



# Beccles Wildlife Group

Formerly Beccles Bird Society

Formed in 1973

OFFICERS: Nina Roffey (Chair) 01502 393956  
Charles Fortt (Secretary) 01502 471094  
Mervyn Aldis (Treasurer) 01502 715615



Autumn 2022

## Introduction

*Nina Roffey*

I am pleased to live in a country that doesn't have a guaranteed blue and cloudless sky every day. It gives us something to talk about every day instead!

I'm hoping you are all ok in spite of all the bad news we keep getting. Watering our treasured plants with washing up water saves the plant and eases our conscience and it's all we can do.

If we do everything we can to help ourselves, the country, and the planet, then there is hope. We can be sure that all is done

to keep our little reserve at its best and that there are many areas that are similarly looked after by caring humans.

On visiting the reserve recently I met a couple who visit it frequently and bring birdseed to replenish our feeders. They are not members but praise the plot and cycle there to enjoy it.

We are so lucky that it exists and it is cared for by volunteers. I hope you are all visiting when you can for all the benefit to our wellbeing. Winter birds are on their way.

## Events Diary



**Friday, September 9th,  
CARLTON MARSHES**

*Meet in the reserve car park at 10am.*

*Leader: Nina Roffey, please ring on 393956 to let her know you are attending.*

**Thursday, October 27th  
DUNWICH BEACH, REEDBED & WOOD**

*Meet at the main car park at 10am, bring lunch.*

*Leader: Tony Butler, please ring him on 712649 to let him know you are attending.*

**Thursday, November 10th  
Indoor Meeting**

**Jane Harris from Norfolk & Norwich Bat Group**  
*The Friends' Meeting House, 7.30pm*

**Thursday, December 8th  
Indoor Meeting: CHRISTMAS SOCIAL**

*The Friends' Meeting House, 7.30pm*  
**Peter Norfolk - California Holiday 2022**  
*As was the case before Covid, please bring something to eat and something to share.*

## Helpers Wanted!



*When our indoor meetings begin, we need two or three attendees to share putting the kettle on and making the teas and coffee. No doubt others will offer to wash-up afterwards.*

*We also need a couple of people to bring the supplies each time - tea, coffee, sugar and biscuits. (Retain the receipts and give to Mervyn.)*

*Please ring Charles on 01502 471094, Many thanks.*

## North Cove Guided Walk

John Trew

EARLY June saw us host our first-ever guided walks for the Queen's Jubilee celebrations. We'd received a generous donation from Barnby Parish Council and they'd asked us if we could arrange walks for Saturday morning and afternoon, so how could we refuse?

Thus Chris, Charles and myself supported by Anne and Toby, and later joined by Mark and Derek, assembled in the car park to conduct the tours and hopefully introduce some Barnby and North Cove residents who'd not been to the reserve before.

Luckily, seeing the forecast for the Sunday, our weather was kind though dull in the morning and a tad windy.

For the morning walk five people turned up, including an inquisitive 8-year-old, and it made sense to start with a potted history of the reserve and its historic link with Beccles Bird Society (now Beccles Wildlife Group).

Chris led the walk from the entrance and amazingly it took about 20 minutes to reach the Railway Hide such was the wealth of information to impart and the interest of the visitors. The child, particularly, was a limitless source of questions.

I then spent a few minutes relating how we monitor the various bird boxes, noting the results to send off to the BTO. One blue tit box nearby had sadly been abandoned but at least I was able to produce one of the eggs for visitors to look at – it was just a shame I squashed it in my rucksack a bit later on!

We then went up Summerhouse Ride, Chris narrating and the rest of us spotting things as we went including a Light Emerald moth (see photo) which created a bit of interest as, with the windy and dull conditions, there was little flying about.

The route took us past the Decoy and round to the main hide where Anne had been pond dipping.

Then under the pines that Ben's father had planted we pointed out the broad-leaved helleborines safely fenced off from the muntjac and back to the starting point.

Ending the tour with a brief demonstration of the Austrian scythe, it was difficult to believe that over two hours had passed before the first visitors left. Everyone seemed to enjoy the walk and we shot back to the Woodland Hide for a quick lunch before meeting the second group.

That group turned out to be larger than expected thus we had ten people to show around. Not being ideal for one leader on our narrow paths, we split into three, as it turned out, flexible groups which quickly became two, then four, then back to three.

Derek joined us for a time and he was able to show the first group five slow worms and a male grass snake on Boathouse Fen Meadow. Unfortunately, they'd disappeared when the other groups attended and despite looking under two other reptile mats, they were unlucky.

Walking the opposite way round to the morning, we were at the Woodland Hide quite early on but luckily the weather had warmed up considerably with the sun coming out as a bonus. A few dragonflies appeared in the warmer conditions along with a few butterflies.

Ending back at the Railway Hide, Charles spoke of how we manage the meadows and gave another demonstration of using the scythes.

All in all, I think, we were able to provide two successful tours which was a valuable learning experience for us and everyone attending seemed to enjoy them.



## Upton Broad & Marshes

Charles Fortt

It was just five BWG members who ventured out on the hottest day of the year by that time to make our first field trip to Upton Broad and Marshes.

About 45 minutes from Beccles, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve is described as *'a tranquil haven in the heart of the Broads, home to some of Norfolk's rarest wildlife: from iconic swallowtail butterflies and Norfolk hawk dragonflies, to otters and water voles, and a staggering array of wetland plants.'*

The reserve reminded us very much of North Cove but on a much bigger scale. Wandering the mown paths through the marsh meadows, the shade of trees in the wooded areas provided welcome relief from the heat of the sun.

There was not much bird life to be seen although several species were heard: reed warbler, blackcap, female cuckoo answering a distant male, but through binoculars on the broad could be seen coot, tufted duck, great-crested grebe and mallard. A magpie crossed our path and flustered nearby.

The preponderance of wildlife was represented by the invertebrates: pollen beetles, azure damselflies, common darter, scarce chaser, Norfolk hawk. Four-spotted chaser seemed the most numerous of the dragonflies we saw.

Of the butterflies, meadow brown, ringlet, red admiral and tortoiseshell were readily found.

Botanists would literally have a field day on the marsh meadows and we identified (well, Anne Barbour did) fen

bedstraw, marsh bedstraw, marsh lousewort, marsh fern, common spotted orchid, self-heal, bog myrtle and wood fumitory.

It was fascinating to see how the plants related to each other; the marsh lousewort, for example, suppressing other plants in the vicinity.

The tour of the reserve took something like two and a half hours, by which time we were back in the car park and ready for lunch, and more than ready to get out of the sun.

Many thanks to Chris Adams for organising and leading us around a reserve I'll want to visit again.





## Reserve Report

Chris Adams

The drought conditions this year have caused the lowering of the water table at the reserve, resulting in the dykes and the decoy drying out leaving exposed sediment.

This has had a negative impact on the aquatic flora and fauna apart from a spontaneous growth of frogbit. The frogbit has more or less completely covered the dyke that runs between the Wildflower and Boathouse Meadows. Not sure why it has grown in such profusion – effect of climate change?



*Ann in full flow, scything.*

We had our scything workshop with Richard Brown of Wild Scythe and we now have several more volunteers able to mow competently.

Much of the Summerhouse Ride and some of the Wildflower Meadow have now been mown using scythes. Meanwhile, the reserve has acquired a tractor-mounted cutter and a baler which are being used to cut and bale most of the Wildflower and Boathouse Meadows.

If this pattern of drought is to continue then slubbing of the dykes and decoy becomes increasingly urgent.

Unfortunately, much the hay was baled green and became spoilt. It is now unsuitable for laying on the paths. Fortunately, there is enough dry hay from elsewhere on the reserve to keep the paths in good order.

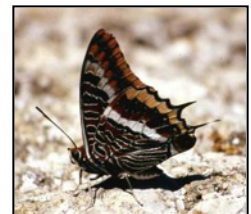
We managed to spread green hay on areas that were prepared on Boathouse Meadow. The seed from Wildflower meadow will hopefully increase the diversity of the flora on Boathouse Meadow.



*A new way of transporting the heavy walk boards.  
[David Fox]*

### TWO-TAILED PASHA

Just recently, a two-tailed pasha butterfly was reported from “North Cove”. Unfortunately, despite good efforts, we are still unable to confirm this was on the reserve. We’ll keep trying!



*[Photo: George Batchelor]*

## Dragons and Damsels

Richard Chilvers & Dave Sheahan

On Saturday, August 13th two of us volunteers at North Cove, took part in a guided dragonfly and damselfly walk around Upton Fen near South Walsham.

Pam Taylor, the Norfolk Dragonfly recorder for the last 30 or more years, provided expert commentary on the species that we saw - nine in all (five dragonflies: Common Darter, Ruddy



*Common blue.  
[Dave Sheahan]*

Darter, Brown and migrant Hawkers, Black tailed skimmer and four damselfly species: the Azure Damselfly, the Common Blue, the Blue-Tailed and the Emerald).

Pam also demonstrated her skills using a small hand net to swiftly capture several species along our route and to carefully secure the wings of the captured insects to allow us to get a more detailed look at markings on the

upper part of the body (the thorax) and the tail sections (the abdomen) that help species identification.

Up to 20 species of dragonfly are present at the site making it one of the ten best sites in the country for sightings.

The particularly hot weather meant that fewer species may have been on the wing at the time we started our walk but we were happy with our tally for the day.

We also had the opportunity to see other natural features of the site including the attractive Grass-of-Parnassus or 'bog star' and the marsh fern which is common at this site but relatively limited in other areas.



*Female Azure.  
[Dave Sheahan]*

*Thank you to members who have sent me photos, articles and reports for the newsletter. Forgive me if I haven't included them in this edition but they will be used in the future.*

*Many thanks, once again. John (Editor)*

THERE were a few swifts about and my first hobby of the season was on the 24th May. A common tern flew up the river and I had a good view of a stoat but it shot off all too quickly. Strangely, someone had decided to destroy much of the burdock from the staithe for the next 150 yards to so - why would anyone want to do that?

In early June I came upon a muntjac helping itself to the fresh willow stems on a branch that had come down in the wind. There were plenty of swifts about on the sixth and a painted lady was a nice surprise - one of several I was to see during the month.

It was good to see a hobby perched on one of the fence posts on the 7th, giving me a nice view of it. Happily, and unexpectedly, the grass along the wall received a good cut the day after - when it's tall and it's rained, it can get very wet along there plus the cut stops the oilseed rape taking over.

Two little egrets flew over on the 8th, the first I'd seen for a while. A Chinese Water Deer with its very small youngster stuck its head out of the reeds along the wall. Meg quickly chased after it for a few yards but interestingly, despite being in full view and only three feet away, she sailed past the youngster - I guess at that age they have no smell.

There were always harriers about and my suspicion that they were nesting down near Castle was confirmed when guys from the Trust came down to ring the youngsters. Evidently three were ringed, two were too small.

The following week, the Trust were down again, this time to ring the owls in the White Mill - shame I didn't have my camera with me. Evidently there were six youngsters and I watched Julie and Pat ring the first one and then left them to it.

The following day was hot and thus I had an evening stroll. Walking past the mill and glancing in I could see something different sticking out to one side. It looked furry but certainly not owl-like. On the way back I looked again. It was still there unmoved, but then a slight movement and then it started to disappear - so was something live. Then an adult came in and two hungry heads appeared, thus the odd



*Thick-kneed flower beetle.*

shape became two young owlets.

Cuckoos were still cuckoo-ing on the 24th, though some were reverting to cuck-cuk-ing now. Later on, whilst fishing, it was nice to see a kingfisher fly past and even better, a red kite flew overhead - at least something of interest as the fish weren't over-keen!

It or another red kite flew over Castle on the 25th and 26th, the latter sparring with a buzzard. I had a party of long tailed tits round me whilst fishing at North Cove on the 30th and swallows were about all afternoon and evening. A cuckoo sat in the tree opposite and kingfisher(s) flew up and down. A green woodpecker called from the tree to the side of me - I couldn't see it, however, as I was sheltered from the downpour under my brolly.

A mistle thrush sat as high as it could in a dead ash on the Norfolk bank on July 1st. A young Chinese water deer took one look at us and promptly disappeared into the reeds. Herons seemed abundant at the time with frequent sightings of one or two birds. Four oystercatchers flew over Castle.

One of the wherries sailed down river on the 3rd, a majestic sight - I remember the trip I had on one a few years ago. With flying wildlife a tad quiet I spent a while inspecting the trumpet flowers of bindweed as you never know what might be there, and true to form thick-legged flower beetles were present feeding on pollen and nectar. A group of some 20 lapwings flew over.

Cuckoos were still about on the 7th, one giving me a nice view sitting on a fence post on Castle. A group of seven little egrets flew over to Norfolk on the 10th and another was over Castle a while later. Another red kite was over Castle the same day. Two common sandpipers flew down the river on the 11th and five little egrets were on Castle - the most I'd seen there for quite some time.

The river wall was now becoming more colourful with great willowherb now in flower plus the spectacular purple loosestrife and hemp agrimony coming out. There was also a nice patch of teasels in flower down near the mill.

I spied a barn owl in the White Mill in the evening of the 20th which was also the evening when we had an inch of rain in one hour and guess who was out in it? I don't think I've ever been so wet. Finally getting back to the car I borrowed Meg's towel to dry some of the wet off me, swapped my sodden trousers for the waterproof ones I'd left in the car (I know, don't say it) and drove home shirtless with the towel round my shoulders.

Amazingly despite all the rain, the following morning it was all dry along the wall. At this time of year, it seems with low tides it's always worth keeping an eye out and five common sandpipers flew off from one of the angler's pegs. Strangely perhaps, it's not that unusual to see common sands along the river at this time of year - I guess they're on their way back.

A flock of seven cormorants flew upriver on the 22nd and two kingfisher flew down the river wall towards me before veering off and continuing up river. Wall brown butterflies were frequent in late July though only in ones or twos.

A kingfisher flew across the river in early August from one of the angling pegs. On the 3rd, 16 black-tailed godwits flew over from Norfolk and three young Chinese water deer were frolicking on Castle. The next couple of weeks were certainly user unfriendly, far too hot for me so it was either a quick morning walk or a more civilised evening stroll.

I did have a nice surprise mid-month though, just after hitting the river wall from the North Cove footpath, something low and long caught my eye running across the meadow near where the old pumphouse used to be -- an otter was taking a shortcut from the riverside dyke to one that runs at right angles to the river. It was only a brief view but it was the first otter I'd seen since way back in January. It just shows you don't just have to look on the river to catch up with *lutra lutra*.

With the weather being hot, I tended to park under the trees in the reserve car park plus one has some shade until you reach the marsh. One morning while I was on the river wall, however, Collen sneaked in and moved his cattle onto the marsh I had to cross. Luckily, so I thought, the cattle were all drifting further over - except for one cow and calf that were feeding right by the kissing gate. I waited, hoping they'd join the herd, but sadly the herd decided to join the them, thus Meg and I had to walk the long way round back to the car. Thanks Collen!





## Birding Round-up

Tony Butler

MY report will cover the highlights seen for the three monthly period, June to the end of August. As per normal, my prime focus will be on the area comprising a five mile radius of Beccles but will also conclude with some of the highlights seen a bit further afield in Suffolk.

It is worth noting that locally, July and August have been particularly quiet this year.

With regard to June, Helga and Paul reported a barn owl over Illketshall St Andrews common on the third. Four turtle doves were seen by myself at Sandy Lane, Hulver on the seventh and a male blackcap was in Alison's Black Boy Meadow gardens on the 12th.

I enjoyed a red kite over Black Boy Meadow on the 17th and a song thrush on a grassy patch off St George's Road on the 22nd of the month.

Daphne reported a turtle dove at Hares Lane, Westhall, two at Alburgh near Bungay and another was reported at Sotterley Park. Daphne also enjoyed a great spotted woodpecker calling from behind her Beccles garden..

The 24th saw a red kite over the Beccles Relief Road roundabout and a pair of spotted flycatchers at Sotterley Chapel - perhaps the same pair which successfully bred there last year. Finally, Kevin Sawford was lucky enough to have a bee-eater fly over his Mutford home.

July consisted mainly of reports of red kites with a bird north of the relief road, two near Gillingham Dam and two over the field at the back of John Trew's Foxglove Close home. He also had three buzzards perched on straw bales following the harvest and regularly reported oystercatcher down Copland Way.

August was also a pretty quiet month, the highlights being a song thrush on my back lawn, red kite again at the back of John T's house, another red kite over St George's Road and two lesser whitethroats, kingfisher, two hobbies and four black-tailed godwits on Beccles marshes.



Garry Nicholaou also reported, after a little rain, green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker, willow warbler, bullfinches, song thrush and greenfinch (quite a rarity these days sadly).

A bit further afield for the period covered but remaining in Suffolk, highlights have included three black-winged stilts, Lackford; three roseate terns, Minsmere; six glossy ibis, Minsmere; slavic grebe, Alton; two purple herons, Minsmere and Lakenheath.

Red-footed falcon, Lakenheath; five cattle egrets, Lakenheath and Minsmere; three white storks, Lakenheath and Pakenham; two quail, Westleton and Ipswich; Hoopoe, Levington; eleven bee-eaters, Felixstowe, Leiston and Minsmere; Caspian tern, Minsmere; two osprey, Blyth estuary and Hazelwood; Pectoral sandpiper, Hazelwood; two wood warblers. Landguard and Alderton. Three wrynecks, Languard, Saxmundham and Dunwich; Blyth's reed warbler, Hollesley; red necked phalarope, Aldeburgh.

It is worth noting that the small colony of bee-eaters, which successfully bred south east of Trimmingham in Norfolk, have now departed the quarry and headed off for Africa. It's reported there were six adults and three youngsters. The so-called rainbow birds were first spotted in early June, drawing bird watchers from across the country. I trust several of you were fortunate enough to catch up with them.

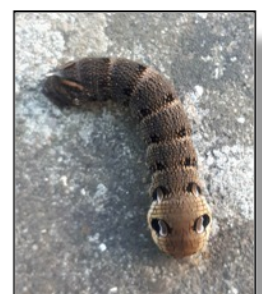
**For reporting your sightings, please contact me either on 01502 712649 or 07762 300053.**



## Daphne Notes

Daphne Hayward

*"I walked to Kessingland sluice last Friday, (15/7) and saw a chick running along the shingle. Getting close enough I saw it was an avocet chick, very young but bags of energy. It ran from shingle to grass and back again, pecking at whatever it found. There was no adult and I have never heard of one nesting there. If it had been there on our return, I would have tried to capture it as with dogs and gulls about it would stand little chance of survival. It was not in sight when we came back although we searched. I will ask at Minsmere to see if any suggestions as to how it got there."*



*"Walking past B&M last week (20/8) I saw a large elephant hawkmoth caterpillar wandering along the pavement just waiting to be trodden on. I took a photo and placed on a low twig above the leaf litter where I hope it hibernates."*

## Kessingland Ringing Group

David Fox

SINCE mid-May the Kessingland Ringing Group have paused carrying out any mist net ringing at our usual patch at Kessingland to give the birds some peace and quiet to enable them to nest and bring up their families. However this is not to say we have been resting on our laurels.

Julie, Pat and I have made several visits to the North Cove Reserve to check nest boxes and carry out ringing of Pulli (young chicks in boxes). In the barn owl boxes there were disappointingly no owls, but two broods of jackdaws totalling seven chicks and one brood of stock doves with two chicks. In the tit boxes we ringed a total of 39 blue tits and 16 great tits, making a total of 64 birds.

In the nest boxes where we ring at Kessingland, there was also a good number of pulli ringed. We also carried out ringing at various sites around the local area, these included house martins with several broods ringed.

We also managed to capture a couple of adult birds, one of which had been ringed as a pulli by the group a year ago almost to the day in the same group of nest boxes. This is a remarkable achievement considering its migration journey to sub-Saharan Africa and back here to the East Coast.

Other local sites we visited, included the ringing of three peregrine falcon chicks, these were also colour ringed as part of an ongoing project. Also several barn owl chicks were ringed at various locations. On June 25th in one box checked, we captured two adult barn owls that were roosting, one of which had been previously ringed on July 18th 2011 as a pulli on the Sotterley Estate, this male bird had not moved far and managed to stay safe for over eleven years.

Incidentally the longest recorded life of a barn owl is 15 years three months and 21 days, set in 2016. At this same site an adult tawny owl was caught napping in a box. This was successfully ringed by Julie despite managing to get its talons into Julie's hand causing quite a wound.

In another box two kestrel chicks were ringed. On June 14th at another site four kestrel chicks were discovered in a box in a

barn and were ringed, these were very feisty and not at all happy at being handled. Another adult barn owl was sitting on five eggs so this box will be checked again in several weeks to hopefully find some chicks to ring.

On the July 6th Julie and I visited the Roman Catholic Church in Lowestoft to check on kittiwake nests. Due to the inaccessibility of the majority of the nests, which are situated on ledges all around the outside of the tower, we were only able to safely catch and ring six chicks. Five of these were also fitted with colour rings as part of the kittiwake project, the sixth one was slightly too small for the colour ring to be safely attached.

On August 5th a check on the barn owl box that had five eggs on June 14th was made, unfortunately it was discovered that the chicks had not survived.

The past three months have been not only extremely exciting but a privilege to see these birds up close, as well as adding another six species to the growing list of birds that I have personally ringed as a trainee.



## Little Terns

Richard Chilvers

I CAN report a record little tern breeding success at Winterton. This mega colony could well be the major site in all British Isles with 700 fledged with a 2.5 breeding success from about 300 nests.

It was the only colony of any size down the East Coast with none at Kessingland, Benacre or Eccles so this mega colony benefited by being able to mob an occasional hobby, and with no kestrel attacks as the second-year non-breeding female kestrel at Winterton dunes is satisfied with insects.

One of the main factors was the abundant availability of food with terns fishing very close to the shore all through the two months that they were there. This contributed to yearly courting/ nesting which began within the first week, and resulted in records all round with quick chick development with most of the colony departing earlier than last year.

### Kessingland Heathlands

Despite there being no terns, the avocets and oystercatchers returned and bred successfully behind the fenced off area which they responded to as protecting sanctuary.

Oystercatchers had one nest with two chicks successfully fledged. Avocets had four nests with only one nest successful in rearing three chicks currently at the fenced pooled area being guarded by adults.

We did not know where all the other avocet chicks were being predated but the RSPB officer Paul Davis, on attending the site recently just after the last eggs had hatched, watched in amazement that these chicks were killed by the avocet pair who may well have been the parents from last year who were looking after the three growing chicks?

Have you witnessed this culling behaviour which maybe a response to the stress in looking after their chicks in drought conditions with the pool getting smaller? Paul Davis has been investigating this behaviour with those at Minsmere never having witnessed it.

- Minsmere avocet chicks have all succumbed to predation due to the increasing marsh harrier population. This is an issue with Scottish crofters blaming white-tailed eagles for predated some lambs, and which, by default, compresses the breeding range of golden eagles

## Turtle Dove Update

Daphne Hayward

I belong to Halesworth U3A bird group and we were given a visit to a house near Bungay where turtle doves are bred.

As soon as I opened the car door I could hear the wonderful purring of the doves. We were taken to see the pens holding a mating pair then the actual breeding hatches.

Once the eggs are laid, they are removed to be hatched under a different species of dove. The pair then mate again producing a second batch of eggs. So far 150 young have been brought up.

Last year, 50 have survived and have lived over the winter in a large cage where they can fly, roost and eat from the large table inside. They need grit which is provided. The table extends to the

open area with a sliding door which will be opened to let the birds decide their fate.

They will be able to find food and water and it is hoped that some, if not all, will remain in the UK, obviating the urge to fly to Africa for the winter. They have successfully survived last winter so hopes are high.

I was surprised to hear that from hatching to flying is 14 days. Amazing when you think of how long other birds stay in the nest.

These released birds have a ring on EACH leg.

You can find more on <https://turtledovetrust.org.uk> and donate to help or volunteer.

## New Forest

John Trew

SO - it was the last night of our holiday in the New Forest. We'd dined at the local pub and settled down to catch up with Springwatch. Then to my dismay, having visited Poole harbour twice during the week, Chris Packham waxed lyrical about the new osprey chicks just hatched down there. I wish I'd known about them, I might have tried a bit harder!

Still, we had a good week (apart from the six-hour drive down), clocking up around 60 birds, three species of deer and, of course, lots of ponies.

Our weather was wonderful, blue skies every day though a bit windy at times. Our accommodation was superb (if not a tad pricey), two miles off the highway down an often bumpy road in a woodland setting and just a short walk to the heath.

The first thing we noticed was the number of song thrushes about – they surely considerably outnumbered blackbirds and we had one singing in the tree in the garden every day and, often, most of the day. Wherever we went, we saw song thrushes – how different to up here in Suffolk.

Tree-creepers and spotted flycatchers were also garden regulars and it was so nice just to sit on the patio with a coffee watching them go backwards and forwards. We even had a redstart one morning and roe deer passing by one evening.

A two-minute walk from the cottage saw us through open woodland where we quickly picked up redstart, bullfinch,

stonechat and Dartford warblers and onto the heath where we had meadow pipit and the odd tree pipit.

As mentioned earlier, we had a couple of trips to Poole harbour, once to Hengistbury Head and once to the reserve at Stanpit Marsh. Unfortunately with high tides we didn't see much of great interest but we spent quite some time in the latter's visitor centre chatting to the volunteers with their impressive list of overall sightings. Shame they didn't mention those ospreys!

Of course I had to finish off the week with a nightjar and, just a three minute walk onto the heath, I had them flying around me – sadly so were the midges, but one has to put up with them or not go, as my frequently bitten wife always decides.



*One of our regular song thrushes.*

## Reserve Defibrillator



*FOLLOWING on from a grant to purchase a defibrillator for the reserve, Michele Judd from MJ Training in Lowestoft, came onto the reserve to give us all training on how to use it.*

*Thus in mid-May the groundsheet was laid out in front of the Woodland Hide and where Michele spent nearly an hour going over all the aspects of the defib and its use.*

*Let's hope we never have to use it but if we do, at least the patient will have a better chance of survival.*



Amanda and I moved into a newly built house that backs onto the old 'Bull Field' on the Beccles/Ringsfield border 23 years ago. With a 'clean canvas' we set about designing the garden with plants and features that that would suit us and attract wildlife to the south-facing plot

There were a lot of potential wildlife visitors as the old Bull Field had been left fallow for a few years and was an ideal hunting ground for barn and little owl that were resident in the oak tree at the edge of it. For a good 15 years now the land has cultivated mainly with wheat, but there is a five metre perimeter strip that has been set-aside for wildlife.

We planned in two patios with pergolas, one east-facing for sunny breakfasts under the pergola and the other west-facing for evening drinks (after work) as the sun goes down.

We then marked out the beds and started to plant trees and shrubs along the perimeter of the plot. These were 90% native including silver birch, hawthorn, rowan, hazelnut and spindle trees interspersed with ivy, holly, pyracantha, and euonymus. For height and cover we have planted honeysuckle (fragrant and loved by moths) and golden hop (attracts comma butterfly) with a couple of clematis (bark used by blue tits for bottom layer nesting material) to scramble up the pergolas to make our otherwise very green-coloured garden slightly more colourful. On the western-most pergola we planted a grapevine which provides cooling shade in summer, nesting opportunities (third

brood blackbirds) and yields 30kg or more of sweet black grapes in September/ October.

As the trees and shrubs have become more established over the years the number of nesting sites has also increased. We now annually have blackbird, robin, wren and blue tit nesting in and around the garden as well as two successful broods of mallard in 2012 and in 2021. I put up two bat boxes on the south-facing and a west-facing wall of the house. Last year we had a brown long eared bat roosting in the south-facing box. Two years ago I noticed a pair of swifts seemingly showing some interest in the west-facing bat box, making close 'slow' fly-pasts before disappearing into the skies. I installed a swift box under the roof soffit in April last year, in advance of the arrival of the migrants in May (May 4th, 2021 to be precise), but I had not had any prospective visitors to the new 'property' in 2021. Fingers crossed for this year !

I do put up bird feeders with sunflower hearts between October and May and am lucky to get good numbers of finches (gold, green, chaff and a load of bull !) and occasional visits from great spotted woodpecker.

Scarce sightings that create great excitement have been lesser spotted

woodpecker (but in year 2000), tree-creeper, waxwings, fieldfares and redwings, with the brief flypast of a pair of ring-necked parakeets (so pleased they continued flying westwards!).

So there's a bit of an insight into the features of and visitors to our garden and we are very happy that the birds seem to like it here too.

• Late report: In mid August, I had a con-volvulus hawk moth buzzing my trumpet vine flowers.

*Eyed hawk moth on golden hop.*

