

Work party management progress – points for Jan 19 IMG mtg

Work parties We pretty well kept to **work plan** but I have some **concerns that we may be in danger of over managing the site to the detriment of wildlife (plants, fungi and animals)**. I will make some points as I go through what has been done this winter

From Oct to first work party in Jan we concentrate on field 1

- moat bank – S and E sides nettles brambles etc cut
- roadside hedge trimmed and lowered a bit to help it thicken up.
- little stream valley - we pulled all willow herb, cut all blackthorn at top and also cut suckering growth along the hedge line there, and cut grass on either side. *Although it looks neat and tidy did we over do it -should we have left some of the willow herb, longer grass (as in the management plan) and blackthorn? Field voles?*
- cleared round ponds, coppiced a willow and removed pond veg – *again was too much removed; our ponds should have about a third veg cover*
- cut back brambles round field 1 – *we need to make sure we pull out the ones rooting into the grass particularly along the west boundary*
- trimmed laid hedge by picnic tables in the hope it will thicken up
- cleared brambles from the copse - a never ending task but we only do one work party in January here which keeps it under control – *this avoids trampling bluebells in spring, fungi in autumn and less disturbance may reduce the spread of ash die back.*
- repaired some **exclusion zone barriers** by the ponds – *but ran out of suitable poles from coppiced willow because some had already been used so there were not as many as I expected.*

Proposal: the 'exclusion area' behind the barriers between pond 1 and the stream (including pond edge) should be managed by Dinah because it is so good for fungi. She should be consulted before any other work is done there.

Other work done on site

We have planted about 15 mainly hazel and dogwood plants on the south side of the tall hedge line between the two gates into field 2 to replace those lost in 2017 when A. Steele 'mulched' the grass. I also put in some plants to improve the strip of grassland between the hedge and the path such as knapweed and mullein – all local wild flowers – hopefully they will enrich the field edge grassland as discussed at site meeting in the summer.

In **field 2** some of the willow herb in the stream valley and bramble in the grassland near by has been cut/pulled. We had agreed to leave cutting any larger patches of bramble until the early Spring for cover for birds, mammals and insects. *But looking round this field I think too much bramble has already been cut. Rabbits?*

I am also very disappointed to see that the big ash tree near the picnic tables, described as 'one of the best in Worcestershire' because of its branches sweeping down to the ground has been cut back so that part of this classic feature has been lost. This despite the advice of Neil McClean and other discussions.

Mark propose that we only do the rest of the work at work parties to finish the winter plan.

The DWT visit went very much to plan – the bridge was erected on the Saturday by Cyril, David, John Sibbit and Tim and taken down when the DWT vols went by nearly the same team- Mark replacing Tim. DWT - about 5 vols and 2 staff plus Cyril, JohnS and myself all day, and Jenny (am) and Mark (pm). The bramble on the island was cut or strimmed and brought off the island to burn. A number of hazels were coppiced but others left as we try to establish a cycle leaving plenty of cover for nesting birds etc yet opening up areas for bluebells, primroses.

Sheep. *By October there were 8 ewes in Field 2; they were joined by a ram in November. Nick intends to remove them all in the next few weeks as they are running out of grass. They have once again done an excellent job. The largest of the ewes is the one that was attcked last year and he is very pleased with her condition. He tells me the borrowed ram would be worth over £1000!*