



**Bedfordshire  
Cambridgeshire  
Northamptonshire**



wildlifebcn

# WILD PLACES

*A Newsletter for Owners and Managers of Local  
Wildlife Sites*

[www.wildlifebcn.org](http://www.wildlifebcn.org)

2016

*Welcome* to the sixth issue of the Wildlife Sites Newsletter. This newsletter is for owners and managers of Northamptonshire's Local Wildlife Sites. *Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)* are areas of land where species and habitats flourish because of past and current management and are the most important areas for wildlife outside legally protected sites such as SSSIs. They do not have statutory protection and it is through the goodwill of their owners and managers that the sites are conserved and retain their wildlife value.



WILDside images

## LWS Update

The wildlife sites project continues apace with a successful survey season last summer. In total 35 sites were surveyed including some which had not been visited for over 20 years! The sites included woodlands, meadows and wetlands, most retained due to the hard work of the landowners. Working closely with different organisations (more about that later) has meant that many sites have been restored or brought into improved management.

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## A Farewell to Tony Balbi

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Tony Balbi, a long-time volunteer and wildlife surveyor with the Wildlife Trust and expert on Northamptonshire's wildlife. Tony has been surveying Wildlife Sites for over 20 years and has likely visited many of the sites that you own.

Tony surveyed over 300 of our Local Wildlife Sites alongside numerous surveys of our own Trust nature reserves, making over 33,000 species records along the way. He was an expert in plants and birds and taught many current and past volunteers and staff most of what they know about surveying. He will be greatly missed and his knowledge and skills will be impossible to replace.



A selection of Local Wildlife Sites

## A Fresh Start for East Midlands FWAG

For over forty years, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group has helped farmers to integrate wildlife friendly agricultural practices into their commercial farming businesses. The aims of the group are as relevant now as they were then, and now three former Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group advisers have joined forces to form East Midlands FWAG.

Part of the national FWAG Association, the new organisation will provide independent environmental advice to farmers across the East Midlands as well as holding events, conservation competitions and offering a farmer membership scheme.

Louise Richmond, the local FWAG advisor, has worked with many farmers in Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire and she brings with her a wealth of knowledge and environmental experience. "Through our new FWAG group, I'm delighted to be able to offer farmers and land owners the very latest news and advice on agri-environment issues and in particular the new Countryside Stewardship schemes," Louise says.

East Midlands FWAG will be organising farm walks across the region and has just launched its membership scheme. To find out more, visit the website: [www.eastmidlandsfwag.co.uk](http://www.eastmidlandsfwag.co.uk).

## Floodplain Meadows

Floodplain Meadows are part of the quintessential English landscape and would have been common along our river valleys 100 years ago. The land alongside the river has always been susceptible to flooding which brought nutrients to the land leaving no need for additional fertilisation but preventing arable farming. Consequently these fields were alive with wildflowers and attract insects such as butterflies and bees as well as providing breeding sites for ground nesting birds such as curlew.



Floodplain Meadow SSSI at Achurch

The most species rich meadows can contain 40 species per square metre, which in turn supports an incredibly high insect diversity. Floodplain meadows therefore provide the basis for a rich food web and complex and sensitive ecological system.

The high fertility produces a large midsummer hay crop and allows grazing of the aftermath during the late summer and early autumn. This management is also crucial from a wildlife point of view as it prevents coarser plant species from dominating.

Nowadays these meadows have a variety of purposes; they act as important natural flood defences, storing winter flood waters that

could otherwise affect local communities, provide nectar for pollinating insects, and are important for carbon storage.

However, over the last 100 years the loss of floodplain meadows has been rapid and widespread due to changes in agriculture, gravel extraction and urban expansion. Today only around 3,000ha of flower-rich floodplain meadows persist across England and Wales.

The small fragments that remain have a critical role to play in the conservation of our natural heritage. They also provide valuable local sources for harvesting wildflower seed that can be used in meadow restoration projects. Many former meadows still have the soil structure in place, even if the wildflowers have been lost, and restoration is possible.

## LWS in Living Landscapes

Nature reserves will always be a vital part of any strategy for conserving wildlife. However, they are typically small, isolated islands in a sea of urban and farmed land which, if managed without care for wildlife, can be a hostile place for many species. By themselves, reserves can never be enough to secure the future of British wildlife.

This is why we need a new approach to nature conservation. We're calling it Living Landscapes. Since 2006, the Wildlife Trusts have been working together with farmers and landowners, members of the public and other organisations to create landscapes in which people and wildlife can co-exist.

A Living Landscape is one which includes plenty of thriving, biodiverse areas outside traditional nature reserves. It is crisscrossed by broad corridors of wildlife-friendly habitat, so wildlife is free to move around and can quickly colonise new areas. Populations are no longer isolated on reserves, which reduces the chance of local extinction.

Local Wildlife Sites host some of the most unique habitats and rarest species our country has left, so they are a key part of this vision. They make our landscape more connected and act as reservoirs from which rare species can recolonise surrounding areas. In short, they are essential if we are to build a Living Landscape for future generations to enjoy.



Rushden Lakes



WILDside images



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Nenescape is a Heritage Lottery funded Landscape Partnership Scheme that works together with the organisations stretching along the River Nene to conserve and protect its natural and built heritage. Through a series of projects it will listen to the past, explore the now and secure the future of this landscape, rich in tradition, wildlife and culture. The project is now in the development stage, working up a detailed plan to submit to HLF in 2017.

As part of Nenescape we are working with farmers and landowners in the Nene Valley from Northampton to Peterborough to help restore and create meadow and wetland habitats as well as undertake vital infrastructural improvements to tackle diffuse pollution & aid water quality. Training courses on environmental farm management will be offered to landowners. These will be in the form of recognised courses run by the project's local Agricultural College - Moulton College.

The river and its surrounding habitats provide valuable homes to a range of wildlife such as dragonflies, birds and butterflies. Many meadows have been lost in the past, whilst remaining wetland habitats can be difficult to manage. This project will offer grant funding and specialist advice to create and restore habitats and tackle diffuse pollution.

The types of project which could qualify are; **Arable reversion to meadow, Restoration of species poor pasture to meadow, Wetland restoration capital projects** and **Infrastructure projects to benefit water quality.**

Funding can include wildflower seed, fencing materials & restoring water features. In-kind match contribution is expected from landowners through undertaking the work and future management.

We are looking for potential sites now, with grant funding for work available in 2018, 2019 & 2020. For more info please contact Matt Johnson (Wildlife Trust) on 01604 774033 or [matt.johnson@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:matt.johnson@wildlifebcn.org).



A group paddle with canoe2 ©David Joyner

## WILDside

We are delighted to announce that the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre has been successful in securing support from the Heritage Lottery Fund for our WILDside Project. The Project Coordinator should be in post from February and the scheme will launch in spring 2017, running through to the end of 2018. As the owner or manager of one of the county's Local Wildlife Sites, you may be interested in benefitting from the Project.

The LWS network plays a crucial role in helping to safeguard Northamptonshire's biodiversity. However, we have surprisingly little information about the species found at each site. Whereas the standard LWS assessments provide a good indication of a particular site's value or potential, they necessarily concentrate on plant and habitat surveys within the limited time available. As a result we have a generally poor level of knowledge about what are amongst the most important wildlife areas that remain in Northamptonshire. For example, just five of the 730+ existing LWS sites qualify based on what is known about their invertebrate fauna.

So, where landowners are willing or particularly keen to learn more about what can be found on their land, we'll be pleased to arrange for small groups of our WILDside participants led by the Coordinator or local experts to visit to carry out surveys of their sites. This will also help to fill some key 'gaps in the map' right across the county.

If you'd like to be added to our WILDside mailing list as a site owner/manager or want more information, please drop us a line at [nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk](mailto:nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk) or call Steve Whitbread on 0752 5050803.



WILDside images



## Scrub Off

This is a Biffa Award funded project to restore calcareous grassland LWS around the Rockingham Forest area to provide a network of sites for many rare and declining species to survive and move in the face of climate change. As the project name suggests the work focused on the restoration of grassland features by tackling scrub and introducing management.

Calcareous grassland is a scarce habitat which supports many rare and important species such as orchids, grizzled skipper butterfly and common lizard. They are our most flower rich grasslands, therefore supporting a large range of bees, butterflies and other insects.

Some scrub is important for a range of wildlife, but left unchecked it will out-compete areas of wildflowers. Scrub clearance will focus on restoring and increasing the best areas of grassland within a site to conserve wildflowers and create a mosaic of habitats for wildlife.

## Case Study - Kings Cliffe

This LWS is a section of disused railway that runs along the northern edge of Kings Cliffe village with patches of calcareous grassland and used by the local adder population. We have been working with Kings Cliffe Wildspaces (a local group of conservation volunteers) to restore the best areas of grassland and open up a route for wildlife and people.



## Sulby Gardens Open Days 2017

Sulby Gardens is an interesting LWS on the Leicestershire border with 12 acres including a species rich nature reserve with woodland, wild flower meadows, orchard, a variety of ponds and a working kitchen garden.

There are so many excellent things to look out for at the wonderful Sulby Gardens. A new edition to the list is the *Tipula staegeri*, subgenus *Savtshenkia*, a crane fly that is new to the County found at Sulby Gardens by John Showers this year. If you would like to know more please check out John's blog at [www.northantsdiptera.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.northantsdiptera.blogspot.co.uk).

## Catchment Sensitive Farming

Georgina Wallis, Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer for the Nene, sets out five ways CSF can help you in 2017.



Hebridean sheep with lambs

1) Take advantage of our free specialist advice visits to help you plan your farm management. Topics include slurry & manure handling, soil husbandry, machinery testing and calibration, pesticide handling and application and farm infrastructure review.

2) Receive CSF support on Countryside Stewardship - bespoke, individual guidance on

the best implementation of Items/Options to help you make farm infrastructure changes that improve water quality.

3) Get access to limited options only available with CSFO endorsement, including Concrete Yard Renewal, Sprayer Loading & Washdown Areas, Underground Drainage Pipework, Biobeds & Livestock and Machinery Hardcore Tracks, to name a few.

4) Attend free specialist events from a range of well recognised speakers on topics of interest to local farmers.

5) Discuss issues you may be facing on your farm with the confidence of utmost privacy and professionalism from your CSFO.

For more information on CSF contact Georgina Wallis, 07921 941734 / 01536 526438 / [georgina@nrp.org](mailto:georgina@nrp.org).

### Next year's open days for Sulby Gardens are:

Thursday 27 April 2 - 5pm Snakeshead Fritillaries and Cowslips

Thursday 22 June 2 - 5pm Wildflower Meadows

Thursday 24 August 2 - 5pm Ponds, Butterfly garden and Wildlife

Thursday 12 October 1 - 4 pm and Friday 13 October 11 - 4pm. Sulby

Gardens Apple Event - **expanded from one day to two!**

Thursday 16 November 1 - 4pm Late Autumn Colour

Homemade teas available. Sulby Gardens Apple Juice, plants, jam and chutney available while stocks last. Stout footwear recommended.

Sulby Gardens, Sulby, Northants NN6 6EZ.

## Why do LWS matter?

From mystical ancient woodlands to quiet churchyards and bustling flower-rich roadsides; the UK enjoys special, often unnoticed, wild places where nature thrives - Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). These valuable habitats cover 5% of Northamptonshire - (compared to SSSI coverage of just 1.5%). These sites are also a vital component in our Living Landscapes (see article on page 5). The diagram below illustrates some of the reasons why they matter.



To highlight their national and local importance, The Wildlife Trusts have produced a guide which can be downloaded. We have also produced four short videos of LWS landowners speaking about their experiences of owning and managing these sites. To see the leaflet and watch the videos go to [www.wildlifetrusts.org/localwildlifesites](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/localwildlifesites).



## Yardley—Whittlewood Ridge

The Woodland Trust is working with partners, such as BCN Wildlife Trust and landowners to increase woodland cover on the Yardley Whittlewood Ridge. Trees and woods are an integral part of a resilient landscape, and we value them for their beauty, their wildlife and a range of more practical benefits such as timber production, wood fuel, game cover and improving land values. Creating a diverse landscape with a mix of native, broadleaved trees is vital to mitigate against the impact of tree pests and diseases.

What can you do to help?

- Plant individual trees within hedges or in fields, they act as stepping stones for wildlife;
- Create wildlife corridors - new hedgerows provide habitat in their own right and enable species to move between core areas to feed, migrate or reproduce;
- Make existing woods bigger - buffer zones protect special woodlands from external pressures such as agricultural spray drift, and allow the species within them space to expand;
- Create new woods - new woodland areas help to connect existing ones and make wildlife movements across the landscape easier.

The Woodland Trust is keen to help with advice and funding for any tree or hedge planting (including gapping up) in this special area (see map below), and offers a range of financial incentives to encourage planting more native trees.

Please get in touch to hear more about our aspirations and to take part in improving this special part of Northamptonshire: email [plant@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:plant@woodlandtrust.org.uk) or call 0343 770 5689.



## Contacts

**Matt Johnson** from the Wildlife Trust can:

- Conduct a wildlife survey of your site.
- Provide advice on grants that may be available to you and apply for them on your behalf.
- Provide 'whole farm' conservation advice.
- Match landowners in need of grazing animals with local graziers or help landowners find someone to cut their meadow for hay.

Website: [www.wildlifebcn.org/wildlife-sites-northamptonshire](http://www.wildlifebcn.org/wildlife-sites-northamptonshire)

Tel: 01604 774033 or 07734 478470

Email: [matt.johnson@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:matt.johnson@wildlifebcn.org)

Address; The Wildlife Trust, Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE

## Other Useful Contacts

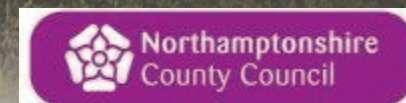
**Northamptonshire Biological Records Centre** based in Northampton, has been set up to gather, store and share information on Northamptonshire's wildlife species, habitats and protected sites. Email: [nbr@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:nbr@wildlifebcn.org) Tel: 01604 400448 Web: [www.northantsbrc.org.uk](http://www.northantsbrc.org.uk)

We hope that you have found this newsletter useful and interesting. General comments and suggestions for future articles are very welcome. If you would prefer to receive future newsletters via email, then please contact **Matt Johnson** at the above telephone number or email or write to Matt Johnson, The Wildlife Trust, Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE.

**The Wildlife Sites project is a partnership project funded by Northamptonshire County Council, NNJPU, DDC & The Wildlife Trust BCN and aims to help bring Wildlife Sites into positive management.**



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