

Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Reserves Round-Up

At the January meeting of the Southwold and Blyth Valley group of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, local Reserves Warden Jamie Smith gave us an update on four local reserves: Hen Reedbeds, Winks Meadow, Dingle Marshes and Reydon Woods. The habitats are very different, and a warden's job has a wide remit.

Hen Reedbeds and Dingle Marshes share certain elements. Both have intricate dyke systems and reedbeds that require maintenance to keep them clear and renewed, as passing birds are attracted by open water and clearings. Both reserves rely on grazing by ponies or cattle to maintain balanced reed and grass growth. Bitterns, bearded tits and water rail are among the many occupants. Otters and water voles inhabit the dykes. Mink are no longer a major problem, but they are monitored carefully. Dragonflies, damsel flies, butterflies and moths all contribute to the wide diversity of the area.

Winks Meadow is a tiny remnant of unimproved grassland near Metfield, surrounded by arable land and an old airfield. It maintains a wonderful mixture of grasses and wild flowers, with five species of orchid, including the rare (for Suffolk) frog orchid. The Trust cuts the grasses for hay, and the collection of wild seeds, and sheep graze every two years to keep the ground broken.

Reydon woods is well known locally for its wonderful bluebells in May. It is an ancient coppiced wood, and that tradition continues today. The rides are mown to keep them open, and encourage a variety of birds, like the bullfinch and nuthatch, and many dragonflies and butterflies. The Silver-washed Fritillary is doing well, as are White Admirals. The open areas are rich in wildflowers, with orchids, ragged robin and a host of others.

We learned a good deal about the continual maintenance that Jamie, his team, and a host of volunteers make to keep this wonderful diversity fit and well for us all to visit and enjoy.

Our next meeting is on Thursday, February 10th at 7.30pm, in the Southwold Arts Centre, IP18 6JP. Ian Barthorpe will be telling us about the wildlife of Costa Rica. Entrance costs £3, to include refreshments. Under 25's free.