



Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership Newsletter

Autumn & Winter 2014

In this issue:

Partners News

	Page No.
Castle Manor Academy Orchard Restoration Project	1
A Facelift for North Warren	3
CAP reform—all change on the farming front	3
A Grand Stag Do	5
Site management at Westleton Heath Pit CGS	6
CMSi – An international system for managing sites for conservation	7
A Popular Crane	8
Breathing life into the River Brett	9
Suffolk's Nature Strategy	13
NOMS Award for 2013 : national winners HMP&YOI Hollesley Bay	15
RSPB in the Brecks	17
River enhancements in north and south Suffolk	18
The Great British Beach Clean—another 'Outstanding' success in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB!	20
Suffolk FWAG Farm Conservation Award	21
Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership News	22
SBP information	23

To find out what this BAP species is, go to last page

Castle Manor Academy Orchard Restoration Project

Becky Baldwin, Castle Manor Academy, Haverhill

Castle Manor Academy is a secondary school in Haverhill, Suffolk. The Academy is part of a partnership of schools which includes two primary schools. Together the Castle Partnership Academy Trust offer an all through learning experience.

When it was built in the late 60s a small apple orchard was planted. As the school grew the orchard was moved by the current caretaker and a team of green fingered teachers/students to its current site, we believe this was in 1973. Students were taught horticultural skills in rural science lessons and there were some animals on site, rumour has it there were rabbits and pigs. Times changed, teachers left and the orchard became overgrown and unused. The animals were not replaced and outside learning slipped off the curriculum. In 2013 the teacher responsible for community engagement, Mrs Becky Baldwin had the vision to restore the orchard with her eco team. To prepare for the task ahead, Becky and Alison (RHS school gardening coordinator) attended a pruning course with the East of England Apples and Orchards Project.

With funding secured from Suffolk Acre (now part of Community Action Suffolk), Grow Wild UK and Suffolk Community Foundation, Becky, Alison, horticulture students and the eco team set about pruning, planting wild flowers, erecting a workshop, fencing in the area and finally purchasing Soay sheep to maintain the long grass.

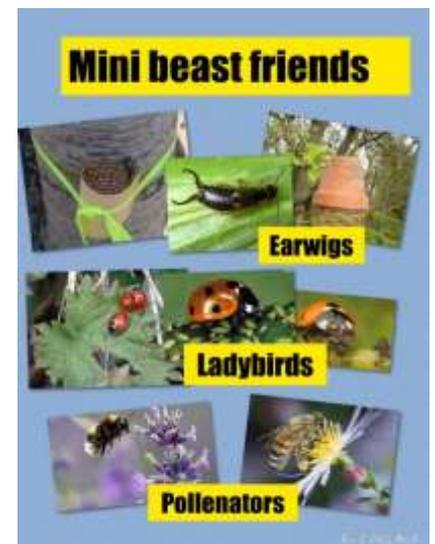
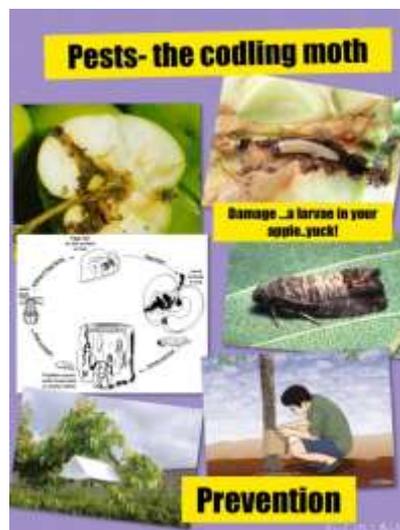


The orchard area is now being used by teachers within the local area to cover many curriculum areas. Den building, apple juicing, biodiversity studies on the wild flowers and insects and cookery lessons using the produce are to name just a few of the activities the orchard is now used for.



The Castle Manor Orchard Restoration Project plans to completely restore the 26 apple trees to their former glory in three years. In the coming year, Mrs Baldwin hopes to introduce CCTV for both security and to observe wildlife in the orchard by installing cameras in hedgehog homes, bird houses and focusing on the sheep shelter. The long term vision for the orchard is that it becomes part of the school curriculum, offering forest school sessions, horticulture lessons, workshops and training for students and families as well as a safe home to the greatly loved sheep, affectionately named by students 'Baaabara and Nessie'.

Follow the orchard's journey to restoration on the [Grow Wild website](#), visit their new Facebook page '[Castle Manor Academy outside learning](#)' or email [Becky Baldwin](#) for details/to arrange a visit to inspire your school/community orchard area.



A Facelift for North Warren

RSPB

North Warren is the oldest RSPB nature reserve in Suffolk, but often remains in the shadow of nearby Minsmere. It is, of course, a wonderful place to visit, with vast coastal grazing marshes that attract huge flocks of geese and ducks in winter, a hidden reedbed where hobbies and bearded tits may be seen in summer, and remnants of Sandlings heath where adders and grayling butterflies breed.

It has recently become much easier to watch wildlife at North Warren, thanks to an exciting project funded by HSBC.

Four new viewing platforms have been built by Gilleards, specialists in hide design and construction. Two of these look west across South Marsh, accessed via a new permissive path close to the sluice cottage, and will give great views of North Warren's ducks and waders. A third platform is on the western side of South Marsh, accessed on another new path from the old railway line. The fourth platform overlooks the reedbed near the boardwalk.

In addition to these platforms, new scrapes, ditches and sluices have been created on South Marsh to improve the year-round wildlife watching opportunities. These should benefit breeding and migrant wading birds, wintering ducks and geese and dragonflies in summer by allowing better control of water levels.



New hide at North Warren. Photo: Christine Hall

CAP reform—all change on the farming front

Steve Podd, Suffolk FWAG

2015 will see big changes on the farming and environmental funding front, the result of the latest reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). January 1st 2015 will see the implementation of several major changes.

In this short article I have aimed to tease out the bones of some of the more significant changes.

So, from 2015 the old Single Payment Scheme (SPS) – funded from 'Pillar 1' of the budget - will be replaced by the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). This is funding for cushioning farm income in the context of an unpredictable, fluctuating market place. From 2015 the size of the smallest possible claim has been raised from one hectare to five hectares, while the largest farms will have their payments capped above a certain level. To encourage more youth in farming, younger farmers meeting certain criteria will be able to enhance their BPS payment for five years.

'Pillar 2' of the budget will continue to fund the agri-environment schemes as now. However, Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) are now closed to new applications, and a new scheme will replace them. This scheme will incorporate the English Woodland Grant Scheme and Catchment Sensitive Farming funds, which have hitherto been separate strands. Some £900m will be available for the new scheme; the main priorities will be biodiversity and water quality, with a secondary focus on landscape, historic environment, genetic conservation and educational access. Climate change adaptation and mitigation will also be a theme.

Sadly in my view, given that ELS and HLS reached farmers holding 70% of England's 'useable agricultural area', Natural England predicts that the new scheme may only stretch to half that figure. This will leave many farmers who engaged with conservation for the first time under ELS out in the cold.

The new scheme will have a 'top tier' aimed at special sites such as SSSIs, entry to which will be by invitation from Natural England.

Below that will be a second tier where farmers can instigate the applications. It's a competitive scheme, so all applications for this tier will be scored against local targeting priorities, with only the best being accepted. Agreements will (usually) last five years.

At the bottom will be a small 'Universal Capital Grant Scheme', also competitive and with a very limited budget, for farms not in other agreements. The maximum grant will be £5000 per year with annual applications. The grant options under this will be restricted to boundary maintenance (e.g. hedge coppicing, gapping up, boundary tree planting; and stone walls will also have grant options). Capital grants will also be available for woodland management plans, tree health issues and water quality benefit.



Good quality hedge and margin.

The major change in all this is the introduction of '*greening*'. Get used to the term, it will be with us for the next few years! Essentially, in an unprecedented move away from past policy, this involves placing certain basic environmental measures under Pillar 1. All farmers must assess their holdings for greening, and failure to implement the rules will result in fines of 30% of the BPS initially, and rising in future years.

In a nutshell, the rules require farms with an arable area over a certain size to grow a minimum of two or three different 'crops' (so called Crop Diversification), and to use 5% of the farm's 'arable land' as an Ecological Focus Area (EFA). There are exemptions to both these rules, but most Suffolk farms, being comparatively large and predominantly arable, will fall outside the exemptions. There are five options which can be employed to achieve the EFA requirement, covering hedges, watercourse buffers, 'fallow', leguminous crops and catch/cover crops. 'Fallow' will include such things as grassy or floristically-enhanced field margins, field corners, wild bird seed mixtures and nectar flower mixtures.

Greening was devised as a policy to cover all EU member states, but almost before the scheme has begun, disadvantages are coming to light and many environmental organisations have been very critical. Potentially the change to greening, allied to a more restricted agri-environment scheme, could undo much of the real progress made in farm conservation in England in the last decade or two. In particular, the EFA alone may not retain all the benefits accrued under even quite basic ELS agreements; and the crop diversification rules will clearly cause big problems for many small farms, forcing them to grow uneconomically small areas of additional crops, and certainly raising costs if they employ a contractor.

Suffolk FWAG has had a busy year completing the last ELS and HLS applications, and we are now actively engaged in helping Suffolk farmers through the greening maze, encouraging them to use the right measures in the right place to help wildlife. On a positive note, we have found that many farmers locally, including some with large acreages, will be happy to leave some or all of their old ELS options in place after their ELS has ended; although there are a number of very practical reasons behind this, these farmers often cite an increase in wildlife as one of the reasons. This is heartening news indeed!

Clearly the new schemes will take time to bed down, including the changes to 'cross compliance' rules, of which the most controversial aspect is the extension of the 'no-hedgecutting' period to 1st September. Despite reservations about greening and a much more restricted budget for agri-environment schemes, I hope we will continue to see positive benefits for wildlife and the wider environment.

All the same, I can't help feeling that, as happened when Countryside Stewardship came to an end in 2004, there will be a call at the end of this current budget period (2020) for a basic agri-environment scheme, open to all (such as ELS; in fact, that's how ELS was born). While supporting special sites, habitats and species is clearly important, in my view we should never forget the wider picture and the 'common or garden'; they are important too. Greening in its present form doesn't really fit the bill; we know it will be reviewed in 2017, but how farm changes will go remains to be seen. Clearly there are constraints and challenges ahead, but hopefully, together, we can continue to help as many farmers as possible to do what is right for the environment and wildlife.

A Grand Stag Do

RSPB

RSPB Minsmere has once again featured heavily in the BBC's amazing series of wildlife programmes, with its red deer playing a starring role in the recent series of Autumnwatch.

While the series came from the beautiful RSPB Leighton Moss reserve in Lancashire, one of several pre-recorded features told the story of the red deer rut here in Suffolk.

From the prehistoric bellowing and parallel walking of rival stags, to the violent clash of antlers, all of the action was filmed and broadcast across the UK's TV screens.

Many visitors at Minsmere were lucky enough to get up close to the action on our ever popular 4x4 deer safaris. With three trips per day over a seven week period, these give a unique opportunity to witness the action at close quarters. We also opened a viewpoint on Westleton Heath once more, where visitors could see not just the deer but also stone-curlews, green woodpeckers and much more.

The red deer rut has now finished for this year, though groups of hinds can often be spotted around Minsmere's nature trails throughout the year.



Red deer at RSPB Minsmere. Photo: Jon Evans

Site Management at Westleton Heath Pit CSG

Caroline Markham, GeoSuffolk

Bob* and I love our penthouse flat in central Ipswich - the urban landscape we view from the balconies is complex and exhilarating. However, one of the unforeseen bonuses of our move here last spring has been the enhanced enjoyment of days out in our beloved Suffolk countryside. Westleton Heath on the RSPB Minsmere reserve at sunset on October 8th was exquisite – a landscape of heather and birches, with a soft southerly wind carrying the sounds of the red deer rutting. We were there to view a County Geodiversity Site, a pit at TM 457693 and make decisions about the following day's conservation project run by Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB – in particular where to dig and how to dispose of the spoil.

The next day, a replica of its predecessor with sunshine and a southerly breeze, saw eight of us assemble at the pit at 9.30 a.m. under the direction of SCH AONB Countryside Officer Neil Lister. Spades and wheelbarrows were the order of the day (Neil with some foresight had brought a few small 'ladies spades' – so easy to dig with, I'm going to buy one!) and we all set to work on the portion of the west face of the pit allocated by Bob the evening before. Our task was to clear the talus which had built up over the years from a section of the face to enlarge the 1.5 m vertical exposure to about 3m. The geology here (Norwich Crag deposits) comprises sandy strata interbedded with layers of large cobbles – the 'Westleton Beds' named after this area. We soon found the sands were much easier to dig out than the pebbles! Nevertheless, a pebble bed was exposed at the base of our section – a mirror to the one at the top with a sandwich of horizontally bedded sands in between. Meanwhile, a small splinter group had dug a section in the north face which showed a (smaller sized) pebble bed contorted by frost action during the ice age.

The Norwich Crag strata here were laid down in coastal waters about 1½ -2 million years ago and represent the last major marine incursion across Suffolk. We hope that these refreshed sections of quarry face may help visitors to consider past environmental change – from sea to land as the climate cooled at the onset of the ice age. Also our small 'windows on the past' should help with understanding the profound influence of the geology, with its high permeability and lack of clay minerals, on the heathland vegetation here. Thank you to the RSPB and Natural England (the heath is a biological SSSI) for permission to dig and to SCH AONB volunteers for the muscle power to make this possible.



Westleton Heath Pit CGS October 2014

CMSi – An international system for managing sites for conservation

David Mitchell

An international consortium of organisations from the Netherlands and the UK have produced a new software system for managing conservation sites anywhere in the world. The system, **CMSi** (where “i” stands for “international”), integrates planning, monitoring, work recording and reporting into one highly functional and easy to use software tool.

Using the very latest mapping, database and web technology, **CMSi** is already used to manage over 1,000 important protected sites across Europe and beyond. It is used by governmental, charitable and private sector organisations to manage international site networks as well as individual parks and reserves.

- Integrates site planning, implementation, monitoring and review into a single, dynamic and adaptive site management system
- No longer does your management plan sit as a neglected paper plan in the bookshelf – it becomes a tool that creates your work plans and structures your work
- It simplifies the planning process allowing you to rapidly copy good planning from other sites but in doing so promotes consistency of approach
- Has built-in free mapping to record your sites, assets, habitats, project work and land ownership
- Offers flexible creation of plans, work programmes, budgets, conservation status reports and more, all with map, photo and chart options
- Promotes sharing of site information, projects and expertise within and between organisations
- Automates routine tasks for less paperwork and more site management
- Centralises, organises and makes accessible all your site information to ensure continuity across organisational and staff changes
- Can be locally installed or centrally hosted and works for single sites or across multiple sites

The image shows a screenshot of the CMSi software interface, which is a web-based mapping and data management tool. The interface displays a map of a landscape with various colored overlays representing different site features, projects, and habitats. A sidebar on the left contains a list of site details and management options. Several callout boxes with red lines pointing to specific parts of the interface provide additional information:

- Dynamic visual representation of your data:** Points to the map area.
- Integrated mapping shows your sites, projects, habitats etc.:** Points to the map area.
- 'My CMSi' Customise the software to meet the precise needs of each user:** Points to the sidebar menu.
- Expand and collapse panels to show only what you need to see:** Points to the sidebar menu.
- Automate all your routine tasks such as work programmes, annual reports, budget forecasts, etc.:** Points to the sidebar menu.
- Use your existing maps and data or digitise directly within CMSi:** Points to the map area.
- Define your own format, terminology and language:** Points to the sidebar menu.
- Management Identify appropriate management. Share management projects between site and organisations:** Points to the sidebar menu.
- Factors What is it that affects the features? It is the factors that most often need to be managed:** Points to the sidebar menu.
- Features Identify what is important about your site and set objectives for each:** Points to the sidebar menu.

At the bottom left is the CMSi logo, and at the bottom center is the text: **For the management of biodiversity and special places**

However CMSi also includes extra optional modules to help you manage your conservation sites. These include:

- A Property and Agreements module allowing you to record all your land ownership records, management agreements and leases along with building details,
- A detailed species and habitat monitoring and recording module,
- An assets module in which you can record details of key equipment, machinery and even livestock along with health and safety audits
- An online interface onto your data in which the public can view whatever site data you choose to release, send in comments or observations of things happening on the site or if they are registered, record work that they have done according to the management plan
- A module to link to images and documents to any part of your management plan
- A link to full GIS software to avail of advanced editing and query functionality

CMSi is owned by an international consortium of conservation organisations operating on a democratic and not-for-profit basis. The aim of the consortium is simply to help managers achieve the best possible conservation outcomes for their sites.

CMSi pricing is based on 'ability to pay' with smaller and charitable organisations paying less than larger and commercial users. The non-profit nature of the consortium means that its income is always directed to support management and further development. Day to day development and management work is contracted to exeGesIS, a specialist UK based software development and environmental consultancy.

For more information on CMSi including web videos of the programme in action, go to www.software4conservation.com or email cms@software4conservation.com.

A Popular Crake

RSPB Minsmere

When reports came into the Minsmere visitor centre in early October of a Little Crake seen from Bittern Hide, birdwatchers across the country waited with baited breath for more news. Initially seen on Tuesday 30 September, it was finally relocated late on Saturday evening.

This was only the third Suffolk record of Little Crake, following birds in Lowestoft in 1830 and at Minsmere in September 1973, so hundreds of twitchers arrived from all across the UK over the following few days.

Luckily the Little Crake remained until 13 October, though it could be very hard to spot and could go

missing for several hours at a time. It fed along the edge of a pool in front of Bittern Hide, but was often only visible for a few minutes at a time, so patience was certainly required, and Bittern Hide was extremely crowded at times.

Little Crakes are rare visitors to the UK. They breed throughout eastern Europe and central Asia, with isolated populations in western Europe. They spend the winter in southwest Asia, and patchily across sub-Saharan Africa. A few arrive in the UK, usually in spring or autumn, but as tiny birds favouring tall wetland vegetation they may be under-recorded here.

Breathing Life into the River Brett

Environment Agency and Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project

The River Brett is a largely rural watercourse that runs from its source near Brettenham through southwest Suffolk before joining the River Stour at Higham. Evidence from historic maps suggests that the location of the river has been significantly altered in the past. More recently, intensive management practices have left the river uniform with steep sides and an over-deep channel. These morphological problems are exacerbated by significant water quality pressures from agricultural runoff and sewage treatment discharges.

Because of these issues the River Brett is failing its objectives for the Water Framework Directive (WFD) – a piece of European legislation looking to improve the ecology of our waterways. Currently the River Brett is at poor ecological potential, with poorer than expected fish populations and an unnatural channel shape and size. These are issues that need to be addressed to fulfil our obligations regarding the WFD and ensure the long-term ecological health of this river.

A collaborative project involving the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project, the Environment Agency and Suffolk Wildlife Trust has helped enhance 1.3km of the River Brett for ecology and wildlife. The works, which were delivered by the Environment Agency's River Stour Field Team, involved the installation of large woody-debris flow deflectors, the creation of berms and the lowering of artificial embankments. In just under two weeks the team were able to install over twenty individual features that had a visible, instantaneous, positive effect upon the river. These features have dramatically increased the diversity and complexity of river habitats present on the Brett and will benefit a wide range of fish, plant and invertebrate species, helping the River Brett achieve good ecological potential as required under the WFD.

Although the progress of this project was dependent upon the efforts of many people, special thanks must go to the landowners, Andrew Scott, John English, Mark Mitchell and Pat Hawes. Without the contribution of any one of these individuals the project would not have been possible as we can only undertake river habitat enhancement projects with landowner agreement. All those involved should be proud of the improvement they've brought to this river and the positive change they've made to the environment. We're optimistic that this scheme will be one of many river enhancements to be implemented by the Environment Agency and partner organisations working with landowners across the rivers of Suffolk.

If you would like further information on the project, please contact Will Akast, Catchment Delivery Manager-Suffolk:

will.akast@environment-agency.gov.uk

Layham: Berm Construction 1. 7 October 2014



1. Existing wide channel



2. Bed material used to define outer boundary of berm



3. Bank re-graded to provide infill material.



4. Completed berm



4. Completed berm. Narrows channel at low flows and drowns out at higher flows.

Layham: Berm Construction 2. 7 October 2014



1. Outer edge formed from bed material.



2. Infilled using spoil from river bank.



3. Final re-profiling to form berm above summer water level and gently shelving bank angle.

Shelley Berm Installation 1



1. Existing steep bank on inside of bend.



2. Outside edge of berm shaped with locally sourced timber secured by stakes



3. Bank pushed in to infill behind timber edging



4. Berm height adjusted to be above summer water level



5. Completed berm with gently shelving bank profile

Shelley Berm Installation 2



Pre-works: Straight, wide channel with steep banks



Post-works: channel narrowed and sinuosity increased through installation of berm. Bank re-graded to give gentler slope.

[Invasive species alert—Quagga Mussel >](#)

Please look out for this species in Suffolk. The first record was in October 2014 when Environment Agency ecologists found a population in a tributary of the River Colne in the Thames catchment near Staines.

NNSS Invasive Species Alert!

QUAGGA MUSSEL
Dreissena bugensis rostriformis

What is it?
A highly invasive non-native species, similar to Zebra Mussel. Significantly alters whole ecosystems by filtering out vast quantities of nutrients. Also a serious fouling risk, blocking pipes, smothering boat hulls and other structures.

What is the urgency?
Unlike Zebra Mussels this species has not yet been found in Great Britain, but based on its spread through Europe is expected to arrive soon. It is essential to identify any new invaders as early as possible.

Zebra Mussel Quagga Mussel

low high

Wild Suffolk

Suffolk is a beautiful county. Our natural environment is important in its own right, but the quality of life it provides is also much treasured by people who visit, live and work here. Whether it is wildlife-rich woods and meadows, wild and windswept heaths and estuaries or our stunning coastline, our environment has it all. Indeed, over 36% of the county is either nationally or locally designated for its wildlife or landscape value.

The natural environment of the county is one of its key strengths, providing us with enviable natural capital on which to improve health & wellbeing and to grow our economy. Whether a tourism business, a farmer growing crops, a Suffolk brewer or an international port, the environment is central to our economic growth and should be considered part of Suffolk's business capital.

Access to, and enjoyment of the countryside is equally important. Physical and mental wellbeing, known to be associated with an accessible and attractive natural environment, are a benefit to business, innovation and entrepreneurship and it reduces pressures on social care and health services. We also know that the quality of life here encourages inward investment.

The strategy's 2020 Vision:

“Working together as individuals, communities, businesses and decision-makers, we will ensure Suffolk's natural environment is conserved and enhanced for future generations and continues to be seen as one of the county's key strengths. Its intrinsic value, as well as its importance to our economic growth, is increasingly understood, whilst the people of Suffolk and our visitors are able to gain better access to, enhanced enjoyment and a deeper understanding of its unique qualities. We will continue to add to our knowledge of Suffolk's wildlife and landscapes and collect high-quality information”.

The strategy

Suffolk's Nature Strategy describes the challenges and opportunities our natural environment faces. Its purpose is to articulate what we believe are the key natural environment priorities for the county and to convey to decision-makers how the wildlife and landscapes of Suffolk are important building blocks for our own economic growth and health & wellbeing. The recommendations and actions we propose within the document are both forward-looking and challenging. Their delivery will enhance the environment of Suffolk itself, as well as our ability to derive both economic and social benefits from it. Once you have read this document we hope that your understanding of the importance of the natural environment goes far beyond its beauty.

It is aimed particularly at the leaders of public, private and voluntary sector organisations, but we hope it will also be of interest to anyone who cares about Suffolk's natural environment and the role it plays in our prosperity and wellbeing. The messages are equally relevant to businesses, health professionals and community representatives. While conservation of Suffolk's environment is of particular interest to us, everyone has a responsibility to look after it, and of course, many already do. It is in all our interests, it should be the business of us all!

Tourism in Suffolk is worth over £1.75 billion per year and as Alex Paul, Director of Marketing at Gough Hotels states in the strategy, *“Tourism in Suffolk is founded on the county's special qualities. The wildlife and landscape here are an important part of our offer. As tourism businesses we should think about the natural environment as part of our business capital in need of maintenance and investment”.*

Who we are

Many people have contributed to this strategy and commented on the various drafts, and we hope many more will support it. It has been put together primarily by the following organisations; Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, RSPB and National Trust advised by Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission. We are all involved in leading and advising on wildlife and landscape conservation in the county. Together, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, National Trust and RSPB have over 120,000 members in Suffolk.

It is our business to champion the conservation of Suffolk's landscapes and wildlife on a daily basis, and this strategy is not intended to recite our ongoing work. The actions and recommendations are forward-looking and most set out new challenges and opportunities for both us and others to achieve, that will enable us all to benefit from and conserve the natural environment. We will support, champion, influence and encourage the delivery of the actions and recommendations herein, and we hope they will empower organisations, individuals and leaders to make the nature and wildlife of Suffolk part of their daily business too.

If you have any comments on the document we would be happy to hear from you. In the first instance please contact Nick Collinson, Natural Environment Manager at Suffolk County Council nick.collinson@suffolk.gov.uk

Food & drink, so important to Suffolk, are also highly dependent on the quality of our natural environment, The natural capital of crop pollinating insects is worth £430 million/yr to UK agriculture.

There are some significant advantages to people and wildlife from a good network of green spaces. Those who live within 500m of accessible green space are 24% more likely to meet recommended levels of physical exercise.

Department of Health and UK National Ecosystem Assessment figures suggest that adequate access to greenspace can lead to reductions in sedentary behaviour, providing £2billion/yr savings in the treatment of coronary heart disease, colo-rectal cancer and stroke. Furthermore evidence shows that urban greenspace can facilitate social contact and give rise to strong neighbourhoods, important as we seek to combat loneliness, particularly in older age groups.

The Green Light Trust have announced the launch of their new website, visit www.greenlighttrust.org. They are also on Facebook and Twitter.

NOMS Wildlife Award for 2013 : National Winner - HMP&YOI Hollesley Bay

Gwyn James, Deputy Head of Reducing Re-offending & Biodiversity Champion

HMP&YOI Hollesley Bay began life in 1887 as a Colonial College, offering training in agriculture and countryside skills to those intending to emigrate to the colonies. In 1938 Hollesley Bay was acquired by the Prison Commission (later to become the Prison Service / Ministry of Justice) to train young offenders within the framework of the Borstal system. It is now an open adult male prison holding 434 prisoners. Under the leadership of Governor Declan Moore I was elected the local biodiversity champion for Hollesley Bay, where one of my first jobs was to develop a local Biodiversity Action Plan. We identified several BAP species such as Brown Hare and Barn owl as well as amphibians and reptiles. With our BAP in place Hollesley Bay forged links with local wildlife groups and connected with the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership. Hollesley Bay is located on the edge of an important heritage coastline with a diversity of international habitats and species. This has been enhanced recently with the RSPB's development of their Hollesley Marshes Nature Reserve.

With the support of Phil Thomas, the Sustainable Development Teams ecologist, we have looked at dedicating sterile and non-operational areas, within the prisons grounds, where various types of wildlife can thrive.

With all this going on, the awareness of biodiversity at Hollesley Bay has become paramount with prisoners and staff alike, and with the local community. We planted the Hollesley Bay Jubilee Wood with 500 native trees, to help celebrate the Queens Diamond Jubilee, in partnership with the local primary school. Children from Hollesley Primary School drew plans for the woodland and then came down to help us plant the trees. All the plans were put into a time capsule which was buried near to the Oak Tree donated to us from the Royal Estate, not to be opened till 2037.

With local partnerships being forged, one has stood out from all the others. This is the RSPB with whom we won the overall NOMS Wildlife Award 2013, for our partnership working.

Our relationship started in 2010 with a chance meeting

at an Alde & Ore Futures committee meeting, where we discussed the possibility of working together. This resulted in small parties working on the Snape & Hollesley Reserves respectively, generally during the winter months.

This carried on till 2012 when we embarked on a larger project of engaging with other agencies to help with drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Talks with Phoenix Futures, Suffolk DAT, & RAPt took place and a project called Conservation Therapy Programme was started, later to have its name changed to Recovery through Nature. Various nature charities and organisations were contacted and the only interested party was the RSPB. The programme is now running at their Minsmere Reserve, 1 day a week, with funding up until the end of this year.

Running alongside this programme we were making 100s of bird box kits for Wallsea Island Reserve for their family fun days, where children can make their own bird box and take it home with them.

In 2013 we were approached to see if we could grow some reeds for Botany Marshes, Snape. They brought us the panicles and prisoners planted these into pots in our greenhouses. As they grew they were separated into more pots (over 15000 in total) until they were big enough to plant in the reed bed. The reeds were delivered to the site by prisoners. The reed beds were being planted by a group of volunteers and we sent a couple of prisoners along to help them with this.



This project made the local press and interest was created from BBC 1's Countryfile. The collaboration between the prison and the RSPB, and a tenuous link to Benjamin Britton's birth place (Snape). Unfortunately we did not go on air.

Also in 2013 planning permission was granted for Hollesley Marshes Reserve and we were asked if we could help. Prisoners cleared the footpaths and the Pillboxes that are dotted along the coastline, and these are regularly maintained by us to this day. The new reserve looks fantastic with lots of wildlife taking full advantage including 80 pairs of Avocets which is quite spectacular to see. Other sightings include a Glossy Ibis, which caused a lot of interest from the bird watching fraternity. Good as the reserve is, there are no parking facilities, so we contacted the RSPB and asked them if they would like to develop one on a corner of our land, near to the reserve (away from the prison so won't impinge on our security). As I am writing I have just received permission to start work on the car park from Suffolk Coastal District Council, so this will be fully operational in the near future giving bird watchers a safe place to leave their cars while they attend the reserve. Future plans are to include a coffee shop and toilet facilities.

The icing on the cake is that 2 of our prisoners are full time volunteers at the Minsmere Reserve, in their own right, and are planning to carry this on upon their release.

Winning awards is great, but successful working partnerships show the benefits to the prisoners, the partners and to society in general. Biodiversity at Hollesley Bay has shown how it can provide prisoners with transferable skills which can help them find employment on release. Working with wildlife also demonstrates further benefits, which perhaps are not readily recordable or measurable; such as feelings of self-worth, personal achievement, working as part of a team, and to experience emotions that perhaps some prisoners may not have experienced in the past, factors which may have lead some prisoners to a life of crime.

With our main aim to reduce reoffending, biodiversity being one of the ways with which we can do this, while giving nature a helping hand at the same time.

"With local partnerships being forged, one has stood out from all the others. This is the RSPB with whom we won the overall NOMS Wildlife Award 2013, for our partnership working."



RSPB in the Brecks

Charlotte Lowry

RSPB continues to work together with partners, farmers, landowners and communities across the Brecks on a landscape-scale. We have a team of five full-time staff, three seasonal fieldworkers and a team of volunteers to deliver our work in the Brecks. We're funded by EU LIFE+, HLF Landscape Partnership (Breaking New Ground) and of course by our wonderful RSPB members. We work really closely with our partners from the Brecks Biodiversity Delivery Group to ensure we deliver for biodiversity across the Brecks.

Our work in the Brecks includes a variety of things, but one of our big projects is securing a sustainable stone-curlew population. Thanks to the hard work of farmers, our partners, other landowners and the RSPB field team, these iconic birds have made a fantastic comeback from fewer than 100 pairs to over 250 pairs, over the course of nearly 30 years. However, the work that goes on does not provide a sustainable long-term solution and leaves the birds reliant on nest protection work. We're now working to increase the number of safe nesting areas on farmland and to improve the condition of heathland to provide suitable nesting habitat for these birds. This work will go towards securing a self-sustaining stone-curlew population, which will no longer be reliant on nest protection work. But it's not just the stone-curlew that we are looking out for and will benefit from this work, a whole range of other wildlife will too, particularly some of the amazing plants and insects found in the Brecks. For example, if you manage a grass heathland for stone-curlew you will also be managing for nearly 400 other species!

Andrew Holland, our Brecks Farm Conservation Adviser, works with farmers to do some of this amazing work for stone-curlews and other farm wildlife, here he talks about some of his work, *"This is a really interesting and varied job, working with farmers and landowners throughout the Brecks, to help them increase the wildlife on their farms. This can be through help with agri-environment applications, by choosing the correct options that will work best for their farms or tweaking existing agreements to work better. I work with a great bunch of farmers and this makes the job really enjoyable."*

Some of our other work in the Brecks includes the work we do with partners on designated wildlife sites to ensure they are in favourable condition. We get involved with lots of planning casework and help to ensure development is done in a sustainable way and without harming wildlife. We also manage some land in the Brecks, where we do our bit for Brecks wildlife directly.

But it's our communications work that underpins everything we do in the Brecks, without the support of people, particularly those that live in the area, we won't get very far! The aim of our communications work is to raise the profile of the wildlife and heritage of the Brecks within the local community and to provide opportunities for them to get outdoors, to experience and be involved in the fantastic Brecks landscape. The events we run are very varied with everything from walks in Thetford to spot the famous otters, stone-curlew roost walks and our annual 'Wild About the Brecks' event. 'Wild about the Brecks' is all about celebrating the Brecks and providing a free wild day out for local people, who will hopefully want to get further involved. This year it took place on a sunny day in September at the BTO Nunnery Lakes Reserve in Thetford. If you're interested in getting involved in next year's event, either by helping to organise it, having a stall or running an activity, please get in touch.

To find out more about any of our work in the Brecks please contact us on thebrecks@rspb.org.uk or 01842 753732.

River enhancements in north and south Suffolk

Will Akast, Environment Agency, Matt Holden Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project,
Penny Hemphill Suffolk Wildlife Trust

River Waveney and River Stour

Two river habitat enhancement projects on the River Stour at Langham and on the River Waveney at Bressingham have recently been completed to help us achieve our Water Framework Directive objectives. The works on the Stour were undertaken by the Environment Agency Stour Operations team working in partnership with the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project and the Environment Agency Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology team. Works involved installing woody-debris mattresses, creating berms and re-profiling sections of river bank. We also created a backwater feature off the main river channel.

The works on the Waveney involved creating similar habitat features and were undertaken by employees of Mervyn Lambert Plant Ltd using one of their long-reach excavators in a partnership project with Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and private landowners. As a result of the scheme, there is more habitat available for fish and invertebrates and the morphological condition of the reach has been improved. In total over 1.3km of the River Stour was enhanced in 3 weeks at a cost of approximately £17K and 1.6km of the Waveney enhanced in 2 weeks for less than £10K.

River Stour habitat enhancements

The River Stour navigation was opened in 1709 and significant works were undertaken deepening and widening the river channel leaving sections of the river with virtually no in-channel variation. More recently, intensive management practices have maintained the uniform character of stretches of the river with steep sides and an over-deep channel. These morphological problems are exacerbated by water quality pressures from agricultural runoff and sewage treatment discharges.

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project and the river restoration consultant Dr Nigel Holmes identified locations that required ecological enhancements on the River Stour between Langham flume and Stratford St. Mary. The Dedham Vale AONB Project obtained landowner agreement for the works to take place. Dr Nigel Holmes produced the detailed designs for the new river habitat features.

A variety of river restoration techniques were used for this project. Gravel bars were created to add flow diversity and improve habitat for fish and invertebrates, a backwater was created to provide fish with shelter from high flows and brushwood mattresses were installed in uniform sections of channel to provide habitat diversity for fish and



The River Stour at Langham. Bank re-profiling and creation of new marginal habitat in an over deep, over wide uniform section of river.

invertebrates. Sections of over steep river bank were re-profiled to narrow the river channel and increase flow diversity and to provide additional marginal habitat for wetland plants.

These modifications will boost biodiversity by: increasing in-stream dissolved oxygen concentration, providing a wider variety of places for plants and animals to live, and creating typical river forms including pools and bars all of which will help move the River Stour towards Good Ecological Status as required under the Water Framework Directive.

This project was successful due to the efforts of many people and special thanks must go to Matt Holden from the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley AONB Project for undertaking a huge amount of work to get this project completed. Penny Hemphill and Nick Oliver from Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Darren Tansley from Essex Wildlife Trust provided critical help and advice. The contribution of Environment Agency Flood Risk Management and Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology team members to the project was invaluable. We are also very grateful to the landowners involved, without whom these works would not have been possible.



The River Stour at Langham. Woody debris mattress providing additional habitat for fish and invertebrates. Fish fry were spotted using these features as soon as they were completed.

Sadly this project was one of the last river habitat enhancement projects that Dr Nigel Holmes worked on as he very sadly passed away just before works on the Stour began on site. Nigel was an inspirational figure and he will be very sorely missed.

We are optimistic that this scheme will be one of many river enhancements to be implemented by partner organisations and private landowners working closely together on Suffolk rivers to improve river habitats and help our rivers achieve their WFD objectives.

River Waveney New Cut habitat enhancements

The River Waveney new cut near Bressingham in Norfolk was constructed as part of a land drainage scheme in the 1950's and is a straight, steeply sided uniform channel immediately downstream of the source of the Waveney at Redgrave and Lopham Fen. In some locations the river banks are 3m above the bed of the river and prior to river habitat enhancement works taking place in October this year there was no habitat diversity or large woody debris present in this section of the river. Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency reached agreement with the 4 main landowners to undertake works to improve habitat diversity and help move this waterbody towards Good Ecological Status as required by the Water Framework Directive.

The river habitat enhancement plan was designed by Trev Bond from the Fisheries and Biodiversity team.

Works undertaken included bank re-profiling and the creation of berms to improve marginal habitat for fish, invertebrates and plants and to try and increase flow in an impounded section of low flowing river, the installation of woody debris mattresses and log flow deflectors. Water vole were present in large sections of the river and work was carefully designed to ensure water vole were unaffected. The habitat features created will be used by water vole.

The works undertaken were managed by the Environment Agency Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology team. Water vole mitigation works were undertaken by Penny Hemphill from Suffolk Wildlife Trust working with Chris Strachan from the Environment Agency. Matt Overton from Mervyn Lambert Plant Hire mastered river restoration techniques very quickly and was directed by staff from the Environment Agency's Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology team. Environment Agency Flood Risk Management staff provided a huge amount of invaluable help working up the details of the project.

We have received some very positive feedback from the landowners on the new cut about the works undertaken and we have completed all feasible work to improve the habitat diversity on this section of the Waveney which will help move this waterbody towards Good Ecological Status.

If you know of other locations where river restoration is required or know landowners who are keen to see river habitat enhancements on their land then please let Fisheries and Biodiversity colleagues know.

For more information about either of these projects please contact:

Will Akast, Environment Agency, Catchment Delivery Manager-Suffolk Will.akast@environment-agency.gov.uk

Matt Holden, River Stour Project Officer, Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project Matt.holden@suffolk.gov.uk

Penny Hemphill, Water for Wildlife Officer, Suffolk Wildlife Trust pennyhemphill@suffolkwildlifetrust.org



The River Waveney at Bressingham
Bank re-profiling and creation of marginal habitat with channel narrowing to increase flow diversity.



The River Waveney at Bressingham
Creation of in-channel berms to promote morphological processes and increase marginal habitat.

The Great British Beach Clean—another ‘Outstanding’ success in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB!

Lynn Allen, Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB

The 19th – 22nd September 2014 saw the 21st annual national beach clean organised by The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) which forms the UK contribution to the International Coastal Clean Up, in which 80-100 countries regularly participate.

In Suffolk, the effort is co-ordinated by the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, under the direction of Countryside Officer, Lynn Allen, who has been leading the annual and year-round Beachwatch schemes in Suffolk since 2005. This year’s event in September was supported by existing and new teams, comprising in excess of 600 volunteers.



Landguard Rotary Club Felixstowe. Photo: T. Pearce



Alexanders School, Bawdsey. LJESENAOIVA



SCH volunteers and rubbish



Scouts and rubbish

It's not just about removing the litter - although this plays an important part in the process - but also identifying and recording what the rubbish is. This enables MCS to identify particular areas of concern, such as balloons or fishing line which can then lead to specific campaigns such as 'Don't Let Go' and 'Hold On To Your Tackle' respectively, to raise awareness and help address the issue.

Marine litter is a huge problem. It isn't just visually unattractive and potentially dangerous to humans, but results in the slow, agonising death of thousands of seabirds and marine mammals each year. Volunteers in Suffolk are making a massive contribution to the UK effort and also the global picture.

Teams took part in last months event all along the Suffolk coast, from Lowestoft to Felixstowe, and along the rivers Stour and Orwell. Encouragingly, the response from most groups was the same – the amount of litter collected is reducing compared to previous years, which must in part be the result of the on-going effort by such enthusiastic and committed volunteers in Suffolk! Teams included Scouts and Guides, Parish Councils, local residents, conservation organisations and larger businesses such as Legal & General. The items gathered were equally as wide-ranging...a dead Christmas tree, an Action Man leg, and an unexploded flare. Plastic was by far the biggest problem as always, comprising over 50% of the rubbish removed.

The results will be published by MCS next spring in the Beachwatch Big Weekend 2014 Final Report, so we will find out then the detail of the contribution in Suffolk.

If you would like to organise a team to take part in Beachwatch in Suffolk, please contact Lynn at the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, lynn.allen@suffolk.gov.uk or go to the [website](#) for more information.

Suffolk FWAG Farm Conservation Award

The annual Suffolk FWAG Farm Conservation Award was held on 5th November 2014, sponsored by Ashton KCJ Solicitors.

Almost 80 people from an array of Suffolk's farming and agricultural establishments came together at Trinity Park in Ipswich to share the success of two outstanding businesses who won the Farm Conservation Award and the Tim Sloane Award. Guest speaker was Robin Page, writer for The Daily Telegraph and former presenter of the BBC's One Man and his Dog. He gave an enthralling talk about his life, love of the countryside and his work to encourage British supermarkets to stock British food.

Ashton KCJ Agricultural Partner Jeanette Dennis who is a Trustee of Suffolk FWAG said: "It takes a lot of courage for the farming community to put themselves forward for an award. This award celebrates the huge amount of farm work that farms and estates do to preserve our countryside for generations to come. There are so many great initiatives taking place on farms to preserve nature and encourage wildlife and natural vegetation - we want farmers and landowners to share their experiences. This is what the Suffolk FWAG awards are all about."

Winners of the Tim Sloane Award were E.J. Barker and Sons of Lodge Farm in Westhorpe near Stowmarket, who impressed the judges with the large number of wildlife-rich ponds on the farm and the amount of environmental interpretation they are undertaking. The standard of entry was extremely high, making it a hard decision for the judges, Genevieve Broad of SBP and Richard Symes of Earlsway Farm in Bramfield.

The hotly contested Farm Conservation Award was won by Frederick Hiams Ltd, a farming and vegetable growing and packing business based at Hill Farm in Tuddenham near Bury St Edmunds. The judges, Richard Barnes of Frontier/Kings Seeds and AJ Paul of the Broxstead Estate in Sutton, Woodbridge, were bowled over by Charlie Hancock, Operations Director, and his **attitude whereby he 'treats everything as a crop'**. The runner up was Bevills Farm at Bures, owned by the Probert family, where preserving and enhancing wildlife features for generations to come is now second nature to them. It was a very difficult decision for the judges.



David Barker, Patrick Barker, Genevieve Broad and Richard Symes - the Tim Sloane award.



Jeanette Dennis, Christopher Wilson, Diane Ling, Charlie Hancock, Richard Barnes and A.J. Paul - the Farm Conservation Award

SUFFOLK BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP NEWS

Our aim : To provide guidance on Suffolk's Priority Species and Habitats for Local Authorities, community groups and schools

10th annual Planning and Biodiversity seminar 2014 success!

The 2014 seminar, organised by Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership, was hosted by St Edmundsbury Borough Council at West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds on 25th November. The event was a great success with an audience of more than 60 people keen to hear about the latest national and county-level developments in planning and biodiversity as well as best practice in spatial planning and development management biodiversity issues. Open for the first time to ecological consultants and planners from other counties, the event provided an excellent forum for delegates from Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and Bedfordshire to exchange practical experiences.

It was an inspiring and thought-provoking day with a mix of current biodiversity and planning issues, funding, species-specific case studies and Natural England updates

To view the presentations on Green Infrastructure planning; the new Community Infrastructure Levy; Suffolk's innovative Nature Strategy; Planning measures for stag beetles, turtle doves and reptiles; the 'Dorset Protocol'; and Natural England's update (including the new SSSI Impact Risk Zones) visit our [Planning webpage >](#)

The presentations and accompanying documents are being uploaded as they become available.

We are extremely grateful to Taylor Wimpey for generously supporting this event.

Launch of SBP Gateway to Priority (BAP) species and their habitats!

SBP launched new website pages in September 2014 aimed at helping to identify in which habitats in which BAP species may be found. Each habitat has a separate dedicated page which lists the BAP species to watch out for in that habitat, together with a link to species photos.

[Find out more >](#)

[Visit SBRC Pinterest board to see photos >](#)

The list of Priority Species and Habitats in Suffolk was reviewed in October 2014. The list is not static, it changes as the wildlife which is recorded in Suffolk changes over the years. The full list can be downloaded [here >](#)



Polecat confirmed as new Suffolk Priority Species following several confirmed records in the summer of 2014.

Planners' Newsletter - Issue 3 available now!

The Planners Newsletter aims to highlight new information on issues related to biodiversity and planning. Issue 3 was published in October 2014 and covers: Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees, Meeting the Biodiversity Duty New Guidance and SBP's Gateway to Priority Species, On-line tool to help planners assess development issues around SSSIs, Ministers publish latest Green Belt Guidance, Biodiversity Guidance for Solar Developments published, BAP species focus - Cornflower.

[Download Issue 3 Oct 2014 newsletter >](#)

SBP is now part of Suffolk Biological Records Centre

The Biodiversity Partnership is delighted to have become a part of the Suffolk Biological Records Centre. This enhances the services available to Local Authorities and the public through the Records Centre and ensures a firm future for SBP. SBRC is supported by a consortium of stakeholders including: [Suffolk County Council](#), [Natural England](#), [Babergh District Council](#), [Forest Heath District Council](#), [Ipswich Borough Council](#), [Mid-Suffolk District Council](#), [St Edmundsbury Borough Council](#), [Suffolk Coastal District Council](#), [Waveney District Council](#), [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#), [Environment Agency](#), [Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#) and the [Suffolk Naturalists' Society](#).

Minutes of the Steering Group meeting on 29th September 2014 can be found [here](#).

Looking for funding?

Check out the SBP web page to see if any of these funds can benefit your conservation or community wildlife project. [Please visit SBP News / Funding >](#)

What's On has been moved to our website under [News / events >](#)

Local / National News - *please note the Update will be circulated in the New Year*

Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership - Moving Forward

To find out about our new services, what's happened to the UK and Suffolk BAPs and how we can help you, please visit our website at www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/

If you'd like to share information on how your organisation is benefiting biodiversity in Suffolk, please send your article to Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Officer (tel: 01473 264308, Mobile: 078948 85337, email: gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk).

Publication dates

The newsletter and updates are published in Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.
Deadline for Spring 2015 newsletter articles: **Friday 17th April 2015.**

**Thank you to our readers for supporting this newsletter,
all feedback is welcome!**

About Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership

SBP is a partnership comprised of conservation organisations, statutory bodies, local authorities, businesses, not-for-profit organisations and community groups working together throughout Suffolk to protect biodiversity. To find out more about SBP and it's work through Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan, please visit www.suffolkbiodiversity.org

Partnership members

Babergh District Council, Center Parcs–Elveden, Environment Agency, Suffolk FWAG, Essex & Suffolk Water, Forestry Commission, Forest Heath District Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, St. Edmundsbury Borough Council, Suffolk Biological Records Centre, Suffolk Naturalists' Society, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Suffolk County Council, Waveney District Council.

Front page—Texas Balloonwort *Sphaerocarpus texanus*
Photo: Robin Stevenson