



# Your local wildlife news

Stowmarket 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.

## SUMMER IN THE VILLAGES NEAR STOWMARKET

Winter weather has a big effect on the natural world. Last winter we had some cold spells, but it was very dry. In February, Suffolk received only 11% of the average rainfall in what is often one of the wettest months. February was also one of the mildest on record. That may not bode well for agriculture and our garden plants in the coming summer.

I am hopeful we may see plenty of grasshoppers and crickets this year. There are eleven native British species which live in the south of England. Four or five are commonly found in our area. Grasshoppers lay their eggs in a pod in the ground. Last year's hot summer may mean that many more were laid. The eggs hatch and emerge as wingless nymphs, often in April. These grow and as they shed their skins they go through a series of development stages, before turning into the winged adults from June onwards. One common species, the meadow grasshopper, has wings but cannot fly. It has no hindwings and its forewings are much shorter than in other species. Look for grasshoppers and crickets in grassy areas, especially in warm weather.

The number of insects will affect the breeding success of many of the birds. Even seed eating birds often feed their chicks on caterpillars and insect grubs. Our native tits and warblers will need them in late spring as their eggs hatch, and then the summer migrants, swallows, house martins, swifts, blackcaps and all the others will need them to sustain their young. Many of the visiting

species raise more than one brood so need a consistent supply of insect grubs. There are still a few spotted flycatchers in our area of Suffolk. This once common bird is now very rare, so it is a delight to see one; they always seem so perky and alert. The small colonies of turtle doves were in some of their village haunts again last year, so let's hope they return and do well this year. Black Bourn Valley Nature Reserve is a likely place to find them too.

The success of small birds and mammals will affect the populations of birds of prey. There are several barn owls and kestrels around and they will rely on voles to feed their chicks. Sparrowhawks rely on smaller birds as part of their diet. Our largest birds of prey are less affected as they are predominantly carrion eaters. We can expect to see buzzards soaring in the warm air on an almost daily basis, and red kites are seen much more regularly.

Whatever the weather we can be assured of wildlife around us. Perhaps when you are outside this summer, it would be a good time to search for the creatures which go unnoticed, the woodlice and beetles finding damp places under stones in the garden and the spiders with their varied strategies for hunting are a couple of ideas of places to start. Just remember to replace them and their hiding places carefully.

Have a wonderful nature filled summer!

**Ken Mudd**

## CAN YOU HELP?

Stowmarket Wildlife Group would appreciate more people to join the organising team to help with the planning and delivery of our events. If you would like to help in any way,

please contact Heather at:

**heathersalmon50@gmail.com** or

**07722 871205**, or speak to one of our team wearing badges at our meetings.



## 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: ARGER FEN & SPOUSE'S VALE

After what feels like a prolonged winter, spring has finally sprung on the reserve. Wildflowers such as bluebell, wild garlic, and lords and ladies having ventured out of the ground in colder months, now bloom alongside primroses, greater stitchwort and red campion. The woodland glades and ride edges come to life with vibrant colour and a flurry of insect activity, making the most of the early season and summer nectar source and innocently sustaining the woodland flora communities through the act of pollination. The open areas of the woodland warm up in the sun not only offering bees, hoverflies and butterflies places to feed and rest but adding more complex structural diversity throughout the woodland that birds and mammals also depend upon.

As birdsong fills the air through spring (the dawn chorus is spectacular by the way),

nightingales dominate this choral ensemble almost constantly, night and day, from thick cover. Other species such as skylark sing overhead on the wilded eastern field areas establishing territories and attracting mates, whilst yellowhammer and greenfinch sing from high perches along the undulating hedge lines.

Following on from some desilting work, the pond within Arger Fen close to the main trail towards the car park has filled up nicely from late winter rainfall and is now being recolonised gradually with aquatic plants (water violet and yellow flag iris). We have already seen signs of amphibian activity with the occasional smooth newt and toad spotted among the sections of open water.

**Will Cranstoun, West Suffolk Sites Manager**

## WHAT'S ON

Wednesday 28 June 7.30pm

### Talk: SUFFOLK THROUGH THE SEASONS

With professional wildlife photographer and trainer Kevin Sawford.

The Village Hall, Church Road, Stowupland IP14 4BQ.

Price £3. Donations welcome.

Wednesday 27 September 7.30pm

### Talk: HOGGING HEDGEROWS

With Paula Baker from Suffolk Prickles Hedgehog Rescue.

The Village Hall, Church Road, Stowupland IP14 4BQ.

Price £3 including refreshments. Donations welcome.

Wednesday 29 November 7.30pm

### Talk: BATS IN SUFFOLK

With Anne and Dennis Kell of Suffolk Bat Group.

The Village Hall, Church Road, Stowupland IP14 4BQ.

Price £3 including refreshments. Donations welcome.

For more details visit:  
[suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events)



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## YOUR LOCAL WILDLIFE GROUP CONTACTS

### NEWS & EVENTS

John Thompson  
01449 676471  
[swtstowmarket@gmail.com](mailto:swtstowmarket@gmail.com)

### VOLUNTEER WORK PARTIES

#### Combs Wood

Tyrone Carr  
07837 515517

#### Bonny Wood

Peter Holborn  
01449 736683

### MAGAZINES

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

#### Nic Martin

Membership Manager  
01473 890089  
[membership@suffolkwildlifetrust.org](mailto:membership@suffolkwildlifetrust.org)

### WILD YOUR INBOX

Would you like to hear from us by email? Sign up at [bit.ly/SWTemails](http://bit.ly/SWTemails)

### YOUR LOCAL WARDEN



**Will Cranstoun**  
West Suffolk  
Sites Manager  
01284 728541

### YOUR WILD LEARNING OFFICER



**Joanne Atkins**  
Wild  
Learning  
Officer



## Your most local reserves

Black Bourn Valley ● Bonny Wood ● Bradfield Woods

Bulls Wood ● Combs Wood ● Mickfield Meadow



**Suffolk  
Wildlife Trust**

[suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://suffolkwildlifetrust.org)

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