

The Butterflies of Suffolk Wildlife Trust Reserves.

At the November meeting of the Blyth Valley and Southwold wildlife group, Steve Aylward, from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, gave us a wonderful presentation of the many butterflies recorded in our area. Steve is a distinguished wildlife photographer, and the evening was a visual treat of these beautiful insects, with close-ups that allowed you to see the details on the smallest antennas, or the effect of the light on wing patterns. We learned about the varied reserve habitats: ancient coppiced woods, meadows and grasslands, heathlands, fens and wetlands, and the returning of arable field to their natural environment. All of these support different species. Some, such as the Dingy Skipper, are in drastic decline due to habitat loss and climate change, but there are reasons to be optimistic. By returning reserves to their natural terrain, and with careful management, the butterflies have a chance to recover. There is a resurgence of the Purple Emperor in Bradfield woods, and it is hoped that this strong flier will find other suitable areas elsewhere. The Silver Washed Fritillary has colonised all over Suffolk woods, and are seen regularly in Reydon Woods. The Wall Brown, once so common but now in chronic decline, is making a slow come-back on the grassy verges at Carlton Marshes. The Silver Studded Blues are doing well at Blaxhall Common, but they do not fly far, emphasising the need for "wildlife corridors". We were left with a positive feeling that the right habitats can turn things around, which is something we can all help with in the way we manage our own gardens, no matter how small they are.

Our next meeting is on Thursday, January 12th, at 7.30pm in the Southwold Arts Centre, IP18 6JP. Adam Burrows, from Natural England, will be talking about East Anglia's Changing Coastline. Admission is £4, refreshments included. Under 25's free, and all are welcome.

Penny Mansfield

Contact us at swtblythvalley@gmail.com