

Main Work Party Reports.

Nov 11 - Strumpshaw Stone Pit - Area mown on 6 Nov raked and cleared to spoil heap. Vegetation at edge of area trimmed back. Some coppicing carried out and fallen tree cut up and stacked in woodpile.

Nov 25 - Snowdrop Acre - Hazel coppiced at additional work party on 16th Nov cut up and cleared to wood piles. All fallen timber cut up where necessary and moved to wood piles. Nettle and saplings scythed raked and cleared. Broken hanging branch over pond brought down with rope and cut up.

Lingwood Pond - Some members moved on to remove hedge cuttings and other vegetation cut at additional work party on 18th Nov. The vegetation was removed from the site and taken by trailer to the Parish allotment area.

Dec 09 - Walsham Fen - Some cutting of reed carried out. The mower broke down and further cutting was carried out using brush cutter and scythe. All cut reed and other lying reed from previous work party raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

Additional Work.

Oct 20/21/26 - Walsham Fen - Large willow branches causing obstruction cut down, cut to manageable pieces and moved to woodpile.

Oct 30 - Limpenhoe Church - conservation area mown on 16th Oct raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

Nov 03 - Lingwood Pond - Raked and cleared cut reed taking it by trailer to Parish allotment site.

Nov 06 - Strumpshaw Stone Pit - Area mown ready for clearance at work party.

Nov 16 - Snowdrop Acre - Two large hazels coppiced and a large fallen branch from a grey poplar cut up.

Nov 18 - Lingwood Pond - West compartment south boundary hedge - pond side of hedge trimmed back using hedge trimmer.

Dec 14 - Lingwood Church Rd Hedge - Pavement side of hedge trimmed back using hedge trimmer.

Work Party Dates 2018

All work parties start at 10:30am, finishing at 1.00pm.

13th January 2018—Lingwood Pond

27th January 2018 —CWS Howes Meadow.

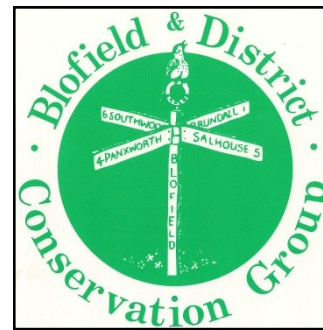
10th February—CWS Howes Meadow

24th February—Jarys Meadow

10th March—Buckenham Woods

24th March—Holly Lane Pond

A good turnout at our two CWS is requested as there is always plenty to do!



BADCOG NEWS.

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I Dig Trees

Beryl Ogden

On January 24th BADCOG will take delivery of 100 trees. They have been given to us for free from TCV as part of the I DIG TREES Programme. The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) is a countrywide community charity that organises Green Gyms, runs courses in practical skills for conservation and offers advice and insurance services for groups like ours. TCV has grown from its origin in 1959 when a group of volunteers cleared some dogwood, from Box Hill in Surrey, to encourage the growth of juniper and other distinctive chalkland flora. BADCOG has been a member of TCV for many years.

The I DIG TREES Programme is a co-ordinated effort between TVC and OVO Green Energy. 2017/18 will be the third year and during the first two years, 500,000 trees have been planted all over the country, in urban as well as rural locations. All these trees have been planted by volunteers. At the end of the season for planting bare rooted trees in April 2018, it is hoped that a further 250,000 will have been planted. A conservation research project at Leeds University concluded that 'interconnected green spaces composed of native trees and shrubs, with less intensive management, offer the greatest benefits for wildlife'.

The trees come in packs of 50 native bare rooted plants. One of our packs will contain 10 Common Alder, 10 Downy Birch, 10 Rowan, 10 Wild Cherry and 10 Norway Maple and the other 10 Common Dogwood, 10 Hawthorn, 10 Blackthorn, 10 Goat Willow and 10 Guelder Rose. They are designated for Howes Meadow, the hedgerow plants to go alongside the wooden fence that replaced the old hedge and most of the others will fill in the gaps along the roadside.

It will be good to remember on the day they are planted that we will be among many other volunteers, all over the country, also planting trees and helping to achieve a goal.

Weather Watching

Ernest Hoyos

I've kept a full set of records as long as we've lived here, since 1971, and I also have various records, not complete, but going back as far as 1959 at Hunstanton. You could say it's a long standing hobby!

In 1993 I acquired a Snowdon rain gauge, officially recognised by the Met Office, and was asked to record the rainfall here for the Environment Agency. They used this information to help with their flood alleviation plans. They then passed my records on to the Met Office.

When I retired in 2008 I thought I'd upgrade all my instruments, it was then that the Met Office came out and checked my site and said they could supply me with a Stevenson's screen, carefully calibrated and very accurate max/min thermometers, wet and dry thermometers to measure the humidity and a ground thermometer. Great, and it didn't cost me anything, but they asked if I could do the readings at 9am GMT, 10am in the Summer, and send in my records on line.

This year at the beginning of Sept. all mercury thermometers were removed by the Met Office under the Minamata convention. This happened with little warning and as they owned the thermometers I couldn't hang on to mine. There was then a 6 week period when I was asked to only submit rainfall and minimum air and ground temps. To keep my own records I was back to using the max side of my old max/min.

Finally, at the beginning of Nov a new Finish made Vaisala Electronic Resistance thermometer was installed. It works on a 12volt battery and has a screen showing current temperatures. By pressing various buttons a graph appears with a vertical line with which you scan the whole 24 hrs to 'capture', as they say, the max temp. This takes time as the screen only cover 30mins at each pressing. The main problem is going to be, when we want to go away and I ask my neighbours to keep my records. It's easy to miss the maximum temp. in the previous 24hrs and its too time consuming! So much easier with the old, very accurate mercury thermometer, which you read and then shook down.

A brief summary of the weather this year. The first 4 months of 2017 were all dry, particularly April when only 15mm of rain fell. On average April is the driest month, but we still expect over 40mm. The next 5 months to the end of Sept. were all average, or above, then Oct. was dry and Nov. a bit below average.

Membership Renewal

Thank you to those of you who have renewed your membership so promptly. To those of you who wish to renew (**individual £5, family £10**) and have not done so, please forward any cheques made payable to

BADCOG to:

**Frances Milliken, 45 Heathway, Blofield Corner Road,
Norwich NR13 4RS, or**

if preferred, pay cash at our next evening meeting.

Wasp Spiders

Matthew McKie

The Wasp spider (*Argiope bruennichi*) is a relatively recent colonist of the British Isles from Europe, having first been recorded in the 1920's. They were however, more suited to the warmer continental climate, so clung on in small colonies on the southern coast of England. In the past few decades these large and brightly coloured spiders have marched northwards in response to a warming climate, and can now be seen close to home. During the summer of 2017 I encountered Wasp spiders on several occasions, in locations with long, dry and un-managed grassland. The first location was along the coastal path at RSPB Minsmere, where Marram grass had been left to grow long. I counted in excess of ten individuals, all sat in large orb webs. These webs are build in the centre of a 'bowl' that they create within the grass. The webs contain a unique single zig-zag pattern, thought to reflect UV light and attract pollinating insects like flies, bees and moths. The second colony I encountered was on a small piece of waste ground, sandwiched between an industrial estate and the USAF base at RAF Mildenhall. With the constant coming and going of military aircraft it doesn't seem the ideal location to call home, but it just goes to show wildlife can adapt to survive in the strangest of places. During the quiet periods at the airbase, they certainly provided me with some entertainment as I set off trying to catch some flies to feed them with, and then watch the spider spin the fly into a silk tomb and proceed to eat it! (It also appears they have a taste for pieces of ham as well!)



Observations Hans Watson Autumn Favourites

Most birdwatchers look forward to autumn, with the anticipation of seeing scarce migrants, or perhaps, just seeing old favourites. For those birdwatchers who love waders, autumn offers excellent opportunities to see birds that have bred in the high arctic, and are now travelling south to escape the Arctic winter. Some of these waders stop only for a day or two, and are passing through to lands much further south, but many are content to stay on the Norfolk coast. In recent years, autumns have proved to be quite good in the Yare valley for one of my favourite waders, the Greenshank. This year, as in most years, I erected one of my small portable hides on the edge of one of the pools where they were feeding, in order to watch them at about 4 to 5 metres range. At this distance, it is possible to hear the little low notes they utter when they are close to one another, and I much prefer watching them at this distance, than through binoculars or my telescope at 200 to 300 metres.

Like other species of the sandpiper family, Greenshank are superb long distance, and very agile flyers. They are also, good swimmers, and quite fleet of foot.

Greenshank are amongst the most alert and wary of all waders, and I have noticed on a number of occasions that once a Greenshank settles to feed near my hide, then other waders often arrive to feed. It is almost as though they respect the judgement of the Greenshank, regarding it being safe to settle there.

I have often wondered why my emotions are so stirred by Greenshanks and other sandpipers. Is it because I seem to encounter them, like old friends, when I am in far flung foreign lands, or is it because they remind me of the happy nights when I was camping in Lapland and was lulled to sleep in my tent by the song-flights of Greenshank and Wood Sandpiper? Certainly the happiest bird watching moments that I recall, have often coincided with the appearance, or presence of these fabulous birds.



To date we've already had 46mm this December, the average is 58mm for the month. However, to reach our annual average of 630mm, just under 25 inches, we need another 57mm. or 103 for the month. The last time we had that much rain in December was in 1986!

As far as temperatures go, they are rarely extreme in Britain. Feb., March and June were all 2c above average, which is unusual though.

The min air temp in January was -4.1c but there were no air frosts in February which was unprecedented going back to 1971.

The highest temp of the year was 31.1c on 18th of June. July and August are normally the hottest months.

BADCOG Winter Walk 2017

"We met by Coltishall Common for the start of our Winter Walk, led by Tony McKie. After rather a chilly start, the sun gradually broke through and made it a very pleasant 4.25 mile walk. Our route took us along some of the quiet lanes of Coltishall and part of the Bure Valley Railway, with lovely views of the surrounding countryside. Lesley spotted a small mouse nibbling a leaf in the roadside verge which we think was a Short-tailed Field Vole. Hans was keeping an eye out for birds and saw a Kestrel, Marsh Harrier and Song Thrush as well as a number of Jays. We were all so busy chatting on the walk that we failed to notice that we had lost 2 of our group, who thankfully were rescued and completed the course! Well actually they took a short cut. So in fact with those members we knew would be taking on only part of the walk this could be distinguished as the BADCOG walk in which 13 of us started out and only 6 reached the end. Afterwards, we retired to the Rising Sun for a very nice lunch and social gathering. A very enjoyable time was had by all."

Sue Randall



Nature Rambling David Pilch Mushrooms and toadstools - can I eat them?

Mushrooms and toadstools have long been regarded with suspicion, yet of the 6000 species recorded in the British Isles less than a score are known to be poisonous, and only a few of these have proved to be lethal. Here are the main culprits:-

The infamous death cap, fairly common here and regarded as the most poisonous fungus in the world; all parts of it, even the spores, are toxic. Even just a quarter of a death cap can be fatal to humans. One of its most distinguished victims was Pope Clement VII in 1534. Together with its close relatives the destroying angel and fool's mushroom it accounts for 90% of fatal poisonings.

The cap is usually olive-green but it can vary from pale greenish yellow to light tan. When it first appears it is rounded but it later opens up to become almost flat up to 10 cm across. A frill hangs loosely under the cap partially covering the 5-10cm tall stem.

The destroying angel, very similar to the death cap, contains equally lethal slow-acting poison, It is said to have killed Emperor Claudius of Rome. Fortunately it is rare in the British Isles being found occasionally in broadleaf woods.

It has a white sticky conical cap about 10cm across and white gills. It is supported on a slender scaly white stem up to 15cm.

The fly agaric is a well known and beautiful species featuring in illustrations of fairy tales. Unfortunately it is poisonous, although not dangerously so unless taken in quantity. In 1893 an Italian diplomat in the USA ate two dozen fly agarics for breakfast and died the following day after prolonged convulsions.

The fly agaric gets its name from its household use against flies. The caps were crushed with milk and sugar making a bait to attract and kill flies. Fly agaric contains small amounts of muscarine - a nerve poison - but the main toxins are ibotenic acid and muscimol which cause headache, tiredness, nausea and intoxication. This latter property has been exploited for centuries by a wide variety of peoples. The Koryaks in Siberia used to eat fly agarics in dried form to induce

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Amanita phalloides

hallucinations and delirium. Recently, however, this practice has been more or less replaced by vodka drinking.

The fly agaric is a woodland species, typically under beech trees with which it has a symbiotic relationship. When young the cap is covered with a white membrane. As the fruiting body grows it pushes through this veil, patches of which are left as white spots sticking to the scarlet cap.

The panther is similar to the fly agaric but is smoky-brown in colour. It is rather rare in the British isles, appearing in deciduous woodland. It contains much higher concentrations of muscarine and has been responsible for deaths in Europe where it is more common.

The yellow-stainer often causes a violent stomach upset, although some people are immune, and it is not fatal with recovery in a few days. In some years it springs up in abundance and is often mistaken for the edible field mushroom.

The cap is white when young turning to grey in the centre as it expands. The gills mature from pale cream to chocolate brown. To identify the species, cut the base of the stem; if it turns bright yellow instantly leave it alone.

The inocybe species is a large group some of which are poisonous. The red inocybe is often confused with the field mushroom with tragic consequences as its flesh contains high concentrations of muscarine. It appears rather infrequently along grassy paths, woodland glades and under beech trees.

The cap is 8cm across, whitish or pale brown at first staining red where the cap splits with age. The stem is fibrous and if bruised during handling it soon becomes spotted with red patches.

The common white inocybe is a widespread poisonous species.

So, some guidelines;

1. No fungus should be eaten unless absolutely identified.
2. Never rely on the old belief that only edible species have caps that can be peeled. The death cap peels easily.
3. Collect whole specimens that are fresh and mature enough for the gills and spore colour to be visible.

The next BADCOG talk will take place on:

Friday 12th January 2018.

Tony Howes will be talking about his latest Photos.

Venue: Lingwood Methodist Chapel, Chapel Road, Lingwood.

Starting at 7.30pm