

The Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation Working Group Report For 2022-2023

The group consists of 6 members of the parish and the parish council clerk. We meet every second month to discuss various projects that may enhance the wildlife within both the residential area and surrounding countryside of the parish of Haughley.

In the early part of 2022 a project of tree planting on the green spaces at the lower end of St Marys Avenue and Fishponds Way junction was started. The initial stage was the planting of 15 fruit and 2 bird cherry trees which, apart from 2, survived the severe drought and heat of the summer of 2022 thanks to the watering and care of local residents. This scheme was completed in January 2023 by the addition of several more fruit trees together with rowan and hawthorn. The standard hawthorn trees were planted alongside the hedgerow on Fishponds Way where several ancient trees of the same species have been lost over the last 20 years. Only one remains and is well over 100 years old. This project now consists of around 35 trees which over the next few years will develop into a significant feature within the village and will be home to many different invertebrate species and provide food and shelter to birds. It is worth noting that the cost of this project was covered by Mid Suffolk Council.

During the spring of 2022 three rustic planting areas each only about 1 meter square were constructed by the group and sown with a mixture of wildflower seeds. These struggled with the summer 2022 drought and heatwave but still managed to produce and display. However, during the late spring of 2023 these areas have produced a much more vigorous growth so hopefully should provide a good display this year and obviously an additional invertebrate food source.

Over the last few years Bee Orchids have been seen on the grass verge adjoining the ancient water filled moat ditch system at the junction of Duke St and The Folly. These have always been cut down at the beginning of June just as they have been starting to flower. So the group had several signs made to request not to mow this area and placed them on the verge from April until October. This worked well and not only did the orchids flower but all the other vegetation grew very well alongside the water filled ditch. This created a mini nature reserve where previously only a short cut verge was present. It goes to show that a small step of making a few signs can have a big impact for nature and wildlife. The area was cut in March this year and then the signs were replaced so hopefully the orchids will display again this summer.

In April this year we planted a small area of wildflower seeds next to the hedgerow on the playing field. We will see if this performs during the summer but was a simple exercise to carry out with the help of a few local residents. We also planted around 100 small hedgerow trees given to the school by the woodland trust. Hopefully these will thicken the hedgerow between Green Road and the playing field. The school children have offered to look after the saplings and wildflower area and so will provide an interesting project for them to monitor.

The final project to mention this year was the request to leave a large area of the village green uncut for the months of may and june. Last june the area was covered in a mass of clover flowers with a huge numbers of bees collecting the pollen so it is vital that this sort of area is more sensibly managed considering the dramatic decline of invertebrate numbers in the uk in the last 20-30 years. Another simple easy action to help wildlife and biodiversity within the parish.

I feel that all these actions listed above might appear small but added together they will have a meaningful impact on both biodiversity within the parish and enhance the pleasure we all get from our local environment.

Report presented by Gavin Deans

Chairman of Haughley Biodiversity and Wildlife Working Group.