

NEWSLETTER

UTTLESFORD LOCAL GROUP

Date; Winter 2017/18 Editor: Tony Morton



ESSEX
Wildlife Trust

ARTICLES

Thaxted Volunteer River Wardens

The Essex Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency have teamed up with other partners to establish an Essex Rivers Hub, website at < <http://www.essexrivershub.org.uk/> >

and as part of that initiative have recruited local volunteers to record, monitor and report on their stretch of the river, in our case the upper Chelmer.

The Essex Rivers Hub (ERH) was formed in January 2014 and is hosted by Essex Wildlife Trust. Water is essential for everything we do. That's why we are working towards improving the quality of all our rivers, lakes and ground waters for everyone to enjoy. It works to ensure that all waterbodies (including rivers, lakes and the sea) reach 'good ecological status' by 2027. 'Good ecological status' means they should be clean and healthy and contain the 'right' type and number of animals and plants. The UK has a legal obligation to meet this target.

We have a group of six local residents who regularly monitor the river, reporting pollution incidents, fly tipping, local flooding issues and systematically recording the wildlife seen along the river.

We sample the river at two locations on a regular basis for the presence of river fly larva and other invertebrates. Different species of invertebrates can tolerate different water qualities, and their presence indicates water quality and any pollution incidents. A scoring system combines the numbers and different types of larvae to give an overall score for the quality of the river.

These sampling results are collated at a national level through the Riverfly Partnership < riverflies.org > and the sampling has to be carried out in a systematic way to ensure comparability and consistency between sites and samplers.

We also organise the removal of the invasive plant Himalayan Balsam, and although we have had three years of pulling up the plants before they seed, it seems a never-ending task.

The project has provided a number of specialised training courses with funding support from Essex & Suffolk Water, in identifying the fly larva, in our case mostly Mayfly, Olives, and Caddis Fly and Gammerus (water shrimps), identifying pollution sources, non native invasive species, and otter, mink and water vole identification.

Locally we were able to identify a county rarity, Brook Lamprey, spawning, and we regularly find Otter spraint under one of our bridges. We also have a mink monitoring raft set up to detect signs of this introduced species with a view to re-introducing water voles once the mink are no longer in the area.

The project is looking to recruit additional local residents along stretches of the rivers in Essex so if you are interested please contact Claire Branch at EWT claireb@essexwt.org.uk

Will Cockerell

Editor's postscript

The project has been so successful that it has gained national attention as an example of good practice, and The Essex Wildlife Trust River Wardens were awarded the inaugural Lynne Farrell group award at the National Biodiversity Network Awards for Biological Recording and Information Sharing! The awards are presented annually to individuals or organisations that are making outstanding contributions to biological recording and improving our understanding of the natural world.

Sweetings Meadow – Fruit Trees Update

In our previous Newsletter the progress at Sweetings Meadow was reported, with a listing of the fruit trees in this orchard being added to the reserve's web page on our website.

See <http://uttlesford-wildlife.org.uk/places-to-visit/sweetings-meadow/>

We also mentioned that much needed pruning work would be carried out this Autumn, and with advice and hands on help from Duncan Gates, bringing his experience to our novices, the trees have now been given the necessary pruning to remove dead wood and rejuvenate them, balancing up those that were becoming lop-sided. This should improve their fruiting in coming seasons. We were happy to donate Apples from the orchard to the Noakes Grove reserve, for juicing, and sales of that juice will help with the costs of running that lovely nature reserve.

CONSERVATION WORK PARTIES ON OUR NATURE RESERVES

Our Nature Reserve work parties are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 9.30 a.m. to about noon, moving around the reserves as the seasons and the work demands to keep them in good condition. New volunteers are always welcome. The details of the locations for the weekday events are shown on the website at ;

uttlesford-wildlife.org.uk

and follow the links to the Essex Wildlife Trust Work Party page.

UTTLESFORD LOCAL GROUP CONTACTS

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Committee Members

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Amanda Thomas

Evening Wildlife Talks

Bishop's Stortford Natural History Society

Meetings will be held at the Meeting Room in Office block at Hatfield Forest, which is situated on the Hatfield Forest road approx 200yds on the right after turning off the old A120 in Takeley Street. There is ample parking and good facilities.

Meetings start at 8.00 pm with a midway break for tea/coffee and biscuits and finish around 10.00 pm

Visitors are welcome at any meeting but a donation of £2 per person is requested.

Friday 5th January

More insects from Hatfield Forest
An illustrated talk by Geoff Vowles



Friday 19th January

Plants and Poisons
An illustrated talk by Steve Ratcliffe



Friday 2nd February

A year at Thorley Wash
An illustrated talk by Robert Phillips, Reserve Warden



Friday 16th February

FLEAM DYKE
An illustrated talk by Ann Forbes



Friday 2nd March

Workshop with Bob Reed



Friday 16th March

Hares
An illustrated talk by Bob Reed, Chairman



Friday 6th April

Out and About
Members; Local Wildlife Pictures