

Welcome to Waldringfield Wildlife Group

WWG have designed this booklet to welcome new members to the group and to inform everyone about its activities and wildlife conservation projects. We hope you feel encouraged to join in some of these activities to share and increase our knowledge of wildlife and to contribute to its conservation.

We are fortunate to live near the Deben Estuary in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). However there have been dramatic declines in the UK's wildlife over recent decades and this is mirrored in our local wildlife (Ref 1). WWG is an example of how local people who share an interest in wildlife can come together to do something about its conservation at a local level.

This booklet describes our aims and activities and some of our projects since 2005 when the group was formed.



Common seals, Deben Estuary

Photo by Chris Morton



WWG Aims

Waldringfield Wildlife Group exists to conserve, enhance and record the local wildlife; to protect wildlife habitats and encourage biodiversity; to encourage wildlife-friendly management of land, gardens and public spaces and to encourage a greater interest in the knowledge and love of wildlife in general.

Group Projects

- The Verges and Pollinators Project
- The Barn Owl Project
- The Swift Project
- The Spotted Flycatcher Project
- The Hedgehog project

Verges and Pollinators

The 'Village Verge Project' was started in 2005 . With continuing grim news about the loss of wildlife throughout Britain, we looked at ways to help wildlife locally. Management of gardens, roadside verges, public open spaces, parks and agricultural land are all very important. The Verges Project looked at verges along School Road and Cliff Road. The two aims were:

- To improve their quality as a wildlife resource
- To make the verges look more attractive and interesting .

Flower power was increased by planting bulbs and plant plugs for a succession of flowers through spring and summer. The verges were often allowed to grow longer to provide shelter and food for those creatures who form the bottom of the food chain - the caterpillars of tiny moths, small spiders, beetles and hoverflies as well as the more showy butterflies, larger moths and bees.

The Parish Council supported the project, helping to buy thousands of bulbs which were planted by villagers and adjusting the mowing times in areas they control. Waldringfield primary schoolchildren were pressed into service planting snowdrop bulbs in Mill Road and Cliff Road and wild daffodils within the playing field fence. Volunteers grew plugs of wild flowers from seed and these were introduced into suitable verges which were to be allowed to grow a bit longer for at least part of the year, so the flowers would not be cut down until they had set seed. These brighten the verges especially in spring, and provide food and refuge for birds, bats, amphibians and insects.

Cow parsley beside Cliff Road

Thousands of early crocus have been planted





***Crocus and snowdrops
in Cliff Road***



***Snakeshead fritillaries
in the playing field***



***Corner of Mill Road with
pheasant's eye narcissus and hawkbit***

Photos of verges by Christine Fisher Kay



***1,000 Muscari were
planted for early pollen***

New verges have been added to the project but where houses have changed hands there have been changes to the verges too, and sometimes the flowering plants have been lost due to earlier mowing. Anyone who would like to add their verge to this project is very welcome to get in touch.

***Greater stitchwort in
School Road***



Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB are now promoting 'pollinator patches' which they describe as growing lots of plants favoured by bees and butterflies close together in patches with a sequence of flowers through the year, which are not cut until late summer. They have supplied bulbs, plant plugs and seeds for developing these in public areas but are also encouraging lots of wildlife friendly activity in private gardens too. Waldringfield Gardeners (VALGA) and WWG have supported this project and pollinator patches are being developed in several areas around the village.

The Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project

Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project (SCBOP) was set up in 2005 under the leadership of Steve Piotrowski, Project Director at Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) and aims to protect and increase the population of barn owls in Suffolk which was in serious decline. SCBOP's principal partners are Suffolk Ornithologists' Group (SOG), SWT and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Community involvement was a priority from the start and every parish in Suffolk has taken part.



Launch of the SCBOP in Waldringfield in 2008 with Steve Piotrowski, of SWT (front row, second from left) and Paul Jackson, tree surgeon (front row first left).

Photo by Malcolm Farrow.



Waldringfield barn owl chick being ringed by a licenced ringer from Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Photos of owls by Peter Maddison

The Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project in Waldringfield

The success of the SCBOP project is very good news but annual barn owl numbers fluctuate a great deal and they continue to need help. WWG joined SCBOP in 2008 with a project launch led by Steve Piotrowski. Funds were raised, nest boxes were installed in and around Waldringfield and three members of the group are trained and registered as barn owl nest box monitors. (note that it is against the law to inspect a barn owl's nest without a licence). Since 2009, inspection of our local boxes has continued annually.

The total number of accessible boxes monitored in 2017 is six.

Since our recordings began, a maximum of three boxes have been occupied by barn owls at any one time, although broods were present in only two of these, the third apparently being used as a roost. Each year the same boxes tend to be occupied, indicating site fidelity. Stock doves (on the UK Amber List for Birds) are also attracted to the boxes and have often produced continuous broods. Other occupants recorded have been a tawny owl, jackdaw, great tit, squirrel and a hornets' nest.

The total number of barn owl chicks hatched since 2009 is 23, and 22 of these were fitted with leg rings by a licensed ringer. 19 chicks fledged successfully but 3 did not survive. The main factor influencing survival is availability of sufficient food for the chicks, with breeding success following the fluctuating population of their favourite prey, the short-tailed vole. The floods of winter 2013/14 had a detrimental effect on survival; one of the main hunting grounds used by Waldringfield's barn owls was flooded, so any nests of the vole and other small mammals were destroyed.

Progress reports of Waldringfield's barn owls are published on the Greener Waldringfield Website and in the Parish Magazine.



The fluctuating success of Waldringfield's local project has followed the same pattern as that in Suffolk as a whole. It is wonderful to see barn owls hunting during the day but it usually means that their favourite food is in short supply so they have to hunt more frequently and for longer.

Overall, SCPOB has had a positive effect on the population of Suffolk's barn owls. As Steve Piotrowski said in his 2015 report (p1), "This is a project which all Suffolk people can call their own, and we can be truly proud of our achievements".

The Swift Project

Until a few years ago, parties of swifts were seen regularly over Waldringfield, their arrival from south of the Sahara demonstrating that summer had finally come. First, they would be spotted as single individuals or a few at a time. Later, screaming squadrons of a dozen or more birds appeared, indicating family groups joined by birds from abroad. Screaming parties at roof level suggest nests are nearby.



Swifts in flight

Photo Ben Andrew

Woodbridge RSPB Group confirms our observation that numbers of swifts visiting the area have declined over recent summers because of the modern building practice of blocking up under-eave nest holes. They urge householders and building developers to incorporate nest holes and nest boxes in the eaves when roof repairs are made and in new buildings. They carry out swift surveys each year and welcome reports of sightings and nest sites . Please send to

woodbridge.swifts@gmail.com



*Swift leaving nest box © Robert Freeman,
courtesy of Swift Conservation*

(www.swift-conservation.org)

SWT and the SOG have been surveying swift breeding in Suffolk since 2009 (Jackson 2017). They are asking everyone to report screaming parties, nest sites and sites of new swift nest boxes to the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (BIS) website: suffolkbis.org.uk/swift. Together we may be able to help the RSPB, SWT and SOG reverse the decline of this wonderful bird.

In Waldringfield, two pairs of swift nest boxes were installed under the eaves of two adjacent houses in 2012/13. Also, in May 2017, five swift boxes were installed on another local property together with a call system playing a CD of swift calls. Swifts have been reported to be flying near this site and we are hoping (2017) for nesting success.

Anyone interested in installing nest boxes is encouraged to visit the RSPB Woodbridge website for information www.rspb.org.uk/groups/woodbridge, which has information leaflets on all these topics.

Durable glass-reinforced plastic nest boxes are also available from Len Haworth (tel: 07554 385878, email: info@impeckable.co.uk)



Swift chicks in a nest box © Ulrich Tigges, courtesy of Swift Conservation (www.swift-conservation.org)

Local records will be published on the Greener Waldringfield website: www.greenerwaldringfield.org

We are grateful to Angela Jones, Community Advisor, Networking Nature Community Group, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and to all householders for funding their nest boxes and their installation in Waldringfield in December 2012.

References: James, J (2015) Woodbridge swift survey 2015 – where have all the swifts gone?

RSPB Woodbridge Local Group Magazine, Autumn 2015, p11-14



Young spotted flycatchers nearly ready to fledge in a nest box in Waldringfield

Spotted Flycatchers

Spotted flycatchers migrate from central Africa. Nationally, their numbers have declined alarmingly—by 89% between 1967 and 2010—and they are on the UK Red List. Reasons for their decline include

- Lack of insects as woodland is destroyed on their migration route to and from Africa
- Lack of their preferred mixed woodland and scrub habitat in Britain, and few climbing plants on walls and fences
- Lack of insects available in Britain for them to feed their young and to gain strength for migration
- Predatory cats and jays.

Two actions we have taken are

- The installation of small open fronted nest boxes
- Helping increase their food resource by encouraging insect friendly management such as longer grass and wildflower areas.

In 2012 WWG organised the making of 40 open fronted nest boxes by volunteers at Hollesley Bay prison. These were sold for £3 each to residents and put up in gardens and communal areas. Occupation was however not high although other birds were helped. Half coconut shells are also a favoured nest site; these are easy to install, lodged in climbing plants above 2 metres high in a sheltered east- or north-facing spot.

The spotted flycatcher used to be a common sight in summer in Waldringfield. However in 2016 we were only aware of one nest site although individual birds were seen very occasionally. In 2017 the same nest site in Waldringfield was occupied again and we also know of two nests in Newbourne. These are all on creeper-covered walls. It is likely that there are more spotted flycatchers locally than we know about and we would be very grateful for sightings.

It is a joy to watch them catching insects on the wing by flitting from a favourite perch to insect and back again.



All photos of spotted flycatchers by Alexis Smith

We are grateful to volunteers at HMP Hollesley Bay who made up the nest boxes for us. The sale of these covered the group's costs.

Keeping records of what we see

Recording local wildlife is another of the group's initiatives. Wildlife sightings are reported to local resident Peter Maddison who produces an informative quarterly seasonal report entitled 'What's About?' Any sightings (with date, location and any interesting behaviour) or photos of wildlife within the parish can be sent to Peter at prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk for inclusion in the newsletter. The current one is available on the Greener Waldringfield website

<http://www.greenerwaldringfield.org/wildlife-group/> and back numbers can be found on the parish council website at

<http://waldringfield.onesuffolk.net/our-village/clubs-and-societies>

These reveal an astonishing array of wildlife seen out and about in our area and some wonderful photos.

The Hedgehog Project

For several years hedgehog sightings have been monitored in the village. Hedgehogs are known to have declined nationally and are being studied by SWT among others to try and establish the reasons for this. Hedgehogs are still seen in the village every year although fewer than formerly. In 2014 WWG published a leaflet and distributed it to all households to raise awareness.

It is now known that both male and female hedgehogs forage over 1km each night when active and need to be able to get access to suitable areas in gardens, fields and hedge bottoms to find their food of insects, worms and slugs. Therefore one simple way to help is to ensure gaps in fences and under gates to allow 5” or 13 cms of space.

Hedgehog Numbers Are Still Decreasing!

How can we help? - Here are a few suggestions:

- Avoid using slug pellets or place in a tube where hedgehogs cannot get at them. The poisoned slugs are dangerous to hedgehogs so remove promptly.
- Leave areas of longer grass in odd corners and under hedges where hedgehogs can find insects etc. They will also eat your slugs and snails!
- But tidy away garden netting where they might get trapped.
- Put out a dish of water (never milk) and tinned cat or dog food



Photo supplied by Suffolk Wildlife Trust

If you see a hedgehog, whether alive or dead, or signs of them, please do contact us.

Send an e-mail to our hedgehog recorder Pam Crawley on pam.crawley@gmail.com or phone 736636.

They can also be recorded on the SWT website <http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/> following their links through 'Helping hedgehogs'



Illustration by Claudia Myatt

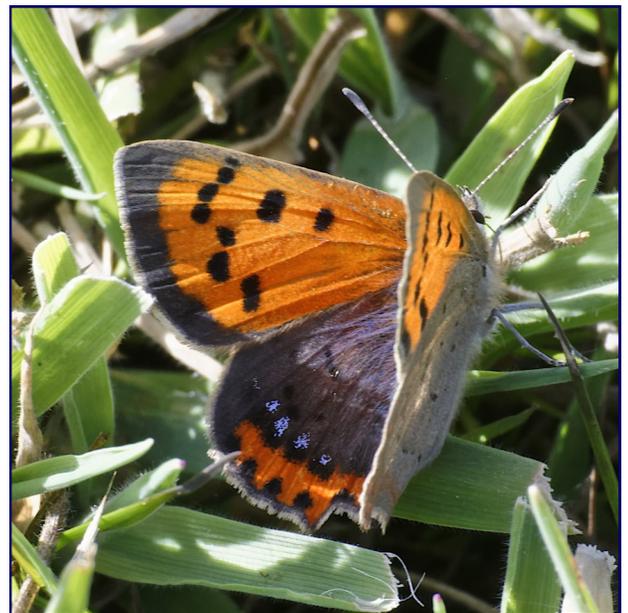
About WWG

WWG was formed as a result of the original Parish Plan. Angela Mace, the group's Secretary until 2017, took the initiative to start up the group in 2005 as so many people expressed interest in wildlife and the local environment.

The aims of the group remain upheld to this day (see front page). From these early meetings, ideas for projects were generated, of which several have been acted on and we hope make a positive difference to our local wildlife.

With all of these projects the group has worked alongside other agencies such as the AONB, RSPB, the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and The British Trust for Ornithology to support their targeted conservation efforts to prevent the further decline of these wildlife species and to improve wildlife habitat.

The group benefits from their support, knowledge and expertise which include illustrated talks on many varied subjects of wildlife held in Waldringfield Village Hall.



Small copper
photo by Chris Morton

Can we make a difference?

We believe our actions here individually and as a group can make a difference to wildlife globally. For example, the use of modern technology has given us huge insights into bird migration, showing how migrating birds must have undisturbed good quality habitat for feeding and breeding to support their long migrations between here and other parts of the world thousands of miles away. Managing space for wildlife in gardens and public spaces to provide food, and habitat and wildlife corridors for wildlife can make a difference in helping to conserve wildlife and the environment.

All welcome!



Early morning coffee in the woods after the nightingale walk

Waldringfield Wildlife Group meets on the second Saturday in the month five times a year from October to June with the Annual General Meeting held in October. Meetings are followed by an expert talk on a wildlife theme which are open to the public. Field trips and excursions to wild life

reserves and places of wildlife interest are organised throughout the year as well as guided events locally such as the annual Nightingale Walk, a Bat Detecting Walk using bat detectors or a forage in Church Field to identify the interesting wild flowers and grasses occurring naturally due to the sandy soil and lack of any fertiliser.

Thanks to all the helpers

The Group is supported by Waldringfield Parish Council which has financially contributed to the Verges Project and towards the printing cost of this booklet. We have also received donations from anonymous supporters and we would like to use this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped in this way. We keep the Parish



*Avocets , Deben Estuary
photo Chris Morton*

Council and the village up to date with the group's activities by reporting to the Annual Parish Meeting and advertising our events in the Parish magazine and in Focus the Village Hall newsletter. The annual programme, reports, wildlife links and photographs can be found on the Greener Waldringfield website at www.greenerwaldringfield.org maintained by resident Libby Ruffle.