

BADCOG NEWS.

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New Country Park for Blofield and Brundall

In 2020 a developer (now Hopkins Homes) received planning approval to build 170 new homes on the land to the East of The Memorial Hall in Brundall. While the houses are in Brundall, the plans also see the creation of a new country park along the Witton Run which is in Blofield, as well as a village green in Brundall.

The Witton Run land is 17 acres of land within the development site, which lies within Blofield Parish. It is an area of low meadow land and rough mixed habitat with a ditch running the length of the area, that is prone to flooding. It will separate the new development from the golf course with the Witton Run being the northern boundary of the site. It connects to a public footpath in the west and Brundall Road/Blofield Road in the east, just opposite the entrances to Marty's Marsh and Cremers Meadow (see map over page). A new entrance road will be created to access the whole development. The homes will be built in the white area and the darker green area will be developed by Brundall Parish Council as a more formal village green for mixed use. Therefore these areas will be designed to complement each other.

Part of the offer from Hopkins Homes is to financially support the transformation of the open green space along the Witton Run into a country park. Blofield Parish Council and Brundall Parish Council have agreed to work in partnership on the development of this Country Park and plan to establish a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to design, develop and manage this land under a Charity and Trusteeship structure.

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The developer will be providing financial support for the initial establishment and maintenance. Work is in progress and ongoing between the two Councils to formalise this arrangement.

To set realistic expectations, it is unlikely that monies from the developer and work on the design will commence much before the end of 2023.



A chance Encounter

As members were leaving a recent committee meeting, I noticed a winged insect on the porch door frame. At first it was unclear whether it was a moth or butterfly but was soon identified as an Early Thorn moth which is distinguished from all other British Thorns by its resting position with its wings held back and close together, similar to a butterfly.



The Early Thorn, *Selenia dentaria* has a wingspan of 28-40 mm and is commonly distributed throughout Britain, though less so in Scotland and occurring in a wide range of habitats. There are two distinct generations (except in the far north), the first of which flies in April and May. The summer brood, which appears in August and September, usually produces smaller and paler moths. The larvae feed on a variety of deciduous trees. Melanic forms regularly occur fairly regularly in parts of northern England.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust is aiming to create a new reserve close to Norwich. Can you help?

“Imagine stepping into a secret wild marsh in the heart of Norwich. A place where kingfishers whistle, water voles swim and orchids bloom. A place of tranquillity for people too, where city children – and adults – can connect with nature. This is not a dream – Sweet Briar Marshes is a miraculous treasure – but we need your help to save it” - Patrick Barkham, President of Norfolk Wildlife Trust

Close to the heart of Norwich lies Sweet Briar Marshes: 90 acres of fen, rough meadow, grazing marsh, old hedgerows and young woodland. This mosaic of habitats, unusually for a city centre, was arable farmland until as recently as the late 1990s, and today provides a treasure trove of nature, wildness and peace.

But this uniquely wild place is increasingly surrounded by urban development, and its sensitive ecology - including a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - is in danger of being lost forever...

Today, with the chance to secure the land, restore its biodiversity, and enhance it for people and wildlife alike, we have the remarkable opportunity to rewrite the story of Sweet Briar Marshes.

We want to create ‘A Wilder Norwich For All’ with Sweet Briar at its centre: an urban green space that is both rich in wildlife and enriching to the lives of the communities it serves; accessible to and valued by all the species who share it.

To do so, we urgently need help. We need to raise £600,000 to:

- Acquire 90 acres of precious wilderness in the heart of Norwich
- Begin work to create a major new nature reserve for the City and its residents
- Protect and enhance a vital stepping stone for wildlife in an otherwise urban landscape

We already have a head start: our public appeal will be generously match funded by Aviva to a value of £300,000, so every penny you give will work twice as hard.

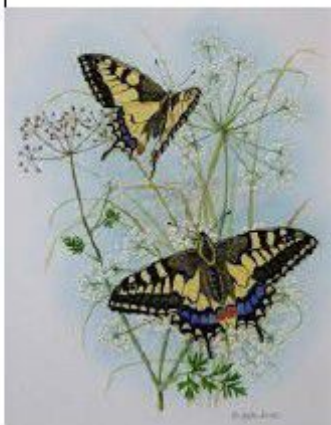
Help NWT raise £300,000 to unlock these vital funds, acquire the land, and begin to plan for its restoration.

Swallowtail Butterflies and Milk Parsley

Tony McKie

In March, the guest speaker for our monthly talk was Dr Mark Collins of the Swallowtails & Birdwings Butterfly Trust. Mark started off by telling us about the work of the trust and its involvement in the conservation of Birdwing and Swallowtail butterflies around the world, some of which are in trouble due climate change, loss of habitat and other issues.

After this fascinating segment of the talk, Mark went on to talk about the plight of our own unique Swallowtail butterfly (*Papilion machaon P.m. Britannicus*) that is found only in the Norfolk Broads. This sub-species differs from its continental cousin (*P.m. gorgeous*); with the butterfly being slightly paler and the caterpillar having a different food plant. The continental population of the swallowtail has a wide range of food plants, but *Britannicus* will only lay its eggs on milk-parsley (*Thysselinum palustre*). This plant again is unique, requiring particular conditions to grow and flourish (sometimes referred to as a 'Goldilocks habitat') and requires a lot of management.



Recently Mark and two students from the UEA have been involved in surveying and recording the ecology and biodiversity of Buckenham Carr and Hassingham Broad. Interestingly, despite the proximity to Strumpshaw RSPB and Wheatfen, where Swallowtails are found, they have not colonised the fen area at Hassingham Broad despite milk-parsley being found there in abundance. Mark's full report can be found in Vol 54 of NNNS 2021 Wildlife Report and makes very interesting reading.

A predicted future problem for the Swallowtail and its host food plant, is the threat of sea level rise and habitat loss. Studies have estimated that in the worse-case scenario, Wheatfen could lose 80% of its area, whilst Hickling Broad could lose 99%. For this reason, suggestions have been made that new areas of milk-parsley should be established now. Should the predicted events happen, the new planting may mitigate some of the potential loss.

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BADCOG has been thinking along the same lines, and it seemed that Walsham Fen could be an ideal area to try and establish the milk parsley plant. Although milk-parsley has not been recorded at Walsham Fen, Swallowtail butterflies have been seen passing over the fen and the adjacent Jary's Meadow. As the crow flies, Fairhaven Water Gardens is only a mile or so away and Swallowtail butterflies are often seen there. They may well be from this location and are searching out places to feed or to lay eggs.



Photo of Swallowtail at Walsham Fen by Matthew McKie

In March BADCOG planted 24 milk-parsley plug plants at Walsham Fen, all of which have been marked with a cane so that they can be monitored. The plug plants have been planted in different areas of the fen, but according to some publications, milk-parsley seems to thrive in sedge tussocks, so some plugs have been planted in the tussocks found at the fen.

As well as planting milk parsley at Walsham Fen, dog violet has also been planted at Jary's Meadow to see if we can attract Silver-washed fritillary butterflies to the meadow. The butterfly can be found along the hedgerows nearby at Ranworth feeding on bramble, but their host plant is the dog violet. This fritillary is becoming more common in Norfolk, so if you visit the meadow in late summer, keep an eye out and report any sightings. You never know you may get lucky.

SPRING WALK

Saturday 28th May

TYRREL'S WOOD AND SHELTON

Start time 10.30am from the car park on Wood Lane (Grid Ref TM205 893) or nearest post code IP21 4XT, just south of Long Stratton and close to Goodies Food Hall
Starting from the wood, this walk continues along well-kept public footpaths, field margin and quiet roads for 5.5 miles (8.9km) passing a wide range of different habitats.
Bring a picnic or drop into Goodies after the walk for lunch.

Annual Orchids Counts

This years annual orchid counts will take place on:

Howe's Meadow—20th June

Walsham Fen—24th June

Both will start at 7pm.

Remember,

good footwear and clothing for wet boggy conditions and insects!

Far from Home

Thought to be the only albatross of its kind in the Northern Hemisphere a black browed albatross nick-named Albie has been seen this year at Bempton Cliffs on the Yorkshire coast. These cliffs are host to Britain's largest mainland sea bird colony and each summer the cliffs are crowded with gannets, puffins, guillemots, kittiwakes and more.

Albie is known to have overwintered in the Baltic Sea around Denmark and Germany since 2014 after being blown off course from the South Atlantic oceans and has remained ever since, making occasional forays across the North Sea to Bempton where he was seen in the summer in 2017, 2020, 2021 and this year when for the first time he arrived in the spring.

Albie is an impressively large seabird with a wingspan of up to two-and-a-half metres and a dark grey saddle and black upper wings. The species is distinctive from other albatrosses by the nostrils on the side of the bird's large bills. The bird's peach-coloured beaks are made up of between seven and nine plates that help them to filter salt from the ocean water.

Black browed albatrosses, also called mollymawks, mate for life. They breed in the islands of the South Atlantic and build unusual nests that look a bit like chimney pots. Made out of mud and guano, these nests measure about 20 inches high. An albatross lays just one egg, in early October, into a shallow hollow dug into the top. This egg is fiercely guarded from marauding predators like skuas and after an incubation of nearly three months both parents care for their single large white chick for over four months. Sadly this species is in decline, with breeding pairs thought to be decreasing each year.

Albie is thought to be only about eight years old. Possibly changes in habitat, plus warmer temperatures may have something to do with him straying so far or it may have been related to his relative immaturity. Sadly the prevailing winds prevent his making a return and unless a female is similar extraordinary circumstances Albie is destined to spend the rest of his lifespan of up to seventy years alone.

Training Workshop Opportunities

Norfolk Wildlife Trust has a new programme of workshops and activities that have been specially designed to support individuals, communities and groups acting for nature in their local area.

Members of BADCOG may find it of interest.

The programme consists of:

- **Group mechanics** – topics covered include: community grants, social media, task leadership and how to set up a 'Friends of Group'.
- **Habitat focus** – looking at managing, creating or restoring such habitats as ponds, meadows, woodlands and reed/sedge beds.
- **Skill sharing** – linking with Friends of Eaton Park coming together to help them cut their meadow.
- **Practical tool use** – workshops to develop skills in scything, peening and safe hand tool use.
- **Species focus** – including: swifts, pollinators and how to survey wildflowers.
- **Community focus** – a chance to take a tour with communities doing great things for wildlife.

Planning for wildlife – webinar on how to get the best outcomes for wildlife from planning decisions where you live.

Contact; Lucy Seely, NWT Wildlife and Community Officer,

Tel 01603 625540

<https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on/workshops-for-a-wilder-community>

BADCOG Work Party Dates

7th May—Buckenham Woods

21st May—Walsham Fen

11th June—Lingwood Church

18th June—Hemlington Church

2nd July—Howes Meadow

16th July—Blofield Church

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

All welcome!

Work Parties Report

Mar 05 – Howes Meadow – South boundary hedge, meadow side trimmed back – some bramble cleared – 2 willows pollarded and some work on stream. All cut vegetation cleared to fire site/spoil heap.

10 members and 6 others including 2 lads on DofE award scheme

Mar 19 – Holly Lane Pond – Annual maintenance - Roadside hedge trimmed – vegetation in area around pond cut back – hazel coppiced – all cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heap. Litter pick carried out.

Some members went on to Howes Meadow to carry out a burn of one of the fire sites.

9 members and 1 DofE plus father

Apr 02 – Jary's Meadow – West Meadow – west of seat to the west site boundary raked and cleared to fire site – encroaching bramble, blackthorn and sallow around edge of meadow cut back. All cut vegetation raked and cleared to fire site. Burning at 2 fire sites. Some clearance of overhanging vegetation on bridleway.

8 members 2 other and 2 DofE

Apr 23 – Howes Meadow – North boundary hedge trimmed back using loppers. Brushcutter used to cut back vegetation in and along the northern ditch. Cut vegetation cleared. East fire site - burning carried out.

7 members

Additional Work Carried Out

Feb 03/11/15 – Howes Meadow – Continuation of work by stream started in January

Feb 22 – Jary's Meadow – West meadow – South boundary hedge west end planted 25 hawthorn

Feb 23 – Limpenhoe Church – New hedge west boundary surveyed and 15 hawthorn replaced. Several spirals also replaced. Existing old hedge cut back where overhanging new plants.

Mar 02 – Railway Wood – New BADCOG signs put up.

Mar 12 – Walsham Fen – Areas A1, A2, F, K, J & H mown. 2 mowers used. Scythed around ponds and cleared around existing spoil piles. Clearance to be carried out by BVCG.

Mar 23 – Walsham Fen – Areas mown on Mar 12 raked and cleared to spoil heaps by the Bure Valley Conservation Group.

Mar 28 – Jary's Meadow – West Meadow – Area west of seat to west site boundary mown.