

# Newsletter

## Spring 2016

### In this issue:

	Page No.
<a href="#"><u>Introducing Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service</u></a>	2
<a href="#"><u>Eden Rose Coppice Trust Sudbury</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>The Species Recovery Trust</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Garden Bioblitz June</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Breckland Flora Group</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Volunteers get the buzz for recording</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>New Distribution Maps for Suffolk Butterflies</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Looking inside the Breckland Stripes</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Wake up and Smell the Coffee</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Tiger Hill Bioblitz results</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Help us build a picture of Wildlife in the Brecks</u></a>	10
<a href="#"><u>B-lines Update for Suffolk</u></a>	10
<a href="#"><u>A new Charter for Trees, Woods and People</u></a>	11
<a href="#"><u>Red Crag Revealed</u></a>	12
<a href="#"><u>Suffolk Polecat Survey</u></a>	12
<a href="#"><u>Swifts in Woodbridge—please contribute to our 2016 survey</u></a>	14
<a href="#"><u>The clean water for life survey</u></a>	15
<a href="#"><u>Wild Ipswich Swifts ‘n Sparrows</u></a>	16
<a href="#"><u>National Water Vole Monitoring Programme</u></a>	17
<a href="#"><u>Spotted a stag beetle? Help save the UK’s largest land beetle by recording your sightings</u></a>	18
<a href="#"><u>Clearing the coralline crag</u></a>	19
<a href="#"><u>Invasive species survey Little Ouse</u></a>	20
<a href="#"><u>Asian Hornets in the News</u></a>	20
<a href="#"><u>Beetle Drive (Scarlet Malachite)</u></a>	21
<a href="#"><u>Exploring schools’ use of natural spaces</u></a>	22
<a href="#"><u>Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership</u></a>	23
<a href="#"><u>About SBIS / contact</u></a>	23

# Introducing Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service



The SBIS Team (left to right: Ben Heather, Martin Sanford & Gen Broad)



Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service

The new SBIS logo

On the 1st April 2016 Suffolk Biological Records Centre (SBRC) changed its name to Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS). This marks the incorporation of Biodiversity advice (previously provided under the roof of the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership) into the range of services we offer. As a result of the change, SBIS has gained a new member of staff, Gen Broad, as Biodiversity Officer, who will continue to highlight Suffolk's biodiversity as well as help us improve the information service into the future.

The new name works to emphasise the idea of service provision rather than the 'dusty cupboard' impression given by the word 'Centre'. However, despite the change in name, SBIS will continue to collect, collate and manage information on the natural environment and to share that information with people in Suffolk who need it for decision making, conservation and education.

Our database now has over 3 million records of species sightings in Suffolk, providing a strong evidence base for the study and protection of our natural environment.

Our website has been redesigned and themed to improve the experience for online users; it now adapts for better display on devices like tablets and mobile phones. It is also being expanded to include all the biodiversity information and advice that was previously found on the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership website. Online recording continues to grow in popularity and we are working hard both on the website and offline to ensure this new flow of information is fed into planning systems speedily without compromising data quality. The domain of our website has also moved to reflect the change of our name and all web traffic to our old domain is being forwarded to [www.suffolkbis.org.uk](http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk) (for a limited time).



*To assist SBIS with the change we would like to ask anyone that hosts links to our website to check that these are updated to the new domain and if you would like a copy of the logo to use with such links please either copy it from this article, the website or ask the editor to forward it on to you.*

## Eden-Rose Coppice Trust Sudbury

*Transforming environmental disasters into biodiversity hotspots for the well-being of people*

Sam Chamberlin, Woodland Manager

Founded in 2007 Eden-Rose Coppice Trust aims to turn neglected and woodland and successional habitats into conservation areas. Since the initial conception of the project site facilities and infrastructure have been achieved with the aid of The Stour Valley volunteers who have completed many tasks for the charity over the years. On a day-to-day basis the 3 acre ex-poplar plantation in Sudbury is managed by a team of local volunteers whilst visiting school groups such as Autism and Anglia and Hillside Special School participate in a structured environmental education programme. It is clear to see that people with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN), especially children and young people will benefit from new sensory and physical experiences in this secure woodland environment.

A rewarding factor of maintaining this lowland wet woodland is the participation of different user groups for the long-term management of the site. However, this also helps the charity in its aim of supporting local people living with critical illness who are able to benefit from the natural beauty of the location as a holistic retreat, thus having a positive effect upon the person. There are numerous benches in the woodland, a compost toilet, pond, pizza oven and an outdoor learning building which are available to all visiting groups.

The charity also acts as a supportive base for vulnerable adults in the local community, taking on individuals as volunteers and working alongside them to discover a passion which can be used to improve practical skills, enhance self-confidence and offer a route back into employment.

In 2014 funding was granted for a polytunnel which has given Eden-Rose Coppice scope to harvest, process and season firewood which is then sold locally. Income generated from firewood sales provides sustainable funds for the project.

The exciting and rewarding outcome of this side project (called Firewood Folk) is the involvement of local people. Volunteers help with the initial splitting of wood, saw kindling, bag logs and assist with deliveries. Not only are volunteers trained to use tools and machinery, but skills are added to CV's as evidence of proactive voluntary experience.

Firewood Folk has organically progressed from sourcing poplar logs from Eden-Rose Coppice Sudbury with the help of local special schools to market the product, to running off-site woodland management volunteer days at Shrubs Farm estate at Lamarsh. This is mutually beneficial for the charity and the landowner as the habitat is being diligently managed in return for timber. The emphasis is very much on improving and restoring woodland habitats, connectivity with other habitat types and conserving



Autism Anglia students building a hedgehog box



Volunteers preparing firewood for delivery

what is there already. With the help of a small volunteer team, extensive coppicing and pollarding has been undertaken in 2015/16 and storm damaged trees have been cleared to create glades. This allows more light to penetrate the ground layer and so improves the woodland structure.

The countryside stewardship day allowed a wide range of volunteers to carry out practical conservation work in the Stour Valley, preserving traditional countryside management techniques such as coppicing, pollarding and ditch clearance. Within our team, outdoor volunteering has offered people a chance to meet new friends, reconnect with nature and encourage a greater interest in the natural environment.

With further funding there is immense scope to expand the project to other sites in Suffolk which require habitat management. This would provide opportunities to involve people who share our passion to get people outdoors and active through practical conservation. We would like to run further sessions of multiple teams containing a maximum of 12 volunteers and two members of staff. Further funding would be used to purchase tools, provide wages and cover costs of running these days.

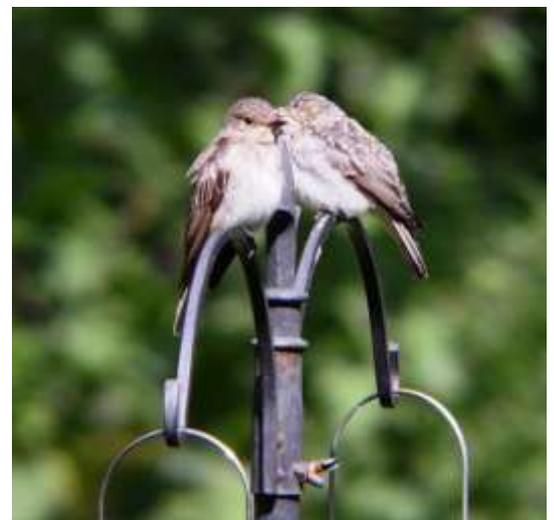


**Shrubs Farm Countryside Stewardship Volunteers**

Comprised of secondary woodland, scrub and wetland meadows the site in Sudbury has a diverse mix of habitats well suited to its lowland location next to the River Stour. Ongoing management has seen a diverse range of species flourish within the retreat and interconnecting habitats.

Breeding pairs of spotted flycatchers have been present in the Coppice for the past two years whilst priority species including bullfinch, song thrush, starling and house sparrow also frequent the wood too.

Lepidoptera are also very prominent on site and volunteers are very helpful in monitoring and recording evidence of butterflies and moths. Over 20 buckthorn shrubs have been planted to help the brimstone butterfly in its local distribution. The remaining hybrid Poplar trees are also a bolt hole for hornet moths which are sadly a declining species nationally.



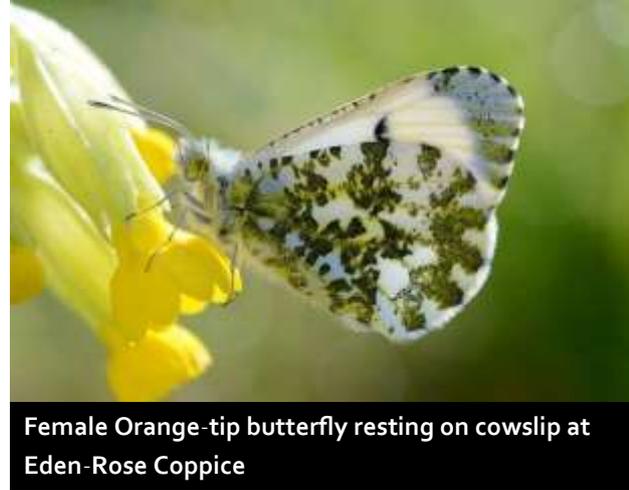
**Spotted flycatchers at Eden-Rose Coppice**

Future plans for the site include creating a traditional orchard with the help of a grant through The Tree Council. This will enable us to plant 12 fruit trees of Suffolk origin which will add to and further increase the biodiversity of the charity land.

The community orchard will be wonderful educational tool and will further improve the learning experience of our visiting schools and user groups.

If you would like to know more about Firewood Folk please contact Project Coordinator Fran mobile 07932 323918 or email [fran.moore@withnature.org](mailto:fran.moore@withnature.org)

If you're interested in helping with any of the projects above please contact Sam Chamberlain at [schamberlin@hotmail.com](mailto:schamberlin@hotmail.com) or tel: 077712 281307.



Female Orange-tip butterfly resting on cowslip at Eden-Rose Coppice

## The Species Recovery Trust

### Training resource

There are over nine-hundred native species in the UK which are currently classed as under threat, with several hundreds more widespread but known to be in significant decline. The countryside is now bereft of many species which were a familiar sight a mere generation ago.

A small number of these species are on the absolute brink of existence, poised to become extinct in our lifetimes. The Species Recovery Trust is committed to halting the loss of some of the rarest species in the UK and to re-connecting people with the incredible world of natural heritage that surrounds us.

Our primary aim is to remove 50 species from the edge of extinction in the UK by the year 2050 through effective conservation strategies informed by detailed scientific knowledge. We also run a range of training courses, aimed at giving people the skills to become the conservationists of tomorrow.

Over the next year The Species Recovery Trust will be producing a series of short films which offer a straightforward and educational guide to wildlife, whether you are a complete novice, keen amateur or working professional aiming to expand your skills.

The first two films - "A short film on grass identification" and "Wildflowers of Heathlands" - can be seen [here](#) > The Species Recovery Trust is currently in the process of obtaining funding to produce several more training films. There is also a [programme of training courses on species and habitats](#) >

Further information [Species Recovery Trust](#) >



Garden Bioblitz is a nationwide garden survey run by volunteers. It's undertaken over 24 hrs on 4-5<sup>th</sup> June. Anyone can take part (an easy tick sheet can be downloaded), either using their own garden, or just a favourite local patch. Even a balcony or a window box can be surveyed! Visit [Garden Bioblitz](#) >

The Breckland Flora Group is a recently formed group of volunteers interested in surveying rare plants wherever they occur across Breckland. The project is led by Plantlife and Natural England, with support from Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service, Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service, Suffolk County Council, Forestry Commission, Elveden Estate and Naturi Ecology.

The current focus is on developing a self-sustaining group, equipped with all the necessary resource and knowledge, able to generate valuable species data to help the partners monitor rare plant populations and inform conservation and we are now well on the way there! The project team has generated packs of historical information for each rare plant site, agreed on standardised monitoring schedules for each species and produced an excellent new field guide to the identification and monitoring of Breckland's special plants.

Breckland Flora Group held its first meeting in February at Santon Downham. We had 40 people at the event who were treated to enthusiastic botanical ramblings from Tim Pankhurst of Plantlife and Bev Nichols of Natural England who shared some of his wealth of knowledge of Breckland ecology. Almost all delegates adopted sites and species to monitor in the coming years. Jo Jones, familiar to many from her monitoring work in the Brecks, has volunteered as a coordinator for the group and over the coming months the project team will be supporting her and other coordinators in taking on a central role in the group.

We held a field meeting in April to look help sort out all those tricky annual *Veronica* species and May sees another to look at *Carex ericetorum* and its confusion species. We'll also have workshops developing technical skills and pub-based social events to share our tales of botanical adventure. It promises to be a great group, and I'm sure lots of lovely data will be garnered.



**Breckland Flora Group recording at Weeting**



***Veronica triphyllos* at Weeting**



**Breckland Flora Group at a Muscari site at Wordwell**

There are still plenty of sites available for adoption and we would like to work with more volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering with Breckland Flora Group please contact Alex Prendergast ([alex.prendergast@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:alex.prendergast@naturalengland.org.uk)) at Natural England.

## Volunteers get the buzz for recording

Sam Neal, Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow (Breaking New Ground Project)

37 local volunteers were lucky enough to attend a recent “Spring Bees of the Brecks” weekend workshop with bee expert Steven Falk, to find out how to record and conserve bees.

Organised by Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) - Norfolk’s Environmental Records Centre - the event was part of “Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow” under the Breaking New Ground landscape partnership scheme, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Steven is a leading expert in pollinators and author of the recent “*Field Guide to the Bees of Britain and Ireland*” which is supported by his stunning [Flickr collection of photographs >](#).

Also a talented illustrator and with a knack for encouraging and enthusing his audience, Steven ensured that the course was accessible to all whilst maintaining a high degree of scientific content.

Despite mixed weather, over 15 species of bee were recorded during the weekend, including mining bees, queen bumblebees and nomad bees which were foraging on spring blossoms such as blackthorn, willow and *prunus* species. The Brecks is a rich area for bees with areas of sandy soil providing ideal habitat for nesting and basking.

One of the exciting finds was a colony of *Colletes cunicularius*, a ground nesting solitary bee species normally associated with coastal sand dune systems in north-west England. This fascinating and rare species creates a tunnel up to 55cm deep, with waterproofed cells for the developing bees built at the ends of side branches.

Other finds included the hairy-footed flower bee (*Anthophora plumipes*), several *Andrena* species including *Andrena haemorrhoa* (a mining bee), and the hoverfly *Cheilosia latifrons*.

Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow is recruiting a volunteer workforce that will help with recording wildlife across the Brecks. NBIS hopes that many of those that attend the free recording workshops on offer (such as the bee workshop) will continue to develop their skills and to send in records to the NBIS database, improving our knowledge of this unique biodiversity ‘hotspot’.

If you are interested in monitoring wildlife and live close to the Brecks or visit regularly, why not get involved?

You could start by joining our summer bees workshop, also with Steven Falk, which runs on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July – more details [here](#)

For more information, please contact : [nbis@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nbis@norfolk.gov.uk) or visit [Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow >](#)

[Visit Steven Falk website >](#)



## New distribution maps for Suffolk butterflies

With thanks to Bill Stone, Suffolk Butterfly Recorder

Distribution maps have been prepared for 34 species that have regularly occurred in Suffolk during the five year recording period 2011-2015. (The maps are based on records received and represent 1025 Suffolk tetrads where butterflies have been recorded. An average of 14.6 species per tetrad was achieved. (NB. Suffolk has 1089 Tetrads in total).

[Visit Suffolk Butterflies >](#)

## Looking inside the Breckland stripes

Caroline Markham, GeoSuffolk

Suffolk Wildlife Trust's (SWT) Knettishall Heath reserve has the most extensive area of periglacial patterned ground in the Breckland – most of it with public access. On April 12<sup>th</sup> the SWT excavator was used, under GeoSuffolk direction, to uncover one of the sandy stripes in the Chalk on the heathland.

A furrow in the Chalk was revealed – just over a metre deep and about 6m wide – filled with sand containing flints. The Chalk beneath was heavily brecciated, indicating formation under extremely cold conditions, and the base of the sand was convoluted and disturbed, suggesting mobility in the active layer above permafrost. We are here looking at a landform created during a cold period of the Ice Age – the Devensian, or possibly even earlier - a landform which is repeated across the entirety of this gently sloping heathland on the south side of the River Ouse valley in a pattern of chalky and sandy stripes which are reflected in the vegetation.



Inside a Breckland stripe

This fine exposure (arguably the best at the moment in the East of England) will be recorded in more detail in White Admiral, Suffolk Naturalists' Society Newsletter. It has been left open and is well worth a visit - it is at TL 945804 on open access land, (but don't wander too far into the adjacent area where skylarks nest).

## 'Wake up and smell the coffee'

Deborah Wargate, East Suffolk Greenprint Forum

Who doesn't love to sit sipping coffee and watching birds and other wildlife thrive? Between October 2015 and March 2016 East Suffolk Greenprint was able to help in a small way through a project called '*Wake Up and Smell the Coffee*'. This was made possible thanks to funds from Essex and Suffolk Water Living Water Branch Out fund and support from Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils.



Yasmin, aged 9, with her customised bird box ideal for blue tits

The project aimed to provide an opportunity for a community, that had not been reached previously by the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum, to come together to reduce social isolation and engage with environmental and social care professionals; with the ultimate aim of inspiring action to improve the environment while enjoying being outside within Lowestoft.

A community event which 61 people attended, with some follow up work, led to:

- ◆ Two litter picks
- ◆ The housing of 15 bird boxes (which have proved popular with Blue Tits)
- ◆ One bird feeding station
- ◆ Two bug biomes
- ◆ One compost bin



Pathways Care Farm Bird Box

You can find out more about the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum [here >](#) and Essex & Suffolk Water's Branch Out funding [here >](#)

Pathways Care farm is a farm, but it's also a place that provides a caring, healthy and therapeutic environment. Pathways gives vulnerable people the opportunity to learn, re-build and grow through a range of hands-on farming activities. Find out more [here >](#)



Anne at the Community Wildspace outside Gunton Community Centre.



Litter picking as part of the project 'Wake up and smell the coffee'

## Tiger Hill LNR Bioblitz results

A bioblitz was held at Tiger Hill Local Nature Reserve on 7th May by kind invitation of Tiger Hill LNR Landowners.

Thank you to everyone who has input their records. The majority of paper records from the day have been logged now, but there will still be some more records to add from other recorders who were present during the day. If you still haven't input your records it is not too late!

**Total number of records - 242**

**Total number of species - 207**

*Are you interested in monitoring wildlife? Live close to the Brecks or visit regularly?*

Norfolk's Environmental Records Centre (Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service - NBIS) hosted by NCC Environment Team is looking for new volunteers to help record the distinctive biodiversity of Breckland, which studies have already shown is a nationally and internationally important hotspot for rarities.

The "Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow" project is part of the "Breaking New Ground Landscape Partnership scheme" (supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund) and will provide wide-scale monitoring of wildlife which is important for detecting underlying changes to the biodiversity of the area.

Whether you're a complete beginner or a seasoned surveyor, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved with lots of support and training.

Biodiversity Information Officer with NBIS, Sam Neal said: "All you need is enthusiasm! We can provide training in species identification, or you may just want to tell us what you've seen whilst out walking in the area."

Volunteers can choose from three levels depending on their interest, time availability and expertise:

**beginners** will be given training and encouragement to get started;

**species surveillance volunteers** will help with monitoring at a number of important wildlife sites in the Brecks;

**river corridor volunteers** will survey a stretch of the Little Ouse river for invasive non-native species

For more information, please contact : [nbis@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nbis@norfolk.gov.uk) or visit the [Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow website](#) >

Breckland is one of the driest places in England with sandy soils and a 'continental' climate which experiences extremes of temperature. Previous studies by the University of East Anglia have shown that the area is a hotspot for biodiversity with a huge variety of species identified. In 2010 the university and a team of 200 naturalists collated nearly 1million records with over 12,000 species represented, of which over 2,000 are priorities for conservation in Breckland. The study showed how fragile their survival is, with habitat fragmentation, climate change and nitrogen deposition all risk factors.

**New monitoring by Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow will play a key part in developing strategies to ensure the long-term survival of all components of this unique ecosystem. We do hope you can help.**

## **B-lines update for Suffolk** Jamie Robins, Buglife

Last year Buglife rolled out the national B-Lines initiative in Suffolk, thanks to funding from Natural England. B-Lines is an exciting landscape scale initiative aiming to create a network of wildflower-rich routes across the UK to connect our best existing wildlife sites by restoring and creating habitat across the countryside.

Wildflower-rich habitats are essential for our bees, butterflies and other insect pollinators. B-Lines will help these important pollinators to move across the landscape and support more resilient pollinator populations.



A 'bee-friendly' meadow. Credit: Leanna Dixon

Buglife worked with a host of expert organisations and partners to create a B-Lines map for Suffolk that connects the county's most important pollinator habitats. The next step is to start creating stepping stones of wildflower-rich habitat in these 3km wide corridors.

Delivering this extensive B-Lines network can't be done by Buglife alone - it needs the contribution of conservation organisations, local authorities and the wider community to help 'fill' the B-Lines. Whether it is restoring an existing meadow (e.g. green haying, scrub clearance, restoring management), creating

wildflower areas in parks, planting wildlife gardens in private gardens or community areas, disturbance management or landowners joining Countryside Stewardship, no matter what the scale, all work can help contribute to helping our declining pollinators.

If you've done any wildflower work for pollinators in Suffolk, please consider submitting your work to our interactive B-Lines map at [www.buglife.org.uk/b-lines-map](http://www.buglife.org.uk/b-lines-map). If you'd like to discuss the work further or have any ideas on how to deliver B-Lines in Suffolk, please email Jamie Robins at [jamie.robins@buglife.org.uk](mailto:jamie.robins@buglife.org.uk)



B-lines map for Suffolk. Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service

## A new Charter for Trees, Woods and People - Please share your story

Ellie Henderson, Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust is leading over 50 organisations in a call to create a new charter for trees, woods and people. The charter will be rooted in stories and memories.

We want to collect thousands of tree stories from across the country. It just takes a couple of minutes to add your own story - [Woodland Trust Share your story >](#)

The Charter steering group of over 50 cross-sector organisations will work together to build a charter that is rooted in these stories – reflecting what people in UK society value about trees, the issues they feel need addressing, and the things they want changed so that future generations can benefit from trees and woods. The resulting charter will have strength because it represents the voices and experiences of thousands of people across all sectors of society. It will provide guidance for individuals, communities, businesses and policy makers.

Could you help us spread the word about the charter through your newsletter, Facebook or Twitter? Please use #treecharter and share this [link >](#) Please contact us at [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) for more information.



BEN campbuilding. Credit: Black Environment Network

## Red Crag Revealed

Caroline Markham, GeoSuffolk

Take a cold February day, an overgrown crag pit and six keen volunteers. Work them hard for five hours, then stand back and marvel at the glowing bronze colouring of the Red Crag, revealed as years of talus and dusty vegetation are peeled back. This recipe for success was used to good effect by GeoSuffolk with Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB volunteers at Butley Neutral Farm Pit SSSI on February 4th. The winter cold had no meaning for us as we lopped the brambles, dug out the talus and brushed the resulting exposure on the south face of this SSSI, designated for its 'Butleyan' Red Crag. A cross-bedded unit was revealed at the base, contrasting with the shell bed above where we found many of the fossil bivalves this deposit is noted for – *Macoma obliqua*, *Spisula constricta* and *Chlamys opercularis*. The discovery of gastropod *Boreotrophon clathratum* gave an indication of the cooler water aspect of this 'Butleyan' fauna, which dates at about 2.75 million years ago.



9.30 am



2.30 pm

## Suffolk Polecat survey

Ben Heather (SBIS) and Martin Hancock (Suffolk Mammal Group)

The **Polecat** (*Mustela putorius*) was pushed to the brink of extinction over 100 years ago. Labelled as probably one of the most hated mammal species, the last survivors retreated to Wales and remote parts of Scotland. Surveys conducted by the Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) over the last 23 years however have noted the gradual return of the Polecat to its former ranges and the latest survey for 2014/15 shows a relatively strong presence in Suffolk.

Whilst the VWT survey has now concluded, the Suffolk Mammal Group is keen to continue monitoring Polecat distribution in Suffolk. A major part of this monitoring is the ability to be able to distinguish 'true' Polecats from their domesticated cousins, ferrets, with whom they interbreed.

SBIS has teamed up with the Suffolk Mammal Group to produce a bespoke Polecat survey form which aims to collect sightings of 'true' polecats in Suffolk. Built upon our basic three stage recording form the survey includes additional questions to input further details about your observation.

For this survey it is ideal but not compulsory that you also submit a photo. Photos should ideally include the full body, including paws and a close up of the face - this should help verification. Sightings submitted without this information may not become verified. If you own a camera trap and this was used to make your observation - please include freeze frames detailing the above features and if possible provide a link to your video (if it is posted online) in the comment field.



## Swifts in Woodbridge—please contribute to our 2016 survey

Jenny James, RSPB Woodbridge Local Group

The **RSPB Woodbridge Local Group** is continuing its campaign to save our swifts and again we need your help. For information about our 2015 survey please see the article on the [Group website >](#).

In our 2016 survey we are looking for swift nest sites either in roofs or nest boxes. Between early May and early August if you see swifts flying at roof level, particularly around the eaves, this could be a nest site. You may see them flying directly into a hole or through a loose tile into the nest with food for the young. If it is your house you may hear them from the upstairs rooms.

Another sign of breeding swifts is 'screaming parties'. These are the groups of birds which fly around in a tight group, at or just above roof top height. If you have a nest box, especially if you are playing the swift calls CD, they may investigate that site for next year.

We would like to hear about nest sites and screaming parties. So please send us your records with your name, the address and post code of the nest site. For screaming parties please tell us the date, the address and postcode. We would be glad to receive any extra details about the activity around your swift nest such as when the swifts arrived and how often you see them.

Please send the information to this email address [woodbridge-swifts2015@outlook.com](mailto:woodbridge-swifts2015@outlook.com).

This year we are working with Save Our Swifts, the Suffolk based group which is aiming to record all known swift nest sites by 2020.

All the data which we receive will also be entered onto the RSPB and SWT websites. Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) receives these records from SWT. In this way we will be making a major contribution to the national picture of swift numbers and distribution.

It is thought that one reason for swift decline is the loss of nest sites on buildings, through modernisation. Many roofs are now deliberately designed to exclude swifts by blocking up entry points. So we are doing all we can to raise awareness among builders, developers and home owners about the need to allow swifts to have entry points into our roofs. They are charming visitors; those who have them feel privileged to share their roof spaces with them for the summer months.

To compensate for the loss of nest sites we are extending our campaign to encourage people to install swift nest boxes on their houses. Nest boxes are available for sale at RSPB Woodbridge group meetings with advice about sound systems to attract the birds.

There are several leaflets which can be downloaded from [Swift Conservation >](#)

- Leaflet 1 Swift nest boxes at your home
- Leaflet 2 Roof & gable Repairs and Re-roofing with swifts.
- Leaflet 3 Swift Nest places in Soffits & Eaves, walls and Gables

Leaflet 4 Swift nest bricks installation & suppliers

Other leaflets are on the [RSPB Woodbridge Local Group website >](#) where you will find more information and links to other swift websites.

- How to attract swifts to your nest box
- How to use the swift calls CD
- Swifts call kits purchase and set up details

This community survey is run by the Freshwater Habitat Trust (FHT) as a 'Citizen Science' project with the aim of learning more about the distribution of wildlife rich, clean water habitats in England and Wales. It is based on simple test kits which give a quick measurement of the amount of nitrate (No3) and Phosphate (Po4) in the water of any pond, Lake, stream or river. At the Suffolk Naturalist's Society 'Freshwater Revival' conference in February many of the delegates signed up to test their local waters and should have received their test kits by now.

In 2015 the Environment Agency conducted trials of a variety of other easily available test kits, publishing a paper aimed towards walkover farm surveys and the EA published a paper called '*Low-cost testing kits for measuring phosphate in water*'. This is downloadable from the [Digital Library >](#)

Having bought a set of the EA recommended kits for Nitrate & Phosphate from the Amazon website, I also obtained a set of the FHT tests from Pete Case, who spoke at the SNS conference. This spring I have started to measure sites and compare the two kits, namely Japanese PackTest from the FHT and Dutch Salifert Profi Test from Amazon.

The results so far show very little difference in readings taken at the same site, both kits reliably indicating clean waters or sites with low to high levels of nitrate & phosphate. But when it comes to ease of use, there is no doubt which kit is best. The kits from Amazon (Salifert Profi Test) may be cheaper at 20p per test, but you need to measure an accurate amount of water into a pot, add 4 drops of reagent, shake, measure and add a tiny scoop of power, shake, then accurately time 3 minutes.

The FHT PackTest kits are in the form of a sealed plastic tube; you pull out the pin, squeeze and suck up roughly half full of water, shake and wait 3 mins. FHT kits are therefore much easier to use in the field and free to volunteers, although they cost £1 a time if bought individually.

Both kits change colour and provide charts which, by comparing colours, reveals the extent of any pollution. The FHT project defines clean water as having nitrate levels below 0.5 parts per million and phosphate below 0.05 ppm. Levels above 1ppm for nitrate or 0.1ppm phosphate indicate high pollution levels.

Using either kit is fascinating and gives a quick visual indication of the quality of a pond or stream and therefore an indication of its potential for biodiversity. Results can also be somewhat contrary to intuition. So a stream which looks crystal clear may show high levels particularly of nitrate, whilst water that is murky and brown can be revealed as exceptionally clean, the brown tinge often being caused by suspended sediment, the result of recent rainfall

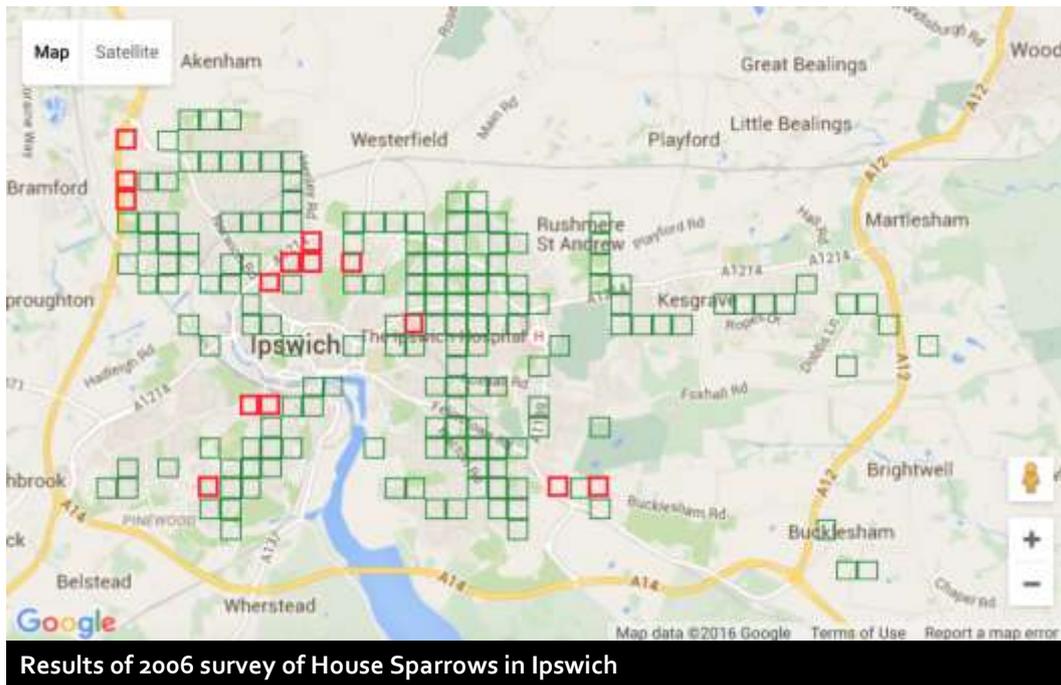
So far the Suffolk sites I have surveyed show, as expected, that the running water sites are all high in nitrates, being fed by ditches emanating from arable fields. Phosphate levels in these sites have not been very high, but are usually elevated. Ponds in farmland also show the same sorts of levels, even when not directly fed from a ditch line. However, the woodland ponds and those on nature reserves, such as Arger Fen, have all shown very clean waters. I intend now to test some spring fed headwater streams.

The FHT Clean Water for Wildlife programme is still looking for volunteers to join the survey. The test kits are free and so easy to use that they are especially good for getting children started in citizen science. The results can be uploaded onto the FHT website and, by the end of the year, should reveal for the first time the proportion of our water bodies which are in a good condition and can therefore support a varied and biodiverse wildlife community.

To join Clean Water for Wildlife email Thea Powell on: [tpowell@freshwaterhabitats.org.uk](mailto:tpowell@freshwaterhabitats.org.uk)

## 'Wild Ipswich' Swifts 'n Sparrows Christopher Courtney, RSPB Ipswich Local Group

Back in 2006 RSPB Ipswich Local Group conducted a survey to try to discover more about the distribution of house sparrows in our town, following on from a wealth of anecdotal evidence that the species was disappearing from many of its former haunts. Our 2006 results can be seen in the map below.



Being aware that nationally we have already lost around two thirds of our house sparrows, the species having been red-listed as a bird of conservation concern since 2002, led to a strong feeling within the group, that 10 years on, was the perfect time for some further work to try to help this species.

Only this time we have set out to be a bit more ambitious, with a two-pronged survey method to evaluate the current population as well as a longer-term initiative, designed in collaboration with other local wildlife partners to provide affordable nest boxes targeted to the remaining house sparrow hot spots.

The lack of suitable nest sites has been identified as a major driver of population decline for both swifts and sparrows, whose shared urban nesting environment, provides a unique link between these two species, that in every other respect could hardly be more different! One a supreme aerial acrobat and long-distance migrant, the other possibly the most sedentary and familiar species we have!

Unfortunately, our Swifts are also in trouble, with the UK population declining by an estimated 3% year on year. Despite being currently Amber listed, they could, if current trends continue, become potentially extinct as a UK breeding species by 2050!

Given the already well established project to survey swift breeding and 'screaming party' records in Suffolk, we decided that rather than re-invent the wheel, we should encourage our network of sparrow volunteers to log sightings directly into the Suffolk Ornithologist's Group/ Suffolk Wildlife Trust sponsored project, Save our Suffolk Swifts being hosted by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS). We will then extract local swift records from SBIS to inform our targeted nest box initiative, being run in conjunction with Ipswich Wildlife Group and the Greenways Countryside Project's Wildlife Homes initiative.



**Lee Warvill, local carpenter and builder, erecting a new swift nest box in Ipswich.**  
Credit: Chris Courtney

Our house sparrow survey comprises firstly of a simple citizen science style questionnaire, available as both a hard copy and online, that we are hoping will be completed by as many residents as possible. Although primarily focused on Ipswich, the questionnaire is also being made available to residents across Suffolk, since records will also be input to SBIS, thus making them accessible to researchers and planners for future use.

Secondly, a more in-depth survey, being run in parallel, is based on the protocol established by the Working Group on Urban Sparrows. This provides a more structured approach to identifying breeding colonies of house sparrows across the town, wherein volunteers request 1 or more representative 350m<sup>2</sup> survey plots, located across 51 1km urban squares, via an interactive map.

We then plan to assimilate the data output from both surveys to provide a baseline for what we hope, will be a project continuing for some years ahead, to improve the conservation status of both of these, nationally recognised urban priority species. For further information follow the links from our website [www.rspb.org.uk/groups/ipswich](http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/ipswich) or do feel free to contact us, if you fancy setting up a similar initiative in your area.



Male House Sparrow on garden fork.  
Credit: Liz Cutting



Female House Sparrow feeding young at an Ipswich nest box. Credit: Chris Courtney

## National Water Vole Monitoring Programme People's Trust for Endangered Species

Last year, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) launched the first ever National Water Vole Monitoring Programme. After a successful initial year, PTES is hoping to build on this citizen science project with a call for more volunteers to participate this May.

Water voles were once a common sight along UK riverbanks and waterways, but over the last century they have experienced the most severe decline of any wild mammal in the UK.

This spring, PTES is asking existing water vole monitors, and new recruits, to take part in the 2016 monitoring programme. Volunteers are required to survey one of the nearly 900 pre-selected sites across England, Wales and Scotland, and record all sightings and signs of water voles along a 500m length of riverbank during May. While no experience is required, those taking part will need to learn how to identify water vole field signs.

If you'd like to volunteer, visit the [PTES website](http://www.ptes.org) > for more information.



Water Vole. Credit: Ian Schofield Shutterstock  
PTES

Like many British species, it is becoming rare to catch a glimpse of the formidable looking Stag Beetle *Lucanus cervus*. Sadly, their numbers are dwindling across Europe due to loss of habitat and predators including cats, magpies and humans. In parts of Britain stag beetles are already extinct, so help is needed to prevent further decline. This spring, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) is asking the public to record any sightings of these iconic insects by taking part in their annual *Great Stag Hunt*.

Stag beetles emerge from mid-May onwards, and live in gardens, parks, woodland edges and traditional orchards. Stag beetles are prevalent throughout southern England and coastal areas of the south west, while they are less common in the north of England and the South Downs. PTES also want to hear from people living in areas that border the stag beetles' known range, such as Devon, Norfolk, Worcestershire and Yorkshire.

Stag beetles can reach up to 75mm in size, which makes them second largest of all UK beetles after the water beetle, but also easy to spot! For the majority of their life cycle, stag beetles remain underground as larvae, feeding on rotten wood. They can remain as larvae for as long as 7 years, and once fully grown they build a large cocoon in the soil where they pupate before finally metamorphosing into their adult, more recognisable, form.

Laura Bower, Conservation Officer at PTES says: "The *Great Stag Hunt* has involved thousands of people over the last 20 years. Now is the right time of year for people to start recording sightings of stag beetles, as they emerge from mid-May onwards. Gardens in particular are very important habitats, as stag beetles rely on decaying wood in contact with soil to feed on as larvae. Volunteers can help by retaining dead tree stumps or building a log pile in their gardens to ensure there is a good supply of dead wood for female stag beetles to lay their eggs in. We hope to see more volunteers joining this year's *Great Stag Hunt* to help reverse their population decline."

To further raise the profile of beetles, PTES is working with MG Leonard, author of the best-selling children's novel *Beetle Boy*. This heart-warming story follows the adventure of a young boy and his friend Baxter, who is in fact a beetle. *Beetle Boy* is the first part of *The Beetle Trilogy*, and was published in March 2016 by Chicken House.

Laura concludes: "PTES and MG Leonard are keen to show children and adults alike that beetles aren't something to be afraid of, and in fact are something to be admired. PTES' *Great Stag Hunt* is a fantastic way for the public to gain wider knowledge of stag beetles and for PTES to find out what their populations look like, which will in turn aid our wider conservation efforts."

For more advice on how to identify a stag beetle, to find out what to do if you find a stag beetle or dig up stag beetle larva, visit: [www.ptes.org/stagbeetles](http://www.ptes.org/stagbeetles).

Last year's *Great Stag Hunt* saw 5,796 recorded stag beetle sightings, including 901 sightings in Hampshire alone. By sending in your records, you will be helping the national conservation strategy for Stag Beetles. Please send your records to our local expert, Colin Hawes by email ([c.hawes@homecall.co.uk](mailto:c.hawes@homecall.co.uk) or [hawescolin@gmail.com](mailto:hawescolin@gmail.com)) or to Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service Online Recording at <http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/SuffolkBRO>



Stag beetle larvae. Credit: Becky Hales



Male stag beetle. Credit: Bill Plumb

Rockhall Wood SSSI at Sutton is a very special place. Designated for its Coralline Crag stratigraphy and relationship with the Red Crag surrounding it, this Crag 'island' forms a low hill above the surrounding fields. The exposures around the sides of the hill tell the story of changing Pliocene sea levels and faunal migrations and extinctions 2.5-4.5 million years ago. The unconsolidated lithology of the Crag means that these exposures need constant attention and GeoSuffolk was thrilled with the turnout at the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Volunteers Day on March 3rd. Boosted by Environment Agency volunteers we numbered thirteen altogether and luck was with us – the sun shone on this beautiful early spring day.

In the morning, two Coralline Crag faces – one with excellent stratigraphy and the other showing the junction with the Red Crag - were refreshed on the east side of the hill. After a picnic lunch, during which a box of chocolate brownies was passed round, we worked on the Coralline Crag/Red Crag unconformity on the south side of the hill. As well as revealing the honey-coloured Crag exposures, we found some of the fossils for which they are renowned: a very large and complete *Neptunea contraria*; a *Scaphella*; a Coralline Crag bi-valve cast with adhering Red Crag barnacles; a fossil crab derived from the London Clay.

This SSSI is on private land but, if you would like to visit, GeoSuffolk is joining in with Sutton Village Gardens Open Day on June 26th to show its 'Pliocene Forest' on the SSSI site to the public. As well as molluscs the Coralline Crag contains fossil pollen and our 'forest' has living representatives of genera identified by this pollen.



Working on the Coralline Crag/Red Crag junction on the south side of the Crag 'island' at Sutton

## Biodiversity News— Spring issue

Issue 72 of Biodiversity News is now available to download. To view this edition please click [here >](#) Contents include: Polli-Nation project, Great British Beach Clean results, Water Voles thriving in Fenland Drains, The Hive comes to Kew Gardens.

To view previous editions (from 2007 onwards) please click [here >](#)

Rivers, ditches, dykes and ponds are the focus of many popular Norfolk and Suffolk paths and trails, attracting both wildlife and walkers alike. The Little Ouse rises close to Redgrave and Lopham Fen, passing through rural woodland and farmland before flowing through the historic centre of the market town of Thetford. This is where you can join the Little Ouse Path and follow its course under bridges, over weirs, past ancient monuments and through quiet forests all the way to Brandon.

Yet these beautiful stretches of path, enjoyed for their unspoilt beauty and wildlife spotting opportunities are at risk from alien invaders. Invasive non-native species pose a major threat to the rivers of Norfolk and Suffolk, clogging up water ways and outcompeting native species.

The [Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow project](#) > (part of [Breaking New Ground HLF supported landscape scheme](#) >) will perform the first ever survey of invasive species on the Little Ouse from headwaters to Brandon, as part of the project's week long Little Ouse Wildlife Recording Festival (17<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> June). Conducted during this week in June, by canoe and on foot, wildlife experts will be on hand to help you spot any alien species making their home on the Little Ouse and its banks. Here are some of the invaders you might see:

**Signal crayfish:** larger and more aggressive than native crayfish, they also carry crayfish plague, a fungal disease deadly to native white claw crayfish populations across Norfolk and Suffolk. [GB Non-native Species Secretariat](#) >

**Himalayan balsam:** forms dense stands of vegetation, towering up to 2m above riverside paths, shading out walkers and native plant species! Over winter, it dies back leaving riverbanks and footpaths bare and susceptible to erosion and collapse. [GB Non-native Species Secretariat](#) >

**Floating pennywort:** covers rivers and streams in dense mat of vegetation, pushing out native species, reducing light and oxygen levels in the water and kills fish and other underwater fauna.

You can help us tackle invasive species by coming to our training sessions during the festival to learn more about how to identify the above and many other non-native species AND most importantly you can **SIGN UP** to **GET INVOLVED** in surveying by river or on foot during 17<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> June. To find out more, please email Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service at [nbis@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nbis@norfolk.gov.uk).



Signal Crayfish  
Credit: GBNNS



Himalayan Balsam  
Credit: GBNNS



Floating Pennywort  
Credit: GBNNS

## Asian Hornets in the News Natural England

### Asian Hornet Queen



Asian hornet. Credit: Natural England

It's the time of year when Asian hornet queens overwintering in France come out of hibernation.

The Asian hornet is an invasive non-native species that could have a serious impact on UK biodiversity. Defra have prepared a comprehensive [response plan](#), the first of its kind, to help deal with any infestations should they arrive here.

Asian hornets are firmly established in France, particularly in the west, and have been extending their northern range along the coast. They are now found in Brittany and Normandy, and last year they reached the Pas-de-Calais.

The Asian hornet could be accidentally carried into the UK in freight, for example, in shipments of horticultural supplies, or be blown across the Channel by favourable winds. The public is being asked to be alert to their presence. The Asian hornet is distinctive with yellow legs and a mostly dark brown/black body with a yellow fourth abdominal segment.

Unfortunately many media outlets have been using pictures of the Asian giant hornet, *Vespa mandarinia*, to illustrate their news coverage. The Asian giant hornet, aka 'The Yak Killer', is venomous and grows up to 5 cm long, but is not a risk to the UK.

In contrast, the Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*, is half the size of the giant hornet and is smaller than the native European hornet. This confusion will obviously impact on people's ability to identify the species, so please correct this misinformation if you get the opportunity.

### Further information

For more details on Asian hornet, the response plan, its identification, and how to report sightings, please go to the [Non-Native Species Secretariat website](#) >.

## Beetle Drive Natural England



Scarlet malachite beetle:  
Photo: Martin Bennett

**A call to arms - and some thatched 'beetle cottages' - are helping to save the rare but beautiful scarlet malachite beetle.**

It is one of the rarest and most mysterious beetles in this country, but Ian Hughes, a freelance naturalist with support from Natural England and Buglife, is on a mission to secure the future of the handsome Scarlet malachite beetle (*Malachius aeneus*). This involves installing small but perfectly formed thatched 'beetle cottages' on sites where it once thrived.

### An elusive beast

Very little is known about the elusive Scarlet malachite beetle, other than it is very rare and is only found in a couple of sites in Essex, the New Forest in Hampshire and Hertfordshire. But Ian Hughes has been commissioned by Buglife to shed more light

on the secretive life-cycle of this magnificent red-backed beast.

Ian explains, "I do believe that the loss of meadow habitat in this country is partly responsible for the beetle's dramatic decline and this is one of the elements of their life-cycle that I am investigating. They appear to need thatched properties to lay their eggs, and once hatched in early May they need a direct flight path from the thatch to a meadow habitat where they need to feed on specific meadow flowers and grasses and then breed."

An important site for the scarlet malachite beetle is Furzey Gardens in the New Forest in Hampshire. Working with the Furzey Gardens Trust, Ian is currently installing small thatched 'beetle cottages' or nurseries in meadows surrounding the garden where the beetles will hopefully lay their eggs.

Ian explains, "The beetles only emerge for a very short period of time. They will appear in early May to feed and breed and by mid-June



**Thatched beetle house**  
Photo: Ian Hughes

will disappear to lay their eggs. It is hoped that this year they will utilise the 'beetle cottages' as artificial nesting sites on the meadow at Furzey Gardens. I will then be able to study them in greater detail, and build a more comprehensive picture about their life-cycle including their specific habitat and feeding requirements. I am very grateful to the landowners and others who are supporting this important project."

### **Isolated pockets?**

Although once widespread across the country, it is believed that the Scarlet malachite beetle is now hanging by a thread and threatened with extinction. However, as Ian explains, "We need to know if there are other isolated pockets still hanging on."

To do this Ian and Buglife have put a call-out for landowners or those with thatched properties to leap into action to see if they can spot this elusive beetle.

Ian said "We would urge people to go out and look out for the beetle this spring and early summer so that we can assess the current state of play for this beetle in Britain and potentially find previously unknown territories. It is a stunning and unmistakable looking beetle and it seems to be clinging on in just a tiny portion of its former range. It could be that with the help of the public and landowners we might uncover other areas where the beetle is surviving. This would be a fantastic discovery and could make a massive difference to their survival."

To take part in the survey, please visit Buglife's website at [www.buglife.org.uk](http://www.buglife.org.uk) or contact [Ian Hughes](mailto:Ian.Hughes@buglife.org.uk) by email.

***Postscript: the Suffolk naturalist Claude Morley (1874-1951) made 6 records of *M. aeneus* from Monk Soham. No further records have been made, despite a 2008 survey by Buglife in the area . If you live in rural Suffolk, please look out for the beetle and report any sightings to [Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service >](#)***

## **Exploring schools' use of natural spaces**

### **Natural England**

Natural England and Plymouth University staff have contributed a chapter to a major new academic reference book, '*Geographies of Children and Young People*'.

This new book pulls together the best international reflective and innovative scholarship focusing on younger people. The chapter 'Exploring schools' use of natural spaces' focuses on the changing ways in which schools are using natural spaces as part of their pupils' learning experience.

### **Learning outdoors in the natural environment**

The chapter looks at the reasons learning in natural spaces has undergone something of a renaissance in recent times and explores the reasons that this might be so. It also take a closer look at how schools and other practitioners are using outdoor spaces for play, for non-curricular, and for curricular learning.

It draws on a range of countries for examples that show how a nation's cultural ideas about the outdoors can be incorporated into a country's outdoor learning, and how other ideas travel across boundaries to be interpreted in different practical ways. The chapter then looks at different theoretical underpinnings that inform learning outside. Finally, the benefits of and challenges to outdoor learning are considered.

The chapter draws on the experiences of staff working on the [Natural Connections Demonstration Project](#) and from across the work of Natural England's People and Nature Team. As well as being a fascinating read it demonstrates the contribution that Natural England makes in providing leadership to the outdoor learning sector

### **Read the chapter**

You can [read the chapter](#) on the Springer website. If you would like a PDF of the whole chapter please e-mail Natural England's [Martin Gilchrist](#).

# Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership

The Partnership's work has now been integrated into [Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service \(SBIS\) >](#) and the Biodiversity Officer post will continue with SBIS. The SBP website is still currently running, but will be moved to the SBIS website by the end of August 2016. The Twitter account (@suffolkbiod) will shortly disappear and all biodiversity Tweets will be made by SBIS—@suffolkbis. This e-newsletter will continue to be published quarterly through SBIS,

A huge 'Thank You' to all those who have supported the Partnership, we look forward to working with you through SBIS in the future.

## Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service

### *Sharing information about Suffolk's wildlife*

Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service is the One-Stop-Shop for biodiversity information in Suffolk. Operating as an independent and objective centre for biodiversity data we collate, manage and mobilise species and site information for the benefit of Suffolk's wildlife as a whole.

News [SBIS website >](#)

Events [SBIS News / Events >](#)

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

Project Fund We have a small Project Fund available to individuals and communities for research, habitat enhancement or to benefit Suffolk species. Please contact Gen Broad if you're looking for small amounts of funding for your project.

Follow us on [@Suffolkbis >](#)

Like us on [Facebook >](#)

Share photos on [Flickr >](#)

**Newsletter Publication dates :** Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

Deadline for Summer 2016 newsletter articles: **Friday 29th July 2016.**

*If you'd like to share the work that you or your organisation / group is doing to protect biodiversity in Suffolk, please send your article (with photos) for inclusion in the next newsletter to Gen Broad*

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

### Contact Us

Martin Sanford (SBIS Manager) email: [martin.sanford@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:martin.sanford@suffolk.gov.uk), tel: 01473 433547

Ben Heather (Biological Records Officer—GIS) email: [ben.heather@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:ben.heather@suffolk.gov.uk), tel: 01473 433571

Gen Broad (Biodiversity Officer) email: [gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk), tel: 01473 264308