

Martlesham Wilds.

The February meeting of our local Blyth Valley and Southwold Wildlife group welcomed Michael Strand, from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, to talk about Martlesham Wilds. This is an exciting new reserve on the outskirts of Woodbridge, bordering Martlesham Creek and the River Deben. There was tremendous support from the community to raise the one million pounds needed to complete the purchase of the land, formally an organic farm which already had a wonderful variety of habitat. There is ancient woodland, unimproved pastures, mudflats, and saltmarsh. Although the rewilding will happen over time in a natural way, there are several initiatives to start the process. Both the restoration and creation of new ponds will provide essential fresh water across the site for a wide variety of wildlife. Ancient oaks and wild grasslands will provide plentiful seeds. Certain areas will be unobtrusively fenced, to allow grazing to take place, an essential component in diversifying the ground cover, and allowing messy scrub areas to develop. Shallow scrapes and meandering 'foot drains' have been excavated on the grazing marshes, providing an ideal habitat for migratory birds. Local community groups are involved in the baseline monitoring of the flora and fauna. There are already healthy groups of voles, badgers, otters, snakes, and lizards, and it is hoped that over the next few years, species such as the nightingale, turtle dove, skylark and yellowhammer will become more abundant.

We are fortunate to have such an exciting new venture nearby, and Michael's detailed knowledge and enthusiasm left us wanting to visit the Wilds, and enjoy the transformation of this beautiful reserve over the years to come.

Please note that our next meeting is at **Wenhaston Village Hall**, IP19 9EQ, on Thursday March 14th at 7.30pm, when Rupert Mansfield will talk about the Lowestoft Kittiwake Project. Admission is £4, to include refreshments, under 25's free. All are welcome.

Penny Mansfield

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