

Wenhaston Wildlife

2020/21



Woodlark

Photo: Andrew Moon

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Moonrakers
Back Road
Wenhaston
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Introduction

March 2020 the Corona virus struck the UK, and we were all forced to spend our time confined to home with any recreation confined to exercising close to home. This meant many of us turned our attention to watching the wildlife in our immediate surroundings.

For many years the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) have run a garden bird watch scheme which involves members recording the number of birds that occur in their gardens on a weekly basis. This information helps to monitor the health and population sizes of our commoner birds and in recent years this has extended to other garden wildlife such as mammals and butterflies. As a response to the pandemic the BTO opened this scheme to the general public both as a diversion from the problems caused by peoples enforced isolation and as an opportunity to monitor a much larger proportion of the nation's gardens.

Wenhaston is fortunate to not only be located in a beautiful part of Suffolk with a wide variety of habitats but is home to several very active volunteer conservation groups, Wenhaston Commons Group, Blyth Woods, the Swift Action Group and many villagers are members of organisations such as Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the RSPB. With this potential source of knowledgeable and committed conservation minded people I emailed the various groups with the idea we could record the villages wildlife over the course of 12 months to provide a record of the state of the village's wildlife in 2020.

Thirty-five villagers responded and on average 12 people returned a weekly count throughout the period. A weekly newsletter was emailed out giving the recent count information along with other both local and national wildlife news. Within a very short time the records expanded to what people were seeing on their walks around the village. Birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates of all kinds were recorded, and these records were all sent on to the local records office Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS). Although the intention was to record for 12 months, Covid restrictions meant that records were received for 16 months so two breeding seasons were covered, and results could be compared with local and national trends.

The survey had no scientific basis other than recording what people saw and it depended on their levels of competence and enthusiasm as to what groups were covered. Some people just gave adhoc records of birds while others took on regular recording of what bird life they saw both at home and on their daily walks. Several people widened their recording to reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, bees and other insects.

It does however provide a baseline of the state of the villages wildlife in 2020/21 and hopefully will guide and encourage where conservation efforts need to be concentrated in the coming years.

Summary

Wenhaston has a wide variety of habitats from grazing marsh, reedbed through to heathland, woodland and farmland and therefore it is home to a significant variety of wildlife including some rare species. Recording started on 1st April 2020 and finished on 31st July 2021.

A total of 124 species of birds were recorded within the village boundary and 71 of these occurred in people's gardens. Records were only accepted for birds using the village, i.e. breeding, wintering, feeding etc, birds of prey flying over are counted as they are likely to be hunting.

Rare birds such as turtle dove and spotted flycatcher were recorded from some lucky observers' gardens and away from gardens tundra bean geese, great white egret, black kite, honey buzzard and woodlark were some of the many highlights.

Mammals in UK are always much harder to see however most of the species you would expect to find in East Suffolk were recorded with two introduced species being the most commonly seen, grey squirrel and muntjac. It was encouraging to receive several hedgehog records although the sightings appeared to be less in 2021 than the previous year. Bats were recorded using both handheld and static recorders with 5 species recorded.

Butterflies accounted for most of the invertebrate records with 28 species recorded a significant number as the county total is just 35. Obviously the most important species is the silver studded blue which breeds on Black Heath but there were also records of silver washed fritillary a species that is expanding its range across the county. Occasional use of a moth trap added some new records of these mainly night fliers to the lists.

All the expected reptiles and amphibians were recorded except for adder of which there has only been one record in the village in recent years. Sadly, frog and toad records were in the minority and no confirmed records of either species breeding but great crested newts occurred in several gardens and were seen mating in some ponds.

Twelve species of dragonflies along with ten species of bees were identified along with a few beetles including glow worms.



Yellowhammer

Photo: Andrew Moon



Nightingale

Photo: Andrew Moon

Results

The following are lists of the various species recorded along with their status both locally and in a county and UK context.

Birds

The various species are rated as to their current conservation status, i.e. Red and Amber as detailed in 5th Birds of Conservation Concern published December 2021. The BOCC assessment is based on the most up-to-date evidence available. Criteria include conservation status at global and European levels and, within the UK: At 70 species, the Red list is now longer than ever before, and is almost double the length of that in the first review in 1996.

Red is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action.

Red list criteria is as follows:

- Species is globally threatened.
- Historical population decline in UK during 1800–1995.
- Severe (at least 50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or longer-term period (the entire period used for assessments since the first BoCC review, starting in 1969).
- Severe (at least 50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or the longer-term period.

Amber is the next most critical group.

Birds in the amber list will be subject to at least one of the relevant factors listed below:

- Species with unfavourable conservation status in Europe (SPEC = Species of European Conservation Concern).
- Historical population decline during 1800–1995 but recovering; population size has more than doubled over last 25 years.
- Moderate (25-50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or the longer-term period.
- Moderate (25-50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or the longer-term period.
- Moderate (25-50%) decline in UK non-breeding population over last 25 years, or the longer-term period.
- Rare breeder; 1–300 breeding pairs in UK.
- Rare non-breeders; less than 900 individuals.
- Localised; at least 50% of UK breeding or non-breeding population in 10 or fewer sites, but not applied to rare breeders or non-breeders.
- Internationally important; at least 20% of European breeding or non-breeding population in UK (NW European and East Atlantic Flyway populations used for non-breeding wildfowl and waders respectively).

In Wenhaston in 2020/21 a total of 26 red listed species were found along with 44 amber listed species. Of the Red listed birds 14 were breeding or held territories along with 24 Amber listed species. Comments in italics are regarding their county status as published in Suffolk Birds 2020

The order follows the latest British Ornithologists Union list.

Canada Goose	<i>Common resident.</i> No birds were present on the Blyth marshes during the 2020 summer, wintering birds were present from September and a single pair were present in spring 2021, breeding unproven
Greylag Goose	Amber list. <i>Common resident</i> Birds were present on the Blyth marshes throughout the year, breeding unproven.
Pink footed goose	Amber list. <i>Common winter visitor to north of the county, uncommon elsewhere.</i> A flock of 12 flew over Black Heath on 28 th September 2020 and a single bird was seen on the Blyth marshes on 1 st January 2021
Tundra Bean Goose	Amber list. <i>Uncommon winter visitor</i> A flock of 25 birds spent from 6 th December to 1 st January on the fields just outside the village boundary in Blythburgh.
White fronted goose	Red list. <i>Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.</i> 24 were present on the Blyth marshes on 5 th December 2020.
Egyptian goose	<i>Locally fairly common resident.</i> Three were present on the Laurel Farm marshes on 19 th December 2020
Mute Swan	<i>Common resident.</i> Seen throughout the year on the Blyth marshes with at least one pair breeding.
Shelduck	Amber list. <i>Locally common resident and winter visitor</i> Birds were present on the Blyth Marshes except for October and November. Breeding unproven.
Shoveler	Amber list. <i>Uncommon resident, common winter visitor.</i> Only one record was received two birds being seen on Blyth Marshes on 31 st January 2021
Wigeon	Amber list. <i>Common winter visitor.</i> A late pair were present during April 2020 and the only other record was of 6 birds on the River Blyth in January 2021
Mallard	Amber list. <i>Common resident and winter visitor.</i> A female with a brood was recorded on 10 th April 2020. The free flying birds from the collection on Blyford Road were regularly seen however true wild birds were scarce until October 2020.
Pintail	Amber list. <i>Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.</i> 12 birds were present on the Blyth marshes on 14 th January 2021
Teal	Amber list. <i>Common winter visitor, scarce resident.</i> Small groups were present in both springs prior to migrating east, with just a small wintering group recorded in January 2021

Red legged partridge	<i>Common resident, numbers augmented by releases.</i> A few pairs were regularly recorded except between January – April possibly as a result of local shoots reducing the numbers. Birds did occur occasionally in the village gardens.
Pheasant	<i>Very common resident, numbers augmented by releases.</i> Recorded throughout the year including in village gardens
Common swift	Red list. <i>Common summer visitor and passage migrant.</i> This fast-declining summer visitor has had help in the village from the Wenhaston Swift Action Group. Boxes have been installed in several locations including the village hall, school and church along with a number of private houses. The first birds arrived 1 st May 2020 and left 10 th August. Annual counts from the group show in 2020 there were a minimum of 20 nest sites and the July count which should include fledged juveniles was 40. In 2021 the first birds arrived on 1 st May a similar number of nest sites were located, and the July count was 64. 2021 saw birds investigating the nest boxes for the first time.
Cuckoo	Red list. <i>Declining summer visitor.</i> At least one bird was seen or heard regularly from 26 th April to 23 rd June 2020, mainly around the Blyth marshes. In 2021 the first bird was heard on 17 th May.
Stock dove	Amber list. <i>Fairly common resident.</i> Recorded regularly from April until October when records became more sporadic. One pair bred in a barn owl box on Laurel Farm
Wood pigeon	Amber list. <i>Very common resident and winter visitor.</i> The commonest bird throughout the village with birds frequenting gardens as well as the wider countryside
Turtle dove	Red list. <i>Declining summer visitor.</i> A single bird was seen briefly in a garden on 18 th May 2020. Three birds were photographed beside Blyth marshes on 6 th September 2021.
Collared dove	<i>Common resident.</i> Recorded every week, the majority of records are from the Blackheath Road area.
Water rail	<i>Fairly common resident and winter visitor.</i> This secretive bird was recorded in April/May so likely a single pair bred on the Blyth Marshes and was only recorded again in December.
Moorhen	Amber list. <i>Very common resident and winter visitor.</i> Locally very few records of this common water bird, the presence of mink along the rivers in recent years has likely led to its local decline.
Coot	<i>Common but declining resident.</i> A once very common bird now becoming increasingly scarce with only single records on the Blyth marshes in April 2020
Little grebe	<i>Locally common resident and winter visitor.</i> One to two birds seen on numerous occasions on the River Blyth

Oystercatcher	Amber list. <i>Common declining resident, very common winter visitor.</i> A single pair held territory on Laurel Farm marshes but breeding was not proven.
Lapwing	Red list. <i>Declining breeding species, common winter visitor.</i> Winter flocks fed on the arable fields along Bartholomews Lane. A flock of 150 were feeding on the flooded Blyth marshes on 25 th December 2020 and a pair bred on Laurel Farm in 2021.
Whimbrel	Red list. <i>Fairly common passage migrant.</i> Passage birds were recorded on the Blyth Marshes from the third week of April until second week of May in both 2020 and 2021.
Curlew	Red list. <i>A common winter visitor and passage migrant, a few pairs still breed.</i> The largest flock recorded was of 90 birds feeding on the flooded Blyth marshes on 25 th December.
Woodcock	Red list. <i>A declining resident and common winter visitor.</i> A once common resident in our woodlands now only a winter visitor in small numbers with birds being occasionally recorded in Vicarage Grove
Snipe	Amber list. <i>Common winter visitor now extinct as a Suffolk breeding species.</i> A flock of 17 were feeding on Church Farm marshes on 9 th February 2021 and 10 were feeding on the Blyth marshes on 13 February.
Common sandpiper	Amber list. <i>Common passage migrant.</i> Two birds were present along the Blyth on 8 th May 2020
Green sandpiper	Amber list. <i>Fairly common passage migrant.</i> Two birds were present on the Laurel Farm marshes throughout most of August 2020 and singles were recorded on 14 th and 20 th April 2021 including one on the new pond in Grove Piece.
Redshank	Amber list. <i>Declining resident, common winter visitor.</i> Found feeding on the Blyth marshes throughout the year with a single pair breeding in both 2020 and 2021. Fifty were feeding on the flooded Blyth marshes on 25 th December 2020.
Spotted redshank	Amber list. <i>Fairly common but decreasing passage migrant.</i> Single birds were recorded on 16 th August 2020 and 7 th April 2021 on the Blyth marshes
Greenshank	Amber list. <i>Common passage migrant</i> Singles were recorded on the Blyth marshes on 1st September 2020 and 2 nd May 2021
Black headed gull	Amber list. <i>Very common resident and winter visitor.</i> Birds are present around the village throughout the year
Mediterranean gull	Amber list. <i>Uncommon resident, winter visitor and a rare breeder in the county.</i> Single adult seen feeding on arable fields with black headed gulls through spring 2020 and birds were frequently seen passing overhead. A flock of 40 flew over Black Heath on 7 th July 2020

Common gull	Amber list. <i>Very common winter visitor and a scarce breeder in the county.</i> A single bird on the Blyth marshes on 13 th December 2020 to 20 th February 2021 and a bird visited one garden with black headed gulls on 9 th February. They are frequently seen flying over the village.
Herring gull	Red list. <i>Very common resident and winter visitor.</i> Birds are present around the village throughout the year
Lesser black backed gull	Amber list. <i>Very common summer visitor, increasing numbers over winter.</i> Birds were recorded in most weeks of the year.
Cormorant	<i>Common resident and winter visitor, has bred in the county since 1998.</i> Strangely just one record in 2020 but recorded weekly from March to June 2021 all on the Blyth marshes
Bittern	Amber list. <i>Scarce resident, slowly increasing breeding population, winter visitor.</i> A single bird was seen on the Blyth marshes on 29 th April 2020.
Grey heron	<i>Common resident and winter visitor.</i> Commonly seen both on the Blyth and Church Farm marshes throughout the year, the nearest heronry being at the Hen Reedbeds
Great white egret	Amber list. <i>Uncommon but increasing visitor.</i> A single bird fed on the Blyth marshes from 14 th February until 13 th March 2021 and again on 9/10 th June
Little egret	<i>Locally common and increasing resident.</i> Birds were recorded every week on both the Blyth and Church Farm marshes. The closest breeding colony is on Henham Park
Osprey	Amber list. <i>Uncommon passage migrant.</i> A single of this iconic species was seen over the Mells Quarry on 6 th May 2021
Honey buzzard	Amber list. <i>Scarce passage migrant.</i> A single of this summer visitor was seen over the marshes on 25 th August
Sparrowhawk	Amber list. <i>Common resident and winter visitor.</i> A regular visitor to village gardens recorded in every month of the year.
Marsh harrier	Amber list. <i>Fairly common summer visitor with increasing numbers over wintering.</i> Birds are seen throughout the year with one pair breeding close to Laurel Farm in 2021
Hen harrier	Red list. <i>Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.</i> A ringtail was hunting the Blyth marshes on 18 th February 25 th March and 14 th April 2021
Red kite	<i>Uncommon but increasing.</i> This once rare passage bird can now occur in any month with birds now breeding within 10 miles of the village. Four birds flew over Black Heath on 15 th June 2020
Black kite	<i>Rare passage migrant.</i> Single birds were seen over the marshes on 6 th May 2020 and again on 24 th May 2021

Common Buzzard	<i>Common resident, winter visitor with increasing breeding population.</i> Seen daily this is now the commonest local raptor with a minimum of 4 pairs breeding within the village boundary
Barn owl	<i>Fairly common resident.</i> There are a number of nest boxes spread around the village, in 2020 three boxes were occupied producing 5 young and in 2021 four boxes produced a minimum of 6 young with one late brood fledging in November. A bird fledged from Laurel Farm in 2018 was found breeding in a box in Laxfield in 2020 and a bird captured in a box at Hall Farm in 2021 had been ringed as a chick in 2014 at Kelsale. This shows how the birds disperse after fledging.
Little owl	<i>Fairly common resident.</i> Only three calling birds were located in 2020, Laurel Farm, Bartholomews Lane and the Mells Quarry.
Tawny owl	Amber list. <i>Common resident.</i> Regularly recorded around the village, more often heard than seen, this as to be expected is the commonest owl in the village.
Kingfisher	<i>Fairly common resident.</i> A single pair bred in 2020 and birds were frequently seen along the river. Birds were present in 2021 but not proven to breed
Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Common resident.</i> Recorded in every week, often visiting garden feeders, a pair bred successfully in Vicarage Grove in both 2020 and 2021
Green woodpecker	<i>Common resident.</i> Recorded in every week this woodpecker is often heard rather than seen birds recorded holding territories in Vicarage Grove and Church Common.
Kestrel	Amber list. <i>Common resident.</i> Recorded in every week at least one pair bred in both seasons.
Merlin	Red list. <i>Uncommon winter visitor.</i> Just one bird recorded on 9 th February 2021
Hobby	<i>Fairly common summer visitor.</i> First recorded on 21 st April 2020 and then regularly until the end of August, including visiting some gardens. In 2021 first record came on 14 th May with occasional records through to July.
Peregrine	<i>Uncommon but increasing winter visitor, has bred in the county since 2008.</i> Single birds flew over Black Heath on 16 th May and 5 th November 2020. A single bird was seen hunting snipe on 7 th February 2021 on Blyth Marshes and again on several occasions in the last two weeks of March
Ring necked parakeet	<i>Scarce resident.</i> A single bird was seen flying from Vicarage Grove on 25 th December 2020

Jay	<i>Common resident and winter visitor.</i> Recorded in every week one pair held territory on Grove Woods in both 2020 and 2021
Magpie	<i>Very common resident.</i> Recorded in every week, a familiar visitor to a great many gardens.
Jackdaw	<i>Very common resident and winter visitor.</i> Recorded in every week, several pairs breeding in barn owl boxes
Rook	Amber list. <i>Very common resident and winter visitor.</i> Recorded in every week with large rookeries in Blyford Lane and at Brook Farm. A count on 14 th June 2020 revealed 590 birds at the Blyford Lane site.
Carrion crow	<i>Very common resident and winter visitor.</i> Recorded in every week occasionally visiting some gardens.
Coal tit	<i>Very common resident.</i> Recorded in every week, visiting gardens more frequently in winter
Marsh tit	Red list. <i>Fairly common resident.</i> Only one record over the entire period, a single bird in Vicarage Grove on 11 th April 2020
Blue tit	<i>Very common resident.</i> One of the few species that occurred in gardens on every week of the year. The nest boxes in Vicarage Grove, Church Common, Merton Wood and Grove Piece resulted in 56 nests and fledged 335 young in 2020 and 54 nests and fledged 310 young in 2021
Great tit	<i>Very common resident</i> Another species that occurred in gardens throughout the survey period but in smaller numbers than blue tit. The nest boxes in Vicarage Grove, Church Common, Merton Wood and Grove Piece resulted in 5 nests and fledged 29 young in 2020 and 8 nests and fledged 29 young in 2021
Bearded tit	<i>Uncommon resident.</i> Birds occasionally seen on Blyth marshes in suitable breeding territory in 2020 and a pair bred near Laurel Farm in 2021
Woodlark	<i>Fairly common breeding species.</i> A pair held territory in 2020 the male started singing on 18 th February and raised at least one young, second male arrived late May but failed to attract a mate. First pair second brooded seen carrying food outcome unknown. A pair held territory in 2021 but failed to breed.
Skylark	Red list. <i>Common resident and winter visitor.</i> Birds recorded in every week of the survey. Small flocks of were seen on arable fields around Low Farm during the winter.
Sand martin	<i>Common summer visitor.</i> The colony on Blackheath continues to thrive, in 2020 46 pairs raised 102 young with second broods raising a further 42 young. In 2021 the first birds returned on 19 th March but in much lower numbers due to a very cold spring and a total of only 9 pairs bred fledging a minimum of 8 young.

Swallow	<i>Very common summer visitor.</i> Sadly, numbers of this once common summer visitor seem to be very low around the village in both periods with only two pairs seen along Bramfield Road and Low Farm in 2020 and 2021. The first birds arrived on 10 th April 2020 and 6 th April 2021.
House martin	Red list. <i>Common summer visitor</i> A similar story to the swallows with just a few pairs nesting in Back Road, The Street, St Michaels Way and Black Heath. One nest containing three chicks in Back Road collapsed in 2021 the birds were quickly transferred to an artificial nest and the adults continued feeding until the 3 young successfully fledged. The only other report of successful fledging was a pair at Black Heath who raised at least 3 young.
Cetti's warbler	<i>Fairly common resident.</i> A single male held territory on Blyth marshes in 2020 and 2 possibly 3 birds in 2021
Long tailed tit	<i>Very common resident.</i> Recorded in every week of the period, with birds increasingly visiting gardens in winter. A pair held territory in Grove Woods in both springs
Willow warbler	Amber list. <i>Declining summer visitor.</i> A bird was heard singing on Black Heath on 6 th April to 23 rd May 2020 and possibly bred but there were no records in 2021 so it is unlikely this once common species now breeds within the village boundary.
Chiffchaff	<i>Very common summer visitor.</i> The earliest record of this migrant was 4 th March 2020 and was then recorded weekly until 25 th October. Six territories were recorded in Grove Woods in both breeding seasons. An over wintering bird was recorded on 25 th February 2021.
Sedge warbler	Amber list. <i>Common summer visitor.</i> Birds were recorded holding territory on the Blyth marshes from 19 th April 2020 the last being seen on 25 th September and in 2021 the first birds were seen on 18 th April.
Reed warbler	<i>Common summer visitor.</i> Birds were recorded holding territory on the Blyth marshes from 20 th April 2020 the last being seen on 15 th September and in 2021 the first birds were seen on 25 th April.
Grasshopper warbler	Red list. <i>Uncommon, declining summer visitor.</i> A single bird reeled beside the River Blyth throughout spring 2021.
Blackcap	<i>Common summer visitor.</i> First bird of the year was singing on 4 th April 2020, Grove Woods had four birds holding territory in both springs. A male overwintered appearing in gardens along Black Heath Road from December through to February and two were recorded on 9 th December 2020. A male visiting feeders on Black Heath on 23 rd February was joined by a second bird on 15 th March.
Garden warbler	<i>Fairly common summer visitor.</i> First bird recorded on 19 th April 2020 and in 2021 not until 16 th May. Three possibly four pairs bred on Black Heath on 2021

Lesser whitethroat	<i>Fairly common summer visitor</i> First bird recorded on 22 nd April and could be found in various locations around the village during the summer including one holding territory in Grove Woods. First bird in 2021 was recorded on 20 th April.
Whitethroat	Amber list. <i>Common summer visitor</i> . First bird recorded on 17 th April 2020 and two territories were found in Grove Woods. In 2021 the first bird was recorded on 28 th April and just a single territory recorded in Grove Woods.
Goldcrest	<i>Very common resident and winter visitor</i> . Seen throughout the year most commonly feeding in the yew trees in the churchyard.
Wren	Amber list. <i>Very common resident</i> . Recorded in every week of the survey period. A total of 7 territories were found in Grove Woods rising to 10 in 2021.
Treecreeper	<i>Common resident</i> . The only record came from 2 birds seen in Vicarage Grove in April 2020
Starling	Red list. <i>Very common but declining resident and winter visitor</i> . Recorded in every week of the survey period. A flock of 500 were feeding on Blyth marshes on 25 th December 2020. One pair double brooded in a swift box in both 2020 and 2021
Song thrush	Amber list. <i>Fairly common resident</i> . Recorded throughout most of the period except for late September and October. Numbers appear to be very low with very few singing birds in spring, numbers barely reaching double figures. Grove Woods had one pair holding territory in both springs.
Mistle thrush	Red list. <i>Fairly common resident</i> . Recorded during both spring periods because of its distinctive song but only sporadic through the rest of the year. The Black Heath area and Church Common appearing to be the only regular sites.
Redwing	Amber list. <i>Common winter visitor</i> . The last birds of the 2019/20 winter were seen on 5 th April and the first of the 20/21 winter were recorded on 5 th October. A flock of 23 birds were stripping the gardens of berries on 1 st January 2021 before moving on.
Blackbird	<i>Very common resident and winter visitor</i> . Recorded throughout the survey period with numbers rising in the winter as migrant birds join the residents. Grove Woods held 4 territories during both spring periods.
Fieldfare	Red list. <i>Common winter visitor</i> . The first winter visitors were recorded on 5 th October and then throughout most of the winter, the last bird recorded on 1 st April 2021.
Spotted flycatcher	Red list. <i>Declining summer visitor</i> First bird arrived back on 15 th May, two pairs held territory one breeding successfully. In 2021 only one pair returned on 26 th May and successfully raised two broods.

Robin	<i>Very common resident and winter visitor.</i> Recorded in every week of the survey, in Grove Woods 6 birds held territory in 2020 and 5 in 2021.
Nightingale	Red list. <i>Declining summer visitor</i> First recorded on 14 th April 2020 three birds held territory on Black Heath. Birds were later arriving in 2021 the first bird heard was on 4 th May and 7 territories were found on Black Heath with three nests successfully fledging.
Black redstart	Red list. <i>Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant.</i> A female spent the day in a Black Heath garden on 3 rd April 2020
Redstart	Amber list. <i>Uncommon summer visitor.</i> Only one record, a male was seen on Bickers Heath on 6 th May 2021
Stonechat	<i>Fairly common resident and winter visitor.</i> A pair wintered on the Blyth marshes near Laurel Farm from 7 th December until 16 th January.
Wheatear	<i>Common passage migrant.</i> Single birds were recorded passing through on 29 th March, 25 th April and 2 nd May 2021
House sparrow	Red list. <i>Common but declining resident.</i> Recorded in every week of the survey but in distinct small flocks of generally less than 25 birds, Back Road and Laurel Farm seeing the largest groups. A peak total of 83 birds were spread across 9 different gardens.
Dunnock	Amber list. <i>Very common resident.</i> Recorded in every week of the survey, evenly distributed throughout the village gardens.
Grey wagtail	Amber list. <i>Fairly common resident and winter visitor.</i> A pair regularly seen along the Blyth in both spring periods, have bred successfully in the past but no juveniles seen in the last two springs.
Pied wagtail	<i>Very common resident.</i> Recorded in every week of the survey.
Meadow pipit	Amber list. <i>Common resident and winter visitor.</i> No breeding territories were found in spring 2020 with the first birds recorded on 12 th October as a small number overwintered. One pair held territory on Blyth marshes in 2021.
Tree pipit	Red list. <i>Declining summer visitor and passage migrant.</i> Single birds were seen on 23 rd April and 8 th May 2020 on Black Heath and were the only sightings throughout the period.
Chaffinch	<i>Very common resident and winter visitor.</i> Recorded in every week of the survey, Grove Woods held 6 territories in 2020 and 5 in 2021. Several birds recorded in gardens suffering from <i>Fringilla papillomavirus</i> a virus that causes warty swellings on their legs and is caused by mites.
Brambling	<i>Fairly common winter visitor.</i> Nine birds were seen on Black Heath on 14 th October 2 remained until 1 st November. Other records were of single males, 5 th , 11 th October 2020 7 th , 24 th November and 19 th and 28 th March 2021

Bullfinch	Amber list. <i>Common but declining resident</i> . Regularly recorded throughout the period except for the early autumn 2020, most records came from the Merton Wood area. A maximum of four were recorded in a garden on 20 th January and 6 on Black Heath on 21 st February 2021.
Greenfinch	Red list. <i>Very common but declining resident and passage migrant</i> . Recorded throughout the survey period but in very low numbers. Singing males were heard in Back Road and Merton Wood.
Linnet	Red list. <i>Common summer visitor, over winters in small numbers</i> Birds held breeding territories on Blackheath, birds were recorded throughout the survey period except for a 6 week period between the beginning of October and mid-November. A winter flock frequented the arable fields near Low Farm
Lesser Redpoll	Red list. <i>Declining winter visitor</i> . Birds were recorded in October and November 2020. A flock of 13 birds were present on Black Heath on 14 th October and 40 flew over Back Road on 21 st October. Singles were seen on 29 th January, 5 th and 27 th March and a male sang on Black Heath for two weeks in April 2021.
Crossbill	<i>Locally common resident and irruptive visitor</i> . All records came from Black Heath with 10 birds on 13 th July, a single on 22 nd October and 3 on 24 th November 2020
Goldfinch	<i>Very common resident</i> Recorded in every week of the survey and is now the commonest finch species encountered
Siskin	<i>Common winter visitor, very scarce breeder</i> . A few records in September, October, November with the largest flock totalling 20 birds on Black Heath but the majority of records were from March and early April likely being birds returning to their northern breeding grounds with the last birds being recorded on 19 th April 2021.
Yellowhammer	Red list. <i>Common but declining resident</i> . Recorded in every week of the survey, Bartholomew's Lane hedges proving to be the main breeding area. One female became a garden regular throughout February 2021.
Reed bunting	Amber list. <i>Common but declining resident</i> . Birds held breeding territories on Blyth marshes in both springs.



Sandmartin

Photo: Andrew Moon

First dates for migrants		
	2020	2021
Blackcap	02/04/2020	27/02/2021
Chiffchaff	04/03/2020	28/02/2021
Cuckoo	25/04/2020	16/05/2021
Garden warbler	19/04/2020	16/05/2021
House martin	14/04/2020	11/04/2021
Lesser whitethroat	22/04/2020	28/04/2021
Nightingale	14/04/2020	04/05/2021
Osprey		06/05/2021
Redstart		06/05/2021
Sand martin	05/04/2020	19/03/2021
Spotted flycatcher	15/05/2020	26/05/2021
Swallow	09/04/2020	05/04/2021
Swift	01/05/2020	03/05/2021
Turtle dove	23/05/2020	
Whitethroat	17/04/2020	28/04/2021
Willow warbler	09/04/2020	
Wheatear		30/03/2021

With some blackcaps and chiffchaffs overwintering its difficult to assess if early songsters are actually migrants.

Mammals

The majority of UK mammals are secretive, often nocturnal and therefore not so easily recorded as birds. No specific surveys were carried out except for the monitoring of one badger sett. However, between April 2020 and July 2021 a total of 22 species were seen with grey squirrel and muntjac the most frequently encountered both in gardens and in the wider countryside. Ironical that these are both introduced species and are having a major impact on our native wildlife. The grey squirrel hastened the demise of the red squirrel by carrying the parapox virus and out competing them for food. Muntjac have been responsible for reducing the understorey in our native woodland and as they can breed all year round often producing twins, it's thought the population doubles every 5 years. Hedgehogs were recorded from several gardens though records were much lower in 2021 than the previous year. Bats were recorded using electronic detectors on just a few occasions with 5 species found. Barbastelle bats have been recorded in previous years and so are likely to still be present. Unusually no stoats were recorded and only one record of their smaller relative the weasel. Strangely just three species of deer were recorded, roe, muntjac and Chinese water deer considering there are large numbers of fallow deer to the north and red deer to the south.

Grey squirrel	These largely unwelcome visitors were recorded in every week of the survey period both in gardens and around the village.
Bank vole	Occasionally recorded from several gardens
Field vole	Most frequently encountered as dead prey in barn owl boxes
Water vole	Although no survey was undertaken during the period covered there are small populations on the Blyth and the Bramfield water course.
Wood mouse	Regularly recorded in gardens; one built a winter nest in the same bird box every winter
Brown rat	Probably the most unwelcome visitor to gardens, most records occurred during the winter when the animals have left the arable fields seeking food.
Rabbit	Recorded in every week of the survey period, the numbers around the village are now much reduced due to the spread of the disease namely viral haemorrhagic disorder. Although regarded as a pest on arable land the loss of this species would soon change the appearance of our heaths and commons.
Hare	Most frequently seen during the spring when males are competing for females, animals were most frequently seen on the arable fields around Bartholomews Lane.
Common shrew	More often heard than seen as they emit audible twittering's as they forage in thick grass swards. Dead individuals were found on the paths around Grove Woods.
Mole	Seldom seen but evidence of their presence by way of molehills means they were easily recorded throughout the survey and are widespread around the village although possibly not always welcome in the gardens.

Hedgehog	Apart from three road casualties, all of the records came from gardens with animals found in 8 of the 16 gardens that regularly sent in records. However, there were far fewer recorded in 2021 with no apparent reason for the decline.
Serotine bat	Recorded at the eastern end of the village where there is known to be a colony, this species is not particularly common in Suffolk with less than 50 known colonies.
Noctule bat	The largest UK bat, this high flying tree dwelling species was recorded over Mill Common and Vicarage Grove on two occasions.
Common Pipistrelle	The most frequently seen and detected bat in the village with at least one known breeding colony.
Soprano pipistrelle	Recorded at a number of locations around the village using detectors, its call is at a higher frequency than the common pipistrelle.
Brown long eared bat	There is one known breeding colony in the village and has been recorded in the church in the past.
Fox	Recorded throughout the year, more often by its smell or footprints
Weasel	A difficult animal to see, one was seen to cross Low Road in 2020 and another Blyford Lane on 22 nd April 2021 and so it must be assumed there are more spread around the village
European polecat /polecat ferret	A animal showing features of polecat was seen 31 st July 2020 near Brook Farm It is still difficult to split between the species as ferrets are the ancestors of polecats and feral ferrets can show polecat features and can also interbreed with true polecats. A similar animal was seen in Hazel Lane in 2018.
American mink	Another introduced species, one animal was trapped on the Blyth as part of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's project to remove them from our waterways where they decimate the water vole populations.
Badger	There are at least two active setts around the village, one of which has produced three cubs in both springs.
Otter	There were several sightings of animals on the Blyth including a mother and cub. The Blyth Otter Group have trail cameras throughout the area monitoring the local population. The most unusual record was of an animal running along the footpath in Grove Woods early one April 2020 morning, some distance from the river.
Roe deer	Just one record of two individuals on Black Heath on 7 th June 2021.
Reeves muntjac	After the grey squirrel this is the most commonly encountered mammal both in gardens and the wider countryside. Recorded in every week of the survey
Chinese water deer	Another introduced species but its now thought there are more in UK than in its native China. Individuals were seen on occasion in the arable fields around Bartholomews Farm



Otter

Photo: Peter Boyden



Chinese water deer

Photo: Barry Wentworth



Hedgehog

Photo: Andrew Moon



Brown hare

Photo: Andrew Moon

Butterflies

A total of 28 species were recorded during the survey period. The most important species to the village must be the silver studded blue found on Black Heath and the emblem of the Wenhaston Commons Group. A new species for the village was recorded in 2021 namely the silver washed fritillary a butterfly that has been increasing its range in the county over the past 10 years with Reydon Wood being the closest regular site to see them.

Seven species of butterfly that occur in Suffolk are listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and four of these are found in Wenhaston, Silver studded blue, White admiral, Grayling and Small heath.

Small skipper	A few records around the village
Essex skipper	Recorded on Black Heath
Large skipper	Recorded on Black Heath
Clouded yellow	Very few were seen across the county in 2020. One was seen on Blackheath on 27 th July 2020
Brimstone	The earliest record was one seen on 21 st February 2021
Large white	First recorded on 12 th April 2020
Small white	Regularly recorded through the summers.
Green veined white	First recorded on 12 th April 2020
Orange tip	First recorded on 13 th April 2020
Green hairstreak	Recorded on Black Heath
Purple hairstreak	All the records have come from butterflies seen flying around oaks on Black Heath in July 2021.
Small copper	Regularly recorded on Black Heath.
Silver studded blue	<i>UK BAP species.</i> The most important butterfly species in the village. The insects on the north half of Black Heath were a result of a translocation back in 1986. The development of Martlesham Heath village would have destroyed a colony and so it was translocated to an area close to the Bramfield Road. Over the years the numbers of butterflies had declined and so in 2017 after several fires had threatened the remaining colony it was decided to undertake a second introduction on the south side of the heath. With permission from Natural England 10 male and 12 females were moved from Westleton Heath and released. In June 2020 a record 56 butterflies were recorded and they have spread from the original release site. The first butterflies were seen on

15th June 2021. Nationally this species has seen a 55% increase over the past ten years.

Brown argus	Recorded on Black Heath
Common blue	Commonly recorded in many of the gardens
Holly blue	First recorded on 11 th April 2020
Red admiral	Commonly recorded in many of the gardens
White admiral	<i>UK BAP species</i> . Two seen on Church Common on 23 rd June 2020. While this species appears to be stable in Suffolk nationally it has suffered a 61% decrease since 1976.
Painted lady	Following a good year in 2019 numbers in the county were significantly reduced. Only a few records in both summers
Small tortoiseshell	First recorded on 11 th April 2020
Peacock	First recorded on 12 th April 2020. A count of 37 were seen on a single buddleia bush on 16 th July 2020
Comma	First recorded on 12 th April 2020
Silver washed fritillary	The first record for the village was on 3 rd August 2021
Speckled wood	Recorded in Merton Wood
Grayling	<i>UK BAP species</i> . This species is struggling in Suffolk and has suffered a 71% decrease in the last 45 years. Single butterflies were seen on Black Heath on 13 th September 2020 and 1 st July 2021.
Gatekeeper	Common throughout their flight period with good numbers on the Bramfield Road verges.
Meadow brown	The most frequently recorded butterfly in both summers
Small heath	<i>UK BAP species</i> . Regarded as vulnerable in Suffolk this species has suffered a 46% decline since 1976. Regularly recorded on Black Heath
Ringlet	Commonly recorded in many of the gardens



Silver studded blues mating Photo: Alan Miller



Grayling on Black Heath Photo: Dan Doughty

Moths

Hummingbird hawk moths were recorded from 3 gardens and a couple of moth trapping sessions added a further 20 different species. The Suffolk Biological Information Service lists 102 species recorded for Wenhaston and so further recording will confirm the old records and hopefully increase the species total for the village.

Common emerald	Swallow prominent	Brimstone moth
Buff tip	Scalloped oak	Rosy footman
Common footman	Least carpet	Flounced rustic
Pale prominent	Buff ermine	Cinnabar
Peppered moth	Broken barred carpet	Broad bordered bee hawkmoth
Common footman	Mottled rustic	Humming bird hawk moth
Brown tail	Least carpet	
Ruby tiger	Willow beauty	

Dragonflies

Fewer dragonfly records were received than might be expected given the abundance of water bodies around the village. A total of 12 species were seen including a Norfolk hawker on Black Heath.

Large red damselfly
Azure damselfly
Common blue damselfly
Blue tailed damselfly
Migrant hawker
Southern hawker
Norfolk hawker
Emperor dragonfly
Four spotted chaser
Broad bodied chaser
Common darter
Ruddy darter



Broad bodied chaser

Photo: Peter Boyden



Norfolk hawker

Photo: Barry Wentworth

Other insects

Several people took an interest in recording the various bees and a total of 9 species were seen throughout the period.

- Buff tailed bumblebee
- Common Carder
- Red tailed bumble bee
- Honey bee
- Garden bumble bee
- White tailed bumble bee
- Tree bumble bee
- Forest cuckoo bee
- Early bumble bee

Other insects of note were an impressive lesser stag beetle, glow worm, cardinal beetle, 14 and 7 spot ladybirds, cock chafer or May bug, oak bush cricket, dark bush cricket, hornets and common wasps.



Lesser stag beetle Photo: Geraldine Lines



Dark bush cricket Photo: Roland Hammond

Reptiles and amphibians

All the expected Suffolk reptiles and amphibians with the exception of adder were recorded at some point during the survey period. The last adder recorded was seen in 2015. Frogs and toad sightings were very scarce, the rare great crested newt was recorded in three garden ponds and in the restored pond in Grove Woods and smooth newts are thriving in a number of garden ponds.

Common frog	Frogs were recorded in 7 garden ponds but with one exception all were single animals and spawn was only recorded in one pond.
Common toad	Only two gardens recorded this once common amphibian and there were no records of spawn being laid.
Great crested newt	Recorded from 3 garden ponds and from the newly restored pond at Grove Woods. Several were seen displaying to each other in a garden pond in February 2021.
Smooth newt	The commonest amphibian recorded in any numbers and seen in 7 garden ponds and the Grove Woods pond.
Common lizard	Although previously recorded on Black Heath there were no records during 2020/21
Slow worm	Individuals were recorded in 5 separate gardens.
Grass snake	Individuals were recorded in 4 gardens and an adult was seen in Vicarage Grove on 20 th May 2020.



Common toad

Photo: Andrew Moon



Slow worm

Photo: Andrew Moon

New Year's Day Bird Race 2021

As a distraction from all the problems caused by Covid a New Year's Day Bird Race was organised to see how many species of birds could be seen or heard in the village within the 24 hours of the 1st January 2021. The Challenge was keenly contested by 19 people. The weather could have been better, a very cold start and rain at lunchtime, then the dull afternoon reduced the day light hours a little. A predicted winning score was around 50 and a possible of 70. The best total was 53 and 73 species were seen during the day.

The winners were Myles and Kate Archibald, living at Marsh Cottage may have been a slight advantage with their location, although they didn't see the stonechats that were about 100 yards from their house.

Many had frustrations at missing birds that you would usually see when walking around the parish, for instance only Jo Small saw a grey heron. Wildfowl particularly duck were very few and only mallard, shelduck and wigeon were seen. Many miles were walked during the day with Jo Small measuring 12 miles followed by Sally and Nick Amery with ten.

New Year's Day total bird list		
Mute Swan	Common gull	Cettis warbler
Bean Goose	Herring gull	Goldcrest
Pink footed goose	Lesser black backed gull	Great tit
Greylag goose	Stock dove	Coal tit
Canada Goose	Wood pigeon	Blue tit
Egyptian goose	Stock dove	Long tailed tit
Shelduck	Collared dove	Bearded tit
Mallard	Barn owl	Treecreeper
Wigeon	Tawny owl	Magpie
Pheasant	Kingfisher	Jay
Little grebe	Great spotted woodpecker	Jackdaw
Grey heron	Green woodpecker	Rook
Little egret	Skylark	Carrion crow
Marsh harrier	Meadow pipit	Starling
Common buzzard	Pied wagtail	House sparrow
Sparrowhawk	Grey wagtail	Chaffinch
Kestrel	Wren	Linnet
Water rail	Duncock	Common redpoll
Coot	Stonechat	Goldfinch
Moorhen	Robin	Greenfinch
Lapwing	Song thrush	Bullfinch
Redshank	Mistle thrush	Reed bunting
Curlew	Redwing	Yellowhammer
Snipe	Fieldfare	
Black headed gull	Blackbird	

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