



BADCOG NEWS.

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President: Richard Hobbs

Chairman: Ernest Hoyos, Sunny Cottage,
Buckenham Woods, Lingwood
Norwich NR13 4HG.

Tel 01603 712913

www.badcog.co.uk



Tree Planting in Blofield David Pilch (Blofield tree warden)

On a frosty morning, on the 21st January 2023, a group of 16 willing volunteers comprising of seven BADCOG members, two tree wardens, three parish councillors and four local residents, planted 140 trees on new public land behind the new Wyngates development.



The site which had been strawberry fields had been denuded of its topsoil which had been scraped into bunds leaving poorly draining clay subsoil. There were also three small shallow alleviation ponds. Thus, the site represented a bit of a challenge for species selection and distribution.

Accordingly, a planting plan had been worked out the previous week. The majority of the trees had been supplied through the Broadland Tree Warden Network. Others coming from Norfolk County Council or locally sourced trees. Each planting position was first cleared of surface vegetation with mattocks - a process known as screefing. We used the "notch" planting method which was appropriate to the size of the trees. This method involves digging two full spade depth cuts at right angles to each other, lifting the clod of earth so formed and sliding the root of the tree into the slot before letting the clod fall back and treading on it to make it firm. The planted trees were protected from grazing rabbits or deer by guards and stakes and surrounded by a mulch of wood chippings.



The species planted were: cherry plum, field maple, guelder rose, hawthorn, hazel, hornbeam, pedunculate oak, rowan, silver birch, small leaved lime, spindle, walnut, yew.

Local Weather Roundup for 2022

Ernest Hoyos

My last weather report came out in the March 2022 Newsletter which covered the year 2021.

2022 was a very different year. Although rainfall was variable in 2021, the year ended near average, whereas the first 8 months of 2022 produced only 222mm against an average of 395mm. The three wet Autumn months and Dec. helped make up the shortfall a bit but, 2022 still ended the driest year since 2011, 83% of average, over 100mm or 4 inches short.

For interest, I measured the depth of our well in September '22, from the top of the brickwork down to the water at 22ft 6in. 6.9m. I measured it again at the beginning of February this year, it had come up to 13ft 2in. or 4m showing the rise in underground water levels, however January's rainfall was a bit below average and unless we get a wet time before the end of April when evaporation really takes effect, there could well be a water shortage this Summer. At the time of writing, halfway through February, I've recorded no rain at all.

The real talking point of the weather last year was of course the extreme temperatures. Every month except December just gone was above average and July, with only 8mm of rain, produced two of the hottest days on my 50 years of records, 36.7c on 13th July, 98F. and 34.7c the next day, unprecedented, and as we know exceeded 40c further in land. I have a weather book entitled 'Weather patterns of E Anglia' printed in 1987 which contains a temperature conversions page which doesn't go above 37.8c which is 100F.

These exceptional temperatures combined with the drought triggered field and grass fires, some of which spread to houses and gardens causing severe damage in a few cases, this previously almost unthinkable in this country. As to the future, we are warned to expect more heat waves and droughts but no one knows for sure. Last Summer was exceptional. The hottest day I recorded in 2021 for instance was 28.6c on 7th September and this Summer may turn out similarly temperate and we'll remain a green and pleasant land.

**From our Africa correspondent
Submitted by David Pilch**

By way of explanation, our son Jonathan lives in Zimbabwe and is active in the conservation of a wetland site of international importance on the outskirts of Harare. The voluntary organisation he works with is COSMO (Conservation Society of Monoale). I like to think he has carried forward his interests from his early years with BADCOG as seen in the blue hat in the picture from 1985. Anyway, he has forwarded the attached reports from the vlei warden Jimmy Muropa



Monoale Vlei November Report 2022

“The rains have brought a unique charm to the vlei and an amazing outlook. A fantastic month in terms of birding with 119 bird species recorded. The increase is due to the many migrants arrivals which include Diederik and Levallants Cuckoo’s, Red-chested Cuckoo, Abdim’s Stork, Red-backed shrike, Lesser grey-shrike, Spotted fly-catcher and Dwarf Bit-tern,” the report says.

The report went on to say, ‘other notable bird specials were Copper Sun-bird, Rosy-throated Long-claws, African Rail, Lanner Falcon, Straited heron, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Black Cuckoo-shrike and Orange-breasted bush-shrike. A long-crested Eagle is once again nesting for the third consecutive year on the other side of golf course’. The report added, “The early rains were most welcome and this rendered the vlei flooded with pools of water and made ideal spawning grounds for hundreds of Barbels as witnessed in mid November. Scrubhare were flushed on the vlei and the side-striped Jackal continues to be seen by residents.

Monavale Vlei December Report 2022

The month was overwhelming and teeming with biodiversity that fluttered, slithered, crawled and flew from edge to edge of this amazing vlei. Barbels were galore once again and spawning. A total of 127 bird species were seen/heard for the month whilst the 3rd Sunday bird walk yielded 57 species. A grand total of 186 bird species were seen/heard for the year 2022. Isn't this amazing! Streaky-breasted flufftails (and one of our specials) were heard calling on the 23rd of December marking their arrivals. Other bird highlights for the month were Dwarf bittern, White-faced whistling duck, African Cuckoo-hawk, Steppe buzzard, Black Sparrowhawk, African Harrier-hawk, Amur falcon, African Rail, African crane, Red-chested flufftail, Red-chested and Levallants Cuckoo's, Malachite kingfisher, Great reed warblers, Sedge warbler, Rosy-throated long-claws, Copper sunbird and Cuckoo finches to list these only.

The Hidden Treasures of Ernest's Compost Heap

By Martin Rejzek

Visiting my father-in-law's garden is always reason for excitement. Ernest manages his garden in a nature friendly, organic way. He has dedicated part of the garden to a wildflower meadow attracting a range of wild animals. Moreover, his garden is situated on the fringe of Buckenham Wood, which further increases the diversity of wildlife visiting the garden.

In October 2003 my friend Stanislav Snaell and I sampled a compost heap in Ernest's garden, and we discovered 33 species of Beetles (Coleoptera) using a technique called sieving. Encouraged by these remarkable results, I came back in December of last year and in addition to 20 Beetle species I found a plethora of other invertebrates like Pot Worms, Millipedes, Mites, and Springtails. One species of Springtail called *Protaphorura armata* was particularly abundant. These tiny collembolan animals are blind and unlike most other Springtails, they are unable to jump. *Protaphorura armata* feeds on fungi and contributes significantly to controlling fungal diseases caused by *Fusarium culmorum* and *Gaeumannomyces graminis* var. *tritici*, two of the most important soil borne pathogenic fungi of cereals.



Springtail
Protaphorura armata

The greatest surprise that came out of the compost heap, however, were two species of Pseudoscorpions. These tiny arachnids reach body lengths of about 2 mm but if observed under a microscope they reveal their true nature. Equipped with a pair of pincer-like pedipalps they superficially resemble Scorpions. Pseudoscorpions are voracious predators of many small invertebrates including Mites, Springtails, Moth and Beetle larvae and consequently, they are beneficial to humans.

The first species recorded in the compost heap was Compost Chernes (*Pselaphochernes scorpioides*). In Britain scattered records have come from southern and central parts of England and only few records are known from Scotland.

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The species is commonly phoretic on flies, meaning that the Pseudoscorpion attaches itself to a fly for the purpose of travel, riding the flies to reach a new source of food. Right: Compost Chernes (*Pselaphochernes scorpioides*)



The second recorded species is called Knotty Shining Claw (*Lamprochernes nodosus*). It is a synanthropic species (living near human beings) occurring in compost and dung heaps and in rotten wood of dead trees.



Left: Knotty Shining Claw (*Lamprochernes nodosus*)

The species diversity recorded in this single compost heap suggests the importance of this microhabitat for invertebrates. They come to the compost heap to overwinter, finding a rich source of food in a warm environment. Many species of invertebrates, however, inhabit the compost heap all year around. Composting is an environmentally friendly way of dealing with our organic waste. It helps control plant diseases and produces compost to fertilise our gardens. An added benefit of composting is that it creates a great hot spot of biodiversity.

Note: I wish to thank my friends Liam Andrews, Peter Shaw, Stanislav Snaell and Martin Collier for assisting in identification of the Pseudoscorpions, Springtails and Beetles.

Early nature notes.

In an 1829 book 'The Norfolk Tour' some information was shared about indications of spring in the late 18th century.

For example in 1778 the earliest appearance of snow drops was Dec 24th and the latest in 1795 was Feb 10th. The earliest hawthorn leaf to appear in 1759 was Feb 11th and the latest in 1784 was April 22nd. The earliest singing of the Churn Owl was noted in 1781 on April 29th and the latest in 1792 on June 26th.

'Yellow butterflies' appeared on Jan 10th in 1790 but the latest recording in 1783 had been April 17th. Turnip flowers appeared on Jan 10th in 1796 but had been much later, on June 18th, in 1790.

I wonder what variations people have noticed in more recent years and whether anyone records Churn Owls or turnip flowers.

Eclectic Reflections on musing through past BADCOG newsletters – continued.

From Sept 2005 – Another ‘Go Wild Day’ was held in association with Norfolk Wildlife Trust. The children were shown how to use sweep nets in long vegetation and transfer their finds to a viewer pot to identify them. Later, they noted the different variety of plants within quadrants on dry and wet areas. The children made a long list of interesting flora and fauna, with some new observations being added to the BADCOG Database.

From Nov 2005 – The purchase of our second piece of land is complete and one suggestion for a name is Jary’s Meadow. Major Jary, a local benefactor and landowner, lived at South Walsham Hall and died in 1920.

From May 2006 – In March we planted 60 trees in the NE corner of Jary’s Meadow. At Moulton Pit Wood the paths and the area around the pond have been cleared and currently the wild service tree looks spectacular.

From July 2006 – The orchid count graph shows a result of 4909 in Howes Meadow. Ten years earlier in 1996, there were 52.

From March 2007 – A work party at Buckenham Woods saw the construction of more steps to help accessibility of the slopes, especially in wet weather. At Southwood Church we carefully cut back and removed a huge weight of ivy. For a gate to be erected between Walsham Fen and Jary’s Meadow, we dug in two 3m. telegraph poles to form the gate posts.

May 2007 – saw the first colour photo in the newsletter.

From Sept 2007 – We’ve noted improvements in the flora of our own Jary’s Meadow and the shrubs we planted there are thriving, as is our new hedge alongside Church Road, Lingwood. A few of us helped plant the new Community Wood, in the rain and mud, at South Walsham. Last February, BADCOG had a stand at the ‘Wild About Norfolk’ Conservation Fair in Norwich, part of the coming together of over 50 Wildlife and Conservation groups.

From Jan 2008 – This is a landmark year for BADCOG and during it there will be a number of opportunities to mark our silver Jubilee.

July 5th 2008 – BADCOG celebrated 25yrs with a BBQ at Jary’s Meadow.

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From Nov 2008 - The updating of our site-handbook, containing records and photos going back as far as 1983 giving a good idea of the immense amount of work BADCOG has carried out during the last quarter century, is being undertaken.

From July 2009 - A hornbeam was planted on the grass verge near the traffic lights in Blofield, to celebrate our 25years of local conservation.

From Sept 2009 - Back in March we helped plant a mixed hedge of 350 plants, along with 60 trees and shrubs at Upton Village Hall and around the playing fields.

From March 2010 - A new hedge was planted on the eastern boundary of Braydeston Churchyard, consisting of a mixture of 8 species and a total of 135 plants.

From May 2010 - We carried out some tree management on approximately 40 oaks (planted 1998) along Lingwood Long Lane, in addition to carrying out checks of the oaks (planted 2000) along the Cantley Cock Road.

From Nov 2010 - On 30th September, six members of BADCOG attended an award ceremony at the Assembly House. The group was presented with the 'Local Group Award' from the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership. The award was for; 'BADCOG's long-running programme of habitat conservation & management and its active involvement of volunteers from the community'.

To be continued

Membership renewal.

BADCOG Membership subscriptions are now due.

The cost for a annual membership remains the same as last year:

£5 per single membership or £10 per family membership

You can pay by Bank transfer to:

Lloyds Bank. Sort Code: 30 99 97. Account No: 00642538.

Name: Blofield and District Conservation Group.

Or forward any cheques made payable to BADCOG to:

**Frances Milliken, 45 Heathway, Blofield Corner Road,
Norwich NR13 4RS**

Work Party Reports

Jan 07 – Lingwood Pond – West compartment – South boundary hedge cut back using hedge trimmer. Two swallows on North side coppiced. Oak on North side pollarded. Some willow and bramble on causeway path cut back. East compartment E side of main pond – ivy removed from ash tree. Area around the pond boundary – overhanging vegetation, bramble and reed on North side cut back using scythe. All cut vegetation raked and cleared and taken to the PC allotment site. 11 members

Jan 21 – Wyngates, Blofield – Tree Planting -141 trees planted, 5 - Cherry Plum – 17 Field Maple – 5 Guelder Rose – 20 Hawthorn – 16 Hazel – 15 Hornbeam, 26 Pedunculate Oak – 15 Rowan – 10 Silver Birch – 5 Small-leaved Lime – 5 Spindle – 1 Walnut, 1 Yew. Apart from a few in pots all were bare rooted and notch planted and protected with stakes and guards. 7 members and 9 others

Feb 04 – Buckenham Woods – The causeway path – top and both sides-cut and cleared of sycamore and bramble. 12 members and 3 others

Feb 18 – Walsham Fen – Area F – mown raked and cleared to spoil heaps. Boardwalks in Areas I,L,K,J and H – raked and cleared vegetation from both sides to spoil heaps. Some boardwalk repairs carried out, 6 slats replaced. One part of fallen alder tree cut back. 5 members and 2 others

Additional Work Carried Out

Jan 11 – Pedham Road, Panxworth – Trees planted by BADCOG in Feb 2016 trimmed

Jan 14 – Wyngates, Blofield – proposed tree planting site – marked out area using canes -130 planting places, random spaced 3 metres apart.

BADCOG WORK PARTY DATES

4th March—Howes Meadow

18th March—Holly Lane Pond

1st April—Jary's Meadow

15th April—Howe's Meadow

13th May—Buckenham Woods

20th May—Walsham Fen

3rd June—Lingwood Church

17th June—Hemblington Church

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

All welcome!