



Report for The Waldringfield Parish Council AGM April 2014

The group continues to thrive with a steady membership of about forty members and there is a good attendance at business meetings. The group's bi-monthly talks have continued to be well attended during 2013 - 2014 usually with a better turnout when there is a subject of local interest such as Nick Mason's talk on the River Deben's rich and varied wildlife or when there is a local resident speaking such as Peter Maddison's talk on the wildlife of Borneo and this year's talk on Suffolk Butterflies. Nevertheless, the group would benefit by extending its membership by finding ways of involving a wider group of people in its wildlife activities or by extending the range of its projects in some way. This may be something for the group to work on in the future to enable the group to improve the way it can meet one of the terms of its reference: 'to encourage a greater interest in and knowledge and love of wildlife in the local community.'

Talks by Wildlife Experts in 2013 by home and visiting wildlife enthusiasts included:

Nick Mason, the SWT volunteer warden for Sutton Heath who gave us a detailed talk on the varied wildlife of the River Deben. Nick regularly takes part in the Wetlands Bird Survey, once a month from September to April. He is one of nine volunteers who walk sections of the river at high tide counting waders, ducks and geese etc. He also edits the Suffolk Bird Report and was able to tell us that, in recent years, there are fewer Goldeneye and Snipe but more Avocets (many of which come over from Holland), Marsh Harriers, Little Egrets and Cetti's Warblers. There are two heronries, where Grey Herons nest, one at the Rocks and one at the Tips. Nick then summarised the wildlife of various habitats along the river, including the fresh water habitats as well as the salt marsh, grazing marshes, river walls, dykes, reed beds as well as the sandy beaches at Bawdsey reinforcing for us what a special habitat the river Deben and its environment is for wildlife.

A marvellous talk followed by the Norfolk Ant recorder Doreen Wells who was most enthusiastic about a subject that most of us prefer to shy away from. We were introduced to many types of ants and struggled with names such as *Lasius fuliginosus* that live in old Scots Pines and the reasons why we should be grateful to the ant as they are the chief predators of insects and spiders which damage our crops and gardens. We also learnt that many species such as the Silver Studded Butterfly cannot survive without the ant.

In May, some of our group members took advantage of a guided tour of Trimley Marshes by the well informed warden Andrew Excell and where we were given the special privilege of driving direct to the site. Sally Redfern kindly provided a written account of the birdlife observed there.



In June we had a delightful talk by Peter Oliff who told his story of how he has developed a wildflower meadow close to Kingston Field in Woodbridge. Peter described the two approaches he took, firstly after preparing the land which was back breaking work he planted a seed mix which consisted of 80% grass and 20% wildflower seed followed later in 2012 by a predominantly wildflower seed mix and no grasses which gave a longer display through to October. We learnt that creating a Wildflower meadow as a habitat for wildlife was not a soft option but that once established was a joy to see.

In June, a group of members met to tour the private gardens of Priors Oak enjoying the hospitality of the owner Trudy Willis and her very competent gardener Paul from whom we learnt a lot about the plants and planting combinations to benefit wildlife. We also enjoyed lovely refreshments in the way of homemade cake. The visit was so good that some of the members made a second visit during the summer months.

Linda Wilkins and Sally Redfern continued to attend the meetings of the DEP Environment, Landscape, and Archaeology Committee. The WWG are the only voluntary community group represented on this group so far and the WWG's observations of the wildlife species and habitat along the Waldringfield stretches have helped in a modest way to inform the committee's broad policy papers and reports along with contributions from key agencies such as Natural England, The SWT, RSPB and the Environment Agency. Arrangements for public consultation of the final draft document of the DEP has been deferred until the summer 20154 but an update public meeting took place in November 2013 at the Waldringfield Village Hall.

Neil Winship and Jon Wilkins have kept the group members informed, by attending two of the group's business meetings, of the proposals for the river walls of the River Deben outlined in Andrew Hawes report, including the stretch of the river wall upstream of Waldringfield which is graded as one which is in very poor condition and at serious risk of breaching in surge conditions and which has deteriorated further due to the December 2013 tidal surge.

We did not introduce any new projects in 2013 into the group's activities but we have continued to support and develop existing ones such as the Barn Owl, Swift and Spotted Flycatcher SWT projects. Sadly, for the Barn Owl the 2013 winter was a cold one which interrupted the success of the breeding season in the Waldringfield area. Hopefully we will see a recovery in 2014.

The Verges Project Team implemented its plans for more planting of bulbs and wildflowers in the autumn 2013 with funding provided by the Parish Council. An informative leaflet to explain the Verges project was designed by Christine Fisher Kay and distributed throughout the whole of Waldringfield.



In June 2013 a small group of stalwarts ie John Smith; Jon Wilkins; Geoff Evans and Bob Crawley project managed by Alexis finally removed the tern raft. Help was called rather late in the day and coincided with the group trip to Priors Oak Garden which meant that the individuals involved had to think on their feet to overcome some of the obstacles involved. A personal thank you to those involved on behalf of the WWG.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Peter Maddison to produce the 'What's About' quarterly report which could not be produced without the reported observations of WWG members.

We have an exciting programme of speakers and trips planned for 2014 (attached) The WWG continue to promote and engage in activities which will meet the objectives of the WWG which are: to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of local wildlife; to protect wildlife habitats and encourage bio-diversity; to encourage wildlife friendly management of land, gardens and public spaces and to encourage a greater interest in and knowledge and love of wildlife in general. This year we will work alongside the SWT Lottery Funded– Have you Seen a Hedgehog Campaign as Ambassadors. Suffolk Hedgehogs are disappearing from our towns and countryside . We will need your help to track them down so we can take target action to save them. The first step is to use the SWT online hedgehog survey if you spot a hedgehog in 2014 or have seen a hedgehog in the last two years. Log your hedgehog onto the survey map on suffolkwildlifetrust.org/hedgehogs and find out more about how to stand up for hedgehogs – before it is too late.

Linda Wilkins

WWG Co-ordinator.