliferous plants on our roadsides are Alexanders. Of recent years in the UK, Alexanders have dominated roadside verges where cow parsley might once have grown. Growing to 150cm (60”) tall, it has compound ternate leaves and yellowish green flowers. Also growing widely on wasteland and in hedges around the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of Europe it is now established in the UK where it has become so dominant as to suppress most other plants. The name Alexanders is a corruption of the Roman *olus* - herb and *atus* - black.

The English name, being a further corruption of the Latin (*olus-ater* = alisander), has nothing to do with Alexander the Great. Other vernacular names are alsander, alshinder, allick, skit, skeet and hellroot (a corruption of heal root) megweed, wild parsley, Macedonian parsley, wild celery, horse celery, and black lovage.

It was formerly widely grown as a pot herb. A member of the carrot family it was once highly valued in northern Europe as an early vegetable; one of the few to be eaten in February or March. The seeds had a reputation among sailors for curing scurvy hence its old name *hellroot* - heal root.

FOXLEY WOOD

Foxley Wood, near Dereham, is the largest ancient woodland and coppice in Norfolk. Measuring 123 hectares, it's a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a National Nature Reserve, and rich in flora and fauna.

Parts of the wood are known to be over 6,000 years old. During the past 1,000 years it was a source of wood including hazel. When demand for hazel ceased, the woodland became neglected. In the 1990s it was privately owned and managed by the Forestry Commission, and then in 1998, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) acquired it.

Now the NWT is to expand the reserve by an extra 100 acres, made possible by two legacies, enabling land purchases. Foxley Wood is well worth a visit along with the smaller Honey Pot Wood, which is nearby. Look out for dog's mercury, greater butterfly-orchid and the broad-leaved helleborine just some of the 208 plant species recorded at the wood.

Lowestoft is blessed with an urban kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) population, now back in good numbers around town in the first week of March. Kittiwake spend their winters at sea, returning to cliffs (and selective towns across the country!) to breed. For me, walking into town to the kittiwaking kittiwakes never fails to bring a smile to my face! Indeed, as spring advances and more of our long-distance migrants arrive onto our shores, the habitats you visit will define the birds you can encounter.

When visiting our wetland environments, the soundscape coming from thriving reedbeds is dominated by two species from the reed-warbler family: sedge warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*) and Eurasian reed warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*). Both these migrants arrive later in the year (late April/May) from sub-Saharan Africa and have similar quick scratchy melodies. A rarer addition to the wetland soundscape is the grasshopper

Warbler (*Locustella naevia*), who arrive at a similar time to the two other wetland warblers but is much easier to identify with your ears. The mistake to make here is if you are listening to a bird or insect!



Suffolk is lucky enough to have rare heathland habitats, which can bring along one of our more specialist breeding species, the nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*). Nightjars are nocturnal species and have one of the most fascinating songs you can experience on British shores, but beware, you will need to stay up late to hear them, as they begin their strange serenades as the sun sets. Nightjars visit from sub-Saharan Africa, a location only recently discovered by geo-locators attached to adult birds breeding in western Europe. In winter, they prefer savannah scrublands, but in the UK, these birds are heavily reliant on heathland habitats to set up breeding territories. A nightjar's strange serenade is colloquially known as 'churring'! Ultimately, wherever you enjoy spring's return, the soundscape will be different from what it was a few months previously.

SPRING BIRDING IN SUFFOLK

In an article he wrote for the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, **DR DAN WADE** explored highly anticipated arrivals and his favourite memories of birds in Suffolk.

The warmth of those first few sunny rays breaking through the grey of winter, to me, marks a welcomed change of the guard and a date of high anticipation. Indeed, as the warmth lifts our moods and the colour of spring takes hold, visitors from distant shores decide that a summer in Suffolk is the best thing they can do to achieve a successful breeding season.

As a birdwatcher since my childhood, migration has always been of fascination for me. The first species I recall connecting with was the whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*). Not what you would call a spring migrant in a traditional sense, but the small wintering population of Suffolk departs on their journeys to arctic breeding grounds in the spring, after a winter brightening our binoculars since arriving during the autumn migration window.

The inspiring image of family groups of swans flying over turbulent seas from their rest sites in Scotland over the North Atlantic to Iceland was one of the key start points to my journey in conservation, to where I am now as an employee at Suffolk Wildlife Trust!

Spring migration is as much about a fond goodbye, a see you later, to many of the birds that brighten our winter days as it is about welcoming the soundtrack to our summer in the British countryside.

The first sign of spring migrants for many of us is the repetitive song of the chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*). Chiffchaffs can arrive throughout March, and sometimes as early as late February, given the right wind direction (southerlies from their wintering grounds around the Mediterranean and North Africa). Chiffchaffs are widespread and can be heard at most of our reserves!

For me, as a recent resident of Lowestoft, my first signs of spring migration were different this year; even urban environments see a transitional shift in their breeding birds.

Continues next page.....

PROTECTING BEES.

SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST is thrilled with the news that the UK Government has upheld the ban on thiamethoxam - a banned "neonic" pesticide highly toxic to bees, pollinators and river life.

For five years, the UK Government had repeatedly approved the "emergency" use of the bee-killing pesticide on sugar beet, at the request of British Sugar and the NFU. However, following extensive lobbying and campaigning from The Wildlife Trusts - including a petition with over 300,000 signatures - the government has finally upheld the ban, marking an end to the pesticide's devastating impact on British wildlife.

This marks a pivotal moment in tackling the sugar industry's reliance on toxic chemicals that are used heavily across East Anglia in the production of sugar beet yet, pollute our soils and rivers and kill countless bees and pollinators.

Ben McFarland, Director of Wildlife Conservation & Recovery at Suffolk Wildlife Trust, said: "As an agricultural county, this outcome is a vital one for Suffolk's wildlife. "There is simply no place in modern sustainable agriculture for highly toxic pesticides that kill bees and poison soils and rivers.



Neonicotinoids were originally banned in the UK in 2017 but were granted repeat authorisations for use, despite explicit guidance against their approval. "Many farmers across Suffolk and East Anglia have already turned their backs on these devastating chemicals. It's time for British Sugar to take greater responsibility, and support nature-friendly practices by paying growers a fair price for producing beets without neonicotinoids. "The focus must now be on a complete, sustainable transition away from a reliance on the use of neonicotinoids not just in agriculture, but also in pet flea treatments. This is a key source of chemical pollution in our waterways, with 10% of UK rivers found to contain toxic neonicotinoid chemicals."

A REPORT FROM THE WILDLIFE TRUST

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.

Commenting on the national report, Ali Morse, Water Policy Manager at The Wildlife Trusts, says:

'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'.

Ali continues saying, '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'.

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.

Continuers next page.....

- 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.

Ali Morse continued: '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 WORK PARTY DATES

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

All welcome.

12th July—Blofield Church

15th July—Blofield Church—The Gt Yarmouth Green Gym

26th July—Howe's Meadow

9th August—Walsham Fen

30th August—Jary's Meadow

13th September—Buckenham Woods

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