

Main Work Party Reports

Mar 14 – Holly Lane Pond – Annual maintenance carried out, roadside hedge cut back, bank around pond cut, one hazel coppiced and all encroaching vegetation trimmed back. All cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heap. Members 6 + 2 others.

Mar 28 – Buckenham Woods – Entry gate and car parking area cleared encroaching bramble and carried out a litter pick. Pit area East of steps – Removed 100+ sycamores ranging from seedlings which were hand pulled to medium sized trees which were felled with chain saw and subsequently treated. Many other sycamores were pulled using two root pulling tools provided by BAWT. Large cut branches were made into habitat piles. 5 tit and 3 robin nest boxes were installed throughout the woodland. Members 8

Apr 11 – Peter’s Jubilee Wood - Removed approx. 80% of old tree guards which were then bagged and taken home to dispose of in general waste bins. Members 4.

25th April—Jary’s Meadow—Blackthorn/sallow/bramble behind seat, cut back and burnt. A fallen small elder removed to fire site. Two of the 3 fire sites burnt and one cleared to one of the other fire sites. Members 6.

Additional Work

Mar 09 – Walsham Fen – Preparation for BVCG. Areas A1, A2, and a section in I up to the large tussock and 50% of G all mown. This was the second cut in area G. The edges of ditches and ponds were cut using a brush cutter.

Mar 18 – Walsham Fen- Areas A1 and A2 raked and cleared by BVCG. Area G 50% raked and cleared to spoil heaps. An alder that had fallen across stream was cleared.

Apr 17 – Peter’s Jubilee Wood - 1 large bag of tree guards from trees and shrubs removed from site.

Apr 26/27—Howe’s Meadow—The two spoil heaps set alight and checked & restacked over 2 days.

BADCOG WORK PARTY DATES.

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

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

9th May—Buckenham Wood

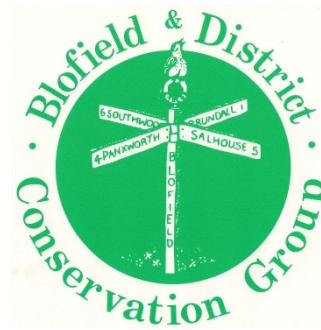
30th May—Howe’s Meadow

13th June—Walsham Fen

27th June—Lingwood Churchyard

11th July—Blofield Churchyard

14th July—Green Gym at Blofield Churchyard



Chairmans Update—May 2026.

If you've recently visited Walsham Fen, you'll have seen that it's now closed to the public. The BADCOG committee made this decision because parts of the boardwalk are no longer safe to walk.

The boardwalk's history dates back to shortly after BADCOG began managing the site in 1986. Originally, volunteers built only small sections of boardwalk across particularly wet and boggy parts of the fen. In 2003, Walsham Fen was designated as a County Wildlife Site, adding to its existing Local Nature Reserve status. Two years later in 2005, NCC, who own the land, hired contractors to construct a boardwalk all around the site to improve accessibility. When BADCOG took on a 10-year lease of the site in 2012, it took on responsibility for maintaining the boardwalk as part of the agreement.

Despite our very limited resources, we've tried to keep up with the maintenance, whilst also managing the entire site. However, repairing just a single 10-meter section of boardwalk consumed much of



our resources. Realising we could not win the battle to maintain the boardwalk, we

decided to stop spending time on it and prioritise wildlife conservation instead. Some preliminary work has been done to estimate repair costs, but everyone who has inspected the boardwalk agrees that it needs a complete rebuild, with quotes exceeding £64,000!

NCC has been notified of the unfortunate situation; however, visitors may still observe the site from the hide built by

BADCOG volunteers in 1988 (left).

Finally, a trip out to Grange Farm, Lessingham has been arranged for Thursday 14th May starting at 13.30. If you are interested in this visit to a new nature reserve, then please let me know via my email at a.mckie57@btinternet.com

BADCOG NEWS.

No 243: May 2026

President: Richard Hobbs

Chair: Tony McKie, Teal Barn,

Vicarage Road, Lingwood,

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Picture: 27th Oct 2018

Local archives

The Bushel was a village newspaper based on Strumpshaw and the surrounding villages published by Stephen Peart. He derived the name from the traditional doling out of grain from four bushels at Strumpshaw Church on Boxing Day to parishioners according to the will of William Black who died in 1756.

The following article, published in December 1985, features the names of individuals who contributed to the formation of BADCOG in 1984.

4 Blofield & District Conservation Group

Phrases like 'protecting the environment' and 'the importance of conservation' tend to give the impression that the subject is more the concern of the tweedy intellectual rather than the ordinary person but, in fact, the state of the countryside should be of interest to all of us.

Man is, unfortunately, a very rapacious animal taken as a whole and his attitude towards the resources of the world is usually governed by short-term economics rather than an intelligent desire to look to the future.

Considering that it is our children's children who will have to pick up the bill, so to speak it ill-behoves us to be too cavalier about the problems of our world.

Present-day farming practices are no help but as farmers are as much of a cross-section of character and intelligence as the rest of us it follows that a proportion of them care for the countryside and do their best where they are able.

Standing on the sidelines theorising about what others ought to do is no way to tackle the problem. Mindful of this, the Blofield & District Conservation Group (BADCOG) was formed to take on practical conservation work in the form of tree planting and management of sites for the benefit of wildlife.

In only a few hours of physical effort every month - usually Saturday mornings - members clear rank vegetation from footpaths, plant trees and shrubs, clear and maintain young trees, manage churchyards, ponds and water meadows for wild orchids and other flowers and generally take measures to encourage birds and butterflies.

If you enjoy the countryside and take an interest in the views of the landscape, if you like wild flowers, butterflies and birds, you would be most welcome to join our work parties in our efforts to bring back the precious beauty which is not as widespread as it used to be.

More helpers from Brundall, Lingwood and Strumpshaw would be particularly welcome - and it's not all work either - we also have evening



An example of recent conservation work at Braydeston Church: Tree planting with the Revd. Bob Baker and Cubs from 1st Blofield & Brundall Sea Scout Group.

*(Photo: Dick Flowers)

meetings at the Old Court House when speakers entertain us with interesting talks on wildlife together with slide shows and coffee.

Members of BADCOG are friendly people with the right priorities - join us! Our next meeting at Blofield Court House is at 8.15 p.m. on Friday 10th January when John Beckett of the Norwich Wildlife Group will be the speaker.

If you are interested in joining us, get in touch with the Hon Secretary, Mary Darby - (telephone Norwich 712128).

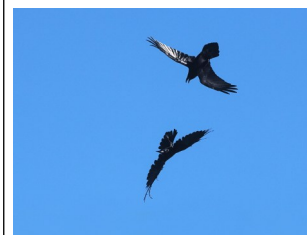
David A. Fagg.

Ravens

The regional distribution of bird species has always been subject to gradual change, and bird watchers have become quite used to new species coming to settle in Norfolk. However, I and many of my bird-watching friends, have been amazed at the Ravens (*Corvus corax*) sudden change in status, from quite scarce vagrant to breeding resident. In the past I had always regarded Ravens as birds of the more hilly parts of western Britain and am consequently finding it a bit difficult to get used to watching them strutting about on grazing marshes amongst Wigeon, in the Yare valley.



Like their near relatives Rooks and Carrion Crows, Ravens are amongst the most intelligent of birds, and although they are mainly scavengers, they are very capable of killing prey up to rabbit size, or even newborn lambs. This obviously makes them very unpopular in sheep farming areas. For many people, the first view of Ravens that they experience, is at the Tower of London, where a small group of about 6 Ravens are kept. They are looked



after by a uniformed Ravemaster, and a legend states that if the Ravens ever leave the Tower, then the Kingdom will fall. There are many amusing stories, told by Ravenmasters, of Ravens that could imitate human speech, and play pranks on people.

Now that the shortest day has past and hours of daylight increase, the local Rooks and Carrion Crows appear to be spending more time in trees where they normally nest. As Ravens are very early nesters, I have been watching a pair that have taken up residence in a wood less than a mile from my home, and it certainly appears that they are preparing to nest there. So, my fingers are firmly crossed. I should point out that I have not yet obtained any decent photographs of Ravens in Norfolk, so all the photos in this article were taken elsewhere.

Annual Orchid Counts.

The orchid counts will take place on:

Monday 22nd June—Howe's Meadow

Friday 26th June—Walsham Fen

Both counts will start at 7pm.

Long trousers and long sleeved shirt recommend!

Chalk Streams Status

The Bishop of Norwich has joined MPs and Peers calling for Britain's chalk streams to be awarded UNESCO World Heritage status, recognising them as among the rarest and most important habitats on Earth. Only around 200 chalk streams are known to exist worldwide. Around 85 per cent are in England, and many of these are in the Diocese of Norwich, including the evocatively named Babingly, Glaven, Gadder, Ingol, Hun, Stiffkey, Tiffey, Wissey and Wensum.

They support more species of plants than any other English river type and their aquifer-fed, mineral-rich flow provides vital habitat for threatened wildlife including water vole, brown trout, southern damselfly, white-clawed crayfish and Atlantic salmon. Despite their global importance, most are in poor condition. Over-abstraction is causing some to run dry in the summer, while sewage discharges, agricultural pollution and climate change are placing increasing pressure on the fragile ecosystems.

Fewer than a dozen chalk streams currently benefit from legal protection as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Giving chalk streams World Heritage status would highlight their importance, strengthen their protection and help unlock funding, research and public engagement to support their recovery.

The Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Revd Graham Usher, has backed the Chalk Streams (UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site) Bill, introduced to Parliament on 25th February. Bishop Graham said: *"People are rightly horrified by the destruction of rainforests thousands of miles away – but sometimes seem less concerned about collapsing ecosystems almost literally on our doorstep.*

"Christians are called to advocate for God's creation. In our nature-impooverished land, this means protecting our heritage of natural wonders, including precious chalk streams."

Campaigners are also urging the Government to give chalk streams planning protection by listing them alongside ancient woodland as an irreplaceable habit in the National Planning Policy Framework, and to reinvest fines from polluting water companies into a fund for chalk stream restoration.

In October the Bishop of Norwich's amendment to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, to protect rare chalk streams, was passed by 196 votes to 137 in the House of Lords but subsequently failed to gain approval from the House of Commons. Some concessions were negotiated with the Government, to be included in future legislation

Monavale Vlei - Highlights 2025

Report to AGM of Mashonaland Branch, BirdLife Zimbabwe—31 January 2026

Observations: 170 species were recorded during 2026, 6 fewer species than 2024. Bird highlights for the year included the following: Reed Cormorant, Grey and Purple Heron, Dwarf Bittern, **Yellow-billed Stork (new species for Monavale Vlei)**, Abdim's Stork, Black Duck, Egyptian Goose, Spur-winged Goose, Red-billed Teal, Yellow-billed Kite, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Wahlberg's Eagle, Long-crested Eagle, Common Buzzard, Lanner Falcon, Eurasian Hobby, Amur Falcon, Common Buttonquail, Little Sparrowhawk, Black Sparrowhawk, Corn Crane, African Crane, Striped Crane, Red-chested Flufftail, Streaky-breasted Flufftail, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Red-chested Cuckoo, Levillant's Cuckoo, Black Coucal, Marsh Owl, Southern White-faced Owl, Fiery-necked Nightjar, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Barn Swallow, Lesser and Greater-striped Swallow, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Ground-scraper Thrush, Black Cuckoo-shrike, Great Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Pale-crowned Cisticola, Spotted Fly-catcher, Yellow-throated Long-claw, Red-backed Shrike, Lesser Grey-shrike, Common Myna, Copper Sunbird, Cuckoo Finch and Brimstone Canary and the Bishops, Widows, Whydahs and Waxbills, Golden-breasted Bunting, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, common to the Vlei along with many other species. **Many nests were seen on Monavale Vlei of local and migrant species ... such successful breeding is indicative of a well-managed headwater open grassland wetland ecosystem – Monavale Vlei continues to be a model for the restoration of disturbed headwater wetlands.**

Mammals recorded during 2025 included: 3 adults and 2 juveniles Side-striped Jackal were seen several times, so too were Scrub Hare flushed from the dense grasses, Slender Mongoose, Large-grey Mongoose and Bushpig were present. Tortoises were seen. Vervet monkeys continue to be frequent visitors to Monavale. Olive and Three-striped Grass Snakes and Snouted Cobra were common. Hundreds of Barbels were observed in January 2025 coming with the floodwaters of the Little Marimba Stream to spawn across the inundated Vlei. Common Reed Frog, Long Reed Frog, Sharp-nosed Grass Frog, Bubbling Cassina, Red-banded Rubber Frog, Giant Bull Frog, Guttural Toad, African River Frog and Red Toads were recorded. Invertebrates are plentiful and awaiting recording.

Seasonal rainfall on Monavale Vlei from for the 2024/2025 summer rainfall season was 744.5mm up from 583mm in 2023/4.

The annual rainfall for 2025 was 829.5mm which was 452mm up from 377.5mm in 2024.

For the 7th year burst municipal water pipes and open water hydrants fed portions of the Vlei throughout the year. The bulrush continues to expand. This needs to be addressed.

This is part of the AGM report of COSMO (Conservation Society of Monavale Vlei). My son Jonathan has been involved in the management of this RAMSAR site on the edge of Harare for many years. David Pilch

Moulting of Feathers in Garden Birds

I recently came upon this section in an old bird book. I found the section on moulting interesting, and I thought an edited version might be of interest to BADCOG members.

Feathers, like hair, form the covering of vertebrates. They are both made of keratin and grow from a follicle and share a number of functions. Feathers, however, are much more complex than hair which is a simple structure continually renewed at its base. Feathers, in contrast, once created have to be replaced because of ageing and damage. It is this process which is called moulting. All birds moult at least once a year; many birds such as ducks and waders do so twice, one full and one partial moult. The willow warbler moults completely twice, once in Europe and secondly before returning north in spring. In the interim a feather which is lost is replaced but a broken one is not.

The majority of garden birds moult once in late summer or autumn. The feathers are replaced on a rota basis. Although most birds cope surprisingly well without any tail feathers woodpeckers and tree creepers rely on their stiff central tail feathers for support, thus while other birds moult their tail feathers from the centre out these birds retain their "support" feathers until they can rely on the newly replenished outer ones.

In most small birds wing and tail feathers are replaced while the moult of the body feathers is going on, normally starting at the rump and ending with the head. Tits have a reverse order of doing it. Tail feathers are renewed fairly quickly but that of the wing, being so important, more gradually thus retaining the ability to fly. However a few species such as ducks lose all their flight feathers at once and are flightless for four to six weeks.

In most species the shedding of wing feathers proceeds from innermost primaries to the wing tip. When these are renewing the outermost secondary feathers are shed sequentially towards the body. Oddly the spotted flycatcher does the reverse.

For most birds moulting occurs between July and September. If the breeding season is extended the moult is delayed. Nonbreeding birds may moult early. The duration of the moult varies, that prior to migration tends to be quick and in general it is quicker in small birds, although with tits it may last 4 months. Continues next page

A redstart takes a mere 40 days, a robin 50 days, most finches 10-12 weeks, the carrion crow 19 weeks, a woodpigeon's gradual process may be from February to November. Other birds such as swifts and birds of prey require lengthy moult times to retain their aerobatic ability.

During the moult the birds tend to be inconspicuous, ceasing territorial behaviour. For some migrating birds the moult will be incomplete so it, and the associated food demand, is suspended during migration, completing it in the winter quarters. A few species suspend most or all of the moult until they have migrated. These include swifts, swallows, house martins, spotted flycatcher and garden warbler.

Some birds produce new feathers in preparation for the breeding season. Black-headed gulls begin to develop their chocolate brown heads, pied wagtails with a second partial spring moult look blacker. Most birds however assume a new appearance without new feathers. The starling's spotty winter appearance changes into its glossy green-black uniform as the tips of the feathers are worn away. By the same process thrushes look light grey rather than tawny brown and in the same manner the black bib of the cock house sparrow and the slate blue head of the chaffinch appear. Similarly, the cock redpoll's pink chest, the reed bunting's black head and neck markings and the jet black markings of the cock brambling all slowly emerge as the dull tips of the feathers are worn away.

In the post juvenile moult most young birds gradually develop adult plumage, replacing body plumage but retaining flight and tail feathers for another year. However, house sparrows, long-tailed tits and starlings change all their feathers in the post juvenile moult. Because this moult is usually partial it can be brief. Young blackbirds can do so in 5 weeks. Because the head is the last to moult they can look like vultures at this stage.

Because most young will enter winter with feathers, both acquired in the nest and grown during the summer, the observant birdwatcher can identify such juveniles. Thus, the life cycle of the adult bird is: pairing, mating, nesting, raising young and finally undergoing a complete moult.

David Pilch