

Main Work Party Reports

Mar 10 - Buckenham Woods - Main central area mown and the large bramble patch reduced in size to prevent further encroachment using mower, brush cutter and scythe.

Buddleias cut down. Entrance gate area vegetation cut back. Area around newly planted oaks, adjacent to east path scythed and sycamore saplings cut down using bow saw and loppers. Scythed round 2 newly planted oaks by the causeway path. All cut vegetation with exception of approx 25% of main central area raked and cleared to spoil heaps. Litter pick carried out.

Mar 24 - Holly Lane Pond - Annual maintenance carried out. Main roadside hedge, north side of site, cut back using hedge trimmer. Scythed east and north area by pond, roadside bank and verge. Leveled the east roadside bank by removing a large mound of earth by drainage channel. All cut vegetation raked and cleared plus the earth to the spoil heap. Litter pick carried out.

Apr 07 - Walsham Fen - The cut reed at side of boardwalk left from last years cut raked and cleared. Area around Tussock cut using brush cutter and cleared, to allow in light. A path was cut to a spoil heap and an area cleared between boardwalk and stream. A number of mallards by the stream were cut down. All cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

Apr 21 - Howes Meadow - Northern boundary hedge - meadow side cut, all cut vegetation raked and cleared to fire site. Weeded round the new East boundary hedge. Raked out weed from dyke/stream. Western fire site burnt. Litter pick along Shack Lane bordering the Meadow.

Additional Work

Mar - 5/8/9 & 13 - Howes Meadow - continuation of the clearance of the dyke/stream.

Mar 29 - Buckenham Woods - cleared out base of multi-trunk tree in preparation for felling.

Apr 24 - Howes Meadow - western fire site, burnt at WP on 21 Apr, checked and tidied up. Now completely burnt out.

WORK PARTY DATES

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

12th May—Jarys Meadow

19th May—CWS Walsham Fen

2nd June—Buckenham Woods

16th June—Lingwood Church

19th June—CWS Howes Meadow (G. Yarmouth Green Gym)

30th June—Hemblington Church

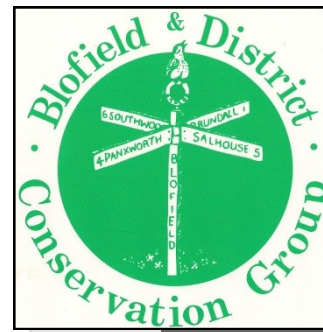
14th July—Blofield Church

17th July—Blofield Church (G. Yarmouth Green Gym)

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

You are welcome to help out on days above with the Green Gym which start at

13.30.



BADCOG NEWS.

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BADCOG's first site.

A recent work party at Holy Lane Pond stirred memories of the time back in 1983 when members of the newly formed "Blofield and District Conservation Group" began work on the site of a small, farmland pond aiming to restore its wildlife interest. In the past the 'pit' would have been used to provide water for livestock on the adjacent farm; a remnant of a past farmland landscape and former agricultural management practices.

In 1983 it was waterless and dead elms had been felled across it. Work parties cleared the accumulated rubbish, removed the dead trees and the pond was re-excavated using a mechanical digger. Gradually rain water filled the pond again. Both bogbean and water mint were introduced and a new hedgerow and trees were planted using a variety of native species including crab apple, hawthorn, rowan and guelder-rose. Water level in the pond is largely determined by rainfall and fluctuates seasonally.



In recognition of the work carried out BADCOG was given a Better Britain Shell Award.

In the succeeding years overhanging boughs have been removed letting in light, hedges are trimmed and water plant growth managed.

Holly Lane Pond is where it all began: BADCOG's first site.

35 years later and a work party in March 2018 cut the hedge, removed debris from the clearance of roadside grips or ditches and scythed the surrounding vegetation.

A continuation from my last weather snip in the January BADCOG News - Ernest Hoyos

Last year was set to end with below average rainfall. However December 2017 turned out to be the wettest on my records going back to 1971. 108mm of rain, (187% of December average) fell and pushed the annual total up to 635mm or 107%, exactly 25 inches.

In January we received a little below average rainfall with 49mm, this was followed by February's rainfall of 55mm and then March with 74 mm (162%) so in the last four months we've had 285mm of rain. In the same four months last year, i.e. December 2016 to the end of March 2017, all below average, only produced 130mm, less than half.

A year ago conditions for gardening and arable farming were ideal. This year Spring has been held back by the cold, wet conditions.

When we look back on this Winter we think of the freezing east winds bringing frost and snow but actually January 2018 turned out 1.1°C above average. It really only turned colder in February with snow flurries and a slight covering in the first week. It was the last few days of February when Winter really bit. We all remember the easterly gale from Russia and drifting snow, culminating on 28th February with the lowest February maximum of -2.9°C in my entire records. March 1st wasn't much better with a maximum of -1°C. The previous coldest March day I could find was a max. of 0.0°C on 3rd March 1987.

When the wind blows on a long track from Siberia in the Winter it loses the extreme cold of Russia but still gives us our lowest winter temperatures. The stronger the ENE wind and the longer it keeps blowing, the colder it gets.

In Norfolk, at this time of year with the North Sea at its coldest, any wind from the sea will retard our temperatures and hold Spring back, so NW, N, NE, E and even SE is not good for us. Conversely, with a Southerly, SW, or W wind we get some of the best weather in the country. Hopefully that's the regime we are moving into from mid-April on.

Summer Outing

Proposed visit to join South Yare Group at their Claxton reserve Duncan's Marsh.

Sunday 17th of June.

More details by email or from Ernest nearer the time.

Sparrows.

Sparrows are probably the most familiar group of birds in the world, and the House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*, possibly the most familiar of all. The family *Passer*, or true sparrows, as opposed to the American sparrows, and others, consists of 27 species worldwide. Many people, even some bird-watchers, consider sparrows as rather plain little birds. I have never shared this opinion, and consider them lovely birds, with character. Some species, for instance the Golden Sparrows, are far from plain.

Sparrows were involved in one of the great disasters of the past century. In 1958 the Chinese leaders introduced the infamous Great Sparrow Campaign, which sought to exterminate sparrows, in particular the Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, (which, as in many Eastern countries, was the commonest



sparrow species), simply because they ate grain. Citizens banging pots and pans kept the birds from landing on trees and buildings, and accounts tell of exhausted birds dropping dead in mid air. Shovels were used to clear the masses of dead birds. Nests were destroyed, and rewards were given to those who handed in the largest number of dead sparrows. This continued for almost two years, by which time sparrows were almost extinct, and the natural ecological balance was gone. Only then was it pointed out to the government officials, that sparrows also ate many insects, as well as grain, so the campaign against sparrows was stopped. By this time it was too late, and with no sparrows to eat them, insect numbers exploded, particularly locusts, which destroyed all the crops. Although other factors were involved, such as misuse of pesticides, the sparrow cull is credited with exacerbating the Great Chinese Famine, in which at least 20 million people died of starvation.