

The Moreton Hall Wildlife Group  
**WOODLAND WAYS NEWS**  
January 2025

**Happy New Year! Your trustees are looking forward to a year in the woods and where our wildlife benefits from our work parties.**

## **Mistletoe**

As we come out of Christmas, some of us may have indulged in the pastime of kissing someone under a sprig of mistletoe held aloft. Its use as a seasonal decoration probably derives from a long history of use in ritual, which may have started with Celtic druids. It's seen variously as a symbol of fertility, love, and peace across European cultures. However, the kissing tradition itself appears to have developed more recently, perhaps in the 18th century. Most mistletoe on sale before Christmas comes from Europe, where it is common in places. Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire are strongholds in England.

In Suffolk, mistletoe grows mostly on lime, poplar, and apple trees, and occasionally on ornamental trees such as false acacia and ornamental hawthorn. Its thinly spread across Suffolk; you can see its big balls of leaves high up trees when driving around Ipswich, on the lime avenue at Kentwell Hall and in Ickworth Park. Interestingly, mistletoe colonised Moreton Hall earlier this century where it now grows on an ornamental alder tree in Tassell Road.

Mistletoe relies on other trees to survive. Mistletoe isn't like a normal plant. It's parasitic, which means it has to grow on other trees to survive. It grows in round clusters, giving it the appearance of sprouting magically from tree branches. Its roots, adapted to grow into bark and connect into the tree's vascular system, takes the nutrients and water from the tree it grows on. Although it doesn't usually kill the host tree, it can weaken it. Mistletoe can also make some of its own food as it has evergreen leaves which photosynthesise to create additional energy for the plant.

Mistletoe berries are rather glutinous and sticky. When pecked at by a bird, sometimes the berry flesh is eaten but the seed rejected, or sometimes the whole berry is rejected. The bird has to wipe its beak on something, often a branch, to clean the sticky mess off itself. Excreted undigested seeds are also sticky. That's how seeds get transferred to new trees, and a small proportion of these seeds will be able to germinate, send roots into the bark and establish as a new plant.

In February, we'll try to propagate mistletoe in our traditional orchard at Pond Covert. We'll collect mistletoe berries from somewhere nearby, and squeeze the seed from each berry. Seeds come out enclosed in a ball of sticky jelly-like viscin, so we'll try to remove as much of this jelly as possible, as the seeds seem to germinate better when fairly clean. We'll wipe the seeds off our finders onto branches 3cm – 5cm diameter, on the underside so rain runs down onto them to keep them hydrated. Germination rates are high, so a few weeks later we expect to see several little seedlings. The seedlings are prone to naturally die, be eaten by pigeons or invertebrates, so seedling survival is low.

Hopefully we will end up in a few years with some of this lovely plant adding to the character and biodiversity of the orchard.

## **Membership renewals**

Thanks to most of our members, for renewing your membership in the autumn. The membership year is October to September, with a discount for people joining part way through. If you haven't yet renewed, or can't remember if you have done, do get in touch!

**Work parties are usually on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month except in November**

All welcome, and no experience necessary. We'll show you what to do, and we will be friendly and supportive throughout. Do as much or as little as you wish!

There is usually a drinks break part way through each work party. Hot drinks are usually provided.

<b>Date in 2025</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Meeting Point</b>
<b>Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> January</b> 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Woodland Ways Pond</b> Shrub and tree maintenance	Lawson Place car park (by pub entrance)
<b>Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> February</b> 10.00 – 12.00	<b>Pond Covert orchard</b> Mistletoe propagation	Mistletoe collection site to be confirmed Please ask.
<b>Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March</b> 10.00 – 12.00	<b>Natterer's Wood</b> Ditch maintenance	Natterer's Wood Kingsworth Road entrance
<b>Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April</b> 10.00 – 12.00	<b>Natterer's Wood</b> Bat hedge and ditch	Natterer's Wood Kingsworth Road entrance
<b>Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May</b> 10.00 – 12.00	<b>Woodland Condition Assessment</b> Our woods	Moreton Hall Community Centre meeting room
<b>Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June</b> 10.00 – 12.00	Kept open for flexibility / needs arising	To be confirmed
<b>Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July</b> 10.00 - 12.00	<b>AGM and hay rake at Woodland Ways Pond / Pond Covert orchard</b>	Moreton Hall Community Centre meeting room
<b>Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> August</b> 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Natterer's Wood</b> The great hay rake	Natterer's Wood Kingsworth Road entrance
<b>Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>Natterer's Wood</b> Tree rescue	Natterer's Wood Kingsworth Road entrance
<b>Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October</b> 10.00 – 12.00	<b>Natterer's Wood</b> Tree rescue	Natterer's Wood Kingsworth Road entrance
<b>Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November</b> 10.00 – 12.00	<b>Pond Covert</b> Path maintenance	Woodland Ways storage unit Pond Covert, Sebert Road
<b>Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December</b> 10.00 - 12.00	<b>Home Covert</b> Path maintenance	Woodland Ways storage unit Pond Covert, Sebert Road

Weather, new needs etc sometimes means we change plans at short notice. Check our website or Facebook for the most up to date information.

Trustees' meetings in 2025 are on Monday evenings, on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 16<sup>th</sup> June, 15<sup>th</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> December. Please come to find out what the trustees do, and contribute anything you might have to tell us.

For more information please contact us.

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