

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT



Stag beetle - One of the UKs most spectacular looking insects, it is named because of the male’s large jaws that look like the antlers of a stag. They grow up to about 7cms making them one of the largest insects in the UK.



Black poplar - One of Britain’s most endangered native timber trees, the black poplar grows in boggy conditions near ditches and floodplains and can be spotted along the banks of the River Stour. They grow up to 30 meters and can be identified by their shiny, dark green, triangular leaves.



Ash - The Ash tree can grow up to 35m and they often grow together to form a domed canopy. Ash trees make the perfect habitat for a number of different species including bullfinches, woodpeckers and owls while the canopy provides the right conditions for wildflowers and insects. Unfortunately, Ash trees are threatened by ash dieback, a disease caused by a fungus.



Otter - A large, powerful mammal with grey-brown fur, a broad snout and pale underside, the otter can grow up to 80cms and can live between 5-10 years. Otters are listed as Near Threatened on the global International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species and are a Priority Species in the UK and Europe.



Dormouse - These tiny mice have a body between 6-9cms and soft, golden-brown fur, black eyes and a long feathery tail. They eat nuts, seeds and berries before the winter hibernation and in spring will find blossoming flowers of trees such as hawthorn and oak. The dormouse population is in sharp decline, with numbers estimated to have fallen by 52% since 1995.



Barn owl - A very distinctive bird, the barn owl has a heart shaped face, buff back and wings with a white chest (although females have a slightly spotted chest). They are nocturnal and mainly eat small mammals such as mice, voles and shrews. There are approximately 4,000 breeding pairs in the UK.



Swifts - A medium-sized bird well-known as a superb flier which can even sleep on the wing. They are easily identifiable with their scythe-like wings and short-forked tail. Swifts are migrating birds, spending around 3 months in the UK however, there has been a 57% decrease in their breeding numbers between 1995 and 2016.



Great crested newts - The largest of the UK's three native species of newt, grow up to 17cm in length. They can be identified by their dark brown or black colour, distinct ‘warty’ skin and a bright orange underside with irregular black blotches. In the spring, males develop an impressive jagged crest along their back. Unfortunately, this species is in decline due to habitat loss and deterioration.



Bluebells - Almost half the world’s bluebells are found in the UK, and nothing says spring like the sight of a carpet of bluebells. They grow in ancient and semi-natural woodlands and can be found growing in many nature reserves in the Stour Valley. Bluebell colonies take around 5-7 years to establish and can take several years to recover after being trampled

Where the wildflowers grow...

There are several open access County Wildlife Sites that are managed especially for their wildflowers. These include:

- **Harpers Hill Grassland, Nayland with Wissington:** a roadside verge with a very good range of flowering plants. A total of ninety-five species have been recorded here, including wild carrot, agrimony, bee orchids and common centaury. The site also supports a good range of invertebrates, particularly butterflies and moths, grasshoppers and ants. Find this site: off the A134, approximately 100 yards north of the Bear Street Junction. Grid reference: TL966344.
- **Leys Farm Lane and Buntry Lane, Kedington:** The green lanes support valuable remnants of unimproved grassland. The chalky nature of the boulder clay soils is characterised by a species-rich vegetation which includes a good range of wild flowers such as bird's-foot trefoil, cowslip, dwarf thistle, agrimony, and a thriving population of sulphur clover which is a nationally scarce species. Find this site: on a walk around the network of footpaths and green lanes, located to the north of the village. Grid reference: TL708476.
- **Long Melford Green, Long Melford:** A small damp flush on the south-eastern edge of this green supports a large population of southern marsh and early marsh orchids along with ragged robin and other wet grassland species. Find this site: on the southern green, next to the water conduit landmark. Grid reference: TL865464.

Left: Foxearth Meadows. Centre: Sudbury Water Meadows. Right: Melford Country Park.

Wonderful Woodlands....

Providing a variety of habitats for wildlife, the woodland areas within the Stour Valley are a must-see for those seeking immersion in nature. As well as the woodland sites highlighted on the map overleaf, the Woodland Trust (www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) and the Forestry Commission (www.forestryengland.uk) both provide information about visiting woodland that is open to the public, on both the Suffolk and Essex side of the Stour Valley.

NATURE IN THE STOUR VALLEY

The Stour Valley is considered to be a quintessential English landscape with rolling farmland, ancient woodland, meadows, hedgerows and meandering river. The valley is predominately used for arable farming but dotted throughout the Stour Valley are historic, picturesque towns and villages, many of which have church towers that can be seen across the landscape.

The open landscape provides a home for over 1500 plant species, 175 bird and almost 1000 moth species. The Stour Valley has a network of designated wildlife sites and protected areas, including several Sites of Special Scientific Interest, as well as the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, all of which support several wildlife initiatives such as the provision of nest boxes for barn owl and creation of habitat corridors for endangered species including the Dormouse.

At the heart of the valley is the River Stour which creates a natural border between Suffolk and Essex.

VISITING THE STOUR VALLEY

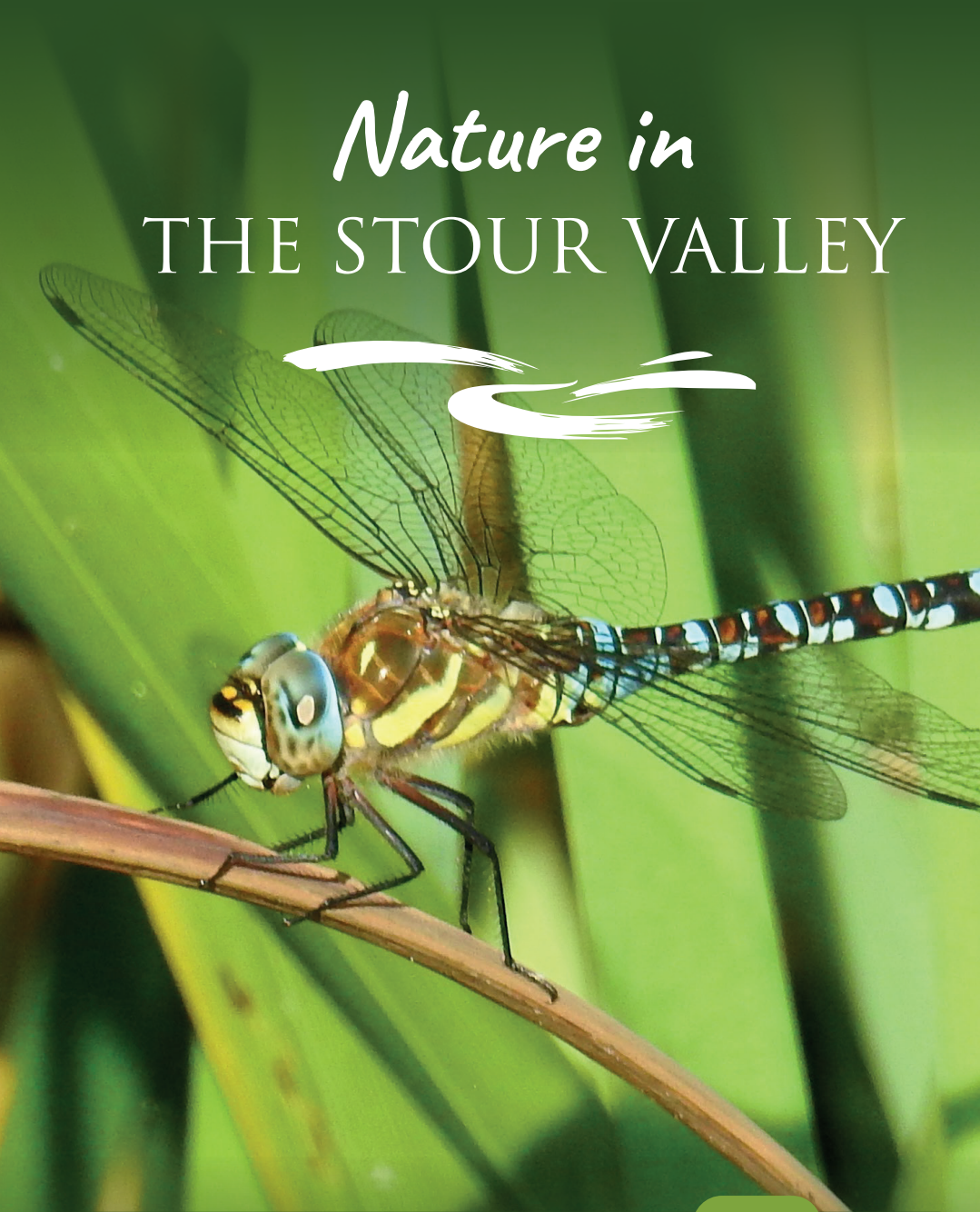
King's Lynn, NORFOLK, Norwich, Lowestoft, Bury St Edmunds, SUFFOLK, Cambridge, Ipswich, DEDHAM VALE AND STOUR VALLEY, Sudbury, Colchester, Essex, Harwich, Manningtree, London.

Please consider travelling sustainably where possible. There are good links to the Stour Valley on the Gainsborough rail line between Marks Tey and Sudbury, and there are bus routes throughout the area. For up to date local public transport timetables, contact Traveline on: www.traveline.info or 0871 200 22 33.

For detailed maps of the area, use Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No's. 196 (Sudbury, Hadleigh and the Dedham Vale), 210 (Newmarket and Haverhill), 211 (Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket) and 195 (Braintree and Saffron Walden)

Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project
Tel: 01394 445225

Email: dedhamvale.project@suffolk.gov.uk
Web: www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org



NATURE in The Stour Valley

