

Yare Valley Society

Enhancing the Valley
for Wildlife and Informal Recreation

Newsletter 121 May 2024



Two important events feature in the May Ecological Calendar, both centred on the coming weekend. Eaton Parish is holding its Eco Fair, and Norfolk Wildlife Trust opens a new nature reserve in Norwich on the Wensum River Corridor.

A recurring concern in the Newsletter is the wear and tear that our green spaces are now receiving and the impact it seems to be having on our wildlife. The new nature reserve, which the NWT will manage to give a balance between the needs of wildlife and public access, and the completion of the McCarthy Stone landscape area should help to ease the pressure on Norwich green space.

Elsewhere you can read of the progress that is being made to create wildflower meadows at UEA and Strawberry Field, and to create tiny forests by the Miyawaki method in Bowthorpe Southern Park.

Eaton Parish Eco Fair Saturday 11th May

Following the success of previous Eco Fairs, St Andrew's Eaton hosts again an Eco Fair:

St Andrew's Eaton

Eco Fair 2024

11th May, 10am-2pm

Come and be inspired, informed and
equipped to live more sustainably!

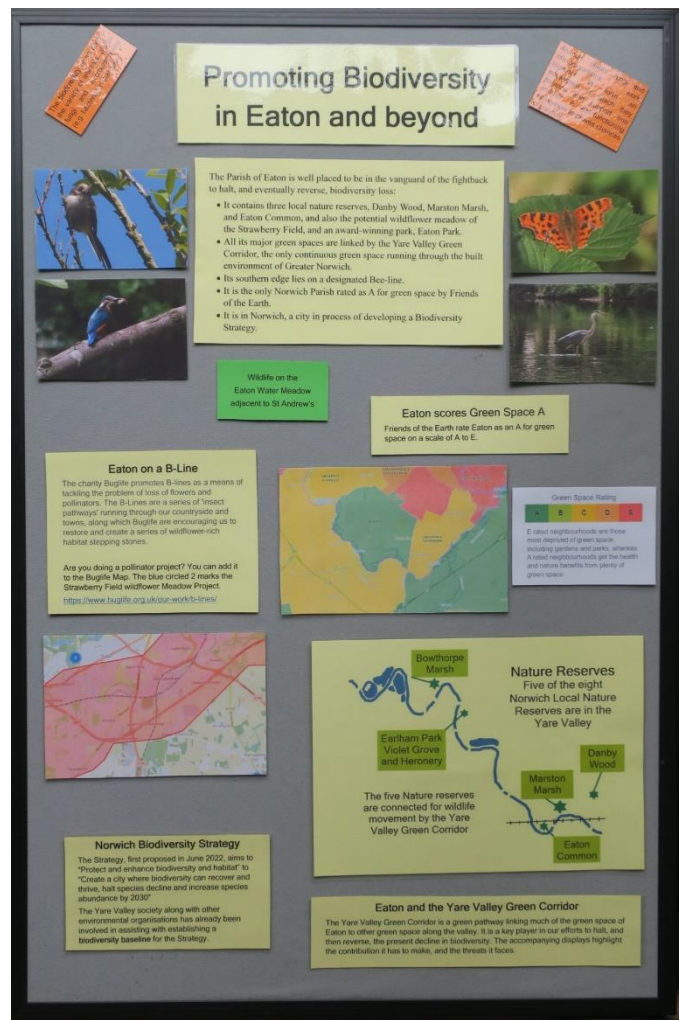


The day will begin with an early morning birdwatching walk with Phil Atkinson along the River Yare – meet in Waitrose Car Park at 7.00 am. The fair itself will be opened at 10.00 am by Rachel Sowerby, the Bishop of Norwich’s Environmental Research Officer and will be open until 2.00 pm. The day will end with an evening talk hosted by the Eaton Village Residents’ Association. Helen Baczkowska, Senior Manager Nature Recovery at Norfolk Wildlife Trust, will be speaking on ‘Bringing back Norfolk’s wildlife – what is happening and how you can help?’ Doors open at 6.30 pm for a 7.00 pm start.

More details are [here](#).

Part of the Yare Valley Society display at the Fair explains why Eaton is well placed to be in the vanguard of the fightback to halt, and eventually reverse, biodiversity loss.

Come along and support us and other environmentally friendly organisations at the Fair.



A panel from the YVS Eco Fair display

Nature Boost for Norwich: Sweet Briar Marshes.



Worn and widened path at UEA

In recent years, and particularly since Covid, there has been a marked increase in public use of our green spaces, as evidenced by the increase in wear on the paths of the Valley, and the increase in the number of new paths. YVS is getting reports of a decline in wildlife in the Valley (e.g. disappearance of water voles) and the suspicion is that the wildlife of Norwich is becoming degraded as a consequence of greater human intrusion.

The good news is that some relief is on its way. The green space of Norwich is being extended with the addition of marshes that will be managed for a balance between wildlife and people. After much preparation, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT), is opening its new 36 hectare (90 acre) Norwich nature reserve, Sweet Briar Marshes.

The marshes will become open free to the public, and the NWT invites you to [free opening activities](#) on Sunday 12th May. You are invited also to [lunchtime and evening drop in walks](#) each day from Monday 13th to Friday 17th May. An added attraction is that NWT have [partnered with the Norfolk and Norwich Festival](#) to create ‘On Our Doorsteps’, part of a nationwide project exploring the relationship between urban communities and the green spaces around us. You can view the newly commissioned temporary artworks from Friday 10 May to Sunday 9 June.

Landscaping begins at last on McCarthy Stone green space.

The new residents currently moving in to properties of the McCarthy Stone phase 2 development on Bluebell Road could have expected to have the benefit of a landscaped Green Open Space along the whole length of the southwest edge of the McCarthy Stone site. The Green Open Space would have included meadowland, a pond, and groups of planted parkland trees. Paths would have passed through the green space to link the new estate with the Strawberry Field and to paths down to the river and the Yare Valley Walk. The plans are [here](#).

The creation of this landscaped Green Open Space is important. UK biodiversity is in serious decline and the green space is intended to compensate, in part, for the biodiversity loss resulting from the built part of the development. It is also important to meet the needs of a growing number of residents in close proximity to the Yare Valley. Pressure of use on the existing green space threatens to be unsustainable. Any additional green open space in the Yare Valley would help ease the pressure of public use on other parts of the Valley.

The Yare Valley Society became concerned when properties of phase 2 of the McCarthy Stone development began to be occupied without any significant work being done on the landscaping of the green space. In January of this year (2024) YVS submitted a detailed report with photographs to Norwich Planning Authority on the situation at that time.



Work begins.

The Authority acted swiftly. It took the matter up with the developers and a timescale emerged for when the work could be expected to be done. The developers were ‘hoping’ the works would be completed by the end of March, but this date passed without a significant start. The good news is that the work is now proceeding.



Gate to come!



Link with Strawberry Field - not a stile here surely?

The plans show a stile at the link to the Strawberry Field. YVS has pointed out that this is not appropriate for a landscaped area adjacent to a residential development designed for people of age 55+, and have asked for something more suitable be installed.

Another cause of concern has been the state of the river path works below the McCarthy Stone development. These too should have been completed by now, but the work had to be postponed because of adverse weather conditions. YVS are looking to see this work start again with improved weather and to see the damage done to the path earlier by the works to be made good and an uprooted seat restored.



Cast aside Yare Valley Society seat.



Here the work stopped.

The Society will closely monitor progress, both on the landscaping, and also on other environmental benefits that were promised when the development was approved.

Stories, pictures and news of activities for possible publication in the Newsletter and/or on the YVS website and Facebook are always welcome at yarevalleysociety@gmail.com.

Fast Forests in Bowthorpe Southern Park

Many have already seen the two fenced plantations that have recently appeared in Bowthorpe Southern Park. They have been installed by the Norwich Fringe Project using the Miyawaki planting method.



A Miyawaki plantation protected by a fence from grazing livestock.

Norwich Fringe Project is testing the effectiveness of the [Miyawaki method](#) for creating tiny forests in a small space within a relatively short time scale. The method was first developed by a Japanese botanist Dr Akira Miyawaki, and has been used recently to considerable effect in the Netherlands. It is particularly suited to the limited space in an urban environment. It is being trialled in a number of places elsewhere in the UK and Norfolk e.g. [North Norfolk](#).

The method involves echoing naturally occurring forests by planting four layers of plants: trees, sub-trees, shrubs and ground cover. The layers are densely planted in previously enriched soil. This has been found to result in a mini forest that matures much more rapidly than normal forest planting and has all the advantages, including carbon capture, associated with conventionally grown forest trees.

Yare Valley Meadow Makers hold first AGM.

The Friends of Strawberry Field and UEA meadows have changed their name to 'The Yare Valley Meadow Makers' to better describe and emphasize their practical 'in field' activities. Their new logo is on the right.

YVS members will recall that Matt Tomlinson gave a very well received talk about his vision for the meadows at the 2021 AGM. He founded the Friends group three years ago. The group has worked with the landowner of the Strawberry Field to make changes to the management of the field so as to better achieve the group's long-term aim



of creating a rich community wildflower meadow. Spurred on by successes in the Strawberry Field the group also became involved in assisting with the nearby hay meadow at UEA.

Now a fully-fledged organisation they held their first AGM in April, attended by YVS committee members. An update was given of the group's activities:

'Strawberry field: Yellow rattle seeds sown in the autumn of 2023, are now present on the top part of the field which is a great news and the first time after trying for 3 years. Possibly due to wet weather. Red Bartsia was also observed on the field last year. The meadow has now been cut annually and the arisings collected for two years in a row, so the soil should now see a reduction in nutrient levels and therefore grass vigour, opening up the sward to more diverse wildflowers....

UEA Broad Hay meadow: Yellow rattle plants (sown in 2023) in Broad hay meadow germinated well. Wild marjoram plug plants planted last year (grown from Strawberry field seed) are growing well. Still a bit too early in the year to observe growth from self-seeded plants which will be an indication of the species establishing well from last year.

Matt said that the main focus of 2024 will be to continue to establish Yellow Rattle and other wildflower species on UEA Broad Hay Meadow. Matt suggested that in autumn 2024 a mechanical scarification in combination with mattocks might be more suitable to create 50% bare earth needed on a larger scale. Need to discuss with UEA and NWT.

Green hay, enough for 40 square metre, was donated by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust from their local roadside nature reserve at Shotesham, a rich fragment of ancient agricultural land – containing rare plants such as Sulphur clover and laid on the UEA field. It is too early to observe if this has worked. Matt thanked UEA estates and Aaron Brown (NWT) for their help getting this done in a timely fashion as green hay needs to be spread on short grass on the same day.'



Yare Valley Meadow Makers. Matt is the seventh from the right

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Yare Valley Society

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