



## Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership Partners' News July 2008

**Welcome** to the July 2008 edition of the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership (SBP) e-newsletter!

SBP is a partnership comprised of conservation organisations, statutory bodies, local authorities, businesses and not-for-profit organisations working throughout the county of Suffolk on behalf of wildlife. The UK's Biodiversity Action Plan is delivered at a local level by members of the Partnership – for further information visit [www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Biodiversity](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Biodiversity).

This new monthly newsletter aims to highlight the biodiversity work of partners and to disseminate information about grants, workshops, events and biodiversity project opportunities.

### PARTNERS NEWS

#### **A Promising start for Silver-studded Blues at Blaxhall Common Rob Parker, Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation.**

One of the objectives of the Species Action Plan for the Silver-studded Blue is its re-establishment at a number of new sites in the Sandlings. Summer 2007 saw a carefully managed translocation of stock from two SSSIs to a fresh site at Blaxhall Common, which is also a SSSI. A collaborative effort by Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) and the Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation, with the assistance of RSPB, Pauls Estates and Blaxhall Parish Council was arranged under the guidance of Natural England, and 60 adult butterflies were liberated at their new home in June/July last year.

It will be several years before we can properly assess the success of the project, but encouraging news came on 20th June 2008, when the first adult butterfly was seen on the wing at Blaxhall. This means that females laid eggs last year, that these survived the winter, were tended by ants and successfully pupated and emerged to begin a new generation. Later this year, we shall be able to see just how many are flying at Blaxhall, and hopefully, pairing in the wild. Their future depends on careful habitat management by a volunteer team working under SWT direction.



Silver-studded Blues freshly released summer 2007, in their new home on Blaxhall Common.

More details will be published shortly as a special edition of the Suffolk Argus (the newsletter of Suffolk Butterfly Conservation).

## **News from Dedham Vale AONB and Stour valley**

**Peter Ennis**

Last winter we were very pleased to find two bats in one of the pillboxes converted into a hibernaculum. We've been monitoring temperatures inside pillboxes and in other structures where bats are known to hibernate. The results suggest that converted pillboxes should be very suitable for bats and shouldn't need any further work. Ironically, the bats turned up in what we thought to be the least suitable of the 10 pillboxes we converted, proving that we really don't know very much about their requirements!

We now have 65 barn owl boxes up and being monitored in the Project area. This year we know of 10 breeding pairs in the valley, 8 of them in our boxes. Brood sizes are small (max 4) and there don't appear to be many voles about as we're not finding surplus dead voles in the boxes as there would be in a good year. There is (not surprisingly) a strong correlation between the boxes that are occupied and the nearby availability of plenty of rough grassland. We will be working with David Wilkin of the Barn Owl Network to ring the chicks over the next 2 months.

We've been working with landowners and managers in the Leavenheath and Assington area to enlarge and connect up ancient woodlands and other semi-natural habitats. Trees are being planted from locally collected seed.

## **Hunting for the Scarlet Malachite Beetle in Suffolk**

**Jamie Roberts, Buglife**

For the past four years Buglife has been working to conserve the Scarlet malachite beetle *Malachius aeneus*, a BAP priority species that has undergone a grave decline in recent years. Once distributed across southern England and Wales, the beetle is now restricted to two strongholds, in Essex and Hampshire. In addition to protecting these sites, the Buglife project has also been surveying historical sites for the beetle, in the hope that we can rediscover a forgotten population.



Scarlet malachite beetle *M. aeneus*

The focus recently turned to Suffolk. There are 6 records of *M. aeneus* from the village of Monk Soham by the late entomologist Claude Morley (1874-1951). Morley, an authority on beetles and author of *The Coleoptera of Suffolk* (1899) was resident in the area and had specimens in his collection dating from 1942 to 1950.

Monk Soham was visited by a member of the Buglife project, Rob Coleman, on a warm, sunny day during the emergence period (May-June). This is a quiet part of rural Suffolk with a landscape not dissimilar to the beetle's Essex site, although the largely arable area has clearly undergone considerable agricultural change over the past 50 or so years (as witnessed by remnant trees from 'ghost' hedges long since grubbed out to expand field size).

A broad speculative search was made of the region which contained a number of areas of good potential beetle habitat. Particular attention was paid to areas less susceptible to agricultural change (including common land and a churchyard). In addition, stretches of road verge / footpath were sampled by sweep netting.

Unfortunately, no *Malachius aeneus* were found, but that simply reflects that this is an extremely rare and localised species - the proverbial needle in the haystack. *We would ask that people living in rural Suffolk keep their eyes open for the beetle next year – photos and identification information can be found at [www.buglife.org.uk](http://www.buglife.org.uk)*

## **Working in partnership: Elveden Estate and Natural England**

### **Bill Nickson**

The recent Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement between Natural England and the Elveden Estate is the largest in the region, covering more than 5,300 hectares in the three villages of Elveden, Icklingham and Eriswell. The Estate has been owned by the Earls of Iveagh since 1984 when it was purchased as a sporting estate from the executors of the late Maharajah Duleep Singh. The agreement covers a large area of heathland, acid and calcareous grassland and field margins, benefitting an enormous range of species. Examples of agreed management include grazing, provision of infrastructure such as fencing, control of bracken and removal of some trees from heathland sites.

There are multiple benefits for wildlife resulting from the HLS agreement, such as protection for rare plants such as Tower Mustard and Perennial Knawel and birds such as woodlark, nightjar, grey partridge and stone-curlew. 15% of the UK population of this species breed on this single estate. There are brown hares and a healthy population of bats, and an enormous range of butterflies, moths and other invertebrates.

Many of the heathlands have open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, although access is restricted during the breeding season to protect vulnerable ground-nesting birds

## **Suffolk Hedgerow Survey**

### **Guy Ackers**

The Suffolk Hedgerow Survey is in its 11th year and has completed 98 parish surveys with another 300 ongoing across the County. There remain less than 80 parishes to begin surveying, but only two seasons are left before the targeted end date of leaf fall 2010.

This project has huge community involvement with over 2,500 volunteer surveyors and a coordinator for each parish survey recruited from within the parish community. Volunteers are from all walks of life, including the Parish Council, WI, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, tree planting and other conservation groups. The data collected is passed to the Suffolk Biological Records Centre.

The survey records the species richness of hedgerows, along with details of trees and bushes as well as the hedgerow structure and landscape connections. It is a quantitative data recording exercise and makes no critical assessment of the hedgerow management. Consequently, in the parishes surveyed, over 99% of farmers and landowners have agreed to give access to the surveyor teams to complete the study when hedgerows can not be surveyed through public access.

## **Underground electricity lines**

### **Neil Lister, Suffolk Coasts and Heaths**

Ofgem, the electricity industry regulator, has provided £2.9 million in the East of England to develop underground overhead low voltage electricity lines outside towns and villages between 2005 and 2010. Schemes are vetted by a regional Steering Group, to ensure the work is achievable and cost-effective and will improve the landscape in protected areas (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks). Ofgem is launching a public consultation in 2008 to decide whether the funding should be continued beyond 2010.

EDF Energy Networks will be removing the power lines that cross Blythburgh Marshes on 15 July. This follows pioneering work with the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, local residents and landowners. The removal of these power lines will enhance one of the most beautiful parts of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Not only is the Blyth Valley a beautiful landscape, it is also an area of high heritage and wildlife value.

A further three schemes are planned in the Suffolk Coast and Heaths. Protected species surveys have been carried out at relevant sites and this has enabled surveys to be undertaken on some sites where access has always previously been refused.

The Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB extends from the northern side of the Stour estuary to the east of Ipswich and as far north as Kessingland, covering about 150 square miles, most of which is between the A12 and the coast. For further information, contact Neil Lister at the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Unit (01394 384948) or visit the website <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org>

## **Suffolk Strategic Partnership**

### **Creating Greenest County Community Award**

Congratulations! to the community-led Corton Woods Project which has just won The Greenest County Landscape and Biodiversity award, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen. Started in 2001 by local people concerned at the deterioration of their woods, the group has improved the visual impact and accessibility to Corton Woods, encouraged biodiversity and restored traditional management techniques.

## **Ponds and great crested newts**

### **Juliet Hawkins , Pond adviser for Suffolk Wildlife Trust**

Suffolk Wildlife Trust's three-year pond project established that whilst widespread in Suffolk ponds – present in 14.6% of 900 ponds surveyed - great crested newt are only just surviving in the majority of recorded ponds and may be on the brink of local extinction in parishes of low pond density and poorly linked ponds. Using various measures, the vast majority of Suffolk ponds need restoration of one form or another (de-silting, de-shading, buffering) to improve them for great crested newt and other aquatic wildlife.

Pond restoration has been discouraged by some conservation groups and has not been seen as a high priority within Defra's Higher Level Scheme. To ensure the continued survival of, and re-colonisation of former landscapes by, great crested newt populations, a proportion of Suffolk's ponds must continue to be rotationally (and traditionally) managed to ensure a wide distribution of ponds in early successional stages. The nature of pond distribution indicates a priority for pond restoration in High Suffolk clayland, currently outside the HLS target area. Indeed, the recent HLS draft targeting statement for the entire Eastern Region did not even include the words *pond* or *great crested newt* – surprising when both are BAP priorities!



Pond of high value in Whatfield

SWT has surveyed a further 150 ponds since the project ended and advised on their restoration. In 2008 we are focussing effort on re-visiting restored ponds and have found great crested newt have re-colonised sites where there were previously none or where they were present in dangerously low numbers. We are continuing to survey ponds and encourage appropriate restoration.

## INFORMATION

### **Marine Bill latest news**

The draft [Marine Bill](#) was published for consultation on 3 April 2008. The consultation closed on 26 June 2008 in accordance with the Government criteria of a 12-week consultation period. A summary of the responses received will be published on the Defra website in due course.

Defra has published 3 documents explaining detail how provisions in the draft Marine Bill for the establishment of Marine Conservation Zones will work in practice. Specifically, the documents look at the site selection and designation process, duties on public authorities, and the making of conservation orders to protect sites. They can be accessed through the [Marine Biodiversity pages](#).

### **England Biodiversity audit 2008**

On 21 July, Hilary Benn, Environment Secretary, announced the launch of an audit of England's natural resources – its wildlife, habitats and ecosystems.

The two-year project will aim to provide a comprehensive picture of our natural environment, the benefits it provides to society, and how it is changing. The results will be used to prioritise work so that the natural environmental is enhanced and damage to it, including biodiversity loss, is tackled effectively.

Hilary Benn said "It will show us just how much we benefit from our natural environment. And in turn, it will provide a springboard for further action to protect and enhance our natural heritage".

To find out more, visit the [Defra Biodiversity News website](#).

## **Biodiversity in the East of England**

To find out what's going on in our region, check the websites for the county Biodiversity Partnerships and the regional forum:

[Norfolk, Bedfordshire and Luton](#), [Essex](#), [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough](#)  
[East of England Biodiversity Forum](#)

## **Non-native invasive species**

Defra launched a new strategy in May to address the threat of non-native invasive species such as signal crayfish and American mink. Such species have now been recognised as one of the major threats to biodiversity, alongside habitat loss, costing the world's economies billions of pounds.

A copy of the strategy document can be downloaded [here](#) (PDF 548 kb). For further information about non-native invasive species, visit [www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org)

## **EVENTS**

### **11 September Fourth Annual Seminar on Planning and Biodiversity.**

Hosted by Norfolk and Suffolk Biodiversity Partnerships at South Norfolk District Council offices, Long Stratton 9.30 a.m.- 4.30 p.m.

The seminar will provide an overview of the latest developments and best practice related to planning, development control and biodiversity, particularly with regard to the NERC Act, 1 App standard application form and the new validation process. A key function of the seminar is to foster exchange of experience among local authorities in addressing biodiversity within development control and LDFs.

For further information contact Gen Broad or Scott Perkin (tel: 01603 222112, email [scott.perkin@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:scott.perkin@norfolk.gov.uk)).

**4 October, Woodland Skills – Tree planting and local provenance.** 10.00 am to 4 pm. Green Light Trust (“Bringing communities together through working with nature”). For further information, visit the [Green Light Trust website](#)

**Various wildlife events -** [Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#), [National Trust](#), [RSPB](#)

*If you would like to share information on how your organisation is benefiting biodiversity in Suffolk, please contact Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Officer.*

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*Deadline for August newsletter: 15 August 2008.*

Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership consists of:

Natural England, Environment Agency, FWAG, RSPB, Suffolk Biological Records Centre, Suffolk Naturalist's Society, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Forest Heath District Council, St. Edmundsbury Borough Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Waveney District Council.