



Report for the Annual Parish Meeting 2nd April 2019

The group has had another successful year acquiring several new members bringing the total membership to 73 and we have enjoyed many interesting talks and events. (refer to 2018 and 2019 programme.) We contribute to the Greener Waldringfield website, including great photographs from member Chris Moreton and contributed written articles for the Parish Magazine. The group activities are advertised on the GW website, Focus, the Parish Magazine and events are included in the Greenprint Forum Newsletter and Transition Woodbridge email circulars. Our thanks to Peter Maddison who continues to produce the much appreciated 'Whats About' wildlife bulletin. Thanks to Libby Ruffle who administers the GW website, Christine Fisher Kay and Betsy Reid for their written contributions to the parish magazine.

The publication of the The Wildlife Booklet in 2018 is made available to new members and new residents to Waldringfield. It welcomes new members and aims to bring attention to wildlife conservation by describing the group's wildlife conservation projects. For the second year members took part in Garden Bird Watch coordinated by group Secretary Jill Winter and to attract birds to our gardens wild bird food is ordered in bulk at trade price from Vine House Farm a conservation award winning provider. Thanks to Betsy Reid who kept the group updated on the use of Pesticides and why we should be concerned about their use. The Parish Council supports our aim to be a Pesticide Free village in those areas within our influence such as verges and gardens. Our business meetings also focused on the impact of plastic on the environment and we considered how we as individuals could make personal changes in the way that we make use of plastic in our day to day lives.

Update on Projects:

Verges and Pollinators Project

The Parish Council has awarded the group a grant of £100 for 2018/19 to continue planting this autumn. Christine Fisher Kay is in overall charge of the verge planting but works closely with other group members significantly Betsy Reid, Sally Redfern and Linda Wilkins. Christine keeps members updated at the group business meetings. Last autumn the following bulbs were added to the verges: Gladiolus Byzantine, Allium Sphaerocephalon, Leucojum Aestivum, Camissis Esculenta and Muscari – about 1000 bulbs in total. Splodges of the blue Muscari could not be missed this Spring. Snow drop bulbs were split and spread around rather than buying in more. Draft proposals from Christine this year include wood anemone and a taller form of Star of Bethlehem, Ornithogalum Nutans which is good in shade. Christine has produced a detailed planting proposal for this autumn.

Many members and residents have again planted square metre patches of flowers for pollinators in parts of their gardens which aim to be wildlife friendly with seeds purchased from Flower Scapes and Emorsgate in bulk to reduce cost and are pesticide free!

Barn Owl Project:

Sally Redfern and Peter Maddison continue to monitor our barn owl boxes on behalf of Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project. Sally Redfern reports the following:

'The Suffolk Barn Owl Project has been going since 2005 and has attracted more enthusiasm from community groups in Suffolk than it ever imagined. The WWG's involvement started in 2009 with a talk by Steve Piotrowski, from Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and a box installing garden party. The population of new barn owl broods in Suffolk has risen and fallen over the years, coinciding with an increase and decrease of the vole population, the owls favourite food. 2017 was an excellent vole year in Suffolk (Piotrowski & Dean 2018) and 2018 was expected to be not so good, with a similar less good outcome in barn owl broods.

In Waldringfield, seven barn owl nest boxes were monitored regularly this year (2018) by Sally Redfern and Peter Maddison who hold a monitors' license. In past years, only one of our boxes contained a barn owl brood but this year, two boxes were occupied. In May, one of them had three eggs and the other, four. In June, there were two downy chicks in the first box and three in the second, the remaining eggs failing to hatch. All five chicks were ringed on the 17th July by Steve Abbott who has been ringing 'our' chicks since the project started. As far as we know, four of the five chicks fledged successfully. Sadly, one carcass was found at the foot of the tree holding its nest box.

The other five nest boxes in the area were occupied by jackdaws and stock doves or were empty this year.'

Reference: Piotrowski S & Dean, 2018 Suffolk Community barn owl Project Spring Newsletter.

Swift Project:

Swift sightings have been mainly at the lower end of the village frequently seen flying high late afternoon, early evening reported by John Ogden and Linda Wilkins. Sally Redfern did see a couple flying to and landing at the end of the roof eave of the cement cottage, Holmlea, near the Maybush. A swift inserted half of its body into a hole under the eave and reversed out. It was as though they were feeding young and is the first time Sally has seen a swift land.

WWG via Linda Wilkins and Sally Redfern link with the RSPB Woodbridge Survey. Please contact the RSPB Woodbridge Survey with report of any swift sightings copied to Sally Redfern (sally.redfern@zen.co.uk) Anyone interested in installing swift boxes is encouraged to visit the RSPB Woodbridge website for information – several leaflets are available www.rspb.org.uk/groups/woodbridge. Swift nestboxes are installed in Waldringfield – contact Linda Wilkins if you would like to view boxes which were installed last spring at Driftwood with the automated call sound system.

We look forward to a talk in our 2019 programme by Edward Mayer founder of Swift Conservation in the UK and who later widened his scope to cover Europe too.

Spotted Flycatcher:

No sightings from Alexis Smith this year of Spotted Flycatchers in her garden. We wait to hear from Christine Fisher Kay for this year's update. However the Spotted Flycatcher is seriously in decline since 1970 numbers have fallen by 87%.

Hedgehog Project:

Several hedgehogs have been seen around the village, seemingly more than last year. This is encouraging as a nationwide decline has been known about for some years. They have been seen so far in Mill Rd, Deben Lane and Church Meadows including a family with hoglets. In other years they have also been seen visiting gardens on Cliff Rd and Village Way. A video recording and photographs have been sent to Peter Maddison.

A dead hedgehog was found on the footpath from the church to the river and another sighted at night crossing Cliff Rd.

Thanks to Christine Fisher Kay for her article in the parish magazine to let others know of the sightings and offering a few tips on how to help conserve our hedgehogs. Hedgehogs spotted can be recorded on www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/hedgehog-action and information about hedgehogs on www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/hedgehogfatcfile

The group's recorder is Pam Crawley on 736636. So if you see any let us know. Peter Maddison also logs sightings on 'Whats About.'

Summer Garden Party :

A very nice time was enjoyed at Anthea's splendid garden in Newbourne on the 24th July where the annual 2018 summer picnic was held. Anthea's garden proved to be perfect setting. A big thank you to Anthea for hosting this event.

Data Protection Act:

Jill Winter, group Secretary made arrangements to ensure our compliance with The Data Protection Act. All new membership forms are to contain data protection notices. Members have been informed that we hold no sensitive personal information and no information is shared for marketing or commercial purposes. The group list is only available to the Secretary, Treasurer and Coordinator. Information is held on password protected computers and Anthony is responsible for keeping it accurate and up to date. If anyone wishes to opt out they can email the secretary and ask to have names removed from the membership email list.

Dramatic Declines in UK Wildlife

This year we have considered recent reports which emphasise the huge decline in our wildlife. 'The State of Nature Report 2016' and Chris Packham's 'The Manifesto for Wildlife' has brought to our attention the extent of these declines in the UK and the destruction of UK biodiversity over recent decades. 56% of UK species declined between 1970 and 2013 and of the species assessed 15% are threatened with extinction. Of the 218 countries assessed for 'biodiversity intactness' the UK is ranked 189, a consequence of depleting and damaging our natural resources. The Biological

Intactness Index (BII) suggests that the UK has experienced a significantly greater long term loss of nature than the global average. In fact, we are among the world's most nature depleted countries. If one considers just England the figure is 80.6%. The significance of this number is amplified when a BII value of less than 90% indicates that national eco systems may have fallen below a level when they can reliably meet society's needs. This is bad news not just for the intrinsic value of wildlife but for people as we all rely on a healthy and resilient eco system to survive.

These losses have been largely driven by agricultural intensification since the Second World War including the use of pesticides and the systematic homogenisation of farming practices resulting in the dramatic loss of habitat and foraging for wildlife.

Brexit may be a headache but it has offered an opportunity to elicit change on how the UK deals with the unprecedented loss of wildlife we are experiencing. Waldringfield Wildlife Group decided to support the Greener UK's Campaign for a robust Environment Bill, by lobbying our local MP Therese Coffey on 8th February requesting a meeting with her. We await her reply still. The Greener UK Campaign strives for legislation that puts the environment at the centre of decision making both in terms of development and agriculture before it is too late. There is concern that the Government's current approach to reforming our environmental laws will fail to bring about the change needed not just to maintain what we still have left in the natural world but a Bill that aims to restore it .

For more information on the details of the campaign please log onto:
www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/news/draft-environment-bill-published

'We are suspended in a landscape of loss. Living in this island entails awareness of a systematic haemorrhaging of life, complexity and texture from the very sweep of Britain. It implies a triple drainage of beauty, colour and meaning from our sense of place. In a way we are denied some of the simple pleasures entailed in our love for wildlife'

Mark Cocker Can We Save Britain's Wildlife before It is Too late?

'The rarer they get, the fewer meanings animals can have. Eventually rarity is all they are made of. The condor is an icon of extinction. There's little else to it now but the last of its kind. And in this lies the diminution of the world. How can you love something, how can you fight to protect it, if all it means is loss?

Helen Macdonald 2013.

Linda Wilkins

Coordinator Waldringfield Wildlife Group