



Firstly, a big thanks to everyone, our committee members, Victoria Kate (who does our social posts) and everyone who has volunteered and given their time in whatever way - it's always very much appreciated !

We would also like to thank all the partners who have worked with us this year. Tom, Nadia and Prof. Iain Barr at UEA and all the UEA estates teams, they have gone out of their way to help us. The Yare Valley Society for their much-valued continuing support. UEA student Conservation and Wildlife Society, Louise Curtis (enabling officer) from Norwich City Council (for wildflower seed donations and grants) and Ella Warren-Cooke from Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

Last year's extreme drought proved difficult for the meadows we help with, the annual survey at UEA broad hay meadow didn't happen, nor did the UEA cut and collect. Seeds we sowed last autumn did germinate well but unfortunately they didn't survive the following harsh dry conditions. The seeds which didn't germinate from this sowing will hopefully germinate this year.

However, it was good to see the wild marjoram and wild carrot planted/sown over the last few years still growing and flowering during the drought. We will continue to try and establish these drought resistant plants on the meadows to build in more adaptation to the breakdown of our climate. This is also one of the main reasons for us planting trees on the UEA meadows. The Quadram institutes meadow is shaded by a tree belt on one side and due to this fared far better in the drought.

It's becoming ever more important to expand our green spaces and increase the biodiversity in them to be able to better cope with future climate shocks. Our groups work is helping to achieve this.

Summary of last year's achievements –

- The new sign/noticeboard went up at the top of UEA Broad Hay meadow, funded by a Love Norwich grant.
- We were delighted to receive a Norfolk Biodiversity award in the spaces for nature and wellbeing category. Big thanks to Jane Wilkinson (Norwich City Council biodiversity officer) for the nomination.
- We were in the local press twice last year, one article in Just Eaton and Cringleford and one in the EDP. A great recognition for everyone's hard work.
- Over 5kg of wildflower seeds were sown onto the UEA Broad hay meadow (close to the Sainsbury art centre), with the mattocks and our brilliant volunteers.
- Smaller mattock patches were used for wildflower seeds on Strawberry field – trying to get yellow rattle better established here.
- Small patches of wildflower seed were also sown onto the old donkey sanctuary (1st paddock next to Strawberry field) as a trial to see what might work here. Noted was the presence of around 25 Bee orchid rosettes at the top of this 1st paddock. The old donkey sanctuary is a 9 acre plot with a lot of potential for nature recovery and to connect the UEA Broad hay meadow with Strawberry field.
- We secured a donation of 165 native trees (Norwich city council and the woodland trust) for the UEA meadows and helped plant them. These included Wych elms to help boost the campus population of white letter hairstreak butterflies, eaten by their caterpillars. A lot of work behind the scenes went into making this happen, thanks to Tom, Nadia and Iain for their support. We will look to expand these scrub areas on the meadows where possible, helping to further increase campus biodiversity.
- The recent tree planting work parties was one of the first times all the three UEA focused groups coming together (UEA biodiversity heroes, UEA student conservation and wildlife society and us). There were as many as 25 volunteers in one of the work parties, impressive stuff!

- We helped Nadia's UEA Biodiversity Heroes to remove Ragwort on the UEA Meadows as needed, so the local farmer can cut and collect and use the hay.
- We now have closer links to Norfolk Wildlife trust; we wait to see if we can benefit/contribute to the new NatureCityNorwich programme.
- 2 small areas (10m²) on Henderson park were raked and seeded last autumn. The CEO of the trust contacted us to ask for help, not only with new meadows, but also with a biodiversity action plan and to get things going. This 26-acre public green space is between the biodiversity hotspots of Earham cemetery and Sweet Briar marsh, and we are keen, along with others, to encourage and provide support on this.
- The Quadram institute had large areas of their wildflower meadow (by the car park) disturbed by pipe and cable works. They have agreed with us to let this area naturalise and wildflower species reestablish from the seedbank and from local sources that naturally find their way there. This is great to see as all too often contractors routinely use imported rich topsoil and then seed over this with rye grass and effectively then the meadow is then lost.

Plans for 2026/7 -

- We may hire a scarifier again or enlist a contractor (get growing grant carried over). NWT have given us a list of contractors they use. If we don't have a drought again this year, we will have some idea how successful the scarifying in autumn 2024 was.
- Ragwort pulling will be back again at the UEA meadows joining with Nadia's group.
- Quadrat based floral diversity surveys at UEA (June).
- Walk through species counts at UEA Broad hay Meadow and Strawberry field (June), looking for new plants on the meadows.
- We will work with UEA to find a good solution to establish conservation grazing (lightly, with only a few horses and rotating them around the paddocks) on the old donkey sanctuary.

- We will keep contact with Henerson park and help get the ball rolling if possible.
- More mattock action in the autumn and sowing seeds again.