

BADCOG NEWS.

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Time marches on and we are heading towards the end of Summer 2021 and thus time for us to take stock.

There was no AGM last September, Covid put paid to that, and without a venue and people still feeling uncomfortable with an indoor meeting an AGM this year will probably only happen if planned for an afternoon in a garden, here at Sunny Cottage if agreeable. We normally hold a members evening after an AGM. This year Coral said she could offer refreshments; all we need is a fine early September day. There have been no evening talks through last Winter and no outings, so I can only report on our practical management and some sightings.

As I reported in last November's News Letter work parties resumed again from August 1st with a cut and clear at Blofield churchyard, greatly aided by dry weather for the first half of the month during which we were able to mow and rake at both Howes Meadow and Walsham Fen. The second half of August was quite wet but then it was dry for the first three weeks of September allowing us to really catch up, we managed to burn the piles at both the above sites but were also able to help with mowing an area at Cremers Meadow for the Brundall group and mowed the new path network at Martys Marsh. Work was also carried out at Buckenham woods, Lingwood Church and the reeds mown at the west side of Lingwood Pond and cleared.

The dry spell in September came to an abrupt end with heavy rain and high winds on the 24th and 25th when over 3 inches fell, and the weight

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of rain and NW gale brought down many trees in North and East Norfolk including our once fine oak in Howes Meadow. As a footnote I planted a replacement oak on 3rd of January this year, selected from my little nursery.

Another lockdown was imposed before Christmas lasting well into the New Year, despite this we checked our new hedge from Peters Wood and gapped up with a few plants. Thereafter a few individuals kept things ticking over before we resumed our usual programme. Holly lane Pond for instance, had been planned for 13th March but didn't happen until the 24th April, well into the nesting season so we carefully checked the hedge before giving it a trim. Thereafter things have carried on as normal to date.

As for sightings, there was a very good show of Early Purple Orchids in Belt Plantation at Burlingham woods in May and a Pyramidal Orchid turned up in Blofield Churchyard. Sadly, no Turtle Dove arrived at Lingwood this year although there was one reported at Beighton church. The barn owl at Walsham Fen was spotted during our orchid count and I've subsequently seen it in the entrance to the box.

During early June Friends of Hemblington church again held a wildlife exhibition at the church. The BADCOG's stand and photos were set up and Tony left the moth trap overnight which was of particular interest to the pupils of Hemblington Primary School when they visited the next morning. A mini bioblitz was also carried out and numerous insects were recorded. After the event and the flora recorded, we carried out our annual mow and rake up.

As always looking forward to more normal times.

Best wishes Ernest.

Great Big Green Week 18th—26th September

Lingwood will be involved in this national event with the main day being Saturday 25th September in the Village Hall. BADCOG will be there!

Nature Notes

Little Terns in Norfolk

Little Terns are one of the UK's rarest seabirds, and rely heavily on the east Norfolk coast which supports around 20% of the national population

Facts about Little Terns

- Little terns measure less than 25cm in length and weigh about the same as a tennis ball.
- The Norfolk name for the little tern is 'Little Pickie', because of the way they skilfully 'pick' fish from the sea with their bills.
- They're also picky eaters mainly feeding on sand eels and young herring which they plunge-dive to catch. The number of eggs they lay and the survival of their chicks is largely dependent on food availability.
- Food is a big part of the little tern's elaborate courtship. It involves the male carrying a fish - both in aerial and ground displays. Females seem to respond to long, shiny fish which the males advertise by shaking them from side to side.
- Little terns do not breed until they are at least two years old, spending their first summer in their West African wintering grounds.
- Little terns, as with all the terns that breed in the UK, have forked tails and this, together with their aerial acrobatics, gave them their old name of 'sea swallows'.

They are fast and strong flyers and mature adults will have travelled more than 100,000 km between the UK and Africa during their lifespan

Autumn

Technically, autumn has two start dates:

Astronomical: normally on 21 September or one day either side, the first day of autumn (or spring earlier in the year) is marked by the equinox - when daylight and dark hours are equal. The word equinox comes from the Latin *aequus* (equal) and *nox* (night). In 2021 the autumn equinox is on 22 September.

Meteorological: weather scientists split the year into quarters based on annual temperature cycles for statistical purposes. By this method, autumn starts on 1 September and lasts until 30 November.

It might not necessarily feel like autumn on these specific dates - warm weather may give the impression of an extended summer, or icy blasts can seem like the early onset of winter. But many changes in nature happen around these times to indicate autumn.

Many birds, including nightingales, cuckoos, swifts and swallows fly south to warmer climates for the winter. Huge flocks of swallows can be seen lining up on telegraph wires ready for their 6,000 mile journey to South Africa which can take them six weeks.

Before long there will be some arrivals of redwings, fieldfares, waxwings and some types of duck and geese heading to the UK from colder countries like Iceland and Scandinavia.

Neatishead, Irstead & Barton Tuft, Wildlife Friendly Village Project Tony McKie

In my role as a volunteer at the RAF Air Defence Radar Museum, I was asked if I would like to be involved in a new local community environmental project. The residents of the villages of Neatishead, Irstead and Barton Turf have recently established a group with the aim of improving the biodiversity in and around their villages.



The motivation for this project comes from the WildEast initiative (www.wildeast.co.uk), which is asking everyone in our region to utilise 20% of whatever space they own, whether it's a farm, a verge, or a window box, to wildlife. This would help to restore some of the 70% of the biodiversity that has been lost in the UK since 1970. It's a well-known fact that the UK is one of the least biodiverse countries in Europe.

This fledgling group is aiming to build a network that enables residents to share information about how they can help wildlife on their own 'patch'. The group also hopes to be able to make wildlife friendly improvements in communal areas around the villages and as the museum at Neatishead is very much part of the community, the manager at the museum was very keen to get involved and support this scheme.

With my involvement with BADCOG, I was asked to have a look at what could be done within our own 'patch' at the radar museum. As the museum only has a small footprint and space is needed for overflow parking and outside hospitality, it was difficult to find areas which we could set aside for wildlife, however, we did managed to find two areas.

The first area is only about 5m² and in semi-shade caused by a mobile radar cabin on one side and a large tree on the other and surrounded by a chain-linked fence. The area has little environmental interest at the moment and is difficult to mow with the sit-on mower. Here we are going to sow a woodland/hedgerow native wildflower seed mix and introduce some wild honeysuckle to hide the fence. I think this area is ether going to be a bit of a hit or a miss but only time will tell.

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The second area is about 20m long and about 6m wide and includes a roadside verge and an anti-ballistic earth blast bank which was constructed to counter a possible IRA attack. The whole area has in the past been mown or strimmed by the council or by the museum's maintenance team, with the cutting left, which as we all know just introducing fertility back into the soil which is not the best conditions for wildflowers. Because of this, the vegetation on the verge is very high and lush and dominates any delicate wildflowers that tries to get established. Fortunately, the blast bank already has a nice range of wildflowers and is low in nutrients and looks very promising. The whole area here has already been mown, raked and cleared this year, with a second cut and clearance planned for the autumn. (Thank you, Chairman, for allowing me to use the BADCOG mower). Here we will sow a cornfield/traditional meadow wildflower mix and manage it much like BADCOG manages it churchyards sites, with one or two cuts a year with all vegetation raked off and cleared.



With this type of management, it's hoped that in a few years' time the vegetation will not be as high and lush and be much more like some of the areas we see in Blofield churchyard, allowing wildflowers to get established.

Further to this, the group are looking to create a wildflower area close to Neatishead Village Hall and to manage some of their roadside verges for wildflowers. Having seen some of the hedges planted by BADCOG, they are also very keen to do some of their own hedge planting.

It's been a pleasure to help and support this group who are very keen and enthusiastic about making environmental improvement in and around their local community. I have also heard that other villages have contacted this group in the hope of starting their own group, which all sound very promising.



Churchyard Conservation in action

BADCOG has been managing the conservation areas of Blofield Churchyard for nearly 40 years and the large range of wildflowers present is testimony to the benefits of the twice-yearly cutting regime.

It came as a surprise this year that thanks to the sharp eyes of the mower we were able to record a new species, a single pyramidal orchid. It will be interesting to see if this species becomes established.



Watchful Parent David Pilch

In April, I received a kind invitation from our Chairman, to go and see a young Tawny Owl that had left its nest high in a nearby Oak tree, and was perched in the hedge near to the Oak. Tawny Owl young regularly leave the nest before they can fly, and although some broods stay fairly close together, most separate by a few yards, and can be very hard to locate. If they fall to the ground, they use their remarkably strong feet and claws to clamber back up a tree trunk, and safety from ground predators. They also have an additional advantage over other young birds, and that is their watchful parents, who will attack any avian threats, such as Crows, and animals as large as cats. There are also numerous accounts of attacks on humans who have climbed trees to inspect nests, and the celebrated bird photographer Eric Hosking lost an eye when he was attacked by a Tawny Owl that he was photographing at its nest. I had this in mind when I visited Ernest's garden to see the young Tawny Owl, which I found where I had been told to look for it. As I stood watching the young owl, I felt that I was being watched, so did not approach the young bird too closely. I heard the alarm call of a Jay in trees about 50 yards away, and knew that the Jay had spotted an adult Tawny Owl. I decided to go to look for the adult owl, in the area where the Jay had called from. Almost immediately I found the adult owl -(watching me) and from a position where it had, almost certainly, been watching me all the time that I had been looking at the young owl.

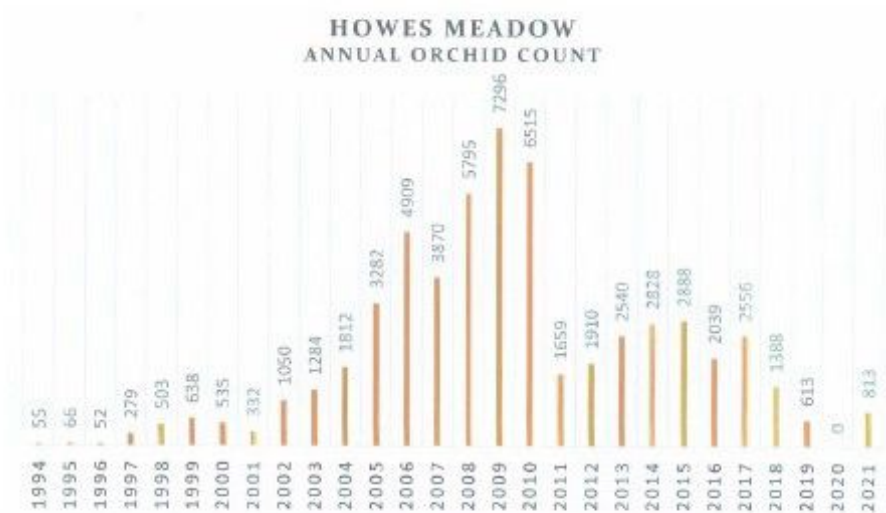


I love all owls, but Tawny Owls are extra special, and I have the greatest respect for them. I hope that this particular family prosper.

Annual Orchid Counts.

Here are the results of our annual orchid counts at Howes Meadow and Walsham Fen. At Walsham Fen, this was the largest ever count carried out here with some stunning specimens (picture). It was also noted that orchid numbers are slowly increasing in Jary's Meadow with 20 counted this year. Also worth a note was that a pyramidal orchid was found in Blofield Churchyard this year, a first here (see page 4). Well done John for spotting it and missing it with the mower.

Tony McKie



Main Work Party Report

Jul 03 – Howes Meadow - 90% of path network raked and cleared to fire sites

Jul 17 – Blofield Church – NE & NW conservation areas raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

Jul 31 – Walsham Fen – Areas D/E raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

Aug 14 – Jary's Meadow - East Meadow – Grassy Hollow raked and cleared to fire sites. West meadow SW corner- some bracken and bramble cut back and old cut heaps of vegetation cleared

Additional Work Carried Out

Jun 05/21 – Jary's Meadow – West Meadow – SW corner – Scythed bracken.

Jun 27 – Howe's Meadow - The path network; Area B; around fire sites, tree trunk seat and fallen oak, all mown.

Jun 30 – Limpenhoe Church – Conservation area mown. Areas around gravestones and adjacent to Southern church wall, scythed.

Jul 07 – Jary's Meadow – West Meadow – SW corner – Scythed bracken.

Jul 08 – Limpenhoe Church – Conservation area raked and cleared by the Bure Valley Conservation Volunteers.

Jul 10 – Blofield Church – NE & NW conservation areas mown.

Jul 14 – Blofield Church – SE & SW conservation areas mown. Areas around gravestones scythed.

Jul -12/13/15/19/20/21 – Howe's Meadow – Continued and completed clearance of path network unfinished at WP Jul 03.

Jul 20 – Blofield Church – SE & SW conservation areas raked and cleared to spoil heaps by the Great Yarmouth Green Gym group.

Jul 23 – Walsham Fen – Areas D/E and top of boardwalk mown.

Jul 23 – Jary's Meadow – West Meadow – SW corner – Scythed bracken. E Meadow – area around fire site by entry gate mown.

Aug 05 – Howes Meadow – Area A, N section between E and middle fire site and paths mown. Both fire sites burnt to about ½ content.

Aug 07 – Walsham Fen – Raked and cleared top and either side of boardwalk.

Aug 07 – Jary's Meadow – East meadow – Grassy Hollow -mown.

Aug 09 – Limpenhoe Church – ¾ of area of ragwort scythed; bagged and removed flower heads. Rank vegetation around new hedge cleared.

Aug 13 – Lingwood Church – Conservation area mown.

BADCOG Work Party Dates

11th September - Walsham Fen (Area G)

25th September - Jary's Meadow

9th October - Howe's Meadow

23rd October - Buckenham Woods

6th November - Strumpshaw Stonepit

20th November - Snowdrop Acre

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

All welcome!