

The World Land Trust.

The January meeting of the Blyth Valley and Southwold branch of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust welcomed Dan Bradbury, from the World Land Trust (WLT). You may have noticed their office in Halesworth, but their work crosses the globe. Founded in 1989, its aim is to protect land threatened by loss of habitat, by buying areas vulnerable to destruction, 'real acres in real places'. What made the Trust different then, and does to this day, is that they don't organise the conservation themselves as outsiders, but empower the local people to do so. The work started in Belize, Central America, where loss of tropical forest was becoming rampant. Partner organisations were set up, and the 'Buy an Acre' scheme proved so successful that it is still in use today. The success of that first operation led to others across the world. Habitat loss takes many forms, from logging, cattle ranching and agriculture, to mining and illegal poaching. Climate change is another major factor. Managing and protecting the growing reserves and wildlife corridors requires considerable resources, and the Trust raises funds, both here and in those countries, through individual and business donors, to train and employ local Rangers. The Rangers engage with the neighbouring communities, working with schools and villages, involving them in the process. The aim is for the reserves to become self-sufficient, both in growing their own regeneration plants, and by creating jobs, such as eco-tourism, for local people. The Trust also works towards carbon balancing, by encouraging businesses to offset their carbon emissions in a meaningful way.

Dan spoke with energy and dedication, and we all came away with a deep appreciation of the far-reaching conservation work of the WLT.

Our next meeting is on Thursday, February 8th, at 7.30pm, in the Southwold Arts Centre, IP 18 6JP. Michael Strand will be talking about the Martlesham Wilds Nature Reserve. Admission is £4, inc. refreshments. Under 25's free. All are welcome.

Penny Mansfield.

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