

Annual Report of Council for 2024-25

General Introduction and Administration

The EFC Spring Meeting and AGM was held on 23rd March 2024 in the Cordite Room of the Wat Tyler Centre, and was attended by 26 members and 3 guests. Simon Taylor was elected as President, and Peter Harvey became Vice President; Peter also took on the role of Treasurer. Simon Wood was elected as a new Ordinary member of Council (and thus Trustee); Rob Smith took on the role of Programme Secretary. Retiring members of Council after some years of excellent service were James Lumbard, Daniel Blyton, Neil Harvey and Richard Parsons. The AGM was followed by a fascinating talk on the wildlife of Epping Forest by naturalist and photographer Peter Warne.

Due to the death of Roger Payne, Yvonne Couch took over as Essex County Recorder for Coccinellidae (Ladybirds) and Rob Smith for other Coleoptera (ground beetles, leaf beetles and longhorn beetles). Due to the infirmity of Graham Ward, Peter Allen took over as County Recorder for Geology. With the agreement of Peter Kirby, Yvonne Couch took over as Recorder for Heteroptera (true bugs) and Adrian Knowles for Auchenorrhyncha (leafhoppers and allies).

The Exhibition and Social was held in November 2024 at the Green Centre, Wat Tyler Country Park, and was well attended by exhibitors and visitors. Council met 3 times in person and twice via Zoom; Council voted in February 2025 to move to holding all Council meetings via Zoom.

The Essex Moth Group held their annual meeting on 1 March 2025 in the Cordite Room of the Wat Tyler Centre.

Essex Field Club/ Essex Recorders partnership continued to act as the single biological and geological records centre for Essex.

It has been recommended that the charitable status of the Essex Field Club should change from an Unincorporated Association Charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation; this is being discussed and is ongoing.

Membership

As of 7 March 2025, the Essex Field Club has a total of 262 members for the year 2025. Out of these, 233 members have already paid their subscription. The remaining 29 members who have yet to pay include 6 institutional members, who traditionally tend to pay later in the year following a polite reminder.

In terms of payment methods, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of members opting to pay by cheque. Instead, the preference continues to shift towards payment via banking order or PayPal, with some members also now choosing to deposit directly into our bank account.

Sadly, over the past 12 months, we have lost a number of members due to their passing, which has affected our overall membership count.

Overall, the club is in a strong position, with most members renewing their memberships early, and the late payments typically being resolved without issue, following a polite reminder in March coinciding with the AGM invitation going out.

Meetings

Field meetings took place at several venues, with usually three visits to each site. All visits to

Causeway End Felsted, Tiptree Heath and Hazeleigh Woods had generally good weather and were well-attended. One of the three trips to Northey Island was curtailed due to heavy rain, and both trips to the Nevendon Washland Reserve had poor weather. There were additional trips to Carver Barracks, Debden and an extra one to Ramsey Marsh to make up for poor weather at the spring trip the previous year.

The Fungi Group held several autumn meetings, including a Waxcap special at Fryerning Churchyard. There were walks at Mill Meadows, Billericay and at Tiptree Heath and a joint meeting with the Essex Wildlife Trust to Sandylay Nature Reserve, Great Leighs. There were also forays at Swan and Cygnet Woods, Stock and another at Norsey Wood, Billericay with the Norsey Wood Society.

Green Centre Activities

The Club's activity area and displays were open to the public on the first Saturday of each month. The Office and Archive were in regular use on Wednesdays by some Council members, and were available for visits on a pre-booked basis.

Using the foyer, display areas and part of the Carstairs Room (thanks to Twizzletops day nursery for access), we held the Exhibition and Social at the Green Centre on 30 November 2024, with 23 exhibitors and 100 persons attending. Refreshments were provided, 53 Essex Naturalists were given to members, thus saving postage, there were 2 new memberships, and 7 people renewed their membership.

Publications

Essex Naturalist

The 2023/2024 Essex Naturalist comprised 249 pages with 29 articles and all colour illustrations. An excellent effort by editor Peter Harvey and the Editorial Team.

Modern Essex Naturalists can now be downloaded by paid-up members from our website, as well as the existing access to older issues through the searchable archive.

The EFC Newsletter

There were the usual 3 issues of the Newsletter, with colour illustrations and many interesting articles as well as wildlife updates, reports of some meetings that had taken place, and listings of forthcoming meetings. .

Our latest Newsletters can now be downloaded from the website by paid-up members, as well as the existing access to older issues through the searchable archive.

Collections

In April, at the invitation of Kelvin, Graham Ward's brother, Bill George and Martin Heywood recovered further material from Graham's bungalow including minerals, rocks, fossils, worked flints and archaeology. Bill is sorting this material as time permits. Items from Martin Gregory's collection have been sorted and the fungi and myxomycete specimens, which are vulnerable to pest damage, stored in metal cabinets. There are a number of microscopes and other equipment which need to be found good homes. In July, Adrian Knowles delivered the second tranche of beetle data from Nigel Cumming's collection and has been paid accordingly. He continues to work on this project as time permits. Yvonne Couch has completed cataloguing Nigel's Hemiptera and the spreadsheet is available on the

Club website. She has also catalogued Roger Payne's entomology collection and the spreadsheet is available on the website. Four drawers of Roger's butterfly collection are on display at the Green Centre. Graham Ekins is making progress in writing his report on the Avifauna. Pest monitoring continues and shows a relatively low number of the main pest, *Anthrenus verbasci*. A program to freeze the deer pelts was carried out in the spring and the silica gel in the geology collection was checked and renewed where necessary. Thanks are due to all who have worked on the collections over the past year.

Library and Archives

Our library and archive, held at the Green Centre, has been open to the public on the first Saturday of each month and, by appointment, on a Wednesday. Email enquiries have been answered, and articles and images supplied as requested for research, publication, and display. Often researchers follow up online queries with a visit. Guided tours of the library, archive and collections are popular and two were organised for the Annual Exhibition and Social. We acted as a clearinghouse for book donations from several individuals. Some were added to our library while others were made available, for a donation, to members and guests at our AGM and Exhibition and Social. Books, journals, maps, images and manuscripts were added to our library and archive. Barbara and Richard Chapman very kindly facilitated a major donation of books, manuscripts, digital images and 35mm slides from the collection of Roger Payne. Work has continued on sorting out the collections of Mike Daniels and Graham Ward. A large number of images from our archive including photographs, prints, lantern slides and glass negatives have been shared on Facebook and added to our website. Dr Roger Hewitt continued to use the library archive on a weekly basis producing articles for publications. Details of exchange journals and other library and archive information were regularly posted on our Facebook group.

A modern Photographic and Pictorial Survey and Record of Essex

Images from our library and archive are constantly being scanned and added to the Essex Field Club website, which now holds almost 10,000 pictures. Any registered individual may easily add their own photographs by following the guidelines provided. Everyone is encouraged to upload their pictures as coverage is entirely dependent upon what participants choose to add. Finding existing images is easy - the website is readily searchable using keywords. For example searches including a place name such as Barking, Brentwood, Ilford and Purfleet, or a topic like bridge, church, fossil, portrait, urchin; or a surname will bring up images of dated photos of wildlife and geological sites, engravings, places, post cards, people, prints and more. Members and other users are encouraged to upload more photos of natural history subjects, such as geological sections, photographs of growing plants, veteran trees, habitat areas and of animals with their natural surroundings, our field meetings, passing events of importance, illustrations of old customs etc in line with the some of the aims of the Club's project in the early 20th century.

Datasearch System

At the end of January 2025 there were 5,982,423 records for 15,494 species in database tables on our website, all for use by the on-line Datasearch System, which continues to provide comprehensive coverage of county records as an Essex Local Record Centre Service. As well

as species data, we also provide information on sites relevant to nature conservation contained in national datasets, together with information on geological sites which are of county and local importance. The datasearch reports also include maps with the Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) relevant to a search area and the corresponding searchable LoWS citations. Potential Local Wildlife Sites are provided where the GIS polygon data and citations are available.

Thanks to work by Mark Yeates, we can now generate GIS shape files for individual polygons held on the website including individual Local Geological Site and Local Wildlife Site shape files. We may be able to develop the inclusion of GIS outputs as part of the datasearch provision.

Free datasearch outputs were provided to the National Trust to inform woodland creation on a site near Tolleshunt D'Arcy and to the Essex Wildlife Trust for a number of their reserves.

We have also provided crane-fly data to help with a crane-fly IUCN national status review, mainly from Essex but including various other VCs and Scotland, with most of the data identified and digitised by the late Del Smith. We provided a new updated export of aculeate Hymenoptera data to BWARS to aid their national status review process.

Website

At the end of January 2025 our Records database table contained 3,247,114 records for 14,958 species in a very wide variety of taxonomic groups. The maps on the Species Account pages are automatically updated with data uploaded to the database and these pages currently provide ecological and phenological information for 9,491 species from over 2,257,791 records. Logged-on members can now access their own records in the database through their My Stuff page and the My Records link. They can also download a species report pdf from the species account pages. Active recorders who submit their records can be given access to the details of the records behind the dots on the maps by request.

County Recorders can add and update the text for species and they can also generate an atlas for different taxonomic groups based on the record data that has been recorded.

A new website record submission facility to allow direct submission of records for all groups via the website is being tested and there is likely to be some further development before going live, together with resolution on how we would deal with the consequent on-going quality control issues, not least of which is the work required to validate and verify records, which will require input from county recorders and other competent specialists. The system uses NBN Identification Difficulty codes with Essex-based codes for moths and associated text to inform recorders, and these can be developed for other groups by specialists, as can different data options agreed for different groups.

Digital pdf newsletters and journals are now downloadable to logged-on members, who may now also choose not to receive the newsletters and/or journals by post. Recent photos and recent records have been added to the home page and right pane.

Mark Yeates has replaced the google pie and bar charts used to display autecological data on the species pages with an in-house solution, resolving the labelling scripting complexity when there are numerous labels involved, so we are no longer dependent on Google who deprecated the google charts many years ago, and which Google have in fact subsequently removed.

All our HLF-funded laptop computers at our centre have been upgraded to Windows 11, so they will be supported with security updates after the Windows 10 support cut-off date of Oct 2025. We have also been donated two more modern laptops for use in our office by Basildon.

MapMate

The EFC uses MapMate and Schemes software created by Teknica Ltd to automatically upload new and edited records from our own MapMate database to the Records table on the website and these data are used to populate the species pages. Our Records database table is also the source of our own records used in the datasearch outputs. MapMate and the Schemes software enable our recording and website to effectively manage the very large amount of species data we maintain for our historical Watsonian biological vice-counties of South and North Essex recording area.

Mark Yeates (MapMate Ltd) closed down the business side of MapMate on 30 November 2024 after designing, running and supporting MapMate since its creation 25 years ago. Mark stated that “Users will be supported, updated, and the infrastructure maintained (funded privately) until the last licence has expired during October 2026. During 2025, important aspects of the program (like making taxon update patches) will be passed on to any interested parties. Hopefully over this time you can decide what's next for your recording or continue using MapMate for as long as our recording community (and Windows!) supports it”.

Butterfly Conservation has already taken on responsibility for updating the MapMate Lepidoptera Taxa Library and will continue to manage this until further notice. If necessary the role could be taken on for other taxonomic groups at a county or regional level, and we could manage this ourselves if necessary, but it will be better for us to wait and see whether this is resolved nationally through the MapMate Support Group.

Moving forward MapMate should continue to work until at least Microsoft support for Windows 11 comes to an end, and there is no reason why this would not continue afterwards. The Club will therefore continue to use MapMate to maintain our county records and upload records to the website. EFC Council also agreed to fund the bulk purchase of 100 new MapMate licences with Mark Yeates privately funded support until 28 February 2026, and we can offer these to members who currently do not use MapMate for their recording. Although any new software takes time to get used to, the use of MapMate should be quite straightforward and we can also offer support and hopefully also training course sessions at the Green Centre to cover more advanced use.

Essex Recorders partnership

The Essex Wildlife Trust joined the partnership at the Spring 2024 Steering Group meeting much to the benefit of the county. Our data partners have provided data updates. Commercial use of the Datasearch System continues to provide income, all of which is used to support the Club, our partner county data-providing organisations and to be made available for grant applications which support recording in the county.

At the Autumn Steering Group meeting a grant application to the CNHS to support publication of a booklet about the threatened Middlewick Ranges site in Colchester was approved.

Planning

When time and resources allow, we continue to provide input to planning applications in the county affecting sites of high nature conservation importance.

Efforts to save the Middlewick Ranges Local Wildlife Site after its adoption by Colchester City Council in their Local Plan for housing development despite its well-known very high nature conservation value have finally produced some potentially good news thanks to the combined efforts and support of the Friends of Middlewick Ranges, Buglife, Butterfly Conservation, Colchester Natural History Society, CPRE Essex, Essex Field Club, Essex Wildlife Trust and RSPB following advice to Colchester City Council by Natural England.

EFC field meetings in 2021-23 and Essex Moth Group meetings in 2023 provided the modern evidence for its SSSI invertebrate status. A comprehensive new botanical assessment carried out during 2024 confirmed that Middlewick Ranges supports the largest remaining intact acid grassland habitat in Essex. New evidence gathered in late 2024 has also confirmed that the grassland supports a previously unknown regionally important assemblage of waxcap fungi. Enormous efforts by the Chair of the Friends of Middlewick Ranges and 2024 surveys confirmed that Colchester Barracks (including Middlewick Ranges) is a nationally significant site for Nightingales, probably second in importance only to Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI in Kent and that Middlewick Ranges and the adjacent Birch Brook Woodland LoWS together support an outstanding assemblage of bats including the Globally Near Threatened, European Vulnerable and GB Vulnerable Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) with a maternity roost confirmed locally.

A Middlewick Ranges Nature Reserve Vision for Middlewick Ranges and Birch Brook Woodland was created by the Friends of Middlewick Ranges and is supported by Buglife, Butterfly Conservation, Colchester Natural History Society, CPRE Essex, Essex Field Club, Essex Wildlife Trust and RSPB. A report giving the case for SSSI designation has been produced by Buglife, Butterfly Conservation, Colchester Natural History Society, Essex Field Club, Essex Wildlife Trust and Friends of Middlewick.

Publicity

Online Social Media

Facebook

The Club's Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/essexfieldclub>) continues to grow, now having over 1,200 members. There have been over 78,000 views in the past 12 months, with a spike on 17 July 2024 and a larger spike (1,900) on 21 February 2025. There have been over 1000 posts (Max=15 on 30 July 2024).

The group started using the online Chat feature to discuss topics ranging from "Is buddleia bad for wildlife" to "Why children need to read about plants at a time of climate change".

The Facebook page is set up for information purposes only and not designed to be interactive, unlike the group. The page has 258 likes and 335 followers. It has received 47,800 views since 23 September 2024 (no data available before then) and reached 17,800 profiles.

Instagram

An Instagram account has been set up which has the capacity to share content from the Facebook Page (the accounts are linked).

Twitter

The Club's Twitter account (@EssexFieldClub) is not active due to access issues. It has 378 followers (down from 404 in 2024) and is following 37 accounts (down from 42).

Real World Publicity

The Exhibition and Social took place on 30 November 2024 and was attended by 100 people.

Talks about the Essex Field Club have been given to RSPB Stort Valley and Thames Chase. A panel discussion on the benefits of volunteering was attended at Writtle College, and a landowner's event in Wimbish provided networking with landowners and other conservation groups in the area. Future in-person events include a talk to EWT Havering and Colchester Cage Bird Society.

Finance

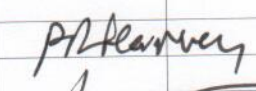

In 2024 the financial status of the Essex Field Club remained strong. Datasearch reports, our main income source, continue to be at a comparable level to previous years. Interest on savings showed a marked rise in 2024 due to the move in September 2024 of a large sum from the internet account into a 95-day Lloyds account paying significant interest.

Our accountants continue to manage our quarterly VAT accounts, to prepare the year's accounts from the account information we provide and to ensure the accounts are independently examined.

Essex Recorders partnership finances are included in the accounts. The income from data provision is restricted for use to support the partnership in line with the Terms of Reference agreed by the partners each year at the Spring Steering Group meeting. £10,000 is treated as partnership reserve and other funds are used to support the data providers of the partnership while some is available to provide grants for projects which support recording in the county.

This Annual Report has been prepared with due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

<u>ESSEX FIELD CLUB</u>			
<u>YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024</u>			
<u>INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT</u>			
		<u>31/12/2024</u>	<u>31/12/2023</u>
Income			
Subscriptions		3,806	4,169
Publications and postage		100	216
Interest receivable		13,285	3,580
Donations		458	2,444
Data provision		119,915	117,883
		137,564	128,292
Overheads			
Essex Naturalist		5,983	6,114
Newsletters		3,875	1,953
Postage and telephone		535	79
Hire of halls		149	258
Insurance		699	515
Accountancy fees		1,725	1,725
Legal and professional costs		2,563	1,400
Mapmate		189	189
Website		3,926	989
Sundry		113	1,393
EFC Centre		4,020	3,778
Essex Recorders partnership		43,118	39,989
Catering		624	843
Bank and Paypal charges		1,974	-
		69,493	59,225
Surplus / (Loss) for year		68,071	69,068
Retained surplus bfw		498,561	429,494
Retained surplus cfw		566,632	498,561

ESSEX FIELD CLUB			
YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024			
BALANCE SHEET			
Current Assets			
Lloyds Term investment		32,605	31,615
Lloyds Business investment account		25,469	25,169
Lloyds Internet account		37,606	249,167
Lloyds Treasurer's account		3,572	1,735
Lloyds 32 day notice account		31,685	30,900
Cambridge & Counties Bank 3 yr		89,611	85,321
Hampshire Trust Bank 2 year		92,334	85,113
Lloyds 95 day notice account		252,705	-
Cash		1	1
Debtors		9,108	-
		574,695	509,022
Current liabilities			
Accruals		1,725	1,725
VAT		5,305	8,385
		7,030	10,110
Net assets		567,665	498,911
Financed by capital funds			
Income and expenditure account		567,315	498,561
Museum fund		350	350
		567,665	498,911
<u>Notes</u>			
Some funds of the Club are restricted			
Income from Data Searches supports and funds projects of the Essex Recorders partnership			
			P. Harvey
			S. Taylor



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name

Essex Field Club

On accounts for the year
ended

31st December 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1113963

Set out on pages

1-2

(inserted to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31/12/2024**

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below *) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

D Bradford

Date:

11/03/2025

Name:

Daniel Bradford

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

MAAT – Association of Accounting Technicians

Address:

36 Southernhay, Basildon, Essex SS14 1ET

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

Restricted funds committed in 2024 EFC accounts:

£90,458.77

(£27,729.40+ £27,729.37 to be paid as 50% partner splits, £10,000 ERp core, £25,000.00 for grant applications)

2023 £92,503.81

2024 £90,458.77