

TIDMARSH ROAD SPINNEY

Leek Wootton Parish Biodiversity Action Plan

Site Survey Easter 2008

Site Surveyed: 10a.m Saturday 22nd March 2008

Site Area: 0.4 Ha

Site Description:

The site is located between Tidmarsh Road and Hill Wootton Road. The site is gently sloping with the down slope running roughly west to east.

Originally a small portion of coniferous woodland with some deciduous understory; ground flora dominated by Nettle and Bramble. The ground is particularly acidic due to the Pines growth.

Site cleared by residents in late 2007/early 2008 as part of extensions to their properties with a wish to manage each of their designated sections to the benefit of wildlife.

A stand of Japanese Knotweed occurs halfway up the site. This proscribed plant is being dealt with by a professional landscaper.

The action on this site fits in with the Urban Habitat Action Plan and the Scrub/Woodland Habitat Plan of the counties Local Biodiversity Action Plan framework

(<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/C6E28DF1EBA4ACB580256C86004BB58C>)

Existing Flora:

With much of the undergrowth cleared the site is in a state of arrest. The dominant features are the Scot's Pine and Lodgepole Pine. These all have Tree Preservation Orders on them. Remnant hedgerows include Holly, Hazel and Hawthorn. These are also present in small numbers across the site. There are a few Oaks, Yew, Cherry and Elder. At the top of the site several trees are heavily covered by Ivy.

The ground flora is re-establishing itself and at present consists of Nettles and Bluebells.

Existing Fauna:

On the site visit Blue Tit, Great Tit, Robin and Blackbird were all recorded and anecdotal evidence was given of Tawny Owls, Wren and Woodpigeons using the gardens and site. Several nest boxes have gone up already to encourage bird life.

There are feeding signs of Grey Squirrels but it is likely most small mammals have been discouraged in the clearance.

Mary Murdoch stated that Dragonflies were also seen on the site in the summer.

Outline Management Suggestions:

As each homeowner will be responsible for their patch management is likely to be inconsistent across the site. In this case it is perhaps best to outline best practice guidelines and advice on how each home owner could "make space" for wildlife in their particular section. The emphasis therefore will not necessarily be on providing high quality natural habitats but more a blend of natural and ornamental features.

As a starting point people should look at the BBC Breathing Places website (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/>). This website has a simple layout that defines the many simple and easy things that can be done in a garden to improve wildlife.

As the spinney was originally scrubby woodland and it is likely that the plot will be sub divided it is likely that new trees will be planted. These trees should where possible be native species as they provide the greatest benefit. Boundaries whilst initially fenced would be improved with hedge planting especially with Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel and Elder.

The following table highlights the importance of these native species.

Species	Number of Invertebrate Species Supported	Invertebrate Notes	Bird Notes	Mammal Notes	General Notes
Bramble	237		Good cover for nesting	Good cover and provides autumn food	Spreads quickly but controlled by hand pulling suckers.
Holly	36	Food plant for the Holly Blue Butterfly	Autumn food source for Song Thrush a LBAP species.		
Yew	26		Cover for nesting and roosting and source of food.		
Poplar	12		Excellent for foraging insectivorous birds.		
Privet	66		Late Summer/Autumn food source for Warblers and Thrushes.		Good nectar source
Scots Pine	65		Good for Goldcrests	Food for Squirrels	
Oak	423			Food for Mice and Squirrels	Important for Epiphytes and Galls.
Ivy	5	Larval food plant for the Holly Blue butterfly.	Good cover for nesting birds.		Autumn nectar source.
Hazel	253		Food for birds	Food for Squirrels and Dormice	Can create rare epiphyte communities.
Hawthorn	356		Nest cover and food source	Nest Cover and food source	
Elder	36		Berries are important food source	Berries are important food source	Bark can create epiphytic communities.

General Management Options

Option	Reason
Put up nest boxes	Encourages birdlife. House Sparrows are particularly in decline and terraces could be put on the houses. The vegetation in the Spinney then provides foraging cover for them. Ensure correct siting to improve chances. Shelter them from the wind and do not face them north. Tit boxes should be angled slightly.
Put up Bat Hibernacula's	Bats will be present in the village and could use boxes as day roost sites and possibly form their own colony. Bats are a protected species and are increasingly endangered by development.
Dead Wood Piles	Leaving dead wood in piles provides a habitat for small rodents and invertebrates such as beetles. They are also good for fungi. Wood piles are a simple way of diversifying the ecology of a site. The pile need not be large but should be left undisturbed.
Dense undergrowth	Leaving some patches of dense undergrowth with species such as Bramble and Hawthorn provides nesting sites for Hedgehogs. Once common this species is in decline. They can also be encouraged by buying specific hedgehog house boxes.
Small Pond	Ponds are an excellent feature for any garden and help improve the ecology of the site. The Spinney provides good ground cover for a range of amphibians and in time Great Crested Newts could be encouraged to use the site. The ponds are best left unstocked and planted with native marginal and aquatic plants. They provide safe drinking spots and support a wide range of insects including Dragonflies.
Remove any Invasive Non-native plants	The Japanese Knotweed is already being dealt with but it would be wise not to introduce any quick spreading plants that out compete native species such as Rhododendron.
Clearing/Felling	Ensure the clearing of undergrowth and felling of any trees is done out of the key seasons. It is best to do these in early spring before nesting begins or late autumn before species hibernate.
Feeding Stations	Feeding stations will encourage more birds to use the site. A range of foods including peanuts, nyger seeds, sunflower seeds and meal worms will help to encourage Thrushes and Finches. The site may also attract Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Nuthatches and Treecreepers.
Retain Veteran Trees	Try and keep as many old trees as possible as long as they don't present a risk. Veteran trees are important gene pool for a species and have a defined micro-ecosystem on them.
Stone walls and or Rubble	Some stone work can be retained on a site where it doesn't present a problem. These provide basking points for Grass Snake.
Maintain Bluebell Cover	Our wild type of Bluebell is being overrun by the Spanish variety therefore all native Bluebells should be kept where possible.

Future Biodiversity Action

It is suggested the site is resurveyed in 2009 to assess the progress and development of the site.