



## Suffolk Mammal Conference 15th Nov 2014

- *Dr Simone Bullion*

Under the chandeliers in the gloriously ornate Georgian ballroom of The Athenaeum, in the heart of the historic town of Bury St Edmunds, we were comfortably seated around large tables awaiting the first of the day's speakers. Suffolk Mammal Group had started to plan this one day conference about



Photo by Arthur Rivett

15 months ago and with all 170 tickets allocated we were eagerly anticipating the day ahead.

Pat Morris was the first speaker, describing the decline of the hedgehog and the evidence behind the prediction that they are now 30% less numerous. He also highlighted what practical steps are needed if we were going to improve their habitats and reduce fragmentation. He demonstrated how a hollow block could be placed in front of a hole in a garden fence to allow safe passage of hedgehogs, but how this prevented access of the neighbour's pets.

Michael Noonan from WildCru was then the next speaker with his very interesting account of the latest technology such as magneto-inductive sensors to track badger movements underground. His findings show that badgers are far from sedentary underground and move frequently between their nest chambers, possibly in response to rising CO<sup>2</sup> levels making their surroundings uncomfortable.

It was then my turn to describe the 15 years of work that Suffolk Wildlife Trust have been undertaking to track down Suffolk's dormouse population...

### Special points of interest:

- Suffolk Badger Update
- Otters In Suffolk
- Right Place, Right Time?
- Suffolk Bat Group 30 Yrs On
- Dates for your Diary

# Suffolk Mammal Conference 15th Nov 2014 (Cont)

- Dr Simone Bullion

After extensive surveys we have found that our dormouse population is located in five broad clusters and during the last six years we have been working with landowners to try to reconnect metapopulations by planting new hedgerows, most recently with funding from the SITA Trust. Finally, Rob Fuller of the BTO spoke about 'too many deer in the woods?' explaining the implications of high deer numbers for birds and other wildlife and how it can result in an 'ecological cascade' effect.

After lunch and a chance to visit the exhibits including a The Mammal Society stand, Darren Tansley of Essex Wildlife Trust explained the species recovery plan for water vole in the East of England. He particularly focused on the benefits of the mink control project in helping water vole numbers increase, as well as the successful translocation of 600 water voles into the River Colne catchment. Johnny Birks then gave a fascinating account of the polecat's return to the 'Far East'. Whilst they are re-establishing themselves in Essex, they have been slow to colonise Suffolk, but there have been three recent records in the south of the county. Emma Webb of Marinelife gave a review of the 19 cetaceans of East Anglia, with details of sightings including the more unusual species, such as the recent sighting of a humpbacked whale off

the coast of Minsmere for the second year in a row. She explained that although the waters around this region are shallow, there is a trench north of The Wash which may funnel some of the deeper water species, causing disorientation and subsequently stranding. Finally, John Gurnell spoke about conserving British red squirrels, including some of his earlier work in Thetford Forest before this population succumbed to disease. He emphasised that the next few years are critical in terms of ensuring that a coordinated

grey squirrel control programme helps slow their advance. A map of the potential extinction rates of red squirrels in the different regions of the north of England and Scotland gave a sobering insight into what will be the outcome if this control is not effectively implemented. The value of recording was the underlying message of all the speakers, so we hope to capitalise on post-conference enthusiasm by getting more people involved and submitting their records. Thanks are due to the two Chairs, Sir Kenneth Carlisle and Lord Cranbook. We are also very grateful for the organisational support and sponsorship provided by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, as well as a financial contribution by Suffolk Naturalist's Society.





## Otters in Suffolk

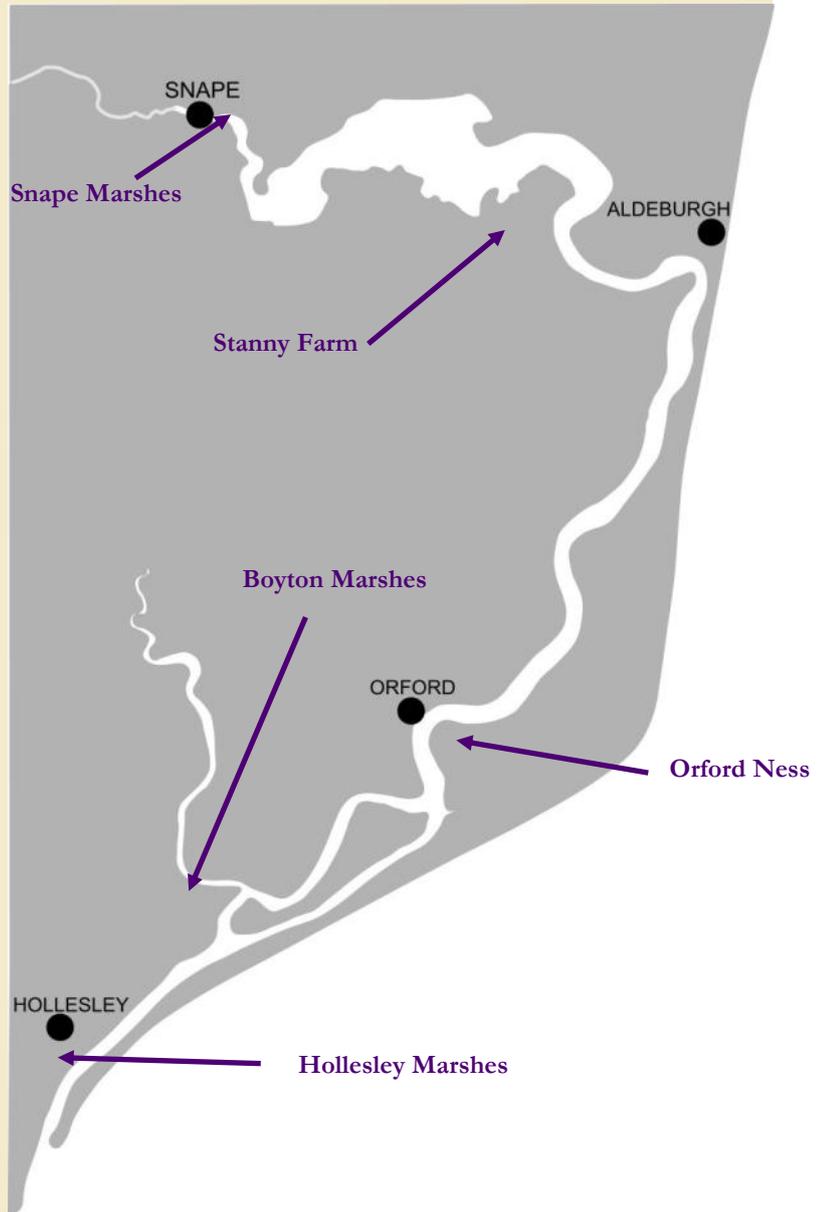
*Richard Woolnough*

### Update: Alde/Ore Otter Project



We now have regular spraint collection going on at Hollesley and Boyton (RSPB); Orford Ness (NT); Snape Marshes (SWT) & from Stanny Farm. Analysis is a challenge but even to the untrained eye the crab remains we were getting loads of originally has now stopped. There are some really good brains working on the analysis so we will get there. We are determined that we will be able to do the job ourselves rather than relying on sending them off to be done by others.

Trail cameras are now in operation at Boyton(1); Orford Ness (2) and Stanny Farm (6) and a family group of a mother and 2 cubs have started to appear on the videos from Stanny. There are a number of well used runs across the River wall at Stanny where we pick up regular supplies of spraint as well as capturing them on camera. These wall crossings all seem to be where the estuary is at its narrowest as if getting across the estuary to the grazing marshes the other side is important rather than getting into the estuary to fish. Any other theories gratefully received. These will be checked weekly with spraint removed as when available for analysis. If suitable secure locations



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## Otters in Suffolk

*Richard Woolnough*



### Update: Alde/Ore Otter Project

can be found, then individual trail cams will be located at each site. Time coordination between all trail cameras set throughout the estuary may help ascertain the population numbers using the area.

We will use the results of the spraint analysis to assess the status & availability of prey species. For example early results from Stanny suggest a significant proportion of crab remains in the spraint. Elsewhere studies have suggested that crabs are an inferior prey only exploited by inexperienced animals or when other food is short. So are the Alde otters living on the edge?

#### Possible conclusions from this study include:

- Does the diet vary at different locations on the estuary
- Does the diet vary through the year?
- Is the diet related to the availability of prey or some other selection criteria?
- The timings on the camera may allow us to estimate the population?

If you are interested in helping in this particular project contact :  
suffolkotters@outlook.com

## Note From The Chair - *Martin Hancock*

Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2015.

The Working Group put a lot of time and energy into the Suffolk Mammal Conference last year, and it certainly paid off. I hope many of you were able to attend and agree. It was a sell out, with some 170 delegates and a great line up of speakers and topics. John Grant from the East Anglian Daily Times was so impressed that he serialised the Conference over four weeks in the weekend editions of EA Environment. You can't do much better than that!

The challenge for 2015 is to build on the success of the Conference by trying to recruit new supporters & encouraging more people to assist the Group with monitoring & surveying. You will see in this Newsletter details of training courses that will be run throughout the year & more will be added as we progress. We will also be involved again in this year's Springwatch.

We are also in the process of upgrading our website, this is a major task, and special thanks to James Meyer at SWT for volunteering his technical expertise to make this happen. We will also be uploading copies of the Conference presentations onto the website.

As always, please let us know if there is anything specific that you would like to see the Suffolk Mammal Group doing in the near future.

All the Best for 2015 - Martin



## Suffolk Badger Update

*Adrian Hinchliffe*



The “Springwatch” cameras may have gone for now, but nature at RSPB Minsmere continues its daily battle to survive and produce the next generation. We have continued to monitor the two main badger setts as featured on the program last year with an additional third. Lots of scientific behind the scenes work has been going on involving the RSPB and Brighton University, and it is hoped that we will all learn a lot more about the badgers lifestyle, feeding habits, family origins and whether or not their behaviour is unique to the reserve.

Winter badger emergence times are certainly much earlier than those mentioned in the earlier studies recorded in Ernest Neal’s “Badger” book. Even return times seem later so could this be the result of our mild winters or the remoteness of the setts?

Further work is soon to commence on recording latrines and dung pits along with bait marking to give an indication of any badger territories. It was most interesting at the Mammal Conference last year to hear Michael Noonan indicating that his studies have shown that animals from neighbouring clans were actually sleeping within chambers of “rival” neighbours. Hopefully the collaboration of the BBC, RSPB and the Suffolk Mammal Group can further explore this revelation. If you are interested in helping us locate and accurately record these latrines then please contact me.



**Planning** can often conflict with Badgers but if Setts are located and flagged up in advance or at an early stage in the planning application, the Badgers and their homes can often be mitigated for and any delays for the builders minimized. Please get in contact if you think a Badger sett will be directly affected by any building work. Please don't assume we already know about it.

Use of modern electrical equipment such as remote cameras is certainly benefitting our studies. Members of the Suffolk Mammal Group can volunteer to feed badgers at the “Margaret Grimwade” hide on a rota during the winter and information gleaned from watches here, are suggesting emergence times similar with those recorded by Ernest Neal so maybe we need to monitor these more effectively with the help of modern technology to confirm this and then try to understand why there are these differences between the two locations.

Road casualties have been continuing to come in so a big thank you to everyone who sends in the details, especially when they contain accurate grid references. In the last few weeks a “road casualty” was reported which actually clearly showed the harrowing effects of the badger being caught around the neck by a snare! Please keep sending in any records of badgers seen in Suffolk.

### Seen a dead Badger?

Please continue to send in any Suffolk Badger casualty records or sett reports to:  
[adrian@wondersofwildlife.co.uk](mailto:adrian@wondersofwildlife.co.uk)

## Right Place, Right Time - *Dennis Brown*

Its about 2.00pm on a cold and windy December day. I'm looking out of the front of Island Mere Hide on the lookout for Otters (or anything else that might come by) when a lady at the other end of the hide calls 'what's that?' She is looking out the back of the hide with her binoculars. She describes where she is looking but all I can see is what looks like a fluffy head of reed mace but then it runs down the reed stem and disappears. A few seconds later it comes back up another stem.



I and a couple of others run down the ramp to get a closer view. It's only 5 – 10 metres away now and is happily eating reed seeds whilst we all takes some photos.

I am amazed how easily it manages to hang on to the seed heads whilst the wind blows it back and forth. I can see it using it's tail as well as it's claws to hang on. It goes down and up other stems 5 or 6 times during the 20 minutes I am watching it. I think I have seen a Harvest Mouse only once before and that was very briefly and many years ago. Definitely a case of right place right time!

**Do you have an interesting story / comment / picture with reference to a mammal? If you could kindly send them in to me then they may well appear in the next edition of the newsletter.**

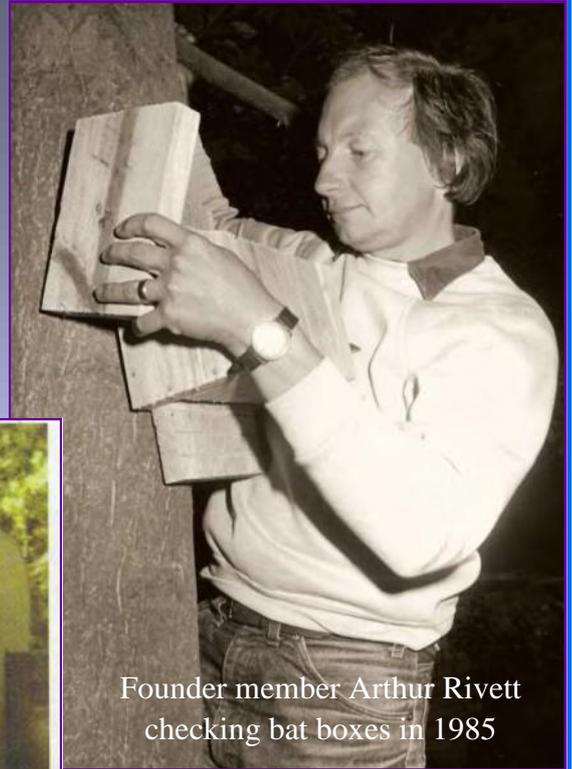
([adrian@wondersofwildlife.co.uk](mailto:adrian@wondersofwildlife.co.uk))



## 30 Years And Still Going Strong!

Congratulations to the Suffolk Bat Group who recently celebrated 30 years of Bat conservation.

The group was formed in 1984 as a specialist group of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Three founder members, Arthur Rivett, Alan Miller & Richard Woolnough, are still involved with the group. Arthur is currently the group's trainer and coordinates the survey work and has



Founder member Arthur Rivett checking bat boxes in 1985



Making bat boxes at R&L Fen, 1988. Alan Miller, Alex Gondris, Chris Madsen.

also been awarded a certificate in recognition of his dedication.

Alan is treasurer and main group contact and Richard now spends much of his time dissecting otter spraint with the occasional bit of bat detecting thrown in. Here's to the next 30 years!





## EVENTS 2014 /2015

- **Otter Workshop: RSPB Minsmere 31st Jan 2015 - Fully Booked**
- **Otter Workshop: Stanny Farm 7th Feb 2015 - [Suffolkotters@outlook.com](mailto:Suffolkotters@outlook.com)**
- **Badger Workshop: RSPB Minsmere 14th Feb 2015 - Sarah Wood Tel: 01728 648071/ Minsmere: 01728 648780**
- **Badger Workshop: SWT Carlton Marshes 28th Mar 2015**  
[carlton.education@suffolkwildlifetrust.org](mailto:carlton.education@suffolkwildlifetrust.org)



### Contacts

Chairman: Martin Hancock - [hancockmjf@aol.com](mailto:hancockmjf@aol.com)

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Badger Coordinator: Adrian Hinchliffe [adrian@wondersofwildlife.co.uk](mailto:adrian@wondersofwildlife.co.uk)

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Cetaceans: Alan Miller [alanm@suffolkwildlifetrust.org](mailto:alanm@suffolkwildlifetrust.org)

All Other Mammals: Simone Bullion [Simone.Bullion@suffolkwildlifetrust.org](mailto:Simone.Bullion@suffolkwildlifetrust.org)

General Mammal Email Address: [Suffolkmammals@outlook.com](mailto:Suffolkmammals@outlook.com)

# Thank You ! - *Dennis Kell*

Thank you to all members who have renewed their supporter donations for 2015. You will remember that we collect donations from the AGM in early autumn, so it may be a while since you sent yours in. I have not made individual acknowledgements this year, but please accept these thanks for your continued support.

If you have not renewed and you would like to remain on our mailing list, please send a donation (minimum £5.00 per person) to the treasurer.

Once again, many thanks to all our supporters.

## Join the Suffolk Mammal Group

### *Who are we?*

In 1981, the “Suffolk Badger Group” was formed by Margaret Grimwade and in 2014 the group name was changed to the “Suffolk Mammal Group.”

### *What do we do?*

We now embrace all of Suffolk’s mammals in our studies and surveys and are affiliated to the “Badger Trust” and the “Mammal Society.”

We encourage the study and recording of all mammals in Suffolk, organising study days and surveys.

We produce two newsletters each year, informing members of the latest events and topics.

### *Where are we?*

**Web:** [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/mammal-group](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/mammal-group)

**Twitter:** @Suffolkbadger

**Facebook:** Suffolk Badger & Other Mammals Group

**Email:** [suffolkmammals@outlook.com](mailto:suffolkmammals@outlook.com)

### *How do I join?*

Please send cheques payable to: “Suffolk Mammal Group” to the treasurer:

Dennis Kell, 9 Pheasant Rise, Copdock, Ipswich, Suffolk. IP8 3LF.

Name (s): .....

Address: .....

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Telephone: ..... Mobile: .....

E-mail: .....

Donation: (£5.00 minimum) .....

Interest (*please circle*): All mammals, badgers, bats, dormice, otters

other.....

***Thank you for supporting the Suffolk Mammal Group through the coming year.***