

### Main Work Party Reports

**Jun 30 - Hemblington Church** - Conservation area mown on 25 Jun, raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

**Jul 14 - Blofield Church** - Conservation areas NE & NW of church, mown on 09 Jul raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

**Jul 28 - Walsham Fen** - Area D/E and boardwalk mown. 2 mowers used. D/E cut vegetation raked and cleared and 50% of boardwalk cleared.

**Aug 11 - Howes Meadow** - Cut vegetation in Area D and path in area C to spoil heap, rowed using hay-turner. Path and 25% of area D raked and cleared to spoil heap

### Additional Work

**Jun 26 - Howes Meadow** - Continued clearance of cut vegetation in main area.

**Jul 05 - Southwood Church** - Conservation area mown

**Jul 09 - Blofield Church** - All 4 conservation areas mown

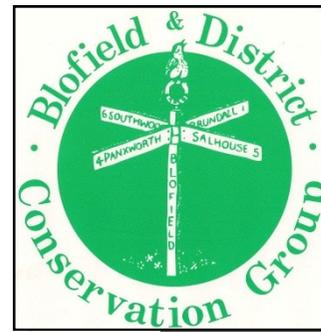
**Jul 11 - Southwood Church** - Conservation area raked and cleared to spoil heaps. This additional WP was carried out by the Bure Valley Conservation Group.

**Jul 17 - Blofield Church** - Conservation areas SE & SW raked and cleared to spoil heaps. This additional WP was carried out by the Great Yarmouth Green Gym.

**Aug 02 - Howes Meadow** - Area D and path in Area C for access to spoil heap mown  
also some areas in main area A that were left uncut at previous WP.

**Aug 18 - Howes Meadow** - Area D - completed the clearance of cut vegetation not cleared at WP on 11 Aug. Quad bike used.

**Aug 27 - Jary's Meadow** - Main track to entrance gate - hedge and bramble cut back. East meadow - Grassy Hollow and a 2metre strip up the adjacent south bank mown. Bramble area in E meadow, the path network and area around the seat in W meadow mown.



### BADCOG NEWS.

No.197 September 2018

**President: Richard Hobbs**

**Chairman: Ernest Hoyos**, Sunny Cottage,  
Buckenham Woods, Lingwood

Norwich NR13 4HG.

Tel 01603 712913

### This Remarkable Summer

**Ernest Hoyos**

As we draw to the end of summer 2018 I've been looking back in my records to see how exceptional it has been.

Taking temperatures, in the last 10 years since I've had accurate MET office instruments, I've only recorded in excess of 30c on two occasions. The 18th Aug. 2012 the mercury hit 32.3c and on the 9th July 2010 it reached 31.6c. this year, in the last four weeks, starting on the 24th July we've exceeded 30c on seven occasions with the highest temperature of 33.5c, 93f on 28th July. Four days in July and 3 in August.

Following the wet Winter the fact that only 16mm of rain fell in May was a great help to farmers and growers but then temperatures climbed in June, and after a welcome rain on the 2nd, no more rain of any consequence fell for 54 days, until the last few days of July when 15mm fell, 28% of the expected monthly total.

On the 6th of August temperatures hit 31c and on 7th 32c, the finally, on the 9th we experienced a rare wet day when 15mm of rain fell. Thereafter temperatures dropped to the 20sC and rain or showers fell.

How many birds and animals died in the drought may become apparent from recordings, but I have no doubt wildlife has been adversely affected. Comparisons have been made with 1976. It had been a dry year in 1975 with a total of 21 inches. From Dec.'75 on we had eight months of well below average rainfall, 189mm against an average of 335mm. This combined with day after day of unbroken sunshine, through the early and mid summer, again led to a parched countryside with reservoirs drying up and stand pipes having to be set up in communities across the country.

Apart from a thunderstorm in the middle of July 1976 it stayed dry until the last week of August when the drought was broken with over 2 inches of rain. This was followed by a wet September and a very wet October. November and December made the year's total up to nearly 22 inches. Six inches in the first 7 months, and 16" in the final 5 months. I wait to see what happens this Autumn and Winter.

## Ducan's Marsh, Claxton

**Beryl Ogden**

On 17<sup>th</sup> June, some of us enjoyed a visit to Ducan's Marsh in Claxton. This small 8 acre site is a real surprise, being completely surrounded by arable land. It lies in the valley of Carleton Beck, a small tributary of the River Yare, which is fed by springs. This gives rise to an area of species-rich fen and fen grassland. Because the marsh has been held in trust as common land since the time of the enclosures, it has never been ploughed, drained or treated with agricultural chemicals.

In the wetter parts, on the day of our visit, we saw many rushes including Black-Bog Rush. Sedges, Marsh Thistle and the beautiful tiny Bog Pimpernel. On the drier fen grassland many Ragged Robin were still in flower. There were patches of Blunt-Flowered Rush and Quaking Grass in amongst the lush vegetation and dense areas of orchids, both Southern Marsh and Common Spotted and no-doubt hybrids of the two.

There is also an area of Alder Carr, the edges of which had recently been cleared to allow more light to enter.

Ducan's Marsh is designated as an SSSI. Natural England has been involved in drawing up the Management Plan to maintain it as such. The South Yare Wildlife Group members are the volunteers who run the work party days. Every summer the whole marsh is grazed, the beginning of which was due to start the day after our visit.

The site is not normally open to the public. The annual Open Day, is organised by the Claxton Trust and the SYWG. After our visit, light refreshments, including strawberries and cream, were served in the village hall.

It is certainly worth looking out for the June Open Day next year for a chance to view this wonderful site.

### Recent Sightings.

Ernest has reported a sighting of a Silver-washed fritillary in his garden, whilst Hans also sighted one in Buckenham Woods. On the 22nd August both Tony and Matthew sighted a Brown Argus also in Buckenham woods, a butterfly we believed we had lost here. A little bit of good news to report.

### WORK PARTY DATES

All work parties start at 10:30am, finishing at 1.00pm.

1st September - Jary's Meadow

15th September - Walsham Fen

29th September— Buckenham woods.

13th October—Howes Meadow

27th October—Walsham fen

10th November—Strumpshaw Stone-pit

24th November—Snowdrop acre

8th December—Jary's Meadow

29th December—Railway Wood.

**Note: The Green Gym will be at Blofield Church on Tuesday 9th October at about 1pm.**

### Caught in the Act

**Hans Watson**

One of my pleasures on a nice sunny spring day, is to go for a walk in some remote piece of countryside, and look for butterflies. Although I am by no means a butterfly specialist, I take great pleasure in seeing the first Holly Blue, Orange Tip, etc, of the year, and just simply watching butterflies certainly lifts my spirit.

On a sunny morning in May, I was watching and photographing Brown Argus butterflies, and had just framed one in the camera viewfinder. I pressed the shutter button, and as is often the case, the butterfly disappeared, and I did not see where it went. These insects have incredible reactions, and the tiny fraction of a second between pressing the button and the shutter firing, is often all the time they need to fly off. Later, when I stopped to have some lunch, I checked the images on the camera, just to see if I had caught the butterfly in flight. I was amazed to see a Robber-fly, legs spread, in the act of attacking the Brown Argus. This was particularly surprising as I had not seen a Robber-fly all morning, and certainly did not see it immediately after I had taken the photo, so can only suppose that it's attack was unsuccessful. I would have thought that a Brown Argus, although a small butterfly, is rather large for a Robber-fly to tackle, although I have heard that Robber-flies will sometimes attack butterflies, and even insects like grasshoppers. It would seem that some Robber-flies are quite ambitious when it comes to meal time.



Some of the smaller solitary bee species, such as *Hylaeus*, will have created brood cells in some of the bramble's hollowed-out stems. These are arranged in a linear series down the stems, and waterproofed with a cellophane-like material secreted by the bee. Each pollen-filled cell contains one egg, which overwinters in a suspended-animation pre-pupa state. They do not have the option of bamboo bee hotels to overwinter in the countryside, so the hollow stems of bramble and hogweed are vital for them.

#### Prickly bramble beauty

There is beauty in the 'prickly trails half over the lane' and pathways which were common prior to the 1960s and evocatively described by the poet John Clare.

And sloes, dim covered as with dewy veils,  
And rambling bramble-berries, pulpy and sweet,  
Arching their prickly trails  
Half o'er the narrow lane

*Autumn.* John Clare, 1793-1864

It was a countryside managed more by Nature's hand and less by man's with a bit of judicious cutting back where necessary during the winter months in the time honoured way. It was a gentle time when more respect and care was shown towards Nature, when we kept to footpaths as we walked through fields, so that dainty wildflowers and their wildlife were not damaged underfoot, or had to put our heads on the horse's back as we rode beneath trees on grassy lanes and we were not obsessed with tidying up landscapes into uninspiring green deserts or demanding the trees were cut so that we could sit upright on our horses. Not having an over-managed landscape taught us to be resourceful.

To encourage wildlife diversity manage bramble on rotation by cutting

back one third in any year to achieve a habitat mosaic. This is because long-tailed tits prefer to nest in old growth whilst harvest mice seek new growth along the edge of a patch.



## Habitat Protection and EU Law

In January the government released its *25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment*. Contained within the plan are the government's ambitions for the environment, namely their hopes of being the first generation to leave it in a better state than it was inherited. Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Michael Gove highlighted the importance of respecting the 'intrinsic value' of nature and the need to 'safeguard cherished landscapes from exploitation'. The Plan is compelling. It contains many of the buzzwords found in the vernacular of those sympathetic to the conservation cause; it talks of the link between nature and our wellbeing, protecting natural capital, corridors for wildlife, the evidence of harmful pesticides on pollinators and the reintroduction of species. White-tailed eagle, orange-spotted emerald dragonfly and beaver are all mentioned specifically.

Though the plan reads like a fusion of ideas from leading writers on the subject it neglects to reveal any impending legislation. The executive can only truly be held to account when the public are able to rely on legal provisions protecting the environment. Without resorting to political cliché, the promises made in a plan fall short if they cannot be enforced by the judiciary. Perhaps this is why environmental lawyers at Client Earth flatly described the Plan as 'underwhelming'. The Plan declares that the UK leaving the EU is an opportunity to improve the environment, though critics fear the uncertainty around Brexit terms leave environmental controls, many of which come from Brussels, open to exploitation.

Legitimate competing interests such as private property rights and the need for economic development have had to face the greater weight now given to conservation issues in decision making. Concerns for the environment have become more than mere material considerations and a substantial part of this is down to controls introduced by the EU. Libertarian commentators may admonish such controls, labelling them a hinderance and a good example of red taping. However, the way in which Europe is carved up matters little to our flora and fauna, for example the wandering path of a migratory bird. The bird does not see our borders as it flies and thus fragmentary protections of habitats are viewed as insufficient.

The development of the Natura 2000 network of sites established by *Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds* and *Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora* (the Wild Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive) allow inter-state protection. Natura 2000 sites are made up of 'Special Areas of Conservation' and 'Special Protection Areas'. SACs are the sites containing habitats listed in Annex I + II of the Habitats Directive and SPAs are classified under the Wild Birds Directive.

Continues over page.....

SPAs obligate Member State governments to designate sites that meet the criteria and the Court of Justice has also held that a Member State can be in breach if it does not designate enough sites. The North Norfolk Coast is a good example of an SPA. Once designated as an SPA the Member State must take appropriate steps to avoid significant pollution or deterioration or disturbance of the birds within it. SACs differ in that the list is drawn up by the European Commission based on Member State submissions and on the scientific advice of a committee of independent experts. Local SACs include the Broads and Breckland.

Natura 2000 sites found themselves entangled in one of the central debates of the referendum; state sovereignty. Small decisions affect a larger picture and so conserving wildlife involves protecting it wherever we find it, whilst relying on other countries to do the same. Deciding not to protect a species in one area on the basis that it exists elsewhere is an approach which fails if we all assume the same attitude. The Natura 2000 network aims to promote conservation efforts across the continent in this way, thus avoiding a death by a thousand cuts. For example, in 2001 the RSPB questioned the Secretary of State for Scotland's decision to grant licences to shoot barnacle geese in Islay (a Natura 2000 site). The licences were being granted to protect crops. The dispute went to court where the judges held in favour of the RSPB, concluding that the deterioration and disturbance to Islay in conservation terms was what the Secretary of State had to consider when making the decision - not the prospective damage to the network of sites overall. This decision confirmed that it did not matter if barnacle geese could be found elsewhere, the responsibility for the Scottish government was to look after their site regardless as it had been designated to protect the geese. The concern for some conservationists now is that in taking back control of its own decisions the government may be inclined to prioritise other interests before the protection of our flora and fauna and the strong provisions offered by the EU will vanish.

In May of this year, the government introduced the Environmental Principles and Governance Bill, providing further hope that conservation protection will be maintained and perhaps strengthened post-Brexit. This was the first sign that new legislation is impending. The UK contains 270 SPAs and 626 SACS which are currently protected under EU legislation; how these habitat protections are maintained or strengthened is uncertain. Fortunately, interest in environmental issues is greater than ever.

Lee Coby  
June 2018

## The Bramble as a Habitat

During the blackberry season many small mammals enjoy feasting on them with obvious relish and use the bramble bush as a way of avoiding predators. Bank voles search with admirable agility and ease amongst the bramble thorns for the choicest berries.

They are also sought after by dormice, wood mice, foxes and badgers who will eat fallen blackberries, plus any that they are able to reach on the bushes.

Crows, woodpigeons, flycatchers, nuthatches, finches, starlings, thrushes, blackcaps, waxwings, pheasants and moorhens all enjoy a blackberry. Water rail have been observed using bramble for cover at dawn.

Adult moths also seek out over-ripe blackberries as a food source. If you go out at night with a torch as the berries reach this state you can find lots of moths feeding on them in a good spot.

The blackberries are finished but the bramble is home to many. As blackberries finish their season in autumn, most people would regard the bramble bush as having no use and so may be tempted to bramble bash it out of existence. However, over the spring and summer moths such as buff arches and fox moths use bramble as a larval foodplant, and it's the sole larval foodplant for the beautifully named peach blossom moth. At this time of year they'll be over-wintering deep within the leaf litter, but come spring they'll emerge from their pupae and make their way up the nearby bramble to inflate their wings and take flight.

In spring, nightingales, robins, wrens, thrushes, blackbirds, warblers, finches, whitethroats and long-tailed tits nest amongst its safe haven brambles, which offer protection from predators.

Bramble blossom is rich in pollen and nectar. There are many invertebrates which use brambles for pollen and nectar from May onwards when it is resplendent with beautiful white-pink blossom. Insects visiting the flowers for food include bumblebees, honey bees, solitary bees, hoverflies, wasps, butterflies, flies and lacewings, many of which also nest or reproduce on the leaves or in the stems.

No extensive study has ever been done on the many species of wildlife that depend upon or visit bramble. As a large, abundant open flower there is virtually no physical limitation for the species that can use them. This means pretty much everything seems to do so, and makes bramble one of the most wildlife-rich habitats that you can have on any site.

