

# Tree Warden & Conservation Volunteer Newsletter



SPRING '10

## Alive & Still Kicking (& planting!) Happy 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tree Wardens

This year sees the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Tree Council's Tree warden scheme, in which time volunteers have dedicated an amazing total of 22 million hours to their communities' trees - worth nearly £154 million at today's volunteer rate. That amounts to a really important commitment to the environment. The Tree Council has been able to calculate these totals thanks to all the Tree Wardens who have taken part in surveys of their activities over the years. Twenty years on and Tree Wardening is continuing to attract lots of new recruits. The latest survey showed that people who have been volunteering for under two years were up by a third - a really encouraging sign of the many new



recruits to the national Tree Warden Scheme. What's more, there was no decline in the number of long-serving Tree Wardens - 29 per cent have been championing trees in their communities for more than 11 years. This is a great indication of how both new and well-established local Tree Warden networks are all attracting fresh recruits while building on the skills and expertise of the long-standing volunteers. Other findings from the survey were that:

\* In 2008 Tree Wardens spent an average of 257 hours a year on tree related matters, which amounts to over 2 million volunteer hours and is worth £14.6 million in volunteer time.

\* 20 per cent (45 hours) of this time was invested in caring for woodlands and orchards and 20 per cent of the time was dedicated to tree planting and 14 per cent to organising events and activities to encourage schools and others to contribute to and value their local treescape.

\* The amount of time spent on hedge work was significantly up - by well over three per cent - on the last survey, and indicates how seriously Tree Wardens are taking the threat to the UK's hedges and hedgerow trees and supporting The Tree Council's Hedge Tree Campaign.

Jon Stokes of the Tree Council says that this great work all adds up to a really vibrant national network of 8,000 volunteers, as we start to celebrate our 20th anniversary. See the Events page for details of this year's East Anglian Tree Warden's Forum

### **Parish Tree Scheme 2010:**

A reminder that this year's scheme is up and running and we have enclosed the relevant forms in this mail out. Please be thinking now about schemes for the autumn and feel free to contact myself or Anne Westover for advice on any planting schemes you have in mind.

# Sutton Heath – A Living Landscape



92% of Sutton Heath SSSI will be restored to its former glory

This winter the Suffolk Coastal Countryside team carried out their largest ever single conservation project. At Sutton Heath, 3 miles east of Woodbridge, an area of 6 hectares was thinned of trees to help restore the area back to its former heathland glory. This work is part of a 10 year Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Agreement with Natural England worth £120,000. Despite the sensitive and contentious nature of removing trees from any area of land, this work is a pre requisite of Suffolk Coastal as the owner of a SSSI heathland, which by law cannot be left to decline.

Sutton Heath, as part of the Suffolk Sandlings, would have been an open habitat for many thousands of years. As the 'wildwood' was cleared by Neolithic man, heathland was inadvertently created and then maintained by centuries of subsequent sheep and rabbit grazing. It is only in the last century that trees have once again begun to re-emerge on the Sandlings as a result of a decline in sheep farming, the planting of forests and the introduction of myxomatosis in the 1950's. Many of the trees felled this winter can date themselves back to this last event.

Since Suffolk Coastal took ownership of Sutton Heath back in the late 1970's there has been a gradual heathland restoration programme, as time and funds allow, but this 10 year HLS agreement gives us the opportunity to now restore 92% of the site back to heathland. Not

forgetting people's rightful love affair with trees, the remaining treed areas at Sutton are also being managed as part of the agreement. An old chestnut and oak copse is to be re-coppiced and the thinning programme will once again reveal the remnants of an old pine wind break for sheep, which will be retained and restored as a both a natural and historical feature.



Heathland restoration at Sutton a la mode



Old style woodland operations in the chestnut copse

# Suffolk Hedgerow Survey Update.



As the Suffolk Hedgerow Survey embarks on the penultimate year for surveying, the current situation is that there are 148 completed parish surveys which have been audited. This has comprised of the analyses of 19,400 hedgerows.

In addition, there are another 150 parish surveys ongoing in which about half the hedgerows have already been surveyed and the other half are to be surveyed this coming season. To put it another way, there are another 10000 hedgerows already surveyed and another 10000 pledged for 2010.

In total it is anticipated that 40000 hedgerows will be surveyed by the end of 2010.

It is expected that between 20 and 30 'new' parishes will join the Project this year. The Project management committee has agreed to provide the usual support and back-up to parishes starting their surveys in 2010 round to leaf fall 2011, but that the Project should close down at the latest, by the end of 2011.

The project has about 1800 surveyor volunteers, 300 survey coordinators and over 300 parish clerks engaged, energised, enthused and actively working in their communities helping with the survey.

This huge voluntary effort has been recognised with the award of 'Green Community Hero' by the Suffolk Creating the Greenest County Project.

"This success has to be celebrated together as an award for all the volunteers and helpers as a joint exercise in the communities across the length and breadth of the County, when bearing in mind that something in the order of 35000 man hours have been expended so far on the project. This must surely endorse that Suffolk is the Greenest County"

Guy Ackers - Chairman of the Suffolk Hedgerow Working Group.

Telephone **01394 383264** or email [guyackersmelton@rmpfc.co.uk](mailto:guyackersmelton@rmpfc.co.uk).

## Suffolk traditional orchard survey

**The Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership is looking for volunteers to help find old, traditional orchards in Suffolk.**

In the early 1900s, the Ordnance Survey map shows over 6,000 orchards in Suffolk. For example, Mellis had at least **16** small orchards! We believe there are about 1,000 of these orchards left today. Our aim is to record and map the remaining orchards and, as a further phase of the project, we'll provide help to restore those of particularly high quality.

These 'traditional' orchards are hotspots for wildlife, providing vital habitat for invertebrates, birds and small mammals (for example, beetles, song thrush and bats), especially now that they are no longer sprayed. They often include other habitats such as grassland, scrub, deadwood, ponds, ditches and hedges that have been abandoned

for decades, making them a valuable mosaic of wildlife habitats. Not only apples were grown – pears were common, and nuts, plums, quince and, in the south of the county, cherries.

Orchards are also important culturally, providing an insight into the history of an area and a featuring a huge number of traditional varieties. Did you know that Suffolk has particular varieties associated with the county? These may be soon lost if we do not take action now!

Suffolk’s survey started last year and is coordinated by Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership. The project is led by Paul Read, an independent consultant, and includes our partners Suffolk Biological Records Centre, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and District and Borough Councils. Further information about us can be found on our website: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Biodiversity/](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Biodiversity/)



For each surveyor, we provide a map of the parish with the known sites marked. We just ask the surveyor to fill in a simple form with information such as whether the orchard is still there, how many trees there are and what kind. We provide training days to provide all the background you need, you don’t need to have any prior knowledge about orchards.

If you’d like to join the survey, please contact Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership email: [gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk), tel: 01473 264308, or Paul Read, [readhf@aol.com](mailto:readhf@aol.com), tel: 07860585422

## TREE WARDEN FEEDBACK FORM

We want to update our records and hope you can take time to complete this short feedback form in the coming weeks and post it back to us.

NAME

ADDRESS

REPRESENTING (PARISH)

PHONE

E-MAIL

WOULD YOU BE WILLING (& ABLE) TO RECEIVE OUR NEWSLETTER AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS BY E MAIL (WORD DOCUMENTS and/or PDF FILES)

CAN YOU PUT AN ESTIMATE OF HOW MANY VOLUNTARY HOURS YOU CARRIED OUT AS A TREE WARDEN FROM APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup> '09 TO MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup> '10

PLEASE RETURN YOUR FORM TO : PETER ROSS, SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT COUNCIL, MELTON HILL, WOODBRIDGE, SUFFOLK, IP12 1AU

# 2010 international Year of Biodiversity



2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations – the year that celebrates the diversity of life on Earth, including every plant, animal and micro-organism. In the UK, IYB has over 200 partners ranging from universities, media organisations and museums to theatre companies and artists. They have come together to promote the understanding of biodiversity during the International Year of Biodiversity. This year is your chance to learn more about the rich tapestry of life around you, discover why it's important for a healthy environment and get involved in monitoring and conserving your local wildlife. There are many ways in which you or your group can get involved. The best place to find out what is going on is their website <http://www.biodiversityislife.net>.

## **SUFFOLK'S COMMUNITY BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS!**

Many community projects are making a significant contribution to wildlife conservation in Suffolk as well as benefitting people. Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership has drawn together information on some of these enterprising initiatives; their aims and aspirations, successes and achievements, as well as the difficulties faced. It is hoped this will inspire other communities to set up new projects and contribute to protecting species and habitats in their own parishes.

### **Pilot area**

This currently provides information on 17 community projects in the Suffolk Coastal area. It is hoped to expand the project in the future to show all the wonderful work being done across all the Suffolk districts on behalf of wildlife.

### **Benefits**

These practical, down-to-earth projects, whether small or large, have a positive impact on the surrounding environment by providing space for nature to thrive alongside people. At the same time, human communities benefit greatly from these initiatives. For example, community projects help to:

*build neighbourhood relations, provide opportunities for physical activity, improve well-being through direct contact with nature, increase safety in previously isolated areas, enhance practical skills, generate a feeling of 'belonging' to a neighbourhood and generate pride in the community and a strong local identity.*

### **Set up your project now!**

Woodlands, village greens and meadows, together with their associated invertebrates, birds, mammals and plants, are all benefiting from the commitment and enterprise of groups in Charsfield, Martlesham and Yoxford amongst many other villages in Suffolk. Why not join them and help more people to connect to nature in your area?

Most of these projects have been set up with the practical help and guidance of experts from organisations such as Suffolk Wildlife Trust, The Green Light Trust, the Woodland Trust and the British Trust for Ornithology. As a next step, discuss your ideas with one of these organisations; they will be able to help you make your vision a reality!

*"The volunteer group have been paramount in creating this wonderful site and I cannot praise them enough."* Michael Ryder, Woodland Trust of Felixstowe's Abbey Grove Woodland Group.

### **Contact**

For further information, or to talk to any of these groups, contact Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership, email: [gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:gen.broad@suffolk.gov.uk), tel: 01473 264308.



## Summer Events 2010



*Below is a list of summer events that we hope you will be able to attend. Unfortunately, because the Countryside Team are without a Greenspace Assistant and will be losing a Countryside Officer in July, we are only running 2 of these. The other events will be of interest, but are being organised by other groups. We will advertise any further events we organise in the Autumn newsletter.*

### **Thurs. May 27<sup>th</sup> : 6pm- 8pm. A walk at White House Farm, Hasketon**

Join us for a superb walk around this farm, which now owned by The Sinfield Nature Conservation Trust. A Suffolk-based charity, it has preserved 115 acres of wild-flower meadows, woodland, ancient trees and ponds which are now a County Wildlife Site that supports over fifty bird species, large numbers of dragonflies and butterflies and great-crested newts. "White House Farm comprises rare and idyllic countryside, reminiscent of scenes from the past. Visitors comment on the uplifting and inspiring atmosphere and the exceptionally preserved land with beautiful and rare plant species."

### **June 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>. Ancient Tree Forum Annual Field Trip at Staverton.**

2 days of talks and walks about the importance of ancient trees as part of our historical and environmental heritage, with guest speaker Oliver Rackham. Those of you who came to our event with Oliver at Staverton a couple of years back will know this will be a worthwhile and free event.

### **Weds. June 23<sup>rd</sup> 8pm- 10pm. 'Nightjars or woodpigeon?' A walk at Sutton Heath**

A chance to see and discuss the heathland restoration and woodland work we have carried out and have planned as part of our Higher Level Stewardship Agreement, before venturing out onto the Common at dusk to hear & see the mysterious 'goatsucker' or nightjar as we now commonly know this migrant bird.

### **Fri. Jul 30<sup>th</sup>. Woodland Masterclass at Thetford**

A training day organised by The Confederation of Forest Industries and the Anglian Woodland Project aimed at those who own, manage or recognise the importance of woodlands. Cost: £15 inc. lunch

### **Sun. Sep 19<sup>th</sup> : East Anglian Tree Wardens Forum**

This is being held at the Red Feather Club, **Horham near Eye**. The theme of the day is the celebration of 20 years' of Tree Warden achievements. A fuller programme is to follow

**If you are interested in attending any of these events please contact me for more details. Peter Ross: 01394 444619**

