

Main Work Party Reports

Jul 12 – Blofield Church – NE & NW conservation areas raked and cleared to spoil heaps. Some chainsaw work carried out on a Box stump which had been cut back last year. 7 members + 3 others.

Jul 26 – Howes Meadow – Area A raked and cleared to fire sites/spoil heaps. 7 members + 1 other

Aug 09 – Walsham Fen – Area G raked and cleared to spoil heaps. 6 members + 1.

Additional Work

Jul 01/02 – Howes Meadow – clearing paths.

Jul 05 – Southwood Church – Conservation areas mown. Litter pick around road side of site.

Jul 07 – Howes Meadow – clearing paths.

Jul 07 – Blofield Church – NE NW SE SW conservation areas mown, areas around gravestones strimmed.

Jul 07 – Howes Meadow – path network mown on 30th Jun raked and cleared to fire sites/spoil heaps.

Jul 09 – Walsham Fen – Boardwalk network + a 1.5 metre strip on both sides mown. One of the “No Public Access” signs missing.

Jul 11 – Jary’s Meadow – West meadow – cut new bracken patch and pulled small quantity in original area, raked and cleared area into a couple of heaps.

Jul 15 – Blofield Church – SE & SW conservation areas raked and cleared to spoil heaps by the GYGG.

Jul 17 – Howes Meadow – Area A between fire sites mown. Holes drilled in dead oak for solitary wasps etc. Scythed around young hedgerow oaks and the tree trunk seat.

Jul 25 – Howes Meadow – Area A start clearance.

Jul 27 – Howes Meadow – Area A clear leftover cuttings from WP 26th Jul.

Jul 28 – Howes Meadow – Area A all the bulk of cuttings cleared to heaps, some tidying, light raking left to do.

Jul 31 – Howes Meadow – Completed raking and tidying up around fire heaps.

Aug 04 – Walsham Fen – Area G + top of boardwalk mown.

BADCOG Evening Talks 2025—2026

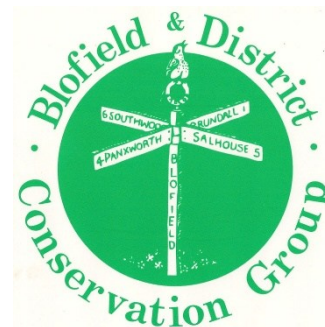
12th September: AGM followed by Members Evening.

10th October : A talk about Salhouse Broad by a warden (Kelly).

All talks take place on the 2nd Friday of the month starting at 7.30pm

Venue: Stumpshaw Community Hall.

NR13 4FS



Chairmans Update—September 2025

BADCOG NEWS.

No 239: September 2025

President: Richard Hobbs

Chair: Tony McKie, Teal Barn,

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This edition of the BADCOG Newsletter includes the agenda for the upcoming AGM. It's scheduled for Friday 12th September at Strumpshaw Community Hall, beginning at 7.30pm. The AGM will be followed by a members' evening, during which attendees may bring items to discuss, including short presentations or slide shows using the hall's projector. Now that autumn is here and having successfully cut and cleared the five churchyards we manage, we now turn our attention to our other sites. This has already started at Howe's Meadow, Walsham Fen and Jary's Meadow. The two sections we have cut and cleared at Howe's Meadow and Walsham Fen, were very hard work. We think was due to the additional growth from a warmer than average summer. To try and get on top of Howe's Meadow and Walsham Fen, we plan to undertake more management at these site with some additional mowing of the worst areas. We have also decided to introduce more Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) to the north side of Howe's Meadow. Yellow-rattle is an annual that thrives in grasslands, living a semi-parasitic life by feeding off the nutrients in the roots of nearby grasses. For this reason, it was once seen as an indicator of poor grassland by farmers, but is now often used to turn grassland back to meadow. By feeding off the vigorous grasses, Yellow-rattle will eventually allow more delicate, traditional species to push their way through. Only time will tell if this will work on the reeds at Howe's Meadow, but we believe it's worth a try.

At Walsham Fen, the Milk Parsley we introduced 2 years ago, is still doing well in one area of the Fen. We will continue to monitor this plant in the hope it will slowly increase its presence across the Fen.

Finally, we are once again very grateful to both the Bure Valley Conservation Group and the Great Yarmouth Green Gym, who have helped us out with the management of Blofield, Hemblington and Southwood Churchyards this summer.

Our local Weather 2025

2025 has been and continues to be a very dry year, but actually this very dry period goes back to October 2024, nine months ago. September last year was the last month with an above average rainfall, 70 mm against an average of 54.6mm. A change came in the second half of this July, as much rain fell between the 14th and the end of the month as had fallen in the previous two months back to April. The average for July is 53mm and I recorded 63mm. As I write however, mid August, we are back to almost drought conditions, only 4.5mm so far this month.

Comparisons with 1976 have been made. After a dry year in 1975, 21 inches, the first seven months of 1976 produced 6.12 inches, or 155mm. This year we've had 149mm for the same period. The remaining five months of 1976 were at or above average especially September and October which together produced over eight and a half inches bringing the year's total to 21.87 inches or 555mm. The long-term average rainfall in Lingwood is 25 ¼ inches or 642mm.

This year nationally Spring, the three months of March, April and May, were the driest on record, but not so here, Spring 2011 was much drier with only 23.5mm.

This year 50.7mm mainly due to one wet day in May, 18.6mm on 27th. 2011 ended as my driest year on record, annual total 16.61 inches or 422mm

Finally for anyone who thinks 2025 has been too hot I've actually only recorded one day to exceed 30c and that was June 28th at 30.8c. Our proximity to the coast does keep us cooler than only a little further inland.

A brief summary of 2025 so far:

Jan: Mean temperature 0.6c below average (av). Rainfall 39.6mm—71% of av.

Feb: Mean temp. 0.4c above av. Rainfall 34.7mm—81% of av.

Mar: Mean temp. 1.0c above av. Rainfall 6.4mm—14% of av (driest March on my record)

Apr: Mean temp 0.9c above av. Rainfall 15.2mm—38% of av.

May: Mean temp. 0.8c above av. Rainfall 29.1—66% of av.

Jun: Mean temp. 2.5c above av. Rainfall 24mm—43% of av.

Jul: Mean temp. 1.1c above av. Rainfall 63.3mm—119% of av.

Membership renewal!

BADCOG Membership subscriptions are now due.

The cost for a annual membership remains the same:

£5 per single membership or £10 per family membership

You can pay by Bank transfer to:

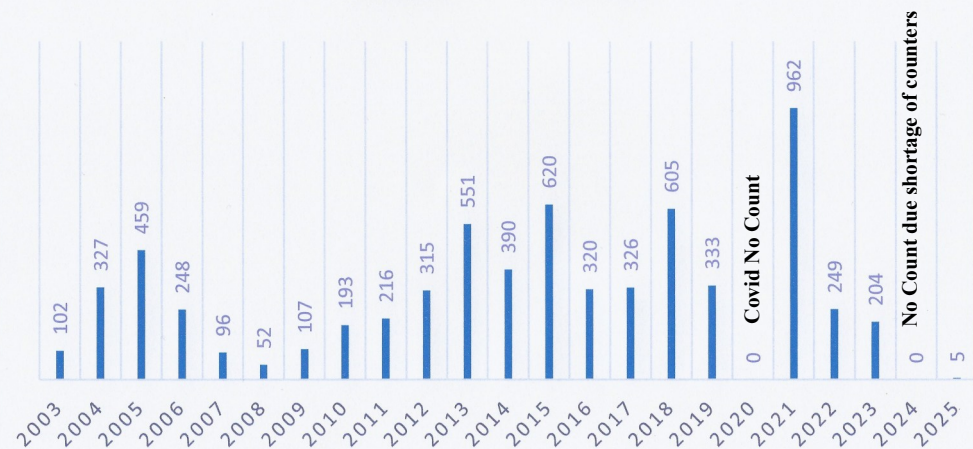
Lloyds Bank. Sort Code: 30 99 97. Account No: 00642538.

Name: Blofield and District Conservation Group.

Or forward any cheques made payable to BADCOG to:

Frances Milliken, 45 Heathway, Blofield Corner Road, Norwich NR13 4RS

WALSHAM FEN ORCHID COUNT



Not far over the border into Lincolnshire is Vine House Farm near Spalding.

Here Nicholas Watts has kept nature records for most of his life. He notes that this year several species have arrived 10 days earlier than normal. Maybe favourable winds helped them, or above average temperatures brought them sooner than in other years.

This year April 16th was his first hearing of the cuckoo Their food used to be the tortoiseshell and peacock caterpillars. With their decline cuckoos now seek the brown tailed moth which are hairy, but which cuckoos enjoy. Sand martins have set about making their nests in a heap of gravel. This is a hive of activity with about 70 holes. The birds burrow two feet deep into the gravel heap to build their nests.

This year has seen a 10% increase in the numbers of tree sparrows Lapwings are also up by 10% but the dry weather is not good for them as invertebrates like to be in moist soil. In dry weather they burrow deeper and can be out of the reach of Lapwings.

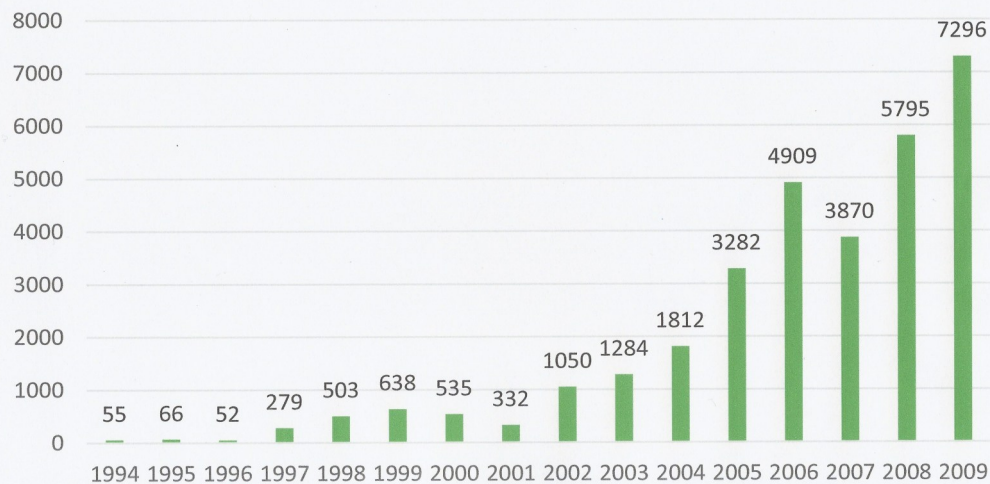
Barn owls are probably finding enough food at night, so Nicholas noted in May that he was not seeing them in the daytime. The dry weather would have suited the voles while they were breeding so there has been plenty of food for the owls.

On the farm sunflowers and millet were drilled in the spring with the next necessary job the protection of the emerging plants from pigeons. A sunflower seed puts a root down and then the seed is pushed up and as it emerges it breaks into two to form cotyledons. These unfolding seeds are sunflower hearts, an extremely tasty snack for a bird, but that is the end of the seed. If undisturbed a pigeon can walk all the way down the row eating sunflower hearts. One alone could clear an acre of emerging plants. Pheasants and partridges also like them. They walk in from the outside of the field, so we net the outside 12 metres which helps a lot. Growing seeds as bird food for smaller wild birds but needing to prevent losing the crop to larger species.

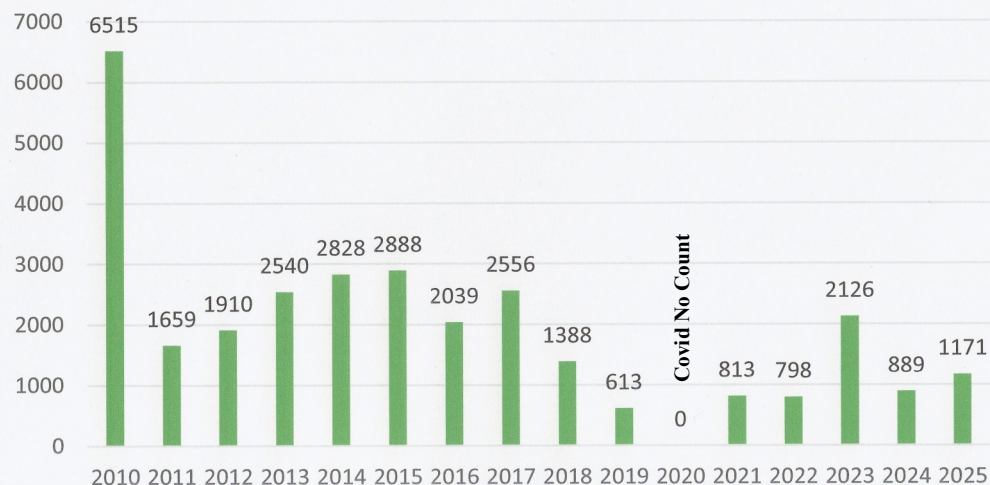
Annual Orchid Counts Charts

This year's orchid surveys were conducted on Monday, 23rd July at Howe's Meadow, and on Friday, 27th July at Walsham Fen. Each survey involved six participants, which is considered the minimum required to carry out this important assessment. The number of orchids recorded at Walsham Fen was notably low; however, as the count occurred a week later than in previous years, it is likely that some orchids had already passed their prime. Reports from other locations indicate that it has generally been a poor year for both Common Spotted and Southern Marsh Orchids.

Howe's Meadow



Howe's Meadow



Resurrecting Ghost Ponds

A 'ghost pond' is an old pond lost to in-filling. Restored 'ghost ponds' can quickly recolonise with aquatic plants and insects providing high-quality pond habitats for farm wildlife with minimal loss of good farmland.

The loss of farmland ponds.

Prior to the 1940s, UK lowland farmland was pock-marked with ponds. While many ponds were dug beforehand, the 17th to 19th centuries saw a real age of clay digging, including calcareous clays that were spread over fields to improve the soil (marling) and various clay types that were used for brick making. In the same era ponds were also dug to water livestock, and much evidence suggests that, once created, ponds in this era had all sorts of practical purposes. However, during the 1950s-70s era, all was to change. A huge government-encouraged post-war push for increased food production saw miles of hedges pulled out and at the same time vast numbers of ponds were filled in, with hedges and hedge banks often bull-dozed into pond as a means of dumping them.

Since the 1880s map-based estimates suggest that probably more than half a million ponds have been lost in England and Wales alone. In Norfolk, for example, pond losses of around 28% (8000+) have occurred since the early 1950s.

Sadly, even today, ponds are all too often filled in to gain what is often a poor and wet piece of land that fails to produce a good crop. In truth we need to go in the other direction and start digging lost ponds out again – ghosts need to be resurrected.

Ghost ponds commonly remain visible as damp depressions, puddles and darker soil patches out in the fields during winter, or as crop marks due to differing soil moisture content in spring and summer.

Due to the remarkable persistence and continued viability of wetland plant seeds, the colonisation of native wetland plants can be very fast. Wetland plant that were common in the countryside in the past, but exceptionally rare today, can turn up in resurrected and the exceptionally rare Grass-Poly was returned to a Norfolk Pond. After a few years the ponds will be hotspots for wetland plants, amphibians, dragonflies, pollinators, birds and even bats.

Locally ponds have been lost and Jimmy Francis who worked on a Blofield farm recalled -

"There was one pond or pit in the farmyard. When the horses came home after a day's work they would go down into what we called the pit to drink. There was one further down the road which we called the Willow Pit that would be the supply of water for the cattle in wintertime. Continues over page.....

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You would have to cart that with a horse and water cart to the cattle which were kept in sheds and in the yards.

I can well remember, in the wintertime, you had to fill this water cart with a bucket. You'd back the cart down into the pit, so the horse was ready to pull it out, and you'd fill it with a bucket. The frost sometimes would be that bad you would have a pulp sack round you and the icicles would hang off it. If you didn't stand on the front of the water cart, when it came out of the pit, just before it got to the top it would shoot up and you'd lose the lot."

When a pond is resurrected such items as old glass bottles, pottery, clay pipes, agricultural implements, drinks cans and even plastic food packaging can provide dateable evidence for the approximate time of burial of a pond and can inform on its long-forgotten history.

BTO Cuckoo Research

Two more cuckoos have been successfully tagged at Worlingham Marshes nature reserve in north Suffolk contributing to vital research which aims to better understand the bird's long-term decline.

The birds were fitted with lightweight satellite tags as part of the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) long-running Cuckoo Tracking Project, which since 2011 has followed the remarkable trans-Saharan migration of more than 100 individual cuckoos.

This brings the total number of tagged cuckoos at Worlingham Marshes nature reserve to four, following the tagging of 'Nick 2' and 'Wilfrid' in June 2024. Tracking data in February 2025 indicates that Nick 2 likely died in Senegal on his return journey to Suffolk, however Wilfrid has returned to Suffolk: the first of BTO's tagged cuckoos to return to the UK.

The two newest arrivals – both males – have been named 'Arthur' and 'Ashok'. The three birds will now be tracked on their extraordinary journey to central Africa and back, providing crucial data to help understand the threats they face along the way. Once a familiar sound of the British summer, the cuckoo's iconic two-note call is becoming increasingly rare. Since the 1960s, the UK's breeding cuckoo population has declined by over a third. Researchers hope that by understanding more about the pressures cuckoos encounter during migration and on their wintering grounds, they can begin to better understand, and hopefully mitigate, the causes of their decline.

Wilfrid's incredible return to Worlingham Marshes is an example of how site-faithful these birds are, as well as a strong indication that Suffolk Wildlife Trust's habitat restoration works - made possible with the support of The National Lottery Heritage Fund – are successfully creating a haven for wildlife.

You can follow the journeys of Wilfrid, Arthur and Ashok live on the BTO's website.

HERON EATS DUCK

Just after 6 pm on the evening of 15th September 1996 I was in the Island Mere Hide at Minsmere, in company with about half a dozen other observers, when the behaviour of a juvenile Grey Heron caused considerable comment. From standing almost motionless beside the Mere, the heron turned suddenly and rapidly covered a distance of about 6-8 metres across an area of reed stubble scattering three snipe and several ducks in the process and began stabbing at something out of view behind a low (~0.3 metre high) screen of vegetation.

It then raised its head and was seen to be holding a duck, probably teal, by the neck in its bill. The latter was attempting, rather ineffectually, to peck at the heron's head. Several times the duck was deliberately dropped and subjected to stabbing attacks and initially it attempted to scramble away but it was soon too weak to attempt escape. It was then subjected to a prolonged (2-3 minutes) attack behind the low vegetative screen.

The heron then attempted to swallow the duck headfirst (the head may, although not certainly, have been removed) and for a few minutes the heron stood with the duck half in and half out of its gape. It made repeated efforts to complete the ingestion until (to general amazement) it finally succeeded and for some minutes was motionless with a large bulge in its neck. This suddenly transferred to the base of the neck and became scarcely visible, whereupon the heron returned to the water's edge.

The entire episode lasted about 15 minutes. Although the literature-refers to herons eating small mammals, amphibians and birds and there is a record of a heron eating a hoopoe prey, the size of a teal appears to be very exceptional. Whether or not the duck was initially sick or injured is not known.

BADCOG WORK PARTY DATES

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

All welcome.

13th September—Buckenham Woods

27th September—Walsham fen

11th October—Howe's Meadow

25th October –Jary's Meadow

8th November –Snowdrop Acre

22nd November—Howe's Meadow

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