



BADCOG NEWS.

No 218: March 2022

President: Richard Hobbs

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

Norwich NR13 4HG.

Tel 01603 712913

www.badcog.co.uk



Claylands Wilder Connections

Norfolk Wildlife Trust is embarking on an exciting and ambitious new project aiming to stitch together the fabric of the countryside in the South Norfolk Claylands. Along with our partners across the conservation sector, Norfolk Wildlife Trust aims to tackle the biodiversity and climate crises by trialing new approaches to the delivery of nature conservation at landscape scale.

The Claylands of South Norfolk is an intensively-farmed landscape, but one that retains notable relict patches of rich wildlife habitat. In *The History of the British Countryside*, Oliver Rackham calls the South Norfolk Claylands 'ramshackle'. He uses the word to describe the layers of history in the area: Saxon churches with their round flint towers, timber-framed farmhouses and traces of Bronze Age fields. Ramshackle also seems a good word for the twisting lanes, the scattered villages and the open commons.

These features are products of a history that starts with the melting of glaciers millennia ago. The 'boulder clay', formed from ground-up rocks from central England, was dumped as the ice sheets retreated, leaving a low plateau that runs from Essex, through Suffolk and into central North Norfolk. Over time, rivers have worn valleys into the clay, sometimes as deep as the chalk bedrock beneath.

There have been many changes in the Claylands landscape in the past 500 years, yet elements of this ancient, unplanned countryside are still evident. Turn off the main road or follow one of the long-distance footpaths and you can find yourself among tall hedges with pollards of hornbeam or oak, ponds formed from clay pits for building materials, ancient woodlands and of course, the open commons.

Continues over page.....

All of these are wonderful for wildlife and evidence of how, for thousands of years, the human and natural histories of this landscape have been closely linked.

One of the keys to this ambitious approach is working alongside landowners, communities and ecologists to improve ecological connectivity across the South Norfolk Claylands. Together, we will secure wildlife-rich, thriving and sustainably managed landscapes across an iconic area in Norfolk.

This initiative has been funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, financed by Defra and administered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Additional support has been committed by Norfolk County Council, the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and the RSPB.

Connecting habitats

The project will focus on the restoration, and sustainable management, of the fabric of the wider countryside: its ponds, hedges, copses, trees, margins and meadows. We aim to restore and create ponds, establish woods, plant more trees and establish more floristically diverse grasslands, either as margins or meadows.

Restoring and creating steppingstones, or corridors of these habitats across the countryside will allow species to move effectively and safely between larger blocks of habitat.

Connecting people

We'll be connecting people with their local landscapes by providing opportunities for communities to take meaningful action for wildlife to create and sustain a connected countryside. People and wildlife thrive in connected landscapes. We are also developing a toolkit of resources for communities and sharing best practice to support conservation actions.

A rich landscape for flora and fauna

Through the Wilder Connections project we will support a wide range of wildlife, including iconic Claylands species, such as barn owls that love to hunt over rough pasture, grassland, hay meadows and well-managed field margins; Sulphur clover – a nationally scarce plant of Claylands meadows, roadside verges and woodland margins; migrant turtle doves that have a stronghold in the mixed farmland Claylands landscape;

Great crested newts, that will benefit from the restoration of old ponds and grasslands; and hedgehogs, whose numbers have declined by 50% in the last 20 years.

Get involved

To register your interest in the project, or to take part in surveying or practical habitat management actions in the South Norfolk Claylands, please get in touch.

Email: wild@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

Web: www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderconnections

Phone: 01603 598333 or call Sue 07393 807897

You can also get involved by recording your wildlife sightings with our Wildlife Spotter survey:

Wildlife Spotter Survey - Norfolk Wildlife Trust



Salt marsh project in Essex

A project to help retain salt marsh habitat is under way at Northey Island, Essex. Salt marsh can store large quantities of carbon, making it a key coastal habitat that can help tackle the climate crisis, but the UK's salt marshes are at risk because of rising sea levels. Work to retain 50 - 60 hectares (120 - 150 acres) of salt marsh at Northey includes modifying banks on the north of the island creating new salt marshes and managing existing ones so they can adapt to the impacts of sea - level rise and climate change. 'If we do nothing, most salt marsh here will be lost over the next century,' says Daniel Leggett, Coastal Projects Manager.



Above: Buckenham Woods
5th February 2022



Above: Jary's Meadow
19th February 2022

EDP article on Snowdrop Acre

“More named varieties of snowdrop were once bred in a garden east of Norwich than anywhere else in Britain.

Snowdrop Acre was once part of the garden of Heyrick Antony Greatorex. Tony, as he was known, and his wife lived in a small rented bungalow, with a huge garden. Much of the land has since been sold – but early each year in an acre of woodland, now owned by Broadland District Council, his snowdrops reappear.

Snowdrop Acre is one of 16 local wildlife havens, including woods, meadows, ponds and churchyards, looked after by the Blofield and district Conservation Group.

Its president, a snowdrop expert, contributed a chapter on the history of Tony Greatorex and Snowdrop Acre to the remarkable new book Enticing Paths, A Treasury of Norfolk Gardens and Gardening, published by the Norfolk Gardens Trust.

It tells of how Tony grew up in Hertfordshire (in the house where David and Victoria Beckham lived from 1999 to 2014) but by 1915 was living in Norfolk, serving with the Norfolk Regiment during the First World War and the Home Guard during the Second World War. Between the wars he created a garden and bred beautiful snowdrops.

“Though it is one of the smallest, yet in its own way, Snowdrop Acre is one of the most influential of Norfolk’s gardens,” the book reveals. “And it was here that Tony Greatorex produced more famous snowdrops than have come from any other garden in Britain.”

Many of the Greatorex snowdrops are named after Shakespearian characters, including Cordelia, Desdemona, Titania and Ophelia.

The chapter is a fascinating tour through snowdrop science and appreciation and tells readers: “Today many people are breeding snowdrops but Tony Greatorex was the first, and for many years, the only person to do so.”

“What at first seems like a rather dull and small garden, hidden away in Norfolk, is in fact a treasure trove, one of the most significant snowdrop sites in the country and a lasting memorial to its fascinating and dedicated progenitor.”

Continues next page.....

Tony himself is said to have been reclusive – and the remnants of his garden are hidden away – but every February they sparkle with his beloved snowdrops.

Enticing Paths, A Treasury of Norfolk Gardens and Gardening, edited by Roger Last, is published by the Norfolk Gardens Trust. “



Local weather roundup for 2021

Keeping weather records for the MET office requires accurate figures and if possible, a complete record. The MET office in return checks my site every year or two and check my instruments against their recently calibrated ones, replacing any that are not accurate within 0.2°C.

My last report came out in the May 2021 BADCOG newsletter and after a brief roundup of 2020 covered winter 2020-2021 (which turned out the wettest for 50 years). As for spring rain this last year, March 31.2mm 69% of average but not as dry as March 2020, plus average temperatures.

April produced only 7.4 mm 18% of average and was exceptionally cold a full 3°C below average and below the average rainfall for March with 75mm.

May was the wettest since 2014 and continued cold 2.2°C below average and the coldest since May 1996.

June, the start of summer, was wet with 7.8mm of rain but temperatures recovered to 0.6°C above average.

July had average summer temperatures and rather dry again with 30.5mm so a pleasant month.

Continues over page.....

August was still dry with 2.6 mm of rain 44% of average and the coolest since August 2014. Those three summer months ended near average temperatures and only 79% rainfall. The highest temperature was 27.3°C on July 18th and the first summer since 2016 to not exceed at least one day of 30°C.

September the start of Autumn continued dry with only 37% of average rain but warm, 1.8°C above average and the hottest day of the year. 28.6°C on 7th.

October turned out wet with 100.7mm (24.5mm more than the previous combined 3 months). Temperatures were average.

November normally one of our wettest months produced 51mm, only 78% of average. Temperatures were again near average. So, Autumn '21 finished 1°C above average, due to the warm September and produced 95% of average rainfall.

Finally, December, the start of winter, had above average rainfall, 117% at 71mm, and was warmer than average, the warmest December since 2018. Despite the erratic rainfalls month by month the annual total finished at 631mm = 98% of average. but the driest since 2018 and among the lowest in the county.

As a footnote January 2022 has been the driest since 2006 with only 17mm of rain and also the mean temperature 0.5°C above average and no snow.

Ernest Hoyos

Lingwood 2021 rainfall 630.9mm/24.83inches



Swallowtails : keeping them safe at home and abroad.

Dr Mark Collins

Chair of the Swallowtail & Birdwing Butterfly Trust

Friday 11th March at 7:30pm

Blofield & District Conservation Group
Community Hall, Mill Road, Strumpshaw NR13 4FS



BADCOG Evening Talks—2022

11th March—Dr Mark Collins, Chair of Swallowtail & Birdwing Trust.

8th April—Garth Copeland, a talk about Australia.

Talks will now take place at a new venue starting at 7.30pm

**Strumpshaw Community Hall,
Mill Road, Strumpshaw, NR13 4FS**

BADCOG Work Party Dates

5th March—Howes Meadow

19th March—Holly Lane Pond

2nd April—Jary's Meadow

23rd April—Howes Meadow

7th May—Buckenham Woods

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

All welcome!

Work Parties Report

Jan 08 – Lingwood Pond – South Boundary hedge – Trimmed the top from W to SE side of pond, North side of pond 3 willow coppiced and the oak pollarded. General tidy up carried out including cutting back vegetation where necessary. All cut vegetation raked and removed from the site to an area at the allotment site. Litter pick carried out.

Jan 22 – Tree and Hedge Planting – Peter’s Wood Permissive Path/ Footpath FP3 – Weeding around all plants including inside guards. Twenty-two damaged or failed plants were replaced with hawthorn.

Blofield Heath Dyes Rd South Side – planting area screeded 14 oaks planted, and guards fitted. Oaks were home grown by Ernest and 3ft high and 2/3 years old.

Feb 05 – Buckenham Woods - Footpath from Buckenham Rd to the wood – hedge and bramble cut back. Site main open area - Buddleia’s around area coppiced – bramble in open area cut back and sycamore saplings cut down. Cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

Feb 19 – Jary’s Meadow – East meadow – Southern boundary hedge trimmed, and adjacent bank cut with brush-cutter. Grassy Hollow mown. Vegetation around oaks and apple trees mown. Bramble cut back and also some bracken at west end of W meadow. One large oak, under overhead cables, pollarded. All cut vegetation raked and cleared to fire sites/spoil heaps.

Additional Work Carried Out 2021

Dec 14/16 - Howes Meadow—Area A - cut vegetation raked into heaps around E end fire site.

2022

Jan 03/04/06/0710/13/24/25 – Howes Meadow – Area B – edge of stream – Reeds cut and removed to spoil heap. Stream edge cut and rebuilt. Reed in stream removed and dredged accumulated mud.

Jan 15/16 – Howes Meadow – Area D – Large branch growing from base of largest oak in hedge rubbing on one of higher branches. Difficulty with branch becoming stuck. Returned following day with assistance and branch removed. Repair to top of main gate carried out.

Jan 07 – Lingwood Pond – start to mow areas ready for WP on 08th Jan, unfortunately after 5min the mower broke down when the forward/reverse cable sheared. South side boundary hedge trimmed - overhanging willow on North causeway and West side over road cut back. Cut vegetation cleared to pile for removal at WP.