



## BADCOG NEWS.

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### What's happening inside my Solitary Bee Hive?



This beautifully crafted hive was a Christmas present, but home-made ones make just as good homes for these solitary bees which are brilliant pollinators. I fixed the hive to the SE facing wall of my house in Spring, clear of vegetation.

The roof swivels and there is a Perspex layer so that you can see inside the second row of tubes. It's not been a particularly warm May this year, but on sunny days Red Mason Bees are active. Ordinarily they would form nests in soft bricks and mortar.

First mud is deposited in the tube around the edge, followed by pollen and nectar. An egg is laid followed by a layer of mud. More pollen, egg and mud make several cells in each tube. The eggs are about 2mm long and ½mm wide. Once eggs have been laid and the tube is full, the female bee seals the end with mud.



The next pictures (page 2) were taken from above the clear layer with the tube openings to the bottom of the picture. Eggs have hatched and the larvae are eating the pollen and growing. When all the food source has been eaten, cocoons form which will stay dormant and not hatch into bees until the spring. This coincides with warmer weather and blossom.

All the holes in the hive were filled and I made an extension. In July I noticed that some holes were being filled with leaves. Leaf cutter bees were cutting leaf pieces, from fuchsia bushes (page 2), and using them to line the holes.

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The bees have been a constant source of interest and I am looking forward to Spring to see them hatch. The hive can be taken apart for cleaning, which is necessary to avoid pests and parasites.

Judith Robertson.



## Winter Walk - 11th December Broadland Country Park



In the last issue of this News Letter, Hans Watson wrote an article about the opening of a new Country Park north of Horsford which is owned and managed by Broadland DC.

In December, eleven BADCOG members took the opportunity to have a walk around this 140 acre park. Although not looking at

its best at this time of year with some paths very muddy, it was still interesting to see some of the wildlife management being undertaken in the park. Hans explained some of the physical work being carried out and how this will help to increase and enhance the already extensive biodiversity found on the site, some of which is rare and should be protected.

This will definitely be a place I'll be coming back to in the spring and summer, particularly if I get the chance to see or hear a nightjar without having to go all the way to Kelling Heath or Minsmere!

Tony Mc





## **Death's-head Hawk Moth (*Acherontia atropos*)**

By Matt and Tony McKie

This Death's-head Hawk Moth was discovered in a North Burlingham garden in November. It is a rare immigrant, with only small numbers of this iconic species recorded in the UK most years.

They are the largest moth to be found in the UK with a wingspan of 13 cm, and also the fastest flying moth in the world, reportedly reaching speeds of 30 mph. The moth is most notable for displaying a skull-like marking on its thorax.

Although a rare visitor to the UK, it holds a large place in our literature, art and folklore, and is seen as a symbol of death. Perhaps most famous of all, the pupa of the moth is left as a calling card by the psychotic serial killer in the 1991 horror film 'The Silence of the Lambs.'



Death's-head Hawk Moths are excellent migrants, travelling all the way from Africa to the UK, Northern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Russia. Those small numbers of moths that do reach our shores are able to reproduce during the warmer months of summer and autumn. The larvae are sometimes found on their foodplant, a large selection of nightshades (*Solanaceae*) such as potato, tomato, tobacco plant, and deadly nightshade. However, the moth and larvae are unable to survive our cold winters, meaning every year the UK population is wiped out. The populations in Southern

Europe and Africa repopulate Central and Northern Europe again after migrating there during the summer.

An interesting behaviour that the Death's-head Hawk Moth displays is its love of honey, and tendency to raid the hives of honeybees. It was often wondered how an unprotected moth could survive stealing honey from a hive, however recent research points to the moth excreting an odour that mimics that of a honeybee, masking the intruder's presence!

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This particular individual was discovered in a North Burlingham garden, sat on a small potted plant. It remained in the same position for over five days, I can only assume it was too cold for the moth to fly. This allowed the moth to be handled easily, and to observe the unique 'squeaking' sound the moth makes when disturbed. The sound is produced by inhaling and expelling air, which vibrates the moth's epipharynx (a lobe-like structure overlapping the mouth) like an accordion.

We must thank Pauline Clarke for letting us know about her discovery and allowing us to see this rare and spectacular moth.

### **Nature Notes by Barbara Pilch**

#### **Counting sheep**

If you resort in the small hours to counting hedge-leaping sheep do they collect on the far side of the boundary in a flock, a herd or a drift?

'Drift' calls up an image of a white, fleecy mass similar to a heap of soft new snow. However your nocturnal jumping flock might also be called a drove, meinie, mob, parcel or trip; each word is pleasingly descriptive.

Similarly other collective nouns can be appropriate or absurd – a bloat of hippopotamuses, a sneak of weasels, a surfeit of skunks, a bellowing of bullfinches, an ambush of tigers, a scourge of mosquitoes.

Does an appropriate word spring to your mind for a particularly pesky pest?

#### **Storm Arwen and the great storm of 1987**

Recently storm Arwen uprooted tens of thousands of trees across the north of the UK.

Conwy's Bodnant Gardens lost more than 50 rare centuries-old trees. In the Kielder Forest trees were toppled by 98mph winds roaring over the Northumberland hills.

Back in 1987 similar gales reached 115mph and downed 15 million trees. It is worth remembering that in nature the legacy of such storms is often not as devastating as it first appears. In 1987 newly created

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glades enabled dormant seeds to burst into life and clematis, honey suckle and heather emerged for the first time in a century. At Toys Hill in Kent, an S.S.S.I, the woodlark and night jar population increased as did that of little owls and tawny owls.

And following similar storms beetle populations have thrived on rotting tree trunks and branches of fallen chestnuts have grown roots and turned into trees.

### **Eagles**

Plans to start a colony of eagles at the Wild Ken Hill estate near Sandringham have been reluctantly shelved.

During a consultation period concerns were raised by some local farmers over the impact of birds with an 8ft wingspan flying over lambs and poultry. They also voiced fears for game birds such as pheasants.

### **Grey seal colonies on Horsey and Winterton beaches**

In the winter of 2019-2020 around 2,500 pups were born during the breeding season between November and January. Sadly up to 60% die within their first 18 months.

Volunteers begin in the autumn to patrol the beaches which have been closed to protect the vulnerable pregnant seals. There had been reports of holidaymakers disturbing them during the summer and of dogs attacking them. This resulted in 20,000 people signing a petition demanding tougher laws to protect the seals.

Despite the beach closures visitors will still be able to see them from viewing points on top of the sand dunes where wardens will be able to answer questions.

### **Brendan's Marsh at NWT Hickling Broad and Marshes**

Brendan's Marsh stretches from Whiteslea track to Stubb Mill paddock covering approximately 20 hectares.

Formerly known as Bishop's Marsh it was drained agricultural land with various crops of potatoes and carrots grown on it. When it reverted to grazing marsh it began to be leased by NWT. Cattle and sometimes ponies were grazed here and the marsh was soon home to meadow pipits, skylarks and occasionally breeding lapwings.

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Sited next to the Christopher Cadbury Marsh it is well situated to develop into more of this nationally scarce habitat offering an extended home for bitterns, marsh harriers, bearded tits and numerous other reed bed birds. It is expected to be quickly colonised by many rare Broadland invertebrates and plants. Mammals such as water shrews and water voles will also benefit and harvest mice will profit from the mosaic of tall-herb wetland habitats. In 2011 a new flood embankment was constructed along Whiteslea track and off towards Stubb mill to reconnect a large area of the nature reserve to its natural floodplain. The resulting ground works created a borrow-dyke around the perimeter and a large shallow scrape. Over the following years the site progressed from strength to strength with breeding lapwings, redshanks and avocets all increasing. Little egrets and grey herons patrol the pools, and it's not uncommon to find a pair of cranes leading a fluffy ginger chick or two along the dyke edges.

The destiny of the marsh is to become chiefly reed bed. The project has allowed for twenty per cent open water and at least two hectares of wet grassland. The bund edges and varying ground heights will ensure that the marsh provides a mosaic of wetland habitats throughout the year and continues to attract many of the species that we currently enjoy.

The marsh is named in recognition of the distinguished tenure of NWT's former Chief Executive, Brendan Joyce OBE,

### War horses

Thousands of horses which had been used to transport British troops in the region around Egypt in the First World War later fell on hard times. In 1930 Dorothy Brooke, the wife of a major general, arrived in Egypt and found many ageing horses "dragging out wretched days of toil in the ownership of masters too poor to feed them. Too inured to hardship themselves to appreciate, in the faintest degree, the suffering of animals in their hands".

Discovering how many of these elderly horses were involved she alerted several British newspapers and set up a fund to buy horses, restore any she could to health and bring a "merciful end" for the rest. Readers sent the equivalent of £20,000 which allowed her to buy 5,000 animals and set up the Old War Horse Memorial Hospital.

Nowadays on this site similar work continues in the Brooke Veterinary Hospital for injured donkeys and horses brought in from the streets of Cairo.



## The Making of Strumpshaw Fen

There is a very interesting and comprehensive historical account by Mike Blackburn of his role as first warden at Strumpshaw RSPB reserve. It is well illustrated detailing his vision and hard work in restoring degraded marsh and reed bed into the basis of what has become a rich mosaic of habitats. It is too long an item to be included in this newsletter but is well worth viewing on the internet through the link below.

<https://wisearchive.co.uk/story/the-making-of-strumpshaw-fen-1960s-to-2000s/>

## Rare Beetle—*Carabus Arvensis*

This photo (below) of the *Carabus Arvensis* beetle was taken by Hans Watson which was found in the new Broadland Country Park. Classified as rare, it seems to be common at this site. The photo consists of 15 individual photos that have been combined and merged so that all parts of the subject are in focus.



## BADCOG Work Party Dates

8th January 2022—Lingwood Pond

22nd January—Tree/Hedge Planting/replacements. (Meet at  
Lingwood Church at 10.30am)

5th February—Buckenham Woods

19th February—Jary's Meadow

5th March—Howes Meadow

19th March—Holly Lane Pond

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

All welcome!

## **Main Work Party Reports**

**Oct 23 – Buckenham Woods** – Main entry gate area tidied and cleared, bramble cut and cleared from around main site sign. Mowed raked and cleared around seat in main area and other good areas nearby. Brushcut slope in steps area and raked and cleared to fire site. Area behind seat at top of steps- opened up the overgrown path, cleared bramble from around shrubs in woodland. Causeway path – hedge at both sides cut back. Mowed and cleared area around newly planted 6 oaks.

**Nov 06 - Strumpshaw Stone Pit** – Main area mown on 29 Oct raked and cleared to spoil heap.

Lower branches of 2 oaks and a rowan, obstructing mowing operations, cut down. Scythed bank area and cut back buddleia.

**Nov 20 – Snowdrop Acre** – Annual maintenance carried out. Scythed nettle and loppers used for small saplings. Cleared area around large fallen tree. All cut vegetation cleared to spoil heap.

**Dec 04 – Walsham Fen** – Area G and boardwalk areas mown on Nov25. Raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

**Dec 18 – Railway Wood** – Annual maintenance carried out.

## **Additional Work Carried Out**

**Oct 07/09/11 – Howes Meadow** – Area B – cut vegetation raked.

**Oct 13/16 – Howes Meadow** – Area B – raked and turned.

**Oct 18 – Howes Meadow** – turned vegetation gathered up at WP from area D and laid around fire site at E end of area A.

**Oct 23/28 – Howes Meadow** – Area B - turned over cut vegetation and fire heap

**Oct 29 – Strumpshaw Stone Pit** – mown.

**Nov 08 – Limpenhoe Church** – Conservation area mown – area around gravestones and the new hedge scythed.

**Nov 08 – Strumpshaw Stone Pit** – Using chainsaw completed the cutting and clearance of buddleia started at WP on Nov 06. Cleared buddleia from top of bank and started wood pile.

**Nov 11 – Strumpshaw Stone Pit** – Using handsaw cut and cleared a 3<sup>rd</sup> buddleia from top of bank to wood pile and spoil heaps.

**Nov 16 – Howes Meadow** – Area B – completed clearance of area to fire site.

**Nov 25 – Walsham Fen** – Approx 50% of boardwalk and a 1.5metre strip at both sides mown. Area G - the area, approx 50%, left uncut from last WP mown.