

Blaxhall Commons Ecological Assessment 2017

<i>Project no.</i>	<i>Report</i>	<i>Date</i>
52/16	Final	27/03/2016
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DISCLAIMER

This survey was carried and an assessment made of the site at a particular time. The evidence of the report can be used to draw conclusions as to the likely presence/absence of protected species and the potential impacts of future development works. This survey is a snapshot in time and further work may be necessary for instance if there is a delay or when applying for planning consent, a Natural England European Protected Species Licence, or the requirement for a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Every effort has been made to date to provide an accurate assessment of the current situation but no liability can be assumed for omissions or changes after the survey has taken place. In particular, no detailed surveys have been made for invasive or protected species, or specific botanical or faunal groups. Surveys were undertaken at a sub-optimal time of year for botanical groups.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants, the wholly owned company of Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT), was commissioned by The Blaxhall Commons & Open Spaces Charitable Trust to carry out ecological assessments of Registered Commons and other areas in Blaxhall, and for the preparation of management plans to allow the Charity to maintain and improve the land for the benefit of wildlife and local residents.

Surveys were carried out on 13th March 2017. The survey protocol conformed to Extended Phase 1 and the information was presented as brief individual site reports using a standardised reporting form developed by SWT Trading Ltd including a Phase 1 map, management map and photographs. The presence, or likely presence, of UK Priority habitats and species and protected species was recorded. Information was also provided under various broad taxonomic groups, including flora, avifauna, invertebrates, herpetofauna and mammals. In addition, the structural diversity each habitat and the connectivity of sites within the overall ecological network across the Borough was assessed. Recommendations were provided for further survey work and management plans for the different areas where relevant.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of the surveys was:

- To undertake an Extended Phase 1 habitat survey for all the identified sites
- To provide information and a description of the wildlife interest for each site;
- To map specified habitat types, using standard colour codes for each site including a breakdown of habitat types within it;
- To list species including protected species or evidence of their presence, Priority species and habitats, comment on biodiversity and appraise the nature conservation value;
- For those sites with previous survey data available, to take these findings into account;

- To provide an electronic photographic record of the sites;
- To provide a written report of results and recommendations for any necessary compliance or requirements for further survey;
- To provide management recommendations to benefit wildlife and local residents.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the overall aims of the project the following tasks were undertaken:

- Existing digital information for each site was collated using data provided by Suffolk Biological Records Centre and from 1:10,000 maps and aerial photographs.
- Each site was surveyed and a record made of its conservation value.
- Photographs were taken of relevant features within the sites, both geotagged and digital high quality images.
- Comments were made on habitats/species of wildlife interest.
- Management recommendations were provided as appropriate.
- The sites were mapped with Phase 1 colour codes using BosqMap software.

3.1 Criteria for site evaluation

At each site the following was recorded:

- **Location:** site name and grid reference;
- **Size:** the size was noted in hectares (ha);
- **Survey details:** date, surveyor, weather conditions;
- **Phase 1 map and photos;**
- **Status:** overall wildlife value;
- **Habitat type:** distinct, dominant habitat types were briefly detailed;
- **Subsidiary habitat:** this included additional habitats of particular note such as dead wood;
- **Site description:** a detailed account of the site;

- **Connectivity:** if a site linked to other green corridors, this was noted and described in detail where relevant. The juxtaposition of other proposed sites was also considered;
- **Structural diversity:** the differing vegetation structure (height) providing a variation in niche potential for a wide range of taxa was described for each site if relevant;
- **Protected species:** these were noted if recorded, or if previously recorded;
- **Protected species potential:** this was noted if the habitat was deemed suitable for named protected species;
- **Priority species:** these were noted if seen, or if previously recorded. NB: if the species is a 'protected species' and a 'priority species', then it was only listed under protected species;
- **Priority species potential:** this was noted if the habitat was deemed suitable for priority species;
- **Priority habitats:** these were noted if present;
- **Flora, avifauna, herpetofauna, mammals, invertebrates etc:** species seen or recorded were noted and habitat which offered potential for specific taxa was noted;
- **Comments and recommendations:** overall impressions of each site were noted and further management work was recommended where relevant;
- **References:** these were included when it was appropriate to reference other surveys.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and habitats: In 2012 the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' succeeded the UK BAP and 'Conserving Biodiversity – the UK Approach'. This was the result of a change in strategic thinking following the publication of the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD's) 'Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020' and its 20 'Aichi targets', at Nagoya, Japan in October 2010 and the launch of the new EU Biodiversity Strategy (EUBS) in May 2011. Much of the work previously carried out under the UK BAP is now focussed at a country level via the creation of biodiversity strategies. However, the UK BAP lists of priority species and habitats remain important and valuable reference sources. Notably, they have been used to help draw up statutory lists of priorities which in turn

inform the local plans which have been produced for those priority species and habitats occurring in Suffolk (Suffolk Local Biodiversity Action Plans). In addition, several other habitats and species that are important with a Suffolk context have been identified and termed 'Suffolk Character Plans'.

Protected species: species protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) and the Protection of Badgers Act (1992).

3.2 Biodiversity value

A broad approach has been taken to describing whether a site was of high, medium or low biodiversity value, which is in line with criteria used by SWT Trading Ltd in other county-wide surveys:

- 1-2 High conservation value: These sites include designated sites such as SSSIs and CWSs. It may also include undesignated sites where it is recommended that they should be assessed by the CWS Panel as to whether they meet the criteria for designation.

- 3-4 Medium conservation value: These are undesignated sites which have a known wildlife value and contribute to the overall ecological network.

- 5-6 Low conservation value: These sites have limited wildlife value. However, a change in future management or additional enhancement may result in an increase in ecological value and a change in site ranking.

Appendix 1. Catalogue of surveyed sites

Site Name

Mill Common

Site A – Packgate

Site B – The Nook

Site C – Cottages

Site D – Mill House

Site E – The Sheilings

Site F – Home Guard Hut & Allotments

Site G – School Hill

Stone Common

Workhouse Common

The Playing Field Pits

Key to phase 1 Map

Extended Phase 1 habitat survey - key to habitats

Contract no: 1

Site: Blaxhall Commons

BosqMap Limited
Website: www.bosqmap.co.uk

- | | |
|---|---|
|  | Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural |
|  | Scrub - dense/continuous |
|  | Other tall herb and fern - ruderal |
|  | Bracken - continuous |
|  | Poor semi-improved grassland |
|  | Cultivated/disturbed land - amenity grassland |
|  | Bare ground |
|  | Buildings |
|  | Broadleaved Parkland/scattered trees |
|  | Coniferous Parkland/scattered trees |
|  | Scrub - scattered |
|  | Introduced shrub |
|  | Intact hedge - species-poor |
|  | Fence |