

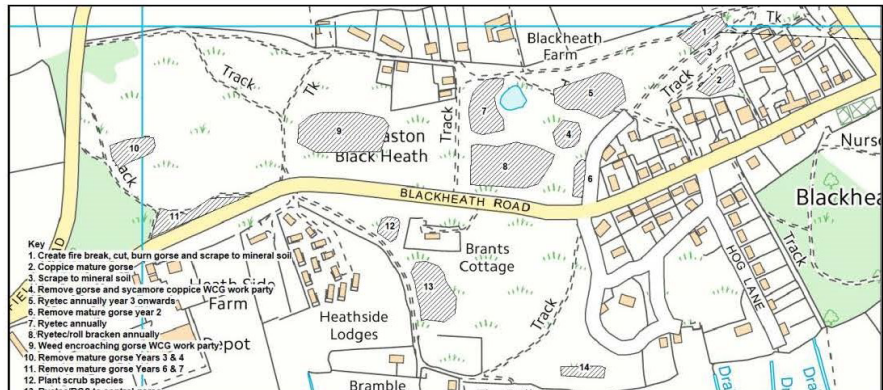
Silver-Studded Blue

The Newsletter of Wenhaston Commons Group



Autumn 2024

10 More Years



- Key
1. Create fire break, cut, burn gorse and scrape to mineral soil
 2. Coppice mature gorse
 3. Scrape to mineral soil
 4. Remove gorse and sycamore coppice WCG work party
 5. Rytec annually year 3 onwards
 6. Remove mature gorse year 2
 7. Rytec annually
 8. Ryteci/roll bracken annually
 9. Weed encroaching gorse WCG work party
 10. Remove mature gorse Years 3 & 4
 11. Remove mature gorse Years 6 & 7
 12. Plant scrub species

WCG's bid for continued funding has been successful and we are now able to access an annual sum from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. This will help us to carry out the work set out in the most recent 10 -Year Plan.

To this end the committee undertook a survey of Black Heath in March and a programme of work for the coming years has now been established, as set out above.

Some of the heavier work will be contracted out. This will include the coppicing or removal of large stands of gorse at the east side of Black Heath and the creation of a firebreak there.

There is always plenty for work party volunteers to do. As the map indicates, there are large areas of mature gorse across Black Heath to remove while encroaching

bracken and regrowths of gorse need to be held back to give heather and grasses a chance. The BCS flail mower along with rakes and pitchforks gets the work done.



Always plenty to do!

Some areas will be scraped back to soil for re-seeding of heather. This has proved successful in other areas of Black Heath. In addition, we will continue to maintain areas such as the sandpit for Sand Martins and the south side of Black

Heath where Silver-Studded Blue butterflies were successfully reintroduced

Following up, Alan Miller led a morning birdwalk over Black Heath which also gave an opportunity to show the current state of the Heath after the fire, and to explain some of the proposals above.

We also visited land belonging to the Gowers on the other side of Bramfield Road. They are managing this land impressively for wild life especially for ground-nesting birds such as Yellowhammer.



Bird walkers at Black Deek

At the time of writing Mill Heath is quite overgrown with bracken but this is easily manageable and work parties have been scheduled for the new season to knock back bracken and gorse and to maintain footpaths. Bickers Heath, however remains problematic. WCG has been waiting for the clearance promised by the owners to be fully completed but now the land is for sale again. We will need to wait for the outcome of the sale to what role we have to play in the long term. For the time being we will continue with some clearance work

Alan was also involved in ringing or Sand Martins in July. He reports: "We caught 24 Sand Martins on Monday at Black Heath of which 3 birds had already been ringed elsewhere.

Four birds were juveniles all the rest adults. The ringed birds were all ringed at Minsmere 2 in 2023 and one in 2022.



All were adults at the time of ringing were at least 3 or 4 years old and all breeding at Minsmere. So, they have chosen to breed with us this year!"

Moth morning: August

For the second year, we ran a moth morning at St Peter's Churchyard in mid-August. A total of 67 species across the 4 locations were identified which compares with 68 at the same event last year although at slightly different locations in and around Wenhaston.



Poplar Hawkmoth at the Moth morning

Two very showy but very sleepy Poplar Hawkmoths (see photo) were the stars but sadly none of the other Hawkmoths turned out for our event this year.

Patrick Barkham at the AGM



Patrick Barkham at the Village Hall 2023

The AGM was well attended and once the usual business had been conducted, and after drinks and nibbles, we were lucky to have an excellent illustrated talk by Patrick Barkham, the nature writer for the Guardian.

Patrick's talk drew heavily on *The Wild Isles* which accompanies the recent BBC TV series narrated by Sir David Attenborough. Patrick drew attention to worrying losses in habitats and species over the last half century or more but he also focused on success stories such as the reintroduction of the White-tailed Eagle and of the Large Blue Butterfly.

'Neighbourhood Nature'

The talk ended with an important message about how local group action plays a very important part in restoring and maintaining habitats which support diversity. This may be most effective if focused on a particular habitat and species.

Patrick had a message too about how important it is for our mental health for us to experience a thriving natural environment. Working to conserve that environment makes us all feel better. His message is to focus on 'Neighbourhood Nature' and to 'Protect our local patch'.

Coming in October



Our next guest speaker will be Hawk Honey, currently a Visiting Officer at Lackford Lakes and author of the blog, 'Suffolk Naturalist'. His talk will be on 'The Bees and Wasps of Wenhaston Commons'. The AGM is at the Village Hall on 22 October. All are welcome.

And finally:

We have a confirmed sighting of an adder on Black Heath. We have long suspected that there are adders here but apart from a dead one found on Black Heath Road some ten years ago there has been nothing definite. This one had decapitated a frog!

Keep in touch on Instagram



Wenhaston Commons Group is always keen to welcome new volunteers. Work parties are on Tuesdays and Sundays (10am to 12). The work is seasonal and includes cutting gorse and bramble, scything bracken and raking and clearing the cuttings under the guidance of a team leader. It can involve as much or as little exertion as you choose. WCG provides the tools and heavy-duty gloves; all you need to bring is sensible clothing and, where appropriate, sun block and insect repellent.

Participation in the work of WCG is rewarding, sociable and gives you a good sense of connection with your landscape and community. If you would like to be involved, please just come along to a work party or contact one of our team leaders:

Jonathan Alder 01502 478885
 Myles Archibald 07774 781186
 Alan Miller 07493 622952
 John Holmes 07305 482400

WENHASTON COMMONS GROUP – Remaining work parties for 2024/5

OCTOBER	TUE	8	JA	Black Heath	Southside
	SUN	20	JH	Mill Heath	Verge by bollards
NOVEMBER	TUE	12	AM	Black Heath	Opposite shop
	SUN	24	MA	Black Heath	East end
DECEMBER	SUN	15	MA	Black Heath	Black Deek Pond
JANUARY	TUE	7	MA	Bickers	By bench
	SUN	26	MA	Black Heath	Sand Pit
FEBRUARY	TUE	11	JA	Black Heath	West End
	SUN	23	MA	Mill Heath	Verge by bollards
MARCH	TUE	11	LH	Black Heath	South Side
	SUN	23	JH	Black Heath	TBC

AGM Thursday 22 October: Village Hall 6.45 for 7 pm.