

THE LITTLE OUSE HEADWATERS PROJECT

News from the Ouse

SUE NUMBER 22 AUGUST 201



Fruitful walking

In late summer and autumn there is much to find along the Little Ouse Valley as wildlife prepares for the cooler times ahead.

Nick Lingwood describes just some of the highlights to discover from a wander through the variety of habitats on the Hinderclay sites at this time of year.

Hedgerow Harvests

Carr Meadow has old hedges on several sides, where hawthorn is sought by hungry birds as other food sources run short. The hedging along the southern boundary of Hinderclay Fen has been bolstered with planting by volunteer work parties to help fill in the gaps. Ivy, growing over older trees, flowers late in the year, providing food for butterflies and other insects, as well as sheltering habitat.



Heath in Bloom

Late summer sees common heather flowering on some drier areas of Hinderclay Fen. Other plants will make the most of warm weather, often alongside others already in fruit. Those sweet treats tempt butterflies, bees and other insects.



Bush crickets and grasshoppers may be



spotted, heard, or recorded with bat recording equipment.

Wooded Edges

Trees are starting to take on autumn colours and, beneath them, fungus blooms in cool, damp conditions. Birch trees along the edge of Hinderclay Fen are favoured by species such as fly agaric; other ground may support puffballs or earthballs. Dead wood and dying trees are ideal for insect larvae, fungi and the wildlife that lives on those in turn.

Fertile Fens

The wet meadows and reedbeds of Hinderclay Fen also go to fruit and seed, in their way. Hop vines winding through the reeds are producing their green flower cones; raspberries and brambles at the edges have more

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recognisable fruit, and the reedbeds change in colour as their feathery heads dry out, to pale ghosts of themselves by winter.

Words and pictures by Nick Lingwood



One month: two awards June 2018:

- National recognition for the LOHP with the NGO Impact Award from the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management, see p3.
- Graham Moates, dedicated volunteer for LOHP, RSPB, Norwich Bat Group and Suffolk Wildlife Trust - won a South Norfolk Community award, see p7.

Children and adults work together to help trees

On a Saturday in late March, a special work party spent a morning planting new hedges and trees by the path running along the edge of Scarfe Meadows.

This work party was special, as the trees and planting kit were provided by Garboldisham Church Primary School, who applied to the Woodland Trust to be part of their Free Trees for Schools and Communities scheme. They were successful and 250 young plants of varied species arrived to be part of our community. The work party was also

special because children. staff. parents and governors from the school came to do the planting with the

LOHP volunteers.

The site was chosen for its easy access from the school and village. All the community can visit and see how their work helps keep our environment beautiful. It is part of the important work being carried out to enrich this boundary.

Rosemary Humphries



More school news

Rejuvenating the willow arbour

Beech Tree class asked Mr Langston if some LOHP volunteers would help give our willow arbour some care. Armed with ladders, ties, saws and

new saplings, the volunteers turned up on a bitterly cold day and set to work showing the Years 5 and 6 children how to cut and weave the willow and how to plant the new saplings. It was so much fun for the children who learnt a lot about willow in a very practical way. The arbour looked

much better at the end and we look forward to seeing it flourish during the summer. Many thanks to everyone who helped us.

Peat digging at Broomscot Common Our whole school topic last term was

I will never

forget doing

peat digging,

it was brilliant!

'Power' in all its forms. and we thought about the 'Power of Peat' as part of our Outdoor Learning. We asked if it would be possible for volunteers from the LOHP to arrange

some peat digging in order to take us back in time within our local

community. As usual, volunteers from the LOHP stepped up to the mark and sorted out a peat digging session on 21st March for Beech Tree class at Broomscot Common.

The children learned about peat as a fuel and how, in days gone by, each family had its own strip of land on the

> Common in order to cut peat to cook with and to burn to heat their homes. Comparisons were made by the children as to how much easier it is nowadays, simply to flick a switch in order to heat homes and to cook. The children enjoyed the whole experience enormously, and

whilst they got incredibly dirty during the session, they all agreed it was an amazing experience. In fact, one child was heard to say, 'I will never forget doing peat digging, it was brilliant!' Again, a huge thank you to everyone involved with the LOHP, we all learn so much from you.

Peat Fest bunting

All the children at school contributed to the LOHP Peat Fest by making wonderful bunting to decorate the site, and this will be used at future

events. Albrights of Diss donated prizes for the competition and our winners were: Corey, Sienna and Freya



- well done to the winners and well done to everyone. The standard of work was fantastic. (See page 6 for full list of winners, Ed.) Carol McGahan



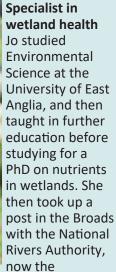
Boosting wetland health professionally and as a volunteer

Judith Tooth talks to one of the original volunteers and founders of the LOHP, Dr Jo Pitt.

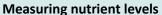
'The TransNational Ecological Networks project was focused on national borders, so bizarrely – as we didn't have any – we used the Norfolk and Suffolk

borders for our application. That's what drove the creation of the LOHP – and little did we know what it would

lead to!'



Environment Agency (EA). These days, she's part of the agency's national research unit, looking at methods used to assess the ecological state of rivers and lakes, and the impacts of nutrients on them. She also works at a European level, putting environmental standards into context with other countries, and sitting on various steering groups for research projects looking at everything from pristine Scandinavian environments to heavily industrialised areas and intensively agricultural landscapes.



Recently, Jo has helped LOHP project manager, Rob Martyr, identify sites for water quality sampling. 'While the EA's techniques are more precise, the number of monitoring points used is very limited,' she says, 'but together, the results give a good impression of nutrient status.

'The Little Ouse is fairly typical of a lowland river system in an agricultural part of England, with raised levels of phosphorus and nitrogen. But the problem is compounded in this river by its very slow flow, caused by over-deepening of the channel in the post-war period, and because the gradient is so low. Over time, the river bed has

changed from a gravelly one to one with lots of sediment.

Speeding the river flow has helped

'We've done some restoration work to improve the river habitat here at Blo' Norton, in the same way that Suffolk Wildlife Trust has at Knettishall Heath, modifying the channel by pushing material into it in places, and pulling it out in others, so that the sediment gets carried in the water with the increased speed of flow.

Monitoring is key to measure success

'We're also doing fixed point photography to look at changes over time, and biological surveys. So this year, for example, we're looking at macro-invertebrates, and comparing results with those of three years ago.

'Having worked on Blo Norton Fen over time, it's great to see the increase in the area of open fen, the development of the fen meadow area - which is now botanically quite diverse - and the return of marsh orchids. It's taken a lot of hard work and volunteer effort and you can really see the difference.'

Judith Tooth



From her kitchen window, Jo Pitt looks across hay meadows to a small poplar plantation. Beyond it flows the Little Ouse, and to the right is Blo' Norton Fen, the small area of wetland that first drew her to the valley, and which remains her favourite LOHP site.

Working on the sites before the LOHP existed

'I love wetlands, and it really was the fen that sold me on the house,' she says, 'having it right on the doorstep and being able to walk round it.'

Walking round it, though, she could see it hadn't been managed much in recent years. Scrub was taking over and there was very little open fen left.

With the agreement of the village Poors Trust, she helped set up Blo'

Norton Conservation Group — one of the forerunners of the LOHP — and was soon putting her practical conservation skills to use.

Cross-border co-operation

It wasn't long before the group heard the echo of chainsaws across the valley, and discovered there was a similar group in Hinderclay. Gradually, interest in their efforts grew, until they were asked by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils to join a big European project.

National award for the LOHP

At the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 2018 Awards the LOHP won the NGO Impact

Award. This award is open to non-governmental organisations of any size, based anywhere in the world, and is given for initiatives that have had a major impact benefitting nature and society. We're delighted that the achievements of the project and hard work of everybody involved have been recognised by this national professional body.

Jo Pitt



More dragons and damsels ...

After entertaining us with a fascinating talk at the last AGM, Pam Taylor, from the British Dragonfly Society, returned to the LOHP area on Sunday 10th June, to train 12 volunteers in dragonfly and damselfly identification. We found 15 species on a walk around the Thelnetham and Blo' Norton Fens, and are looking forward to finding more as the summer progresses.

Jo Pitt







Otter enthusiasts gathered in Thelnetham

In the Spring, LOHP hosted a gathering of the Suffolk Otter Group, at Hinderclay Village Hall. LOHP volunteer, Rowena Langston, reports ...

In the morning, we heard updates from the otter study groups around the county, including LOHP's own group, and a talk by Tom Hughes, who is in the early phase of a PhD study of otters, using the latest DNA techniques. In the afternoon, there were visits to the Little Ouse River in Thelnetham and Blo' Norton, and to Redgrave & Lopham Fen.

New guide to fish bone ID - coming soon

Most groups are studying otter diet by analysing 'spraint' (faeces). The spraint is washed to extract fish bones and other hard remains of prey, for identification. The experience gained by several members has resulted in the development of a comprehensive identification guide to prey remains, updating previous publications.

No eels (yet) in the Little Ouse

The collective findings of these studies, so far, have revealed some interesting details – the importance of even small fish such as sticklebacks and bullhead in the upper river sections, such as the Little Ouse Headwaters, where the absence of eels in the diet is also notable. This contrasts with other rivers, for example the Blyth, in which gobies and stone loach are important and eels feature in the diet. Eels are declining in British rivers and efforts are being made to improve their conservation status. They are present further downstream in the Little

Ouse, and the otter spraint analysis has contributed valuable information to discussions with the Environment Agency and other organisations to facilitate their movement upstream by removing obstacles or by installing passes.

Cameras - night and day

As well as dietary analysis, trail cameras are showing us more about seasonal behaviour, breeding success, and how

otters use Suffolk rivers. A lot of effort has gone into trying to identify individual otters, with some promising results starting to emerge. For further information, see https://suffolkotters.wordpress.com/



Rowena Langston



Fun with moths

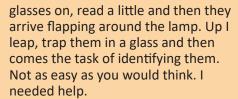
Pam McMillan describes how an event run by LOHP last year inspired her to go further

After the wonderful LOHP moth weekend on the Frith last summer, my interest was piqued, and my partner bought me a very good moth book and a torch/magnifying glass for my birthday, so I was all set.

We live opposite the Fen of Suffolk Wildlife Trust and LOHP in Thelnetham - a rich environment for many species including moths. My makeshift moth trap is my bedroom reading lamp, windows wide open as it's

Dingy Footman in your garden we have two! August, and we're ready. Get comfy,

Garden carpet moth



Rowena agreed to set up a moth trap in our garden using her large light, which should attract moths from a distance. What would we discover?

The trap arrived one evening, was set

I never realised

up and then all I had to do was wait. Early next you could find a morning, with Rowena, we set about liberating and identifying them all. We identified 54 species and 244 individuals with

> being the most at 33, followed by 31 Setaceous Hebrew Characters. We had 3 White Points and 1 Rush Veneer (not so common around here). Some were beautiful, some very plain, others so small that they had no common name. I loved the beauty of them but found the names wonderful. I had never realised that you could find a Dingy Footman in your garden -

Many of our moths are subtle beauties, with very lyrical names, like this Flounced Rustic



we have two. The Flounced Rustic and the Rosy Rustic made me think of beery, merry yokels. The Garden Carpet – such a lovely thought. Large Yellow Underwings Loveliest of all with a name that describes them perfectly – the Snout. All these lovely creatures and more (remind me to tell you about the bat survey) live with us on Thelnetham Fen. I feel very proud to look after their home.

Pam McMillan

Ramblings

Many of you know the LOHP sites well, but do you know the other attractions in this lovely valley?

For this edition, our ramblings have taken us to the venue of Wyevale Garden Centre and the attached attractions of Bressingham Steam Museum and the Bressingham Gardens, a short drive from our sites on the A1066 towards Diss.

The Bressingham Gardens were opened to the public back in 1962 by the Bloom family. The garden now covers a spectacular 17 acres with around 8,000 plant species - well worth a visit for anyone interested in



gardening, or just to enjoy the tranquil environment and wildlife areas.

For the younger members of the family (and many of the older ones?!), there is a chance to have a ride on a steam train, plus a Victorian steam powered merry-go-round. The national 'Dad's Army' collection is also interesting - where memorabilia from this popular comedy, filmed locally (too many years ago to consider!), are on show, including some of the original vehicles used in filming.

As well as the restaurant within the Bressingham Gardens, there is a café in the adjoining garden centre. This large and airy space has additional outdoor seating and a children's play area. It offers a wide selection of

> meals, snacks and cakes. The garden centre sells a variety of plants and gardening tools plus some giftware and, should the visit to our LOHP sites inspire you to have more outdoor adventures. there is a well-priced shop here to get yourselves equipped.

Sue Lawrence and Bev Blackburn

Green fingers?

The LOHP wants to increase the wild flowers on the upper field of the Lows, as well as other sites. Could you help collect wild flower seed and grow them to plant out next year?

No experience needed. All materials provided. Contact Bev **Blackburn** (see back page.)



Peat Fest

Peat plays a vital role in the story of our valley's landscape, history and wildlife habitats, but it's hard to see and understand, so the LOHP held a peat-themed extravaganza in early summer, and the people flocked to it. Local volunteer, John McCormack, describes the day.

Monday, May 7th, dawned bright and sunny. Phew! The weather gods had been kind to us. Tents had been erected, a peat fire lit and food vendors had started arriving on Parkers Piece. The Art Exhibition had been laid out at Blo' Norton village hall and Thelnetham Windmill was open for business. Now all we needed were...people!

Action packed

Never fear! Cars started arriving just before 10, ready for Mike Harding's 'talk and walk on all matters peat'. From then on till the close at 3pm, we had a pretty constant flow of visitors. There were art activities in our 'party' tent and David Whatley did a sterling job baking bread in a traditional cooking pot, called a bastible, over his open peat fire.



There was also a very informative display on peat in our region in the newly built granary next to the windmill.

One especially pleasing thing, was the foot traffic between Parkers and the Art Exhibition at the village hall. It was so nice to see people strolling through this lovely bit of Suffolk/Norfolk.

Huge collaboration

Local schools took part in a bunting competition, which was kindly judged by Deborah Key of SWT, and these colourful pieces of artwork swaved in the little breeze that we had. All in all, over 200 people enjoyed the day and huge thanks

must go to Bev, Sue, Jo and Helen, all the volunteers who set it all up and took it down, the art group for organising the exhibition, David for his cooking demonstration, Nigel for leading walks and Rosemary for galvanising the local schools.

Everything was packed away by 5pm and we retired to the White Horse for a well-deserved pint!

John McCormack



Bunting competition winners

Freya Bowen Year 6, Garboldisham Primary Sienna Smith Year 4. Garboldisham Primary Logan Howes, Year 2, Roydon Primary Corey Nicholson, Reception, Garboldisham Primary (Prizes generously donated by Albrights of Diss).



Special newsletter

Look out for the special peat-themed issue of News from the Ouse to be published in the late Autumn. This will feature peaty articles and artworks from the LOHP creative group's exhibition.



Earth colours Playing cricket

Sue Downie wrote about one of her pictures from the exhibition:

'The central strip is inspired by a photo of a peat core, but is in no way a scientific representation.

The colours in the central area are all earth colours: that is, made from minerals and soil. Most are Daniel Smith watercolours. This company has its own in-house geologist exploring new pigments.'

A 'summery' poem from LOHP volunteer, **Nick Lingwood**

A cricket with one crooked hindmost leg Hops not, but rasps dark notes through grassy stems.

What bird or other harsh mischance once cost The limb has not called in his music yet, For chirping sequences of sound Still grate from low above the ground. With case of wing for instrument, He still persists and tells his presence well. No longer, softer melody Could better fit with what he is, A creature of the summer That must play on while it lives. Nick Lingwood

Mystery tour for LOHP vols

Rob Martyr organised a very special outing to mark Volunteers' Week.
From 1st – 7th June it was Volunteers' Week, celebrating the contributions of millions of volunteers. The LOHP is managed by passionate and dedicated volunteers and to say thank you for their immense contribution a mystery day out was organised.

Seeing someone else's wetland 30 LOHP volunteers boarded a coach and travelled to the undisclosed location - RSPB Lakenheath Fen nature reserve. Converted from arable land, the reserve has become a spectacular landscape-scale wetland, dominated by reedbeds and grazing marshes. As we arrived, dozens of reed warblers and sedge warblers were calling in the distance and a male marsh harrier patrolled the wide open skies.

We were met by Catherine (Reserve Warden) and John (Visitor Experience



Volunteer). John's ornithological knowledge was awe-inspiring as he shared recent sightings. After coffee, Catherine and her colleague led a walk, explaining the history of the site and the transformation from carrot fields to glorious wetland. We were enthralled by the intricate habitats and the water level management to maintain them. All agreed it is a brilliant place for wildlife and many of us marvelled at the impressive paths.

A chance to chat

After the walk, the volunteers were treated to a packed lunch and a chance to chat. The social aspect of volunteering is very important and it is the camaraderie and common purpose that unites these amazing and very committed people. It's clear the LOHP has a very special group of volunteers who maintain and enhance precious fen valley habitats, enthuse the local community with fun events and inspire local children with the wonderful wildlife on their doorstep.

Free time to soak up the wild

It was lovely to see so many LOHP volunteers enjoying a well-deserved day out. After lunch we were free to roam - an afternoon of wildlife heaven! Many of us had the chance to enjoy watching the elusive bittern. Dragonflies and damselflies illuminated the fens, as swallow and

martins swooped over the reeds, catching flies.



Award-winning volunteer

One person unable to attend the day out was LOHP volunteer Graham Moates, naturalist and conservationist, who was picking up his South Norfolk Community Environmental Champion of the Year award that day. Graham's research on small mammal mortality in discarded bottles and drinks cans was published in Keep Britain Tidy's Journal of Litter and Environmental Quality in April. Graham is a true citizen scientist and an inspirational volunteer who epitomises what Volunteers' Week means.

Rob Martyr

Bye Rob: Hi Pete!

We're sad to say, 'Goodbye' to Rob Martyr, who's leaving the LOHP after a very successful year as our first Conservation Manager, and we wish him well with his new job. Pete Fox has taken on the role until next February.

Tea and orchids

Many of us gathered on a fine mid-June day at Pam and Ad's for a feast of tea and cakes and orchids in Thelnetham.

LOHP volunteers were joined by the Tuesday Redgrave and Lopham volunteers, the Midweek Ipswich SWT volunteers, Cambridge Botanical Gardens group, and many botany and conservation specialists.



A variety of walks set off across Thelnetham Fen, and broke into clusters of interest, regathering for lunch. The orchids were in fine flower, with the Early Marsh past their best, but a good show of our Common Spotted, Marsh, and various crosses, including several leopard-spotted variants.

Evaluating management and plans

The walks were across the LOHP lands, to look at the results of management, and to discuss similar sites and plans for future development. We were particularly noticing the effects of digging scrapes, routing paths, and the cutting regimes, whilst taking note of the plants, insects and other animals. I really enjoyed the walk with Tim Pankhurst of Plant Life, who discussed in depth the effects of the clearing of New Fen and the management of Parker's Piece at the east end. We looked over the results of the cutting

and cattle grazing on the reeds, rushes and long grasses. Tim said it would be great if Marsh Lousewort could somehow get into the area. He mentioned how useful it would be to run the cattle through, even for a short time. Someone said, 'How about transplanting some?', but Tim replied he would prefer it to come in naturally, via the feet of cattle.

Thumbs up for the New Fen clearing

We continued to the New Fen clearing where he was delighted with the progress and the regeneration, and we found, in an area only a short distance from Parker's Piece boundary, Marsh Lousewort! Once we 'got our eyes in', it was everywhere, along with numerous other species appropriate to a rich fen like Thelnetham Fen.

After lunch, groups went off to visit The Lows and several other sites.

Becky Whatley

Membership application

(not renewals)

Name:		
Address:		
Postcode:	Phone:	
E-mail:		
I wish to support the LOHP as a:		
Friend of the Fens:	£10 min a year	
Ordinary member:	£5 a year	
Junior member (<18 y	ears) £1 a year	
Please tick one category and write the amount donated below.		
I wish to donate £ to the LOHP.		

Please make cheques payable to the 'Little Ouse Headwaters Project'.

We can reclaim the basic rate of tax that you have

We can reclaim the basic rate of tax that you have paid on the gross equivalent of your donation so, for example, a membership payment of £10 is worth £12.50 to us. Therefore, if you are a UK taxpayer, we would be very grateful if you would Gift Aid your subscription by simply completing the Gift Aid section, and date and sign this form.

I want to Gift Aid the above donation to the LOHP

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made today and in the future.

I am a UK Taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations to charities, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

I understand the Little Ouse Headwaters Project will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Signature:..... Date:.....

Please notify the LOHP if you 1) wish to cancel this declaration 2) change your name or home address, or 3) no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay income tax at the higher or additional rate and you want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Note on renewals: All renewals are due in April. We



The mark of

send a letter to all members. *Please* don't use this form to renew your membership.

A big thank you to all those members who send donations along with their renewals. We greatly appreciate this extra support for the work we're doing to enhance the valley and its wildlife.

Newsletter printed by www.reflex-litho.co.uk

The LOHP needs you!

The LOHP relies on volunteers to run the charity and help with conservation (and other) work. Might you have some energy and time? If so, we'd love to hear from you.

To get involved, and for more information, contact **Bev Blackburn**, Volunteer Coordinator and Event Manager at: beverly.blackburn@lohp.org.uk or 07747 691285, or

Nick Lingwood, Hon. Secretary on: 07772 769025.

Work parties

Get out and enjoy yourself - whatever the weather - at an LOHP work party or event. Work parties monthly on Sundays (dates below) and weekly on Wednesdays. Please check website/email circulation for details and location which may change, depending on the weather.

Sun Aug 12Cut and clear meadowHinderclay WestSun Sept 9Seasonal workTo be confirmedSun Oct 14Seasonal workTo be confirmedSun Nov 11Seasonal workTo be confirmed

Please check website or your emails for up-to-date details.

Sunday work party contact: Bev Blackburn 07747 691285 Wednesday contact: Reg Langston 01379 898009



LOHP on Facebook & Twitter

for news and great photos go to www.lohp.org.uk and click on the icons



Events

Oct 21 Sun - Autumn walk

Morning. Exact time and place to be confirmed

Nov 30 Fri - Annual talk, AGM & members' evening 7.30pm at The Lophams village hall

Raffle and seasonal refreshments. Please bring a plate of food to share. Free admission for members, suggested donation from non-members £2. All welcome.

To contact the LOHP (Reg. charity no: 1098232)

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South Lopham, Diss, IP22 2JN

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