



# Green Ixworth

## November 2023 Newsletter

[www.ixworth.org](http://www.ixworth.org)

### The Black Bourn, Ixworth.



**Before**



**After**

Many thanks to our “Water babies” who have worked hard on our river both here, upstream of Ixworth Bridge and by the great bend near the Filter House/ Pump House on Bailey Pool Bridge Lane.

### Ixworth Christmas Fair – 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

2.00 to 6pm 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023 in Ixworth High Street. Green Ixworth will be exhibiting and meeting friends and supporters on the day. Do come along and visit, enjoy the stalls and attractions and say hello to our stall staff.

### Little Ouse Headwaters Project-1<sup>st</sup> December

The AGM (very short) is to be held on 1st December followed by a fascinating talk on Water Voles and getting rid of mink plus information on the Countryside Regeneration Trust. Details on this poster: <https://www.lohp.org.uk/post/lohp-agm-and-annual-talk-2023>.

### New trees to replace old!?

Preparing a letter to the Bury Free Press on keeping old trees and oaks in particular, on new developments, I came across this piece published by the Woodland Trust. It summarises the need for older trees to be protected for all those fauna, flora and funga which depend upon it. Some of them exclusively and others only when the oaks are ancient.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/oak-tree-wildlife/>

## **Where have all the birdies gone?**

Data released by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has revealed that almost all bird types are reducing in abundance, despite years of warnings from nature bodies that action needs to be taken to protect habitats and save species.

Faring the worst are woodland birds. Their numbers have fallen since 1970, by 37%, of which 22% were in the first 48 years and 15% in just the **past five years**, an accelerating decline. Just three species in the woodland bird group have increased – blackcap, nightingale and nuthatch – but 23 have declined. Wet woodlands have decreased at the fastest rate with losses of birds such as Willow Tits. The Black Bourn valley has a number of wet woodlands, albeit of small total area, but unless we can maintain higher water levels they will disappear.

The government said factors causing woodland bird decline included increased deer browsing pressure, which reduces habitats for foraging and nesting. Removal of hedgerows and the cutting down of woodland, removing habitat, are also still driving declines. Defra said that restoring woodland would have a positive impact on species.

The decline in farm land birds is slightly less but still worrying. Members of the environmentally conscious farming networks, are using a variety of techniques to improve soil quality, no till cultivation, reduced use of chemicals and fuel, “beetle banks”, planting bird and insect food plants, etc are already showing bird, insect and mammal varieties and numbers are steady or increasing. The good news is that conservation methods are proven to work and numbers of birds increase accordingly.

Woodlands also need protecting, including scrub, in which many species thrive. Newly planted woodlands take some years to make a good home, needing not just the bigger trees but understorey to provide hiding places, food and nest sites for secretive birds, amphibians and mammals like the Hazel Dormouse. Unfortunately, many woodland managers believe the floor should be kept clean of under storey, to increase the growth of the trees and prevent disease. There is little evidence for this as the practice limits the development of fungi which are essential to tree health and growth.

We can all help to increase the tree cover, whether it is to absorb carbon from the atmosphere, to clean pollutants from the air, to cool the local area, to improve the visual environment or to benefit wildlife. If you have a piece of “public” land nearby, talk to neighbours to see if they would be happy to see some proper trees and shrubs on it and then let Green Ixworth know so we could approach the appropriate authorities for permission and help with any advice and obtaining the plants. We have some limited funds available for tree purchase. Of course, if you have room in your garden or owned verge or hedge then we may be able to help you with planting. Bare root trees and shrubs, can be obtained from a local grower, Sandy Lane Nursery in Wattisfield at very good prices and with a low carbon footprint to collect.

## **Wild Flowers next year?**

Any patch of ground which is short of nutrient will do. Preferable take off the turf, lightly rake the surface. Then buy some wild flower seeds, preferably without grass but if you want grass then make sure the seed contains Yellow Rattle which suppresses the growth of grass. Spread more thickly than advertised. Obtainable from garden centres but better from professional growers where the choice is greater by soil type - dry, wet, clay, chalk, sand, silt; style - hedgerow, pasture, woodland edge; types - annual, biennial, perennial, tall short. Water in and wait to grow.

Hey presto: flowers next year and even more the year after as the biennials and perennials mature.

Next autumn cut the foliage back after seeds have left the plants. Leave the straw for a week or so and then shake to ensure the seeds are on the ground. Ensure the seeds are in touch with the ground, if it does not rain heavily use water and if you can't borrow a goat or sheep your own feet will have to do, just walk over the ground to ensure the seeds are in touch with the soil. After a couple of years, you may have enough seeds to offer the cut straw to your neighbours. If not then compost it hot to destroy unwanted seeds.

Companies with a good selection include <https://www.bostonseeds.com/>; <https://www.wildflower.co.uk/products/>; <https://www.johnchamberswildflowers.co.uk/>; but there are others.

Good advice also on: <https://www.countryfile.com/wildlife/trees-plants/guide-to-britains-hay-meadows?fbclid=IwAR1kdMyvEsN-7zvq3sTMK4IRa48FkMdX4-OrfJt63JANs4We5iMsesx27bo>

### **East Anglian Daily Times 10/11/23.**

“A new dog walking field is set to open in Hadleigh near Ipswich to cater for the rising number of god [sic] owners in Suffolk”.

### **Heats Pumps and their cost to buy and to run.**

“Which” has recently published information which shows the purchase and installation costs can now be as low as £500 and running costs significantly less than gas.

[https://www.which.co.uk/news/article/a-heat-pump-might-be-a-lot-cheaper-than-you-think-heres-how-aSx7P0B2hOHw?utm\\_source=ExactTarget&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=4365444-SUS\\_EM\\_191123&mi\\_u=216495940&mi\\_ecmp=SUS\\_EM\\_191123](https://www.which.co.uk/news/article/a-heat-pump-might-be-a-lot-cheaper-than-you-think-heres-how-aSx7P0B2hOHw?utm_source=ExactTarget&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=4365444-SUS_EM_191123&mi_u=216495940&mi_ecmp=SUS_EM_191123)

### **Sludge and what you make of it.**

This horrifying article by George Monbiot, explains why sewage sludge spread on farms, as a fertilizer, is even more toxic now than in the past. Water companies have, in recent years, permitted industrial enterprises, for a fee, to put a variety of chemicals into the sewage system, most of which are not taken out even if processed. Sludge has to be tested for heavy metals and few other things but not many chemicals including pharmaceuticals. All of this is taken up by what grows afterwards and some will finish up in our water courses.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/nov/18/cocktail-toxins-poisoning-fields-humans-sewage-sludge-fighting-dirty>

## Free trees/bushes



We ordered some Sea Buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) for replacing dead plants on Crown Lane and the supplier provided Alder Buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*). Sandy Lane Nurseries are fulfilling the original order and we now have 25 trees/bushes which are available to distribute free to supporters on a first come first served basis. They prefer moist ground and a little sun but will put up with any aspect. They require little maintenance and grow after 20 -40 years to approx. 4-5m breadth and height. They make

good hedging and are widely used as food source by birds, insects and mammals. Deciduous. If you would like one or more of these bare root shrubs please mail on: [ginocarbon@hotmail.com](mailto:ginocarbon@hotmail.com)

## “From the Editor” on Storm “Babet”.



Enormous damage was suffered in Suffolk from the storm. The reasons are numerous: existing drains not being maintained or cleared of debris; development on or adjacent to flood plains; reduction in natural areas for floodwater to be held or absorbed; deepening of drains/rivers to speed the flow, so moving the problem downstream; increase in impermeable land eg concrete; Climate Change with its increase in the high volume of rainfall over a short period.

One other reason why things were so bad was poor preparation for the well predicted

storm. The recently sacked Environment Secretary, Theresa Coffey, (above) was not at her best when she explained why better assets were not in place to help residents hit by floods, “Most of our rain comes from the west. This was rain coming from the other way. We do not have quite as much experience on that”. Please note she is MP for the second most Easterly constituency in the UK.

Parliamentary records show the new Environment Secretary, Steve Barclay, received a donation from a major funder of a climate sceptic think-tank just weeks before taking up his new role. Barclay accepted £3,000 on 20<sup>th</sup> October from Michael Hintze, a key funder of the Global Warming Policy Foundation, a UK-based thinktank that has denied the legitimacy of climate science, he was one of its earliest backers.