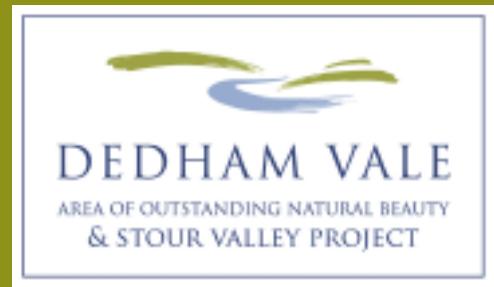


DEDHAM VALE & STOUR VALLEY NEWS

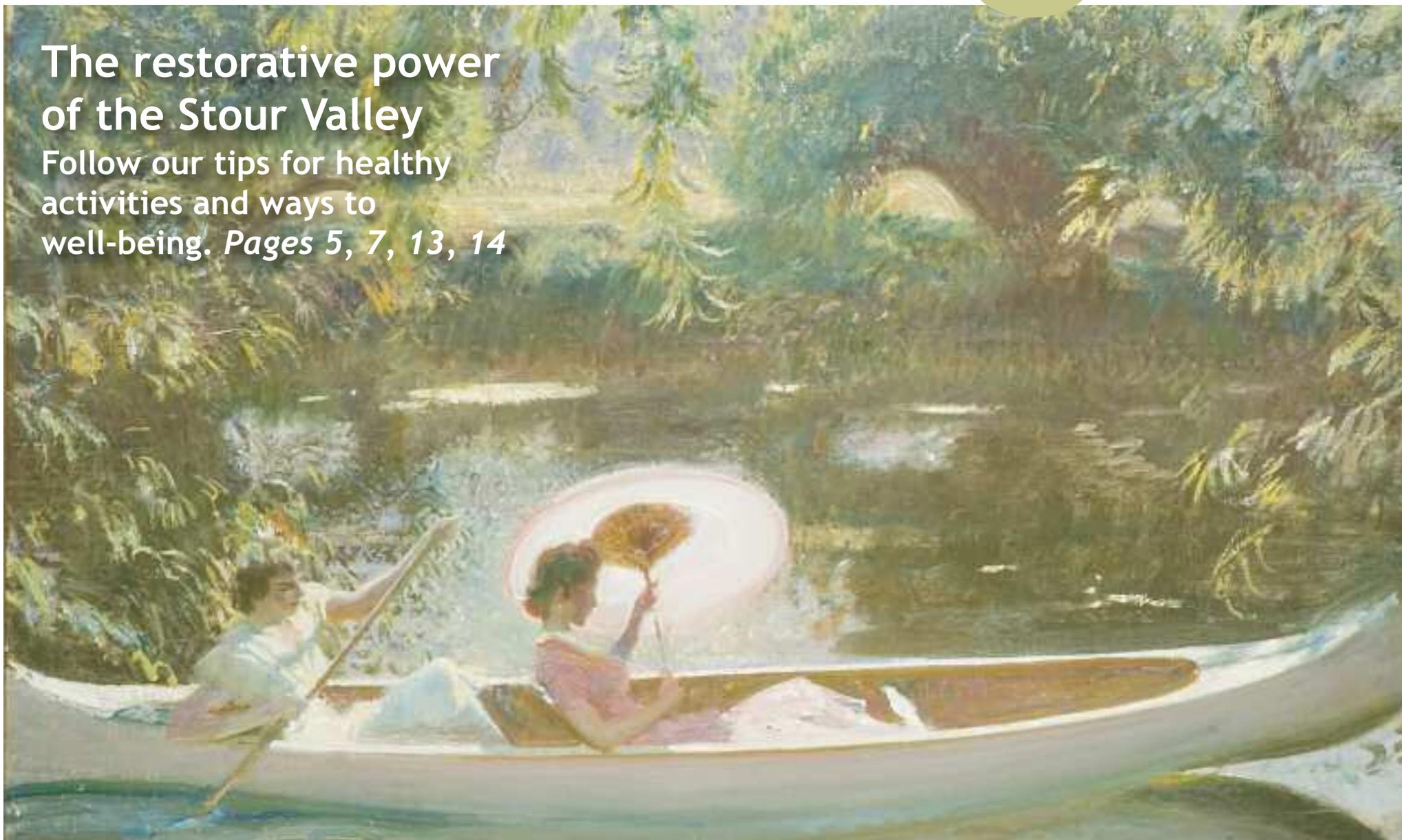


News and Visitor Information for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley

Free

Autumn/Winter 2016/17

The restorative power of the Stour Valley
Follow our tips for healthy activities and ways to well-being. *Pages 5, 7, 13, 14*



September Afternoon, painted by Sir Alfred Munnings © The estate of Sir Alfred Munnings, Dedham, Essex



Far from the madding crowd
Rosemary Mead looks back on her life-long association with Tiger Hill *Page 4*



Blooming marvellous!
Green-fingered students give nature a helping hand *Page 13*



Looking after our countryside
Where will volunteering take you next? *Page 5*

Messages from the Chairmen



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

As summer moves gently towards autumn, I confess that I begin to look forward to the joys of the Stour Valley in the quieter time of year. Taking us into autumn was Outstanding Week, the national celebration encouraging us all to enjoy and to be inspired by the UK's AONBs. Our special farm visit raised money for the Stour Valley Environment Fund.

I am delighted that the proficiency of our Project Team was recognised at two national award events this summer. A commendation was received by our River Restoration Project in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management 2016 Awards for the work done with the Environment Agency, particularly near Great and Little Bradley.

At the National Conference for AONBs the Stour Valley Volunteers were shortlisted for the prestigious Bowland Award for their sterling work over 25 years. The award, presented annually, 'acknowledges the tireless work undertaken by a person or a group for whom sharing, learning and inspiring is a way of life that contributes to AONBs being such wonderful places to live, work or visit.' Congratulations to everyone!

We are currently supporting twelve projects from our Stour Valley Environment Fund and our Dedham Vale AONB Sustainable Development Fund. A number of these are aimed at encouraging youngsters to understand the special qualities of the area, for example the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's plans to provide opportunities for children and their parents or carers to appreciate the natural environment at Arger Fen.

Finally, a quick reminder about our new Walking Guides. Look out for them as they become available over the autumn. They are an invaluable aid to getting out and about in our wonderful Valley, whatever the season!



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

Brexit may mean big changes to the way farming and countryside management is supported by Government. We will have to wait and see how these evolve but we already have a new Secretary of State at DEFRA, Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP and a new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity, Lord Gardiner of Kimble. We hope they will soon get to know the Dedham Vale.

The Management Plan, about which I wrote in the last issue, has now been adopted by the Partnership and will be of help to Local Authorities giving guidance when determining planning issues as well as being the blueprint for Project officers over the next five years.

Funding from Amenity Societies and Parish Councils has enabled the Project to commission studies of the Natural Beauty and Special Qualities of both the existing AONB and the proposed extension by Alison Farmer Associates, a leading consultancy specialising in landscapes.

These documents will be of real value in showing where we can expect Natural England to recommend the AONB extension and why the area will qualify. It will also increase our understanding of what is so unique and special about the AONB and help inform decision makers.

I write as harvest is beginning and with hopes of reasonable but probably not record yields for cereal crops after a wet June and hot July.

This weather has resulted in remarkable growth on trees and hedges such as we have not seen for many years. If there are high winds and autumn storms, the tree surgeons are in for a busy winter!

Vision for the future

The 2016-2021 AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan outlines its vision for the area as:

The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Project area is a distinctive landscape with agriculture and wildlife at its core that retains its natural beauty and special qualities, which is conserved and enhanced by a wide ranging partnership. It is an area where residents feel a strong sense of belonging, visitors are welcomed to enjoy the countryside and the heritage is understood and appreciated by all.

The Management Plan is drawn up by a partnership of organisations that have an interest in the area, and is now available as a free download or as a booklet. The partners are drawn from the environmental, agricultural, business and community sectors and the local authorities.

The plan guides the work of these organisations and seeks to balance the need of the different sectors to ensure that the AONB and Stour Valley remains an example of the finest landscape in the country. It is a statutory duty on local authorities with part of an AONB in their area to produce and review a management plan every five years.

Dark skies better without obtrusive lighting

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 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.



Map of England showing light pollution

Rivers benefit from tree planting

The Rivers Stour, Brett and Box are set to benefit from a wide range of environmental improvements through the planting of 500 riverside trees. The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project, in partnership with the Environment Agency, has been awarded £3,500 from Essex & Suffolk Water through their Branch Out Fund to enable the project to go ahead. The response from landowners has been terrific with over 40 coming forward to request trees. Tree planting will go ahead this winter after careful selection of the most appropriate sites.

The project will be focussing on a stretch of the River Stour from upstream of Stratford St Mary to Sudbury, the River Brett downstream from Lavenham and the River Box downstream from Little Waldingfield. A mix of native broadleaved tree species and large shrubs will be planted including Black Poplar, disease-resistant Elms, Field Maple, Common Alder, and Hazel amongst others.

"The planting of riparian (riverbank or wetland) trees will help to benefit the ecology of the River Stour and its tributaries in many ways and add to the quality of the nationally protected AONB," said River Stour Project Officer Alex Moore da Luz.

For further details about the scheme please contact Alex on 01394 445225 or alex.mooredaluz@suffolk.gov.uk





Neil Catchpole holds a British Trust for Ornithology licence

NEIL CATCHPOLE, Countryside Officer for the Dedham Vale AONB, pens his swansong

Neil's notes

It's that magical time of year again: the cereal harvest in its final throes, the land revealing its under-garments once more and a new crop of wildlife dispersing to fresh pastures.

The greylag geese enthral us with their evening music, flying out from their daytime roosts to the stubbles. A late flush of grass tempts out the roe deer and their 'new kids on the block' from the woodland edge. Midge and moth are snapped up by marauding bats and newly fledged barn owls quarter the rough grassland for small mammals, urgently learning from adult birds, before winter casts its cloak across the land.

After eight happy and rewarding years in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project team, I am also moving on to pastures new, to put back on my contractor's hat and to concentrate on projects of my own. I am so grateful to my work colleagues, our landowners, and visitors for their support and encouragement, allowing me to stamp my individual mark on the Valley that I love so passionately.

Barn owl conservation in the Stour Valley continues, with a team of volunteers monitoring half of the artificial nest boxes, co-ordinated by the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project (see article below). I will continue to monitor the remaining 60 sites, ringing juveniles and adults under the terms of my BTO licence.

One of the last jobs I have completed with our loyal band of volunteers has been the construction of an experimental log cabin bird hide at Assington Mill. Built from conifer thinnings, cut from their own woodland during our broad-leaved conversion work, it will enable course participants to look-and-learn in comfort.

There is great satisfaction in making something out of nothing, whether building a compost heap, constructing a bat box from untreated timber offcuts, or planting an insect-friendly wildflower plot in a spare uncultivated corner of a commercial farm - helping to sway the balance back in favour of the flora and fauna with which we share this overcrowded planet.

Keep up the good work.



Geese flying into stubble to feed at sunset.

Photo by Neil Catchpole



Crazy hats for the volunteers at Buntry Lane during Neil Catchpole's last day with the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project



Neil Catchpole, centre kneeling, with volunteers at Assington constructing an experimental log cabin bird hide.

Photo by Dave Harris

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).



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.

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. 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



Photo by Kathy Piotrowski

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A LIFETIME'S WORK IN THE AONB

CATHY SHELBOURNE meets Rosemary Mead, whose life has been closely entwined with the Griffith Trust's creation and management of a nature reserve in the AONB

Far from the madding crowd

Tucked away on the edge of the Dedham Vale AONB, just south of the western village of Assington, is one of Suffolk's most peaceful and undisturbed nature reserves, Tiger Hill.

Home to a variety of habitats and wildlife - but certainly not tigers - it owes its existence to the indomitable Dr Grace Griffith and her husband Dr David Griffith, and its survival to their descendants.

"Mother was one of the first female doctors, an amazing woman, and a dominant force," recalls Dr Griffith's daughter Rosemary Mead, now 93, and remarkable for her own commitment to Tiger Hill. When Rosemary was just four years old, her mother rented Warren Cottage at Tiger Hill as "somewhere for the family to expand," and in fact, her sister Anne was born there before her mother bought it with 10 acres of woodland (Kedge's Wood) in 1938.

Rosemary went into farming after leaving school, and worked as a milkmaid on her uncle's farm in Abergavenny (where her father was from originally) and bred pigs at Warren Cottage. Farming gave her practical skills, and an understanding of the need to plan ahead: important elements in her 40-year relationship with Tiger Hill.

By keeping the cottage and woodland for family use, "we were able to give wildlife a chance to breathe without being trampled on." However, this close relationship with nature was severely challenged in 1962 when she and her four young children moved into Warren Cottage for two years. "Snow shut us in for six weeks, with no mains water. Local farmers helped out, and I had to walk through the snow to the shop. We had no time or energy to have fun."

After her father's death in 1968 and her mother's death in 1970, Rosemary took over the management of Tiger Hill as she was living in Colchester, closer than any of her five siblings - and "I loved it dearly." Dr Griffith had asked in her Will that the woodland should become a nature reserve and the family

agreed to set up a Trust to manage the cottage and woodland.

The committee of like-minded friends and specialists gathered in 1970 included William Palmer (1905-1984), lecturer in biology at Homerton College, Cambridge; Rosemary Mead, who became the Secretary; Professor Oliver Rackham (1939-2015), Suffolk-born naturalist, Britain's leading woodland ecologist and landscape historian, and author of *Ancient Woodland*; local solicitor Cecil Wells; and family members including Rosemary's nephew, Nick Miller, long-term warden of Tiger Hill Local Nature Reserve, which came into being in the 1980s.

Advisors since 1973 have included Colin Ranson from the then Nature Conservancy Council, and Sue Hooton, Senior Ecologist, Neil Catchpole from the AONB team, and others from Suffolk County Council. The chairmen of the Nature Reserve (and in 1985, the Local Nature Reserve), William Palmer, Cyril Garnham and Gus Govett all gave up their time to advise and steer the Management Plan forward.

"My aim was to put these plans into practical action and maintain the status of the SSSI and Local Nature Reserve," says Rosemary who continued as Secretary until her retirement aged 80 in 2003. She was succeeded by her daughter, Janet Ainsley. But she has never let go of her affection for Tiger Hill, relishing the peace and tranquillity. "Nature doesn't stay still for two seconds, so management of that peace is something we worked to maintain. Hard work never hurt anybody," she says.

Neil Catchpole, Countryside Officer for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project, has known Rosemary since he was a child and she knocked on his family's door after their arrival in Wormingford and invited them to tea. "She is so well loved and widely respected for her knowledge of plants and ecology - and human nature! She was the driving force running the reserve, and this has been continued by the family and especially the Warden, Nick Miller."

TOP LEFT: Rosemary Mead travelled to and from her home in Colchester to Tiger Hill on her moped. MIDDLE: Rosemary, now 93, with the Particulars of the Sale of the Assington Hall Estate, including Warren Cottage and Tiger Hill Cottage, in 1938. RIGHT: Warren Cottage at Tiger Hill, still owned by the Griffith Trust; and Dr Grace Griffith outside the Cottage.



Cathy Shelbourne

How to experience the quiet charm of Tiger Hill

1. Look out for the six main habitats: acid grass-heath, wetter slopes, woodland (especially the bluebells), wet meadows, hedgerows, and stream and ponds
2. Download the leaflet about Tiger Hill LNR from the AONB website at www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/publications/wildlife-and-landscape. A public footpath runs around the south west boundary of the reserve, starting from the water splash on the road between Assington and Wormingford.
3. For details of events, and educational and research visits, or to join a volunteer working party, contact the Warden, Nick Miller, at Tiger Hill Cottage, Bures, Suffolk CO8 5BW. Telephone 01787 227359



Roger Jones



Cathy Shelbourne

Volunteering is on the up!



Volunteers planting fruit trees in Assington

Over the years there has been more and more interest in volunteering for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project, which is wonderful. This is due in part to an increase in volunteer opportunities brought about by public sector cuts, which have decreased budgets. It is also because the AONB Countryside Officers have had to seek more external funding to run new projects on the ground, involving new volunteer opportunities such as the Scattered Orchard Project and Pollinator Patches. I often hear it said that the AONB Project couldn't deliver half what it needs to do without support from our amazing volunteers.

What do volunteers particularly enjoy?

- being outdoors in the beautiful countryside close to nature
- physical practical conservation work that keeps them fit
- walking the promoted routes
- having a sense of purpose with what they're doing whether it's planting a new hedge for wildlife or picking up litter along a footpath; the satisfaction of a good job done knowing wildlife and people will benefit
- camaraderie with other volunteers - the banter, talking to visitors, engaging with others
- learning new skills such as hedge laying or wildflower identification

What they're really talking about is their health and well-

being and for all of us this is so important in our rapidly changing technological world - that connection with nature, the outdoors, and the green calming environment.

Stour Valley Volunteers conserve and enhance

The Stour Valley Volunteers have increased so much in number that I've had to start a waiting list! The last six months have been busy with construction jobs such as building a deer fence around the new Black Poplar clone bank in Alphamstone, dead hedging at Dedham Vale Vineyard, building a bird hide at Assington Mill as well as the annual Himalayan Balsam pulls and meadow management tasks. The volunteers donned hats for Neil Catchpole's last task which was a sad but jolly affair (see photo on page 3).



Stour Valley Volunteers at Long Melford Green Country Wildlife Site

Praise for Constable Country Volunteer Rangers

One year in and we've had such wonderful and positive feedback regarding this scheme. These volunteers have been invaluable. They've not only cleared up masses of litter and dog mess making Constable Country a much more pleasant place to visit but have reported rights of way problems, engaged with visitors about the area and, when needed, redirected walkers away from flooded footpaths. The feedback and social evening was an excellent opportunity for everyone to get to know each other and a good way to find out how to improve the scheme.

Family fun days with SVEN

Outdoor learning providers from Stour Valley Education Network (SVEN) have been busy this year supporting Flatford Nature Days and the Clare Castle Country Park bioblitz. It was great to see all the different activities on offer for families to get involved in. We really are very lucky to have such a wonderful group of outdoor educators in the Stour Valley. Next year we hope to do some themed walks for families for the Suffolk Walking Festival.

Youth Rangers get stuck into activities

The Dedham Vale Youth Rangers have been involved in some great activities such as building minibeast hotels, learning about wildlife at the Tiger Hill Nature Reserve Bioblitz, clearing old tree shelters from the banks of the river Stour and hedge laying. If you're 13-18 years of age and like the sound of this sort of activity why not give it a go?



Dedham Vale Youth Rangers made mini-beast hotels at Flatford

Scattered Orchard Project extends into the Stour Valley

Thanks to funding from the Stour Valley Environment Fund and volunteer support we are able to extend this project into the Stour Valley. Ten parishes have already signed up and site visits have been completed. If you've got a patch of publicly accessible land where you can plant some fruit or nut trees please contact me.

Emma Black, AONB Countryside Officer

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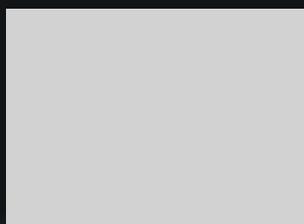


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So much more than the view

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 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 wait for 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

Ensure you are looking after established wildlife habitats to keep those already breeding in a welcome and thriving environment.

Maximise the environmental value of the field boundaries by realising that they are potential habitats for wildlife.

Create small areas of rough grassland where surface water channels through fields to act as a buffer for hedgerows.

Establish flower-rich habitats to encourage insects through pollen production in Spring and Summer, helping to diversify your wildlife.

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 so easily, like otters, voles and fish.

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.



Photo supplied by Jeremy Mynott

Bee orchid, as seen at Shingle Street.

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.



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.



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.

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; her first task ... way marking improvements on the Sandlings Walk; barn owl monitoring with Neil Catchpole; 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 at: www.suffolkyearofwalking.co.uk

Come Along for the Stride!

The past from above

The Dedham Vale AONB is richly endowed with archaeological and historical sites spanning the full range of human history, from the earliest prehistory to the Second World War. 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 structures and earthworks, including the Second World War defences to be found along the Stour Valley. Other sites appear as cropmarks, where buried archaeological features affect the rate of growth of crops planted over the top of them. The ploughed-out remains of nationally significant complexes of Neolithic (4000–2351 BC) and Bronze Age (2350–700 BC) burial mounds have been identified in this fashion at places such as Stoke by Nayland, Dedham and Lawford. The prehistoric field-systems within which these features stood are amongst the earliest recorded in the country.

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. Suffolk Heritage Explorer www.heritage.suffolk.gov.uk

Dr Richard Hoggett, Senior Archaeological Officer, Suffolk County Council



This 1996 aerial photograph shows the cropmarks of a prehistoric barrow cemetery at Stoke-by-Nayland, including a particularly large double ring-ditch and associated trackways and field boundaries.

© Suffolk County Council

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 (see photo), 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 within the zone of influence, over the plan periods.

Sue Hooton, Senior Ecologist, Suffolk County Council

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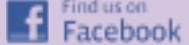
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Beat the street

A new scheme is inspiring residents in Sudbury and Great Cornard to get active and explore their local area. Beat the Street - taking place this autumn - will create a 'playable area' where residents are rewarded for running, walking and cycling as far as they can, says Jane Hatton, Town Team Development Manager in Sudbury.

Local residents will be able to track their journey by tapping special cards and fobs against dozens of sensors located across Sudbury and Great Cornard. In return for going outside and discovering something new about their area, players will be rewarded with points and prizes. To find out how to take part visit www.beatthestreet.me/sgc. Details can also be found at GPs, libraries and sports centres in Sudbury and Great Cornard.

Beat the Street Sudbury and Great Cornard is an initiative run by Intelligent Health in partnership with Suffolk County Council. Taking place during Suffolk's Year of Walking, Beat the Street is designed to inspire whole communities to get moving. More than 500,000 people will have played the game by the end of 2016 in towns and cities across the UK.



Edible treasure hunt

Have you ever really looked at what lies under your feet when you are out walking through Suffolk woodlands? asks Justine Paul.

It wasn't until I joined one of our county's best foragers and Michel Roux trained chef, Carl Shillingford, that I discovered just how many edible delights abound in our countryside. Suffolk Market Events has teamed up with Foragers Feast to help bring this amazing outdoor experience to more people in search of doing something different.

Autumn is the time when mushrooms are bountiful in woods and meadows with at least 130 species of fungi recorded at Tiger Hill near Arger Fen, including Earth Stars and Bird's Nests, Beefsteaks and Chicken of the Woods. Throughout the seasons Carl and Matthew Rooney, ecologist and mushroom grower, run fabulous forages lasting all morning followed by a delicious wild food cooking demonstration and tasting which takes place, literally, in a field kitchen.

After a full morning of hunting and eating, the day ends with every forager receiving a Goodie Bag full of information sheets, recipes and a selection of wild food products including hedgerow pesto, wild soup, dried mushrooms and mushroom sour dough.



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Suffolk refugee visit

Inspired by an episode of *Countryfile* earlier in the year, when a Suffolk farm hosted a group of refugees, the Fulibroch Dairy at Bures St Mary contacted Suffolk Refugee Support and hosted a similar group. It was an opportunity for some of the refugees to return to a rural agricultural setting that they perhaps originally knew and for others it was simply a beautiful day spent in the Stour Valley in glorious sunshine.

Men, women and children from various parts of the world milked the goats, collected eggs, bottle-fed lambs and chopped wood before making food to cook and eat outdoors. It was a very successful day and a joy to watch the appreciation of such a simple offering to people who had faced so much trauma and change in their lives and who are now mainly based in an urban setting. The refugees left armed with their farm produce and have since sent plenty of messages of thanks and wishes to return.

The Fulibroch Dairy has a small herd of pedigree British Toggenburg dairy goats and sell pedigree stock and raw milk, hand milked to order. It is part of the Stour Valley Education Network (SVEN) and welcomes group visits to the holding overlooking the valley particularly for educational, cultural and agricultural purposes.

For more information about the Fulibroch Dairy, please call Tim or Tereza Fairbairn on 01787 229914.




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Blooming marvellous

Last Summer term, a group of year 10s at East Bergholt High School made six plant pots for the RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden, as part of their work with Ms Anison for the Prince's Trust.

"This wildlife friendly community project helped us to build our confidence and learn new skills in communication, decision making and team work," said students Glen Barrell and Summer Patterson.

Funds for materials, paint and plants was donated by East Bergholt Horticultural Society and Capel Bypass Nursery. "We really appreciate the help of Ms Sharon Baker from the RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden who made the project possible for us. We would like to say a big thank you to Mr Stringer for helping us build the plant pots and Ms Thirlby for her advice about the choice of plants, selected for their attraction to wildlife."

Over the Summer the flower pots were on display in Flatford.



Wild Beach by John Ferguson

Wild play

Suffolk Wildlife Trust helped a number of families reconnect with the natural world this summer as part of a Wild Play project supported by Dedham Vale AONB Sustainable Development Fund. Over the summer the Trust put on six free Wild Play sessions to families at Cherry Blossom Children's Centre in East Bergholt and three Wild Play family events at Arger Fen to enable parents and their children to play and learn together in nature.

Wild Play is designed to provide opportunities for children and adults to get back in touch with nature and to engage in playful outdoor experiences - from making mud pies to paddling in streams - with and alongside, each other.

The Trust's Sara Holman, who devised the initiative, said: "Wild Play is free, unstructured and hands-on. No specialist knowledge, skills, equipment or resources are required. Children have the time, space and freedom to explore wild places, make discoveries, take risks, create, build, get muddy and to experience nature at first hand." She added: "These sessions will be the first of many that inspire families to make nature and play part of their everyday lives."

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, redshank and avocet 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



Underwater survey reveals fish population

A river restoration project on the River Stour has proved a great success after an underwater survey revealed large numbers of fish using the installed habitat features.

Environment Agency fisheries officers from Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk undertook the fish survey using a Sonar camera, between Stratford St Mary and Higham, to assess the density and health of the fish.

When they came across a section of the river at Langham, which EA teams had restored two years ago to provide enhanced habitat for fish, they discovered thousands of fish using the woody debris features that had been put in place.

The idea for the river restoration project was initiated by the EA and an Essex angling club after reports of declining fish stocks in this section of the river. A partnership project was developed with the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project and private landowners to enhance the river habitats.

Work on site began in October 2014 in a bid to improve the water quality and enhance the fish habitat. Measures included re-profiling river banks and installing woody debris to provide natural refuge areas for fish and invertebrates. Tom Howard, Environment Agency fisheries officer, said: "We are pleased the river restoration has come to fruition. With steep sided banks, there is very little habitat for fish so this is further justification for installing woody debris. It is really encouraging to know the project has been successful and will provide good evidence for future work."

The specialist camera enables the team to cover large stretches of rivers and reveals clear images, allowing them to observe the fish without disturbing them. The survey also informs officers where habitat is lacking and needs restoring.



Up top, down under: the Environment Agency surveying fish in the River Stour using a Sonar camera

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Munnings and the river

"Until I pass out I shall always long for the river and the warblers' song going on and on, and now and then the wind through the willows turning the surface blue and purple..."

These words by Sir Alfred Munnings give just a small insight into his love of the river. He was born on the banks of the river Waveney and played in and on it as a child. Later, as a successful artist, moving to Dedham and near to the river Stour, he enjoyed rowing upstream in a Canadian canoe, and walking endlessly along its banks. He painted some of his most iconic works there, such as *September Afternoon*, shown here.



© The estate of Sir Alfred Munnings, Dedham, Essex

Detail from *September Afternoon*, painted by Sir Alfred Munnings

For the 2017 season two galleries at The Munnings Art Museum, Dedham will be devoted to an exhibition entitled *In Focus: Munnings and the River*, displaying his artistic and literary responses to the river, which remained a constant motif throughout his life. Little-known paintings and masterpieces will be explored alongside poetry and Munnings' own descriptions of his enduring love for the river. www.munningsmuseum.org.uk

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Landscape impressed

12PM are twelve Print Makers whose prints, in various media, demonstrate an awareness of the Stour Valley landscape as gently undulating, with broad river valleys, fields, settlements, woodland and sky.

The Landscape Impressed exhibition takes place at the National Trust's Boathouse Gallery at Flatford, from 5th November 2016 until 26th February 2017. Although it doesn't guarantee a Constable-like view of the Stour Valley, it will give you colour, tone, drawing and texture and a modern take on the great theme of landscape.



Autumn by Bryan Whitely

David Stone



Essex landscape by Julia Verza

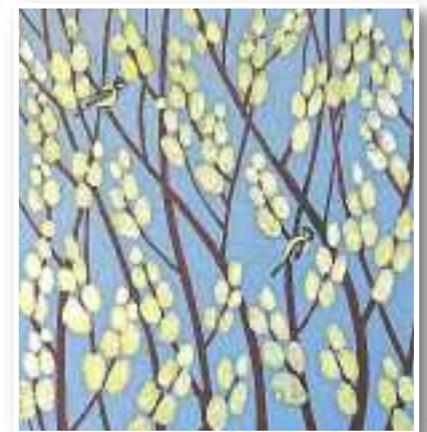
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River Stour, old bridge at Cattawade by David Stone

Remarkable features revealed at Court Knoll

Throughout 2016 Dr Tim Dennis, assisted by a group of volunteers, has been undertaking a geophysical survey of the Scheduled Monument known as Court Knoll, beside the River Stour on the southern edge of Nayland.

A licence was obtained from Historic England and permission given by the landowner, the Trustees of the Tendring Hall Estate.

The survey has shown some remarkable features which coincide with a document dated 1280 relating to repairs to manorial buildings on The Court, including a great hall, knights' chamber, and a great chapel. The clear outline of an apsidal chapel can be seen as well as a rectangular hall with hearth.

Funding was obtained from the Dedham Vale AONB Sustainable Development Fund, the Conservation Society, and the Nayland with Wissington Community Council to undertake limited targeted excavation on Court Knoll in September. An application for Scheduled Monument Consent was made in July 2016 by the Society assisted by Suffolk Archaeology CIC.

"We are delighted that this has been successful and the plan is to hand excavate up to seven trenches of varying sizes in order to find out what lies beneath this ancient feature," says Andora Carver, Hon. Secretary for the Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society.



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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.

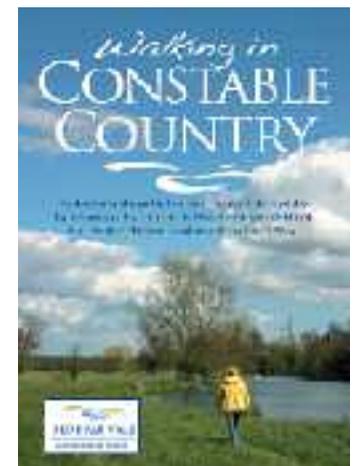
We're very pleased to know that overwhelmingly the response was positive: everyone found the newspapers very readable, and useful both to visitors and local people as a source of information and education about the AONBs.

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

New AONB walking guides!

Look out over the autumn as the new walking guides for exploring Constable Country in the AONB become available! The main Constable Country Guide is complemented by guides to Dedham village and the area around Stoke by Nayland and Nayland.

These will be found on the Publications pages of our website alongside our wide range of guides, and 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 on the Publications section of the website.

