

Inspiring Meadows project: Northamptonshire

Dr Robin Field
Nene Valley NIA Land Advisor
and Matt Johnson
Wildlife Sites Officer, Wildlife Trust BCN



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Northamptonshire



Partnership Project

- River Nene Regional Park
- Wildlife Trust BCN

Funded by

- Natural England (via HLS)
- SITA Trust & NCC (Inspiring Meadows)
- Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (Land Advisor Fund)
- The Lottery (HLF and Awards for All)
- RNRP Environmental Grant Scheme



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Why is it needed?

- Massive loss of species rich grassland since 1940's
- Nationally only about 3% of the 1930's total left
- Northamptonshire following that trend
- Mostly small isolated meadows remaining
- Much converted to arable production and improved grassland
- Others lost to sand and gravel extraction
- Once extraction completed remaining land restored to lakes, arable production and improved grassland

How much have we achieved?

- Started in 2006 using HLS and RNRP Environmental Grant Scheme
- Now recreated over 210ha of species rich grassland
- Restored over 150ha and returned it to appropriate management

This includes:

- Wet grassland sites (MG4)
- Historic water meadow
- Dry and acid grasslands sites
- SSSI, LWS, LNR and SAMs in various ownership



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Inspiring Meadows

- LWS work identified Lowland Meadows as most under-threat habitat
- Many sites not suitable for stewardship
- Developed SITA & NCC funded Inspiring Meadows project
- Aim;
 - Restore 20 sites through improved management or restoring features
 - Capital works to secure long-term management
 - Most popular funding fencing and water
- Year 1 – survey work; 67 sites
- Year 2 and 3; capital and restoration work
- Total of 22 sites worked on (arguably none are restored yet!)



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Case Studies

The Good, the Bad and the Complex

Rushton Grange Meadow

- Wet meadow around old meander (4 fields east of Tailby)
- Mosaic of wetland, wet grassland and dry grassland habitat
- Unmanged for many years
- New landowner keen but runs a stables
- Fenced & water through Inspiring Meadows & CSF
- Local grazier grazing with young Dexters



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Boddington Marshy Field

- Owned by Canals Rivers Trust
- 3 compartments – MG4, MG1e and wetland (swamp)
- Two grassland field annual hay cut
- Fence to allow aftermath grazing and initiate grazing of wetland



Stanwick Hay Meadow

- Survived gravel extraction along Nene
- Old MG4 grassland (90's)
- Now horse pasture
- FMP visit in 2012 identified indicator species clinging on, plus suitable hydrology and soil conditions for restoration
- Land owner not interested and owns no other land



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Coronation Meadows

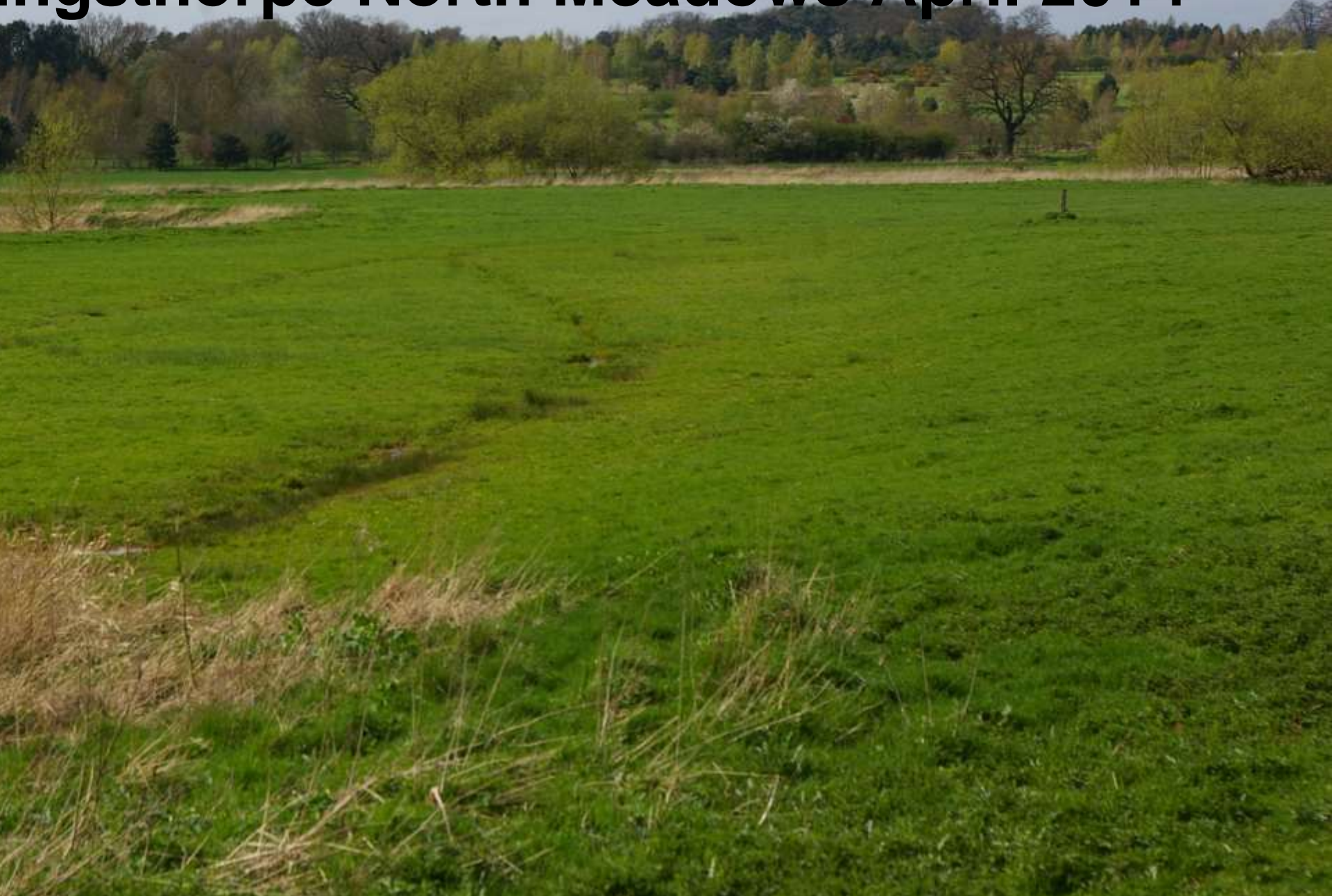
- **Boddington Meadow** (WT Reserve)
- Chosen as Northants Coronation Meadow
- Species rich unploughed meadow - areas of MG4
- Seed collection planned for mid-July and early August
- **Kingsthorpe North Meadows**
- Owned and managed by local community
- Plan to restore lower (sp poor) section alongside river – 3ha
- Soil tests show low nutrient levels (P=12)
- Enhance with Boddington seed this summer



Kingsthorpe North Meadow 2008



ingsthorpe North Meadows April 2014





A photograph of a water meadow in Wicksteed Park. The foreground is filled with tall, dry, golden-brown grasses and some green plants. In the background, there is a line of trees and a fence under a clear blue sky.

Wicksteed Park water meadow in the beginning



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To contact us about this reserve or about how you can support us please write to The Wildlife Trust, Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE, or telephone 01604 405285. E-mail: northamptonshire@wildlifebnp.org

To join the Wildlife Trust please contact the Membership Manager, The Wildlife Trust, The Manor House, Broad Street, Camboorne, CB23 6HD. Tel: 01954 713500. E-mail: cambridgeshire@wildlifebnp.org Website: www.wildlifebnp.org

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This reserve is supported by:



Protecting Wildlife close to home

Welcome to Wicksteed Park Nature Reserve: The Water Meadow

Wicksteed Water Meadow became a Nature Reserve in 2011, with restoration and management of this seven hectare site which has been funded under Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. This historic and rare part of the reserve is owned by the Wicksteed Trust and managed by the Wildlife Trust. The unique habitat conditions of the Water Meadow support a wide range of now uncommon wildlife.

What to look for

The vegetation of the reserve is split into two main types. The northern half and slightly higher western side comprises of a drier area of grassland, dominated by false-oat grass and meadow foxtail. The southern section is largely swamp vegetation with areas of fen and wet grassland.

A network of ditches criss-crosses the reserve. This allows water to be fed onto the meadow from the River Ise in the north, flow slowly across the meadow and through the ditches, and back into the River Ise in the south. This is what maintains the wet and swampy conditions that are now uncommon elsewhere.



Reed bunting



Great burnet

Many unusual plants can be found, such as brown sedge, marsh marigold, great burnet and meadowsweet. In winter snipe are often found in and around the ditch systems while in summer reed bunting, sedge warbler and grass snake inhabit the tall swamp vegetation.



Grass snake

How the Trust cares for this reserve

The reserve is grazed by cattle through the summer and autumn and a hay cut will be taken in some years from the drier areas. The water meadow is flooded and drained at various times of the year to sustain these unusual habitat conditions.



This site is one of several which make up the Wicksteed Park Nature Reserve and also includes the Castle Field on the south side of the Barton Road. A permissive path runs along the River Ise next to the Water Meadow and provides an enjoyable stroll along the valley.



Snipe

The Wicksteed Trust

The Wicksteed Trust was established in 1916 to provide facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupations in the interest of social welfare. The Trust continues to achieve its objectives by providing free access to open space at Wicksteed Park.

We hope you enjoy your visit.



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**RIVER NENE REGIONAL PARK
INSPIRED SPACES**



Achurch Meadow SSSI





Fotheringhay meadow restoration

