



Green Ixworth

News

April 2023

Swifts 'R'Us

A reminder that the presentation on Swifts by the Suffolk Swifts Group is taking place in the Methodist Church, High Street Ixworth on 20th April at 7.00pm. Importantly we can help the Swifts find a home in Ixworth by fitting a swift box in time for their spring arrival. The boxes will be available at the meeting for a suggested donation of £25. Please order one or more via Roger before 17th April from roger.larbes@gmail.com

PFAS

In the last News we reported that on the problem of these chemicals which do not break down in the environment and are toxic and some carcinogenic. At the time of the article the UK "safe level" in drinking water was and still is 100ng/l. Even this level is not enforced. President Biden has just announced a new safe level of 4ng/l for the USA.

On hearing this news, a spokesperson for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said: "UK drinking water standards are among the best in the world and *water companies* are required to carry out regular risk assessments and sampling for PFAS to ensure the drinking water supply remains safe". Another example of the potential criminals deciding whether they are breaking the law and thus facing enforcement action. We could really do with something such as an environment agency, one day we might get one.

Dogs and nature

Wildlife Trusts, which operate more than 2,300 nature reserves across the country, say loose dogs are a leading cause of plant and animal disturbances in UK reserves. Their waste carries diseases for wildlife, with 3,000 tonnes of faeces and urine produced by dogs **each day** disturbing the balance of ecosystems at levels that would be illegal on farmland. Owners of the UK's 13 million dogs are being encouraged to stick to paths and avoid walking groups of dogs in nature reserves this spring and summer to protect wildlife during the breeding season. They are also being asked to clean up waste and, where possible, stop dogs jumping in ponds.

Attacks on livestock are a persistent problem in nature reserves, sometimes resulting in the death of cows, sheep and other animals that might be maintaining grassland ecosystems.

People are also being reminded that dogs must be on leads no longer than 2 metres between 1 March and 31 July on open access land to protect ground-nesting birds, such as nightjars, willow warblers and meadow pipits. Oystercatchers, ringed plovers and little terns nest on beaches and are also easy to disturb. If a dog is seen worrying livestock, the landowner can legally kill the dog. **All this applies wherever you exercise your dog.**

Dozens of cases across the country of wildlife and livestock being damaged by dogs have been documented by the Wildlife Trusts. In Little Woollen Moss, Salford, dogs chase away curlews, lapwings and little ringed plovers, sometimes killing chicks in their nest. In Kent, there were at least eight dog attacks on Wildlife Trust staff and livestock, with 13 sheep killed. Dogs

jumping in ponds can disturb wildlife, while their flea treatments pollute and poison ponds and other waterways.

“Dogs are not the problem – it is the owners that are the problem,” said Duncan Hutt, Northumberland Wildlife Trust’s director of conservation.

Road kill – do we want this,



One of an estimated 29 million mammals and 194 million birds killed each year on European roads, according to a recent study.

Or this?



The introduction to the Greenest County awards ceremony was given by Cllr Richard Rout, cabinet member for Finance and Environment, who rightly emphasised the need to ensure high levels of biodiversity. The key note speaker was Christine Luxton the Chief Executive of the Suffolk Wild Life Trust who as well as emphasising the need for biodiverse hot spots also made a strong case for connectivity between biodiverse locations

Recent headlines have raised the growing problem of roadkill on our roads. We frequently see it on the A143, presenting a significant loss of wild animals, a hinderance to their free movement and a major health hazard to humans. 28% of wild animals are killed this way.

Damage to vehicles or drivers swerving to avoid large animals are costly and life threatening. This evidence, more on our website, demonstrates the need for the Green Bridge.



29% of Polecats are killed on the road. Is it any wonder they are rare in the UK?

We have now written to Cllr Rout seeking his support for a Green Bridge which would connect the biodiversity of our village to our biodiverse countryside and the new 10 acre wood, planted by SW Cross Farms on the crest to the east of the A143. *See final story.*

You don't need to know.

Government is to remove the right to know when sewage is dumped into waterways. The Bill going through parliament which automatically removes all regulations based on EU Directives, unless they are specifically retained, will get rid of the Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) which require water companies to publish details of sewage spills, etc. As a result, it could be much harder to hold water firms and government bodies to account for the ecological quality of our rivers

Making listed buildings energy efficient.

Listed or older buildings are presenting a problem to make energy efficient. The current rules can be quite strict. It is something which we have been looking at in Green Ixworth. As it happens the National Trust and other bodies have commissioned research to examine what can be done. We do hope that they also consider seeking support from government for some flexibility in the rules. Home owners are likely, in the long run, to face problems selling poorly insulated homes.

What is happening to our insects?

The global loss of pollinators is expected to lead to of 500,000 deaths per year. This is due to the loss of healthy food crops particularly fruit, vegetable and nut production. The researches considered heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers all of which are put at bay by the foods needing pollinators most.

Chemicals are still considered as the greatest threat to pollinators but climate change is now a strong contender.

Wild Heritage Suffolk at <https://www.wildheritagesuffolk.com>. A recipient of social funding from the NHS, helping those of us with too much or too little in our lives or stressed. Full details in the Green Ixworth March News

SW Cross Farms. Report by Nick Cross.

2022 gave us another dry spring, with only 2mm of rain during April. Already our crops were under stress, especially those on clay, and we knew we were not going to enjoy a bumper harvest. This year we were growing winter barley, spring barley, winter rye, sugar beet and, for the first time in many years, forty hectares of peas

We are in the second year of our transition to the regenerative farming system, which is a way of farming that prioritises soil health – in other words, how much organic carbon it contains, its ability to retain and disperse water effectively and the richness of biodiversity below ground. In practice this means giving up the plough, using a direct drill, growing cover and companion crops to blanket the soil and supply it with nutrients throughout the year, and reducing our use of artificial fertilisers and sprays.

By autumn, we were pleased with the progress we've made with the new system – the soils seem to be responding – but we were disappointed by the extent to which the dry hot summer had impacted yields. We were down against all our forecasts, with the only bright spot being that our barley and rye quality was high, meaning we could sell into the premium markets.

By far the biggest victim of lack of rain was the new 10 acre wood we planted on top of the ridge by the Bypass as part of the Woodland Carbon Guarantee Scheme, one of a number of new initiatives designed to help the country meet its net zero targets. The fledgling native mixed woodland looked fantastic in early summer, but was wiped out by August. The problem was so severe nationwide that the Forestry Commission authorised grant money to help us and others replant in the winter.

On a more positive note, all our nature conservation plans - supported mainly by the Countryside Stewardship scheme - had been fully implemented over the course of the year, including beetle banks, new hedgerows, crops for feeding birds over the winter, and special management of the low meadows by the river for wading birds. In December Mike Dean, the local butterfly expert, reported back on his second annual survey of butterfly life around Bangrove Wood and we were delighted to hear that he found nearly all the butterfly species he would hope to find locally. We're surveying butterflies because of their importance in the food chain, especially for birdlife.

One final bit of exciting news for local historians. In 2022 we found a gold stater – a type of ancient coin – dropped by a member of the Iceni tribe over 2000 years ago, around 45 BC. Rubbing away the dirt, it shows a long-legged horse with a beaded mane looped back.

Green Ixworth were pleased to hear that Nick Cross is now a Trustee of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

Green Ixworth Website

We would like to thank Tony Phillips for the work he does keeping the website up to date and in particular the recently made improvements to accessibility.

Stark warning.

The Climate Change Committee has warned that the UK is “strikingly unprepared” for the impact of climate change and that there has been a “lost decade” in efforts to improve adaptation measures. Chris Stark, chief executive of the CCC, which advises the government, warned that extreme heatwaves, such as the one last year that killed 3,000 people, will soon become the norm. A similar recent warning has been given to government by the National Infrastructure Committee.

We, and others like us, shall have to show them how it is done.