



Report for the Annual Parish Meeting – April 2017

The group's membership has gradually increased over the last two years bringing membership up to 62, there is good attendance at our business meetings and the group's bi-monthly talks are well attended and continue to attract mainly positive comments.

The group's talks, excursions and projects are widely publicised to encourage as wide participation as possible. Along with other village community groups, a website called '**Greener Waldringfield**' was set up in February 2016 by Linda Wilkins and Libby Ruffle. The idea was to have a single place to showcase all the things Waldringfield does for wildlife and the environment. Chris Morton, Alexis Smith and Peter Maddison are among those who have contributed some wonderful photographs. Anyone is welcome to contribute reports, photos, illustrations or ideas. The website is at:

www.greenerwaldringfield.org

A more prominent focus on environmental and wildlife themes has been encouraged by the use of a centre page spread in the parish magazine identified by the Greener Waldringfield logo.

Radio Suffolk were interested in our support of the Hedgehog which they picked up from the website (encouraging long grass areas, gaps in fences etc.) Christine Fisher Kay was interviewed on the Whole Hog programme on 18th July talking to Mark Murphy to promote awareness of the Suffolk Wildlife 'Have you Seen a Hedgehog Project?' Linda Wilkins, Betsy Reid and Jon Wilkins were invited by the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum to take part in a presentation in Felixstowe on 'What has Wildlife Done for Us' based on Waldringfield Wildlife and Walga Initiatives which were featured in the EADP.

WWG is coordinated by a small team of three officers: Linda Wilkins, Coordinator; Angela Mace, Secretary and Anthony Mason, Treasurer. Members who take a lead for the group on specific activities are: Sally Redfern and Peter Maddison are licensed Barn Owl Monitors for The Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project monitoring the nine Waldringfield Barn Owl boxes. Sally reports on the Swift sightings in the village to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust 'Save Our Swift Project' and is the group contact for the RSPB Woodbridge Swift project. Christine Fisher Kay and Betsy Reid collaborate to encourage wildlife friendly habitat in our village public spaces through planting of bulbs and wildflower seeds in the village verges. Pam Crawley keeps an account of Hedgehog sightings in the village and Peter Maddison produces a seasonal quarterly report, 'What's About?' of bird and wildlife sightings in and around the village.

Our Talks by Wildlife Experts in 2016/17 included:

The group's 2016 programme started with a return visit by our popular River Deben resident, Dr David Healey who demonstrated his love and knowledge of the river in his talk titled Shore Birds of the River Deben. David helped members to recognise local shorebirds by playing the call songs of many different species to accompany some excellent photographs taken by his wife.

Geologist Bob Markham's talk Paradise Lost on The Wildlife of the Deben Estuary 2-4 million years ago was based on the evidence of fossils found in the Coralline Crag deposited 3.8 million years ago and the Red Crag deposited 2.8 million years ago.

Darren Tansley, Water for Wildlife Officer for Essex Wildlife Trust gave an expert talk on water voles and otters providing the background to both species rise from serious decline and in the case of the otter its virtual extinction in the 1970's. In our area, water vole numbers dropped 30% in six years but thanks to the success of the Eastern Region Mink Control Project (landowners working with the Wildlife Trusts to eliminate mink) the water vole population in East Anglian rivers is now almost back to how it was in the 1950s.

Alan Thornhill, retired entomologist gave a fascinating insight into the many Suffolk spiders that can be found in our gardens and our immediate environment and in December 2016 we had a full house when Karen Thomas of the Internal Drainage Board, explained the benefits of saltmarsh to the environment and to wildlife. We started off 2017 with a talk by Roger Draycott of the Game&Wildlife Conservation Trust on the Ecology of the Hare and in April, Susan Rendell Read, RSPB spoke about The Little Tern Recovery Project.

Projects and Wildlife Friendly Initiatives:

Flower Scape Patches:

We have continued to promote and encourage more wildlife friendly areas in our gardens and open spaces. For a third year members made some space in their garden to sow seeds of pollinator friendly flowers from Flower Scape and the children from the primary school seeded the triangle by the village hall.

Village Verges Project - set up in 2008, with direction from Christine Fisher Kay the plan for the verges in 2016 was primarily to monitor and to review the overall planting plan. Christine produced an overview report of the village verges project since its beginning in 2008. This included a plan of the 31 verges, illustrated with photographs of the verges when the bulbs are in flower. An account of the Verges Project in the form of the leaflet circulated round the village can be found on the GW website.

In September, Christine attended an event organised by the AONB to promote 'pollinator patches.' It seems AONB, were inspired by the 'pollinator patch' of wildflower seeds sown in spring, 2015 on the triangle near the village hall and by the Scattered Orchard Project. The AONB are now rolling out a scheme across the entire AONB, including the Stour Valley, distributing natively sourced seed, bulbs, plugs and whips to villages and groups. WWG have used their supply to extend hedges and increase pollinators in grassy areas associated with the scattered orchard project including the playing field. AONB provide leaflets and guidance on planting techniques and maintenance to support the various projects.

Barn Owl Project

Sally Redfern, who with Peter Maddison collaborates with the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project, has reported that this season of the seven Waldringfield barn owl boxes, a barn owl family was

raised in one of Waldringfield's boxes. As a good year for voles was expected, a bumper crop of owls was hoped for, especially as, in the May, five eggs had been laid. However, only two chicks hatched. They were fitted with leg rings in July and both fledged successfully. Two of the other nest boxes were home to stock doves and the other four boxes were either empty or inaccessible this year due to such hazards as a bull in the field. Sally's full report of the Barn Owl Project and its background can be found on the Greener Waldringfield Website.

Swift Project

Sally Redfern also reports Swift sightings to a Woodbridge Swift Survey— Where have all the Swifts Gone? Although there are swifts in the village neither of the two nest boxes installed in the vicinity have reported any swifts nesting there yet. It is considered that the success of swifts nesting in the nest boxes could be increased with the use of a CD of swift calls. Sally's full report on the Woodbridge Swift Project can be found on the GW site and it was also featured in Focus along with lots of information. Anyone interested in installing swift boxes is encouraged to visit the RSPB Woodbridge website for information – several leaflets are available.

Spotted Flycatcher Boxes –This season Christine Fisher Kay reports that there have been very few spotted flycatcher sightings reported in the village. However,

On 20th May Peter Maddison saw one in the churchyard and

On 30th May, Christine and Ian had a pair at Waldringfield Heath which were carrying nesting material to a spot in a creeper on their house wall. On returning from a holiday in July Christine saw both birds occasionally but was not able to tell if they had nestlings or if any had fledged.

They apparently did not return to last year's spot in a nest box at Alexis Smith's.

Nationally they are known to be in decline. One survey found that they chose to nest in half coconut shells where these were provided. This would be easy to do - lodge in climbing plants above 2m height in a sheltered spot east or north facing (as with nest boxes, south facing walls can get too hot). There are probably many factors in the decline such as the lack of insects as woodland is destroyed on the way to Africa, when they migrate; lack of habitat in Britain where they prefer mixed woodland and scrub, also climbers on walls and fences; lack of insects for them to feed their young up to strength for migration. There is also predation by cats and jays.

Hedgehog project:

The footprint tunnels were not put out this year. It would be useful if people continue to let us know when and where shortly after seeing one so we could try the tunnel where we know there may be activity.

It is encouraging that hedgehogs are still seen occasionally around the village and are quite widespread.

2016 Sightings: (any more please inform Pam and Christine. Also remember to record on Suffolk Wildlife Trust website.

8th February: J. Mace: The Quay: At midnight one ran across lawn, appeared healthy.

23rd April: F. Eaton: School Rd/School Lane: Seen several times over preceding 6 weeks;

9th July : P Maddison: Dead hedgehog on road near Bretts Quarry entrance:

4th August: J Spall: Village Way: Hedgehog adult seen around 4th August ;

Early August: Jules Rains: Mill Road corner: Confirmed that his dogs had found a hedgehog in different parts of the garden three times this summer.(October 2nd)

Christine wrote about Hedgehog friendly activities for the August parish newsletter also to be found on GW website.

Wildlife Guided Trips and Outings:

Once again the Nightingale Walk in May was enthused by all and well attended. Tour of Arger Fen and Spouses Vale was appreciated especially having the support of the well informed guide at the Reserve – and the bluebells were in flower;

The Bat Detecting Walk was a marvel with five different bat species detected within a very short time – at the Church yard and by the reservoir;

Landguard Reserve and Bird Observatory – a treat, especially as we had entrance inside the heritage fort from which we enjoyed great views of the harbour. We listened to the soundscape of the migrating birds and watched the ringing of a grey wagtail. In November, a good sized group visited Lackford Lakes to observe the winter roosting birds and the gull and starling pre-roost murmuration.

See WWG programme for 2017 for forthcoming Talks and Field Trips. Our first field trip of this year will be an early start to listen to the Nightingales in Newbourne Springs followed by al fresco breakfast on May 3rd.

Linda Wilkins – Co-ordinator 10th April 2017.