

Main Work Party Reports.

Aug 30 – Jary’s Meadow – East meadow – Area from main gate to middle fire site and around apple trees raked and cleared. W meadow bracken area and around seat raked and cleared. 7 members +1

Sep 13 – Buckenham Woods – Areas – between steps, around seats, bike racks, PC sign and along edge of path network from gate to steps all raked and cleared to spoil heaps/fire sites. Western pit – a number of sycamores cut down and made into wood pile. An area of bramble within the woodland cut back. 7 members.

Sep 27 – Walsham Fen – Areas D/E raked and cleared to spoil heaps. Cleared willow branches cut down on 22 Sep. Areas by boardwalk raked and cleared. 8 members + 1

Oct 11 – Howes Meadow – Area C raked and cleared to fire sites/spoil heaps. Area D raked into rows some clearance to fire site. 8 members + 1

Additional Work

Aug 11 – Howes Meadow – Mower transported to site. Path network mown.

Aug 14/17/18/19 -Howes Meadow – raking and clearing paths to heaps.

Aug 21 – Howes Meadow – clearance completed.

Aug 30 – Howes Meadow – Area A centre fire heap almost completely burnt.

Sep 02 – Limpenhoe Church – Conservation area – small section mown before mower breakdown.

Sep 06 – Howes Meadow - Area A west main fire site – completely burnt.

Sep 07 – Howes Meadow – Area A east fire site – completely burnt.

Sep 08 – Buckenham Woods – The bank area between the two steps, both sides of path leading to main gate, around PC sign, bike racks, and 3 benches all mown.

Sep 11 – Cremers Meadow – A section mown for their WP on 17 Sept.

Sep 18 – Walsham Fen – Areas D/E and top and both sides of boardwalk mown.

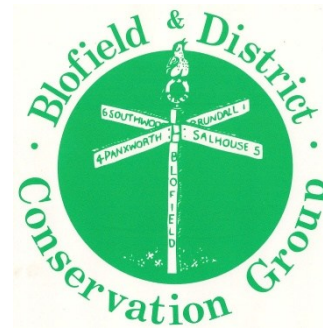
Sep 22 – Walsham Fen – 2 medium size willows pollarded. Trunks cut up and placed in wood pile.

Oct 01 - Blofield Church – GYGG carried out many small tasks in all 4 conservation areas. Nettles and rank growth in lower part of churchyard scythed.

Oct 06 – Limpenhoe Church – Completed mow of conservation area started on 02 Sep before mower breakdown.

Oct 13 – Howes Meadow – Area D further raking and clearance carried out.

Oct 21—Jary’s Meadow—Central area of meadow and around fire sites mown. Also, some mowing at the bottom of the bank was carried out.



BADCOG Chairmans annual report

BADCOG NEWS.

No 240: November 2025

President: Richard Hobbs

Chair: Tony McKie, Teal Barn,

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The Blofield & District Conservation Group (BADCOG) is a small group of keen volunteers undertaking wildlife conservation management at 14 sites in and around the Blofield area.

All sites have a wildlife value, some greater than others. Most, if not all sites are accessible to the public, and if left unmanaged the wildlife value would quickly decline, and they would quickly become inaccessible to the public.

To ensure this doesn't happen, over the past 12 months BADCOG has undertaken 27 main work parties. Some sites require just one work party a year, such as Holly Lane Pond, Railway Woods and Snowdrop Acre, while others require much more attention, such as Howe's Meadow, Walsham Fen and Buckenham Woods.

In addition to the main work parties, there have also been many more occasions, 103 occasions in fact, when BADCOG Volunteers have undertaken additional work. This ranges from:

- Preparing sites for the main work party, mainly mowing.
- Finishing off jobs when uncomplete, mainly raking off and clearing.
- Burning fire heaps and many other jobs.

All of which is important to make sure the sites are at their best.

BADCOG relies on a core number of about 16 volunteers who regularly attend work parties. This past 12 months the average turnout has been 8 volunteers per work party, which is down on last year's numbers which was 10 per work party. Despite this, we have still been able to get a great deal done, so a big thank you to all of our volunteers. Your efforts are greatly appreciated, particular John Elvin for his work at Howe's Meadow and his chainsaw work when needed.

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This year we must once again thank the Bure Vally Conservation Group who helped us out at Walsham Fen and Southwood Churchyard and the Great Yarmouth Green Gym, for their help at Blofield Churchyard.

It is also worthwhile mentioning the Brundall Scout Group who came along to the Lingwood Pond work party. This was to help them out with an achievement badge, and they proved to be very useful on the day, helping with the coppicing and clearance.

Although we have not been directly involved with any planting schemes the past 12 months, Ernest and a small team carried out some tree care work on a number of oaks we planted in Lingwood a few years ago. These oaks had been badly damaged by the local farmer while cutting back the hedge. It's hoped these oaks survive and are not damaged again this winter.

Last winter we had a contractor reinstate the ditch on the North side of Howe's Meadow. The purpose of the ditch is to catch any runoff from the fields to the north and prevent it overspilling onto the meadow. This it now does successfully.

Looking ahead, we are planning to reinstate the 2 small ponds at Walsham Fen which over time have filled up. These ponds support a wide range of wildlife and are important features of the fen.

Also, it is hoped that very soon a management plan for Buckenham Woods will be published. Currently our work parties at this site consists mainly of keeping access around the site open. This plan should now give us a more joined up approach to the management of the woodland, and we look forwards to working alongside Strumpshaw PC and the Buckenham Ancient Woodland Trust.

Finally, I must thank all committee members for their work this past 12 months. Just a few mentions:

- Ernest for maintaining the mowers and other machinery, and for the use of his vehicle for transporting the mower to the sites,
- David & Bardara Pilch for getting items for the Newsletter,
- John Laycock for looking after our finances and our talks programme,
- Berly for her admin work.
- Tony Bowyer for maintaining our records, and
- Frances for the Newsletter distribution.

Thank you all for another successful year.

Using advanced mapping technology, and on-the-ground analysis, the project team have discovered and re-excavated 15 buried 'ghost' pingo ponds hidden beneath the landscape. Eleven of the ghost pingos to be excavated were at NWT's Watering Farm, adjacent to NWT Thompson Common reserve, and four were on two nearby sites owned by separate landowners. 'Ghost' pingos may have been filled in by humans, normally to facilitate larger scale agricultural production.

The revitalised pingos have attracted an impressive array of wildlife. Surveys documented 50 water beetle species, 15 of which are of conservation concern. Amphibians and reptiles including common frogs, toads and great crested newts were recorded.

This project was the first of its kind and the main objective was to see if reinstatement of a ghost pingo can be done and how best to approach the process. The project has shown that extremely positive results can be achieved in just one- or two-years post restoration.



A Pingo Trail

The Great Eastern Pingo Trail at Thompson Common reserve is an 8-mile circular walk which takes you through the heart of the pingo landscape.

BADCOG Evening Talks 2025—2026

**14th November—Wildlife in a Country Churchyard.
A talk by David Bryant**

All talks take place on the 2nd Friday of the month starting at 7.30pm
Venue: Stumpshaw Community Hall.
NR13 4FS

What is a pingo?

Also known as kettle ponds, pingos date back to the ice age and Pingo is the Inuit word for “hill”.

Pingos were originally low hillocks which formed in permafrost (tundra) conditions 20,000 years ago during the last Ice Age when water beneath the surface froze to form lenses of ice pushing the soil upwards and forming a small hillock. During the summer the soil on the surface would sludge off and accumulate around the periphery of the hillocks. Shallow craters were left when the ice melted causing the hillocks to collapse.

The most famous concentration of these unique ponds, a network of around 400 small pools, is at Thompson Common (6 km south of Watton). This is a National Nature Reserve and is well worth a visit to enjoy its wildlife including dragonflies, butterflies and England's rarest amphibian the northern pool frog.

The Breckland area has a significant concentration of these unique ponds - important wetland habitats for a wide variety of flora and fauna.

The Norfolk Wildlife Trust's project to reinstate pingos.

The NWT is working to reinstate some of the lost pingo ponds, known as ‘ghost pingos’, on newly acquired land adjacent to the reserve at Thompson Common. Many of these wonderful, ice age ponds were drained or lost to agriculture through deep ploughing and infilling. As the pingos are recovered wildlife is quickly returning to these ancient spaces.

Work will focus on restoring ghost pingos, which have already been identified by geospatial mapping, and reinstating the thriving Breckland grass heath known to be present in the 18th century. Taking this land back to its past will actually increase its resilience in the future.

The wider Brecks area has hundreds of these ponds supporting much rare and threatened wildlife including dragonflies, aquatic snails, the northern pool frog and many rare water plants.

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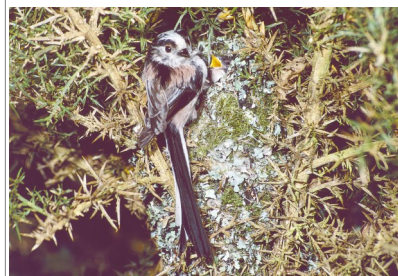
Fifth Time Lucky

Hans Watson

About fifteen years ago, Long-tailed Tits built a nest in a thick and very spiny Berberis bush, on the edge of my shrubbery. The birds had not finished lining the nest when it was torn to pieces by an unknown predator. Two years later, Long-tailed Tits built a nest in the same Berberis bush, and in the exact same spot in the bush. This time the top of the nest was completely torn off, and it was obvious even from a distance that something awful had occurred with nest lining scattered over the bush. What was puzzling was that undamaged eggs were left in the remains of the nest.



On the third occasion, Long-tailed Tits were seen to be taking nest material to a site about fifteen feet up in a Macrocarpa tree. I watched the progress of this through binoculars, with some dread. Sure enough, it was completely destroyed by a pair of Jackdaws before it was completed. The fourth occasion was in 2023, when I saw a Long-tailed Tit collecting spider webs, from the outside of my garage window. Watching from inside the garage, I saw the bird fly into a gorse bush in the garden. During the next two weeks I watched from the concealment of the garage, the nest reaches the lining stage. One day whilst I watched, I saw a Dunnock with a beak-full of nest material disappear into the same gorse bush. This continued for several days, and then one day I realised that I had not seen the Long-tailed Tits.



When I went to the gorse bush, there was a beautiful complete Dunnock nest, only 25 centimetres from the still uncompleted Long-tailed Tit nest. The Dunningtons went on to rear 4 young successfully, and the Long-tailed Tits deserted their nest.

This year I once again saw Long-tailed Tit building a nest in the same gorse bush, but a little higher up. This time I was able to see them successfully fledge at least 7 young. What puzzles me is that I have quite a lot of thorny and spiny shrubs that would seem to be ideal for nesting in, and that would offer more concealment, including a number of gorse bushes, but 4 of the 5 nesting attempts have been in just two, seemingly less suitable bushes.

Migrant dragonflies at Carlton Marshes



Towards the end of June Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve has seen the influx of multiple vagrant emperor dragonflies.

These long-distance migrants originate from arid areas in North Africa and take advantage of southerly winds from the Sahara. These dragonflies don't appear every

year and were last seen at Carlton 4 years ago.

More than 10 individuals are present currently and have been observed ovipositing (egg laying) where, unlike our native emperors, the male clasps the back of the head of the female while she lays her eggs both underwater and in damp, muddy holes. Their larvae grow very quickly, and the next generation of adults could emerge in Sept/Oct and continue their migration to pastures new.

Veteran trees on "The Link"

Norfolk Council's proposal for its £274m Western Link bypass surprised Sheridan Sayer, a conservation arborist, with its claim that just seven veteran trees would be impacted by the new road.

Sheridan also volunteers for the Woodland Trust verifying the special trees people add to the Ancient Trees Inventory, so he is familiar with the historic track ways and parish boundaries where they tend to survive.

Looking at the corridor, the council had chosen he knew their claim just didn't add up.

He said, "Over ten weeks or so I walked 90% of the four-mile bypass route - all but one landowner was opposed to the scheme, so they gave me permission. I found seven veteran trees in the first half an hour and recorded fifty-four in all, plus seven ancient ones. One of the best - an oak with a trunk 15ft round - had been deemed 'dead or dying' by the council but, in fact, it had a large, healthy canopy. An 8m lime tree wasn't included at all despite being one of Norfolk's largest."

"Other experts looked into the impact of the bypass on chalk streams and rare barbastelle bats and, thanks to our big collective effort, Natural England threw out the road project last spring - though I hear a new plan is being hatched. I hope they expect the same scrutiny."

Mountainside habitats in Wales.

A common site in Wales is one of scattered trees clinging to steep hillsides above small family farms in the scrubby fringes between enclosed fields and the open summits. The habitat is a sort of cultural artefact, forged by farming heritage and the distinctive topography of Wales, and it has a very specific Welsh name - *ffridd*.

"Thousands of years of browsing by wild animals and livestock has created woody reaches interspersed with glades, bogs and bracken" says the Woodland Trust's Kylie Jones Mattock.

"And wildlife has evolved to make the most of this mosaic: you'll find tree pipits flitting through the *ffridd*; lesser horseshoe bats on the woodland edges; lichens and bryophytes in wetter areas; lizards and adders basking on the rocks."

"The Trust's biggest swathe of *ffridd* is at Llennyrch, in Southern Snowdonia. Here we're scattering local seed and planting saplings in the outcrops to establish pockets of rowan, crab apple and holly trees, hidden from hungry mouths by dense bracken and bramble."

"We'll experiment with grazing to try to reach the right level of disturbance to create that perfect patchwork for wildlife. Then we'll share what we've learned so other landowners can boost *ffridd* habitat on their own land."



BADCOG WORK PARTY DATES

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

All welcome.

8th November – Snowdrop Acre

22nd November – Howe's Meadow

6th December – Walsham Fen

20th December – Railway Woods

3rd January 2026 – Lingwood Village Pond

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