SBIS Newsletter

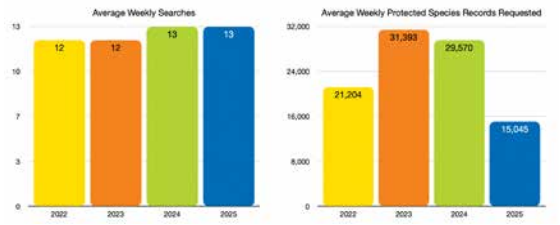
Staverton Thicks © Gary Battell

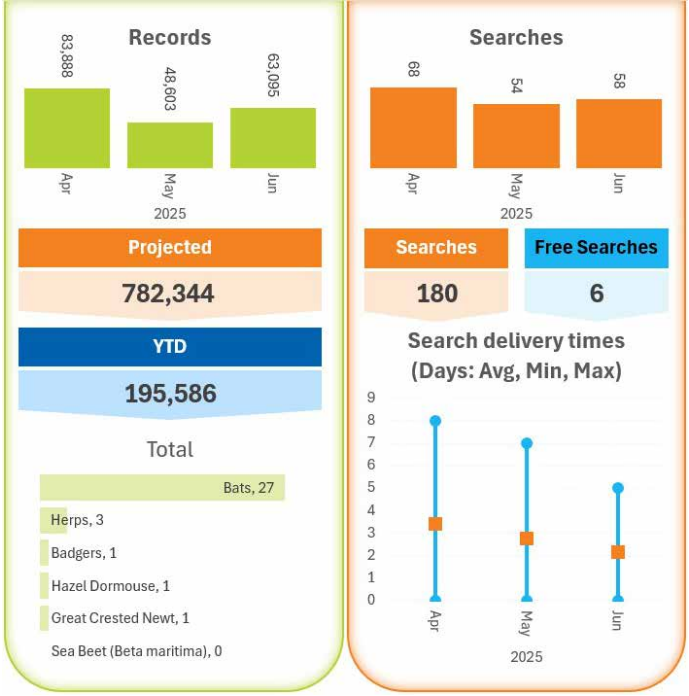
Summer 2025

SBIS News

Commercial Data Enquiries

From the start of April this year, we have processed 180 searches, supplying 195,586 species records. This equates to an average of 13 searches a week with 1,087 records per search.





Projects

LIDAR-DERIVED TREE CANOPY POLYGON DATA

Data generated for hedgerows is now available on our website (www.suffolkbis.org.uk/hedgerow); this includes data on area, height, estimated volume and the total number of tree canopies. We have mapped these quality indicators at parish level and these can be requested free of charge. Additionally, data is available to download in GIS format.

COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES, ROADSIDE NATURE RESERVES, COUNTY GEOSITES

Suffolk Wildlife Trust continues to rewrite CWS citations, which are regularly added into our database.

DATA UPDATES FOR SLA PARTNERS

The 6-monthly GIS data updates were made available through our website in June. The next updates will be available in Nov/Dec.

NATIVE BLACK POPLAR SURVEY

The recording form and map is live and accessible to registered volunteers and Suffolk Tree Wardens. The planted sapling data is now included as a layer on the map, and volunteers are adding new records to this and verifying existing trees. Records of new trees are sent to the Native Black Poplar Recorder, Sue Hooton, to verify.

ANCIENT WOODLAND INVENTORY UPDATE

The Ancient Woodland Inventory data was delivered to Natural England, which been reviewed and approved, and will be published in September, see p. 11.

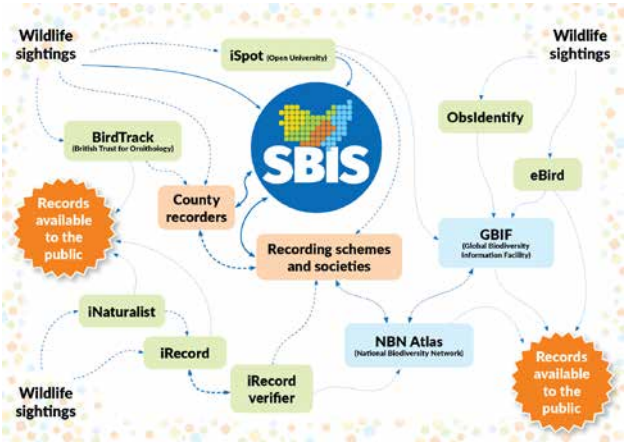
SBIS WEBSITE CHANGES

You might have noticed our Data Search pages have had a little refresh. But that's not the whole story! We've been busy behind the scenes making some major improvements to how we handle your data requests. Thanks to a significant system upgrade, our search team can now process your requests much faster and more efficiently. We've also automated our invoicing, freeing up our team from time-consuming paperwork. What does this mean for you? It means we have more time to focus on providing you with a high-quality service and concentrating on our core functions.

We are also pleased to announce the launch of three new sections in our digital Knowledge Hub. Firstly, you can now explore Ancient Woodland & Trees, a section that details their importance as rare ecosystems and serves as a gateway to further resources on woodland ecology. A companion section focuses specifically on Suffolk's Ancient & Veteran Trees, offering insights into identifying these remarkable trees and highlighting notable examples across the county as well as signposting you to resources for recording Ancient trees in your area.

Finally, we are proud to present the 2023 Suffolk Bat Atlas. This comprehensive publication, produced in partnership with the Suffolk Bat Group, details the distribution and conservation status of all bat species found in Suffolk, providing invaluable data for conservationists and planners alike. The Suffolk Bat Group has also produced a detailed series of fact sheets covering each bat species.

WHERE DO YOUR RECORDS GO?



from NEONS

Isolde Cutting, Senior Landscape Officer, Suffolk County Council

Photo: Pablo Gentile, Unsplash

Unless you belong to the initiated, who are regularly invited to meetings, you may wonder what this odd acronym stands for or you may indeed be oblivious to this group's very existence. NEONS withholds any clues until you spell it out: Natural Environment Officers Network Suffolk.

So, who are we and what do we do?

NEONS has evolved in natural progression from a group which was endearingly referred to as SLOG (Suffolk Landscape Officers Group), with the main difference being that we now cast our net wider, to include all local authority officers who work within Natural Environment teams in Suffolk, such as Ecologists, Arboriculturists, and representatives from the National Landscape Team, whereas beforehand the focus was just on Landscape Officers.

It is fair to say that this wider reach has proofed to be stimulating and enriching for the group. Not least, because there is a greater chance that a good number of us can attend a meeting at any given date. The different disciplines have widened the scope of conversations, and the group now provides a forum for professional cross-fertilisation, with contacts being established or renewed and strengthened, and ideas sparked, which is great to witness.

The modus operandi follows long-engrained traditions, we meet online every other month on the third Thursday, usually without agenda, and certainly without anyone producing minutes. It is a safe place to share what is going on in our daily lives at work (and have a bit of a rant, frankly, if needed). Occasionally, we do have agenda topics, and members of the group or guests give short talks for general information and further discussion. Sometimes there are actions to be taken away and followed up.

The National Landscape Team introduced us to the Dedham Vale Lighting Design Guide, an incredibly useful document, which I refer to regardless, whether an application is within a National Landscape or not.

They have also kept us up to date with regards to the strengthened duty for relevant authorities in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 (section 85) in any policy-making, decision-making or actions that affect National Landscapes in England.

The SBIS Biological Records Officer shared with us the fantastic work that she has done for the Ancient Woodland Inventory, which is expected to result in many more Ancient Woodlands being officially recognised. The Nature Recovery Partnership Manager provided a fascinating insight into her work on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Suffolk.

As our meetings take place online, we have begun to make an effort to meet in person at least once a year. For our third annual summer outing, we are looking forward to visiting Elveden Estate in July, where we hope to find out more about the measures taken to future-proof the estate through Forestry management (provenance of stock – deer control), Water management (new reservoir/ irrigation), the management of the RNR along Brandon Road, and the estate's approach to managing access to sensitive areas.

The invitations to our meetings go out quite widely (too widely, in some cases, I am told). However, if you feel, you or a member of your team would like to join NEONS, or you would like to make a guest appearance with a topic that relates to the Natural Environment, then please do get in touch and I shall happily put you onto the mailing list or arrange for one-off attendance.
Isolde.Cutting@suffolk.gov.uk.

Suffolk's Secret Sanctuaries: The Unsung Heroes

Here in Suffolk, beyond our famous coastline and celebrated nature reserves, a hidden network of natural gems forms the wild heart of our county. You may already know one – perhaps that cherished local woodland where you walk the dog, a vibrant wildflower meadow you pass on your commute, or a bustling ancient hedgerow that borders a familiar lane. These are our County Wildlife Sites (CWS), and this network of unsung sanctuaries is vital for Suffolk's nature, our communities, and our future.

This is the story of their ecological roles, the benefits they bring to us, the challenges they face, and their part in the mission to bring nature back to life across our county.

Unveiling Suffolk's Hidden Havens

At the heart of Suffolk's conservation efforts are our County Wildlife Sites, areas celebrated for their unique local ecological value. Their designation is a formal recognition that follows a rigorous assessment process, using ecological surveys and scientific criteria to ensure they are of genuine conservation value.

We are fortunate to have over 900 of these sites, collectively covering around 11,000 hectares. While that may sound like a lot, it represents a mere 3% of our county's land. They encompass a rich and diverse tapestry of habitats, small, cherished meadows and green lanes, or larger, impressive areas of ancient woodland, vital heathland (the Brecks and Sandlings), historic commons, and crucial marshland.

Identifying these sites is overseen by the Suffolk CWS Panel. This key partnership brings together a wealth of expertise from Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS), Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and Natural England. Sites are selected for their important, distinctive, or threatened habitats and the species they support. SBIS maintains the official register and map of all CWS in Suffolk, detailing their locations and key features.

The Ecological Powerhouses on Your Doorstep

Suffolk's County Wildlife Sites are far more than just pleasant green areas on a map. They are dynamic, living ecological systems that provide a critical sanctuary for our county's flora and fauna.

Many of these sites protect irreplaceable habitats. Crucially, they often support species that have been identified as national priorities under UK Biodiversity Action Plans, which highlights their importance far beyond the county border. They are vital refuges, providing safe havens for numerous threatened and declining plant and animal species. In our increasingly fragmented modern landscape, these sites act as important biodiversity reservoirs.

Their most vital ecological function is landscape connectivity, forming an intricate web of "stepping stones" or "corridors", linking to other conservation sites. In a disconnected landscape, these green highways are vital, enabling species to move, feed, breed, and adapt to long-term pressures such as climate change. In essence, the CWS network enhances the effectiveness of our protected areas system, forming a "backbone" for Suffolk's ecological network.

It's important to understand where CWS fit within the UK's hierarchy of protected sites. CWSs are non-statutory designations. This means they don't have the same direct legal protection as statutory sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which are designated for their national importance. The

protection of CWS in Suffolk relies primarily on their recognition within local planning policies and the goodwill and positive action of landowners. However, "non-statutory" should never be mistaken for "less ecologically valuable". The SSSI system is designed to be a representative sample of the UK's best sites. In contrast, the CWS system aims to be more comprehensive at a local level. As a result, many sites of SSSI quality are designated as CWS, meaning Suffolk's CWS can be amongst the very best and most valuable sites for biodiversity.

The Value Beyond Wildlife

The benefits of CWS enrich our lives in many ways. The positive impact of access to nature on our well-being is now widely understood. Regular engagement with natural spaces is linked to increased physical activity, reduced stress, and improved mood. The evidence is compelling; a study by The Wildlife Trusts found their nature-based health programmes delivered a remarkable Social Return on Investment of between £6.88 and £8.50 for every £1 invested, through improvements to individual health and well-being. Protecting and enhancing Suffolk's publicly accessible CWS is, therefore, a proactive public health strategy.

Furthermore, some Suffolk Wildlife Trust CWS, serve as invaluable outdoor classrooms and focal points for community engagement, offering opportunities for people to learn about our local natural history. Volunteers are vital for the management and monitoring of many CWS, and this involvement fosters a powerful sense of pride and stewardship, which in turn leads to better site protection.

Economically, CWS are functioning natural assets that contribute to our county's stability and quality of life. They provide essential "ecosystem services" that we all depend on, such as clean air and water, crop pollination, and natural flood resilience, all of which have a tangible economic value.

Under Pressure: A Fragile Heritage

Despite their immense value, our CWS face pressures that threaten their survival. The lack of direct legal protection is a fundamental challenge. While they are recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which presumes against harmful development, sites can still be lost or damaged when development pressures are high. The Suffolk Wildlife Trust actively monitors planning applications to defend these sites from harm.

Beyond the threat of bulldozers, a more silent decline can occur through neglect or inappropriate management. Many CWS are located on privately owned land, and they depend on ongoing, sensitive land management practices. Without this, their unique character and biodiversity can degrade and disappear.

Suffolk's CWS are also subject to broader environmental pressures, including agricultural intensification, pollution, climate change, and the spread of invasive non-native species. Because CWS are often smaller and integrated into the broader landscape, they can be particularly susceptible to "edge effects" from these surrounding land uses.

The Future is Local: A Path Forward

The conservation of Suffolk's CWS is poised to play an increasingly important role in addressing the biodiversity crisis. They form the "bedrock" for Suffolk's part in the new national Nature Recovery Network (NRN). The NRN aims to create a bigger, better, and more connected network of habitats across the country, and our CWS are the perfect building blocks.

Furthermore, as the UK government pursues its target of protecting 30% of land for nature by 2030 (the "30x30" goal), our CWS network offers a vast potential contribution. Covering nearly 3-5% of Suffolk already, these sites could be recognised as "Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures" (OECMs), provided they are managed effectively for long-term biodiversity benefits.

New policies such as the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), which requires most new developments to deliver a 10% net gain for biodiversity, could also provide a route to fund habitat creation and enhancement that benefits or expands Suffolk's CWS network.

How You Can Help Protect Suffolk's Heritage

The future of our County Wildlife Sites depends on all of us. Here are some ways you can help:

- Get Advice: If you own land that is, or has the potential to be, a CWS, you can contact Suffolk Wildlife Trust for free advice on habitat management and funding.
- Volunteer Your Time: Local conservation groups frequently seek volunteers to assist in managing these special sites.
- Support Conservation: Become a member of organisations like Suffolk Wildlife Trust that champion and support the CWS system.
- Engage with Planning: Make your voice heard by commenting on Local Plans and planning applications that could affect a CWS in your area.
- Garden for Wildlife: Create wildlife-friendly spaces in your own garden, no matter how small, to complement and connect with the wider CWS network.

Most CWS in Suffolk are privately owned and therefore do not have public access. Always respect the rights of landowners.

By cherishing, protecting, and investing in these vital sanctuaries, we can help secure a wilder, healthier, and more resilient Suffolk for future generations.

DISCOVERING OUR NEWEST NATURAL TREASURES

There is a quiet magic at work in the British countryside. It unfolds in the hum of an insect, the flash of a wildflower in a sunlit meadow, and the rustle of unseen creatures in the ancient hedgerows. Our role, as guardians of this natural heritage, is not only to cherish these places but to formally recognise their importance. This is the work of the County Wildlife Site (CWS) panel, a group of dedicated ecologists and conservationists who assess and designate areas of significant value to nature. This summer, the panel visited three proposed sites in Suffolk, each with its unique character and story to tell. Over two days, they explored a community park teeming with unexpected life, an ancient floodplain meadow rich in history, and a pioneering woodland where nature is being allowed to forge a new path.

14 May

A MORNING AMONGST ORCHIDS AT GREAT CORNARD COUNTRY PARK

The panel's journey began at Great Cornard Country Park. This 13-hectare mosaic of habitats, managed by the Sudbury Common Lands Charity on behalf of the Parish Council, is a perfect example of how community green spaces can become havens for wildlife.

What makes this park so special is its incredible variety. It is a tapestry woven from different habitats: fragments of ancient woodland, vibrant lowland meadows, and areas of scrub and dense, old hedgerows that act as corridors for wildlife. On higher ground, a section is being left to its own devices, an experiment in natural regeneration. Its location, close to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Cornard Mere reserve, makes it a vital connecting piece in the wider landscape puzzle.

The panel was visiting to discover whether the park's wildlife interest had developed enough to merit CWS status. They were not disappointed. A survey conducted in July 2024 revealed a staggering list of wild flowers. The stars of the show were undoubtedly the orchids. An astonishing count of c.110 Bee Orchids were recorded, their fuzzy, bee-mimicking flowers a delight to find. They were joined by six Pyramidal Orchids, their bright magenta spikes pushing up through the grasses.

But the floral wonders did not stop there. The slopes were coloured with the purple of Field Scabious and Knapweed, the sunny yellow of Yellow Rattle and Lady's Bedstraw, and the delicate white of Oxeye Daisies. The air was scented with Marjoram, Wild Basil, and Corn Mint. A closer look revealed dozens of other species, from the tall, architectural stems of Teasel and Wild Carrot to the sprawling, cheerful faces of Meadow Cranesbill and Musk Mallow. This sheer diversity is a testament to the management that has allowed a rich and natural flora to flourish.

Where there are flowers, there are insects. A butterfly survey in July 2024 found the air dancing with life. Marbled Whites drifted over the grasses, while Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns flitted along the path edges in significant numbers. The sharp-eyed surveyors spotted Common Blues and a Brown Argus, alongside a trio of skippers: Small, Large, and Essex.

This rich ecosystem supports more than just insects. Volunteer recorder Debbie has confirmed the presence of Common Lizards basking in sunny spots and even a Grass Snake. A large, active Badger sett indicates a healthy population of these elusive nocturnal mammals. The panel's visit confirmed even more treasures, discovering Goatsbeard, delicate Quaking Grass, swathes of Meadow Vetchling and a Slow Worm sheltering under a pile of bark. It was clear that the wildlife value of this country park has grown over the years. It now stands as an oasis for nature.

AN AFTERNOON ON THE ANCIENT FLOODPLAIN OF SHALFORD MEADOW

After a well-earned lunch, the panel travelled to their second site: Shalford Meadow. This vast, 36-hectare expanse is an entirely different habitat. It is a floodplain meadow, which are increasingly rare and precious in the UK, where so many of our fertile river valleys have been lost to development. Lying between the River Stour and the Sudbury to Marks Tey railway line, Shalford is a place rich in both wildlife and history.

For hundreds of years, this meadow has been shaped by the seasons. Winter floods replenish the soil and create temporary wetlands that attract scores of birds that overwinter. In spring and summer, the floodplain transforms into a complex tapestry of grasses and wild flowers, supporting a vast variety of insects, which in turn feed birds and bats.

The entire site is being managed for wildlife, utilising a traditional system that has created ideal conditions for nature. The vegetation is allowed to grow tall through spring, providing cover for ground-nesting birds. A hay crop is taken in midsummer, after most flowers have set seed, then the regrowth is lightly grazed by cattle, preventing coarser grasses from taking over and allowing the flower-rich sward to thrive.

The panel's walk across the meadow revealed a site of immense interest. One of the day's most exciting finds was hiding in plain sight. Tim, a member of the panel, spotted a small tree sapling growing near the riverbank. However, this was no ordinary sapling. It was identified as a native Black Poplar, our most endangered native timber tree. What made this discovery so thrilling was that it appeared to have grown naturally from seed – a remarkably rare event. Samples from the sapling and its presumed parent tree are now being sent for DNA analysis, a discovery that has greatly excited plant specialists at Natural England.

Further exploration revealed more botanical treasures, including the Narrow-leaved Water Dropwort *Oenanthe silaifolia*, possibly one of the rarest plants in Suffolk. Until recently SBIS held just two records for it – one from 1912 and one from 1974 – however it was rediscovered in Shalford Meadow last year and the panel were delighted to find it again on this visit.

The air was alive with the sound of Skylarks singing high above the grassland, while Small Heath butterflies danced among the flowers. Lapwings, with their distinctive crests and tumbling display flights, have been reported as successfully breeding here in 2024. Confirming Shalford Meadow as a site of national importance, a beautifully managed, publicly accessible landscape that serves as a living link to our agricultural and natural history.

After our visits, both of these sites received the green light for CWS designation during a panel meeting just a short while later.




20 June

INTO THE WILDWOOD AT ARGER FEN

For the final visit, the CWS panel ventured into the enchanting world of Arger Fen, a Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserve. Here, they met with Warden Cormac Adlard to explore the areas being considered for CWS designation, former arable fields that are returning to the wild. The panel was eager to learn about the development of these areas under the Trust's pioneering approach.

Arger Fen is not just a wood; it is a landscape. It lies in a series of hidden valleys, giving it a secretive, almost magical atmosphere. The reserve is a fascinating blend of the old and the new. At its heart is a core of true ancient woodland, a remnant of the wildwood that once covered Britain. A place of gnarled, coppiced stools of hazel, hornbeam, and lime. But surrounding this ancient core are the newer lands of Spouse's Vale and other adjacent fields, which the Trust acquired to buffer the woodland and create a larger, more resilient habitat.

The panel's focus was on these 'new' lands. Instead of planting millions of trees, the Trust's approach here is one of "natural regeneration" or "wilding". The land is simply left for nature to reclaim. Seeds from the surrounding ancient woodland, carried by the wind or by birds and mammals, have begun to germinate and grow. It is a slow, patient process, but it is creating a far more natural and diverse woodland for the future. The panel could see the first thorny scrub species, such as hawthorn and blackthorn, establishing themselves, acting as a natural nursery for slow-growing trees like oak and field maple.

This dynamic approach to management creates a habitat rich in wildlife. The traditional coppicing that continues in part of the fen provides the perfect conditions for the Hazel Dormouse, that thrives in the dense, shrubby regrowth. The mix of ancient trees, deadwood, and open glades makes the reserve a stronghold for rare bats, most notably the Barbastelle bat, which uses the peeling bark of old trees for its roosts.

Walking with the warden, the panel learned how this mosaic of habitats benefits a vast range of species. The soundscape of the fen is a symphony of bird song. Nightingales, masters of melody, return each spring to the dense thickets. The gentle call of the chiffchaff is a constant companion, while the drumming of great spotted woodpeckers echoes through the trees. The team spotted some unusual lines of holes

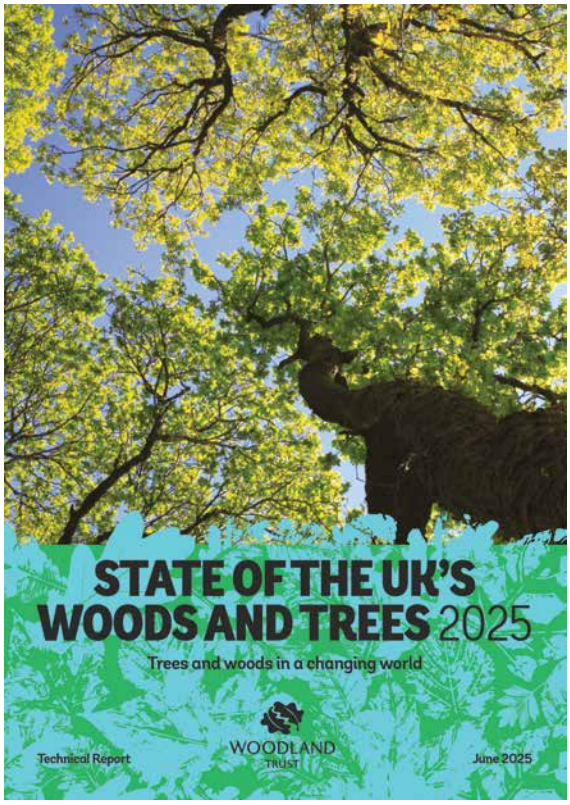
in several small-leaved lime trunks, this was later found to be the work of the woodpeckers.

The new wilding areas, with their open, grassy clearings interspersed with developing scrub, are particularly valuable. They provide hunting grounds for barn owls and kestrels and are rich in the wildflowers and insects that have been lost from much of our farmland. Arger Fen is more than just a nature reserve; it is a living laboratory. It demonstrates how we can work with natural processes to restore habitats and create landscapes that are not only teeming with wildlife but are also better equipped to cope with the challenges of climate change.

The panel left inspired, having seen firsthand how these former fields are transforming into the wild woodlands of the future.

These three visits paint a remarkable picture of the wildlife riches that our county holds. From a community park to a historic meadow and a forward-thinking woodland, each site demonstrates the incredible value of protecting and managing land with nature in mind. The work of the CWS panel ensures these places are recognised, offering them a greater degree of protection and celebrating the efforts of the landowners and volunteers who care for them. They are vital stepping stones in our landscape, ensuring that the quiet magic of the British countryside endures for generations to come.

More Trees, Less Life:
A Health Check for Suffolk's Woods



At first glance, the news seems good. The Woodland Trust's latest report reveals that tree cover across the UK has crept up to 13.5%. But this simple number hides a troubling secret: beneath this growing canopy, our woodlands are in crisis. The wildlife that calls them home is in freefall, a direct result of the poor health of the woods themselves. For a rural county like Suffolk, this national health check is a vital wake-up call.

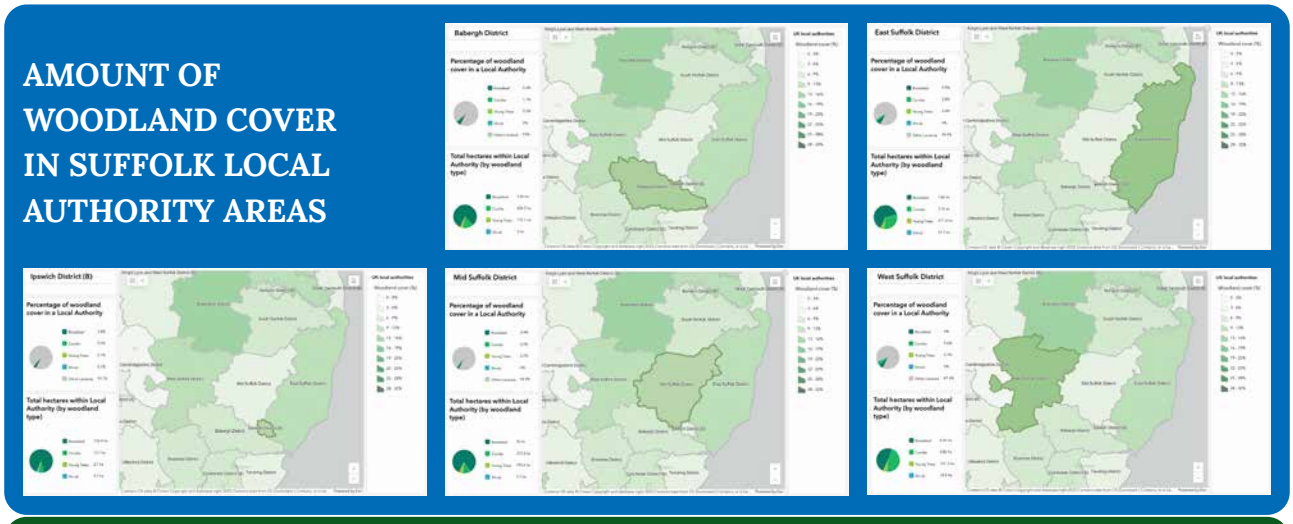
The National Problem: Why Our Woods Are Ailing

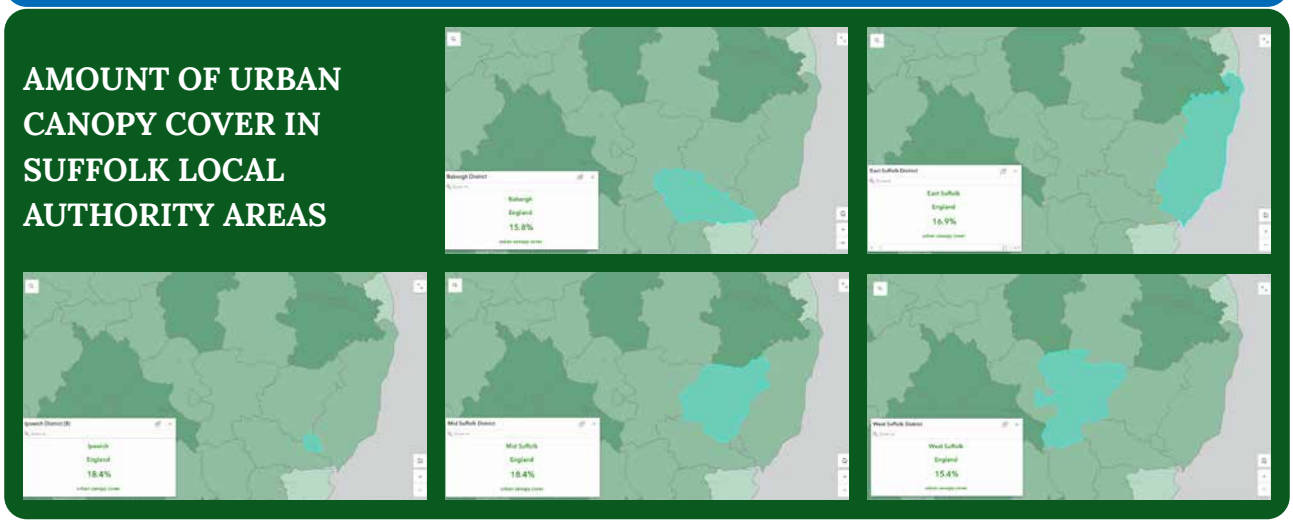
The report paints a stark picture. While we have more trees, our woodlands have become simplified, uniform, and less full of life.

- **A Silent Decline:** The rich variety of plants on the woodland floor has fallen by 22% in 50 years. The sound of birdsong is fading, with woodland bird populations crashing by 37% since 1970. Specialist butterflies have fared even worse, declining by 47% since 1990.
- **Critically Poor Condition:** A shocking 9% of native woodland in England is considered to be in good ecological condition. They have become darker, shadier places, lacking the open glades and varied structure that wildlife needs to thrive.
- **Missing Ingredients:** Two key features of a healthy wood are vanishing. Ancient and veteran trees, which are ecosystems in their own right, are critically scarce. So is deadwood – standing and fallen – which provides food and shelter for everything from beetles and fungi to bats and woodpeckers.
- **A Barrage of Threats:** Our woods are fighting a war on multiple fronts. They face pressure from unsustainable deer populations that graze away young trees, a constant stream of new pests and diseases, and the growing impacts of climate change.

The Suffolk Story: A Fragile Inheritance

These national trends have profound implications for our county. Suffolk's greatest woodland treasure is also its greatest vulnerability: our ancient woods. We have over three times less ancient woodland than the national average, making every remaining fragment incredibly precious.





The threats are local, too. High numbers of deer prevent our traditionally coppiced woods from regenerating, silencing the nightingales and wiping out the wildflowers that once flourished in the sunlit clearings. The decline of these traditional management skills is turning our vibrant, complex woods into the simplified, quiet places the report warns of.

A Blueprint for Hope: How We Can Help

This report is a diagnosis, not a eulogy. The solutions are known, and here in Suffolk, we are well-placed to lead the way.

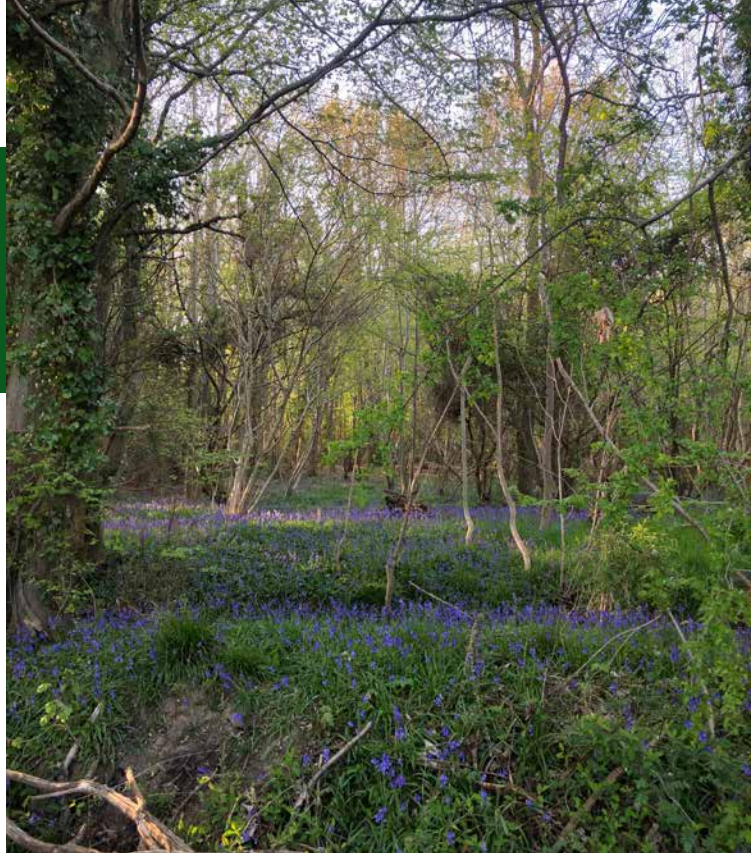
- **Embrace Complexity:** The answer isn't just planting trees; it's about restoring health and complexity. This means reintroducing traditional skills like coppicing, creating open glades, and leaving deadwood to rot, creating the rich mosaic of habitats that nature needs. You can see this in action at Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserves like Bradfield Woods, a masterclass in traditional management, and Arger Fen, where woodland is being allowed to regenerate naturally.
- **A Plan for Nature:** The new Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) provides a county-wide blueprint for joining up our fragmented habitats, ensuring we create bigger, better, and more connected spaces for wildlife.
- **Your Part in the Recovery:** We all have a role to play.
  - **Landowners** can get support. East Suffolk Council, for example, aims to plant 250,000 trees by 2027 and is working with the Woodland Trust to offer funding and advice to anyone with land to spare.
  - **The public** can be a powerful voice for nature. By supporting organisations like the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust, and simply by visiting and valuing our local woods, we reinforce the urgent case for their protection and restoration.

The message from the Woodland Trust is clear. To save our woodlands, we must learn to see the wood for the trees. The future of Suffolk's wildlife depends not just on how many trees we have, but on how full of life we can make the woods that shelter them.

Data maps are from the online report by the Woodland Trust, use the QR code to see the report

WOODLAND TRUST

ANCIENT WOODLAND INVENTORY PROJECT: SUMMER 2025



Hannah Alred, SBIS

We are delighted to announce the update of the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) for Suffolk has been successfully completed, submitted to Natural England, and officially approved!

This achievement marks the culmination of years of work, careful research, and invaluable contributions from many individuals and organisations. The updated inventory will soon be published to the public portal and viewable at the following link: **https://tinyurl.com/mmfrstfn**. We are excited to share the wealth of new data and statistics on Suffolk's ancient woodlands once this publication is complete. Following publication of these data we will be able to provide detailed figures on the increase of ancient woodland area, as well as insights into changes at a local level and the wider distribution across the county.

Why is this update so important?

Ancient woodlands, defined as areas that have been continuously wooded since at least 1600 AD, are irreplaceable habitats. They are rich in biodiversity, supporting complex ecosystems that have evolved over centuries, often harbouring rare and specialist species of plants, fungi, and invertebrates that cannot thrive elsewhere. They also hold cultural and historical value, often holding local importance to communities for generations.

This updated inventory is more than just a list of sites; it is a vital tool for their future protection. Its significance is underscored by its integration within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF recognises ancient woodland as an "irreplaceable habitat," meaning that development resulting in their loss or deterioration should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists. With a more accurate and comprehensive Ancient Woodland Inventory, more of Suffolk's precious ancient woodlands will now benefit from this enhanced protection within the planning system, ensuring safeguarding for generations to come. This robust dataset will empower local planning authorities, landowners, and conservationists with the most up-to-date information, enabling informed decisions that prioritise our natural environment.

A Thank You to Our Contributors

This project would not have been possible without the extraordinary dedication and commitment of numerous individuals. We extend our sincerest gratitude to everyone who contributed, particularly:

- **Our Archive Volunteers:** The meticulous work undertaken by our volunteers in the archives, poring over historical maps and documents, was absolutely fundamental to identifying previously unrecognised ancient woodland sites and strengthening the evidence base for existing ones. Their dedication, patience and attention to detail were truly remarkable.
- **Our Woodland Survey Volunteers:** The invaluable "ground-truthing" provided by our woodland survey volunteers, who ventured out in all weathers to assess the ecological characteristics of potential ancient woodland, was critical in verifying historical evidence and ensuring the accuracy of the inventory. Their ecological expertise and tireless efforts have been instrumental.

The collaborative effort demonstrated by all involved, from data collation to field verification, data and archive sourcing, GIS support and knowledge sharing has been the core of this project.

We eagerly anticipate the official publication of the updated Ancient Woodland Inventory on the Natural England public portal and look forward to sharing the detailed data and statistics with the biological recording community and all our stakeholders. This is an important piece of work for Suffolk, which we hope will help protect and enhance our ancient woodlands now and into the future.

A Journey into Suffolk's Ancient Woodlands

Emma Aldous, SBIS

As the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service's dedicated work on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) review draws to a close, project organiser Hannah Alred arranged a fascinating field trip for the team. The objective was to explore and survey three distinct Ancient Woodlands, all located nearby, to confirm their status as Ancient Woodlands and observe the rich tapestry of life they support.

Ancient Woodlands are a vital part of our natural heritage, not just collections of old trees, but complex, living ecosystems that have evolved over the course of centuries. They are irreplaceable habitats, home to a vast array of species, many of which are slow to colonise and are therefore rarely found elsewhere. Their undisturbed soils harbour a wealth of archaeological and biological information, a living record of our landscape's history.

Queech Wood: A Surprising Haven of Biodiversity

On a fine, sunny April day, the team's first destination was Queech Wood. This woodland is actively managed for a variety of outdoor leisure activities. Initially, there was some concern that the level of human activity might have diminished its ecological value. However, the SBIS team was pleasantly surprised.

Contrary to their expectations, Queech Wood was a shining example of how careful management can allow conservation and recreation to coexist. Thoughtful stewardship had left undisturbed areas, providing a sanctuary for a remarkable abundance of ancient woodland indicator species. These plants, such as the delicate Wood Anemone and the vibrant Early Purple Orchid, are tell-tale signs of a long-established woodland. The presence of a diverse collection of these species is a testament to the wood's health and ancient origins.

The owner of the site, who joined the team, shared his passion for the woodland and outlined his sustainable management plans, ensuring a bright future for this valuable habitat. The species list compiled by SBIS's Andy Mercer, ranged from the cheerful song of the Chiffchaff and the tinkling twitter of the Goldfinch to the mournful call of the Stock Dove, further underscored the wood's ecological significance.

A GLIMPSE OF QUEECH WOOD'S RICH FLORA AND FAUNA:

Avian Residents: A chorus of birdsong accompanied the team, with sightings of Chiffchaff, Robin, Great Tit, Blackcap, and the striking Green Woodpecker, among many others. The presence of top

Wood Anemone (Anemone nemorosa), Bluebell (Hyacinthoides non-scripta) and Primrose (Primula vulgaris) at Queech Wood

predators, such as the Common Buzzard and Kestrel, indicated a healthy and robust food web.

Delicate Wings: Butterflies such as the Small White and the Speckled Wood danced in the dappled sunlight, adding to the atmosphere.

Woodland Flora: The woodland floor was a carpet of indicative ancient woodland plants, including Dog's Mercury, Lesser Celandine, Bluebells, Primroses, and the intriguingly named Yellow Archangel. The trees themselves told a story, with a mix of Ash, Elm, Oak, and Hornbeam forming the canopy.

The Slade: A Cautionary Tale of Lost Heritage

The team then moved on to The Slade, a woodland situated within the grounds of a large country house. Here, the story was quite different. Over many years of being managed as a formal woodland garden, The Slade had sadly lost many of the defining characteristics of an ancient woodland.

While several magnificent veteran trees still stood as silent witnesses to its past, the intensive management had taken its toll. The understory, a crucial component of a healthy woodland ecosystem, had mainly been cleared to create a more manicured appearance. This, coupled with the introduction of non-native species, had led to a significant loss of the specialist indicator plants the team would have expected to find. Instead, the woodland floor was now dominated by the aggressive growth of nettles, a common sign of nutrient enrichment and soil disturbance.

Rede Wood: A Thriving Example of a Working Woodland

The final visit of the day was to Rede Wood, a designated County Wildlife Site and a fine example of a working woodland. Typical of the ancient woodlands found on the region's heavy Boulder Clay soils, Rede Wood presented a picture of traditional, sustainable management.

The woodland structure consisted of standard trees, predominantly ash and oak, towering over a coppiced layer dominated by hazel. This practice of coppicing, a traditional method of woodland management, creates a mosaic of habitats and allows light to reach the woodland floor, encouraging a profusion of life. The ground flora was characteristic of its ancient status, with carpets of Wood Anemone and the distinctive Wood Spurge. The site is also known to host the rare Bird's-nest Orchid, a species with a fascinating reliance on fungi for its survival.

Historical surveys dating from 1986 have documented an impressive forty-nine species of fungi and forty-five bird species, including the now scarce Spotted Flycatcher, highlighting the enduring ecological importance of Rede Wood. This visit gave us a powerful reminder of how traditional management practices can sustain these precious habitats for both wildlife and future generations.

Yellow Archangel (Lamiastrum galeobdolon), Replanting in a deer exclusion area, both at Queech Wood, A veteran tree in The Slade

Staverton Thicks © Gary Battell

AN ENDURING LEGACY, A HELPING HAND

Rupert Bently-Walls, Senior Arboricultural Officer Suffolk County Council

The task for the day was simple: weeding. Yet, the atmosphere at Staverton Park on June 10th suggested something far more profound was taking place. Amidst friendly conversation and laughter, a group of volunteers from Suffolk County Council's (SCC) Natural Environment team – including Ecology, Landscapes, Arboriculture, Public Rights of Way, Nature Recovery, National Landscape and SBIS – knelt to their work, tending to some 2,000 young saplings. The rain from the previous week had softened the soil, a welcome gift that made clearing competing vegetation from the pots easier.

This was not just any collection of young trees. These were "Staverton Oaks," each one a direct descendant of the ancient giants that define this extraordinary landscape, and the task was not just weeding. As one volunteer noted, there is no such thing as a weed, only plants that have found themselves in the wrong place. This thoughtful approach perfectly captured the spirit of the day, a spirit championed by Gary Battell, the recently retired Tree and Woodland Officer for Suffolk County Council (SCC). For over three decades, Gary has poured his passion and unmatched knowledge into Staverton, much of it on a voluntary basis. His commitment, from planting and woodland management to public talks, has made him the heart of this conservation effort.

Staverton Park: A Living Monument Through Time

To understand the importance of the day's work, one must first understand the significance of Staverton itself. This is not just another patch of woodland. Staverton Park and the adjoining Staverton Thicks are widely regarded as among the most important surviving examples of ancient wood pasture in England. In recognition of this, the area holds designations as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), marking its outstanding value to nature conservation.

Covering over 80 hectares, the park is a breathtaking landscape of closely spaced oak pollards.

It is home to more than 3,020 ancient oak trees, many of which are over 400 years old. Within the park lies "Staverton Thicks," a dense and magical woodland celebrated for its veteran oaks and hollies, some of which are among the largest in Britain. This living monument, carefully stewarded for four generations by the Kemball family, stands as one of the natural wonders of the British landscape.

Its history is as deep as the roots of its oldest trees. The park was first formally recorded as a medieval deer park in 1268, but its origins likely stretch back much further. A journey into the archives reveals a reference in the Domesday Book of 1086. Here, the area was listed as *Stauertuna* or *Stauretona*, an Old English name meaning an enclosure made with stakes or poles. It was recorded as a manor with a church and, crucially, woodland sufficient to support 30 pigs. In a county where woodland was rare even then, this notation highlights the area's early significance. It also reveals a remarkable continuity of purpose. The "woodland for pigs" of 1086 describes the same fundamental land use, wood pasture, that defines the park today. For nearly a millennium, this land has been a place where trees and grazing animals coexist, a continuous thread of ecological character woven through the centuries.

© Nick Dickson, Natural Environment Manager

Sowing the Seeds of a Resilient Future: The Tree Nursery

While Staverton's past is magnificent, its future requires proactive and careful planning. This is the purpose of the tree nursery, a project born from Gary Battell's long term vision. His ambition went beyond simply planting trees; he aimed to establish a sustainable seed source that could not only support Staverton's own regeneration but also contribute to increasing tree cover across Suffolk.

This important project was made possible through funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme, a grant initiative supporting farmers and land managers in England's National Parks and National Landscapes. The funding provided the necessary infrastructure to grow and care for the young trees, but the methodology behind the nursery reveals a deeper, scientific purpose. This is not just a planting exercise; it is the creation of a living genetic archive. Acorns are systematically collected from the park's ancient oaks, with meticulous records kept of each parent tree's location and girth. This ensures the local provenance, the unique genetic heritage of Staverton, is preserved.

The young saplings are grown in air-pots, special containers designed to promote optimal root development and prevent root

Before and after pictures © Isolde Cutting, Senior Landscape Officer

© Nick Dickson

circling. Once they are mature enough, they will be planted out in the park and protected with Gen Guards, which help reduce damage from browsing animals. This entire process is designed to give the next generation of Staverton oaks the best possible start. It is a direct response to the pressures the ancient trees face from changing climate patterns, pests, and diseases. By carefully monitoring the saplings from known parent trees, the project is effectively a long term study in resilience. The data gathered today could one day help identify which genetic lines of Staverton oaks are best equipped to survive the challenges of the future, providing invaluable knowledge for ancient woodland conservation far beyond Suffolk.

Camaraderie and Care

The success of the nursery depends on the kind of dedicated support shown on this volunteering day. It was an excellent example of cross-departmental collaboration, bringing together experts from diverse fields and organisations.

The day began, as all such activities should, with a comprehensive health and safety briefing. Although weeding seems low risk, Gary ensured everyone was aware of potential hazards like back strain from repeated bending or the possibility of insect bites and grazes. Volunteers were advised to use knee pads, wear sturdy footwear and gloves, and stay hydrated. This thoughtful preparation set the tone for a day of careful, focused work.

© Nick Dickson

As the volunteers tended to the 2,000 saplings, which were segregated in pens according to their parent tree, the spirit of teamwork shone through. This was not a race against the clock, but a meticulous task requiring attention to detail to avoid damaging the delicate young oaks. Martin Sanford from SBIS put his botanical expertise to good use, carefully identifying and noting all the other plants growing in the pots for the nursery's records. One particularly attractive grass, known as Beard Grass or Rabbitsfoot Grass, caught the eye. Meanwhile, Countryside Project Officer Neil Lister from National Landscape kindly brought along extra tools and knee pads for everyone's comfort.

A well timed tea and coffee break provided a welcome chance to stretch, especially for those who had been kneeling on the hard stone shingle that helps suppress weeds across the nursery site. Refreshed, the team pressed on and completed the entire task by a well earned late lunch at 1:30 p.m. The afternoon was dedicated to learning, as Gary led an insightful walk around Staverton. He discussed the pressures facing the veteran trees and explained why the nursery is so crucial for safeguarding the park's future, ensuring its succession and resilience for generations to come.

A Heartfelt Thanks and a Lasting Connection

The day was best summarised in the words of Gary Battell himself, who shared a message of sincere gratitude with the team.

"I want to extend my sincere thanks to each of you for your hard work," he wrote. "You proved the old saying true; many hands really do make light work. What would have taken me days was accomplished together with care, spirit, and camaraderie".

He explained the importance of the task, noting that removing competing plants gives the saplings the best chance to thrive, especially as the origins of seeds arriving with the soil cannot always be traced. He gave special thanks to Martin for his botanical work, which will be added to the nursery records, to Rupert for coordinating the day, and to Neil for providing the tools and knee pads.

Gary Battell © Isolde Cutting

"I hope you felt a sense of pride in what we achieved as a team, even if your backs and muscles were gently reminding you of the effort later!" he added. "I hope you enjoyed the walk around Staverton and that your visit left you with good memories and a deeper connection to this special place".

Gary's words perfectly captured the outcome of the day. It was a day of practical help, of shared purpose, and of strengthening the bond between organisations, people and this truly remarkable corner of Suffolk.

Martin's list of wonderfully identified species found in the Airpots

English	Latin
Square-stalked Willowherb	*Epilobium tetragonum*
Hairy Willowherb	*Epilobium hirsutum*
Rosebay Willowherb	*Chamaenerion angustifolium*
Nipplewort	*Lapsana communis*
Selfheal	*Prunella vulgaris*
Perennial Alkanet	*Pentaglottis sempervirens*
Goosegrass	*Galium aparine*
Nettle	*Urtica dioica*
Ivy-leaved Speedwell	*Veronica hederifolia*
Climbing Corydalis	*Ceratocapnos claviculata*
Vetch	*Vicia sativa*
Forget-me-not	*Myosotis sylvatica*
Creeping Cinquefoil	*Potentilla reptans*
Broad-leaved Dock	*Rumex obtusifolius*
Sallow	*Salix cinerea*
Prickly Sowthistle	*Sonchus asper*
Smooth Sowthistle	*Sonchus oleraceus*
Dandelion	*Taraxacum officinale*
Thale Cress	*Arabidopsis thaliana*

English	Latin
Wavy Bittercress	*Cardamine flexuosa*
Procumbent Sorrel	*Oxalis corniculata*
Stitchwort	*Stellaria holostea*
Foxglove	*Digitalis purpurea*
Groundsel	*Senecio vulgaris*
Hedge Garlic	*Alliaria petiolata*
Parsely Piert	*Aphanes arvensis*
Grasses	
Annual Beard Grass	*Polypogon monspeliensis*
Water Bent	*Polypogon viridis*
Fern Grass	*Catapodium rigidum*
Sterile Brome	*Anisantha sterilis*
Cocksfoot	*Dactylis glomerata*
Rye Grass	*Lolium perenne*
Wall Barley	*Hordeum murinum*
Meadow Fescue	*Schedonorus pratensis*
Yorkshire Fog	*Holcus lanatus*
Rough Meadow-grass	*Poa trivialis*
Rat's-tail Fescue	*Vulpia myuros*

A Pattern of Failure

Beyond the A14's Broken Promises

A recent article in The Guardian, laid bare the environmental failure of the £1.5 billion A14 improvement scheme in Cambridgeshire. Describing how the flagship project, promising a landmark 11.5 per cent biodiversity net gain, instead delivered a net loss, leaving a legacy of over 600,000 dead saplings and non-functional wildlife culverts.

This is more than just a grim headline; it exposes the gap between policy rhetoric and on-the-ground reality. To treat the A14 as a one-off disaster is to miss the point. It reveals a wider malaise, and its toxic mix of flawed planning, a box-ticking culture, and a shocking accountability vacuum, is being replicated across the country, turning policy into tragedy.

While the A14 is the most egregious example, its failings are echoed in projects large and small. At the A45/A6 junction in Northamptonshire, three-quarters of the mitigation saplings died. Data from National Highways shows a systemic problem, with one report revealing an average failure rate of over 30 per cent across nine of its major projects.

This is not just a roadside issue; it pervades all kinds of environmental mitigation. A housing development's promised "wildflower meadow" turned out to be a patch of rubble and weeds of limited ecological value. A river restoration project saw the newly engineered banks collapse within two years due to poor hydrological assessment. These are not isolated incidents, but symptoms of systemic flaws.

A Cascade of Errors

There is a profound disconnect between policy and practice. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a laudable concept, but its implementation has been plagued by a culture that prioritises the easily measured metric over the complex ecological outcome. The goal becomes planting "x" number of trees, rather than establishing a functioning woodland, or designating an area as meadow, without ensuring the soil and seed mix can support it.

The lack of long-term thinking compounds this. The life cycle of any new habitat, extends far beyond the construction phase. Yet still projects lack fully funded, legally enforceable management plans. The plastic tree guards that still litter the A14 are a perfect symbol of this 'plant and forget' mentality, where aftercare is an afterthought and long-term responsibility is absent.

There is an accountability vacuum. Even when failure is undeniable, obtaining clear data and enforcing remediation is an arduous battle. This implies that the challenge of holding private developers to their 30-year BNG commitments is immense. A May 2024 National Audit Office report on the implementation of statutory BNG warned that significant risks to its effectiveness remain. Highlighting that it will be years before we can be confident that the policy is truly working, and questioning whether local authorities have the capacity to effectively enforce compliance.

A Call for Professional Rigour

The continued underperformance of such schemes requires a critical evaluation of current professional practices and standards. A more rigorous and assertive approach is required from expert stakeholders.

Enhanced Due Diligence: A thorough and critical interrogation of baseline data and design blueprints is fundamental. The standard procedure should involve a detailed scrutiny of soil surveys, species lists, and hydrological reports, rather than accepting them at face value. This includes challenging assumptions and demanding robust, site-specific evidence before projects start.

Emphasis on Ecological Function: There is a need to evolve project evaluation beyond simple metrics towards a more holistic assessment of ecosystem function. Recommendations and reports should prioritise the long-term resilience and viability of the ecosystem. This includes ensuring that plans account for climate resilience, species provenance, and ecological connectivity.

Financially Secured Long-Term Management: Long-term, fully funded management plans must be a non-negotiable condition of planning approval. A 30-year management plan without a secured and ring-fenced budget lacks practical standing. Financial provisions for aftercare, monitoring, and remediation must be transparent and legally binding.

Commitment to Transparency and Data Accessibility: Radical transparency in project monitoring and outcomes is essential. The difficulty in obtaining data from past schemes is a significant barrier. As a condition of planning, all monitoring data should be made publicly accessible. This would create a strong incentive for developers and contractors to deliver on their commitments.

These issues highlight systemic weaknesses in the current approach to environmental enhancement. They represent a clear call to action for adopting higher standards. Without a collective commitment to greater rigour, accountability, and long-term strategic planning, the sector will continue to see suboptimal outcomes and a failure to deliver on environmental goals.

SUFFOLK'S NATIVE BLACK POPLAR *POPULUS NIGRA SSP. BETULIFOLIA* – A TREE OF OUR TIMES?

Sue Hooton and Gen Broad

A hedgerow Black Poplar in autumn © Lucy

The sun shines, puffy white clouds in a high blue sky, the June day hot and humid. We stroll gently through the first floodplain hay meadow, the river Alde a few metres to the left. The hay cut has left a scattering of huge round bales wrapped in plastic, grasshoppers and crickets leap to safety amongst the taller grasses, white butterflies flit around the 6m high dark green hawthorn hedge. We're heading for a female Black Poplar in the hedgerow, where the track leading to the next water meadow narrows and mature willow trees create welcome shade.

Oliver Rackham's description of 'rugged grandeur' is apt. Standing high above the hedge, possibly 30m tall, she leans in a characteristic stance, graceful boughs arching downwards at a gentle angle to almost touch the earth and then up again at the tip. This ancient specimen has a massive fissured trunk at least 2m in diameter with extensive burring, giving the bark a black appearance. The burrs or bosses are diagnostic of native Black Poplars, caused by epicormic growth, new shoots sprouting from dormant buds. Beside the ditch, at the base of the tree, a carpet of wind-blown fluffy white seed heads lie amongst a thick patch of common nettle at least one metre high. The female catkins of a Black Poplar are green, whilst those of the male are reddish purple.

The owner of this land feels a strong protective connection to the tree, saying: '*It is late May, and the meadow that borders the river has a soft, fluffy look. Seeds attached to cottony hairs blow about in the breeze. They are from the catkins on the old Black Poplar, she is tall, with a great fissured trunk, lower branches droop down, the upper ones reach up high, all are well covered in bright green leaves. The leaves make a rustling, like water gently bubbling in a pan, a very soothing sound.*

As the summer ends the tree gradually turns a lovely yellow, you can see her from far away, glowing against a blue sky. Winter shows us her frame, great curving boughs, with smaller branches fanning out, some almost reaching the ground and others held well above the nearby oak and willows.

The long pointed buds in spring open to give us delicate pale green leaves. We look out for all these changes with much pleasure, glad to be caring for this female Black Poplar, who has stood in this valley for two hundred years. "

Oliver Rackham says that Black Poplar (identified as *Popel* or *Poplar*) is richly recorded in medieval documents, distinguished from Aspen (*Aspe*) and White or Grey Poplar (*Abel*). Until about 1850, Black Poplars had a wide range of uses, particularly for housebuilding as they are quick growing with helpfully curved boughs for cruck framed buildings in which arched timbers support the roof. They are also highly fire resistant due to their fine texture and softness. That same softness gives them spongy shock absorber qualities, valuable in the construction of carts, rifle

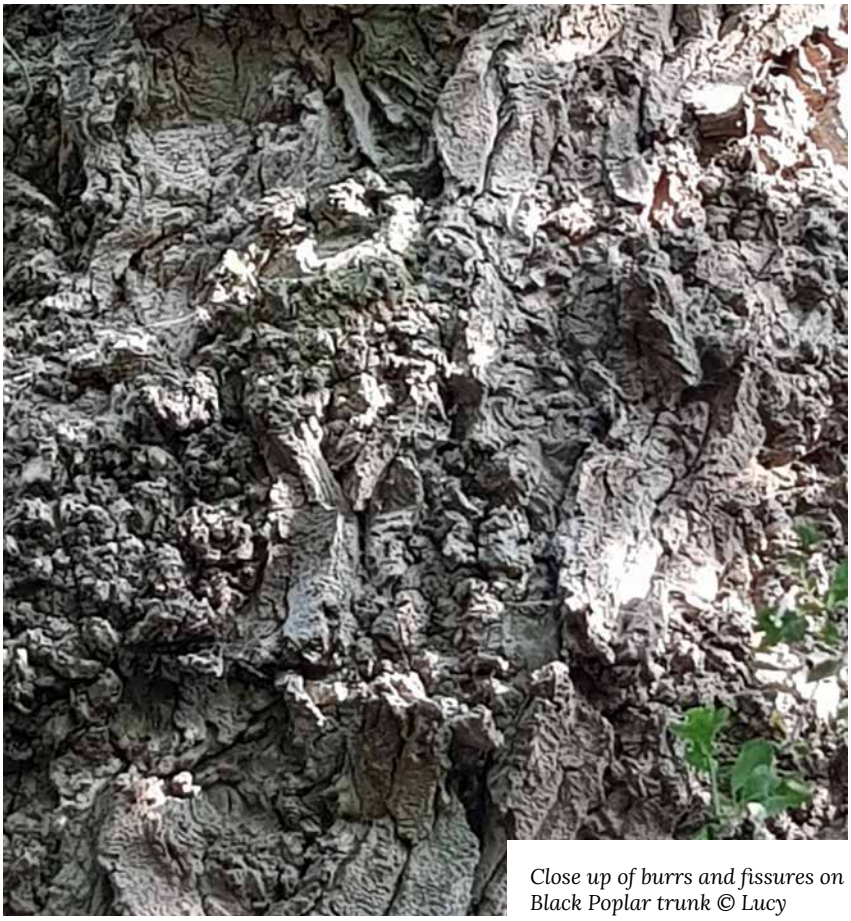
A carpet of white fluffy seedheads under a female tree © Lucy

butts and stable partitions. A batch of arrows aboard the Tudor ship, 'Mary Rose' was found to be made of Black Poplar! Trees were often planted to indicate a parish or county boundary as their shape is so distinctive. The Black Poplar has been an integral part of our culture for centuries, but as practices changed, the timber became less useful and it is now one of the UK's rarest trees with fewer than 8,000 known mature specimens, the majority of which are males. Suffolk is proud to be a stronghold for Black Poplars, with about 430 specimens recorded.

Black Poplars grow naturally in floodplain woodland, where the seeds can fall into mud which must remain moist from June until October so the seedling can get established. With the loss of UK flood plains to clearance by Neolithic folk and draining for agriculture and development, the species is no longer able to germinate seeds. Fortunately, saplings will readily grow from cuttings, which led to farm workers in the 1600s and 1700s planting them for the next generation, often by farm ponds. It is likely that male trees were favoured as the female produces huge amounts of inconvenient fluffy seed. As Black Poplars are dioecious, male and female trees must be close enough for fertilization to take place. Isolated trees now occur in wet meadows and river valleys, alongside streams, ditches and farm ponds, and in hedgerows. Through DNA work, the Forestry Commission has identified that the low diversity British population is derived from southeastern European trees which colonised Britain after the last glacial period.

The Cheshire Seedlings Story

Edgar Milne-Redhead (1906-1996), an eminent botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew for over 40 years and president of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI), moved to Suffolk in 1971. Work to conserve Black Poplars in the county shot to prominence when he initiated the nationwide BSBI Black Poplar survey from 1973 to 1988. Hoping to re-establish Black Poplars across Suffolk, unbeknown to many he arranged to have seed collected from a female tree growing next to a male tree at a marl pit in Cheshire, the only site in Britain known at the time where trees of both sexes grew close enough together to produce abundant fertile seed with no risk of contamination from nearby hybrids. Eric Rogers of the Forestry Commission in Thetford agreed to grow the seeds on. In 1979, saplings were planted out at Sturminster Newton in Dorset and also donated to Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) and planted on their reserves, eight of which still survive, as shown in the table overleaf.



Close up of burrs and fissures on Black Poplar trunk © Lucy

SWT Site	Number of seedlings planted	Male or female	Surviving
Brecks (Pashford Poors and Wangford Carr)	2	Unknown	No
Bromeswell Green	1	M	Yes
Hen Reedbeds	2	Both M	Yes
Carlton Marshes	2	Both M	Yes
Cornard Mere	2	One F, one M	Yes
Redgrave & Lopham Fen	1	M	Yes

Black Poplar enthusiasts have carried this early conservation work forward. Peter Webb (Suffolk County Council) and Peter Ennis (Dedham Vale and Stour Valley project) planted native Black Poplar saplings throughout the Suffolk countryside over three decades. Sue Hooton, Black Poplar County Recorder and chair of Suffolk Black Poplar Group until 2012, has worked tirelessly over the past 25 years to maintain a register of existing mature trees in Suffolk, and has distributed true native Black Poplar saplings to appropriate sites throughout the county, supported by **Suffolk Naturalists' Society**. To quote the Woodland Trust '*Right tree, right place, right reason*'.

In the meantime, DNA analysis has improved significantly and can now distinguish hybrid Black Poplars from non-hybrid trees, providing an important conservation tool. In the 1990s, there were only six known clone types in Suffolk, five male and one female and by 1998, three quarters of our Black Poplars were male (364 trees), most of which were Clone Number 25. Analysis of leaf samples from the surviving SWT "Cheshire Seedling" trees in 2010 by Forest Research showed they were all brand new clone types (five males and four females) and today Suffolk is host to 14 different genotypes. There are currently 33 known sites for female Black Poplars in Suffolk, all on the east coast, mainly in the Framlingham area, except for one in the Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds. Suffolk holds almost half of the clones identified nationally, so the aim now is to conserve this unique genetic material. This is being achieved by growing on cuttings from DNA tested material in Black Poplar clone banks and planting them out in suitable locations. These clone banks, including **Suffolk Tree Warden's Network** one at **Nowton Park Nursery,** which supports people with learning disabilities and autism, the **Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley**, are ensuring that Suffolk's valuable genetic resource for this rare tree is conserved and utilised to ensure a future for this rare native tree.

Typical massive trunk of Black Poplar with burrs and fissures © Gen Broad

Conservation of Suffolk's Black Poplars has now been taken on enthusiastically by Suffolk Tree Warden's Network, which is coordinating a survey of all existing Native Black Poplars recorded in the **Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service** (SBIS) database, supporting the clone

banks at Nowton Park Nursery and Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley, searching for unrecorded trees and identifying suitable new wetland planting sites for many Black Poplar saplings of all Suffolk's clone types.

Many landowners welcome Black Poplars growing on their land, in particular because they have great value for wildlife, especially for insects, such as the poplar hawk moth, and provide nest sites for owls and roost sites for bats. One Private Nature Reserve owner who recently planted young saplings, said: "*Letting nature lead across our lowland meadows has meant stepping back — restoring with minimal intervention. Along the beck, where alder, willow and ash pepper its banks, the planting of black poplar felt both fitting and necessary — ecologically and culturally. Being introduced to Sue Hooton, a leading expert, ensured we planted only pure-bred saplings, preserving the genetic integrity vital to this species' recovery and upholding our core principle of remaining true to the character of the meadows. More than extraordinary hosts to so many species, these rare trees are living echoes of our landscape's past, and are a quiet investment in its future — particularly in the face of climate change, with their resilience to flooding and disease. For me, they embody our commitment to authenticity and integrity: restoration not just of a habitat, but of meaning and deep-rooted belonging.*"

Leaving the calm, elegant Black Poplar and the ancient wetland meadows reluctantly, we reflect that Edgar Milne-Redhead would, no doubt, be pleased with progress over the past few years, but would be urging us to greater conservation efforts, towards a Suffolk countryside in which this magnificent species will once again dominate the skyline with majestic beauty and grace.

Next steps

Many of the mature Black Poplars in the Suffolk register have not been checked over the past 30/40 years to see if they are still standing. If you're keen to help record these trees to bring the SBIS register up to date, please contact David Appleton at the **Suffolk Tree Wardens Network** or via **SWT Discover Native Black Poplars**. This important conservation work supports the SBIS dataset distributed to all of Suffolk's Local Planning Authorities.

A Black Poplar dominates the hedgerow in early summer, leaning in a characteristic stance © Gen Broad

Solving Orchard Mysteries:
The FruitID DNA Fingerprinting Scheme

Ever wondered about that old apple tree at the bottom of the garden, or a lone tree in a hedgerow bearing delicious fruit you can't identify? For centuries, the names of countless local fruit varieties have been lost to time. Now, modern science offers a remarkable way to uncover their identity.

The FruitID DNA Fingerprinting Scheme, run by Paul Read of the Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group (STOG), provides a fascinating opportunity to solve these fruity enigmas.

What is the FruitID Scheme?

For the past nine years, the FruitID scheme has allowed anyone in the UK to submit leaf samples from their mystery apple, pear, or cherry trees for DNA analysis. The 2025 sampling period is over, however, the scheme will run again in 2026.

Your tree's unique genetic fingerprint is compared against a vast international database of nearly 9,000 known cultivars. If a match is found, your tree's true identity is revealed. If not, you may have discovered something truly special: a unique seedling, a potential new variety that, if its fruit is good enough, could be officially named and propagated.

A Suffolk Success Story

Members of the Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group have enthusiastically used the service to identify mystery apples from all corners of the county – from forgotten orchard trees to landscape plantings along the A143 from the 1980s. These were trees whose fruit was too good to ignore but had stumped even the experts at local Apple Days.

This detective work has given names to a host of unique Suffolk seedlings. The county's 'seaside apples' now have certified names like Dunwich Heath, Thorpeness, Walberswick Wonder, and Shingle Street. Similarly, excellent old garden varieties whose names were lost have been christened Langton Green and Suffolk Stiles Pippin. All of these are now being given a new

Apple Day © Food Museum, Stowmarket

lease of life, propagated at STOG's grafting and budding courses.

How Does It Work? The Practical Steps

While the science might sound complex, getting involved is remarkably straightforward. The entire process is managed by Peter Laws through the FruitID website.

1. **Request a Kit in 2026:** Email Peter Laws via the FruitID website to register your interest. He will send you specially numbered leaf bags.
2. **Collect Your Sample:** In early summer, simply collect fresh leaves from your chosen tree and place them in the bag.
3. **Post Your Sample:** Mail the bag to East Malling Research (EMR).
4. **Await the Results:** The leaves are cold-stored before undergoing analysis. Peter will email you the results the following November or December, with an invoice from EMR to follow.

The Science Behind the Search

At the lab, DNA is extracted from the leaves. This genetic material is then analysed to identify the unique values at 12 specific 'marker' sites on the DNA molecule. These values create a genetic profile known as a Simple Sequence Repeat (SSR) – a definitive fingerprint for that individual tree. This fingerprint is then cross-referenced with the database to search for a match.

It's important to note that this technique identifies a specific cultivar (a clonal individual), not its parent species. Because cultivated apples, pears, and cherries are all propagated vegetatively (by grafting or cuttings) from a single parent tree, they are all genetically identical clones. This makes DNA fingerprinting the ideal tool for telling a 'Bramley's Seedling' from a 'Cox's Orange Pippin', but not for confirming if a tree is a wild crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*).

What Do Your Results Mean?

- **A Perfect Match:** Your report will confirm the name of the known cultivar your tree matches with. Mystery solved!
- **A Unique Discovery:** If no match is found, your tree is likely a seedling – a one-of-a-kind individual. If the fruit is worthwhile, this is your chance to make history! You can propose a new name for your discovery. Each year, a specialist team, including Dr Matt Ordidge (curator of the National Fruit Collection) and Peter Laws, meet at the University of Reading to certify new names, officially adding them to the national database.

Before You Spend Your Money: A Word of Advice

DNA testing is a powerful tool, but it's always worth seeking a human opinion first. Before sending a sample, I highly recommend showing at least five examples of the fruit to an expert at a local Apple Day. A seasoned identifier may recognise it straight away, and any good expert will have the confidence to say when they simply don't know.

Ready to Solve Your Mystery?

- Visit www.fruitid.com.
- Click on HELP in the top right corner.
- Read the '2025 DNA Scheme' document for full details.
- To apply, open 'Sample Bag Request'.
- **The deadline for this year has passed, however the scheme will open again in the spring/ early summer of 2026, so add a reminder to your calendar!**.

To see some of the scheme's stars, visit the Food Museum at Stowmarket's Apple Day on 25th October 2025, where many of the newly named Suffolk varieties will be on display alongside over 100 other cultivars.

© Julian Dowse/Natural England

ALL IN A FLAP:
THE CONSEQUENCES OF BARN RENOVATIONS ON OUR NATIVE WILDLIFE

Amber Hanys, Suffolk Owl Sanctuary

True to their name, barn owls are closely associated with agricultural buildings. They rely heavily on barns and similar structures for shelter and breeding. The high rafters, secluded corners, and minimal disturbance often found in barns make them ideal for nesting. These locations also offer abundant hunting opportunities, as stored food and livestock attract rodents - the owls' primary prey.

However, with the growing trend of barn conversions and renovations, there is increasing risk to these birds. Invasive work on potential nesting sites should only be carried out outside the breeding season, which typically runs from March to August. If urgent work cannot be delayed, a thorough ecological survey is essential to confirm whether barn owls, or other protected wildlife, are present.

Unfortunately, we've recently seen the consequences of neglecting these precautions. Three juvenile barn owls, all with their eyes still closed and only a few days old, were brought to us after their nest was accidentally destroyed during barn renovations. The presence of the owls had not been known and after receiving a call for advice, we determined that it wasn't safe to return them to the site. They were transferred to Suffolk Owl Sanctuary for rehabilitation.

If the young owls in our care survive and develop well, they will eventually be transferred to one of our hack pens, specially designed aviary-like enclosures that allow for a soft release into the wild. These pens provide a controlled environment where the owlets can build strength, learn to hunt, and gain the skills they need to survive independently. Located in remote areas to reduce human disturbance, the pens are designed to allow small rodents to enter naturally, but we also provide food every few days.

The owls will be monitored via trail cameras to track their progress. When they are ready, the door of the hack pen will be opened, giving them the freedom to leave while still having the option to return. Supplementary food will continue to be provided for a period after release, and the area will be monitored closely to ensure the birds make a successful transition to life in the wild.

Barn owls aren't the only wildlife affected by barn renovations. Bats also frequently roost in barns, making use of natural cracks, crevices, and warm spaces. Bats are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, which makes it illegal to intentionally kill, injure, or disturb them, or to damage their roosts, even if the animals are not currently present.

All wild birds in the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it illegal to intentionally kill, injure, or take them. Among these, barn owls receive extra protection as they are listed under Schedule 1 of the Act. This means their nests, eggs, and young are also safeguarded, along with the buildings or trees they occupy during the nesting period.

Suffolk's High-Tech Raptors:

The Peregrines of Adastral Park

Peregrine © Jon Nelson, Flickr

High above the cutting-edge innovation at BT's Adastral Park in Martlesham, a more traditional form of high-speed aerial prowess is captivating Suffolk's bird lovers. A resident pair of peregrine falcons, the fastest animals on the planet, has turned the site's iconic radio tower into their own personal skyscraper, successfully raising chicks and becoming a celebrated local wildlife success story.

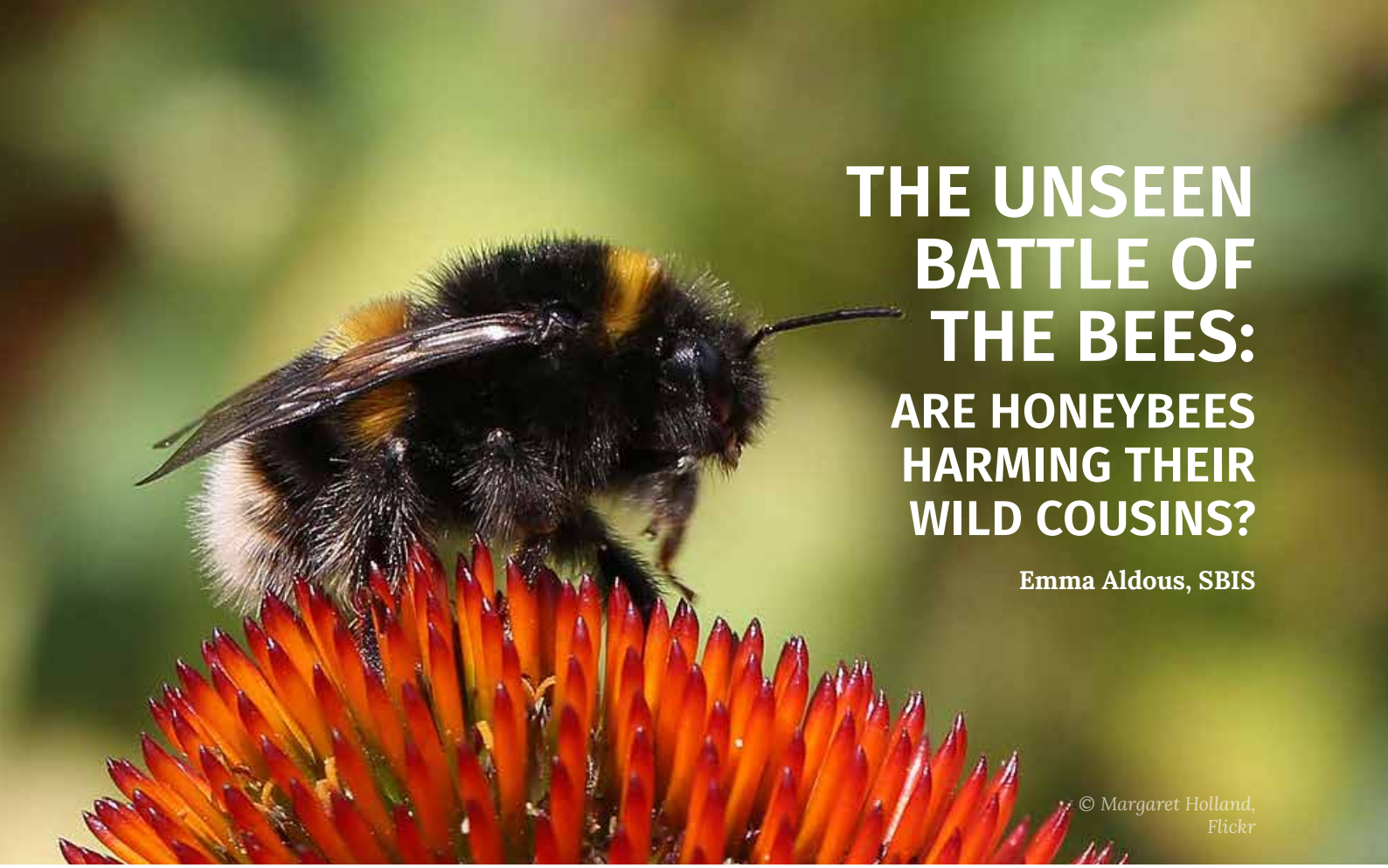
These magnificent birds of prey have become a fixture at the research and technology campus since 2019, when BT, in a proactive conservation effort with the Hawk and Owl Trust, installed a specially designed nest box on the lofty Pegasus Tower. The initiative proved an immediate success, with the falcons taking up residence and raising their first brood of three chicks that same year.

The appeal of Adastral Park for these formidable hunters is clear. The tower provides a safe, elevated nesting site that mimics the cliff ledges they would naturally favour, offering a commanding view of the surrounding landscape and a prime vantage point for hunting. Their diet consists primarily of other birds, which they catch in spectacular high-speed dives, or 'stoops', that can exceed 200 miles per hour.

In the initial years following their arrival, the peregrine pair consistently delighted observers, with further successful broods recorded in 2020 and 2021. This breeding success is a significant contributor to the resurgence of peregrine falcons in Suffolk. The falcons have made a remarkable comeback after suffering severe declines in the mid-20th century due to the use of pesticides. The recovery has been bolstered by the legal protection of the birds and their nests, as well as the proactive installation of urban nesting sites, such as the one at Adastral Park and others in locations like under the Orwell Bridge.

This year has been another successful one for the Adastral Park peregrines, with the pair successfully hatching and rearing two chicks. You can watch the feathered family on the live webcam: **Adastral Park Peregrine Webcam**.

The peregrines of Adastral Park serve as a powerful symbol of how technology and nature can coexist. As innovators on the ground work to shape our digital future, these ancient hunters continue their wild and thrilling existence in the Suffolk skies above, a welcome and dramatic addition to the county's rich biodiversity.



THE UNSEEN BATTLE OF THE BEES:

ARE HONEYBEES HARMING THEIR WILD COUSINS?

Emma Aldous, SBIS

For many of us, the honeybee is a beloved symbol of nature's industry. From their intricate hives to the golden honey they produce, we see them as diligent, essential pollinators. In recent years, concerns over bee populations have led to a surge in well-meaning conservation efforts, with many people taking up beekeeping or installing hives in gardens, city rooftops, and even our most treasured nature reserves. But what if our efforts to help one type of bee are inadvertently causing significant harm to others?

A study published in the journal *Current Biology* provides the most conclusive evidence to date of a hidden conflict in the world of pollinators: a fierce competition for food between managed honeybees and their wild relatives, with devastating consequences for the latter. By turning a small, protected Italian island into a unique "open-air laboratory," scientists have painted a stark picture of what happens when honeybee populations become too dense. The results suggest a strong link between the presence of managed honeybees and a dramatic, ongoing decline in wild bee numbers.

An Island Experiment

To untangle the complex relationship between honeybees and wild bees, researchers needed a controlled environment, free from the myriad of variables such as pesticides and habitat loss that complicate studies on the mainland. They found the perfect location in Giannutri, a tiny, 2.6 km² island in the Tuscan Archipelago National Park. Crucially, managed honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) were only introduced to the island for beekeeping purposes in 2018, giving scientists a rare opportunity to witness the early stages of their impact on the native ecosystem.

The island's small size, which is less than the typical foraging range of a honeybee, meant that the 18 hives located there influenced the entire island ecosystem. This, combined with the absence of feral honeybee colonies, allowed the research team to perform a truly remarkable experiment: for periods of time, they could effectively remove the *entire* honeybee population from the island.

Over a period of three years, from 2022 to 2024, the scientists conducted a series of manipulative tests. On selected days, they closed the entrances to all 18 honeybee hives before sunrise, keeping them shut for 11 hours during the peak foraging period for wild bees. These "honeybee-free" days were then compared with days when the hives were left open. The team meticulously measured changes in flower resources, wild bee behaviour, and, most critically, tracked the long-term population trends of the island's most common wild bees: the buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) and a solitary bee, *Anthophora dispar*.

A Tale of Three Findings

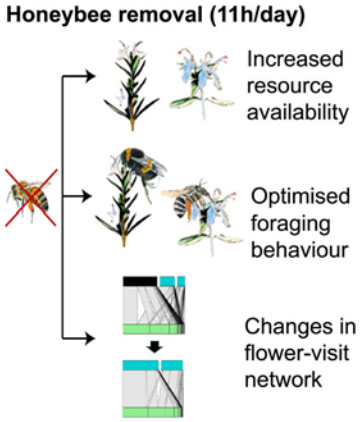
The results of the four-year study were both clear and alarming, providing a comprehensive chain of evidence for what ecologists call "exploitative trophic competition" – in simpler terms, a food heist.

1. THE FOOD VANISHES

The first major finding was just how drastically the honeybees were depleting the available food. On days when the honeybee hives were closed, the amount of nectar

in the flowers most visited by pollinators shot up by an average of 60%. Pollen availability also saw a significant boost of around 30%. This demonstrates that the sheer density of managed honeybees – around 7 hives per square kilometre, higher than the European average – was creating a food shortage. Even a temporary, 11-hour removal of the honeybees was enough for the island's flowers to replenish their stocks, highlighting the intense pressure these managed colonies exert on floral resources.

2. WILD BEES ARE FORCED TO CHANGE THEIR WAYS

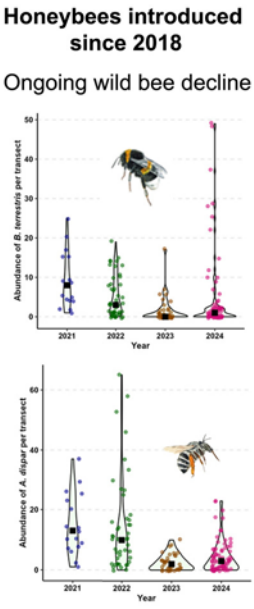


With more food available on honeybee-free days, the island's wild bees immediately changed their behaviour. Both bees species became more efficient and effective foragers. Scientists observed that the wild bees spent more time drinking from each individual flower, a key indicator that they were getting a larger, more rewarding drink of nectar. On days with honeybee competition, they were forced to spend less time at each flower, expending more energy flying between blooms for a smaller reward.

The bumblebees also became better at finding pollen, with the time taken between pollen collection events shortening when they didn't have to compete with honeybees. Furthermore, the wild bees altered their daily schedules. When honeybees were active, native bees were forced to shift their foraging activity to the very early hours of the morning, seemingly in an effort to avoid the midday rush hour when the honeybees dominated the flowers. This constant struggle for resources forces wild bees to work harder and less efficiently, impacting their energy budgets and overall health.

3. THE POPULATION CRASH

While the behavioural changes are significant, the most shocking discovery came from the long-term monitoring data. Over the four years of the study, from 2021 to 2024, the populations of both *Anthophora dispar* and *Bombus terrestris* plummeted. The median number of individuals counted per transect fell by an astonishing 77% for the solitary bee and 87% for the bumblebee.



This catastrophic decline provides the crucial, and previously elusive, link between the daily competition for food and the long-term survival of wild bee populations. The researchers carefully considered other potential causes. Pesticides are not used on the protected island, and while the climate is changing, there were no significant trends in temperature or rainfall during the bees' active period that could account for such a drastic drop. The evidence points overwhelmingly towards the introduction of high-density honeybee hives as the primary driver of this wild bee decline.

A Warning for Britain

While this study was conducted on a small Mediterranean island, its findings carry a powerful and universal message, particularly for a nation of nature lovers like Britain. The popularity of beekeeping has soared, and hives are often placed in conservation areas and national parks with the best of intentions. However, this research shows that we must be far more cautious.

Honeybees are essentially managed livestock; they are not endangered and their numbers are increasing globally. In contrast, many of our native wild pollinators, from the garden bumblebee to the red mason bee, are facing serious declines. These wild species are often more effective pollinators for native plants and certain crops, and their diversity is essential for a healthy, resilient ecosystem.

The conclusion is not that honeybees are villains or that beekeeping is inherently bad. The issue is one of density and context. Flooding an area with a very high number of managed honeybees creates an unnaturally competitive environment that can overwhelm and ultimately eliminate local wild pollinator populations.

The work on Giannutri is a call for a more nuanced and scientific approach to conservation. It underscores the urgent need for rigorous ecological assessments *before* introducing apiaries into sensitive environments. We must balance our appreciation for the honeybee with our responsibility to protect the full, rich diversity of our native pollinators. They may not give us honey, but the vital pollination services they provide are truly priceless.

Reference:
Pasquali, L., Bruschini, C., Benetello, F., et al (2025). Island-wide removal of honeybees reveals exploitative trophic competition with strongly declining wild bee populations. *Current Biology*, 35(7), 1576-1590. e12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2025.02.048

Volunteers removing floating pennywort from the River Waveney

RIVER WAVENEY TRUST UPDATE

Martha Meek, Director, River Waveney Trust

The River Waveney Trust work across the Waveney Catchment with farmers, landowners and communities.

Floating Pennywort eradication

After many years it seems that floating pennywort is the lowest it has been since the start of the project, though still not eradicated, which is the aim. The addition of a volunteer trained in pesticide spraying has meant that we are more capable of dealing with tricky plants that have rooted into the banks. We have found that the pesticides usually take 2-3 weeks to take effect, but is a key way to prevent spread.

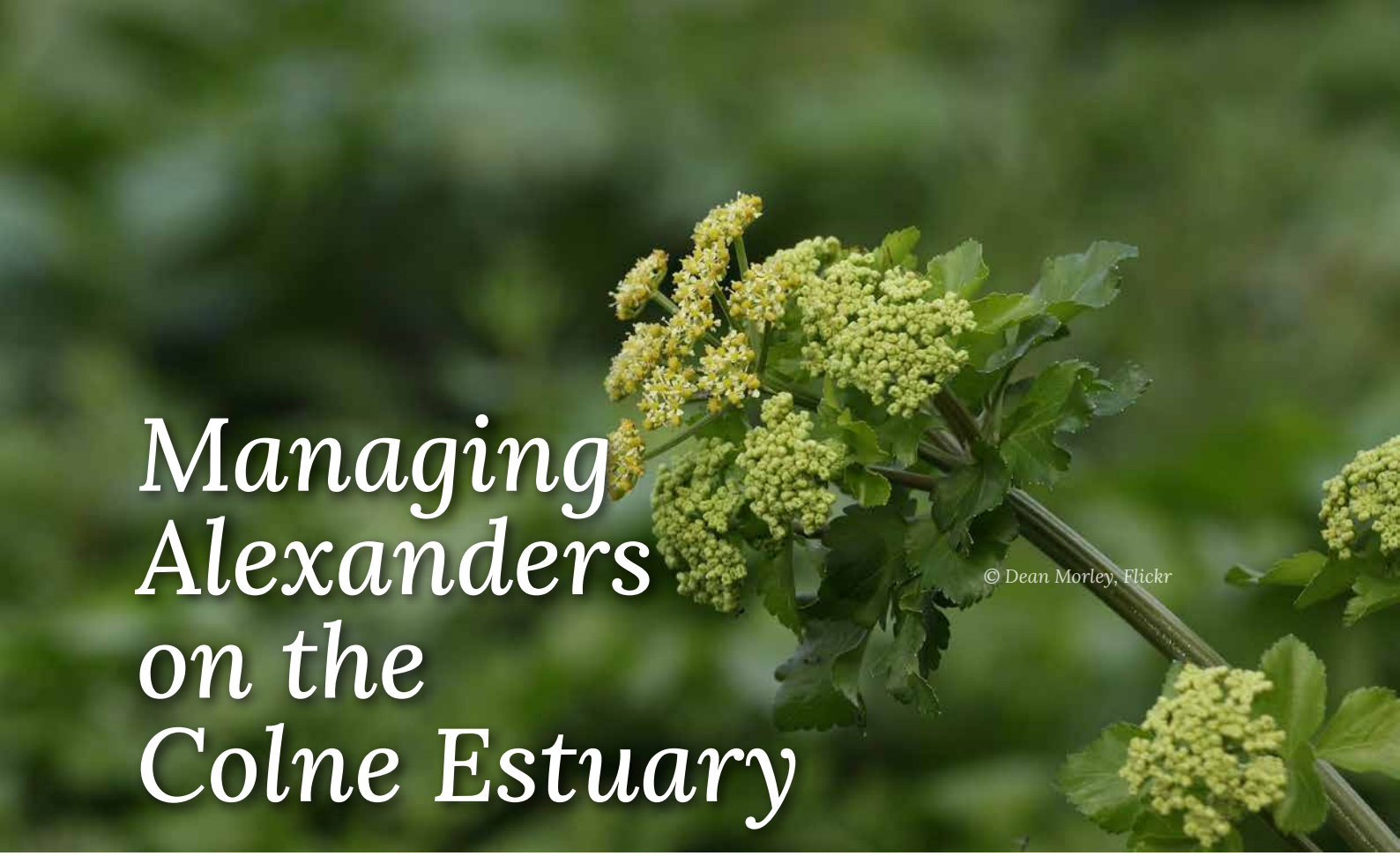
The volunteer group is in high spirits and very proud of what they have managed to accomplish over the last 3.5 years. The continued support and access granted by the local farming community has been invaluable in this success.

Community talk on Natural Flood Management

Natural Flood Management (NFM)

Our Natural Flood Management projects continue to develop, with both our DEFRA project focused around Diss, and wider catchment resilience work in the Waveney Catchment. Community engagement continues across 35+ parishes, including multiple site-visits, follow-up meetings and community events, with members of the local and wider communities, including residents, landowners, parish, district and county councillors. As we seek to further extend our community, stakeholder and landowner engagement, multiple sites are in the process of being modelled and developed for NFM schemes, increasing our communities' resilience in the face of future flooding events.

RIVER WAVENEY TRUST



Managing Alexanders on the Colne Estuary

© Dean Morley, Flickr

Trial Results from a Native Reseeding Approach

Bryony Craze, Biodiversity Officer in Essex/Suffolk FBG team, Environment Agency

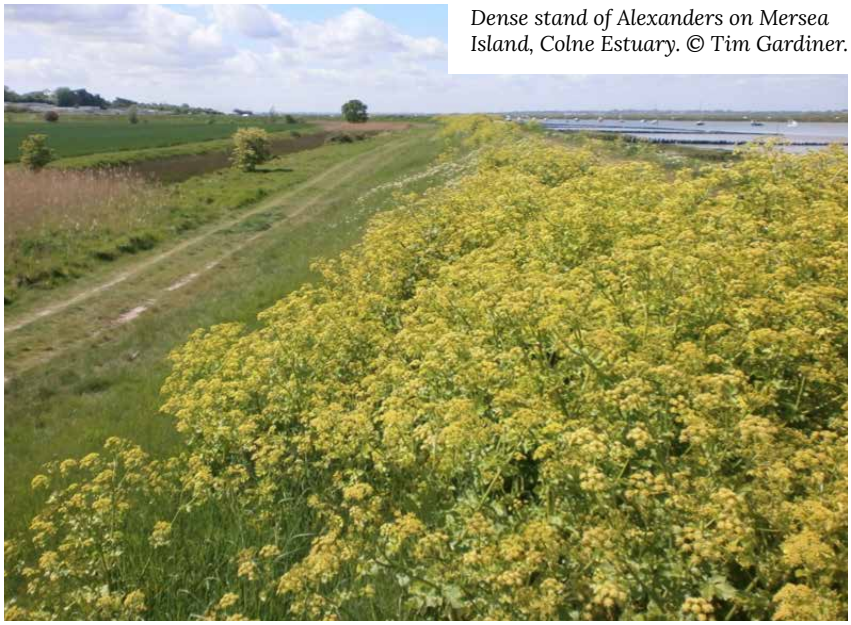
Although not currently listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Alexanders (Smyrnium olusatrum) is increasingly behaving invasively in many parts of southern England. Originally introduced by the Romans as a pot herb, the species is now frequently seen spreading along roadsides, grass verges, and into inland habitats. In coastal areas, its impact has become more pronounced, particularly in Essex.

Along the Colne Estuary, which is designated as a SSSI, SPA, and Ramsar site, Alexanders has become a dominant species on many Environment Agency-maintained sea walls. These coastal flood defences are vital for protecting low-lying communities, infrastructure, and sensitive habitats. However, Alexanders forms dense, tall monocultures that suppress native vegetation, displace rare plant species, and drastically reduce grassland diversity. When the plants die back in winter, they leave large patches of bare ground, especially on landward slopes, exposing the defences to potential erosion and structural risk if overtopped during storm surges.

Traditional management relies on a labour-intensive mowing regime between March and November, aimed at preventing seed set. This can be effective in the short term, but it is costly and labour intensive, and any missed cuts allow Alexanders to replenish its seed bank. Herbicide use is not permitted on designated sites, and previous crushing and herbicide trials elsewhere have shown limited effectiveness.

To explore alternative approaches, a trial was conducted in 2023 across seven Alexanders-dominant (95-100% coverage) sea wall sites on the Colne Estuary. The objective was to assess whether reseeding with native meadow species following

Alexanders plant – a robust, biennial plant with glossy, divided leaves and tall, ridged stems. It produces domed umbels of yellow-green flowers in spring, followed by distinctive black seeds (up to 3000 per plant) later in the season.



Dense stand of Alexanders on Mersea Island, Colne Estuary. © Tim Gardiner.

mowing could improve control outcomes and support restoration of native vegetation. Three treatments were implemented at each site:

- Mowing only
- Mowing and reseeding with Emorsgate EM2 meadow mix
- Mowing and reseeding with Emorsgate EM4 clay soil meadow mix

All sites were mown in late March, with a second mow in mid-May. Reseeding was carried out directly after the first cut, focusing on areas of bare or patchy ground. Both seed mixes were selected for their compatibility with sea wall soils and native plant assemblages.

The results of the trial showed a clear benefit from combining mowing with reseeding:

- Mowing alone achieved a 34% average reduction in Alexanders cover the following year.
- Mowing with reseeding reduced cover further, to ~49–50%.
- Early colonisation by native species was observed in reseeded plots, suggesting competitive suppression of Alexanders regrowth.

Variation in outcomes was observed between sites, likely due to local environmental differences such as slope gradient, aspect, and soil moisture.

Recommendations

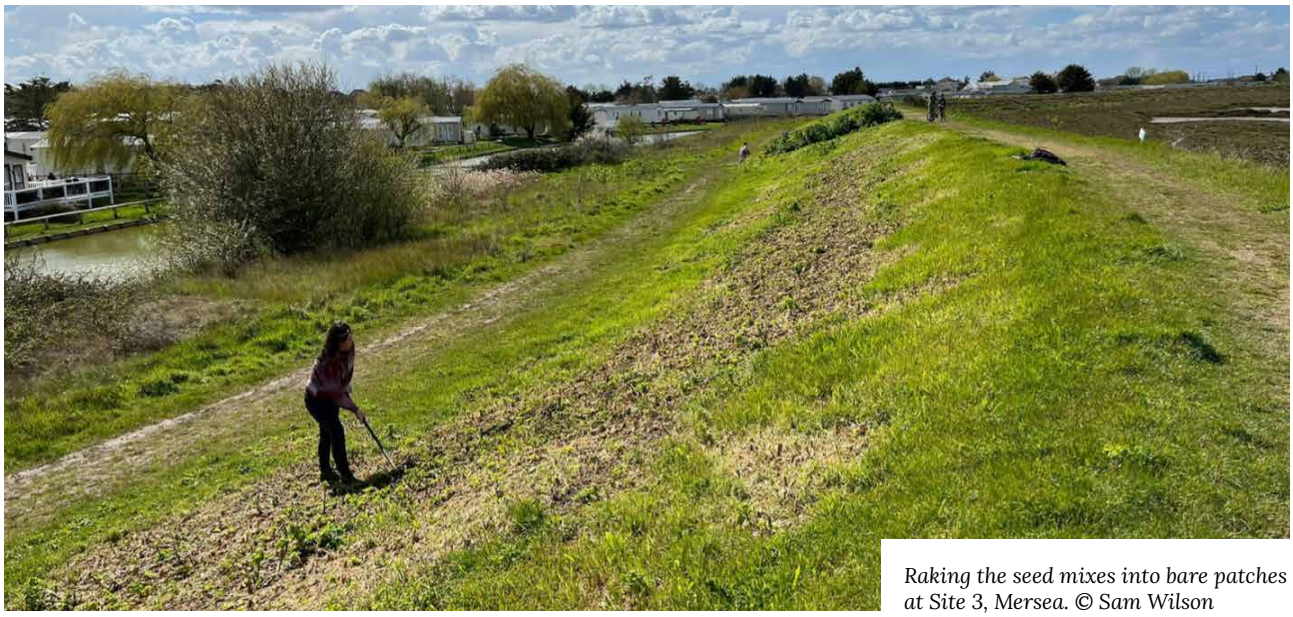
Based on the results of the trial, the following practices are recommended for Alexanders management on sea walls:

- Continued mowing in early spring (at least 2 cuts in March and May) to target flowering stems before seed set.
- Reseed freshly mown bare patches with a suitable native seed mix (e.g. EM2 or EM4) immediately after the first cut.
- Strim flowering heads on the upper seaward slope and around hard-to-reach structures where mechanical mowing is not feasible.

This combined approach offers a low-impact, herbicide-free strategy that not only suppresses Alexanders but also promotes biodiversity recovery in sea wall grasslands. These measures have been incorporated into the maintenance schedule for the Colne Estuary sea walls. Continued monitoring will be required to assess long-term establishment of native species and control of Alexanders regrowth.

Reference:

Craze, B. (2024) Assessing Native Reseeding and Mowing as Management Tools for Controlling Smyrnium olusatrum (Alexanders): An Experimental Study; MSc dissertation, University of Plymouth



Raking the seed mixes into bare patches at Site 3, Mersea. © Sam Wilson

© David Little, Flickr

Expansion of River Waveney Trust Citizen Science Program

in collaboration with the Broads Authority and Norwich University of the Arts

Martha Meek, Director, River Waveney Trust

The River Waveney Trust is thrilled to announce the expansion of its citizen science program, thanks to funding from the Water Restoration Fund (water company fines). To date numerous dedicated volunteers have collected over 500 water samples, meticulously analysing quality to tackle water quality challenges. This remarkable effort has laid a strong foundation for the next phase of the project, which will focus on the vibrant community of Bungay.

Community Engagement in Water Quality

Bungay's community is set to play a pivotal role in this initiative, actively participating in river health projects. Various stakeholders, including local residents, businesses, and environmental groups, are prioritizing water quality issues, demonstrating a collective commitment to preserving the river's health. This collaborative approach will be underpinned by the tried and tested community engagement model known as 'Integrated Local Delivery' (IDL). The understanding of the river catchment by those who inhabit, work, play, love and depend on it is a powerful resource. Ensuring that the community's voice is heard and their efforts are recognized will bring about positive change for the River.

Enhanced Water Sampling Efforts

The upcoming phase of the project aims to intensify water sampling efforts, providing a more comprehensive understanding of water quality changes. By working closely with local communities and organizations, the River Waveney Trust will address identified issues and implement effective solutions. This hands-on approach not only empowers the community but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the river's well-being.

Join the Movement

The River Waveney Trust invites everyone to join this exciting journey towards cleaner and healthier waters. Whether you're a seasoned volunteer or new to citizen science, your contribution is invaluable. Together, we can make a significant impact on the river's health and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

John Finlay, Citizen Science Coordinator for EA, quality checking River Waveney Trust Water Sampling volunteers.

For more information on how to get involved, contact us directly: **info@riverwaveneytrust.org**

Citizen Science project funded by the RPA/UK Government

Funded by UK Government


© Gill Moon

LANDOWNER HELP NEEDED TO BENEFIT NATURE

Tom Fairbrother, National Landscape

Can you help achieve ambitious targets for nature recovery in the Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape and the Dedham Vale National Landscape?

The National Landscape is working in partnership with landowners and organisations to achieve significant, and measurable, benefits for nature.

Ambitious targets have been set for each National Landscape and National Park by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for a range of targets covering the following:

- Restoring/creating wildlife rich habitats
- Increasing tree canopy and woodland cover
- Planting hedgerows
- Enabling natural regeneration
- Creating ponds and wetlands

We are looking for landowners/land managers to help us deliver the work to meet these targets. If you have land and want to improve its biodiversity potential or change the way it is used e.g. by planting trees or sowing a wildflower meadow, we would love to hear from you.

This would enable us to record your project, including it in demonstrating nature recovery across the National Landscape. In return we may be able to provide:

- Informal advice from experienced conservation staff
- Volunteer support to turn your vision for nature into reality
- Signposting towards further guidance and/or funding

For information please email **coastandheaths@suffolkandessex-NL.org.uk** or **dedhamvale@suffolkandessex-NL.org.uk** or you can phone 01394 445225.

Dedham Vale National Landscape & Stour Valley

Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape

View from the Verge

Tim Outlaw, Ecologist, Suffolk County Council

As we launch full-steam into the summer season, including a welcome return to a greater number of site visits to assess flora and fauna around the county, we find ourselves at full capacity and as busy as many of the invertebrates we aim to conserve.

Now is the time when we visit up to a third of our Roadside Nature Reserves (on a rolling triennial basis) to monitor the status of qualifying plants and identify ways to ensure their conservation. Sulphur clover and lesser calamint are carpeting various sites, with pyramidal and bee orchids, crested cow-wheat and stemless thistle all putting on a show. The dry spring this year has resulted in a poor showing of man orchids, but we will monitor this and hopefully a more traditional spell of April showers will allow them to bounce back next year; such is the nature of ecology sometimes.

We are currently in the early stages, in partnership with our Highways colleagues, district councils and others, of putting together a project where low-impact changes in management of our soft estates alongside our road network will cause immediate benefit to the county's biodiversity. Ensuring we can achieve this efficiently, without compromising health and safety, is our main aim. The extent of land, albeit often narrow strips and small patches, with potential for improvement in this project, is significant and will help us work towards our target of a 30% increase in biodiversity by 2030.

In addition to our scrutiny of planning applications and larger Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), we are undergoing our regular suite of monitoring visits to waste and mineral restoration sites around the county. All such developments must plan how they will restore their sites when they come to the end of their working lives. One of Suffolk County Council's responsibilities is to ensure that site owners implement the plans and correctly establish enhancements to biodiversity.

Lesser calamint on an RNR

Bee Orchid on an RNR

We were very fortunate recently to have the opportunity to visit Staverton Park and help with weed control for the next generation of mighty oaks that stand there, some of which are in excess of 700 years old. It was a privilege to wander amongst these venerable hulks who already had roots in the soil when the Magna Carta was signed.

We wish everyone a happy and sunny summer and always appreciate the care, consideration, and passion that the residents of Suffolk show for the extraordinary biodiversity of our county.

SCC Ecologists and colleagues working in the nursery at Staverton Park

BSBI – Botanical Skills Webinars

Recordings of the BSBI webinars are now available on their **YouTube channel**

Getting started with Flower Anatomy

Getting started with Plant Keys

An Introduction to Equisetum

Grasses and grassland habitats

Getting started with Plant Anatomy

Lepidoptera and Plants

Dryopteris in Northern Ireland

Beginners Grasses, Sedges & Rushes

Getting started with Cotoneasters

Field Studies Council Courses

- Discovering Garden Birds • Online • 22 Jul – 02 Sep • £20.00
- Everyday fungi: How it shapes our world • Webinar • 22 Jul • £10.00
- Further Your Suffolk Wildflower Skills • Flatford Mill • 31 Jul – 03 Aug • £320 – £490
- Birdwatching • Flatford Mill • 1 – 3 Aug • £225 – £310
- Seal Field Skills • Online • 1 Aug – 12 Sep • £60.00
- Ecology, Surveying and Conservation of Dormice • Flatford Mill • 9 –10 Aug • £250 – £470
- Discovering Trees • Online • 13 Aug – 24 Sep • £20.00
- Discovering Ferns • Online • 21 Aug – 25 Sep • £20.00
- Discovering UK Otters • Online • 26 Aug – 30 Sep • £45.00
- Botanical Anatomy • Online • 1 Sep – 6 Oct • £60.00
- Introduction to Mustelids • Online • 4 Sep – 9 Oct • £20.00
- Discovering UK Seals • Online • 12 Sep – 24 Oct • £20.00
- Discovering Marine Ecology • Online • 17 Sep – 29 Oct • £40.00
- Discovering Tracks and Signs • Online • 18 Sep – 16 Oct • £30.00
- Discovering Reptiles • Online • 24 Sep – 29 Oct • £20.00
- Autumn Fungi • Flatford Mill • 27 – 28 Sep • £130 – £350
- Bee Conservation • Online • 29 Sep – 10 Nov • £12.50
- Discovering Bryophytes • Online • 6 Oct – 17 Nov • £40.00
- Managing Citizen Science Networks • Webinar • 7 Oct • £10.00
- Fungi Field Skills • Online • 7 Oct – 4 Nov • £30.00
- Birdwatching • Flatford Mill • 10 – 12 Oct • £225 – £310

Natural History Courses
Covering all aspects of the natural world for beginners, enthusiasts, volunteer recorders and professionals.
www.field-studies-council.org/fsc-natural-history-courses

Professional Development for Ecologists and Conservationists
An extensive range of courses that cater to a range of career levels, providing wildlife identification and surveying courses in many subjects.
www.field-studies-council.org/biodiversity/professional-development

Image: Nigma walckenaeri by John Brooks/Flickr

WEBINARS AND TRAINING

Suffolk Wildlife Trust

- Nature walk at Westleton Heath • 20 Jul • Westleton Heath
- Bird Ringing Demo • 20 Jul • Trimley Marshes
- Guided monthly walk: Summer reptiles • 27 Jul • Foxburrow
- Twilight Safari • 15 Aug • Lackford Lakes
- Wild Forage Cocktails • 16 Aug • Holywells Park, Ipswich
- Identifying trees in Summer • 23 Aug • Bradfield Woods
- Antlions and more • 24 Aug • Foxburrow
- Bat Walk • 4 Sep • Martlesham Wilds
- Moth Trap at Fen Meadow • 6 Sep • Fen Meadow
- Evening bat walk • 12 Sep • Foxburrow
- Workshop: Summer photography • 13 Sep • Lackford Lakes
- Talk: Big cats around the globe. • 18 Sep • Southwold Arts Centre
- Nighttime Biofluorescence walk • 19 Sep • Lackford Lakes
- Talk: Red deer at Minsmere by Steve Everett • 24 Sep • Stowmarket
- Bat Detectives Evening • 25 Sep • Carlton Marshes
- Autumn on the Marshes Photography Course • 4 Oct • Carlton Marshes
- **Wildlife Live Webinar – Historical Ecology • 1 Oct • Online**
- Talk; Butterflies of the Cambridgeshire chalk • 8 Oct • Haverhill
- Discovering the secret world of lichens • 11 Oct • Carlton Marshes
- **Wildlife Live Webinar – On the Verge • 14 Oct • Online**
- Introduction to fungi ID • 23 Oct • Bradfield Woods
- Finding fungi • 26 Oct • Foxburrow
- **Wildlife Live Webinar – Symbiosis • 28 Oct • Online**
- Talk: Forestry England and conservation in Thetford Forest • 12 Nov • East Town Park Centre, Haverhill
- **Wildlife Live Webinar – Lichens • 13 Nov • Online**

Details of all SWT events:
https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events

Biological Recording Company

- British Springtails: How Many Species Really Are There? • 15 Jul
- Mesophotic Coral Ecosystems: Reefs From the Twilight Zone • 5 Aug
- Identifying Ferns & Allies • 12 Aug
- Networking Nutrients: Nutrients as a Driver of Invertebrate Interactions • 19 Aug
- Smarter Surveying: Digital Solutions for UKHab and BNG Surveys • 4 Sept
- The Bizarre Biology of Bdelloid Rotifers • 23 Sept
- Surveying For Dragonflies • 23 Sept
- Seagrass Conservation: • 30 Sept
- Surveying For Pollinators • 2 Oct
- Ferns of the UK: Spleenworts • 14 Oct
- More Moths Please! Breeding and Reintroducing the Dark Bordered Beauty • 4 Nov
- Crayfish 3: Conservation and Management • 11 Nov

Details of all BRC events:
www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-biological-recording-company-35982868173

The Species Recovery Trust

Online courses

- Around Britain in 25 Grasses • 1 Sep
- Around Britain in 30 Bryophytes • 8 Sep
- Botany for surveyors - Part 1 • 10 Sep
- Around Britain in 20 Ferns & their Allies • 15 Sept
- Botany for surveyors - Part 2 • 17 Sep
- Around Britain in 20 Rushes • 22 Sept
- Botany for surveyors - Part 3 • 24 Sep
- Grasses Part Two • 6 Oct
- How to Survey and Assess Hedgerows using the Hedgerow Regulations • 29 Sep
- Great Crested Newts - Ecology, Conservation and Survey • 7 Oct
- Badger Ecology, Survey and Mitigation • 15 Oct
- Heathlands and Acid Grassland - Species and Habitat Survey • 17 Oct
- Aquatic Plant ID • 20 Oct
- Woodlands - Botanical Survey • 3 Nov

Details of all SRT courses:
www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-species-recovery-trust-17335753729

The Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers

brecks.org/events/

London Natural History Society

www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/london-natural-history-society-30790245484

Royal Entomological Society

https://www.royensoc.co.uk/events

National Biodiversity Network

https://nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/upcoming-events