

Fordingbridge Conservation Group

Vice-chair's report 2019

We have continued to concentrate our site work on the areas surrounding the pond. Our aim is to increase biodiversity and in particular make it more attractive to insects.

The Pond

The pond itself is continuing to fill with water only for part of the year. We are ensuring that it does not become overgrown with vegetation. To that end we have removed the *Juncus* and we will cut the grass once the wildflowers have seeded.

We have added some comfrey and ragged robin plants at the edge of the pond.

Robert Aquilina visited the pond again and has produced a list of the species he identified. It does show that there are populations of winter visitors and some species that survive in the area of damp mud over the summer. The fact that there are so many different species is encouraging and means that even as a winterbourne, the pond is contributing to the biodiversity of the site.

Wildflower Bank

This is the area to the right of the gate at the entrance to the pond. It was cleared of unwanted plants in late spring. Some plants such as the teasel and mullein had already been introduced. Other plants including lungwort and foxgloves were added.

In the summer some seeds from Beebombs were spread on the bank. These contained a selection of wildflower seeds which are attractive to bees, butterflies and other insects.

Unfortunately the weather has worked against us because although we had some heavy rain it was interspersed with long dry hot spells. A few of the annuals like a poppy and a cornflower did struggle through and we hope that the biennials and perennials have made sufficient growth to provide us with flowers in future years. The whole bank at the moment is looking dry and sad.

We do have more seed to plant next year and hopefully we will be more successful.

Steep bank by Normandy Way

Here we removed the brambles and undergrowth in early spring and again in August to allow the bluebells sufficient light to grow. The bluebells across the whole site are doing well and continuing to spread and give a great display in spring.

Raised bank to the west of the pond

We have continued the coppicing this area. We are also planning to site a beehive here. Kate Denning is looking for a suitable hive. We thought we had one earlier in the year, but bumblebees had already moved in there. Kate has now located another hive complete with honey bees which we are hoping to move to the site very soon.

Woodland area

During the autumn there was a mass planting of wild daffodil bulbs and we were rewarded with a great display of flowers in the spring. The bluebells are continuing to spread here too.

In the winter we received 100 bare-root trees donated by the 'I Dig Trees' scheme run by the Trust for Conservation Volunteers. We spent a very tiring afternoon potting these up. We are looking after them in our gardens until we get the optimal planting conditions this autumn. We intend to plant them as a wildlife friendly hedge at the far end of the woodland edge next to Normandy Way. There will be some bramble clearance required first. The new hedge should attract a wider variety of wildlife than the brambles would alone.

Open Days

We had an open afternoon just before Christmas. The weather was dire, it was windy and the rain poured down. Unsurprisingly, we had no visitors. It wasn't a complete loss however as some of our members who we don't see that often came along and gave us a chance to catch up with them.

The open afternoon on August 25th was much better. We had about 15 visitors who were given guided tours of the site. We hope that some of them may be inspired to join our working parties at the pond.

The pond in August was of course dry and the vegetation around it looked as if it had seen better days. A suggestion was made that perhaps the next open afternoon should take place in spring when there is water in the pond and we have fresh plant growth. This does seem like a good idea.

Thanks

Thanks are due to everyone who has helped over the year in whatever capacity.

Bill and Ellen have decided to retire from the group. Bill said that at the age of 90 he felt that it was time to have a rest. As he lives so close to the pond I said I would still keep

him informed of the working party dates so we could have a chat with him. Many thanks are due to Bill and Ellen for all the refreshments they have provided.

Thanks are also due to Trevor who has had to retire from working parties on medical grounds. Over the years, Trevor has put in much hard work at the pond. His bonfires are of legend.

Helen is also standing down in her joint roles of treasurer, membership secretary and being in charge of publicity. We know that she works tremendously hard on many community projects and completely understand that she wishes to ease up a little. Her work that she has done behind the scenes for the conservation group is much appreciated by all of us. Thank you Helen.

Lastly I need to thank the rest of the management team, Edward, Graham, Richard and Sue for all their hard work. Graham needs special thanks, for despite a very difficult year for him, he updated our leaflet and wrote an excellent booklet outlining the history of the pond and the work we are doing there. It was very well received at our open day and at the Damerham show.

Jane Ward
10th September 2019