



## **Annual Parish Council Meeting Report from of Waldringfield. April, 2013**

### **Report of the Waldringfield Wildlife Group.**

The group continues to thrive with a membership of 40 members and a good attendance at the group's business meetings. The group's bi-monthly wildlife talks are also very well supported by local residents; for example, sixteen additional visitors attended the talk by SWT Volunteer Warden, Nick Mason on the Wildlife of the River Deben in February 2013.

There has been one change to the composition of elected Officers following Sally Redfern's resignation as Co-ordinator after three years of successful leadership. Angela Mace was re-elected as Secretary and Alexis Smith as Treasurer at the AGM held in October 2012. Linda Wilkins and Betsy Reid were elected as joint Co-ordinators with Linda Wilkins taking the principle steer.

Talks by Wildlife Experts in 2012 – 2013 by home and visiting experts included: 'Creating a new reed bed – adapting to rising sea levels by David Price; Suffolk's amphibians by Duncan Sweeting; The wildlife and natural history of Orfordness by David Fincham and a talk by Simone Bullion about the mammals of Suffolk. Our very own Peter Maddison gave an illustrative talk in December 2012 on the spectacular wildlife of Borneo to conclude the year's programme. Nick Mason extended our knowledge of the diverse wildlife of the River Deben to start the 2013 programme and this April, Doreen Wells, the Norfolk Ant Recorder will be sharing her knowledge of the Norfolk and Suffolk Ants.

The group enjoyed a guided walk to Bradfield Woods by warden, Pete Fordham MBE in May 2012 and a bring and share picnic in August in Church Field. A quarterly newsletter, *What's About*, written by Peter Maddison,

continues to be very popular and reports sightings of bird activity and other wildlife during the year. Once again we are currently enjoying the displays of snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils and other wildflowers planted by members in the grass verges in previous years, funding initially provided by the Parish Council and other private donors and more recently augmented by the WWG.

Regular monitoring of the Barn Owl nest boxes continued during last year's breeding season. The successful nest box of last year was home to a brood of three owlets, each of which was fitted with a leg-ring by a qualified ringer from Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Funding for the installation of two more nest boxes have been applied for from Networking Nature of the SWT one of which we hope will be installed within the grounds of the primary school. 2012 was a bumper year for Barn Owls in Suffolk and we hope that the prolonged severe weather of 2013 does not adversely affect the number of broods this year.

We have embarked on a nest box scheme for Spotted Flycatcher, another species in decline. Forty nest boxes were made by a young man at Hollesley Bay prison and these have been installed in gardens around the village. Two pairs of Spotted Flycatchers were known to have nested in the village this summer and it is hoped that their offspring will return to Waldringfield to make use of our nest boxes.

The Wildlife Group also applied for a grant from SWT to help reduce the decline in swifts by installing nest boxes in locations in the village where they have nested in the past. Two households have accessed the funding and two boxes have been installed ready for this year's breeding season.

To encourage the expansion of the Brimstone Butterfly a minimum of 30 buckthorn plants were distributed in member's gardens. Members of the WWG also supported the Scattered Orchard project set up by WALGA by helping with funding and planting fruit trees in the village public spaces.

Two members of the WWG are active members of the D.E.P Environment, Landscape and Archaeology Committee. WWG is currently the only voluntary group represented on this committee and the WWG's observations of the wildlife species and habitat especially along the Waldringfield stretches have helped to inform the committee's broad policy papers and reports along with the contributions from key agencies such as Natural England, The SWT, The National Trust; RSPB and the EA.

Neil Winship WPC kindly attended the February meeting to outline the EA's plan to clear the vegetation from the river wall both upstream and downstream of Waldringfield as well as other locations along the Deben Estuary river walls. Neil gave an informed account based on the Flood Cell Survivability Report from Geo Technical engineer, Andrew Hawes which helped to inform members of the reasons for the clearance and removal of vegetation which has provided an important habitat for wildlife. The clearance work which started in March, 2013 has since come to a halt. WWG has communicated with the EA project representatives to seek clarification of the plan to continue the works now that the breeding and nesting season has begun, typically from April to the end of July and to recommend that continuance of such works should now be delayed until the end of the nesting period, late summer/early autumn as advised by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and other conservation groups. It is important that we communicate closely with the EA over these works given that nightingales nest in the thickets landside of the river wall and if disturbed they may not return to nest in this locality.

Linda Wilkins

Co-ordinator, Waldringfield Wildlife Group

7<sup>th</sup> April 2013.