



BADCOG NEWS.

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BADCOG Hosts Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT)

Tony McKie

On the 7th June, BADCOG hosted the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) with a walk and talk at two of our sites, Walsham Fen and Jary's Meadow.

This event was advertised by the NWT as, '*Wildlife & wildflowers at Walsham Fen—A chance to find out how local volunteers manage Walsham Fen and Jary's Meadow*'.

The walk to the sites started and finished at Hemblington Church and was led by Lucy from the NWT with myself, Ernest (BADCOG Chairman) and David Pilch acting as guides. To get to the sites we took the bridleway that leads to the fen and meadow from High Noon Lane. Even this part of the walk was interesting as the local farmer has started some rewilding and a large area has been sown with a very colourful wildflower mix.

Unfortunately the weather was cool with overcast skies resulting in little in the way of any flying insects to be seen. However, both the fen and meadow were looking good with a wide range of flora, including the Milk Parsley that was introduced into the fen last year. As all who attended were keen to learn about the flora found on the sites, the walk took well over 2 hours to complete. One of the group was a good birder and quickly identified a Marsh Warbler on the fen and a Lesser Whitethroat on the meadow.

Unfortunately the resident Barn owl was not seen and may well have heard us and taken flight well before we even arrived on site.

This event was a great success with the following message back from Lucy, '*Thank you to the whole BADGOG group for all the work you do for wildlife - what a team you are*', which is great testimony to the good work we all do in our local community.



Cremer's Meadow and Milk Parsley

Cremer's Meadow is currently a mass of buttercups (mid-May), with some cuckoo flower (one of the food plants for orange tip butterflies that are also to be seen now.) There is a succession of flowering plants including many southern marsh orchids.

However, there are only 2 milk parsley plants on the meadow. Seed was collected from our plant last autumn and sown in a pot at home in some soil from the meadow.

When the plants are large enough, they will be transplanted to an open site on the meadow near to reeds, which I understand will give the best chance of survival and to attract passing swallowtails.

Dr Collins' talk (November 2022) impressed on the BADCOG audience the necessity to establish new sites for milk parsley (the only food plant for swallowtail caterpillars and only found in East Anglia), which is not only at risk from disease on current sites, but also from salination of water from tidal surges now and in the future.

New colonies of milk parsley, it is hoped, will ensure that swallowtails continue to breed successfully in our area.



Footnote (Tony McKie): Last year, BADCOG introduced milk parsley into Walsham Fen. The 12 plug plants came from British Wildflowers at North Burlingham and were planted in different locations around the fen. In the spring I tried to find these plants but there was little sign of them. However, by early summer and after another inspection on the 7th June, I'm very pleased to report that most, if not all plants, are doing well. I'll continue with the monitoring and report back on their development, and who knows, one day we may get a passing swallowtail butterfly dropping into the fen and laying some eggs on its foodplant.

BADCOG makes it into the NWT Tern magazine.

In the Summer issue of the NWT Tern magazine, there is a nice article about BADCOG entitled, '*Conservation group celebrates forty years helping local nature thrive*'. Alongside the article there are some photos, one of which shows the work at Holly Lane Pond back in 1983.

A visit to Ashwellthorpe Wood

David Pilch

I was unfortunately unable to attend the talk Anne Edwards gave to BADCOG about Ashwellthorpe Wood. By all reports it ranked with the most interesting, so I was delighted to accept an invitation at the end of April to join Ernest in a walk Anne was leading round this NWT ancient woodland. The ash trees of course are far from well in the wood because of ash dieback but the wood hosts a variety of other trees including much hornbeam, alder, hazel, silver and downy birch, willow, East Anglian elm and oak with some majestic ancient specimens. It's 37-hectare extent covers a patchwork of different habitats and management. A significant programme of coppicing by volunteers is in operation with solar powered electric fencing to prevent deer grazing the vulnerable newly created coppice stools.



Like all ancient woodlands the ground flora is at its best before the trees come into leaf in spring. We were too early to see the best of the bluebells, but early purple orchids (above right) were in full flower and I was pleased to see herb paris, (Left) a rarity. Ann also pointed

out an egg of the orange tip butterfly on cuckoo flower (below right). The accompanying photos show these plus a view of hornbeams, coppicing (below left) and an ancient oak pollard (below middle). I would certainly recommend a visit and also the book Anne has written about the wood.



Robin's Year

It has been a long winter but I can finally see the green spears of the daffodil buds. My name is Robin and I live in a little village called Blofield.

Now that spring is here my best friend the chiff chaff has been singing at the top of his voice. All the birds, including me, have found a mate and we are all busy nest building.

I was able to find an old tin kettle in the churchyard and I have made a cosy nest in it. Every morning a little boy runs around the churchyard past my nest but I don't think he even knows it's there.

As spring slowly turns to summer our tiny babies grew inside our four speckled eggs.

Now we are in May and our babies are hatched and enjoying the warmth of summer but they are very hungry! My mate and I spend the daylight hours collecting worms, caterpillars and all sorts of insects for our four ravenous chicks.

Today I flew past some beautiful meadow buttercups, cowslips, ox eye daisies and poppies before I even left the churchyard. Marty's Marsh was full of cow parsley, dog's mercury and red campion. It is all full of pollinators for me to catch.

I then found myself by the stream where I had a sip of cool water and could see lots of green alkanet and in the soft earth of the bank I found four big juicy worms, one for each chick.

As the summer moves on our babies grow and fledge. Now they can fly and fend for themselves. When I fly over the marsh and the meadow now I can see knapweed and meadowsweet.

Autumn is approaching. The days are shorter and getting much cooler. The leaves are changing colour, everything looks golden.

The blackberries are ripe now and they are so tasty. The teasels are out and there are loads of thistle seeds. Now we are in October and I have found some juicy worms under the golden beech tree when I heard the strangest noise I have ever heard. It was too rough to be a bird and too small to be a dog, ah, it was a muntjack deer barking! They do that when they are marking their territory.

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Autumn is my favourite time of year because I get to chase tractors and there are loads of bugs and beetles.

This morning I saw frost on the grass for the first time for a long time and I could see my breath in the air. Winter is fast approaching.

One morning I woke up to find everything white. Snow had arrived. It is going to be very hard to find food now. I decided to go looking in gardens and I found a bird table full of seeds, bread and an apple core. I really enjoyed the seeds.

This is the toughest part of the year but I am sure spring will come again.

By Beatrice Grace Bennett

The Commissioning editor writes (David Pilch)

I am always grateful for contributions members make in the form of articles for the newsletter, it makes my task and that of Tony much easier and, I hope, increases its interest.

This issue features an item from one of our younger contributors, 10-year-old Beatrice (above) who helped with the tree planting at Wyngates.

A rare sighting in the garden Barbara Pilch

We have only rarely seen a great spotted woodpecker at a feeder in our garden. They are very wary and depart when they realise they have been seen. Recently one did visit to drink from a bird bath. With its distinctive red patch on the back of its head it seemed an exotic garden visitor.

About black bird sized and distinguished by its bouncing flight it clings to tree trunks keeping out of sight from the observer. Its call is loud and you may hear its spring-time drumming display as it excavates holes in trees to make its nests.

**Eclectic Reflections on musing through past BADCOG
newsletters – continued**

1983 – a group got together to restore Holly Lane Pond. This group became BADCOG.

2023 – It's 40 years later – and we are still here!

From Jan 2015 – BADCOG is now in its second year of a 10 year Environmental Stewardship agreement with Natural England at our two wetland sites, Howes Meadow and Walsham Fen. A consequence of this agreement is a requirement to undertake restoration work of the dyke at Howes Meadow. The dredging of one side of the dyke, to remove vegetation and deposits, has been completed.

From March 2015 – In January a Fen Harvester, on contract from the Broads Authority, was used at Walsham Fen. The cutting blades on the front of the machine both cuts and mulches the vegetation before depositing the cuttings into the large hopper on the back of the vehicle. This task would have taken BADCOG volunteers a considerable amount of time to complete!

From May 2015 – This year, with the help of three grants and a very generous donation, we have finally been able to find the funds for a replacement mower.

From July 2015 – To give local residents the opportunity to see Howes Meadow, an open day was held on the 6th June. It's still surprising how few people know the whereabouts of this flora rich site.

From Jan 2016 – A photo of an otter was taken at Walsham Fen with a camera trap. Unfortunately, the camera only got one shot of it. We shouldn't be surprised that otters visit this site as it's the same water course that feeds Fairhaven, a place where they are often seen.

From Nov 2016 – Our remit is to manage our sites to the best of our ability and aid and encourage their wildlife potential. This is often labour intensive but this year the average work party attendance has been 9 as opposed to a little over 7 last year. A lot can be achieved in 2½ hrs x 9, and we still have time for a chat!

From July 2017 – Since 1994, BADCOG has undertaken a count of the orchids at our two County Wildlife Sites at Howes Meadow and Walsham Fen.

We do the count at the same time of year every year, using the same method, giving the count continuity. We know that we will miss some orchids and others will be counted twice, but it gives us a good indicator of numbers.

From Nov 2017 – Broadland District Council's third annual Broadland Community at Heart Awards were presented on 13th Oct. at The Space in Sprowston. Ernest Hoyos was named as the Environmental Champion of the Year. This is a well-deserved award.

From May 2018 – A recent work party at Holly Lane Pond stirred memories of the time back in 1983 when members of the newly formed 'Blofield and District Conservation Group' began work on the site of a small farmland pond aiming to restore its wildlife interest. By 1983, it was waterless and filled with rubbish and elms that had been felled across it.

From Jan 2019 – Members of BADCOG are celebrating after defending an under-threat woodland they planted at Shack Lane in 1984, following the construction of the Blofield bypass.

...to be continued.

Jary's Meadow Surprise

David Pilch

Our granddaughter is working towards various environmental awards so was keen to get involved in any BADCOG projects. She has previously worked at Strumpshaw Stone Pit. So, on this occasion she went with Barbara and me to put some deer protection round a newly planted hedge between the meadow and the field above. While there she was treated to views of the barn owl, a buzzard and a marsh harrier plus peacock, brimstone and orange tip butterflies. But more was to come.

Once we had carried out the task we thought we would explore the cause of some freshly turned earth in the scrub bank. This proved difficult to access through bramble and blackthorn so we decided to approach from further along the bank. In doing so we discovered a labyrinth of large tunnels one of which was the one with freshly disturbed soil with feathers at the entrance and was now being used as a fox's earth. The remainder was an old badger sett and indeed we found a skull confirming this (as pictured). Badgers are now absent from this area but an old resident of Burlingham whom I spoke to some 40 years ago could remember the sites number of active setts which were gassed. Badgers now seem to be recolonising Norfolk so who knows, one day they may reoccupy this des res at Jary's meadow.



Seen in the garden

A surprising view early one morning was a sparrow hawk on a garden wall, just a few yards away from my window, standing erect, alert and proprietorial over a pile of feathers. I looked at it. It looked at me - and then it flew off. In my experience they rarely return after an interruption and this one had completed its meal. Only a cluster of feathers remained on the wall. Sadly that same afternoon a sparrow hawk, probably the same one, made off with one of "our" garden blackbirds in its talons. We would like to hear of any surprising wildlife sights in your garden. Please contact us. It would be great to have readers' input to this newsletter.

Sparrow hawks

Sparrow hawks do not have the stamina for long chases but are very manoeuvrable and need to approach their prey closely and undetected. With a flying speed of 30-40kph (but 50kph in short bursts) still only one attack in ten results in capture because small birds give warning calls to each other. Gardens are an easy source of prey with the most frequently caught birds being those which are conspicuous, sick, old or injured. A female can take prey up to wood pigeon size but the smaller male does not catch anything bigger than a mistle thrush. In summer about 40% of a sparrow hawk's diet is fledglings.

Main Work Party Report

May 13 – Buckenham Woods – Scythed around all newly planted trees and shrubs. Sycamore on South side of pit cut back and one uprooted using heavy mattock. Hand cleared lumps of concrete and flints that had been thrown into grass by contractors. This to prevent damage to tractor flails when they come to cut. 7 members + 1 other.

May 20 – Walsham Fen – Raked and cleared both sides of boardwalk mown on 15th & 17th May. Encroaching elder, stream side of boardwalk, cut back.

Vegetation missed by mower scythed. All cut vegetation taken to spoil heaps.

Jary's Meadow – Some areas of path network cut on 17th May raked and cleared to fire sites. Cleared some of bracken in meadow. 4 members + 1 other.

Jun 03 – Lingwood Church – Conservation area – Approx 70% of area raked and cleared then removed to Lingwood PC composting site. Moved on to Footpaths from Peter's Wood and checked and cleared around trees planted along public footpath paths. 9 members +1 other

Jun 17 – Hemblington Church – Conservation area raked and cleared to spoil heaps. 6 members + 3 others

Additional Work Carried Out

May 15/17 – Walsham Fen – Top of Boardwalk mowed along with both sides of the boardwalk about a meter wide.

May 18 – Walsham Fen – Attached posts to the hide for additional support.

Jary's Meadow – Erected wire netting to protect new hedge.

May 24 – Jary's Meadow – Cut and pulled bracken.

May 29 – Lingwood Church – Conservation area mown.

Jun 05 – Blofield Church – NE area – Scythed around posts under trees defining new area for ashes. Also cut a few areas around signs and war grave by public footpath.

Jun 09 – Hemblington Church – Conservation area mown.

Jun 21 – Blofield Church. - The whole churchyard mown ready for main work party on the 1st July and the Green Gym on the 4th July.

BADCOG WORK PARTY DATES

1st July—Blofield Church

4th July—Blofield Church (Green Gym)

15th July—Howes Meadow

29th July—Walsham fen

12th August—Jary's Meadow

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

All welcome!