

NEWSLETTER

No.1 Winter 2013



In this Newsletter : What is Langdon Living Landscape ? - upcoming events - how YOU can get involved

So what is meant by a Living Landscape?

The term "Living Landscape" refers to wildlife conservation across a whole landscape. In the case of the Langdon Living Landscape we're talking from the Hills' most westerly point at the Lower Dunton Road Wildlife Trust Visitors' Centre through to the easterly slopes down to Pitsea marshes.

However, it refers to a whole lot more than that. It involves supporting our own local community, and local economic activity. It can mean a readiness to look to one's own locality to produce food, goods and services, rather than automatically relying upon long-distance supply - and it implies operating on a sustainable basis, nurturing the landscape. Insofar as it is practicable, it involves working with nature, and taking pride in the landscape, whether in its detail or on the grander scale. It involves a love of place. It means valuing what is in the landscape, keeping it healthy, and productive - and that can mean thinking longer-term as well as more immediately.

It involves goodwill, volunteered effort, education, and enhancing what we have inherited, be it our own part of the community or the wildlife which dwells in our midst - for it has a right to be here, and its absence would diminish us.

Dr. Rod Cole



EWT's Langdon Visitors' Centre



An iconic view



Bluebell Woods



Willow Park in Winter



A working landscape

Dormouse survey

We have long suspected that dormice inhabit some of the local woodlands - but these are elusive animals, and we have no definite knowledge of them. A dormouse group starts its work this spring, fixing tubes in selected sections of woodland, under the direction of a trained and licensed expert. If you would like to get involved, contact Sue Adams at the Langdon EWT Centre, on 01268 419103.



Pond renewal

We have secured a substantial grant of money from Veolia, some of which is to be spent on restoring several old ponds which have gradually become overgrown and silted. The plan is to remove thick marginal vegetation late in this winter, prior to mechanical excavation during next winter (Nov. - Jan.), when amphibians will be hibernating and thus far less vulnerable. This has the approval of Natural England, as the best means of rejuvenating some of these important features of the natural landscape. If you wish to know more or get involved, contact us on 01268 419103 or 01268 553149.





From One Tree Hill



Across Martinhole Wood



Highland Cattle at One Tree Hill



Dry Street Pastures



Basildon Golf Course

Orchard revival

At one time there were many orchards on the Langdon ridge. Some were commercial, as at Wootten House on Dry Street, and on Bells Hill. Practically every farm had its own orchard, while cottage trees were a vital part of local supply. In their heyday, many of the plotland bungalows had fruit trees and small orchards, as did the grander houses. There was a time when fresh fruit could be purchased at the gate locally, but this is very rare these days. Some valuable local varieties are gradually being lost. Through the Living Landscape we are encouraging interest in growing new fruit trees and preserving some of the venerable old ones, propagating where necessary. Also, old orchards and trees provide an important wildlife habitat. We hope to stage an Apple Day in October. Meanwhile, a community orchard is being planted this March, and another is being considered.



Silver-washed Fritillaries are now back on Langdon Hills



These magnificent woodland butterflies have spread back into this area in the past two years, after more than four decades' absence. The restoration of woodland coppicing has made it possible for them to breed in local woods once again. They bring the number of butterfly species on Langdon to 31: rather more than any other part of the county.



Kestrel/Barn Owl boxes

Both kestrels and barn owls already exist in this area, but their position is somewhat precarious, and determined in part by the availability of suitable nesting places. By constructing and locating special boxes in suitably secure places, adjacent to sufficient hunting territory, we plan to boost their chances. If you wish to get involved, or have a suitably secure location, contact 01268 542066.



Hedge-laying course

Next winter we plan to lay on a course in hedge-laying, bringing in an experience trainer. Many of our hedges are centuries-old, and there was a time when they were laid on a fairly regular basis. This has not been practicable for a long time: the labour is too expensive, and the skills have virtually died out locally. Yet a group of skilled volunteers could easily be established, applying their efforts to chosen and appropriate hedges. More details will follow – but if you are keen to get involved, let us know.



Langdon Living Landscape is being driven by a number of partners : Essex Wildlife Trust, Thurrock Borough Council, Basildon Natural History Society, Essex Field Club, RSPB, Basildon Borough Council, Essex Badger Protection Group.

For more information about Langdon Living Landscape and about how YOU can get involved, please contact us on 01268 419103 or 01268 553149.