

# Courses, Events and Contact Information

## One-day courses in 2014

Thanks to Veolia funding, we have arranged several one-day courses for 2014. By raising individual levels of knowledge and expertise the plan is to increase awareness of what exists around us on Langdon. In turn, that should make it easier to spot and perhaps preserve features and creatures which might otherwise be destroyed inadvertently. Besides, it should be fun, and life-enriching.

**7<sup>th</sup> May: Identifying Bats**, and training in the proper use of bat detectors. Led by Phil Briggs of the Bat Conservation Trust. Based at the Dunton EWT Centre, 6.45 p.m. start, finishing 10 p.m., with a follow-up session on 16<sup>th</sup> May.

**18<sup>th</sup> May: Wildlife Gardening**, including green roofs. Led by John Little, who has a great deal of experience. Based at Hilldrop, on South Hill.

**24<sup>th</sup> May: Bird identification**, including identifying songs and territories. Led by Gareth Brookfield (RSPB) & Ruth Barnes. Based at Dunton EWT Centre, indoor then outdoors. Start 10 a.m. Packed lunch advised.

**26<sup>th</sup> July: Butterflies** of Langdon Hills. Led by Rod Cole. Based at Dry Street Church Hall but, weather-permitting, involving outdoor sessions a.m. & p.m. 10 a.m. start. Packed lunch needed, if staying for the whole day.

**2<sup>nd</sup> August: Bumble bees and Dragonflies**. Led by Professor Ted Benton. Based at Dry Street Church Hall but, weather-permitting, involving outdoor sessions a.m. & p.m. Packed lunch needed, if staying for whole day. Contact Sue Adams (01268 419103) or Rod Cole (01268 553149) to book for any of these.

## Chainsaw training

Five volunteers have now been trained up to certificate level in the use of chainsaws, and the necessary equipment has been purchased, thanks to the Veolia grant. The sixth volunteer is lined up for training. This will make much more expertise available for helping to manage some of our rich endowment of native woodland, so much of which is currently in need of careful treatment if the long-term biodiversity and beauty are to be maintained – and useful materials be nurtured at the same time.

## Get involved! Come and join in !

There is already a great deal going on in the community, and we wouldn't have the cheek to claim the credit for most of it. What is clear, however, is that people benefit from personal involvement in what is going on, gaining a stronger sense of identity with the area and a greater readiness to speak out against those forces which threaten it. We are aware of the following activities and groups. Others are welcome to contact us and seek a mention in future Newsletters:

- **Essex Wildlife Trust**, based at Dunton: volunteers for outdoor work parties, for the visitors' centre, and for the Haven museum; Friday knitting group. Details from 01268 419103
- **Friends of Langdon Hills Country Park**: wide range of activities, including seasonal entertainments. Details from 01268 542066
- **Basildon Borough Heritage Group**, based at the Green Centre, Wat Tyler Country Park, open a.m. Mondays & Wednesdays, & Saturdays 11 til 3. Local history items & exhibits welcome, and there is plenty to fascinate. Contact: [www.basildonheritage.org.uk](http://www.basildonheritage.org.uk)
- **Essex Field Club**, HQ at the Green Centre, with hands-on access to field studies materials plus wide-ranging expertise in natural sciences in the county. Contact [www.essexfieldclub.org.uk](http://www.essexfieldclub.org.uk) or phone 01375 371571
- **Basildon Natural History Society**: indoor talks, field trips, conservation coppicing at Marks Hill, moth-recording group. Contact 01268 553149, 01268 523882; website <http://www.bnhs.net>

For more information on Langdon Living Landscape please visit its web-page :

<http://www.bnhs.net/living-landscape>

(Hosted by Basildon Natural History Society)

Contact Sue Adams on 01268 419103, Rod Cole on 01268 553149 or Nick Stanley on 01268 542066 to see how YOU can get involved in the Langdon Living Landscape !!



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# Langdon Living Landscape NEWSLETTER

March 2014

Number 4



## So what's this Living Landscape?



The Langdon Living Landscape was set up in 2011 to protect and enhance the astonishing wild life richness of the area, on a landscape scale. It exists to promote the beauty of the Langdon ridge, from Vange Heights through to Dunton and Horndon, and campaign for imaginative management to ensure that we do not, collectively and inadvertently, destroy what we wish to enjoy. It assumes that the ridge will be needed forever, the more so given the population growth in the region. And it aims to encourage both residents and users of the ridge to become actively involved, in any of a whole variety of ways, thereby strengthening the community as a whole, not least by promoting spiritual and physical well-being. Where practicable, it seeks to promote sustainable enterprise, and support local business and industry.

## Countryfile calendar: another triumph for Langdon!



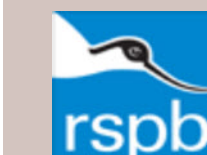
Many of you will be familiar with the superb photograph of bluebells on the front cover of the BBC Countryfile calendar for 2014. This photograph, The Dell, was taken in Coombe Wood by a frequent visitor to the country park, Bill Robinson, and it was chosen as the overall winner of the 2013 photographic competition – out of thousands of entries. It celebrates some of the outstanding beauty of Langdon – and follows hard on the heels of the adoption of one of Langdon's special wildflower meadows as Essex's Coronation Meadow, as championed by the Prince of Wales. Gradually the outside world is coming to appreciate what we have long known – that the Langdon Hills ridge is outstandingly beautiful, and in serious need of celebration and protection.

## Rarities on Langdon

3. Grizzled Skipper butterfly (*Pyrgus malvae*). This swift little butterfly used to be quite common across the whole county but it is now extinct in Essex, save only on a few of Langdon's long-established meadows - including some of the Dry Street Pastures. It has suffered a dramatic decline across England, with a 42% reduction in numbers in the decade up to 2004. The larval foodplants (agrimony, cinquefoil, low bramble) are common enough, but lightly grazed pasture is now pretty rare in Essex, while wholesale mowing for hay or parkland order destroys the larval stages.



Photo taken locally by Peter Furze





## Basildon Golf Course (Local Wildlife Site) Resuscitated

Following the failed attempt to allow the Basildon Golf Course to be submerged (all but the fairways) under mountains of building waste, we are delighted to report that this large piece of the Langdon Ridge has been under new management since the end of September. The MD of *Basildon Golf Club/Course Ltd.* has recruited highly experienced staff to help turn around the fortunes of the course and has welcomed the involvement of volunteers offering to help with the grand task. They have so far come from the ranks of Friends of Basildon Golf Course, Basildon Natural History Society, golf club members, and local residents.

Inadequately checked shrub and tree growth over the last few years has made maintenance of the golf course extra challenging. Tees and greens suffer from shading. Access to drainage ditches is impeded. The fairways are narrowed, and mowing equipment cannot reach fairway margins. Since the arrival of the new management everything has changed. Volunteers are helping with scrub clearance and tree management and the pond on top of the ridge and adjoining what used to be Vange Hall Farm has been exposed by the volunteers as part of the Langdon Living Landscape programme to restore or create seven ponds. Watch this space for further reports in future newsletters!



## Essex Wildlife Trust – Update on Veolia funded work with schools

Despite the chilly, damp weather local schools have been working hard with the schools outreach team improving their grounds for local wildlife. Donna Barton (EWT) recently spent the morning at St Anne Line infant school working with Reception and year 1 pupils building a Minibeast hotel. Despite the very muddy conditions all the children were eager to get going. Using donated pallets and logs with leaves from the school grounds, the children helped build ‘hotel rooms for Minibeasts’. Whilst discussing the needs of the Minibeasts, some of the children decided that they would build a little garden at the back of the hotel complete with swimming pool (old tub) and sun loungers (curved sticks)! This Minibeast hotel will provide shelter for a range of creatures from ladybirds and lacewings, to spiders, beetles and even frogs. The first resident moved in before we had even finished when one of the children found a worm and put it in one of the penthouse rooms. Other projects recently completed have included a Bioblitz wildlife survey with years 3 and 4 of Merrylands Primary school. At Whitmore Primary groups of children helped to create a woodland area complete with pathway for educational use, and as a quiet space to sit and enjoy their wildlife.



There are more projects in the planning stages at the moment so watch this space for details. Also, if you would like more details or information about building your own Minibeast hotel, do get in touch with us at Essex Wildlife Trust Langdon Visitor Centre.

## Barn Owl Boxes

During the course of the winter we have taken delivery of eight very sturdy barn owl boxes, five of which have so far been put into place, some in old buildings and others in alternative but secure locations. The other three are due to be fixed within the next week or so. We have aimed to cover most of the ridge in terms of potential territories – although there is no guarantee that owls will take up residence. It usually takes a year or two for these birds to locate and occupy a box, during which time other creatures might move in. Either way, we hope that we are providing the basis for rather more of these lovely birds to populate the ridge. They have always been with us, but such is modern agriculture that it is harder for them to find suitable nesting sites. We are very grateful to Barry Ballard, based at Wat Tyler Park, for constructing six of the boxes.



Barry and Owl Box

## Completion of the pond-clearing

During the course of January six ponds were dredged and cleaned-up, courtesy of the funding that was secured from Veolia. This paid for the excavator provided by Pearl's Land Drainage and very impressively operated by Ian Baker, one of the company's most skilled drivers. Right now, especially after such a wet winter, those ponds look rather muddy and bare, but as spring sets in they should become the basis for exciting and very varied wildlife once more, complete with a few rarities. All six ponds have very long histories (three of them as farmstead ponds), and have now been saved from gradual silting and obliteration. Two large trailer-loads of lorry tyres, as well as plenty of other rubbish, were removed from one pond. Congratulations are due to several volunteers for their hard work in support of the pond-renewal, and thanks to Basildon Council's Barleylands waste disposal staff, the EWT's Jonathan Wisbey, and Robert Colby for help in shifting and processing the rubbish and scrap.

*The Transformation of Pump Road Pond (South of Northlands Wood) March 2013 - January 2014*



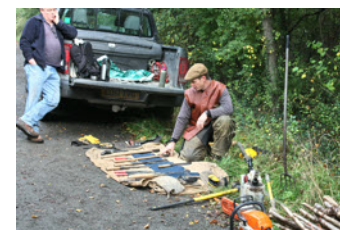
## Community Orchard at Dry Street

Work has commenced on clearing some of the trees and undergrowth at the site chosen for setting up the orchard. The aim is to get one section cleared and rid of tree roots, with a view to planting new stock, probably next winter. Thanks to the staff at Sargent's Orchard, run by the EWT, some young trees have already been arranged and set aside. Meanwhile, another part of the overgrown Dry Street site already has some large old fruit trees, very much in need of rescue and pruning. This is an exciting project. Let us know if you wish to get involved. The orchard which was set up at Holy Trinity Church last winter, with a couple of dozen local-variety apple trees as well as a few pears, has prospered during its first year. It all takes time!



## Reviving a traditional management process: hedgelaying

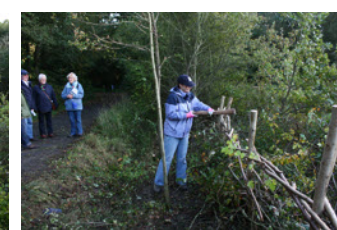
Thanks to some of the Veolia funding, we were able to arrange a one-day course in hedge-laying, directed by Jim Wallden, a very experienced operator. This was on a section of tall-grown hedge bordering Home Field, on the Langdon Nature Reserve, behind Lee Chapel South. A dozen or so folk thus learned the skills, which have since been applied to more of the same hedge, as well as to another hedge near Langdon Lake. The process involves cutting out a lot of the woody growth, prior to part-cutting and literally laying selected bushes into a stock-proof continuum, strengthened with regular stakes and topped with hazel “featherings”. The effect is attractive as well as very practical, ensuring the long-term survival of the hedge (which, left to itself, would eventually be both huge and patchy, as trees die out amid the competition). As the participants found, hedge-laying is a superb means of keeping fit, using a wide range of muscles. If you wish to get involved, in what is an autumn and winter activity, get in touch (see back page).



Jim shows a range of hand tools



Weaving in the pleachers



Levelling off the hedge



The finished product.