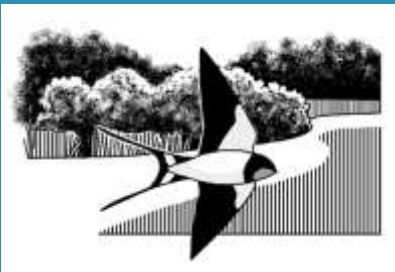


News from the Ouse

ISSUE NUMBER 23
December 2018



Scarlet elf cup

Winter discoveries

With winter well along the way, the landscape changes. The vegetation is reduced, days grow short with the sun close to the horizon, and even the big skies change moods. But the valley still holds much to find, even if the choice is now between Wellingtons and walking boots. So here are some likely highlights from a circuit of the LOHP sites in Blo' Norton and Thelnetham.

Exceptional weather left water levels low across the fens and along the river this autumn. So there are reasons to hope for a wet winter. Reed beds and scrape ponds on sites such as Betty's Fen, Bleswyck's Bank and Webb's Fen offer homes or seasonal shelter for many species.

Wild harvest

Hedgerows and wooded edges have a bumper crop of hawthorn and other fruits, such as ivy berries. These will be food for

hungry, over-wintering birds, before they need to turn to garden bird tables. And, in turn, the birds spread and fertilise some of that seed.

Colourful fungi

Autumn and milder winter times, bring out their own 'flowering' of fungi. Networks in the soil, trees or other organic matter, sprout distinctive ways to spread their spores to damp, fertile growing ground. From scarlet elf cap in wet woodland to jelly ear on elder stems, there are reasons to look underfoot, as well as all around.

A winter rest and recovery

Many of the valley fens have been mown, and other areas grazed, to encourage a varied vegetation. What looks like mud, moss and puddles is waiting to spring into life again. And



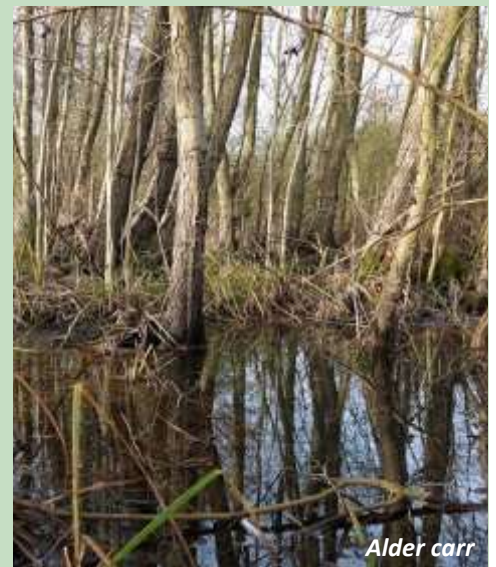
Frosty Parkers Piece

hard frosts, or snow that falls and stays, help to reset the natural calendar.

Stark silhouettes

Winter exposes the landscape in its starkest state, with pale reedbeds and the branching outlines of trees to catch the light and breeze. So there's a lot waiting for those who venture out, even in this season.

Words and pictures by Nick Lingwood



Alder carr

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A brand new way to support the LOHP's work

Find details of our new 'Sponsor an Acre' scheme on page 4, along with an application form.



What have polar bears and salmon got in common with our local cuckoos?

At the end of the summer term, LOHP volunteer Reg Langston visited Garboldisham Church Primary school to stimulate some thinking about migration. Summer is a good time to think about travelling - for children the holidays are coming up - for birds and other animals, their journeys are a matter of life and death.

On Thursday June 28th, Mr Langston joined Beech Tree Class to talk about migration. Mr Langston demonstrated the subject by looking at the cuckoo, and the work done by the British Trust for Ornithology (based in Thetford), to track these birds across continents. The class discussed whether patterns of migration were being altered due



Map of satellite-tracked cuckoos' southward migration, from the British Trust for Ornithology website www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking

to climate change, using the polar bear as an example of the greater distances being travelled because, it is thought, of the influence of global warming on the planet.

During a whole class discussion on why birds and animals migrate, we thought about what the driving forces

are, and whether it's known how they navigate such long distances?

Mr Langston set the class, in groups of three, to discover as much as they could about the migration of a particular bird, animal, insect or fish, using the Internet. Some of the species investigated were gnu, salmon, polar bear and blue whales. The children were encouraged to make notes of what they found, and then were invited to relay their information back to the whole class.

The children were amazed to discover what huge distances these migratory animals travelled, and, using the salmon as an example, how, after several years at sea, these same salmon could navigate their way back to the same river in which they were spawned.

Beech Tree Class would like to thank Mr Langston for giving up his time to come and speak with them, and to share his wide knowledge of the natural world.

Alison Nightingale

...autumn plans

Following a very busy start to the autumn term, Garboldisham Primary School children and teachers are looking forward to working closely once again with the LOHP, as we head into the cooler months.

Beech Tree class are eagerly waiting to learn about what owls eat, when Mr Langston leads a lesson on owl pellet dissection. Always a popular guest, and following on from his visit last term, Rowan Tree class are hoping Mr Langston will pop in so that they too can learn more about migration.

Cherry Tree and Beech Tree classes will continue their art with Rosemary Humphries, once she returns from her holiday, and are looking forward to including our local landscape and wildlife in their work.

Carol McGahan

LOHP volunteers keep winning awards

In the last issue of *News from the Ouse* we reported on Graham Moates winning a volunteering award in South Norfolk. This time, across the border, in Suffolk, it was Reg Langston's turn. Fellow volunteer, Martin Forge, describes the award ceremony.

On the 25th September, a few of us gathered in a marquee in the spacious grounds of the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket, for this prestigious ceremony. Several people and organisations received

their awards for their various activities, and then, it was Reg's turn. Paul White, the Community Action Suffolk Volunteering Manager, read out a long list of Reg's amazing achievements in his tireless work for the LOHP. The award and certificate were presented to Reg, who replied with a few words of thanks, but, when



he reached the microphone, his first words were, 'I didn't know that I did all that!' Well Reg, you *do*, and we thank you for it. This award was very well deserved.

One point that slipped the net in Reg's long list of works and achievements, is the fact that, despite spending so much time looking after the local fens, he is also a very active local Parish Councillor.

I am not just proud to be able to work with Reg on the fens (even though my efforts are, relatively, so small), but I am also proud to call him my friend.

Martin Forge



Outstanding contribution to volunteering - Reg Langston

Reg Langston, and his wife Rowena, were two of the five original founders of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project charity. Soon after winning an award from *Community Action Suffolk*, Reg spoke to Newsletter Editor, Nicky Rowbottom.

Half a century of volunteering

Reg is modest about his achievements but admits he is an experienced volunteer - and volunteer-manager. His earliest volunteering task - more than 50 years ago now - was building nest boxes and swan islands at Sutton Park near Birmingham. From there, after gaining a Geography degree, Reg moved on to work for the National Trust and RSPB on short term contracts, his far-flung posts including the Farne Islands and the Insh Marshes.

Few people know about Reg the HGV driver

Conservation jobs were very hard to find in those early days and junior staff were hired just for the summers. Reg passed his Heavy Goods Vehicle test and, in the winters, made ends meet by driving lorries. Friends already teaching, had invited him into their classrooms, so he had seen what a career in schools might be like. A crunch moment came when he was working on a Scottish RSPB reserve, sitting among the wild dunes of Nairn Bar. He thought, 'What shall I do: teach? Or stay with the RSPB?'



The importance of good teachers

'I'd made a big mistake at school,' said Reg, 'I had a lovely Latin teacher and a bad Biology teacher, so I took Latin at 14 and gave up Biology.' In spite of this regret, Reg has clearly immersed himself in wildlife conservation and monitoring, and has made a massive contribution to the places he has lived and worked in. He became one of those inspirational teachers who are always taking children out on field trips and outdoor lessons, passing on his love of landscape, and wildlife to countless young people.

The sound of another chainsaw

The earliest beginnings of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project can be dated back to a time in the late 1990s, when, clearing scrub on part of Hinderclay Fen, Reg, Rowena and their neighbours, Jacquie and Nigel, heard another chainsaw from the other side of the river and realised someone else was actively managing fens on the Norfolk side. They followed the sound, found the Blo' Norton conservation group and soon began to collaborate on forming one single conservation charity, the LOHP, which, since that time, has gradually restored more and more fragments of wildlife-rich habitats to their former glory and involved hundreds of other adults and children in discovering and conserving wildlife.

So many roles

Reg was the first chair of the LOHP when there were just five core members setting up the charity and getting grant money to begin site restoration. He was treasurer for 12 years, and navigated his way through improving computerised bookkeeping systems.

Reg leads many of the Wednesday work parties. 'It's very rewarding,'



Reg in his natural habitat - sharing his enthusiasm for conservation, and setting the children off on a practical peat-digging task

he says, 'I almost never come back in a bad mood! Many friendships are forged and people look after each other. The group achieves a tremendous amount of work, and we're pleased to be able to run joint work parties with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust volunteers - especially when we're working on adjacent fen sites - all tackling the task of cutting and raking which flower-rich fens demand. The most rewarding thing is to see the way volunteers develop confidence and skills and start to take initiative. As with teaching - it's a tremendous feeling to know you've helped people grow.'

Looking forward to?

'Retirement!' says Reg, with a smile, 'When I retired from being head of Garboldisham Primary, I took on a lot of the day-to-day admin of the charity, and a lot of that is still in my head. Now I need to step back and pass on more to other people.'

I'm also looking forward to seeing the LOHP working in close coordination with SWT and other landowners and partners to achieve further improvements in river quality.'

Nicky Rowbottom

Would you care for an acre?

The Little Ouse Headwaters Project was formed in 2002 and at present manages some 175 acres of fens, heaths, meadows and woodland. The charity now incurs many costs to maintain this land and these must be found from grants and fund raising.

The major costs are:

- Conservation management
- Maintenance of fences, paths & trees
- Water & drainage
- Rent (on leased sites)
- Training of volunteers
- Monitoring species and habitats
- Insurance
- Professional fees
- Safety inspections
- Newsletters

Each acre costs over £120 a year to maintain and the grants and subscriptions that LOHP receives do not cover these costs. LOHP has an urgent need to generate a regular income to cover these recurring expenses.

LOHP is asking if you will help by sponsoring an acre?

Whether you're an existing member or not, you can help to secure the future of LOHP by becoming a sponsor. The cost is £120 per annum or £10 per month, paid by standing order. Sponsors can be businesses or individuals and they will become members of LOHP.

All sponsors can, if they wish, have their names printed in future newsletters, indicating their support and commitment to LOHP and to our environment. You can, of course, sponsor more than one acre.

The trustees of the LOHP are dedicated to the restoration and the conservation of local land that neighbours the Little Ouse, so that it can be used and enjoyed by the community NOW and for future generations.

LOHP also has many dedicated volunteers who regularly help to maintain the land, but it does need dedicated money as well. The trustees hope that you will consider becoming a sponsor, which will give you the satisfaction of continually caring for an area of our very special countryside.

To become a sponsor: Please complete the enclosed application form and send it to Edward Coales (Treasurer) at the address on the form.

Grateful thanks to the sponsors who have already signed up:

- Cyprium Motorsport Systems Ltd, Redgrave
- Mrs Paddy Richards, Wortham
- Andrew Dickson Ltd, Rickinghall
- Dr Tim Cooke, Wattisfield
- Peter Frizzell Ltd, South Lopham
- Mr John Wallace, Coney Weston
- Starwing Brewery, Redgrave
- English Electric Motor Co, Redgrave



Martin Phillips

Marsh tit

With this ring ...

The LOHP Creative Group were invited along to watch the bird ringing team at work on Hinderclay Fen in the summer.

Martin Phillips went along early - armed with his camera.



Martin Phillips

Jacquie Clark, Bev Blackburn, Rowena Langston, Reg Langston, Mike Wraight and Nigel Clark



The Little Fox cafe

The Little Fox cafe (set within The Fox pub at Garboldisham), is hosting coffee mornings on Fridays between 10am and noon. As you can see, the cakes are delicious and all homemade by the volunteers! There is a refillable coffee and tea pot, and the service is friendly with a welcoming atmosphere.

There is a lot going on during weekends at The Fox, including music, classic car meets and food every Saturday evening. For details, check their Facebook page or website.

Bev & Sue



Turtle doves in deep trouble

LOHP volunteer and bird ringer, Jacquie Clark, explains a project aiming to understand and help one of our most beautiful summer visitors.

The 'purr' of turtle doves is one of the real markers of spring as they return from their wintering grounds in Africa and take up territory – or at least it used to be. The turtle dove is now one of our fastest declining species – the population has plummeted (94% fall from 1995–2015) and is now listed as globally Vulnerable to extinction (Red List of Threatened Species).

Chick numbers down

The problem is that the number of chicks produced has declined, possibly because of a change in diet from plant seed to spilled crop seeds. The RSPB is trying to understand the decline and is organising a survey of turtle dove 'hotspots' to try to learn more about where turtle doves are still breeding. This will allow conservation action to be targeted where it will be most effective. The survey results will also provide a baseline to monitor any future change in numbers of turtle doves and the quality of their habitat.



R Hayes

Counting locally

LOHP volunteers agreed to take on the local survey squares (including one on the Frith and the Lows). In each of the six 1 km squares, we covered we had to work out a route consisting of ten 200m sections - not too bad on the map, but there were a few hiccups on the ground. So we did our early morning walks through our squares to map the habitat, and hoped to count turtle doves as well as other farmland birds - but what did we find? Well, sadly, not a single turtle dove between us, but a variety of farmland birds and, interestingly, the highest density of these was around an area that had been planted with a winter bird-food crop. The absence of turtle doves was disappointing, but not very surprising. However, like many other surveyors, we will be back out in the same squares next year with our fingers crossed!

Jacquie Clark



Martin Phillips

Tiny brain: great sense of direction

Ringling studies like these have shown that the blackcaps breeding on LOHP sites are likely to spend the winter in southern Spain. The ones which feed in our gardens in winter tend to breed in southern Germany.

Juvenile blackcap



Martin Phillips

Rather strange-looking, but it is a wren

Clean enough to eat my dinner off!

Skanksa sent their Structures team from Ipswich, comprising engineers and managers, to attend a specially organised work party in September.

The team assembled on New Fen and were tasked with burning scrub and branches on a huge bonfire. They worked for several hours and must have done a good job of clearing the area, as Reg commented that they had left the site 'clean enough to eat my dinner off!'

Comments from the engineers included 'lovely to get out of the office' and 'good to do some physical



Wayne Hewitt

work'. Their colleagues were persuaded to come along the following month so it must have been

a worthwhile day. May there be many more visits...
Chris Blackburn

An LOHP timeline

On a gloriously sunny October morning, 37 folk (and three dogs) gathered on Parkers Piece for a stroll through, as Jo-Anne Pitt put it, an LOHP timeline. Hannah Salisbury describes the experience.

Our walk took in LOHP's more recent acquisitions, as well as some of the charity's longer-held pieces of land.

Our first stop was on New Fen where Jo talked us through the recent work that LOHP volunteers have been doing, cutting down trees and planting others on the drier part of the site.

The logic of this approach is to remove non-native, overcrowded trees, and replace them with native species with more space between them to allow more things to grow on the ground.

Fortunately, Allan Downie was also on hand, to tell us how ash die-back disease is affecting the trees here – some have succumbed, but others seem to be resisting.

From there we made our way to Thelnetham Middle Fen, where LOHP



Hannah Salisbury

Conservation Manager, Pete Fox, told us a little about the importance of the site and the rare species it supports. The LOHP is working with SWT who manage this site, to improve the link with the wet area of New Fen.

The furthest point of the walk was Carr Meadow, which was acquired by the LOHP about three years ago, as part of the aspiration to create a continuous habitat corridor along the upper reaches of the Little Ouse.

The walk back took in Blo' Norton Fen, returning over Bob's Bridge onto Bleyswycks Bank and heading back towards Parkers Piece.

The beautiful sunshine showed off the autumn colours to their best advantage – an ideal day to show old members, and some new faces, the ongoing work of the LOHP.

Hannah Salisbury



Hannah Salisbury



Hannah Salisbury

LOHP plant workshops

LOHP ran two workshops for members in July. The sessions were led by the very experienced botanist and ecologist, Jonny Stone, who gave an insight into the health and history of the habitat and included useful tips for plant identification.

Fen & grassland flora course – 11th July 2018



Broomscot Common - burnt by the sun

The morning was spent on Broomscot Common (an area of 11.4 hectares), in Garboldisham. There are 3 different habitats in close proximity that were compared – fen, dry sandy grassland and the transition slope between them.

On the dry grassland, few green plants could be seen due to the dry hot summer. Jonny explained the features to look for to identify plants when they are not flowering, including:

- Common ragwort
- Sheep's sorrel
- Grasses
- Lichens

The slope was interesting, showing plants which prefer (acid) rainwater at the top and plants which love calciferous water at the bottom, towards the fen. An example of this was Soft Rush, seen up the slope, while Hard Rush appeared lower down. Below the slope, on the area of fen, typical fen plants were seen, including:

- Angelica (a fen indicator)
- Marsh thistle
- Marsh, or greater, birdsfoot trefoil
- Marsh horsetail

Monitoring techniques were explained on an existing monitoring plot on the Common. Poles 50m apart were located and joined with tape to find a specified 10m² area – this was marked out with tape. 1m² plots were selected and marked out to evaluate for:

- Flowers
- Sward height

- Plant litter
- Bare patches
- Dung
- Insects
- Plants of interest
- Anything unusual!

In the afternoon, we looked at Scarfe Meadows, a flood meadow on the banks of the Little Ouse, in Garboldisham. In the past, the site was not managed for conservation, so wild flowers are not prolific. Grasses and rushes were identified and restoration management is underway to encourage flower-rich grassland.



Practical botany on Scarfe Meadows with Jonny Stone

Aquatic plant identification course – 28th July 2018

The day started at Thelnetham Windmill with an introduction to the fens ecosystem and plants we might see. Throughout the day, a grapnel, or grappling hook, was used to search areas of deeper and less accessible water.

On the banks of the Little Ouse, we saw how past channel management had helped reeds spread. The impact of the reeds is to slow the river and raise water levels in the Fen.

Due to the summer this year, many ditches had dried - one on Parkers Piece still had some aquatic type plants visible, but the meadow grasses and plants had started to grow back.

We looked at plant species from fen through to pond and learnt how to identify them when not in flower by looking at their structural features.



Martin Phillips

Enough plant diversity to baffle a beginner

Plants identified included:

On the bank and fen:

- Reeds
- Willows
- Rosebay willow herb
- Rushes
- Sedges

In the pond and river:

- Pond weeds
- Hornworts
- Water parsnip
- Stoneworts

Again it was a very enjoyable, practical and informative day. We left the workshops with a much better understanding of the plants that can be found on these sites.

The LOHP hope these workshops will increase the ability to monitor our sites and assess the effects of our management activities over time.

Martin Phillips



Martin Phillips

Getting to grips with water plants is messy but rewarding

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 years) £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 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 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.



The mark of responsible forestry

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 are 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 Dec 9	Extra incentive: mince pies + mulled wine
Sun Jan 13	Seasonal work Place to be confirmed
Sun Feb 10	Seasonal work Place to be confirmed
Sun Mar 10	Seasonal work Place to be confirmed
Sun Apr 7	Seasonal work Place to be confirmed

Sunday work parties start at 10.30. 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



Event

Dec 30 Sunday - Winter walk

10 am—12.30 Meeting place to be confirmed

A seasonal stroll around South Lopham and the Little Ouse valley to blow away any over-indulgent cobwebs. Suitable clothing and stout footwear recommended. Dogs welcome on a short lead. Suggested donation £3.

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

Email: enquiries@lohp.org.uk

Write: LOHP, Waveney Cottage, Redgrave Rd, South Lopham, Diss, IP22 2JN

Phone: Pete Fox on: 07919 912045

Website: www.lohp.org.uk

Newsletter editor: Nicky Rowbottom