

# Wild Essex

# april nature news



# Wild Essex Diary

For more info or to book a place on any walk, please email me at <a href="mgibson1959@btinternet.com">imgibson1959@btinternet.com</a> or text 07503240387.

Or you may like to keep in touch via our lively Whatsapp group for lots of shared photos and info about exclusive events. Just contact me and I will add you to the group ©

#### **EVENTS FOR 2023**

#### MAY

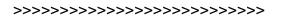
Thurs 11th 11.30 – 4pm £20 per person
WRABNESS HALF-DAY
EXPLORATION
Sample some of the delights of this village – East Grove, House for Essex, Sand Martins, EWT Nature Reserve and much more! Bring your lunch.
Hoping for less rain this year!



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Tue 23rd From 6pm
PINT OF SCIENCE FESTIVAL
COLCHESTER
Conundrums of Climate and
Conservation | Pint of Science
Chris will be speaking on the topic of
Parasitic Plants. Order your ticket
online. The event is also on Monday
22nd and Wednesday 24th.







'Crown Imperial' at Beth Chatto's Garden

#### Welcome....

#### .....to our newsletter for April.

As ever our weather gives us plenty to chat about! A wet March was pretty uncomfortable for us (with our continuing leaky roof), and our situation made me appreciate how awful it must be for birds in their nests if they haven't found a suitably dry place to set up home! April has lived up to its reputation and been showery - the sunny spells have been most welcome, but not so the cold winds. Good to see Swallows and House Martins have returned to The Shipyard, there are good things about living in a roofspace!

Looking ahead to next month, we would like to mention NO MOW MAY. See Plantlife charity for more information <u>Take part in No Mow May - Plantlife</u>, as they say.... 'Free the wildflowers in your lawn so they can grow wild and provide a feast for pollinators, tackle pollution, reduce urban heat extremes, and lock away atmospheric carbon below ground.' What's not to like?? Wivenhoe is embracing these principles with 'the Gardening for Nature project' including many verges, private gardens together with areas of grassland which will be allowed to grow free at least until the end of May, and hopefully beyond. Fantastic!!



#### **JUNE**

Saturday 3rd 9am – 11am Marvellous Moths! - Beth Chatto's Plants & Gardens

Come and explore the insect life in this wonderful garden and see our moth trap (set overnight) opened. £25 per person

Book directly with the garden.



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MANNINGTREE EARTH FESTIVAL
Sun 11th 12 noon – 6 pm
The Manningtree Earth Festival |
Entertain, Inspire, Educate, &
Empower

Lots of interest at this FREE festival in nearby Manningtree. We will be leading some 'Wildlife Wanderings' events. Come and join us, meet at the Water Zone.



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Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> HOCKLEY WOODS, NEAR SOUTHEND

Largest continuous block of ancient woodlands in East Anglia. Famous for Heath Fritillary Butterflies, at their peak at this time, plus a whole range of other insects and flowers. Half day £20 per person. Meet at lunchtime and spend the afternoon with us. Full details will be sent out nearer the time to those who make a booking. (For info we intend to travel by train).



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Monday 19<sup>th</sup> SUTTON AND UPPER HOLLESLEY HEATHS AND NIGHTJARS

Own transport and packed meal(s) required. Three options for the day....choose between...

#### **DAWN CHORUS!**

If you haven't been on a dawn chorus in person this year (or even if you have), why not tune into this relaxing programme on BBC iPlayer <u>BBC iPlayer - Dawn Chorus: The Sounds of Spring</u>

#### CITIZEN SCIENCE

Why not join in with the Essex Wildlife Trust's Bio Blitz? <u>Essex Wildlife Trust | Essex Wildlife Trust (essexwt.org.uk)</u>. Also, if you should be fortunate enough to find a toad, record it here <u>Toad Watch | Essex Wildlife Trust (essexwt.org.uk)</u>

Our own Citizen Science project – 'Firebugs' – turned up more of these little critters, along Dovercourt Seafront – all doing very nicely thank you very much!





#### **NATURE NOTES**

We are grateful to everyone who has taken the time to get in touch with photos and comments this month.

#### **FLOWERS**

Kicking off this time with some pictures sent from Spain (where it has been very dry) of flowers which are easily grown here in gardens, and good examples of 'drought-tolerant' plants.







Alyssum

And nearer to home....



Scurvy grass on the Isle of Wight



Purple Toothwort, East Bergholt

a) meet after lunch at Sutton Heath for an afternoon walk around the Suffolk Sandlings, maybe including Shingle Street. Looking for flowers, insects and heathland birds. Stay on for an evening listening for Nightjars £30 Or b): just come along for the afternoon £20 Or c): just for the evening £10.

Full details will be supplied to those who book with us.



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Saturday 24th 9am – 11am Midsummer Moths event (**PROVISIONAL**) See 3rd June above. Book directly with the garden.



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Wednesday 28th SUMMER SOCIAL AND STAG NIGHT, WIVENHOE KGV

To complement our 'Winter Trees' session, come and learn how to ID trees in summer, and see the wild plants growing on KGV in the unmown areas. As dusk falls, stay for Stag Beetles and Bats. Bring chairs and refreshments and we will make a night of it. (3)

From 8pm. £5 per person





Common Storksbill, Suffolk



Cowslips, Essex

#### **AMPHIBIANS**



Front legs argear

Masses of frogspawn in local pond

Amazing lifecycle of these animals

#### **BIRDS**





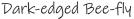
Lovely to see a 'host' of **House Sparrows** which regularly visit a garden in Colchester. Sadly these birds are in decline <u>House Sparrow Population Trends - The RSPB.</u> along with many other species <u>UK bird numbers continue to crash as government poised to break own targets | Birds | The Guardian</u>

But....was good to know that a linnet was heard singing in a bramble copse at Landguard Fort, whilst there were 'plenty of Buzzards and solitary Kites' about in other parts of Suffolk.

#### **INVERTEBRATES**

Love a story with a happy ending! This critter was found half dead in a bowl of water, but when fished out it came back to life and flew away  $\odot$ . This is a Dark-edged Bee-fly, wonderful to see, and which herald the spring and warmer weather (in theory!). They hover supping nectar from flowers using their proboscis. LH photo shows its 'dark-edgeness' very well. Look out too for the 'Dotted' version...these are rarer but sometimes can be found.







Dotted Bee-fly



Hairy Shieldbug



Gorse Shieldbug



Brassica aka Crucifer Shieldbug

Three of the many types of Shieldbug that you may find this summer

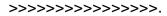
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#### WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

MISTLEY BIRDS AND MORE Enjoyable couple of hours looking out for birds along the estuary, and in sunshine! Good pub lunch too ©

#WildEssex – a walk along Mistley Walls | Chris Gibson Wildlife





#### **BLUEBELL WALK – WIVENHOE** WOODS

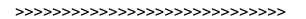
Invigorating walk in our local special place for bluebells. See our blog for a write up. #WildEssexWalks -Wivenhoe Wood: Bluebells and much more... | Chris Gibson Wildlife

And read this wonderfully evocative poem by Anne Boileau. https://1drv.ms/w/s!ArJb8tGtNUkTIM0 ES\_KhwqZfis35gQ?e=IMqaeY



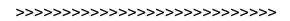
#### WHATSAPP GROUP GET-TOGETHER

The first of what we hope will be many social meet-ups for our Whatsapp group. This time in Beth Chattos. Fun despite the persistent rain!



#### TAI KS

Chris has a large repertoire of fully illustrated presentations, all suitable for giving to clubs, groups etc, in person or by zoom. Talks | Chris Gibson Wildlife Do get in touch if you would like more details.



#### TRANSITION TOWN

Find out more about what you can do to help the environment locally by contacting Diane at transwiv@gmail.com to receive her regular newsletter.



Stunning photo of **Juniper bugs**, showing how wonderfully they are camouflaged on their food plant...the shapes, the coloration, even their orientation in relation to the leaves. Amazing.

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#### SPRINGMEAD GARDENS, BRIGHTLINGSEA

We wanted to make special mention of this wonderful garden where we enjoyed a morning with other wildlife-lovers this month. The garden is free to enter, and open 9-6 during the summer months. Located at the junction of Spring Chase and Ladysmith Avenue. See here for our blog. Springmead Garden, Brightlingsea | Chris Gibson Wildlife

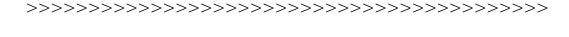
There is a 'Friends Of' scheme for only £5 per year. See their Facebook page @Springmead, Brightlingsea.



#### IN THE NEWS

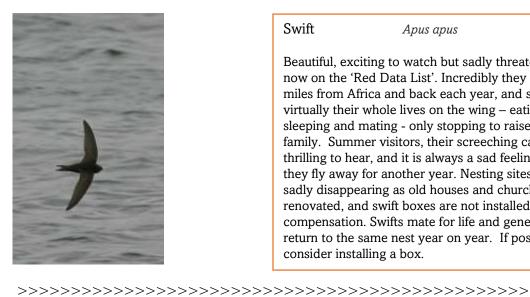
Fascinating and fun

Why giant prehistoric animals got smaller - BBC Future



#### **BIRD OF THE MONTH**

Summer must be approaching when we see the.....



#### Swift

Apus apus

Beautiful, exciting to watch but sadly threatened, now on the 'Red Data List'. Incredibly they fly 3400 miles from Africa and back each year, and spend virtually their whole lives on the wing – eating, sleeping and mating - only stopping to raise a family. Summer visitors, their screeching call is thrilling to hear, and it is always a sad feeling when they fly away for another year. Nesting sites are sadly disappearing as old houses and churches are renovated, and swift boxes are not installed in compensation. Swifts mate for life and generally return to the same nest year on year. If possible consider installing a box.

#### **BRINGING NATURE TO YOU**

We would be very happy to discuss any ideas you may have for a tailor-made nature experience. Perhaps advice on Rewilding your garden, a moth trapping evening or bespoke walk with a group of friends. General cost £5 per hour per person, usual minimum group of 3 or £15 per hour.

THIS MONTH: ADVISING ON WILDLIFE GARDENING IN BRIGHTLINGSEA: both in a private garden and at Springmead Gardens

Springmead Gardens - Visit Brightlingsea

BLUEBELL WALK: for a private group.

#### **NATURETREK WALKS**

Chris has been involved in leading holidays and day walks with this company for a number of years. You may be interested in this? (book directly with Naturetrek)

Wrabness 11 July <u>The Wild Side of Essex:</u> <u>Summer by the Stour Estuary (Day Trip) -</u> Naturetrek



Thanks to Jenny for her WRABNESS NATURE NEWS -

In Stour Wood, two darkish tits are fossicking about among the slim trunks of a coppiced Sweet Chestnut. But they're not Coal Tits – they are chunkier and have no white stripe down the back of their heads. Marsh Tits!

At the start of the sea-wall path, the air is heavy with the scent from a bank of lime-green Alexanders. Where the leaf-stalks meet the main stems are newly-opened pale-green sheaths, decorated with fine pink lines.







Marsh Tit (Owikimedia commons)

## AND FINALLY ... FEATHERS!!

These familiar but fascinating structures were brought to our close attention this month when we were sent this photo. The feathers had once belonged to a bird killed by a raptor and were discovered in a Herefordshire wood... but to which unfortunate bird?



©Dilys Hart

Thanks to the website <u>Featherbase</u> Chris was able to determine that they were from a <u>Mistle Thrush</u>. <u>Mistle Thrush</u> (<u>Turdus viscivorus</u>) - <u>Feathers on featherbase.info</u>

An interesting book in our collection: 'Feathers, The Evolution of a Natural Miracle' by Thor Hanson, is well worth checking out, for anyone with an interest in science or social history. As it sums up - 'Feathers are an evolutionary wonder: aerodynamic, insulating and beguiling'.

The following link may be of interest to feather-fans (no pun intended!) too. <u>Plucky idea:</u> the feather library providing a visual A to Z of India's birds | Birds | The Guardian

#### PLEASE KEEP SENDING US YOUR PHOTOS AND NATURE NOTES!

Special thanks this time to Val Appleyard, Anne Boileau, Jenny Coumbe, Nick Green, Wark Halladay, Dilys and Ian Hart, Sue Harvey, George McKissock, Mary McNeilly, Sue Minta, Paul Peak, Matthew Vinogradoff, Ginny Waters, Sue Ward and Sue Warren

# CONTACT US:-

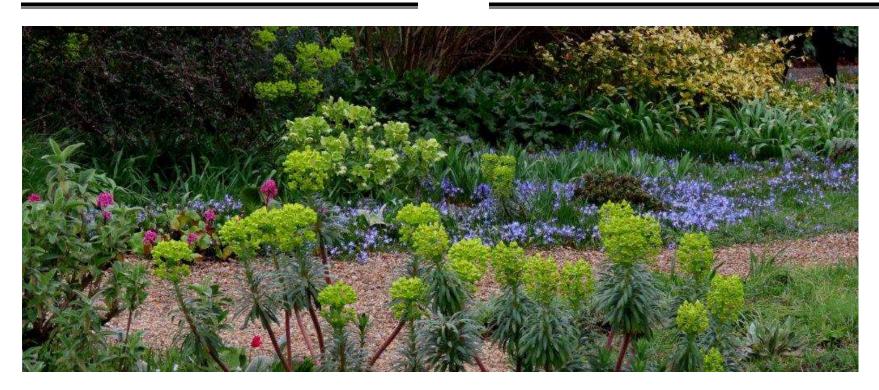
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Beth Chatto's Dry Garden