

Suffolk Coast & Heaths

Autumn/Winter 2016/2017

FREE

Suffolk Coast & Heaths

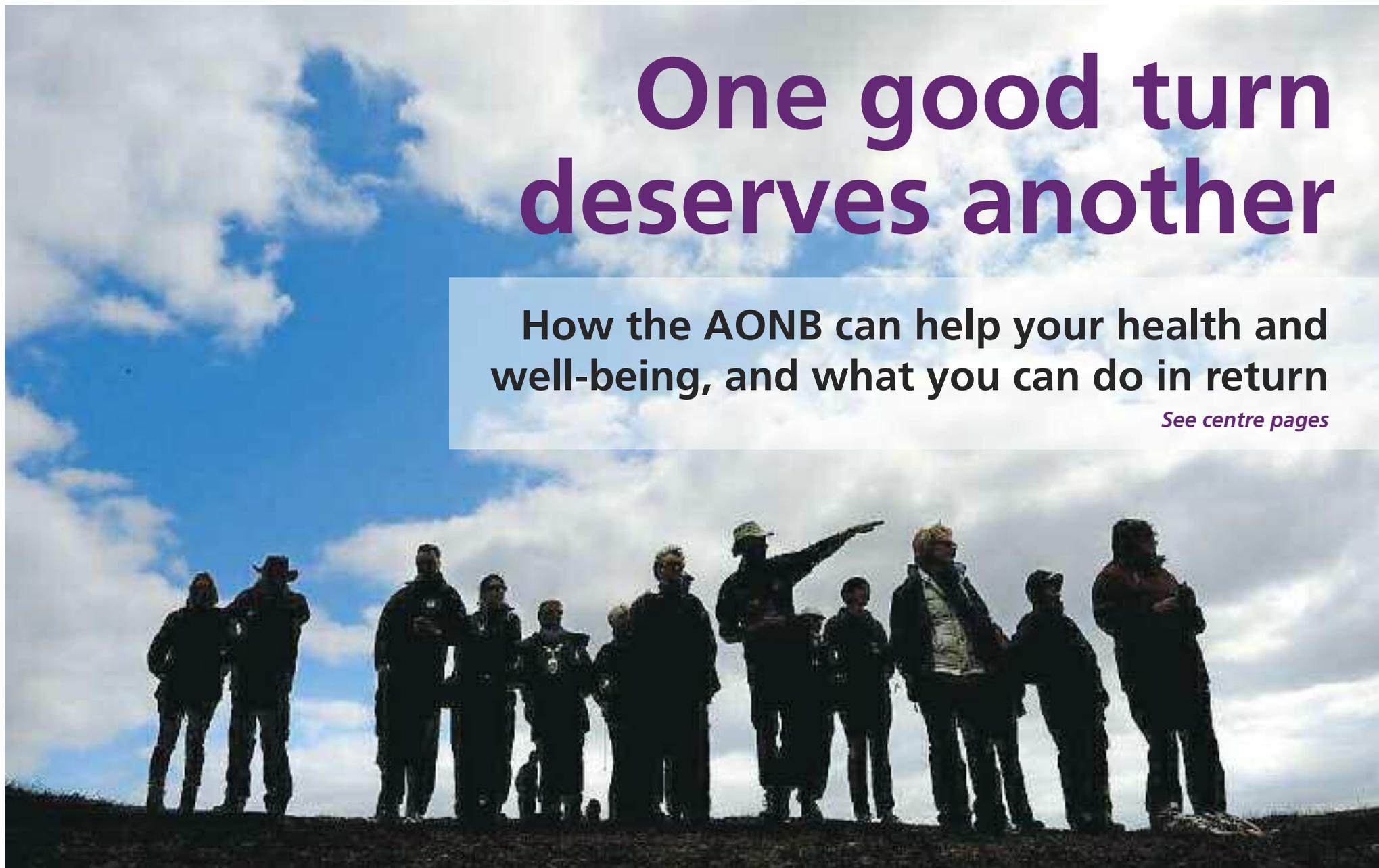
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



One good turn deserves another

How the AONB can help your health and well-being, and what you can do in return

See centre pages



Walkers at the launch of Suffolk's Year of Walking 2016 at RSPB Minsmere reserve



Jonathan Dyke at Suffolk Yacht Harbour by Cathy Shelbourne

Perfect harmony
Suffolk Yacht Harbour's Jonathan Dyke on sailing, stewardship - and muddy boots *Page 4*



Sunken Sandlings walk by Rosy Thornton

Mystery and history in the Sandlings
Local author Rosy Thornton explores timelessness *Page 3*



Wild Beach by John Ferguson

Going wild on the coast
Hands-on family workshops with wood, waves and wildlife *Page 14*

A Message from our Chairman



Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2016/17 edition of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) newspaper.

What an interesting year we've had! So many things we have taken for granted have been blown off course – perhaps not such an unusual experience if you live on or near the Suffolk coast – or come to an end.

In the wake of the Brexit storm we have had a government shake-up, and Lord Gardiner of Kimble is now Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity. We look forward to his support.

Changes are afoot locally too as we continue to consider the extension of the AONB boundary, and we will keep you informed via our website www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org. Sadly the wonderful Touching the Tide project has finally beached, although Project Manager Bill Jenman, who led so many amazing initiatives, is still with us, developing follow up ideas for a future funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

One thing that does remain constant though is the quality of our countryside. I've really enjoyed sharing my knowledge of the area, and appreciation of the work put in by so many people, when I've been talking to visitors as a Suffolk Coast Greeter, part of our Coastal Communities Fund project linking conservation volunteering with the visitor economy.

Once again, the National Association of AONBs held their annual celebration of our landscape during Outstanding Landscapes Week in September. Our AONB teams in Suffolk and Essex were at the Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival - what better place to taste the fruits of land?

Now is a great time to get out in the AONB. After the rush of Summer, Autumn and Winter gives us an opportunity to reflect and recharge our batteries. This issue of the newspaper looks at health and well-being – not just our own, but that of the AONB itself. On the centre pages you'll find some suggestions for where to go and what to do, and ideas you can put into practice for the benefit of our wildlife and countryside.

Councillor David Wood, Chairman
Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership

UK Power Networks goes underground

The lovely coastline and rivers of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB are due to be further enhanced by the removal of 10km of overhead powerlines between Ipswich and Felixstowe.

The work is part of a £30 million scheme and also includes laying two high voltage electricity cables under the rivers Stour and Orwell to boost power supplies to Felixstowe, Shotley and Harwich.

UK Power Networks, which owns and operates the electricity networks in the East of England, London and the South East, has carried out archeological investigations and dug bore holes ahead of the two-year project which will see 16km of 132kv cable installed between Ipswich and Felixstowe. The scheme also involves 33kV cables being installed into Shotley and Harwich to provide underground supplies to regions currently supplied by overhead lines. The development is set to be the longest drilling scheme ever

undertaken by the company, which will install two 1.1km and 1.7km directional drills underneath the rivers.



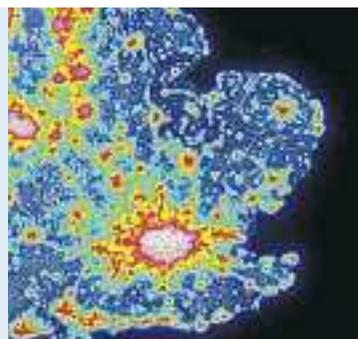
Chris Sugars, project manager at UK Power Networks, said: "The project is very challenging, not only because we will be drilling beneath two rivers and laying more than 35km of cable in total, but large swathes of the land adjoining the rivers is of historic and natural importance and so we have been consulting with a number of organisations to safeguard the wildlife, habitat and any possible ancient artefacts which may be in the ground." Work began in September 2016 and is due to be completed in late 2018.

A panoramic view across the countryside near the Port of Felixstowe



Photo credit: UK Power Networks

Dark skies better without obtrusive lighting



Map of England showing light pollution

Darkness at night is one of the key characteristics of rural areas and it represents a major difference between what is rural and what is urban. We are concerned that, even in the depths of the countryside, genuine dark starry nights are becoming harder to find.

The AONB Partnership has produced a 'position statement' on lighting, and has made it available to the planning authorities. The AONB Partnership recognises that lighting can be beneficial to society in terms of guiding and providing a sense of security, however lighting in the wrong place or at the wrong time is a form of pollution as it has an adverse impact upon the environment. You can see the full document on the AONB website.

Comments include:

- Exterior lighting proposed as part of any development – within the AONB or where it may impact upon its setting or where lighting within the setting impacts upon the AONB – should be kept to the minimum required and only appropriate to its purpose, so as to protect the area's natural beauty and special qualities
- Proposals for exterior lighting should follow good practice as set out in: *Guidance notes for the reduction of light pollution* produced by the Institute of Lighting Engineers
- Development proposals should demonstrate that there is not a significant adverse impact, individually or cumulatively, on the character of the area (including its natural beauty and special qualities), the visibility of the night sky, wildlife, residents or those enjoying the area.

New grants and old

There have been over £78,000 of grants awarded in 2016, with more to come! The Suffolk Secrets AONB Fund is a new two-year, £25,000 fund that reflects the considerations of holiday cottage letting agency, Suffolk Secrets www.suffolk-secrets.co.uk and the AONB, with additional objectives specifically about encouraging out of season family events and activities that support the AONB and local food producers.

Suffolk Secrets has raised money on behalf of the AONB for more than ten years, encouraging awareness of the conservation of the area from visitors. The Suffolk Secrets AONB Fund is open for applications until Thursday 10 November 2016, and organisations will have the full 2017 year to complete projects.

2016 has been a bumper year for grant-giving around the AONB. We also administer four other funds that benefit a variety of community and conservation, access and recreation projects throughout the Suffolk coast area:

- Galloper Wind Farm Fund – thanks to Galloper Wind Farm Ltd; supporting six projects with just over £15,000
- Amenity & Accessibility Fund – now in its fifth year, thanks to EDF; supporting seven projects with just over £19,000
- AONB Sustainable Development Fund – supporting eleven projects with £39,693, thanks to Defra
- AONB Community & Conservation Fund – supporting eight projects with over £4,000, from our small grant fund that grows through fundraising by local businesses and donations

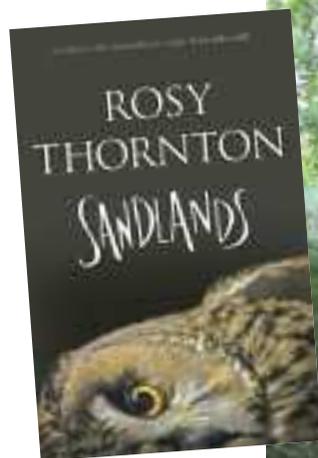
Information on the Suffolk Secrets AONB Fund and all grants can be found on the Grants and Funding pages of the AONB website.



How well do you know the Sandlings? Leaf through local author Rosy Thornton's collection of short stories, then stride out along the Sandlings Walk

Discover the mystery and history of the Sandlings

Timeless is a word used frequently about the landscape of rural Suffolk. I spend many hours walking the tracks and lanes around my home in coastal Suffolk, through forest and farmland, over heathered heath and flat estuarial marshes. And it's hard not to think, as you tread those paths, of generations that have walked that way before you. The Sandlings Walk is a physical embodiment of this: worn down by years, even centuries, of wayfaring feet, so that now you wind along in a deeply sunken furrow, flagged shoulder-high by brackened banks.



Rosy Thornton

When I began to write a series of short stories set here which became the collection, *Sandlands*, it was inescapable that time and timelessness should run through and connect them. Migrating birds fly a thousand miles to rear their young in the same patch of gorse where they were fledged. Strollers in the village lanes retrace the tracks of earlier generations, or of their younger selves. Churchgoers slide into well-worn grooves inherited from pagan ancestors. In ancient woodland, bluebell bulbs push up fresh shoots for two millennia: different flowers but the same bluebells. The ripples in the salt marsh mud take different shapes with each receding tide, but it's still the same stretch of shore.

Sandlands by Rosy Thornton (Sandstone Press, £8.99)
www.sandstonepress.com/books/sandlands

The Sandlings Walk

The Sandlings Walk is one of three long distance routes in the AONB, linking the remnants of the Sandlings heaths on a 60 mile walk between the very contrasting end points of Ipswich and Southwold. The route passes through a variety of villages and hamlets, and a mosaic of habitats, including three of our estuaries, with a new view around every corner.

Whatever the time of year there is always something to enjoy and discover. In Winter, the heaths are lit up with common gorse, glowing golden yellow and accompanied by a heady coconut scent. Listen out for the flutey melodic song of the woodlark, or the 'chack chack' of the brightly coloured stonechat.

The woodlands burst into life in Spring with carpets of bluebells and other flora. Adders, slow worms and lizards emerge from their hibernation and bask in the welcome early sunshine. Heaths come into their own in the Summer, feeling almost desert-like on the baked sand. Bell and ling heather create a purple haze, providing valuable nectar for a myriad of insects, such as the delicate and rare silver studded blue butterfly. In turn, the insects are the food source of many birds such as the Dartford warbler, hobby and the mystical nightjar – the emblem of the walk. As the days shorten, the change in colours heralds the onset of Autumn, and the red deer rut, made famous by BBC Autumnwatch, can be seen on the heaths around Dunwich and Minsmere. The Sandlings are steeped in mystery and history. Walk through them - and bring Rosy's book to life!

Lynn Allen, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Countryside Officer

Cutting edge conservation

You may have noticed this year that the grass on some sections of sea wall within the Alde-Ore and Butley estuaries has been cut in a different way. The Environment Agency has introduced a modified grass cut that leaves portions of the sea wall unmowed in alternate years. This has been done to benefit a declining species of butterfly fittingly called the Wall Brown.



Why cut the grass at all? In times of extreme flood such as that which occurred in December 2013, sea water overtops the wall, knocking grass and herbaceous plants flat, and flows down the rear slope. The vegetation acts as a protective blanket in effect, protecting the wall from the full erosive force of the water. Cutting the grass helps maintain a grass rich sward and keeps the trees and scrub under control. It also enables inspection for any structural defects.

It is important that the wall itself is free from trees and scrub which can inhibit grass cover and provide refuge for burrowing animals such as rabbits and badgers. Bare earth and broken ground is easily eroded and flood waters can quickly create holes that will cause the wall to fail. There is more than 300km of embankment along Suffolk's coast and estuaries. Built primarily of clay, these defences support a corridor of grassland habitat that can be home to many rare species of flora and fauna. It is recognised that management can have an impact on some of these species and this is why the new butterfly cut is being trialled.

Elsewhere, cutting is timed to reduce impact on the most vulnerable species. Cuts are usually once per year and are restricted during bird nesting season. They are carried out late in the year at some locations so that sensitive flowering plants and invertebrates can complete their life cycles. Cutting an entire estuary requires a programme which includes a range of times which can benefit a diversity of species. Impact is further reduced by cutting to a minimum of 15cm retaining an area of undisturbed habitat below the mower blades.

Chris Strachan, Biodiversity Officer, Environment Agency



Sea wall breach, December 2013 by Chris Strachan | Wall Brown butterfly by Karen Brown

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Jonathan Dyke, managing director of the Suffolk Yacht Harbour at Levington

What happens to the mud?

Every winter, SYH uses its much-loved dredger *Muddy Boots* to clear thousands of cubic metres of silt from the marina and the entrance channel, to maintain a minimum depth of 2.5 metres throughout the marina. Dredging is carried out under licence and the terms and conditions of the licence must be tightly adhered to.

The mud is discharged on to the foreshore, and the marshes in Levington Creek and around Loompit Lake - some of the most important bird-life habitats on the river Orwell. Migratory birds overwintering on the Stour and Orwell marshes include dunlin, Brent geese, redshank, pintail, grey plover, black-tailed godwit and knot.

The aim is to restore the intertidal area and salt marshes, which are being degraded by coastal squeeze and sea level rise.

Continuing our series focussing on businesses within the AONB, CATHY SHELBOURNE meets Jonathan Dyke, managing director of the Suffolk Yacht Harbour, the largest marina on the East Coast

Room for a view

If there was a competition for the occupant of the office with the most wonderful view, Jonathan Dyke would surely win it. Below his first floor window overlooking the Suffolk Yacht Harbour at Levington, yachts and motorboats sparkle in the sun (or ride the waves, depending on the weather). Behind this 550-berth marina are a host of related businesses, including riggers, sailmakers, marine engineers, and even a sailing club housed in an iconic red lightship. Beyond the harbour, the river Orwell ebbs and flows, and on the horizon, the cranes and ships of the port of Felixstowe are silhouetted against the vast East Anglian sky so beloved of painters.

The wonder of all this commercial activity is that it is firmly located within the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and that humans and wildlife, businesses and environmental organisations, happily co-exist.

Jonathan is the managing director of the Suffolk Yacht Harbour, and has helped to steer a successful passage between the development of the marina and its associated enterprises, and stewardship of their immediate environment.

"This lovely landscape is one of the main reasons for yacht and boat owners to choose to berth here," he says. "They buy into the beauty of the AONB - the walks along the shore, a seal bobbing in the harbour, wading birds feeding on the saltmarshes. And of course the dredged marina gives them access to the river at all stages of the tide."

The annual dredging is an important part of Suffolk Yacht harbour's recycling policy and relationship with the environment. The nutrient rich mud is deposited on the foreshore in the inter-tidal zone, enriching the grasses and supporting a variety of wildlife. The company actually owns a much bigger acreage than that occupied by the harbour and the associated businesses: from Loompit Lake westwards to Levington Creek and behind the marina towards the road. Much of this Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust and others to support the different habitats of, for example, waders on the foreshore, wildfowl on the saltings, and deer in the tree belts.

With up to 550 boats, owners, and as many as 80 people working on the site in the high season, waste disposal is treated very seriously. Boat owners are strongly encouraged to use the eight separate recycling and disposal areas around the marina and hardstanding.

The company has its own sewerage treatment plants, and everything else is recycled - even the water in the harbour, which is used in a heat exchange process to keep warm the splendid new building housing the harbourmaster, chandlery, and offices.

All this makes for a very happy ship. Staff turnover is low; job satisfaction is high. Jonathan himself came to SYH over thirty years ago as assistant harbourmaster, after graduating in yacht and boatyard management in Southampton. "We love what we do. We are passionate about boats; the environment and the changing seasons make for a wonderful lifestyle; and we have a great team of people here."

Enjoying this yacht and wildlife haven

1. The Suffolk Coast Path runs through the marina and is accessible all year round www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/things-to-do/walking/long-distance-routes

2. Learn to sail! The East Anglian Sea School is a Royal Yachting Association (RYA) training centre, teaching shore-based and practical yachting, motor boating, dinghy or powerboating courses, as well as Own Boat Tuition.

www.eastanglianseaschool.com
The East Anglian Sailing Trust (EAST) is a voluntary organisation providing sailing activities for disabled people and their carers. www.eastanglian-sailing-trust.org.uk

3. Already sail? Join the Haven Ports Yacht Club and experience their extra-ordinary clubhouse, the old Cromer lightship LV87. www.hpyc.com

4. Come along to the Clarke and Carter Yacht Fair from 28th-30th October, and Workshop Open Weekend from 29th-30th October. Explore the facilities, talk to the staff, discover the walks. For more details see www.syharbour.co.uk or telephone 01473 659465



The Suffolk Yacht Harbour, accessible at all stages of the tide, on the river Orwell in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. Photos by Cathy Shelbourne.

Wildlife in Shingle Street

Shingle Street is a tiny hamlet on the Suffolk coast perched precariously between land and sea. About 60 people live here – but that's only the population of *Homo sapiens*. We are surrounded by more than 1,300 other life forms, which also give this place its identity. The reason why Shingle Street is classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) has nothing to do with the beauty or interest of its human residents, alas. It's all down to the wildlife, and in 2015 we decided to survey and record this larger local community, with the very welcome support of Touching the Tide and the

Heritage Lottery Fund.

Britain's wildlife is currently threatened as never before. In the last 50 years we have lost over half of it. That is a shocking statistic. Did you realise the rate of decline of these much-loved bird species, for

example, all deeply embedded in our national culture: skylarks down by 61%, cuckoos and curlews by 62%, nightingale by 90% and turtle dove by 96%? And the figures for flowers, butterflies and moths are as bad or worse.



The Shingle Street residents responded to this challenge splendidly. We formed survey teams, recruited experts, examined historical records and compiled a detailed technical report, which can be studied on our website at

www.shinglestreetsurvey.org.uk. This has images of the more striking species recorded and gives the link to the popular booklet, *Knowing Your Place: Wildlife in Shingle Street* by Jeremy Mynott, which is available via this website or in local bookshops.

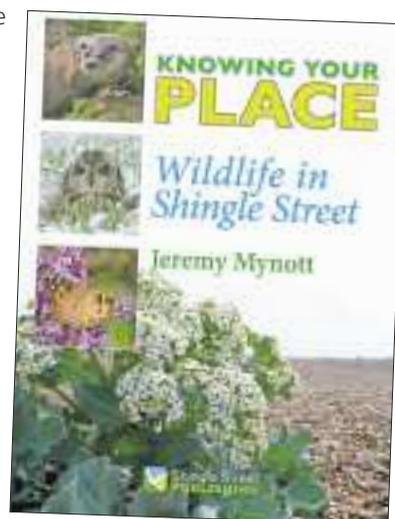
So, what did we discover? Would you have guessed we had 379 different moths visiting Shingle Street or 59 species of spiders? We found otters, bee orchids, harvest mice and clouded yellow butterflies, as well as a host of less charismatic but rare

snails, sedges and molluscs. The total of 1,305 could easily have been over 2,000 if we'd had more time and expertise available, but we think this already amply demonstrates the natural wealth of the area.

What we now hope is that other communities on the coast will follow this example and show just what makes this stretch of Suffolk coastline such a significant part of our local and national heritage.

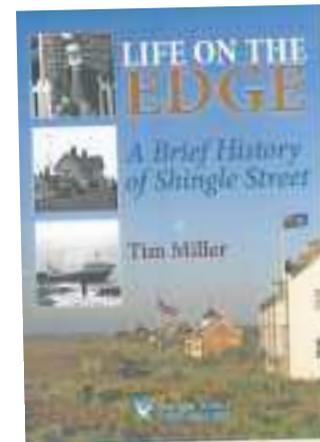
Jeremy Mynott

Left: location map of Shingle Street; above, curlew in flight; centre and right, *Knowing Your Place* and *Life on the Edge* booklets, available from Shingle Street Publishing.



Life on the Edge – A brief history of Shingle Street

“Do people live here?” ask the people who visit Shingle Street to fish, walk, watch bird life or simply enjoy its peace and the healing of sea, wind and weather. They are surprised to find that the hamlet remains a living community whose residents are those with a love and knowledge of nature and a passion for the seas. In the past, everyday life for the men and women of the hamlet was hard and challenging, and this short book tells their story, in the place described in 1876 as having “the grandest views possessed by any place on the Suffolk coast.”



Life on the Edge is a companion piece to the Wildlife guide, and was published in 2016 and printed with the support of the AONB Community & Conservation Fund.

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There's plenty to enjoy on The Ship's menu from: pie of the day, slow-cooked pork belly, or classic fish and chips through to traditional English puddings like sticky toffee, apple crumble and much more, accompanied by good wines at sensible prices, or proper beers and ales - including Adnams and a range of guest ales.



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So much more than the view

Feeling frazzled? Need to blow away the cobwebs and think more clearly? Nothing beats time spent in our AONBs for recharging the batteries.



We've asked people who live and work in the AONBs to share with us their suggestions for healthy activities and ways to well-being.

In the words of John Grant, environment correspondent for the East Anglian Daily Times: "AONBs and National Parks offer a wide range of environments and methods of bringing benefits to our health and well-being. Walking, for example, is one of the easiest, cheapest and most ubiquitous ways of keeping fit."

Make it your pre-new year resolution to try one of these!

"I think it's important for everybody to experience hills and open space and grass under their feet. It makes you breathe differently."

Anita Rani, presenter of Countryfile



Jonathan Dyke,
Managing Director,
Suffolk Yacht
Harbour

A lovely day's sail, followed by a drink in the Haven Ports Yacht Club, provides a gentle workout and totally unloads the brain!



Emma Dixon,
Being Well in the
Wild Officer,
Suffolk County
Council

Why not tick off one of our Fab 40 Adventures (see Reconnecting with Nature on page 10)

and take time out to witness the annual red deer rut? Our AONB is one of the best places in England to experience this spectacle of nature. Or kick fallen leaves on a walk in the ancient woods at the spectacular Arger Fen in the Stour Valley?

Emma Black, Countryside Officer
Dedham Vale AONB

Coppicing a wood with our volunteers as you're working hard, enjoying great camaraderie and surrounded by silhouettes of trees and the lie of the land.



Karen Turnbull,
Economic Growth
Development
Manager, Colchester
Borough Council

Walk in the footsteps of Constable. Experience the skies and landscape around Dedham, Flatford and East Bergholt that made him a painter.

Nigel Chapman, Chairman,
Dedham Vale AONB and
Stour Valley Joint Advisory
Committee (JAC)

'My afternoon relaxation is to stroll through Boxted's walnut orchards, down to the pond and await the kingfisher to flash past – wonderful!'



Simon Amstutz,
AONB Manager

Suffolk Coast & Heaths:

Get out into the countryside. By bike or walking, pick one of our guides, preferably for an area you don't know so well, and enjoy one of our self-guided routes. If you can combine the trip with a camping (or glamping) experience, all the better as you will see the coast at one of my favourite times - daybreak or twilight.

Dedham Vale & Stour Valley: Hire a canoe or take an organised trip. What's better than paddling down the river stopping to see the views and wildlife or having a spot of lunch? I have done it in the heat of summer when it was so hot I needed to jump in, or in the pouring rain (also in the height of summer), and enjoyed them equally. An evening, or those that can, early in the morning, is particularly beautiful.



David Wood, Chairman, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership

Head for the Shotley peninsula for lovely walks around Alton Water, or along the foreshore of the rivers Orwell and Stour – they are excellent exercise and a great opportunity to watch the terns on the rafts in the reservoir, or the wading birds feeding at the water's edge. Follow this up with a nice cup of tea or even a meal in the Suffolk Food Hall's first floor restaurant at Wherstead for a wonderful view up and down the river Orwell.

Robert Erith,
Chairman, Dedham
Vale AONB & Stour
Valley Partnership

Go out on a dark night, see the stars and wonder at the magnificent Milky Way. The Dedham Vale qualifies as a Bronze Level International Dark-Sky place. There are very few in Southern England!



AONB Team's top tips for wildlife, conservation and people

Just as we look after ourselves, so too does wildlife need caring for. You can do your bit in your own back garden or even with a window box. And if you'd like to assist on a grander scale, the AONB team would be very happy to see you on a volunteer project, litter survey, or one of the many other activities all year round.

The team have put together some top tips to help you support conservation in the AONBs.

Top tips to help you farm for nature

- 1 Ensure you are looking after established wildlife habitats to keep those already breeding in a welcome and thriving environment.
- 2 Maximise the environmental value of the field boundaries by realising that they are potential habitats for wildlife.
- 3 Create small areas of rough grassland where surface water channels through fields to act as a buffer for hedgerows.
- 4 Establish flower-rich habitats to encourage insects through pollen production in Spring and Summer, helping to diversify your wildlife.
- 5 Provide food for birds in Winter by leaving overwintered stubbles on 5% of arable land.

Haidee Stephens, Suffolk Estuaries Officer

LEAD by example – put your dog on a lead if it will otherwise roam on the saltmarshes, heaths and beaches especially during nesting time and around livestock. Locals - you have the power to set the tone: neighbours and visitors will follow your LEAD. And don't forget to Bag it and Bin it!

Put water out for birds all year round – keep a bird list on the kitchen wall for the family to add to and binoculars handy if you have them, and put a bell on your cat.

Shop locally – treat yourself in the village shops, pubs and tea rooms and at the farmers' markets – there's an abundance of local produce to enjoy.

Neil Lister, Countryside Officer

Keep the AONBs looking special by picking up litter – think of it as a two-minute neighbourhood clean! Specially the really bad litter such as broken glass, balloons, plastic yokes from beer cans, fishing line – these have a high risk of harming wildlife (also dogs and children).

Encourage children to notice and not be afraid of small things such as woodlice and worms; encourage their respect for living things – don't squash wildlife that enters your home.

Follow good counsel – please read and follow any official signage and info that you come across.

Alex Moore da Luz, River Stour Project Officer

Be observant when you are out and about – notice signs of pollution, keep an eye out for invasive species (crayfish, plants etc) and report them.

Please don't plant or encourage non-native plants or species in your gardens, especially near the water where nature helps them spread even more quickly!

Fishermen, please don't leave any kit behind on the river banks or beaches or in the water – these are harmful to dogs, swans and children, and also to the things you may not be able to see like otter and voles.

Lynda Gilbert, Countryside Officer

Allow some of your garden to be wild. Leave an area of grass to grow a bit taller, create a pile of twigs and leaves – not being too tidy allows space for wildlife. Provide a habitat for invertebrates, mammals, birds etc to feed and live.

Volunteer with a conservation charity or the AONBs. Find a good local project, muster local support (all ages and backgrounds) and get some extra help from the AONBs.

Support your council in leaving verges uncut for longer (in places where it doesn't affect road safety).

Emma Black, Countryside Officer

Composting can save you money and is good for your garden and wildlife, but be careful not to disturb the residents that will make use of compost heaps!

Enjoy being outside, improving your health and well-being, while also supporting local community projects that encourage wildlife to your local area.

Get to know your local patch so you can care for what you've got on your doorstep and benefit from seeing hares, new flowers and bird life in Spring; ripening crops, butterflies, wildflowers and nice dry paths in Summer; blackberries, elder berries in Autumn; sloes and bracing walks in Winter. Say hello to your fellow walkers.

Cathy Smith, Communications Officer

Respect, protect and enjoy the AONBs – leave only your footprints. Take your litter home, close gates, help your dog be well behaved and responsible, enjoy exploring in every season!

Be a good cyclist – ride in single file; ring your bell or call out to tell people you are there; don't cycle on public footpaths, in nature spaces or along river walls; slow down, enjoy looking around and say hello to people as you pass.

Don't release balloons or sky-lanterns – you don't know where they will land and what damage they will do when out of your sight.



Bee orchid, as seen at Shingle Street.

Photo supplied by Jeremy Mynott

Pollinator pointers

Can you bee-lieve that a bee's wings beat 190 times a second, and beetles pollinated the first flowers when the dinosaurs were alive more than 140 million years ago!

Pollinating insects are essential to maintain the exciting variety of plants and wildlife in the UK and play a vital role in food production: research estimates their value to crops at approximately £600 million as a result of improved productivity. Due to changes to the British landscape over the last century, not all pollinators can find the food and shelter they need. Countryside Officers from the two AONB teams will 'bee' encouraging communities in each AONB to 'plant well for pollinators' this year, with help from the Sustainable Development Fund.

Top Tips: Advice to families, gardeners, farmers, developers, land owners and local authorities is simple:

- 🌱 Grow more flowers, shrubs and trees. Make sure that at least two kinds of nectar and pollen rich plants are in flower all year for a constant supply
- 🌱 Grow plants with a variety of flower shapes, for example tubular, bowl-shaped and bell-shaped, as each species of bumblebee is adapted to feed on certain flower shapes
- 🌱 Let your garden grow wild, cut grass less often – your 'pollinator patch' should be less formal and a bit 'hairier' with longer grass and weeds to provide pollinator nest sites
- 🌱 Don't disturb insect nests and hibernation spots – and leave piles of dead wood lying about for nests
- 🌱 Bees need to drink and evaporate water to cool their hives. TOP TIP! They drown in water bowls, so fill a bowl with glass beans, pebbles or marbles to provide a surface for them to drink from
- 🌱 Think carefully about whether to use pesticides

By following these steps we can all help give bees and pollinators the food and shelter they need to survive. Pollinators in numbers:

- 1500 species of insects pollinate plants in the UK including bumblebees, honey bees, solitary bees, hoverflies, wasps, flies, beetles, butterflies and moths
- 25 species of bumblebee, 260 species of solitary bee, 1 honey bee species and hundreds of types of hoverflies, butterflies and moths live in the UK
- 70 of the 100 crop species that provide 90% of food worldwide are pollinated by bees



No such thing as dead wood

Dead and decaying trees are vital parts of a woodland ecosystem and play a key role in supporting biodiversity, soil fertility and energy flows in streams and rivers. The amount of deadwood has decreased dramatically because of removal of wood for firewood, and forest management practices which remove deadwood for safety and aesthetic reasons.

How can you help?

1. Dead wood standing

This is of great value to insects, fungi, mosses and lichens. Birds such as woodpeckers feed on insects that make their home in old wood. A decaying tree with a snagged bough or a small cavity might provide a nest site for a bird or bat. Dead branches also make excellent song and display perches for birds. Leave dead trees and shrubs standing to decompose naturally. Instead of felling trees when they are dangerous you could cut them to a safe height so they become standing dead wood.



2. Log piles

Woodpiles are a valuable habitat for mosses, lichens and fungi, as well as many insects which in turn feed other animals. They also provide homes for amphibians that hibernate underneath them as they are dark, damp and cool. Leaving piles of wood to rot down will provide a source of food for other animals and will ensure valuable nutrients are recycled back into the ground.

Lay a stack of logs on their side in shaded, open, wet and dry areas to provide a habitat suitable for a variety of different species. To prevent them rolling, drive a stake into the ground either side of the pile. Logs at least 10cm thick with the bark still attached provide the best wood. Hard wood trees such as ash, oak and beech are particularly good. Birch logs can look particularly attractive. Be careful of freshly cut willow and poplar logs, as these can easily re-sprout if left lying on the ground.

3. Stag beetle pyramids

The stag beetle is the largest terrestrial insect in Britain and north of the Colchester area is a notable stronghold. They breed in rotting tree stumps and other sources of decaying wood, where the larvae will remain for up to five years. To create a stag beetle pyramid dig a large hole in the ground and partially bury logs of different diameter and length vertically to a depth of 45 - 50cm in a pyramid shape then backfill with soil and firm in.



4. Dead hedges

A dead hedge is a barrier constructed from cut branches, saplings and foliage. Dead hedges are the most primitive and ancient form of hedging. Instead of burning the cut material or taking it to waste disposal sites reduce your carbon footprint and create a dead hedge. It creates an attractive barrier, works as a corridor for wildlife and is great for insects, small nesting birds like wren and mammals such as hedgehogs. Just make some stakes, push them into the ground about 50cm apart in alternate rows and place the cut material with butt ends facing the same way in between.



From business to barn owls: my ten month placement



I am studying for a BSc (Hons) Wildlife Conservation with Natural Resource Management at Harper Adams University in Shropshire. For my industrial business

placement, stretching over 44 weeks, I joined the AONB team in September 2015. What lay in store for me over the next ten months?

I have been able to get involved with many different aspects of the AONBs. One that really stands out was working with the wonderful Stour Valley and Suffolk Coast & Heaths volunteer groups. They were more than happy to let me join in, and I'm so glad I did!



I have learnt so many practical skills that I will no doubt use in my future career, from coppicing to deer fence building, as well as management skills such as how to organise a group, and how to correctly access a situation from a health and safety point of view, always ensuring that the volunteers' (and your own!) safety is top priority. As an added bonus, I was invited out with one of our Countryside Officers, Neil Catchpole, to monitor barn owls on the Tendring Hall Estate, where we found a few youngsters!



I have also been able to help out with the many conferences and forums the AONBs attend and organise. One of the first was the 2015 Saltmarsh conference at Snape Maltings. I provided admin support prior to the event, and then helped set up the displays and register arrivals, which



enabled me to meet many new people. The conference itself was really insightful, and the view outside was stunning!

The AONB team has allowed me plenty of opportunities to go on training courses, ranging from First Aid to LANTRA Chainsaw Maintenance and Crosscutting. I have also attended smaller courses, usually run by the Suffolk and Essex Wildlife Trusts, including Saltmarsh and its Plant Life, and an Introduction to Biological Recording. The skills and

knowledge I have gained from these courses will come in handy during my final year at Harper Adams, as well as in the long term.

There is no question in my mind that working with the AONB team over the last 10 months has considerably broadened my horizons, and will certainly be a big bonus on my CV when job hunting. The various job

roles I have encountered have given me much food for thought regarding the direction of my own career, from ecologist to countryside officer. The fact I am now relocating to Suffolk from the Midlands surely says something about what a wonderful place it is!

**Lauren Goring,
Volunteer Placement Student**

**Simon Amstutz,
AONB Manager, writes:**

We are delighted to offer the opportunity for a volunteer placement for students as it gives the successful candidate a chance to learn some of the skills needed to work in the protected landscapes environment. In addition the AONB team gets new projects delivered and a fresh set of eyes looking at what we do and how we do it. Lauren grabbed this opportunity with both hands and we were delighted with what she achieved for our AONBs. She has learned much that will give her many advantages in a very competitive employment market. **For our latest opportunities give us a call.**

Placement student Lauren Goring, from top, working with Stour Valley Volunteer Graham, at Spouse's Vale; barn owl monitoring with Neil Catchpole; her first task ... way marking improvements on the Sandlings Walk; and carrying out practical work as part of the River Stour Restoration project

Reconnecting with nature

Suffolk's Fab 40 Adventures are wonderful ways to step outside and explore the amazing world of nature on your Suffolk doorstep and around the wildlife-rich coast and countryside beyond.

Getting out into the natural world promotes mental and physical well-being; helps prevent disease and is proven to aid recovery after illness. So this Autumn and Winter make sure you switch off the screen, unplug the wi-fi and take time to reconnect with nature.

The Fab 40 project is all about putting family time first – modern lives are all too busy, especially when both parents are working. Getting active all together outside for just a few hours really can be a walk in the park – but there are plenty of wild outdoor places to discover through gentle activities too.

Beaches and woodlands, forests and farmland, heaths and saltmarshes – our AONBs have so much to offer. Find out more about Suffolk's Fab 40 Adventures www.fab40suffolk.co.uk @suffolkfab40 #40adventures

Emma Dixon, Being Well in the Wild Officer, Suffolk County Council



Suffolk's Year of Walking: come along for the stride!

Suffolk is an inspiring and beautiful county to walk in with approximately 3,500 miles of public footpaths spanning the coastline inland to the Brecks and Fenlands. Suffolk's Year of Walking is a celebration of walking in Suffolk; promoting walking events and encouraging new walking opportunities. The Year of Walking launched as part of the iconic Suffolk Walking Festival on Saturday 14th May 2016 at the scenic RSPB Minsmere Reserve and will run until May 2017.



Walking is simple, free and one of the easiest ways to get more active, lose weight and become healthier. It is ideal for people of all ages and fitness levels who want to become more active.

Regular walking has been shown to reduce the risk of chronic illness and can also be a great way of reducing social isolation and improving mental health.

OneLife Suffolk provides Health Walks – a wide range of free walking opportunities available for everyone. There are over 200 walks available every month – many of which take place within the AONBs. All of the details about the Health Walks can be found www.suffolkyearofwalking.co.uk

Come Along for the Stride!

The past from above

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is richly endowed with archaeological and historical sites spanning the full range of human history. Worked flints more than 700,000 years old are eroding from the cliffs at Pakefield and Benacre, while the Cold War Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Orfordness has recently been designated as a Scheduled Monument. The AONB has been subject to extensive archaeological study, most significantly from the air, and aerial photographs have enabled us to identify and map swathes of new archaeological sites.

Some of these sites are still visible as earthworks, including extensive Second World War military training areas at Westleton Walks, Dunwich Heath, Orford and Aldeburgh. Others appear as cropmarks when buried archaeological features affect the rate of growth of crops planted over the top of them. The ploughed-out remains of numerous Bronze Age (2350–700 BC) burial mounds have been identified in this fashion at places such as Shottisham and Alderton.

Details of all of these sites and many others like them can be found on the Suffolk Heritage Explorer website, which contains details of over 30,000 archaeological sites and finds from the county. Visitors to the website can also download a series of guidebooks about the coast's Second World War defences. The Suffolk Heritage Explorer can be found at www.heritage.suffolk.gov.uk

Dr Richard Hoggett, Senior Archaeological Officer, Suffolk County Council



This 2007 photograph from Google Earth clearly shows the earthworks of a Second World War stronghold to the north of Aldeburgh, comprising a series of pillboxes and linking communication trenches. Image: © 2016 Getmapping Plc.

Celebrating our Outstanding Landscapes

Every year the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Landscapes (NAAONB) holds a week of events nationwide. The Suffolk and Essex AONBs celebrated in September with a variety of activities. Farmers Jonathan and Miff Minter hosted a Farm Walk in aid of the Stour Valley Environment Fund, and the AONB team were exhibiting at the Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival.



Recreational avoidance and mitigation strategy

Planners from Ipswich Borough, Babergh and Suffolk Coastal District Councils are being supported by the Suffolk County Council Senior Ecologist in taking a joined-up approach to mitigating development impacts on internationally important wildlife sites and de-risking projects for developers. Providing new housing developments without an adverse impact on the environment is challenging anywhere but more so in areas surrounded by nationally and internationally important countryside and coast.

The Habitats Regulations Assessments of the three Local Plans identified mitigation measures to address likely significant effects from recreational disturbance on internationally important wildlife sites. The three Councils are working together and have started producing a recreational avoidance and mitigation strategy across their areas. This will identify any cost measures necessary to mitigate recreational impacts, and confirm how they will be funded and delivered. The strategy is being drafted by specialist consultants for public consultation before being adopted by March 2017. Once approved by the three Local Authorities, the strategy will provide an option for developer contributions to an agreed and costed scheme of mitigation for residential developments with the zone of influence, over the plan periods.

Sue Hooton, Senior Ecologist, Suffolk County Council

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Australian resident Jeremy Cooper cycled around East Anglia on a borrowed Brompton M6R. We join Jeremy in Southwold, heading south for Felixstowe, where he grew up.

A short cycle ride along the Suffolk Coast

Southwold is a very busy holiday town in the summer season with holiday-makers and their cars, everywhere. On my way to find my hosts' house I passed a pub (name forgotten), so I called in for a Wherry.

I found my hosts' street in Reydon, the village next door to Southwold, easily, but could not find the house, eventually spotting a bicycle parked in a driveway and made the assumption that this was indeed 'it'. My host Murray told me that he sometimes rows the ferry I was to go on in the morning, and of course knows all the other ferrymen (there is a woman among them). Today was a 50-mile day.



I was the first and only cyclist at the ferry at 10.00 and the ferryman was Luke. I cycled the narrow and picturesque roads to Snape, via Leiston (not strictly on the route), beginning with an off-road section which included some soft sand patches, making cycling impossible, so a little bit of walking was forced upon me. Once back on roads I found there are so many roads, cross-roads, and junctions that it seems impossible to always choose the right one.

Of course, it doesn't really matter what road one is travelling on when one is only there to look at the countryside. In the event I got to Snape at about 12.30, and stopped just long enough to take a picture from the bridge and talk briefly to two other cyclists who were there, with exactly the same Brompton bikes as mine. They turned out to be Germans on holiday, and had brought

their bikes from home. The good thing about folding bikes is you can take them on trains and buses free of charge.

I was still conscious about time, so pressed on towards Orford and stopped there to look at the jetty and have a break (and a Wherry) at *The Jolly Sailor*. I chatted with a few people interested in the folding bike, and a couple who had one electric-assisted bike and one normal one. I asked whether they drew lots to see who would get which.

I eventually got to Butley Creek at about 13.30 for my crossing. The tide was out, so the water was a narrow ribbon within wide strips of mud. The ferry only operates on weekends, May to September, and is run by volunteers who do it for fun and to keep the ferry tradition going. It is said to be England's smallest licenced ferry. Taking the shortcut through Hollesley rather than the detour to look at the penal institution, I reached Bawdsey just before 16.00, in good time for the next ferry.

I stopped at *The Ferryboat Inn*, on the Felixstowe side, for a very welcome break (and Wherry) and then cycled home. It was a very satisfying excursion, but would have been a lot more enjoyable if my backside had been more 'battle-hardened' before I started. I arrived in Felixstowe at 17.00, having cycled 205 miles in the five days I had been away.

Jeremy's tips

- I belong to 'Warmshowers', a web-based group of cyclists offering free accommodation to other travelling cyclists on a reciprocal basis www.warmshowers.org
- Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB very kindly sent to me in Australia the Suffolk Coast Cycle Route pack of maps and guides which I found very informative indeed
- I also bought Sustrans cycle maps of Suffolk and Norfolk. See National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1). My planned route was a hybrid of Suffolk Coastal Cycle and Sustrans Routes

Food glorious food



Build a food trail, name it, share it with your friends and on social media says Jess Brown. It's a great way to get out and discover

what Suffolk has to offer. The Suffolk Food Trails,

thanks to the Coastal Communities Fund, are accessible via the Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival website. The trails are free for local businesses to register and free for the general public to use. We have had a great experience getting to know some of Suffolk's producers, chefs and crafts people even better while producing our new book *Un-Earthed*. It's a self-published book looking behind the scenes and discovering people who contribute to Suffolk's growing foodie credentials. Available online at www.aldeburghfoodanddrink.co.uk.

Conservation contributions in our Outstanding Landscape

Early May 2016 saw the very first Wild Days Conservation holiday being held on the Suffolk coast – September and October saw another two. These small group holidays specialise in undertaking research and conservation tasks, and it is thanks to the Coastal Communities Fund that we have been able to bring visitors to Suffolk!

The May programme included: small mammal trapping and surveying findings at the National Trust's Dunwich Heath; a survey of pirri pirri burr (an invasive plant from New Zealand) on a site at RSPB Minsmere, including researching how it affected plant/insect life around it and some clearance; bird surveying of Dartford warbler (saw lots!), stonechat and wood lark (saw a few) at NT Dunwich Heath; and also an MCS beach litter survey on Dunwich beach.



"For me" said one participant, "the pull of conservation work closer to home is strong. I feel more directly responsible for and connected to the environments I have grown up in and will continue to live in, and closer to the contemporary challenges and issues. It is also rewarding to be learning more about the native species of trees, animals, landscapes and plants that are around me all the time."

Wild Days Conservation encourage attendees to understand and support native species, and enjoy a bit of local heritage, food and drink and excellent accommodation too!

See www.wilddaysconservation.org/holidays/location/suffolk for holidays in 2017.



Can you help Suffolk's wading birds?

The Suffolk Wader Strategy consists of a core group of organisations who have come together to reverse the decline in wader populations in Suffolk. The strategy focuses on three species: lapwing (right), redshank and avocet (below) and currently concentrates on coastal sites. Both lapwing and redshank have undergone significant declines (nationally 50% and 59% since 1975 respectively). Although avocet numbers appear to be increasing (1500 pairs in the UK in 2010), productivity varies significantly between years, often falling below the level required to sustain local populations.



Together, as organisations working in partnership, the strategy has the ability to influence land management both on nature reserves and more widely across the countryside. The partnership is made up of conservation charities (RSPB, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, National Trust), a government agency (Natural England) and the private sector (Stanny Field Centre, Iken). The aim is to have a key set of reserves that complement each other at a landscape scale, which together support exceptional breeding wader populations, underpinned by a long term



strategic plan for dynamic habitat management. These will be complemented by key sites away from reserves that support healthy numbers of breeding waders through first class agri-environment support.

The strategy aims to build on the recent success at several sites such as Hollesley Marshes where all three wader species had a highly productive season in 2014.



Accurate estimates of current wader populations and productivity are critical to the success of the strategy; the resulting data can help inform us of potential problems and also where we are doing well, therefore helping us to improve habitat management. There is a need for increased monitoring both on and off reserves and we are looking for volunteer observers who can identify lapwing, redshank and avocet and preferably have some previous survey experience, although this is not essential if you attend the workshop. We would require volunteers to carry out a minimum of four field visits from April to July. The training workshop will be run at Stanny Field Centre on 21st January 2017. www.stannyfarm.org.

To register your interest please contact Robin Harvey on 01728 648072 or e-mail robin.harvey@rspb.org.uk

Suffolk's Silver-studded Blue butterflies



Photos by Matt Berry

Members of the Suffolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation have for some years been monitoring the Silver-studded Blue butterfly, which although rare, is found across many of Suffolk's heaths.

We are looking for volunteers to walk a couple of the transects, at Dunwich Forest and Minsmere, during the butterflies' flight period (June-July 2017).

We are also helping to restore heathland habitat for the butterfly and other species. As part of the Ipswich Heaths project, we have regular work parties and would welcome new volunteers.

If you would like to get involved, please email Helen Saunders at: helens919@gmail.com

Valued volunteers!

A big thank you – say Lynn Allen and Neil Lister – to all our volunteers for their hard work, whatever the weather!

The Work Party Volunteers undertake landscape and conservation tasks to benefit wildlife, recreation and local communities – in six months they did 14 tasks. Volunteer numbers remain low for some tasks however and we would like some more volunteers – are you interested? We'd also like to hear from you if you have a site that might need the 'elbow grease' of volunteers to achieve conservation improvements in the AONB.

Our **Promoted Route Volunteers** help check and improve the long distance path (LDP) routes, including surveying the signage, checking waymarker posts and reporting on path conditions. We have three LDPs – Stour & Orwell Walk, Suffolk Coast Path and



the Sandlings Walk – all with wonderful volunteers.

We welcomed more volunteers to the **Coast & Estuary Warden scheme** this year. Their reports confirm that all is well at a given location, which is as valuable as reporting an incident of concern. They report on overgrown footpaths, damage to information signs, litter, erosion, dog fouling and even jellyfish strandings. These have been reported to the relevant organisations, such as East Area Public Rights of Way, the Environment Agency, Suffolk Coastal Norse and Natural England – and the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) through their national jellyfish survey. The Marine Conservation Society's Beachwatch scheme and the annual Great British Beach Clean, which the AONB promotes and co-ordinates in Suffolk, have continued to be well-supported by our many dedicated existing and new teams. Corporate events have been very popular, as team building exercises or as a means of community payback. AXA Ipswich, BT and Essex & Suffolk Water are just some of the businesses who have participated.

A whole lotta bottle?

Reviewing the last ten years of beach litter surveys, Lynn Allen found that 7,517 volunteers have taken part in Suffolk and together collected 15,510kg of litter. "Plastic items have consistently made up between 8-10 of the top ten items found in Suffolk," she says.



BEACHWATCH: The Great British Beach Clean takes place annually in mid September and regular Beach Watch teams do other seasonal litter picks. Get in touch to join a team. Above: Trimley and Felixstowe Scouts.

This is reflected nationwide, according to the MSC's pollution campaigns officer Emma Cunningham. "In every part of the UK the number of bottles our volunteers found had increased in 2015 compared to 2014. On average, 99 bottles were found per kilometre of beach cleaned – an overall increase of 43%."

Across the whole of 2015 the surveys in Suffolk covered more than 15km of coast and estuary, and on average, 1,200 items of litter were found on each kilometre. The mountain of rubbish collected by 785 volunteers weighed more than 1.248 kg. Plastic and polystyrene made up 71%. See the AONB website for the full 2015 report.

The highest number of items per metre surveyed was on a 100m stretch at Bawdsey East Lane South. This was down to the diligence of the 20 volunteers, organised by Jenny King. Other high-yielding areas were north of Felixstowe Pier, Bawdsey, and Trimley Marshes, where teams of Scouts, and volunteers from the AONB, BT, and Suffolk Wildlife Trust, took part.



Stretch your legs at Ickworth

Whether you're here for a long ramble through ancient woodland, walking with the dog or a gentle stroll with your family, Ickworth has a path for you. Pop into our cafe to indulge in that well-earned hot chocolate and slice of homemade cake.

Call 01284 733270 for details
nationaltrust.org.uk/ickworth

Beating the bounds in Hollesley

On a very changeable Summer Sunday afternoon, 18 intrepid Hollesley residents (and two very well behaved dogs!) donned hat and coat and ventured out on to the Hollesley Lower Common to 'beat the bounds.' This ancient tradition goes as far back as Roman times and involves the replenishing of small mounds of earth that mark the common boundary.

Starting at the first mound, just beneath the new WI tree at Moorlands Close, the group, led by Alan Shelcott, walked over four kilometres around the Common, past Poplar Park, on to Manor Farm, up to Eagle Lodge and then along the new fence erected by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust at the back of the Common and back to the village. Amazingly, 44 mounds were either replenished or reinstated where they had been depleted over time. The group witnessed much wildlife including a large herd of deer and were joined at one stage by the four ponies on the Common.

The plan for later in the year is to beat the bounds of the Upper Common. If you would like to join us please contact Judi Hallett, the Parish Clerk, at hollesleyparishclerk@gmail.com.



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Wild beach, wild belts, wild woods

Families living around the Suffolk coast have been taking part in a series of workshops on Sizewell beach, Sizewell Belts, Thorpeness and Kenton Hills to help them access and understand the coastal and woodland habitats that surround them.



Wild Beach, Wild Belts, Wild Woods, which was organised by Suffolk Wildlife Trust and supported by the Galloper Wind Farm Fund ran throughout the Summer holidays.

The scheme included six free family workshops, enabling up to 30 people per session to get hands-on with wood, waves and wildlife.

The Trust's Bev Rogers, who led the project, said: "It was fantastic to see so many people coming out to enjoy and explore the coast. From beach combing and mini-raft-making to discovering the hidden worlds of plankton, these sessions helped people really engage with the wild spaces close to where they lived."

Photo by John Ferguson

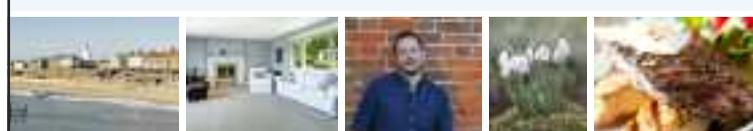
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A great local view

Be it a couple of hours chatting about churches, a guide to a Greeter's favourite food and drink spots, help figuring out where good playparks are, or finding out what a local loves about our wonderful natural environment, a Greeter can help you make the most of your visit. You can find out more about individual greeters from www.suffolkcoast.greeters.info/about-us/greeter-of-the-month.

The Suffolk Coast Greeter programme has been developed with funding from the Coastal Communities Fund. Alongside and supporting Wild Days Conservation holidays (see page 12) the AONB has also been developing a **Join In!** programme, supplying information to visitor businesses about all the conservation and volunteering activities that visitors can do along the Suffolk coast.

See www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/volunteering/join-in for all the opportunities to Join In!



Photo by Peter Eyles



Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project

The original aim of this project was to halt the continued decline of barn owls in Suffolk. It began in 2005 when the county's barn owl population was down to around a mere 45 pairs and now, after celebrating over 11 successful years of community working, we have over 450 pairs.

The project manages over 1,860 boxes, with 14 voluntary Area Co-ordinators and 150 voluntary Monitors/Ringers recording their success. This information is forwarded annually to the national database managed by British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Continued support from Suffolk Coast & Heaths and Dedham Vale AONB's Sustainable Development Funds will allow us to monitor the condition of our existing boxes and carry out minor repairs or replacement.

The careful and constant management of the habitat in the AONBs is paramount. Each year the barn owl parents need to catch approximately 10,000 mice or voles to enable them to successfully raise a family.

Hand-in-hand with the box repair programme we will be equipping our volunteers with tools and materials and training. This includes running monitoring/repair workshops sessions for health and safety and provision of essential equipment, tools and computer software, as well as holding community events to help local people to learn about barn owl conservation.

We have been asked by the BTO to trial and test their new data processing programme, ensuring that barn owl data held in Suffolk will be up-to-date and current.

Monitoring for this season is now well underway and the results are encouraging despite less than favourable weather conditions this Spring. Occupancy of the boxes has again been high but productivity is relatively low with an average of 1-2 chicks fledging from each nest and the breeding season one of the most protracted in recent years with early birds going down in March and some on a fresh clutch of eggs in August.

Steve Piotrowski



Photos by Kathy Piotrowski

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Your AONB

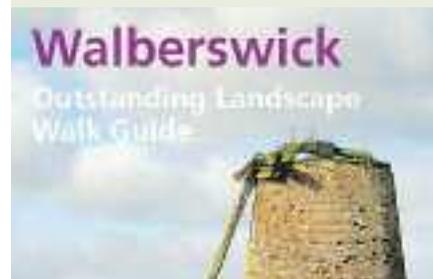


Outstanding Landscapes walks

This AONB is developing, with support from the Coastal Communities Fund, four new Outstanding Landscapes Walks. Look out for them as they come available over the Winter!

The guides are to:

- Rendlesham and Staverton
- Sutton and Hollesley
- Aldeburgh and Thorpeness
- Walberswick



Satisfied readers

Thank you to everyone who took part in our readership survey. The £30 book token prizes go to Douglas Spivey in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, and Julie Thomson in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley for their helpful feedback.

We're very pleased to know that overwhelmingly the response was positive: everyone found it very readable, and useful both to visitors and local people as a source of information and education about the AONBs.

If you have any suggestions for future features and items, please forward your comments to Cathy Smith, AONB Communications, Funding and Development Officer.

Enjoying the AONB

We have a wide range of recreation guides available, plus interesting information about looking after the AONB. You can choose from 14 walking Explorer routes including Alton Water, Kessingland and Shotley or from five new Adnams Cycle Explorers. If a challenging walk is more your style then try the Long Distance Routes, available in a pocket-sized guide (£12.95) incorporating the Suffolk Coast Path (Lowestoft to Felixstowe), the Stour and Orwell Walk (Felixstowe to Cattawade) and the Sandlings Walk (Ipswich to Southwold).

See the Publications pages of our website for the full list; most can be downloaded for FREE. Some guides are for sale, so please order these by post, email or phone and send a cheque payable to Suffolk County Council, adding postage and packaging as per the guidelines.



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 Poli Mohan – Business Support Officer
 Richard Brockman - AONB Project Support Officer

Edited by Cathy Shelbourne, Sea Shell Communications
www.seashellcommunications.co.uk

Key to Map

- AONB area
- Additional project area
- Towns and villages
- Woodland
- Heathland
- Main roads
- Railways/stations
- Suffolk Coast Path/Stour and Orwell Walk
- Sandlings Walk
- Sailors' Path



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