

Suffolk Coast & Heaths

Autumn/Winter 2015/2016

FREE

Suffolk
Coast &
Heaths



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Discover Suffolk by Bicycle with our new Cycle Explorer Guides

Page 7



Wild about Autumn & Winter

The AONB team suggests what to see and where to go Pages 8-9



Booming Bitterns!

Take our quiz and see who else is a big noise in the AONB Page 3



Saltmarsh Solutions

Some surprising answers on how to sustain our saltmarshes Page 4

A message from our Chairman



Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2015/2016 edition of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) newspaper.

I love Autumn and Winter in our AONB. After the summer season of holidaymakers, life calms down - and with less people around, it's a great opportunity to make a return visit, or experience for the first time the lovely autumnal colours and crisp clear days of winter.

On the centre pages you can see what our AONB team are looking forward to in these months. Their favourite places include a fine selection of pubs - after a good walk spotting wildlife and enjoying the countryside, of course!

I will be on my bicycle as often as possible, following the paths around Alton Water, which I am very fortunate to have on my doorstep. And I'll probably take my grandchildren with me. The cycle network is ideal for families, and on page 7 you can read about our Suffolk Cycle Explorer leaflet series, sponsored by Adnams. The five Cycle Explorers, including Alton Water, were launched in September.

Some of you may have seen me on BBC Look East recently, talking about the estuaries and their importance for wildlife. By the time you read this, we will have hosted the very first Suffolk saltmarsh conference, at Snape Maltings. Turn to page 4 for an introduction to our saltmarshes.

**Councillor David Wood, Chairman
Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership**

AONB Boundary Review

For over twenty years people have spoken about extending the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to include the southern shore of the Stour Estuary. A formal process has now been started by Natural England. You may not have heard much about it yet, as at the moment Natural England are gathering background information relating to the area's natural beauty.

The AONB designation offers opportunities to conserve and enhance the landscape that many people consider to be important as well as providing new opportunities for local businesses. The existing Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is calculated to be worth around £240M per year to tourism. There is concern amongst some that any further AONB designation would stop any future development in the area. This is not true; the designation merely seeks to conserve and enhance the area and there are numerous development applications approved across the AONBs both locally and nationally.

From late 2015 and into 2016 Natural England will be undertaking a consultation process on the proposals. I would encourage you to take part so that Natural England understands the view of people that live, work in and visit the area. This consultation will include detailed mapping of the area that Natural England is looking at. Further information about the process is available on our website at www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/about-us/aonb-boundary-review

Simon Amstutz, AONB Manager

Housing Development Impact on Birds

Planning applications in the pipeline for housing developments around the Stour estuary include: 285 dwellings plus a nursing home, convenience/retail development and health centre on the old HMS Ganges site at Shotley Gate; 78 dwellings at Holbrook; 320 dwellings plus employment units, community space and playing fields at Brantham; two adjacent plots for 300 and 360 houses at Mistley; and 71 dwellings at Ramsey near Bathside Bay, Harwich.

All these extra people bring extra pressure on the estuaries in terms of walkers, dogs, cyclists, kite flyers, water users, people wanting to launch craft, anglers, litter, noise, tranquillity...

The AONB team is working with Suffolk County Council to develop measures to inform new residents about the special qualities of the area, for birds in particular, and ask them to respect the needs of wintering birds especially by keeping dogs on leads on river walks etc.

Anglian Water, who run the Alton Water Park accessible from Stutton and Tattingstone, are planning a dog off the lead play area.

Haidee Stephens, Suffolk Estuaries Officer



New Cycle Explorer Guides

Our five new Guides help you explore the Suffolk coast:

- Alton Water & Pin Mill
- Woodbridge & Waldringfield
- Snape & Orford
- Dunwich & Minsmere
- Rendlesham Forest & Shingle Street



See page 7 for further information and full details of the Alton Water and Pin Mill Cycle Explorer Guide.

Risk of Flooding

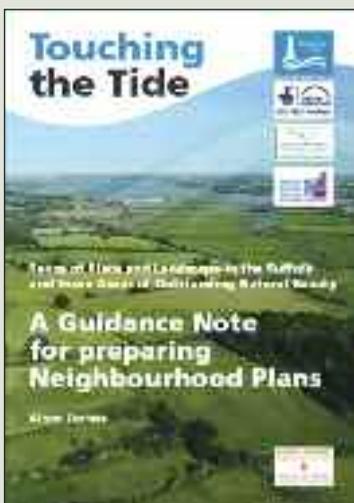
The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is an amazing place. However, some of it is at risk of flooding. If you are a resident or planning a visit, take a look at the Environment Agency's website to check the live flood warning information.



There are three levels of warnings: Flood Alert, Flood Warning and Severe Flood Warning. Flood Alerts warn of possible flooding to low lying land and roads, Flood Warnings are issued if property is likely to flood, and we only issue Severe Flood Warnings if there is danger to life. If you receive a Flood Warning message this is the time to take action to prepare yourself and your property for any impacts.

If you would like any further information on flood risk you can contact your local Environment Agency office on 03708 506 506, ring Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or look at the website www.gov.uk/environment-agency.

You can follow Floodline on twitter @envagency or Facebook www.facebook.com/environmentagency



Good Neighbours

Neighbourhood Plans give communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood.

The AONBs have produced a guidance document in conjunction with our HLF project Touching the Tide. It's aimed at Parish Councillors and anyone else with an interest in shaping their local place through the planning system.

For more information see www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/publications/understanding-the-aonb

Balloon Releases

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB considers that balloon and sky lantern releases have the potential to adversely impact upon the special qualities of the area, and are not supported by the Partnership.

There is a risk of harm or death to wildlife and livestock (ingestion, entanglement, entrapment, panic) from released balloons and sky lanterns. Unexpired sky lanterns pose a significant fire hazard. Both contribute to the defacement of land by litter and waste.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the natural beauty of the finest landscapes in England and Wales is conserved and enhanced. Occasionally we issue statements outlining our position on specific issues. Other position statements can be seen on our website.



A razorbill meets its death after becoming entangled in a balloon.

Photo by Christine McGuinness, Marine Conservation Society

An Outstanding Quiz

How well do you know the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Suffolk and Essex? Take our online quiz to discover the extent of your knowledge – and to learn so much more!

- What are the special landscape features of our AONBs?
- How many long distance paths are there?
- Who wrote *We Didn't Mean to go to Sea*?
- Where would you find a devil's coach horse?

These and many other questions make up the online training quiz originally developed for tourism businesses in the AONBs as part of the Outstanding Landscapes project. Since its launch in March 2015, nearly 50 tourism businesses in the AONBs have been involved in this EU-funded programme of activities and events demonstrating that landscape features can increase visitor enjoyment, encourage repeat business and help build a stronger year-round visitor economy.

Using feedback from the tourism businesses taking part in the workshops and tours, the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and Dedham Vale AONB have now launched the online quiz – which is free and accessible to everyone. There are two quizzes, each specialising in an AONB.

Each question in the quiz gives you four options, and lots of information on the correct answer. There are 40 questions covering species and habitat, places and attractions, heritage and culture, sounds and stories, and icons.

On completion you receive a certificate and a useful pack of information, including guides to the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and a copy of the quiz questions and answers for further reference.

Go to www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org and www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org to register for the quiz. You can keep up with all the latest Outstanding Landscapes news via social media using #outstandinglandscapes and #outstandinglandscapesquiz.



At the Johnsons

Kay and Martin Johnson run a 4 star bed and breakfast business close to Alton Water, within the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, and conveniently placed for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley too.

"The more knowledge and information that we can assemble the better the experience our guests will have of our beautiful area," say Kay and Martin, who attended the launch of the Outstanding Landscapes project in March 2015 at Christchurch Mansion.

"Our guests welcome advice on where to go and what to do. We want to provide added value and hope that they will return. Our website gives lots of information about the area in advance, and we keep leaflets and books in the rooms. Most of our guests want to have a natter and to find out more about the countryside.

This quiz is an excellent opportunity for us to acquire more in-depth knowledge that we can pass on to our guests."
www.atthejohnsons.co.uk

Examples of quiz questions:

Want to know the answers? Take the quiz!

Register at www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org and www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org

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Looking after our saltmarshes

Haidee Stephens, Suffolk Estuaries Officer, seeks some solutions for sustaining saltmarshes

Photo of Haidee supplied by Archant



Suffolk's first Saltmarsh Conference was held on 8th October 2015 at Snape Maltings, within sight of the beautiful Alde-Ore estuary.

We had an overwhelming response as soon as we advertised the conference and were at capacity in just 10 days, receiving bookings from local residents, professionals and environmental charities from Suffolk and from as far away as Glasgow and Wales. The event also attracted researchers and academics who are improving our understanding of saltmarsh and how valuable it is to people as well as wildlife. A line-up of eminent speakers included experts in coastal managed realignment projects, saltmarsh ecology, local restoration schemes and economics.

The last may be a surprise but there is an enthusiasm to develop a market in wetlands and saltmarsh, as they have a real benefit to society as a carbon sink as well as for coastal protection. This could provide the funds for restoration that are so badly needed.

The conference aimed to increase communication between practitioners and academics, support the practical projects being undertaken to restore saltmarsh with and by the community in the Suffolk estuaries, and give weight to the argument that this is a resource that deserves sustained and reliable funding.

Internationally important wetlands

All the Suffolk estuaries are considered internationally important wetlands as they contain really quite special habitats – the glistening mudflats at low tide, the whispering reedbeds near inlets and creeks and the textured shelf of green-grey shrubby saltmarsh that you can see on a walk along the river walls are familiar to many of us but they are not commonplace at all. They are home to breeding birds in summer and of great value to significant populations of the world's migrating birds as a feeding and resting place in the winter months.

For example, the River Deben has 40% of Suffolk's saltmarsh, yet this resource, like in many other estuaries, is suffering from enlarging creeks and channels and from drowning under high tides. The plant species are changing too, with more grasses becoming dominant; and the edges are eroding in places creating cliffs against the river channel.

Aerial surveys show that areas of saltmarsh are becoming fragmented whilst anecdotal evidence is backing up the science to tell us that those river walls with saltmarsh in front of them fared better in the storm surge of 2013 than those without.

Saltmarsh is being recognised at last for the role it plays in buffering our earth flood defences from erosion by tides, waves and currents, and so it is not only a valuable community of plants and a habitat for birds and a valued element of our landscape but also an integral part of our flood defences.

Partnerships

Currently the AONB is working with community partnerships, the Internal Drainage Board Water Alliance, Environment Agency and Natural England on projects near Slaughden on the Alde-Ore, where our Sustainable Development Fund is helping the Alde-Ore Estuary Partnership to install simple barrier fencing to protect saltmarsh this winter. There are similar projects at Falkenham and Sutton and Waldringfield on the Deben and at Levington on the Orwell that was featured in the Summer 2015 AONB newspaper and on the BBC Countryfile programme in February 2015. Projects are trialling a range of natural and geotextile materials and methods in different geographical locations – all sites posing different challenges - and all are showing positive results, recognising that this is not something you can achieve in a hurry.

It is not easy to say precisely why our saltmarshes are suffering; the answer probably lies in a combination of factors including the presence of the sea walls that prevent the migration of saltmarsh inland, water chemistry, sediment supply, weather conditions and plant species changes, but we do know there is no reason to sit on our hands and watch it disappear while we find the answers.

Photos by Haidee Stephens. Below left: bird survey at Holbrook. Below right: saltmarsh on the Deben at Woodbridge. Above from top: saltmarsh project at Falkenham, sea lavender on the river Alde.



Touching the Tide – Still Going Strong!



Touching the Tide (TtT) is a three year Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Scheme hosted by the AONB. "After three fabulous years and £900,000 we'll end in Spring 2016," says Bill Jenman, above, Touching the Tide Project Manager. "We're in our last year and there's still an exciting winter programme. Check out our website at www.touchingthetide.org.uk and click on events."

Landscape Partnership Schemes like Touching the Tide do what they say on the tin – they're a Partnership, and they're about a Landscape, in our case the Suffolk Coast. Our Partnership is wide but firmly rooted in the community, with committed individuals and local organisations like Suffolk Coast Against Retreat (SCAR) on our governing board, alongside larger organisations such as RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and Suffolk County Council.

Touching the Tide is all about celebrating and conserving the heritage of our coast, and increasing understanding of coastal change. Suffolk has a very dynamic coastline, with erosion causing problems in some places, new land accreting in others, and a historic environment that is itself a product of how the shoreline has changed in the past. There are no easy answers here, and every 'solution' has its downsides.

We've carried out excavations on Saxon cemeteries and at the lost city of Dunwich, helped to create new nature reserves, run some very popular art workshops, assisted a few new graduates on the career ladder while protecting nesting little terns, and generally had a great time! All this has been done with the help of a wide range of delivery partners. So far we reckon we have directly touched the lives of over 10,000 people.

A lot of people are still learning about this beautiful and ever-changing coastline. There will be a legacy of new knowledge, more places for wildlife, and lots of keen volunteers. We hope we've brought people together, often from conflicting viewpoints. But in the end our success will be measured by the decisions taken and the choices made, that determine if the future of the Suffolk Coast will be as rich as its past.



Photos above by Jeremy Hennell James. Top: Bawdsey; below: Orfordness

Wild Adventures
under
Suffolk's Skies

Tidal Travel Log

Discover the Suffolk coast landscape at its wildest - in the autumn and winter months. A new series of landscape photography walks, part of the HLF Touching the Tide project, aims to collect memories of change along the Suffolk coastline through photographic exploration.

Six photography workshops will take place from 27th October 2015 to 5th March 2016 in Bawdsey, Thorpeness and Orford, for beginners and intermediates, including users of mobile phones and iPads. Other dates for groups are possible on demand.

The afternoon workshops start at a tearoom, with an introduction to the history of the area. We will make sure participants are comfortable with camera settings before heading out to be inspired by the open skies and the coastal landscape. All workshops include the 'Golden Hour' of photography and end after sunset.

The group will be tutored by photographer Jeremy Hennell James and guided by Monika Koch from Wild Adventures under Suffolk's Skies. Participants are supported with training and practice opportunities while taking in the coastal scenery, the wildlife and the history of the locations.

Price: £32 per person; booking via Monika@WASuffolk.co.uk. See www.wasuffolk.co.uk for more information.
Monika Koch

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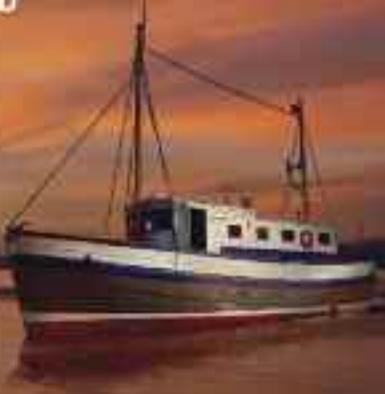
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To advertise in the Spring / Summer 2016 edition please call Greg on 01728 622030

Enjoying two AONBs



New Cycle Explorer Guides

Are you keen to cycle AND explore the AONB at the same time? Then the new Adnams AONB Cycle Explorer Guides are just what you need!

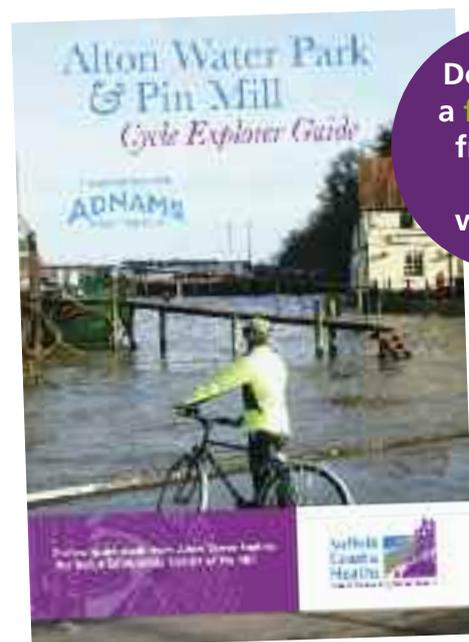
There are five new Guides to help you explore the Suffolk coast:

- Alton Water & Pin Mill
- Woodbridge & Waldringfield
- Rendlesham Forest & Shingle Street
- Snape & Orford
- Dunwich & Minsmere

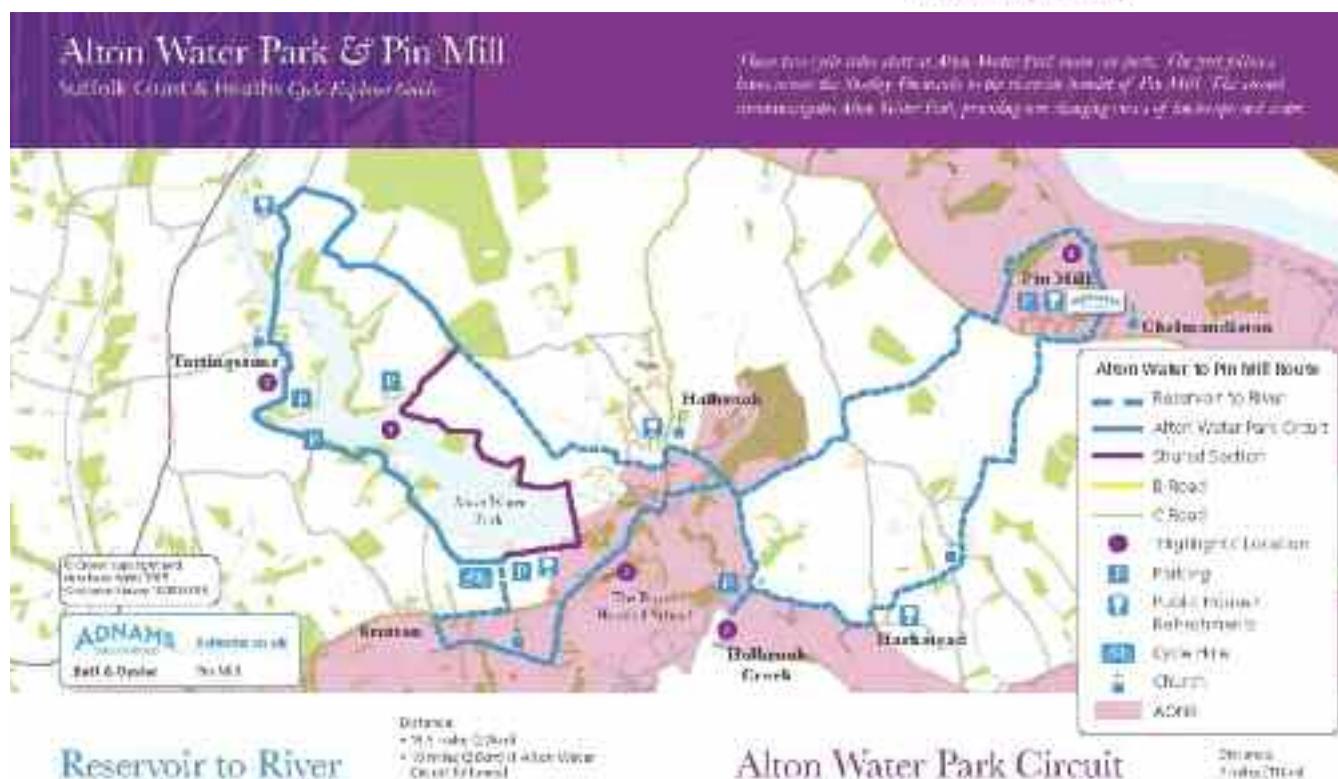


These guides, similar in style to the highly successful AONB walking Explorer Guides, offer a selection of what to see along the way, Route Highlights, a map and directions. There is also a range of route lengths from 12.5 to 27.5 miles (20 to 44.5 km) showing short cuts or extensions were possible. Included in each one is the AONB Safe Cycling Guide, with tips on keeping yourself and others safe so everyone can share the views and enjoy the roads together.

As Adnams, sponsor of the five Guides, says: "Cycling is a fun, inclusive and healthy way to enjoy the beautiful county we live in and it's made even better by a refreshing drink in one of our pubs at the end of your adventure!" Download a free copy from the AONB website.



Download a free copy from the AONB website!



Alton Water Park & Pin Mill Suffolk Coast & Heaths Cycle Explorer Guide

Alton Water Park is set in the beautiful countryside of the Shotley Peninsula. Quiet roads lead to Pin Mill, a well-known riverside hamlet with links to the children's author Arthur Ransome.

Route Highlights

1 Alton Water Park. The reservoir was created between 1974 and 1987 to supply water to Ipswich and Felixstowe. Alton Water Park is owned and managed by Anglian Water. Before the reservoir was built, several farms and a watermill nestled in the valley. To preserve local heritage, Alton Watermill was dismantled and relocated to the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket.

Today, Alton Water Park provides a home for many plants and animals. Thousands of water birds such as wigeon, pochard and teal spend the winter here. Summer visitors include chiffchaff and common tern. Anglian Water has created nature reserve areas to encourage more wildlife.

2 The Royal Hospital School occupies the buildings on either side of the B1080 road in Holbrook. The school was founded in Greenwich in 1712, moving to its present site in 1933. The distinctive buildings were designed by Arts and Crafts architect Herbert Tudor Buckland. The bell tower is a local landmark and the bells toll throughout the day. Until recently, entry to the school was limited to boys from seafaring families. Although this no longer applies and the school is co-educational, the maritime links are proudly maintained.

3 Holbrook Creek is one of many tidal inlets on the River Stour. The reed beds and salt marshes are a great habitat for wildlife, particularly birds. Avocet, ringed plover and redshank are year-round residents, whilst reed warblers arrive in the spring. Migrating birds, including geese, sandpipers and greenshank can be spotted in the spring and autumn as they stop to rest and feed. The nearby mudflats also provide a magic, sticky habitat for plants and animals.

4 Pin Mill is a beautiful waterside hamlet. It was once the centre of a thriving barge-building industry, supplying vessels to transport goods to and from Ipswich and beyond. Barges still anchor off the village and boat-building continues on a smaller scale. Arthur Ransome, the famous children's author, lived in the village in the 1930s. His novel, *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea*, begins at Pin Mill. Ransome was a keen sailor and his yacht, *Nancy Blackett*, has been saved by the Nancy Blackett Trust.

5 The Tattingsstone Wonder is an illusion! In the 1700s, the local squire, Edward White, wanted to improve the view from his house, Tattingsstone Place. He did this by building a false tower on a row of cottages to create the outline of a church. The tower only has three sides and is open at the back. (Alton Water Park route only)

On Your Bike!

Whether you're an avid cyclist or you're planning your first cycle ride, Suffolk is a great place to get on your bike. And with it being Suffolk's Year of Cycling, there's no better time to explore the county.

From quiet lanes undulating through beautiful countryside to adrenalin pumping off-road tracks, there's something for everyone.

The Suffolk Coastal Cycle Route is a circular signed route from Felixstowe to Dunwich on quiet roads along the coast before looping inland via the market towns of Framlingham and Woodbridge.

Much of the 88 mile (142km) route lies within the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. The full route is ideal for weekend tours, and there are many opportunities for detours and short cuts to make day rides, including off-road tracks in three forests.

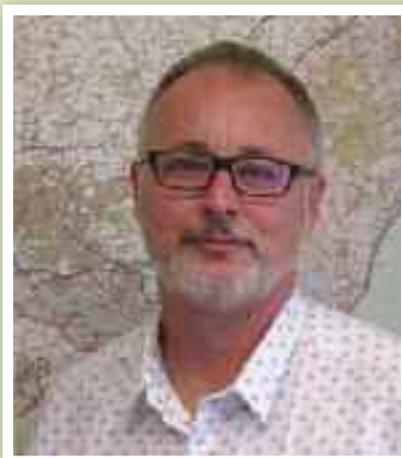
See www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/things-to-do/cycling/

Keep up to date with all the events and activities taking place during Suffolk's Year of Cycling at www.suffolksyearofcycling.co.uk and share your experiences of cycling in the AONB @SuffolkSpokes

Helen Raven, Suffolk County Council



Photo of cyclists on Dunwich Beach by Cathy Shelbourne



Simon Amstutz AONB Manager

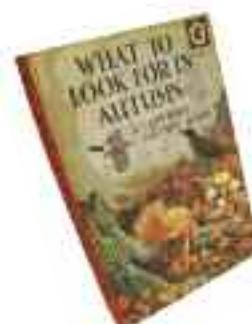
- Get up very early (daybreak) and walk the footpath between Dedham and Stratford St Mary (A12) and look for otters. If you are quiet enough you might see an actual otter, otherwise, look out for footprints and spraints that smell like cut grass. Then retire to Dedham to enjoy warming refreshments!
- Enjoy a walk at Arger Fen for autumnal colours and then on to Bures for a pub lunch.



Paula Booth AONB Officer

- My favourite thing to do on a bright wintery day is to put some homemade soup in a flask and head off to a beautiful spot for a walk and winter picnic.
- Suffolk Coast & Heath: From Snape, through the reed beds and on to Iken, you are pretty much guaranteed to be rewarded with the sights and sounds of the overwintering birds that feast on the rich intertidal mudflats found here.
- Dedham Vale and Stour Valley: The low mist hanging over the river valleys on an autumnal morning really is a beautiful sight and a feast for any keen photographer. Walking from Sudbury to Long Melford is a well-loved walk and a great way to spend a few hours enjoying the tranquillity of being close to the river.

What to look for in Autumn and Winter and where to go



The AONB team reveal their favourites - and suggest good places to go to watch wildlife or enjoy the countryside



Richard Brockman AONB Project Support Officer



- I like to walk the quieter river footpaths observing the winter wader flocks and hoping for a rare sighting of hen harriers. These elegant raptors breed on the moorlands but are sometimes seen on coasts and estuaries during the winter months.
- A good volunteer project for all birdwatchers to get involved with is the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) which is co-ordinated by the BTO and RSPB and aims to monitor the population and distribution of waterbirds in the UK.

Emma Black Countryside Officer, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project

- Take a sunset walk along the footpath from Flatford to Cattawade Marshes to see the autumn glow on the reeds and watch the migrant birds fly in.
- Forage for nuts, fruit and berries from hedgerows to make jams, cordials, fillings for warming puddings, as you walk one of the 'Walks Off the Stour Valley Path.'
- Walk through Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Arger Fen and Spouses Grove reserve to see the beautiful autumnal colours and fungi. Head to Assington Farm Shop and café afterwards for light refreshments or to buy local varieties of apple.



Cathy Smith Communications, Funding and Development Officer



- I particularly like the autumn colours of the heaths, so I'll be heading off to Dunwich and Westleton, where you can also see and hear the red deer rut on the heath, using the new Adnams Cycle Explorer Guide for that area.
- Autumn is also an ideal time for undertaking tasks that help with the conservation of our wildlife areas. The Stour Valley and Suffolk Coast Volunteers are regularly out and about planting, clearing and managing sites, and always welcome new helpers.



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Neil Catchpole Countryside Officer, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project

- Get yourself a Granary Pat [a big round granary loaf with a crusty, floury bottom – available in large and small] from Lavenham bakery in the market square, a big lump of cheese and a bottle of Suffolk cider, and sit your back against one of the magnificent old oaks beside the footpaths above the Box Valley. Speak softly and make no sudden movements and wonder at how soon the wildlife returns to its daily tasks, especially as this season's young discover that food is becoming more difficult to find.
- Now that the bare bones of the countryside are visible once again, and there are a few more muddy paths to follow, download a basic guide, keep your eyes down, and try your hand at tracking. Foxes, badgers, deer and the smaller mammals, which are starting to range further afield as they mature and disperse, will betray their regular tracks and trails. Sketch the routes in a note-book, creep quietly back at dawn or dusk, and see if your detective work has paid off. Children and the young at heart will love to have a go at making plaster-casts of the tracks you find, especially if you come across the pad-mark of the elusive otter on a wet riverbank.



Alex Moore da Luz River Stour Project Officer

- A fantastic place to get a really good view of the migrant birds that come into the Stour estuary in the Autumn and Winter is at The Walls in Manningtree. The road hugs the shoreline and you can get so close to the waterfowl and waders that you can easily identify birds such as black tailed godwits – which makes it ideal for bird-watching beginners too.
- Cattawade marshes, on the other side of the estuary, just off the A137, is also good for waterfowl and waders.



Neil Lister Countryside Officer, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

- Hunker down inland of any of the Suffolk estuaries just before high tide (in the lee of some cover). Wait and see what types of shoreline birds fly overhead as they are pushed off their feeding grounds by the rising tide. You might see greenshank, golden plover, teal, dunlin or many other species.
- There are about 4,000 species of fungi to be found in Suffolk, hundreds of which can be encountered growing in our countryside. The sandy soil areas of the coast and Breckland tend to be more productive than the rest of the county, so a walk anywhere in the Coast & Heaths with your 'toadstool hat' on will be a great experience (ED: although we asked Neil for a photo of him in this headgear, he tells us that the pixies have requested no publicity). It is best to look and not pick, but if you can't resist picking these are some simple guidelines: Go out with someone who knows what they are looking at and follow the 'fungi pickers' code' see, www.leics.gov.uk/fungi_code_of_conduct_2012.pdf



Haidee Stephens Suffolk Estuaries Officer

Go birdwatching at Holbrook Creek, on the river Stour: park in the car park at Lower Holbrook and walk about 200m on a gravel path down to the estuary. The sight of the water comes as a surprise as you break out of the trees and step onto the embankment – this is where a sluice lets the water drain back to the estuary from a nice little reedbed at low tide.

You can walk westwards along the sea wall and see lots of sea birds and waders feeding on the mud flats at low tide or perched rather comically one on each of a long line of wooden posts, which are

almost submerged at high tide. Keep your eyes open and you're almost sure to see the vivid blue flash of a kingfisher as they have a fondness for Environment Agency structures and there are quite a few of these built through the sea walls here.

You'll probably hear 'the sentinel of the marshes' before you see it – the redshank is quite a feisty character with a shrill persistent call and you'll see a flash of black and white underwing as it moves across the saltmarshes, often coming quite close to you.

You'll get the best view of the birds if you're quiet, don't wear bright colours and are prepared to stand or sit and watch awhile – bring a flask of hot drink and lots of warm and windproof clothes to keep the chill off and a pair of binoculars or better still a telescope if you can borrow one for the day.

Birds in winter need to reserve their energy so please try not to startle them yourself or by letting your dog run off the lead. That's very important to remember, and if you can pass that message on to a friend you'll be doing the world's migratory birds which choose our estuaries a good turn. (No Tern jokes here...)



Lynda Gilbert Countryside Officer, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

- Listen and watch the fallow deer rut. My favourite place is Hollesley Commons, around Barthorps Folly.
- A great place any time of the year is Staverton Thicks near Rendlesham. It's a fantastic woodland of ancient oaks and hollies, great for trees, deer, birds, fungi and dappled light.



Photo of Haidee Stephens by EADT



Barn owl by Jon Evans

Owl Project Ten Years On

Project Director Steve Piotrowski celebrates the first ten years of the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project (SCBOP)

SCBOP is dedicated to the successful conservation of barn owls. Our principal partners are Suffolk Ornithologists Group, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and BTO, but a number of smaller independent projects also fall under the SCBOP umbrella including those administered by Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project, Thornham Owl Project and Suffolk Owl Sanctuary.

Throughout 2015 we've held a series of special events, starting with my lecture tour and workshops, and ending in a special talk on 19th October in Halesworth by Dr Colin Shawyer, author of *The Barn Owl* www.halesworthartsfestival.org.uk

The Project was very proud to receive Suffolk County Council's Greenest County Award in the Landscape and Diversity category early in 2015.

The Project has been awarded £2,000 from each of the AONBs' Sustainable Development Funds, with an additional £1,000 from Touching the Tide Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Scheme. This money will allow us to repair or replace dilapidated boxes in the two AONB areas. In addition, a further £1,000 has been raised by Waveney Bird Club, so boxes in the Waveney Valley can also be repaired or replaced as and when necessary.

The Project has advised on the fixing of over 1,800 barn owl nest boxes throughout Suffolk, on nature reserves, farmland and on community spaces like village greens and school grounds. In addition, the success of the project has resulted in requests for the fixing of boxes just across the boundaries in Norfolk and Essex. By providing an extended connected network of good habitat and nesting opportunities, we can give the barn owls the fighting chance they need to thrive.

The Project involves the whole community and the boxes are made by local organisations and monitored by an army of expert volunteers each year. This system of raising awareness, creating nesting opportunities and managing suitable nearby habitat is having a positive effect on barn owl populations across Suffolk. This is a project of which all Suffolk people can call their own and be proud of.

What do Barn Owls need?

An indication of how barn owls are faring is by the number of chicks ringed. Last year nearly 1,000 barn owls were ringed whereas indications for 2015 show that the total is unlikely to exceed 400, roughly a 50-60% reduction. It should be noted that we await results of nearly half of the boxes that are monitored annually and we are aware of the presence of many late broods. This year is most unusual in that there is a double first-egg laying period, with many laying their first egg around the usual time of 20th April and then another batch laying in the second week of June. Boxes containing late broods are being monitored; it will be interesting to note whether these late broods will fare better.

To sustain good barn owl numbers there must be enough prey. Short-tailed voles need a particular type of habitat - rough, tussocky grass that they can move through in tunnels and that provides their own source of food and nesting habitat. This habitat, in close proximity to correctly positioned barn owl nest boxes, provides the ideal conditions for the owls to hunt.

Currently, much of the county's grassland is 'managed' by too much grazing or frequent cutting. The project is committed to offer advice to provide the grassland that barn owls favour across the county - with the benefits extending well beyond barn owls and voles. This habitat is scarce and precious, it holds up entire ecosystems from diverse flora to many species of invertebrates that use it for overwintering.

Could it be that Suffolk barn owls are able to diversify more than those found elsewhere? When food is plentiful, barn owls will continue to take food to the nest and form larders. Larders have been few and far between this year, but those that have been found show a good selection long-tailed field mice and common, pygmy and rare water shrews.

If you'd like to help the Project, come along to our free training course, due to take place in February 2016 at Heveningham Hall. Please call on 01986 893311 or email spiotrowski@btinternet.com.



ABOVE: Steve Piotrowski from the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project (SCBOP) during a talk to children at Bawdsey County Primary School. Photo by Kathy Piotrowski.

Alex and Rosie's Adventures in Suffolk

David Blakesley, from Autism and Nature, introduces a book which helps younger children with autism to engage with natural places in the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.

Autism and Nature staff are working on an illustrated story book for younger children with autism and related disabilities. Alex and Rosie's Adventures in Suffolk describes the adventures of two children as they visit the natural places featured in our recent publication *Visiting the Suffolk countryside: a guide for parents and teachers of children with autism*. The book will feature clear and attractive illustrations, simple language and Widgit symbols for children with speech and language difficulties who rely on visual supports. The book should help autistic children to understand and visualise what they might see and experience in the countryside, and what activities they might undertake at particular places.

Natural places visited by Alex and Rosie include Westleton Heath, Snape Warren, Sutton Common and Walberswick. The book will be published towards the end of 2015 and will be free of charge. For more information about Autism and Nature and its publications for adults and children, please visit our website www.autismandnature.org.uk.

The book is being funded by Dedham Vale AONB and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB; and the Martineau Fund and Bluebell Fund (through Suffolk Community Foundation).



So Much More than the View

England's finest landscapes contribute more than £20bn each year to our economy, similar to that of Birmingham, according to a new report. The publication 'So much more than the view...' from England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and National Parks, highlights the wide range of benefits these iconic areas provide to society.

Did you know?

- More than two thirds of people in England live within half an hour's travel of a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- AONBs and National Parks welcome more than 260 million visitors who spend in excess of £6bn and support thousands of jobs and more than 85,000 businesses

- They provide a base for businesses that rely on a high quality environment; creative and sporting inspiration; homes for people and wildlife; food and drink; and life enhancing experiences for millions of visitors of all ages.

"Our British landscapes are among the most beautiful and precious in the world," says Environment Minister Rory Stewart. "And such land remains central to the British imagination, to our souls and to our identity. We have a deep obligation to protect this land, its farms and its communities."

www.landscapesforliferesources.org.uk/images/uploads/pdf/So_much_more_than_the_view.pdf

Filming the AONBs

Working with local businesses, organisations and communities, five 2-minute films have been produced which feature and highlight the landscape, wildlife, heritage and seasons of the Suffolk and Essex AONBs. Nick Boulter and film cameraman Carl Stickley spent over 12 months filming in locations selected to show the diversity and attractiveness of the areas.

The films are free for businesses and organisations to upload and embed on to their websites, blogs or social media. By doing so, the local economy benefits from helping to raise the profile of the area in general, and local food, drink and accommodation in particular can be highlighted. This will increase visits out of season and assist local businesses to develop and build retail opportunities that do not currently exist.

"A growing number of people now use the internet to access information on-line," says Nick Boulter, who has many years' experience in radio broadcasting and internet technology. "This film making project is a modern, innovative way to gain information about the history and environmental issues which gives visitors more appreciation of the area."

As part of the project young people were invited to attend a workshop and a practical demonstration on film-making with feedback given by Carl Stickley, who has worked extensively in television and films, and now teaches in FE colleges.

This project was funded by the Amenity and Accessibility Fund (AAF) and Sustainability Development Fund (SDF) with additional help from the AONB team. The videos can be viewed on the AONB websites. To use these films to promote your business please contact nick@pebble-media.co.uk.





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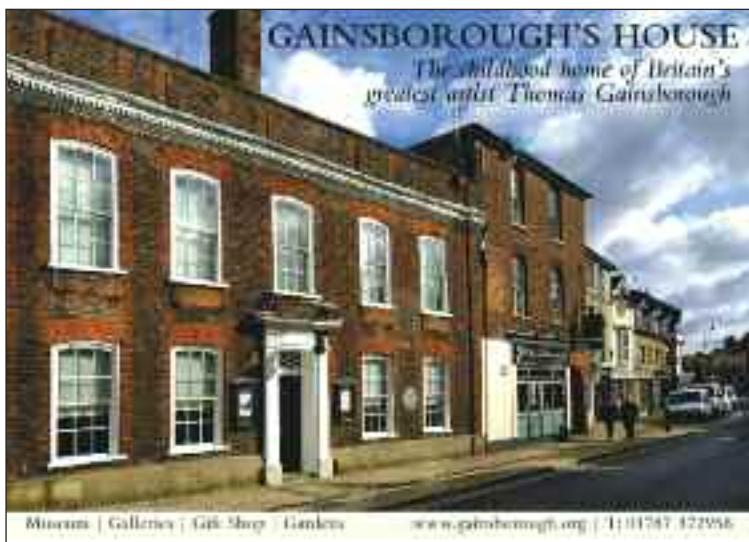
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Coastal Communities Fund projects



Come as a Guest, Leave as a Friend

Do you think the Suffolk Coast is special? Do you want to tell visitors from near and far how much you love the area and how they can enhance their experience of visiting too? Then this new Suffolk Coast Greeters scheme will be for you!



The Suffolk Coast Greeters programme is an exciting activity which offers visitors to the area the chance to enjoy a personal welcome from a local host. Founded in August 2015, the Suffolk Coast Greeters are volunteers from the local area who are friendly and enthusiastic, as well as passionate about our beautiful AONB. Greeters are volunteers who share their local knowledge with visitors from both the UK and abroad. The 'Greets' are average two-hours and for up to six people and are on a range of topics, from local gems to visit, wildlife and nature reserves, art and architecture to culture and cuisine.

If you are involved in the tourism industry then telling people about this opportunity could be a great way to offer something extra, and we hope they will leave feeling like a friend, to return for another visit or two soon!

Becoming a volunteer Suffolk Coast Greeter will suit people who enjoy variety, like meeting people and talking to groups, have a friendly and helpful nature, enjoy being outdoors and like to share their knowledge of the wonders along the Suffolk coast. Get in touch now for further information! www.suffolkcoastgreeters.org.uk Telephone 01394 445225 or e-mail SuffolkCoastGreeters@gmail.com

Volunteer Holidays

In a similar vein, linking volunteers and tourism, we are pleased to confirm that the Volunteer Holidays project is also taking shape and by Spring 2016 we will be offering our first conservation holidays! By offering hands-on wildlife conservation activities, along with quality accommodation and food, we will have a new way for visitors to enjoy the AONB all year round! Contact Cathy Smith at the AONB to find out more.

Perfectly Seasoned on the Suffolk Coast

Whatever your interests, however you like to spend your holiday, the Suffolk Coast is a great place to spend your free time, whether you only have a few hours or the luxury of many days or weeks. The Suffolk Coast really comes into its own in the Autumn, Winter and Spring, with festivals and events to brighten up the shorter days. Come for the weekend, or an out-of-season break. Perfectly seasoned – whatever the time of year.

The Suffolk Coast website www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk provides a window into what's available – including



Painting and willow fish-making workshops at Aldeburgh Cinema for children, inspired by the film Song of the Sea

Young Audiences in Suffolk Coastal

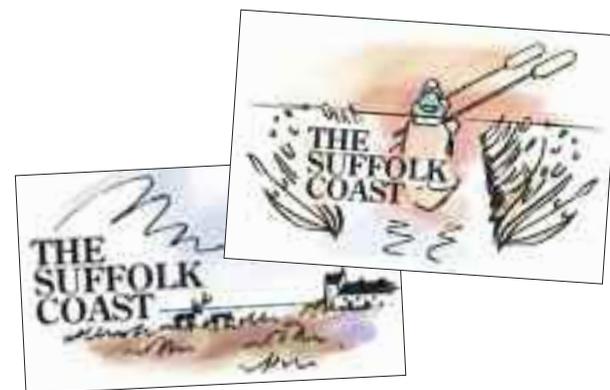
Aldeburgh Cinema has embarked on an ambitious project to develop classy, entertaining, inspiring year-round movie related activities for residents and visitors of Aldeburgh and the Suffolk Coast. The aim is to expand activities, particularly for children, young people and families, to help make Suffolk Coastal an ever more exciting place to live and visit. It's supported by the Coastal Communities Fund through Suffolk Coastal District Council.

It all began in summer 2015 with a series of film screenings and accompanying activities at Aldeburgh Cinema. Inspired by the wonderful Oscar nominated film Song of the Sea, a series of painting and willow fishmaking workshops gave 4-10 year old girls and boys a chance to produce some really beautiful work.

Aldeburgh Cinema currently works with the general public, as well as schools and teachers, on scheduling fun screenings and activities, and school screenings to tie in with curricula. The result is a Film Festival with and for children and young people in the Spring half term holiday 2016.

For more details of all activities and screenings, and the Festival, please visit www.aldeburghcinema.co.uk

Louisa Thorp, Aldeburgh Cinema



accommodation, events, videos, photography and articles, plus updates, news and occasional competitions. If you prefer social media, 'like us' or 'follow us' at www.facebook.com/thesuffolkcoast and www.twitter.com/thesuffolkcoast. Look out for the Suffolk Coast brand images depicting the Suffolk coastline. These new images plus other promotions are part of the campaign funded by the Coastal Communities Fund to develop seasonal interest for visitors.

Fiona Johnson, The Suffolk Coast

Volunteer News

Many people continue to dedicate their spare time and support the AONB in achieving different projects which help us to protect and enhance our great landscapes.

Suffolk Coast & Heaths Countryside Officer Lynda Gilbert reports on some recent major initiatives.

Beachwatch

Beachwatch organisers along the Suffolk/Essex coast and estuaries work tirelessly to organise events throughout the year to clean our beaches and estuaries and pass valuable survey data to the Marine Conservation Society (MCS). The MCS encourage Beachwatch organisers to do four surveys per year – one per season ideally, and if not, do the Great British Beach Clean, which takes place annually over the third week-end in September.

These events are supported by the AONB who loan equipment to the Beachwatch organisers. Some organisers run events once a year, while others are out once a week!

The AONB Beachwatch volunteers have continued to meet at Shingle Street to collect and survey litter, despite the wind and threatening rain, and make a real difference to this beautiful and popular area for wildlife and people.

Keith Horn from The Felixstowe Society has been supporting a local Felixstowe company Damco (see box) to achieve their corporate social responsibility aims and has arranged for company employees to get involved in Beachwatch litter picks in Felixstowe. Other corporate groups involved this year include Ipswich Building Society and Wrigley's.



Let's Get Involved

Damco UK, part of the Maersk Group, launched its corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda with the tagline Let's Get Involved. The main objective was to help mobilise Damco's 250 UK and Ireland employees to work with local charities and good causes to help contribute to the local community and society in general.

One of the initiatives was the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) Beachwatch scheme. The purpose of Beachwatch is not just to clean beaches but to record the litter collected so that the MCS can identify the sources and target the main offenders, and so reduce the pollution in our seas and on our beaches. Discarded marine litter - some of which is dangerous as well as unsightly - kills thousands of seabirds, mammals and turtles every year, and detrimentally affects thousands more.

In June and September 2015 teams from Damco joined the Felixstowe Beachwatch scheme for the first time. Stuart Clarke, HR Director, Damco commented: "It's great for us as a company to get involved with the local community and to help support such an excellent initiative."

Great British Beach Clean

The annual Great British Beach Clean took place the third weekend of September. This is the MCS flagship event, now in its 22nd year. It represents the UK's input to the International Coastal Cleanup (representing 152 countries and locations), which occurs over the same weekend, providing a worldwide snapshot of marine litter.

Data collected by thousands of volunteers from hundreds of beaches around the UK is published by MCS the following spring in the Beachwatch Annual Report. This document is used at regional, national and international levels to raise awareness of the impacts of marine litter, to promote measures to reduce litter at source, and to campaign for better marine litter legislation. Some of the groups in Suffolk and Essex taking part included various Scout and Guide Groups, Parish Councils, East Suffolk Greenprint Forum, National Trust, RSPB, Adnams Plc, Rotary Clubs, Alexanders School and many individuals.



Volunteer Robin Gilbert repairing a footpath sign at Snape

Volunteers required for Sandlings Walk

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Countryside Officer and volunteers have been carrying out a full survey of the Sandlings Walk. Problems along the route such as obscured or missing signs are being rectified in Autumn 2015. The route has been altered at Snape to avoid walking along roads and to provide a more scenic way along the river and through the woods which border Snape Warren.

Tony Freeman has been the mainstay of the Sandlings Walk volunteer programme since 2007, carrying out surveys and practical tasks – but more volunteers are needed to help monitor and maintain this route. It would be great to have at least six volunteers who can assess the path once year, report problems, cut back vegetation and maintain signage.

If you can help, please contact Lynda Gilbert, Countryside Officer



Volunteers on the beach near Fort Green car park at Aldeburgh

Coast and Estuary Wardens

Coast and Estuary Wardens continue to provide us with valuable information about issues relating to erosion, litter, pollution, bait digging, dog fouling, disturbance and footpaths. This information is passed on to the relevant authorities who can then deal with problems which will help to conserve our area and make it a safer place for wildlife and people.

News from around the AONB

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Ian Barthorpe, RSPB Visitor Experience Officer, looks back at a very successful breeding season at Minsmere



New Minsmere fence leads to successful breeding season

As viewers of BBC Springwatch will be aware, the 2014 breeding season on the Minsmere Scrape resulted in almost complete failure due to predation by at least one badger that had burrowed under the anti-predator fence.

Over the last winter, RSPB staff and contractors worked hard to replace the ageing fence around the Scrape with a newer, higher specification fence. The new fence sits on dry ground, which necessitated constructing a low bank in places, and is dug deep below ground to prevent badgers and foxes from digging underneath it. Trail cameras around the Scrape fence revealed several attempts by badgers to dig underneath it, without success.

Thanks to the new fence keeping the Scrape free of mammalian predators, Minsmere has had its best breeding season for many years. Avocets fledged an impressive 58 chicks from 60 nests, and at least 130 common tern chicks have successfully fledged. It was also a good season for breeding black-headed gulls, redshanks and shelducks, with higher than usual fledging success.

This is, of course, great news for the conservation of these species, but also ensured that visitors enjoyed some amazing views of chicks and fledglings throughout the spring and summer.



Lapwing in June 2015 by Ian Barthorpe

Lapwing success at Minsmere

In March the Suffolk Wader Strategy workshop brought together conservation organisations from around East Anglia to explore ways to improve breeding habitat and success for nesting lapwings and other wading birds in Suffolk. Following this workshop, lapwings have enjoyed a record breeding season at one of their most important sites in the county, RSPB Minsmere.

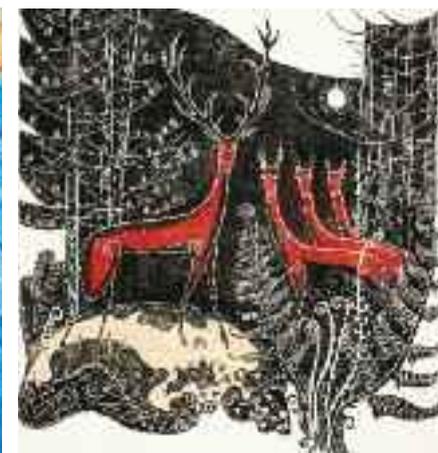
No fewer than 41 pairs nested across the reserve's varied habitats – the highest total on record. Although a few pairs did nest within the newly protected Scrape, the majority of the birds nested on the grazing marshes or around pools with the reedbed.

A few pairs also chose to nest on Minsmere's dry grasslands, a habitat mainly managed for stone-curlews, confirming that lapwings can readily adapt to a variety of habitats if they are managed sympathetically.

For more information about the Suffolk Wader Strategy, contact Ben McFarland at RSPB Minsmere email ben.mcfarland@rspb.org.uk or call him on 01728 648085

Wild about Suffolk

Among the Suffolk artists selected for the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's range of eight Christmas cards are Penny Bhadresa and Lucy Grossmith, who were inspired by Dunwich Beach and Rendlesham Forest in the AONB. Proceeds from the sale of these cards will be channelled into the Trust's river restoration work encouraging the return of brown trout, kingfishers and water voles. Buy online at www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/shop or at one of the 140 outlets countywide.



Examples of card illustrations: Otter Hunting Curlew Rising Moon, watercolour by Jackie Morris; and At the Forest Edge, linocut by Penny Bhadresa

LEADER Launch

The latest round of the LEADER rural development programme launches nationally on 14th October 2015. LEADER is a grant-funding programme for local businesses and organisations to help them carry out projects which create jobs, help business to grow and benefit the rural economy.

Locally, there are two new LEADER areas, the Heritage Coast and the Wool Towns, covering south Suffolk, coastal areas as well as much of north Essex. LEADER has six priorities for funding:

- Increasing farm productivity
- Support to micro and small businesses and farm diversification
- Boost rural tourism
- Provision of rural services
- Provision of cultural and heritage activities; and
- Increasing forestry productivity

The two areas each have a Local Development Strategy that guides their decision-making on funding applications. In addition to the six main programme priorities each area has specific priorities and objectives relating to the types of projects they are particularly keen to fund.

The Heritage Coast has the following objectives:

- Agricultural and other rural businesses to develop and diversify their businesses
- Support the growth and sustainability of tourism and leisure businesses
- Increasing the volume and value of food production and the development of local supply chains
- Activities designed to maximise the efficient use of natural resources
- Increasing the supply and diversity of timber products and supply chains
- Increasing opportunities for young people to access local employment and skills training
- Effective rural services

More information is available on the website www.suffolk.gov.uk/business-jobs-and-careers/funding-for-businesses-charities-and-projects/rural-development-funding/ or you can contact the Suffolk County Council team by email on ruraldevelopment@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk

Bawdsey Quay

An exciting new project is taking place at Bawdsey Quay, one of the prettiest places on the Deben peninsula. Bawdsey Parish Council is taking ownership of the Amenity Area at the Quay from Suffolk Coastal District Council and building a brand new visitor facility.

This three and a half acre wooded site was originally part of Sir Cuthbert Quilter's estate at Bawdsey Manor but has been neglected in recent times. As part of the regeneration the Parish Council has obtained planning permission to build an innovative visitor centre with café on the site, designed by award-winning architect, Ralph Carpenter of Modece Architects.

With the help of a Sustainable Development Fund grant from Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, plans are being prepared by landscape architects, Sheils Flynn of Kings Lynn, to make sensitive improvements to the layout of the site and to establish an outdoor classroom. Guided and advised by the AONB's Countryside Officer, Neil Lister, Bawdsey Primary School and Bawdsey Bird Club have each sponsored an owl box to be situated on the site in order to enhance its biodiversity. Local villagers are also supporting the project by sponsoring 20 bird and 20 bat boxes to be installed in the autumn.

Jenny Webb, Clerk of Bawdsey Parish Council



Hollesley school children visited the ruins in Dunwich and experienced its history through storytelling and poetry

I Am The Bell

Twenty-eight children from Hollesley Primary School took a trip to Dunwich as the starting point for the Eastfeast creative writing storytelling project funded by the Amenity and Accessibility Fund. The project was inspired by Kevin Crossley-Holland's Sea Tongue, with its evocative opening:

"I am the bell. I'm the tongue of the bell. I was cast before your grandmother was a girl. Before your grandmother's grandmother. So long ago."

The poem was read to children amongst the ruins of Dunwich by storyteller Suzanne Arnold. As well as visiting the ruins, museum and leper's chapel, they looked at the flora and fauna and discussed the erosion of the coast, from long ago and within living memory.

Back at school, the poem was used to study the story of Dunwich, prior to the devastating storm of 1286. The children took in all aspects of the history, society (past and current) and the changing geology and environment which was brought to life by the storyteller using visualisation and reflection. The children then wrote their own verses inspired by Sea Tongue and performed them to the whole school, parents, guests and governors.

Louisa Thorp, Eastfeast



A model of the new visitors' centre at Bawdsey

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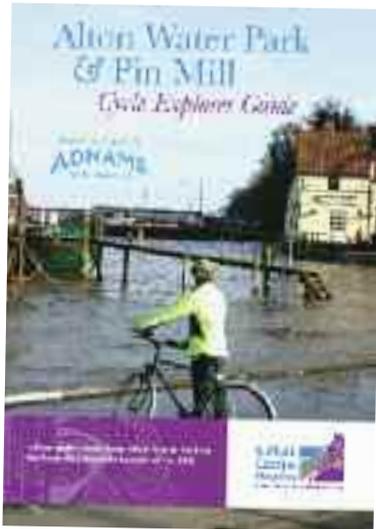
Publications available from the AONBs

The AONBs both offer a wide range of recreation guides which are FREE to download. On the Suffolk Coast you can choose from 14 Explorer routes including Alton Water, Kessingland and Shotley or, in the Dedham Vale, go 'Cycling through a Masterpiece' with routes through the Stour Valley, taking you to numerous locations of historical importance and past enchanting views.

If a challenging walk is more your style then try the Stour Valley Path as described in the above article or walk the Long Distance Routes of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. A pocket-sized guide (£12.95) incorporates the Suffolk Coast Path (Lowestoft to Felixstowe), the Stour and Orwell Walk (Felixstowe to Cattawade) and the Sandlings Walk (Ipswich to Southwold).

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB has also been busy developing the Adnams Cycle Explorer Guides (see page 7 for details).

Visit the Publications pages of the websites for more about all of these plus a wide range of interesting information about looking after the AONBs. Please email, phone or write to us to purchase publications, enclosing a cheque payable to Suffolk County Council.



What We Do!

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) consists of a small team whose focus is the conservation and enhancement of the special character of the Suffolk coast, including the Sandlings heaths and the five estuaries. The AONB team works in partnership with local authorities, government agencies, local and national organisations, and local people to deliver projects to conserve and enhance the area. The AONB team works across two AONBs, also caring for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org



Contacting the Team

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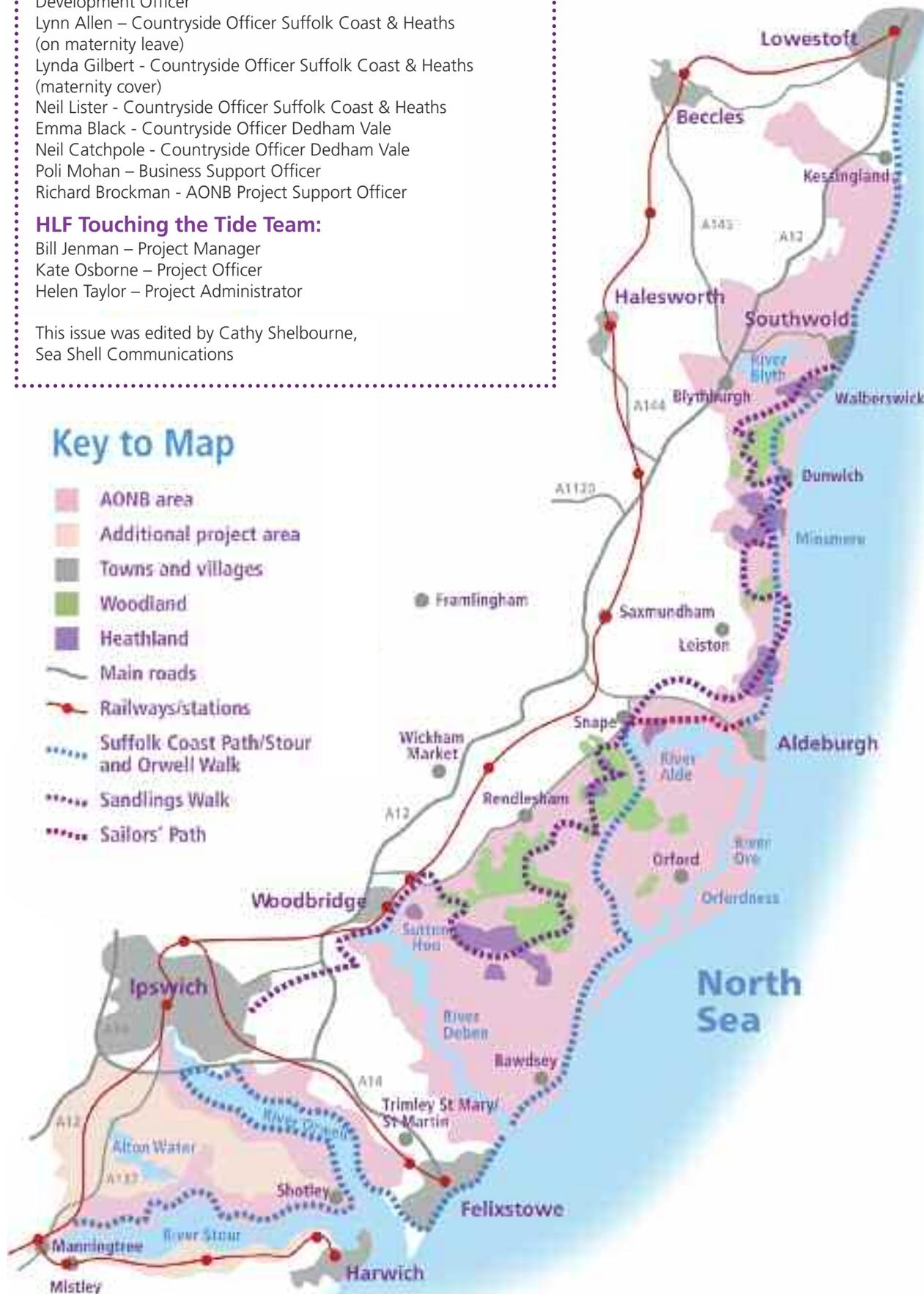
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 Haidee Stephens – Suffolk Estuaries Officer
 Alex Moore da Luz – River Stour Project Officer
 Cathy Smith – AONB Communications, Funding and Development Officer
 Lynn Allen – Countryside Officer Suffolk Coast & Heaths (on maternity leave)
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This issue was edited by Cathy Shelbourne,
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