



Your local wildlife news

Valley Fens Wildlife Group is part of Suffolk Wildlife Trust's county volunteer network. Led by local Trust members, the group organises events, talks and wildlife activities and raises money for the Trust, to help safeguard our wild and beautiful county.

LUMPS, WARTS AND SPOTS

We started the year with two excellent talks. The first was by Duncan Sweeting of the Suffolk Amphibian and Reptile Group. He gave a run through of all the different species in the UK of these two important phyla which are so often overlooked. As well as clear photos, he gave several tips for quick identification, such as frogs having a black spot behind their head whereas toads have a lump, and newts only having four digits on their fore limbs whereas lizards have five.

He also explained their basic biology, such as reproduction. Toads go to great lengths to reach their breeding grounds, crossing roads as necessary, so that on regular routes, toad tunnels have to be built. We have road signs for 'beware crossing frogs' just a few hundred yards from the Redgrave & Lopham Fen visitor centre. Also, the reason that spawn seems so abundant in ponds when the females are quite small is that the eggs swell when in contact with water to give protection to the eggs. One clump has been laid by one female.

Of the six species of reptile, sand lizards and smooth snakes are not found in Suffolk, but the others are common. Reptiles have scales or plates rather than the warty skin of amphibians.

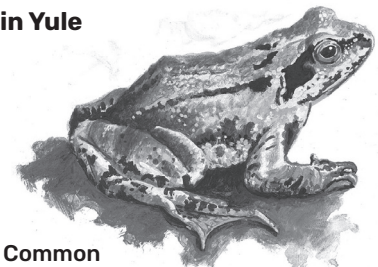
But this means it can't stretch too much meaning that the skin must be shed as the creature changes size, including during pregnancy. In the case of adders and grass snake, scales are 'keeled' meaning they have a ridge to help them grip. The adder is of course the only venomous snake in the

UK. Duncan was at pains to point out that the correct term is venomous, as something that is poisonous will poison you if you eat it.

The second talk was by Sam Franks from the British Trust for Ornithology. She had worked for numerous summers in Alaska, and gave us a comprehensive view of the landscapes and wildlife of the state. One picture I'm sure we will all remember is a map of Alaska superimposed on a map of the USA at the same scale – it is huge. Consequently, it has a vast range of landscapes from Arctic Tundra through Boreal Forest down to the Coastal Temperate Forest. The area is still incredibly rich in sea life. Fish, otter, whale, and lots of marine bird life.

Some of the species are familiar such as the kittiwake. Others such as the guillemot are known by a different name, and others are unique to the area. Denali National Park was noted to be one of the best places to see bears, wolf and caribou and is home to the highest mountain in North America at 23,000 feet. As well as excellent photographs, Sam had managed to include both video and audio clips that really brought things such as the mating dance of a grouse to life.

Colin Yule



**Common
frog**

BILL STEVENSON



Be part of Team Wilder

Research shows that if just one person in every four takes up a cause, this can be enough to change the minds and behaviour of the majority. Imagine what we could achieve if that cause was nature: if a quarter of people in Suffolk created more space for wildlife to bring back what we've lost.

**#Team
Wilder**

suffolkwildlifetrust.org

RESERVE NEWS: KNETTISHALL HEATH

If you are embarking on a walk around the heath this Spring, look out for some of our key species. Skylarks fill the air with song earlier in the season, and we welcome back woodlarks one of our fantastic success stories. These sensitive birds' nest on the ground and so really appreciate visitors sticking to the paths during this crucial nesting period. Also listen out for the 'chak chak' of stonechats or the 'yaffle' of green woodpeckers.

The foxglove season is not to be missed here, and common lizards can often be seen basking on top of the heather. If it's a river walk you fancy, then the banded demoiselle damselflies can offer quite a spectacle. We welcome any sightings visitors may have, in particular of white admiral butterflies. This stunningly large monochrome species can be seen flitting through sunlit woodland glades amongst honeysuckle and bramble and is on the wing from mid-June.

So please do stop by the reserve office or the catering van in the main car park for a drink, bite to eat and tell us what you have spotted!

Have a look at our webpage for our full list of events happening throughout the spring and summer: suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events

Events include:

- Guided walks
- Wild Tots
- Weekend Wildlife Club
- Young Wardens
- Forest School
- Home-ed
- SEND Woodland Play

Finally, do come along to our main event of the year:

Sunday 30 July 10am-4pm

HOORAY FOR HEATHS!

Join us at Knettishall Heath for a day of discovering and celebrating our amazing nature reserve during Heath Week 2023. With guided walks, activities for children and local craft stalls, there is something for everyone! For more details visit our website: suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events

WHAT'S ON

Tuesday 30 May 7pm

Walk: AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES OF SUFFOLK

With Ellie Beach, Conservation Manager Little Ouse Headwaters Project.

Meet at Thelnetham Windmill from 7pm (1½ hours). £4.

Tuesday 27 June 7pm

Walk: WILDLIFE WALK

With David Tomlinson at Knettishall Hall Farm. At Knettishall Hall Farm IP22 2TQ. £3

Tuesday 25 July 25 7pm (1½ hours)

Walk: WILDLIFE WALK AT BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY

Meet in the riverside car park by the Nun's Bridges on Nun's Bridges Road, Thetford IP24 2EP.

For more details visit:
suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events

CAN YOU HELP?

Thanks to the continued generous support of local volunteers, decades of editions of *Suffolk Wildlife* magazine have been hand delivered to your, and every members' door across the county multiple times each year. These geographically located teams require a volunteer coordinator(s) to organise each delivery into subsections ready for collection and distribution three times each year, January, May and September.

We are currently seeking one or two people in the Waveney area who like organising to come forward and fill this gap. In doing so you will help the Trust save thousands of pounds in postage costs, which will otherwise be spent more directly on conservation work.

For an informal chat about the role please contact Nic Martin, Membership Manager at membership@suffolkwildlifetrust.org.

YOUR LOCAL WILDLIFE GROUP CONTACTS

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MAGAZINES

If you would like to help our magazine volunteer delivery team in the future please contact:

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suffolkwildlifetrust.org

WILD YOUR INBOX

Would you like to hear from us by email? Sign up at bit.ly/SWTemails

YOUR LOCAL WARDEN



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West Suffolk
Sites Manager
01284 728541

YOUR WILD LEARNING OFFICER



Deborah Key

Wild
Learning
Officer
01379 688333

Your most local reserves

Hopton Fen ● Knettishall Heath ● Market Weston Fen ● Mellis Common

Redgrave & Lopham Fen ● Roydon Fen ● Thelnetham Fen



**Suffolk
Wildlife Trust**

suffolkwildlifetrust.org

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