

## Previous Reports

### Saturday 15th & Sunday 16th December 2024 BNA Essex Branch "Tree" at Brightlingsea Christmas Tree Festival

Once again BNA Essex took part in the Brightlingsea Christmas Tree Festival, & as in previous years we did not use a conifer tree but used an alternative and promoted wildlife & the Branch. Some years we have used loppings & prunings, this year we re-purposed/reclaimed a used wooden pallet & shaped it into a tree & used wooden & paper mache ornaments. We put up the tree on 12th December at All Saints Church ready for the weekend festival on 15-16th December when it was open to the public.



### Saturday 5th October 2024 British Naturalists' Association Encaenia & Behind the Scenes at NHM, London

Another excellent occasion at the Natural History Museums with behind the scenes tours, NHM garden visit, brilliant lectures including by Neil Garrick Maidment on Seahorses and the BNA's robed Encaenia 2025. Neil was bestowed by our President Roger Tabor with a Fellowship Honoris Causa of the Association. Among the awards given and Grade Membership Recognitions, Steph Holt FBNA of the NHM was presented with the David Bellamy Award. BNA Chairman Steve Rutherford chaired the day. A number of BNA Essex members attended. President Roger Tabor gave a eulogy for Tony Soper HonFBNA, long term President of the BNA Young Nats, recipient of Peter Scott Memorial Medal & Hon Fellow.



### August Bank Holiday Monday 26th August 2024 Nature Spotting at the Lozenge Nature Area, for Families.

Many families with youngsters took part to identify wildflowers & minibeasts at the Lozenge Nature Area, Brightlingsea Essex It was open from 11.00am - 4.00pm. Across the day over 97 people took part. 76 individuals of youngsters and family members searched to wild plants and some invertebrates, and mapped where they found them. To enable the event to take place there were 17 volunteers, including a rota of 13 of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea manning the entrance gazebo. To give support and advice to the families on the species they found there were 4 Grade experts from the British Naturalists' Association.

The youngsters were given spotter sheets with colour pictures to aid identification, plus maps of the Lozenge so they could mark down here and what they found. There were also some "Mystery Species" to ID. All the youngsters received wildlife sticker book prizes.

The Lozenge is a little gem, only 5 acres in total, but has a great range of species to spot. The event is run as part of the Brightlingsea Town Show and jointly organised by the British Naturalists' Association & the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea.

We were visited during the day by Steve Archer, the Deputy of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea, who had opened the Town Show, and the Town Mayor of Brightlingsea Cllr John Carr. The reserve is owned & managed by Brightlingsea Town Council.



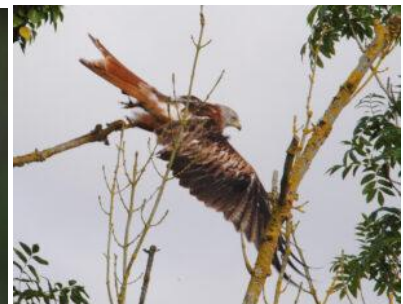
Picture [1] of Cinque Port Deputy & Lady Deputy in front of entrance gazebo, with (L) Martin Rapley FBNA & (R standing) Roger Tabor HonFBNA, & seated Peter Ball KoR of Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea. Pict [2] (L) Cinque Port Deputy & (R) Mayor Brightlingsea. Pict [3] British Naturalists' Association naturalists guiding in Lozenge, Sara Biggins ABNA & Martin Rapley FBNA. Pict [4] one of the families taking part, holding the ID spotting sheets & map to write down where they found each species. Pict 5 Two Cinque Port Liberty volunteers manning the gazebo, Peter Riley & Tony Spurling.

This year's Mystery Objects were leaves of Ginko biloba tree, & grey squirrel opened shells of hazel nuts (that question was which species opened these nuts, squirrel, wood mouse or dormouse?)

### Field Trip in South Suffolk

Early August 2024 field trip to Bradfield St George and Bradfield Woods near Bury St Edmunds. A meadow adjacent to the woods was full of Wild Carrot, Common Knapweed, Tufted Vetch, Field Scabious, some Agrimony, but the star a single Motherwort. This is sparsely dotted about that area of Suffolk. Watched a Red Kite on tree at field edge, which looked spectacular when it eventually took off.

Bradfield Woods are a significant ancient woodland & National Nature Reserve which has been under constant coppice management since at least its earliest record of 1252. The block called Front Fell was recut a couple of years ago, at its edge ditches flowering Water Mint was being fed on by Silver Washed Fritillary butterflies. Dogs Mercury, Enchanters Nightshade, Meadowsweet, St John's Wort, Agrimony and Wild Angelica fringed the block. Ash stools with their higher base gave hole retreats to small mammals in contrast to the Hazel. A monitoring scheme continues in the woods for Hazel Dormice.





## **Wivenhoe Wander with Dr Chris Gibson FBNA, Lower Lodge, Colne Local Nature Reserve, Sunday 21st July 2024**



This was a fabulous opportunity to join the co-author of the excellent new Pocket Guide book "British & Irish Wildflowers & Plants", Dr Chris Gibson on a plant hunt at Lower Lodge, Colne Local Nature Reserve, Wivenhoe, Essex. Chris is a knowledgeable & enthusiastic naturalist, & recipient of the David Bellamy Award of the British Naturalists' Association as a "naturalist of distinction".

Dr Chris Gibson FBNA

Starting at 10am, over 2 hours Chris & his partner Jude covered with a slow stroll just some 600 metres as there was so much to see on this grass and scrub-land site which is rich in wildflowers and insects.

Lower Lodge was farmland up until the 1980s, and it is managed by sections cut every 3 years, plus paths cut. It has great views over the Colne valley. (The site is continuous with Wivenhoe Woods & Ferry Marsh).

## **Wildlife Forey, Carver Barracks, RAF Debden Airfield, 6th July 2024**

This field meeting was led by Fiona Hutchings MBNA for the Essex Field Club, with a kind invitation to BNA Essex members to take part. It is a large tract of calcareous grassland a great habitat for many species. There is also an ancient wet woodland, heathland, planted copses, water bodies and scrub, so a varied site. Thanks to Fiona for the invitation.

## **BNA Nature Zoom Talk and AGM 22nd June 2024**

This was well attended, including by a number of BNA Essex members.

## **BNA Essex stand at Nature Restoration Event, Brightlingsea Library, 25th November 2023**

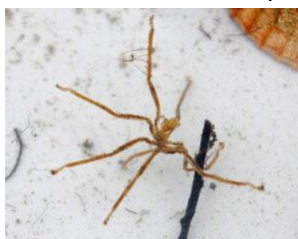
Tony Thorn FBNA manned the BNA Essex stand for the very busy event at Brightlingsea Library that had its theme of Nature Restoration. There were a number of stands by a range of organisations in the Library on a bright sunny day. The event was organised by Susie Jenkins with support of Brightlingsea's Nature Recovery Group aided by Brightlingsea Council, and Brightlingsea Nature Network. Our BNA Essex stand had the new BNA Essex leaflets as well as a display of marine wildlife found in Brightlingsea's waters, and information on BNA's Grade Recognition Scheme.



## **Marine Estuary Wildlife Display Exhibition at Harker's Yard, Brightlingsea, Essex 9th - 13th October 2023**

This display, first exhibited at Brightlingsea Museum, was subsequently shown in October 2023 at the Pioneer Sailing Trust's Harker's Yard for a Trust event, appropriately on the banks of Brightlingsea Creek. The display was by Roger Tabor HonFBNA, President of the BNA & Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports' Droit-gatherer for Brightlingsea, from his activity in both roles monitoring species in Brightlingsea Waters, especially Brightlingsea Creek. The Pioneer Trust had helped support some of the sampling work by the BNA (see pictures) by providing the use of "Trinity" (an ex-Trinity House launch) and access to its jetty area for which the Association is grateful. One picture shows one of the findings while aboard "Trinity", the Sea Spider Nymphon gracile.

(Further information on Roger's role as Droit-gatherer watching for Fishes Royal, can be found in the Winter 2023 issue of "Country-side", journal of the BNA, p28-31 on "Recent Porpoise Strandings at Brightlingsea Creek").



## Mapping Attractive Scarce Plant; 16<sup>th</sup> September 2023, All Saint's Churchyard, Brightlingsea, Essex



Roger Tabor with Lesser Calamint

A group of Branch members helped update the map of the current distribution of a nationally scarce species in All Saints churchyard, Brightlingsea. BNA's Roger Tabor HonFBNA first noticed & identified Lesser Calamint as being in the churchyard some years ago. Ken Adams FBNA gave his confirmation as County Recorder. It has an attractive flower and beautiful scent from its leaves. Its main distribution in the UK is in north Essex & south Suffolk. It used to exist more widely on roadsides, but now mainly can be found in churchyards, but unsympathetic management has dramatically reduced its abundance. But not in this churchyard, where the clergy & churchwardens collaborated with Roger & the "Holy Mowers" with management targeted to support the plant and it is thriving.

## August Bank Holiday Monday 28th August 2023 Nature Spotting at the Lozenge Nature Area, for Families.

Many families with youngsters took part to identify wildflowers & minibeasts at the Lozenge Nature Area, Brightlingsea Essex It was open from 11.30am - 4.00pm. Across the day over 85 people took part. 70 individuals of youngsters and family members searched to wild plants and some invertebrates, and mapped where they found them. To enable the event to take place there were 15 volunteers, including a rota of 11 of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea manning the entrance gazebo. To give support and advice to the families on the species they found there were 4 experts from the British Naturalists' Association.

The youngsters were given spotter sheets with colour pictures to aid identification, plus maps of the Lozenge so they could mark down here and what they found. There were also some "Mystery Species" to ID. All the youngsters received wildlife sticker book prizes.

The Lozenge is a little gem, only 5 acres in total, but has a great range of species to spot. The event is run as part of the Brightlingsea Town Show and jointly organised by the British Naturalists' Association & the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea.



## BNA Zoom Talk by Essex Naturalist Tricia Moxey FBNA 21 August 2023



An excellent BNA Zoom talk by the very well-known and popular Essex naturalist TRICIA MOXEY FBNA speaking about **"The alluring nature of some insect pollinated flowers"** It was on Monday 21st August and starting at 7.30pm.



(Picture of Tricia Moxey when she received her BNA Fellowship)



## Essex Members at BNA's Brandon Marsh Weekend national event 1st - 2nd July 2023



A brilliant weekend trip up to a fabulous reserve with a great range of habitats near Coventry. This national event gave members attending the excellent opportunity to meet other BNA members from across Britain, and catch up with old friends from other Branches. BNA Essex was represented among the activity leaders by national President & Essex member Roger Tabor HonFBNA and BNA Trustee & Essex member Dr Chris Gibson. Roger led the exploration of marshland plants in Brandon's wetland marshes, particularly around Goose Pool and the central area of the marshland. Chris led walks investigating wild flower meadow ecology & another on grass identification, he also was involved in moth ID.

BNA Vice President Dr June Chatfield MBE with BNA President Roger Tabor at Brandon Marsh



Roger Tabor talking about marshland plants



Dr Chris Gibson talking about wild flower meadow ecology

both photos taken at Brandon Marsh



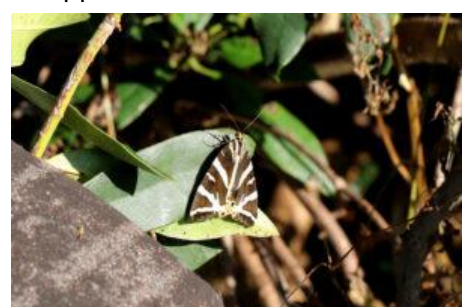
See the full report on the national BNA website at: <https://bna-naturalists.org>

## Churchyard Talk with Nature Activities, Bromfield, Essex, 24th June 2023

A talk on "Churchyard Natural History, Plants & Lichens" by Sue Brading was aided by Kenneth Biggins MBNA as technical naturalist advisor, who demonstrated some natural history activities & had a BNA Essex display. It was on Saturday 24 June at 2pm at St Mary with St Leonard Church, Broomfield, Essex CM1 7BD.



Ken had available with him some of the new BNA Essex trifold leaflets to support the event.





In the churchyard Ken had sampled some insects which he showed in sample pots, & was surprised & delighted to find a 6-Belted Clearwing Moth, and appropriately given the ecclesiastical location, among others a Bishop's Mitre Shieldbug. In his own wildlife garden in Chelmsford a few days later he was delighted to find another star, a Jersey Tiger Moth. A while ago these were just on the Channel Islands & a few bits of the south coast, but this year & certainly the last few they have been found as a scattering across Essex.

### Essex Members at BNA Encaenia at Natural History Museum, London, Saturday 22nd April 2023

The national Encaenia and objects handling day was a brilliant & colourful day at the Natural History Museum in London. It was the first BNA Encaenia in 2 years due to the Pandemic. New Fellows, Registered Members & Associates received Recognition in a robed event. Significantly for our BNA Essex branch the presentation of the Peter Scott Memorial Award was to BNA Essex member Professor Ted Benton HonFBNA of Essex University by President Roger Tabor HonFBNA. The Peter Scott Memorial Award is the highest award given by the BNA in the memory of past BNA VP Sir Peter Scott. Ted is an outstanding entomologist and philosopher ecologist and author of 3 Collins New Naturalist Series books. Ted gave a fascinating talk as did NHM fly authority Dr Erica McAlister, who was bestowed with an Honorary FBNA. The event was chaired by Steve Rutherford FBNA, the Association Chairman. It was also a behind the scenes at the NHM Exhibits Handling Day, plus tours of the Waterhouse Building & the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity. Amazing day in an amazing natural history venue.



Professor Ted Benton HonFBNA receiving Peter Scott Memorial Award from BNA President Roger Tabor

### BNA Essex Stand at Brightlingsea Library 18th March 2023

A very lively & enjoyable Nature Recovery event took place at Brightlingsea Library on 18th March 2023, featuring our British Naturalists' Association local branch stall with great display of our Branch & BNA activities. We were inside the Library in prime place just inside the doors, beside some other stalls. A Library Community Garden has been established in the the library courtyard, and activities with a hands on approach to soil organisms and plants took place. BNA locally is part of Brightlingsea's Nature Recovery Programme co-ordinated by Brightlingsea Town Council. That was on display for anyone to see & hear what's been going on. BNA's Roger Tabor & Tony Thorn were on the stand, we were joined for a while by Dr Chris Gibson, BNA Essex member & BNA trustee. Tony had his ongoing Brightlingsea survey on show. (BNA member & founder of Brightlingsea Nature Network, Suzie Jenkins was the overall event organiser). Lots of chat between the various stall holders and each other, and of course with the many visitors who thronged about the event. Interesting chats with our neighbouring stall on Essex coast birds and another stall about Hedgehog Rescue.



Mayor Mick Barry put up some bird boxes on the walls from a ladder of the adjoining building, watched by a crowd.

## **BNA Essex "Tree" in Brightlingsea Christmas Tree Festival, St James Church, Brightlingsea 9-11th December 2022.**

The usual venue was changed for 2022 as All Saints church is undergoing works. Instead the event was held in St James church in the High Street of Brightlingsea. Our "tree" in the Christmas Tree Festival was titled "Hol(l)y Tree" & viewed by many visitors to the event.

The BNA Essex Branch has taken part in the event for a number of years with natural history themes for our "trees". Not once have we used a conifer, but have created the trees with loppings, trimmings of shrubs/trees subsequently composted or re-used. Our theme this year as the name suggests was holly.

## **BNA Essex Stand at Essex Field Club Event, Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea, 3rd December 2022**

Our BNA Essex stand at Wat Tyler Country Park was manned by Ken Biggins MBNA & Roger Tabor HonFBNA. We were taking part again in the Essex Field Clubs' Annual Exhibition & Social not far from the Thames at Pitsea. Other BNA members looked in to have a chat. Its also a good opportunity to talk with other Essex naturalists.



BNA Essex members visiting BNA Essex stand

## **BNA Essex September Estuary Sea-life Boat Trip Friday 23rd September 2022**



We arrived & parked for 9.45am at Pioneer Sailing Trust, Harkers Yard, Brightlingsea Essex CO7 0AR and met up with the BNA event leader Roger Tabor & Felicity Lees of the Pioneer Sailing Trust. Our group included the Mayor & Mayoress of Brightlingsea, Cllr Mick & Jenny Barry & Gerry Johnson, Chairman of the Essex Birdwatching Society a BNA Registered Member.

Roger first introduced us to estuary wildlife and oysters on land and he went onto estuary mud bringing some up for us to look at species living on its surface and in it. He showed Ragworms Nereis (Hediste) diversicolor swimming. He showed us an individual Laver Spire Shell (alt. Mud Snail) Hydrobia (alt. Peringia) ulvae which was adult but remarkably small & they exist at high densities on the upper half of the intertidal zone of estuaries. He talked of habitat preferences of native & non-native oysters & their ecological role, management history & the current Restoration Initiative. Species were examined from under the water's surface from the jetty including Sea-squirts and algae.

We were provided with lifejackets by skipper Felicity before going aboard TRINITY a former Trinity House launch restored by the Pioneer Sailing Trust.



We went for a short estuary voyage in Brightlingsea Creek looking at Cindry island, saltmarsh with oyster pits & mudflat habitats. We sampled some species from the Creek.



Species were looked at in containers in seawater, & subsequently returned. Roger found & identified a rarely encountered species, the Nudibranch the Winged Thecacera, *Thecacera pennigera*. It has only been found on the whole East coast of the UK very few times. It is small but spectacular with white with orange & black spots, and various protrusions. (Picture Roger Tabor)



Roger found a wine red Ghost Shrimp *Caprella linearis* and the robust isopod *Idotea linearis*, plus Sea Spider *Nymphon gracile*.



Felicity is holding a Slipper Limpet chain, *Crepidula fornicata* with a big female at the lowest ranging to small male uppermost. Invasive species of oyster beds introduced accidentally to UK in late C19.

Species pictures: Roger Tabor.

(See also Pioneer Sailing Trust website <http://www.pioneerck18.org/> & the Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative (ENORI) <https://essexnativeoyster.com/> )

### **Future for Brightlingsea Wildlife Event, Springmead Gardens, Brightlingsea, Essex, 22nd September 2022**

Event organised by Brightlingsea Town Council's Nature Recovery Programme Group with British Naturalists' Association speakers' Dr Chris Gibson FBNA & Roger Tabor FBNAhc. The event took place in Springmead Gardens, it was opened by the Town Mayor Cllr Mick Barry, who was followed by the talks given by Chris & Roger. Topics covered included flood risk with global warming, places of key wildlife interest around Brightlingsea, marine rewilding with Native Oyster Restoration in Essex (ENORI), verge management with cutting heights and times, the success of mowing regime to support Lesser Calamint in the churchyard, Beth Chatto's Garden, wildlife gardening and what can help insects as we go forward. An audience of around 50 people took part in this open air event. As it became dark then pipistrelle bats were spotted, but the real focus became moth trapping under cover of a large gazebo led by Chris. Species attracted included the Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing Moth & Box Moth, the latter has only arrived in the UK relatively recently but built in numbers damaging box hedging.







## Nature Spotting at the Lozenge Nature Area, Brightlingsea, Essex, BH Monday 29th August 2022



Once again numbers of youngsters and their families took part in this annual event held by the BNA Essex Branch with the active and appreciated help of members of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea. We hold this as part of the Brightlingsea Town Show at the Lozenge Nature Area with the agreement of the Brightlingsea Town Council. The Mayor & Mayoress Cllr Mick & Jenny Barry & the Deputy of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea Mark Wilby were greeted at the Lozenge entrance by the British Naturalists' Association President Roger Tabor.

We have run this for a number of years for youngsters and their families that are both local and from further afield. They take part in finding the plant species & some insect and snail species that they have as 15 photos on the sheets given to them in the Lozenge. They mark on the map where they found them. It's a great way for youngsters (& mums, dads & grandparents!) to be able to begin to become familiar with identifying plants & insects.

All the youngsters who took part received a wildlife stickers & puzzle book on the day.

BNA Essex naturalists were on hand to give help when needed including Sara Biggins ABNA, Martin Rapley FBNA, & Roger Tabor HonFBNA .

## BNA Essex August Estuary Sea-life Boat Trip Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2022

All arrived & parked for 12 noon at Pioneer Sailing Trust, Harkers Yard, Brightlingsea Essex CO7 0AR where we met BNA's Roger Tabor who was leading the event, and Felicity Lees from the Pioneer Trust . Unfortunately we were a couple down who couldn't attend with covid. We first explored features relating to estuary wildlife on land, Roger went down and waded in the mud of the rising tide at the Yard, and brought up a sample of mud and talked about the anaerobic state just below the surface, and how it was caused, and how species overcame this. He showed the brown mud lining the tunnels of the ragworms due to their swimming pulling oxygenated water through the tunnels, in contrast to the black anaerobic mud through which they passed. He eased out a couple of Ragworms Nereis (Hediste) diversicolor and put them in a tray of seawater where their swimming with their paddles was clear to see. He then put them back where he had found them. He showed broken shells of American Hard Clams lying on the Yard's concrete, that had been dropped by Herring Gulls to smash open.





We were issued with lifejackets by our skipper Felicity, then went aboard TRINITY, a restored ex-Trinity House launch.

We went around a part of Cindry Islands, viewed the saltmarsh & oyster pits & mudflat habitats around the estuary. Felicity sampled some species from the Creek which were brought up and transferred into a large sorting tray. Roger talked about the history of oyster fishing and management at Brightlingsea, the role of the Creek layings, the oyster pits in the salt marsh. Roger's family have been oyster fishermen at Brightlingsea since the 17th century. He showed the difference between the Native Oyster *Ostrea edulis* & the introduced & invasive Pacific Oyster *Crassostrea edulis*, and also talked of the Portuguese Oyster & Bluepoint Oysters that had also been introduced earlier. He also showed us Peppery Furrow Shells *Scrobicularia plana* common in the estuary mud, along with the accidentally introduced and invasive Slipper Limpets *Crepidula fornicata*, a pest of Oyster beds. After a picnic lunch at the Yard we then went for a walk to the oyster pits in the saltmarsh, where Roger showed us how they had been made & used, and the important saltmarsh plants.

(See also Pioneer Sailing Trust website <http://www.pioneerck18.org/> & the Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative (ENORI) <https://essexnativeoyster.com/> )

### Essex BNA ZOOM talks 2022:

**John Ray, Essex Naturalist, Father of British Natural History, Pioneer Taxonomist:** Zoom talk Wednesday 16th March 2022 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm



Zoom talk about John Ray, the outstanding naturalist and taxonomist, born in Black Notley in 1627 where he also died in 1705, but he had an amazing life in between, and his achievements in the natural world influences us to this day. This free talk was given by Roger Tabor, BNA President



**Some Essex Ancient Woods:** Zoom talk Wednesday 16th February 2022 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm

This free talk was given by Roger Tabor, BNA President

Chalkney Wood, Essex, historic coppice stool pic. Roger Tabor

### BNA Essex "Tree" in Brightlingsea Christmas Tree Festival, All Saints Church, Brightlingsea.

**Saturday 11th & Sunday 12th December 2021.**

After last year's covid virtual event, it was good to again be putting our BNA Essex wildlife-themed "tree" into the All Saints Christmas Tree Festival at All Saints. It is a very successful annual event to which large numbers of people attend (howbeit this year with covid limitations). Many organisations take part with a themed "tree", so a good opportunity to promote the needs of wildlife.

We do not use a Christmas Tree conifer, but in past years we once constructed a tree from coastal wicker pots & shells, on another occasion created a glade from





willow prunings and another year re-created a traditional “Kissing Bough” of woven willow, holly, bay and mistletoe.

BNA Essex Christmas 2021 “tree” was titled “COP26 Ecology-tree” and constructed on the 10<sup>th</sup> December of re-used lopped branches, cones and evergreen trimmings by BNA Fellow Tony Thorn and President Roger Tabor. The tinsel was not plastic but made of cellulose and will be re-used. The decorations were nearly all re-used with plaster and wood figures. A couple of decorations were well over 70 years old, re-used each year! The decoration exception to re-use was the small quince fruit, which were subsequently naturally recycled in the garden. This year’s tree received a lot of positive feedback from those attending the event.

### **Looking at Seagrass at the Naze, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

Dr Tim Gardiner FBNA led this shore walk to introduce the group of 15 attending to seagrass spotting and draw attention to the importance of seagrass. Taking part were two new BNA Young Naturalist members who had won the older age group section of Nature Spotting at the Lozenge 2021, Vidhun and Piraveena Sutharsan took part with their mother.

We met at the Naze Tower, then Tim led us down to the shoreline where he took us to pools with seagrass growing. They are the only flowering plants to pollinate submerged in seawater.

A counter to global warming is carbon sequestration, and it is estimated that seagrass accounts for 10-15% of the oceans total carbon absorption even though only covering 0.2% of the ocean floor. Seagrass populations have been decimated, the UK has lost up to 92%, but Project Seagrass hopes to turn that around and Tim has been finding new areas on the Essex coast.

### **Fruit & Foliage Walk, Wivenhoe Park, University of Essex, Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021.**

Dr Chris Gibson FBNA led this walk of a dozen people including 3 youngsters with parents, one of whom was new BNA Young Naturalist member Darcey Williams. Chris kindly gave her a special welcome to the keen young prize-winner, along with her family.

Wivenhoe Park was immortalised in a well-known painting made in 1816 by the outstanding landscape painter, John Constable. Then owned by the Rebow family, its 200 acres hold over 2,800 trees, from veteran native oaks to exotic species trees. There are many oak species present, Chris drew particular attention to 2 recumbent Cork Oaks *Quercus suber*, that are believed to have been planted as seedlings brought back from Lisbon by General Francis Rebow, where he had been in the Peninsular War. Chris also showed a number of Rhododendron Leafhoppers *Graphocephala fennahi*, one of the very few insects to feed on Rhododendron sap, a USA native introduced to the UK in the 1930s. They have striking Cambridge blue & red markings.

### **Nature Spotting at the Lozenge Nature Area, for Families, Brightlingsea, Essex, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

Fortunately, once again numbers of youngsters and their families were able to take part in this annual event held by the BNA Essex Branch with the active and appreciated help of members of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea. We hold this as part of the Brightlingsea Town Show at the Lozenge Nature Area with the agreement of the Brightlingsea Town Council. Due to covid pandemic concerns the Town Show was a reduced affair with no indoor events, but as our BNA event was entirely in the open, we were able to go ahead.

We have run this for a number of years for youngsters and their families that are both local and from further afield. They take part in finding the plant species & some insect and snail species that they have as 15 photos on the sheets given to them in the Lozenge. They mark on the map where they found them. It’s a great way for youngsters (& mums, dads & grandparents!) to be able to begin to become familiar with identifying plants & insects.

BNA Essex naturalists were on hand to give help when needed including Sara Biggins ABNA, Tony Thorn FBNA, Martin Rapley FBNA, Roger Tabor HonFBNA and Susie Jenkins.



Across the day 63 individuals took part from 21 families, all spending between half to threequarters of an hour on the hunt for the different species on the 2 acre site. When they finished there were ‘mystery objects’, they each received an individual small stick without leaves, and were asked to identify which tree it came from just by touch

and colour from three possible choices. By this stage the youngsters were becoming budding naturalists, for virtually all of them correctly identified it as Hazel!

All the youngsters who took part were given prizes of wildlife sticker and puzzle books. The most successful youngsters in each age group won a number of natural history books each including field guides.

The age group winners of BNA Nature Spotting at the Lozenge for Families 2021 are: Youngest Age Group: Darcey Williams (age 4); Mid Age Group: William Porter (age 9); Older Age Group: Piraveena Sutharsan (age 11), Vidhun Sutharsan (age 13).



The wildlife field books they were given for their prizes were to encourage them to continue with their interest in the natural world. This is clearly working for the youngest prize-winner, Darcey Williams, the next morning after receiving her prizes coincided with a BNA Essex walk Darcey took part clutching her field guide prize beside her Mum. This was in Wivenhoe Park, of Essex University.

**Publications:** Congratulations to recent Fellow Tony Thorn for 3 new papers in the most recent 2020/2021 edition of Essex Naturalist (EFC), particularly from his mollusc survey work on Brightlingsea beach. Relating to his BNA Essex walk above, Dr Tim Gardiner FBNA published a paper in the same edition on the state of Dwarf Eelgrass *Zostera noltii* in the Stour and Orwell Estuaries, noting a 98% reduction in 2020 from 1973. The same publication had 2 papers by Hon Fellow Ted Benton, one on the bees in his garden over Lockdown, plus 2 each by BNA Fellows John Dobson and Tony Boniface.

### 2021 Wildlife Spotting in Covid Times

During the Covid Pandemic Lockdowns BNA Essex branch members continued to follow individual natural history activities in gardens & local exercise walks.

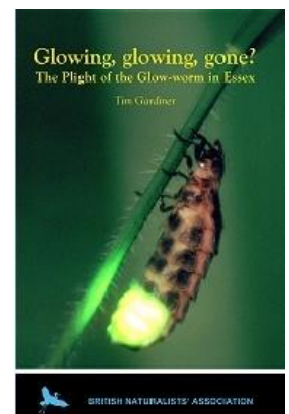
### BNA Essex Twitter: @essexbna

Our BNA Essex branch Twitter account remained active throughout the pandemic for members & others to view & respond (it has over 1,000 followers). Roger Tabor filmed hundreds of nesting Sand Martins flying around their sandy cliff holes at Jacques Bay, Wrabness, which was put on @essexbna on 4th July 2021. He saw & heard turtle doves at the Wrabness EWT reserve on the same visit, & looked in on Wrabness All Saints churchyard, which during the pandemic has benefitted from a further reduction in the mowing regime which has benefitted wildlife. He found masses of hedge bedstraw *Galium mollugo* which was Tweeted with pictures, which developed into a positive conversation on the site. Other tweets included one on Meadowsweet on 14th July & the same day a picture of a freshly emerged Box Tree Moth *Cydalima perspectalis*. This is on the increase having been only found in the UK just 14 years ago over the Thames in Kent. There are fears that it may cause significant damage to long established box topiary in historic gardens.

### BNA Essex Members Activities:

Dr Tim Gardiner FBNA remained active with publications (see [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)). In Jan 2021 appeared two papers on glow-worm abundance declines. One in relation to artificial lighting, the other included the note of awareness of glow-worm decline emerged from the earliest survey on them which was carried out by the BNA in the 1960s & 1970s: "BNA Glow-worm Survey, 1974, Country-side, 22; 266-271. [Tim's book on Essex glow-worms "Glowing, glowing, gone!" can be obtained from the 'Shop' section of the national part of this website)

Tim's other papers were on improving sea walls for declining bumblebees co-authored with Kimberly Fargeaud, and another on the conservation status of Dwarf Eelgrass *Zostera noltii*





BNA Essex's Dr Tom Cameron HonFBNA, Dr Alice Lown FBNA & Dr Jayne Heywood FBNA published 'European native oysters & associated species richness in the presence of non-native species in the southern North Sea complex' Conservation Science & Practice 3(5).



Dr Chris Gibson FBNA has kept his Essex wildlife blog ([www.chrisgibsonwildlife.co.uk](http://www.chrisgibsonwildlife.co.uk)) full of fascinating observations & great pictures keeping us all inspired. In entry for 25 July 2021 Chris visited the EWT Thameside Nature Discovery Park, the day before was on the wild side of Beth Chatto's Gardens in high summer. Before that are blogs on the wild side of Wivenhoe & Brightlingsea, bugs & botany, plus others.

Dr Chris Gibson FBNA

We are delighted that BNA Essex member Tony Thorn has been accepted by the BNA's Grade Recognition Board as a new Fellow of the Association. He has carried out a walkover biodiversity survey on Brightlingsea beach to the west of Bateman's Tower. He mainly looked at types and numbers of molluscs particularly cockles, & including the non-natives Pacific Oyster, Slipper Limpet & Northern Quahog (Hard Clam).



Roger Tabor HonFBNA had previously reported finding the Skeleton Shrimp *Caprella Linearis* on a mooring buoy in Brightlingsea Creek. On the 25th July 2021 he found a population of at least 500 Skeleton Shrimps on the base of a boat's submerged fender in a attached mixed community of species

Skeleton Shrimp *Caprella linearis*

### **BNA Essex Badger-Cams Spring 2021**

Roger Tabor continued to monitor badgers in the Spring of 2021 using a group of trail cameras, & was delighted to see the cubs at active play.

### **Tree Planting New Hedgerow on field edge near Church, Brightlingsea 1 May 2021**

Another hedge planting initiated by BNA Essex Branch member Suzie Jenkins with volunteers from Brightlingsea Nature Network & BNA Essex, keeping to Covid regulations Social Distancing. Planting was in field with co-operation of farmer, beside main road leading to All Saints' Church.

Congrats to Suzie for organising it (she is in the mauve/purple jacket). BNA president Roger still wearing his "lockdown beard".



### **BNA Essex's Annual Christmas "Tree" for Virtual Christmas Tree Festival at Brightlingsea December 2020**

Due to the covid pandemic & the government restrictions it was not possible to hold the annual Christmas Tree Festival at All Saints church, Brightlingsea, so we took part in their virtual one instead. We entered a 'tree' of dead willow branches with attached fallen large cones. It was decorated with traditional papier-mache baubles & a teasel-head 'Santa'. A 'natural tree'.



To see the tree, & others in this year's 2020 Virtual Festival see: [www.brightlingsea.info/xmas-trees/cone-ifer-tree/](http://www.brightlingsea.info/xmas-trees/cone-ifer-tree/)

**Wishing all BNA Essex members & friends, all BNA members & all naturalists everywhere a good Christmas & other Seasonal Festivities & Happy New Year despite the covid pandemic & restrictions.**

### **Tree Planting New Hedgerow by a Farm Lane November 2020**

This was initiated by BNA branch member Suzie Jenkins with volunteers from Brightlingsea Nature Network & BNA Essex following covid Lockdown rules. Only members of individual household 'bubbles' were allowed on site in the field & planting at any one time, following a rota of times co-ordinated by Suzie. Time gaps were between group visit slots so the site would be empty before the next group could be there. Congratulations to Suzie for managing the planting so well to ensure covid-safety yet keeping conservation working. (Pictures of Liz & Roger planting).



### **BNA Essex Badger-cams September-October 2020**

Roger Tabor has been monitoring the busy Autumn activities of badgers with a group of trail cameras. This has included badgers dragging their dug soil reversing back out of a set.

A number of other species to have been seen on camera around the set areas including hare (picture: hare sitting on side slope of sett entrance) muntjac deer, grey squirrels, wood mice & fox.



### **Adult Porpoise washed up on shore NE Essex, 24th August 2020**



Within yards location of the juvenile Porpoise that was washed up at the end of July last year, this time an adult was washed up dead at the end of August at Brightlingsea. BNA president Roger Tabor found it was an adult female 1m 60cm long with a girth of 0.75m. Her weight was found to be 26kg which is underweight for for a female adult porpoise of her length. The wound on her back with regular cut marks suggested possibly the injury was from a propeller of a small boat rather than grey seal attack. The findings were recorded with Seawatch Strandings/NHM/IOZ. The Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports was also notified.

Juliet Heppell of Brightlingsea Beach School had noted a pod of 4-5 porpoises in early mornings the area around the creek mouth before the stranding. Thanks to Terry Hamilton of Brightlingsea Parish Council for helping Roger in weighing the porpoise.





### Moth Trapping in Essex during Lockdown 2020



Fiona Hutchings MBNA, an Essex BNA Branch member, normally traps weekly in her garden using her 15W actinic Skinner trap. So this was an ideal activity to continue during the Covid lockdown, & started her 2020 notebook in March just ahead of lockdown, & March as usual was a "slow start" with a handful of individuals & species. However, the first night of April kicked up to 17 moths (8sp.) & one the dotted chestnut, an Essex red data book species. In her article in BNA's "British Naturalist" (Autumn-Winter 2020 issue) she noted that in April she was "assisted" by her teenager kitten who took to catching some moths in mid-air which did not help. Quaker sp. were followed by Hebrew characters, treble lines then pugs.

Her best night she noted was on 21st May with 116 moths (38sp.) including a spruce carpet. In June she was delighted with a lime hawkmoth, toadflax brocade (also an Essex red data book sp.) & a lobster moth. She even had unexpected intruders of 8 carrion beetles on one occasion. As she noted: "Whilst the implications of lockdown have been difficult & stressful for many, I thoroughly enjoyed being able to trap more frequently at home".

Fiona in her MBNA robes at the British Naturalists' Association's conference at Forest School in 2019.

### Tree Planting New Hedgerow at Brightlingsea, Essex, 6th March 2020

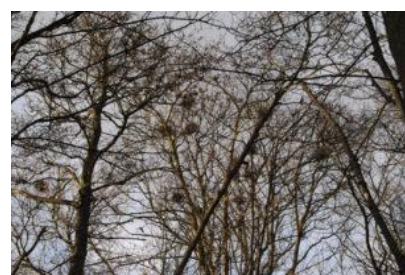


Suzie Jenkins, BNA member & organiser of Brightlingsea Nature Network asked BNA president Roger Tabor to help start the planting of a new hedgerow at Brightlingsea. Suzie & members of the Nature Network planted hundreds of young whips. The hedgerow will help shield an industrial building from the field & woodland view as well as enhance the natural history potential of the site.

Suzie Jenkins planting Roger Tabor tree planting



Roger then surveyed the field & adjacent small historic wood of Barkers Grove. The eastern boundary hedge of the field is an attractive existing feature. Although the woodland's dominant tree cover has largely yielded to sycamore, nonetheless the amount of bluebells suggests old origins as does the boundary banking & location alongside the historic farmhouse & pond. An active rookery stood out against the still bare branches in early March.





### **BNA Essex Coastal Birding Event at Brightlingsea, Essex, 22nd February 2020**



This was due to have been a boating trip from Brightlingsea Harbour like the successful one last year, but the day turned out to be too blustery & the water far too choppy for a comfortable trip. (Our thanks to Brightlingsea Harbour for allowing us to postpone it, but unfortunately since then the covid pandemic emerged & government restrictions has not yet allowed our return). So on the day our band of hardy naturalists went for a coastal walk & looked at the birdlife at the boating lake (brackish water) plus a walk along the very blowy seawall to view over the SSSI coastal grazing marsh led by

Roger Tabor & Gerry Johnson MBNA (chairman of Essex Birdwatching Society). Roger then showed us a dead Common Seal that had been recently washed up on the saltmarsh.



### **BNA Essex Display as part of Oral Natural Histories at Brightlingsea at Railway Tavern, Brightlingsea, Essex, 8 February 2020**

We were delighted to be asked to mount a display of Essex wildlife with an emphasis on that seen in & around Brightlingsea, held at the congenial atmosphere of the town's Railway Tavern. It was part of an Oral Natural Histories event organised by Suzie Jenkins, BNA member (& part of Cob-nuts, an art & wildlife group affiliated to BNA, & organiser of Brightlingsea Nature Network)) with Catherine Herbert. Catherine was recording memories of local wildlife in days past from locals as a component of her Masters degree & which will become available at Brightlingsea Museum. Our president Roger Tabor was present to discuss wildlife sightings & memories. Local wildlife photographer Ant Niles also put on a display of his excellent photographs as part of the event. It was a fascinating event which stimulated a great deal of discussion & reminiscences of memories of changing wildlife.



### **BNA Essex' Annual Christmas "Tree" at All Saints' Christmas Tree Festival. Brightlingsea, Essex, 14 - 15th December 2019**



Our theme for 2019 was a "Green Man" remembering BNA's past President David Bellamy who had recently died. David had been in the church in 2014 as part of the "Bellamy at Brightlingsea" weekend. A number of people kindly expressed their condolences, remembering meeting or seeing him at the church event or during that BNA natural history weekend or how watching him on TV started their interest in wildlife.





## **BNA Essex stand at Essex Field Club Exhibition event at Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea, Essex Sat 7th December 2019**

On Sat 7th Dec 2019 BNA Essex had a big L shaped stand at Wat Tyler Country Park's Green Centre as part of Essex Field Club's Exhibition & Social, which was a great day for meeting & talking with other naturalists from other Essex natural history/conservation organisations, & catching up with old friends/colleagues. Ken Biggins MBNA & our President Roger Tabor in BNA logo tops manned the stand, with some appreciated occasional support from Gerry Johnson MBNA, a branch member, but who was primarily there to man the Essex Birdwatching Society stand as its Chairman. That mix of people being in not only one organisation was an excellent common feature of the day showing the overlapping interests of Essex naturalists, & the support individuals bring to wildlife in the county. Other BNA Essex members who came to see the stand & whom it was great to see included Professor Ted Benton HonFBNA, Fiona Hutchings MBNA, Tony Boniface FBNA & John Dobson FBNA.

On the stand there were sections about BNA Essex fieldwork such as river sampling at Chelmsford & early Spring event at Alresford, plus there were displays on the Brightlingsea coastal study area of the Branch including seine net sampling, winter wader & wildfowl estuary boat trips, amphibians, reptiles found, & a particular emphasis on saltmarsh studies, a section showed the BNA's 2014 "Bellamy at Brightlingsea" weekend event in which nearly 20 specialist naturalists including our past President David Bellamy & our present President, led a number of events in different habitats around the area. There were also display panels on the BNA's role as a Naturalist Recognition body, & how naturalists can seek to gain recognition especially for their fieldwork as FBNA's (Fellows), MBNA's (Registered Members) & ABNA's (Associates).

Enjoyable event to take part in with opportunities to discuss matters of common interest with other naturalists, - plus excellent refreshments!



## **BNA Essex Displays & Oral Natural History Memories at Brightlingsea Museum, Brightlingsea, Essex 16th November 2019**

We were pleased to be asked to put on an exhibition of local wildlife at the new Brightlingsea Museum building to stimulate & support the recording of memories of local natural history. *(The event was held before the permanent exhibits moved in to Dove House, the new Museum building, which would have been officially opened in May 2020 but for the Covid pandemic which has delayed that until September, & although free entry, due to current health restrictions you will need to book a ticketed time slot).*

The event was organised by Suzie Jenkins, (BNA member, & part of Cobnuts which is a natural history & art group affiliated to BNA, & organiser of Brightlingsea Nature Network) together with Catherine Herbert. Catherine is gathering the recorded memories as a component towards her Masters degree, the finished material will be put on display at the museum. Margaret Stone, the Curator of the museum encouraged the event to take place.

The event was well attended & it did stimulate a lot of discussion about the wildlife of the area. The Town Mayor Graham Steady recorded his memories at the event. Also present in his chain of office was Peter Ball, the Deputy of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea, the historic chain of silver oysters & sprats, itself is a record of local marine wildlife from when these were regularly fished from the port. Our President Roger Tabor was present to discuss wildlife sightings & memories.

Also on display was a hand written report made many years ago of a study of the ecology of the saltmarsh bordering the Colne Estuary at Brightlingsea, including some pressed saltmarsh plants, made by Michael Woods when at Westminster College, Oxford.



### **Sowing & Planting New Wildflower Meadow by Lozenge Nature Area, Brightlingsea 2nd & 3rd November 2019**



Suzie Jenkins, BNA member & key member of the art & wildlife group Cob-nuts that are affiliated to BNA has instigated the Brightlingsea Nature Network, & with the backing of Brightlingsea Town Council organised a planting & sowing of native wildflowers into a new small meadow. On the 2nd November our President Roger Tabor put in the first plant, a small selfheal plant into the turf, aided by Suzie, Cllr Graham Steady the Mayor of Brightlingsea & others. A few native bluebells were put in the planted edge wood, but no seed was sown as the wind was far too strong! On the following day another planting group of keen volunteers were able to finish the job.

### **Tree Planting at Lozenge Nature Area as part of BIOLOGY WEEK 2019, Brightlingsea 11th October 2019**



Our President Roger Tabor gave a short introductory talk at the Lozenge about the wildlife importance of the coastal Brightlingsea area with its many layers of legal protection inherent in its SSSI, SPA, SAC, RAMSAR, MCZ & other designations & the value of the Lozenge, & the value of tree planting, & of the significance of the trees to be planted. As a Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology he said he was delighted that Brightlingsea Council who own & manage the Lozenge were co-operating with the BNA to draw attention for the need of appropriate locally sourced & locally grown trees for planting, within the RSB's Biology Week. Then he & the Mayor of

Brightlingsea Cllr Graham Steady planted a tree together. Then others present including Councillors, Terry Hamilton, the Council's Estates' Manager, Brightlingsea's vicar Rev Caroline Beckett, & BNA member Suzie Jenkins also took part in the plantings.



## Nature Spotting for Families at the Lozenge Nature Area, Brightlingsea, Essex 26th August 2019

Our annual event at the Lozenge, Brightlingsea, to encourage youngsters with their families to find a number of species of wild flowers, trees, insects & other species. They work from sheets with photographs of the species to find, then put them on the map of where they found them in the reserve. BNA Essex has been running this for many years in conjunction with the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea who kindly provide volunteers to man the event alongside BNA members. The Cinque Port Deputy in his chain of office kindly met many of the families.

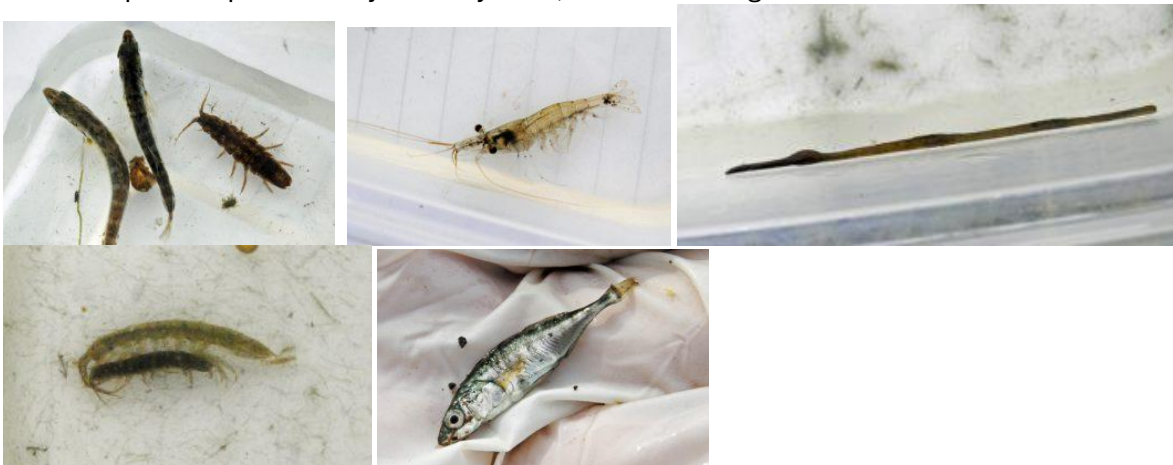


We are grateful for the use of the reserve to Brightlingsea Town Council. The event is part of the Brightlingsea Town Show which takes place each August Bank Holiday. In addition to age group prizes, this year every youngster taking part received a small prize on the day. Top spotter was Oliver Pentney, with Ezri Marsh winning the younger age group, with a number of runners up with scores not far behind the top prize-winners. Excellent naturalists of the future!



## BNA Essex Coastal Marine Event at Brightlingsea Boating Lake 10th August 2019

This event was led by Roger Tabor, BNA President. It started at 10am & we were delighted that Brightlingsea Beach School youngsters took part with their organiser Juliette Heppell. Branch members & local members of the public also took part despite the very blustery wind, - but it was bright at times!







Nets were used, & the youngsters made excellent use of their sample pots with magnifiers. Using lenses it was possible to determine the marine Isopods found were *Idotea baltica* from their telson shape. Roger pointed out that female guarding among the Isopods which were very abundant. 3-spined Sticklebacks & shrimps were also found. The Boating lake is brackish with an inlet from the estuary. Roger also showed the location of nermertine ribbon worms *Lineus ruber* he had found recently at the edge of the lake. He then showed the group some invasive Japanese Wireweed from the beach.



### Investigating Porpoise Death Brightlingsea Creek 21st July 2019

Our President Roger Tabor was called in to investigate the death of a Porpoise in Brightlingsea Creek. The porpoise was found by Brian Roberts washed up on a beach in the Creek. Roger identified it as a young calf which he measured at 0.79m long. There were a series of parallel deep cuts near the head that could have been from the propeller of a small boat. There was also a chunk out of the abdomen (possibly from a grey seal or scavengers). It appeared that it had been otherwise in good health. A live adult porpoise was subsequently spotted off the town jetty.



### Moth Trapping at Saffron Walden 19th July 2019



The 19th July was a busy day for BNA Essex with 3 events taking place across it. Many thanks to newly recognised MBNA Fiona Hutchings for kindly inviting other BNA Essex members to join her for her evening moth trapping at Bridge End Gardens on this the third Friday in July, & for the third Friday of each month in the season this year. This kindness is much appreciated.

### Official Opening of New Permanent Natural History Display at Chelmsford Museum, Essex 19th July 2019

The afternoon of 19th July 2019 saw the official opening by Chelmsford Museum Director Nick Wickenden & the mayor of the city of Chelmsford of the new galleries at the Museum's Oaklands Park site. Our BNA President Roger Tabor was one of those officially invited as he had been involved in the design of the new permanent Natural History display. This shows a range of animals & birds that could be encountered in a garden in Chelmsford, both by day & night (the lighting changes to feature nocturnal or daytime species). An electronic interactive selection board gives information within the display.





### **BNA ESSEX at Sandford Millstream 19th July 2019, Freshwater Wildlife**

This event was led Ken Biggins MBNA with support from our President Roger Tabor FBNAhc, & we were delighted to be joined by Twitter's own @PondManUK Neil Phillips who brought along his mobile photo-aqaria to take "underwater" pictures. It was a great pleasure to meet up with him & to see him in action. The millstream below Sandford Mill, near Chelmsford, is a great location to sample species at, but not the easiest of places to find! However well worth the trip, & hot day. The stars of the dipping were Miller's Thumbs, fish with broad heads otherwise known as bullheads. The name Miller's Thumb comes from how millers tested the flour to see if it had been ground fine enough by the stones by rubbingsome in the palm of one hand with the thumb of another. A lifetime of doing that broadens the end of the thumb, like the broad heads of the fish. The link with millers is that this species is commonly found in milltail streams & splash pools below watermills as due to the tumbling of the water at the wheel & gate it is higher in oxygen than upstream of the mill, oxygenated conditions the fish prefer. Neil found some small fish leaches.



### **Moth Trapping at Carver Barracks Airfield, Wimbish, Essex 5th July 2019**

Many thanks to newly recognised MBNA Fiona Hutchings for kindly inviting other BNA Essex members to join her for her evening moth trapping at Wimbish on the first Friday in July, & for the first Friday of each month in the season this year. Her kindness is much appreciated.





## **BNA ESSEX at National BNA Conference 11th May 2019, at Forest School, Snaresbrook**

BNA Essex was well represented at this year's National BNA Conference which had the brilliant theme of "Protecting Our Marine Wildlife". We welcome new members of the Branch Dr Tom Cameron who became recognised at the event as an Hon Fellow, & Alice Lown who became a Fellow, both of the University of Essex & both working in marine biology. We also welcome Fiona Hutchings to the Branch, she is also an active member of Essex Field Club. We congratulate existing member of the Branch Tricia Moxey who became recognised as a Fellow. Other BNA Essex members who can be seen in the pictures below are Tony Boniface FBNA examining leaves, Ken Biggins MBNA who led the pond dipping, Alan Purdy taking part in owl pellet analysis, Gerry Johnson MBNA who put on a display for the Essex Birdwatching Soc, Dr Chris Gibson FBNA (bottom right) who led the botanising in the Forest. Branch member Sara Biggins ABNA led the gowned procession in the afternoon.

Dr Tom Cameron HonFBNA can be seen giving one of the Marine lectures, in part discussing restorative work that he & Alice are involved in that may save our Native Oyster. Alice has mapped the distribution of the Native Oyster in the Colne, Blackwater, Roach & Crouch Essex Estuaries MCZ, so further congratulations, for shortly after the conference she became Dr Alice Lown. Alice & Tom (top left) are standing by Alice's display presentation alongside the display mounted by Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (based in Brightlingsea) who have assisted Tom & Alice's work. One picture shows Fiona receiving her certificate from our new BNA President, Roger Tabor HonFBNA (Roger is also our Branch President). Also taking part from Essex were a number of Essex Countryside & Wildlife Adult Education course members (based in Chelmsford), which is affiliated to the BNA, plus some WREN Conservation Group members who are active naturalists in the area around Forest School. Our thanks as a Branch to Forest School for all the help & support it gives BNA in holding its conferences there.



## **BNA Essex: Spring in Cockaynes Wood, Alresford, Essex**

Visit to the fantastic Cockaynes Wood led 13th April 2019 by Dr Chris Gibson. The location is a mosaic of ancient woodland, stream, lakes plus sandy areas as part was a former sand extraction site. An exposed mounded slope of sand descending from woodland has become colonised by the colonial solitary bee the Vernal Colletes (or Spring Mining Bee) *Colletes cunicularius*. This species in the UK was purely on the West coast (Wales to Cumbria) on old dunes, but here the former extraction site suits it perfectly. The wetter areas of the site provide willows whose flowers power the early flight period of the bee (March-May), our April visit was perfect timing to see the bees.





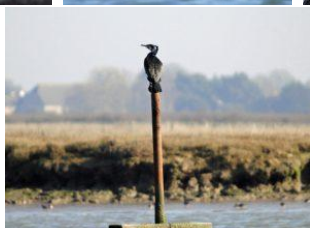
In the woodland by the stream Chris pointed out the remarkable flowered Moschatel, otherwise known as Town Hall Clock due to its flowers on each side of the flower head (plus one on top!)



### Coastal Birding Boat Trip, Over-wintering Wildfowl & Waders 23rd February 2019



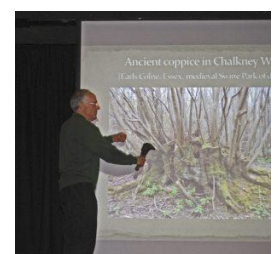
Fabulous boat trip lots of birds on the Essex Sunshine Coast at Brightlingsea in brilliant sunny weather, - for February, but everyone dressed properly! Combined event by BNA Essex with Essex Countryside & Wildlife course (based in Chelmsford & affiliated to the BNA). It was led by Gerry Johnson MBNA (above) & Roger Tabor HonFBNA (below). Gerry is a Branch member & a course member of EC&W, plus he is chairman of Essex Birdwatching Society, Roger is our President. The boat was skippered along Brightlingsea Creek by Nigel Taylor, who is a BNA Essex Branch member as well as a trustee of Brightlingsea's Harbour Commissioners (it was a Brightlingsea Harbour boat).



We had a full boat (numbers limited for this one!) & saw around 1,000 Brent geese, some hundreds of oystercatchers, a flock of grey plovers (can identify from black armpits in flight!), some 50 curlew, godwit, turnstone, avocets, redshank, lapwing, herring gull, shellduck, lesser black backed gull, a couple of cormorant, wigeon, little egret, teal, mallard, crow, overhead 3 buzzard, kestrel, rook, wood pigeon. Very enjoyable trip, rounded off by a cafe lunch at the "Coach House".

### Forest School Talk -"Forest!"

On Thursday 4th October 2018, Roger Tabor, BNA national chairman & BNA Essex president gave a talk at Forest School, Snaresbrook, in Epping Forest, to pupils & staff of the school plus some pupils from a nearby school titled "Forest!". He talked about the arrival of Royal Forests & forest law with William the Conqueror & the changes affecting



the original Essex Forest & its subsequent fragments, Writtle Forest, Hatfield Forest, Waltham Forest then Hainault Forest & particularly Epping Forest. He talked of coppicing & pollarding, & commoner's rights of pannage, grazing & lopwood, & the survival of Epping Forest.

### Nature Spotting for Families at the Lozenge Nature Area 2018



Bank Holiday Monday 27th August 2018: Once again numbers of youngsters & their families were able to take part in this annual event held by the BNA Essex Branch with the active help of members of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea, as part of the Brightlingsea Town Show at the Lozenge Nature Area with the agreement of the Brightlingsea Town Council.

We have run this for a number of years & youngsters & families that are both local & from further afield take part in finding the plant species & some insect species that they have as photos on the sheets given to them in the Lozenge, & then marking on the map where they found them. Its a great way for youngsters (& mums, dads & grandparents!) to be able to begin to become familiar with identifying plants & insects. (BNA naturalists gave help when needed). The most successful youngsters (in different age categories can win natural history prizes too!).

### Seine Netting Essex Coast



On 11th August 2018, BNA Essex Branch Marine Event was led by BNA's Roger Tabor with Dr Tom Cameron of Essex University Marine Dept. & Rob Dyer & Colm O'Laio of Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authorities. Members could see seine net sampling in action on the estuary foreshore at Brightlingsea Creek, & have the great opportunity for hands on identification of the gathered marine species. Young seabass *Dicentrarchus labrax* featured, bass spawn offshore, then the young fish move close inshore in estuaries for a couple of years or migrate back & forth until adult at 3 years. Members could see how well

armed even the young seabass are, spines raise in the 1st dorsal fin plus there are more spines on the lower edge of the gill covers. (There are very strict restrictions on catching seabass, but this was legal population sampling with Kent & Essex IFCA & Essex University. Once caught for their welfare they were put straight into an oxygenating tank, then examined & returned live straight back to the sea).

Sand Smelt *Atherina boyeri alt. presbyter* were also caught, which are small, slender, silver fish that have a silver stripe on their sides. They like inshore warm waters of southern Britain's estuaries & saltmarshes in the summer (but move offshore in the winter).

Moon Jellyfish *Aurelia aureta* with distinctive 4 'C' shaped gonads viewed from above, plus dangling oral arms armed with stinging cells for very small prey. Roger spotted the less recorded Crystal Jellyfish *Aequorea vitrina*.

Roger then sampled with a hand net the fabulous marine isopod *Idotea linearis* at the top of high tide over a sandy beach. Its a sublittoral species but has been noted as occasionally cast up & swimming near the water's edge over sand.



*Idotea linearis* at Brightlingsea

The BNA Essex Branch is grateful for the great support by Tom, Rob & Colm & the University of Essex & Kent & Essex IFCA.

### BNA AGM & Nature Day, Perivale Wood, Perivale

21st July 2018: Some BNA Essex members travelled from various parts of the county over to west London (mainly by Tube) to take part with other BNA members in the AGM & Nature Day at the fascinating ancient wood plus grassland habitat surrounded by suburbia. The wood is owned by the Selbourne Society who were excellent hosts & kindly provided food. BNA Essex Branch's Dr Chris Gibson led one of the walks (see pictures). Our branch President Roger Tabor as the then BNA Chairman, chaired the AGM meeting. There were also talks in the Selborne Society's excellent new straw constructed Bluebell Centre. The weather was glorious, as was much of the summer 2018.





## BNA Essex Branch visited by BNA South Yorkshire Branch 27-30th June 2018



This was a glorious series of summertime coastal events at Mersea Island & Brightlingsea by the Colne Estuary. The rich wildlife opportunities of this area attracted the BNA South Yorkshire Branch to visit & stay over in Essex in joint events with the BNA Essex Branch.



Kimberley Fereaud, Tim Gardiner & Roger Tabor Roger Tabor & group East Marsh Brightlingsea



On 27th June Roger Tabor joined our visitors at the Lozenge Nature Area at Brightlingsea, the on the following morning of 28th BNA Essex's Dr Tim Gardiner, of the Environment Agency with his colleague Kimberley Fargeaud, led our visitors along the seawalls & foldings searching for crickets & bees. In the afternoon Roger Tabor took the group out onto the East Marsh saltmarsh & oyster pits beside Brightlingsea Creek looking at saltmarsh plants & oysters. A Great Green Bush Cricket was found in the seawall foldings.

Great Green Bush Cricket from seawall



On 29th June the group went across the Colne to East Mersea shore & Cudmore Grove Country Park, finding Bee Wolves on the shore & in the cliffs, & using nets & bat detectors to locate crickets in the grasslands.



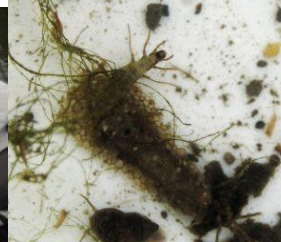
Bee Wolf on East Mersea shore



In the evening BNA Essex & BNA South Yorkshire jointly hosted with Friends of All Saints a Batwatch (& Creatures of the Night!) open event, at which over 60 people took part at the fantastic medieval All Saints Church, Brightlingsea. While there was still light Roger Tabor showed people the rare Lesser Calamint which the church has been protecting. Then he with BNA S Yorkshire chairman Steve Rutherford & BNA Essex's Dr Chris Gibson talked in the church about the local species of bats & moths (followed by refreshments from Friends of All Saints). Then as it was dark enough & the bats became active, a fantastic spectacle took place as bats streamed out wheeling about in & around the south porch so they could be both seen & heard by the numerous bat detectors. Mainly Soprano Pipistrelles, some Pipistrelles, some Brown Long-eared plus a single Noctule delighted everyone. By the base of the tower Chris ran a moth trap & then to cap it all a peregrine falcon circled the church & settled on the roof! A fantastic series of events enjoyed by all, with excellent natural history!

## Springfield Lock, Chelmsford, Invertebrate Sampling Chelmer Canal

28th April 2018 Ken Biggins led a 'pond-dipping' event of the Chelmer & Blackwater Canal below the Springfield Basin beside the historic Springfield Lock bridge from the towpath staging. We were joined by distinguished naturalist & BNA member Tricia Moxey. Although not far from the confluence with the R Chelmer it is a watercourse with little flow, but remarkable it had a good diversity of species



Pictures show caddis fly larva with case, damselfly nymph, water snails & identification .