



# RUNNING FOX WALKS

## I PEAR TREE CLOSE



*Apples from our orchard...*



*Burwash frogs are very friendly...*

*This meadow is called Pear Tree Close. Under the Saxon system of land holding, the small fields near to the village were called 'closes'. They were small hedged and fenced grass fields (in contrast to the large 'open' arable fields) where livestock could be kept securely, especially at night. This field has, therefore, probably not been ploughed (except by pigs!) for 1000 years or more (if ever!). It is called Pear Tree Close because of a venerable wild Pear Tree which, sadly, died some 20 years ago.*

### **Wetland and water**

Over the last 50 years or so, lowland wet habitats have suffered catastrophic losses, consequently redressing this has been one of the main aims of our conservation work, some of which is being funded under our Environmental Stewardship agreement with Natural England.

In 1996 the original ditch, to your right, which carries the overflow from the Moat, was widened to form a broader, wetter 'brook' and therefore a boggy habitat. We seem to have succeeded, as Snipe, which feed in mud, are regular visitors. Over the past few years, since the late 1970s, Snipe numbers nationally have declined steeply in lowland grassland: this habitat.



*Keep your eyes open for snakes!*

A small belt of trees and shrubs was planted on the banks of the new brook creating one of the ideal habitat combinations for many species: water, rough grass and scrub.

Behind the row of Lombardy Poplars (in front of you, slightly to the right) is an insignificant little pond which, in early Spring, becomes a seething mass of mating frogs. Probably as a result, this is a favourite hunting area for our grass snakes and if you go quietly you may spot one warming itself in the sun on the path.

### **Old orchards**

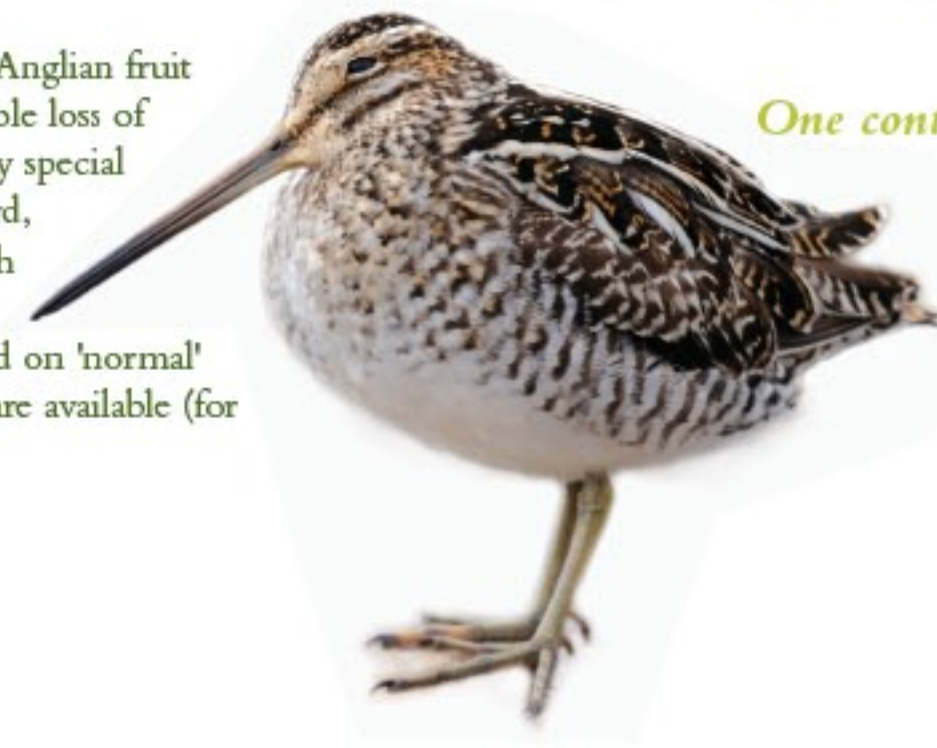
Since Britain joined the EEC, the traditional East Anglian fruit orchard has been in steep decline with the inevitable loss of the old varieties that grew in them and of this very special habitat. We have tried to rejuvenate our old orchard, (just across the ditch, to your right) by gapping up with some less common varieties, such as Devon Quarrendon and Lord Hindlip. These were planted on 'normal' rootstock to produce full sized trees. Their apples are available (for a brief seasonal period!) from the Larder.

Every year, in October, we hold an Autumn Apple Fair at which (amongst a great many other events) your own unusual/unknown varieties can be identified, by experts from the East of England Apples and Orchard Project and to which you can bring your own surplus apples to be juiced.

### **The Grassland**

The meadow to your left is grazed by either sheep or cattle, alternated annually in rotation to lessen parasite build up. If there are cows in the meadow they will be part of our suckler herd of pedigree Beef Shorthorn Cattle - a rare breed.

*Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.*



*One contented Snipe*

