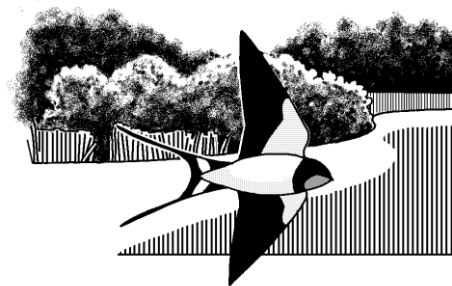


# Little Ouse Headwaters Project (LOHP)

## Members' Newsletter

August 2005



Welcome to the 6<sup>th</sup> LOHP Members newsletter. We try to send our newsletters out to as many people as possible by e-mail, saving paper and reducing postage costs - if you currently receive the newsletter by post but would be happy to get an e-version, please let us know your e-mail address. All the information in this newsletter, and much more, can also be found on our website at [www.lohp.org.uk](http://www.lohp.org.uk).

### What's been going on?

Since the last newsletter we've been busy. Our main priority this summer has been to push forward our site restoration projects on Betty's Fen and Hinderclay Fen. Our EU funding through the TEN initiative (Transnational Ecological Network) finishes this autumn and we have to have completed all of the work under this programme by then. Read on for more on this and our other activities during the summer.

### Publicity

On the publicity front, interviews about the project have been broadcast on Dutch and German radio and some of our restoration management work has been filmed for publicity for the international TEN project. The EDP are currently working on an article about the project so please watch out for it in the next few weeks. On 1<sup>st</sup> September we hosted part of a tour by Dutch and German conservationists involved in a major wetland restoration project in Southern Jutland. Exchange visits of this kind are an invaluable way to ensure best practice by the exchange of ideas and practical knowledge.

### Events

Twenty People joined us on a hot sunny 1<sup>st</sup> May for our May Day walk, starting from Redgrave and walking through part of Redgrave Fen (managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust) before crossing the B1113 and moving on to our own sites, the Frith and the Lows, before returning to Redgrave. The walk was notable for many of us for our first sightings of swifts for the summer (sadly, they have now departing for warmer conditions in Africa).

We also held another enjoyable cycle ride around the Little Ouse headwaters in June, when in addition to our sites, two local churches, Thelnetham Mill and Thelnetham Vineyard were open to visitors. Forty people took part in the event - the quiz was won by long-standing supporters of the LOHP, Lindsay Medus and Keith Seaman, who distinguished themselves not only in the quiz, but by cycling from Forncett St Peter just to get to the cycle ride! Many thanks to all of the volunteers who helped to man this event.

The Suffolk Moth Group visited Hinderclay Fen to record moths on the evening of Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August. Unfortunately, although fine, the evening turned rather cool, which limited the moth activity to 53 species: over 100 would have been expected on a warm night. The group have promised to return on a warmer night to add to their list.

We've also been visited during the summer by members of the Suffolk and the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Societies, who have been adding to our biological records for the sites that we manage. These records help us to build-up an inventory of our remaining the species and to monitor the impacts of the restoration work that we are undertaking in the valley.

## **Forthcoming events**

### **Bats in the Valley**

Our next event is this Friday (9<sup>th</sup> September), when, weather permitting, local bat experts Arthur Rivett and Nick Woods will lead a walk from Thelnetham village hall car park to explore the bat life for the Little Ouse Fens. The walk starts at 7.30pm. We will be using bat detectors to pick up calls of the different species. The detectors can't be used in wet weather so please phone 01379-687680 or 898009 on Friday afternoon or early evening to check, if you are in doubt. Bring stout footwear, warm clothes and a torch.

We will be sending out information about this year's AGM (held in November) and winter walks in the next couple of weeks.

### **Volunteer news**

The LOHP is a volunteer organisation. We have no paid staff and so everything that happens, from managing our substantial grants to organising events or writing emails to members, is achieved by volunteers, often with full-time jobs. We are always stretched and always welcome offers of help. If you can give us a regular commitment of time, however small, please get in touch.

Our major fen restoration programmes require specialist skills and equipment and are carried out under contract. However, most of the routine management that is required to maintain and enhance the wildlife and landscape of our sites is carried out by volunteers. Volunteers work parties have continued on the second Sunday of each month, and we've achieved a significant amount of work on our sites. On the Frith, this year's tasks have included extending the hedge that was started on last year (and has shown good survival), cutting and raking-up a dense area of soft rush and stinging nettles that has developed at the expense of a richer fen flora, and digging-out invading musk thistles. On Betty's Fen we have coppiced an area of old blackthorn scrub to maintain dense cover and encourage birds such as nightingales.

In addition to the usual activities, a number of volunteers took part in a training session run by the Suffolk Hedgerow Survey. Guy Ackers, who co-ordinates the Survey, led the training course at Redgrave Activities Centre, both for our members and other interested people from neighbouring parishes. If you would like to join with others in your parish to build an inventory of the remaining hedges and collect basic information about the way in which they are managed and the species present, please contact Guy Ackers at [guyackersmelton@rmplc.co.uk](mailto:guyackersmelton@rmplc.co.uk) or Wilf Garford at [Wilf.Garford@SuffolkCoastal.gov.uk](mailto:Wilf.Garford@SuffolkCoastal.gov.uk).

Eleven of our regular volunteers also attended a Red Cross first aid training session run by Ann Topham, which was tailored specifically for our requirements for work parties - hopefully they won't have too many requests for their services. This was funded by our Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

The list of work parties for the next few months is at the end of this newsletter - we are always glad to see people at work parties, even if only for an hour or two - remember children are welcome but they must be accompanied by a responsible adult. As well as providing good company and exercise, work parties make a real difference to the restoration of our sites. They also allow us to claim match funding towards our Heritage Lottery grant - the more people who come along, the more funding we generate.

### **Riverlink Fundraising appeal**

Our appeal for funds for the site restoration and public access and education projects, launched earlier this spring, has already raised £24,578 from charitable Trusts and private donors. Most of these funds will go towards the restoration work on the Blo'Norton Fens and Hinderclay Fen. We have also raised the funds to provide seats on several of our sites so that visitors can enjoy the wildlife and lovely views in more comfort. The seats will be unobtrusive in their placement and construction. We are hoping to commission them locally and have them in place by the spring.

## Land management

On the *Frith and the Lows* we have continued to manage the vegetation by grazing with sheep and supplemented their efforts by additional, regular 'topping' of the stinging nettles. Sadly this year we have had a serious problem on the Frith, with lambs being killed by uncontrolled dogs - almost certainly two dogs working together. In total we have lost 13 lambs, which is not only distressing, but represents a significant financial loss for our grazers, Sarah and Dennis Jenkins. We are very grateful for the efforts of surrounding landowners in attempting to track down these dogs, which are undoubtedly from somewhere close by. Because the lambs were being attacked at night, and the Frith is such a big field, it hasn't been possible to identify the dogs. We can only hope that local publicity has helped to end the problem and that it won't occur again. Please let us know of any sightings of uncontrolled dogs in the vicinity of the Frith.

Restoration has continued at *Betty's Fen* - by early Spring much of the central area had been cleared of the trees and scrub that had invaded the open fen since the 1970's. The new open area will be restored to wet fen by removing some of the rotting surface peat during September and early October. This will be used to build a raised path across the Fen from the road to allow public access and create a new circular walk. The new river bank section of this walk, leading west from the Blo'Norton Fen riverbank path, is already open. This work has been funded by the European TEN project matched with appeal donations, but part has also been carried out by volunteers at our work parties (see below). In early spring the Environment Agency carried out a weed removal operation on the stretch of river flowing past Blo' Norton and Betty's Fens, as a means of increasing the flow of water in the river channel - a fortunate side-effect of this was the clearance of a track along the river bank that gave us a head start with establishing the new footpath.

At *Hinderclay Fen* more tree clearance has been undertaken at the western end of the site, creating more open fen areas (although there are still plenty of trees left). Further work, again part-funded by the TEN project, will be done to fill in the deep and dangerous pools in the middle of the site. These were created during the drought years of the 1990s when the fen was very dry, but since then water levels have increased, and the pools themselves have never supported any aquatic life, so the safest option is to fill them in. Both Hinderclay and Betty's Fens will retain substantial areas of woodland, both dry oak and birch woodland on the sandy fen margins and wet 'carr' of willow and alder on the lower-lying areas. Our restoration projects seek to restore some of the very rich open fen communities that have been largely lost from these sites, whilst maintaining an attractive landscape and diverse mosaic of different vegetation types.

Like most landowners, we have had to fight this year with the paperwork for registration of our sites for the new *Single Payment Scheme*. This scheme replaces the old production-based agricultural support system with a land-based system designed to deliver environmental benefits in return for financial support. Although it will initially yield only a very small income, it should make a useful contribution to our ability to sustain routine management work on our sites in the future.

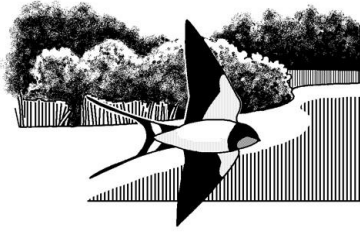
## Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions were due in April. If you haven't renewed yours yet, we would still be very grateful for your support.

How to contact us:

Phone: 01379 687680, e-mail: [enquiries@lohp.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@lohp.org.uk),

Post: Little Ouse Headwaters Project, c/o Waveney Cottage, Redgrave Road, South Lopham, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 2JN



## Little Ouse Headwaters Project

# Autumn/Winter 2005/06 WORK PARTY PROGRAMME

Our work parties are held on **the second Sunday** in the month:

Date	Venue	Task
11 September	The Frith	Cutting and raking rush
9 October	Hinderclay Fen	Scrub removal
13 November	The Frith	Hedge planting
11 December	Betty's Fen	Hedge planting
8 January	Hinderclay Fen	Scrub removal
12 February	Blo'Norton Fens	coppicing
12 March	to be announced	
9 April	The Frith	thistle clearance

All work parties start at 10-30am. Please come for as little or as much time as you like and bring your friends along - all contributions are valuable. You will need wellies or strong boots, old clothes and a drink. We will provide tools and gloves and other refreshments. **Please don't be put off by bad weather! If it is too wet for the planned task we will meet at an indoor venue for nest-box-building and tool maintenance**

Venues can change, depending on weather and ground conditions, so for up-to-date information nearer the time, e-mail [info@lohp.org.uk](mailto:info@lohp.org.uk), look at our web site [www.lohp.org.uk](http://www.lohp.org.uk) or phone:

for Hinderclay Fen, Reg and Rowena Langston on 01379-898009

for Blo'Norton & Betty's Fen, Jo-Anne Pitt on 01379-898684

for the Frith and the Lows, Helen Smith on 01379-687680