



Support **Essex Wildlife Trust** by joining your Local Group of volunteers and getting involved in fundraising, events, and activities. Meet fellow enthusiasts to **protect wildlife** and inspire others.

## Water Voles at Rushy Mead



Water Vole at Rushy Mead

During coastal restoration work at Fingringhoe Wick, the resident population of water voles was relocated to the Thorley Wash Nature Reserve on the River Stort south of Bishop's Stortford.

The voles evidently have done well in their new habitat and the increasing population has resulted in some of the voles making new homes elsewhere along the river. We now have water voles both in Sawbridgeworth Marsh and in the Rushy Mead Nature Reserve, where the network of ditches and scrapes seems to suit them very well and they bred successfully in 2019.

Thames Water, who are the owners of the Rushy Mead site, generously funded a hard-surfaced path from the River Stort towpath through the reserve to a couple of observation points, which we hope will allow the voles to be seen in 2020 when they emerge from their underground burrows to feed.

Chris Swan

## Contacts

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For Trust and Local  
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**Conservation work on  
our nature reserves.**

**Tuesday and Thursday  
mornings from 9:30 to noon.**

New volunteers are  
always welcome, contact  
**volunteering@essexwt.org.uk**  
or call **01621 862 940**

See details of the locations  
and dates on our local website  
at **uttlesford-wildlife.org.uk**  
and navigate to the Essex  
Wildlife Trust Work Party  
page with the quick link  
button at the right side  
of the page.

## Sweetings Meadow

Sweetings Meadow is a very small Essex Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve with some old fruit trees, a pond and a wildflower hay meadow. In the spring the meadow has a fine display of orchids including Common twayblade, Common spotted and Pyramidal along with primrose and knapweed and in late summer and autumn the fruit trees are usually laden with apples, pears, plums and a few cherries.

It is situated on the road from Thaxted to Lindsell, but like many small reserves, can be quite difficult to find. But if you have a smartphone and the 'what three words' app, the entrance is at [///calm.crouches.flirts](https://www.what3words.com/#!/en/@@@calm.crouches.flirts). This app gives a unique three word location to every 3 metre by 3 metre square on the planet, and combined with a map app or your phone's compass, it will navigate you to that square. This can also be quite handy in finding the location of individual plants or nest boxes, for example the recently planted St Edmund's Russet apple tree is at [///prepare.soups.count](https://www.what3words.com/#!/en/@@@prepare.soups.count)



and the delicious Czar plum tree is at [///bookshop.feasting.withdraws](https://www.what3words.com/#!/en/@@@bookshop.feasting.withdraws).

The app is only as accurate as your phone's GPS but as the system is also used by the emergency services you can give them your 'what three word' location and they will be able to locate you to within a few metres - very handy if you don't have a postcode or map reference of your location.

## Oxlips

Our rare local wildflower, the oxlip (*Primula elatior*), will be appearing in West Wood and Shadwell Wood during April, a perfect time for a visit. We used to see it from late-April to mid-May, but due to climate change it now flowers three to four weeks earlier. Sometimes mis-spelt as 'oxslip', it was always confused with the cowslip, until Charles Darwin published a paper in 1869 concluding that it was a separate species. It has greatly declined in numbers; a 2002 survey by Essex Wildlife Trust suggested that on many sites it has declined by 90%, mainly due to being eaten by high numbers of deer. It needs a cold winter to flower well, and climate change brings warmer winters which do not favour them. This could be a species that becomes extinct in the county over future decades.

**Tony Morton**



Photo by Tony Morton



Residents for Uttlesford

## Tree Planting

Essex Wildlife Trust provided planning and practical assistance to Saffron Walden Town Council for its tree planting day on 30th November. This was a community event run by the town council during which over 200 residents ranging from the toddlers to eighty-year olds planted three new hedges containing over 3000 young trees.

The Trust helped identify the best plants to use as well as joining the working group to provide planting and organisational advice. On the day they were on hand across the three sites to ensure the planting went smoothly. Plans are being made for similar events over the next few winters.

**Dave McLellan**