



Report on Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Support for Local Nature Reserves Management in North Warwickshire
April 2023 to March 2024



WWT Volunteers at Abbey Green LNR undertaking grassland management

Introduction

The following comprises a summary of works delivered over the last 11 months by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (“WWT”) in connection with Abbey Green Park, Cole End Park, Daffern’s Wood and Kingsbury Meadow Local Nature Reserves (“LNR”s).

The principle aim of management is to maintain and enhance these high value sites and their habitats for wildlife – these primarily being woodland, grassland, wetland habitats and ruderal/scrub. This is achieved through practical delivery of management often utilising local volunteers and the communities that use the sites and building diversity for nature. It's important to ensure the habitats maintain a good condition as this perpetuates structural and age diversity of the habitats that benefits a wide range of species from birds, mammals and invertebrates. Water is part of all four sites, and this is an essential facet for the wildlife that calls the sites home and is important to sustain. Of note, the spring and summer being the most important months for breeding for a host of wildlife, practical tasks are limited to maintenance, meadow management and invasive species control as detailed in the management schedules with woodland management and tree planting undertaken during the autumn and winter as a rule.

Headlines

Over the period of up to **December 2023**, there has been **a total of 54 individual incidences of volunteering** occurring at the sessions **across 4 sites on 12 sessions**.

The work achieved has been varied and detailed below, but cumulatively the time committed by the **volunteers equates to 256.2 hours. This can be represented as 36.6 days of volunteering input.**

Based on the £14.00 rate for volunteering value this totals and in-kind cash value of £3,586.80 for the period being reported on. Note an up-to-date report with final figures will be supplied at year end.

Summary of Activity:

Cole End Park:

The summer works of Himalayan Balsam pulling and maintenance of the newly planted tree whips and plug plants were completed at Cole End Park through a combination of midweek work parties and a single Severn Trent corporate work party. Himalayan Balsam had appeared to have increased in extent at the site, perhaps because of floods washing down the river Cole from upstream. The vast majority of these were removed through a combination of pulling and some brushcutting. The newly planted tree saplings are establishing well and received maintenance throughout the growing season and some replacement of losses over the winter. The grassland management was completed at the end of autumn and small-scale coppicing in the woodland blocks will bring structure and age diversity.



Tree planting at Cole End Park to increase tree species diversity and age structure which benefits more wildlife and the resilience of the woodland.



Balsam pulling, before and after at Cole End Park to reduce the impact of the invasive species on our native wildlife and reduce the spread in the water catchment.

Abbey Green:

Himalayan Balsam was also pulled before seeding in early summer and summer grassland management saw the ‘top meadow’ cut and raked by Trust staff and volunteers.

High water levels in September and October prevented reed management in the channels. Our local volunteer work party leaders continue to act as the eyes and ears for the site and we look forward to being able to support that further across 2024/2025.



Abbey Green: grassland management on the ‘top meadow’

Kingsbury Meadow:

A third of the sedge bed was cut and a proportion of the invasive bramble was cut back (see photo below) along with other scrub and the drier grassland areas were started. As a bonus, the walking path on the south side of the brook again received a cut back and fallen trees cleared whilst there were power tool operators on site. Further work over the winter included more grassland and bramble patch management.



Kingsbury Meadow: Sedge bed cutting

Of note, the sedge bed has increased its total extent due to the repeated yearly management and this important habitat is important to wetland species of invertebrates. The drier neutral grassland glades on the south of the brook were sensitively cut and rakes and invading scrub controlled.

One particularly exciting project over the winter has been our project to re-naturalise the Hurley Brook at Kingsbury Meadow by constructing two timber structures in the water course to deflect the flow, narrow the channel slightly and filter the water. After a considerable body of administration and permission seeking in the previous year, the structures were installed by our volunteers and staff in January 2024.



Erosion control areas where woody brash is placed and pinned between the posts (before and after below)



Woody debris placed in the channel to slow the flow.



Finally, the willow arches received some repairs in the winter months to further stabilise and maintain the living structures.

Daffern's Wood:

With a revised management plan and TPO permissions in place, woodland management could start in earnest this winter.

Sensitive coppicing of a handful of hazel shrubs in the centre of the wood and reducing the number of elder shrubs should ensure that the magnificent displays of wildflowers continue and expands. Coppicing in other areas will bring regeneration of mature rootstocks and age structure within the woodland. Three sycamore trees were removed to reduce the cover of this invasive non-native tree and remove a seed source. Small areas of bramble were also cut back.



A freshly coppiced stool – a practice of rotational cutting to produce age and structural diversity in woodlands that benefits wildlife.



Wetland management at Daffern's Wood to encourage better wetland habitats and maintain open water vital for wildlife.

We continued our programme of monitoring and removal of the garden escape variegated yellow archangel and undertook maintenance of the small woodland 'pond' /wetland in the wood.

The grassland areas to the North of the site received a cut and rake and a percentage of the scrub in the 'pit' was cut back to bring structure.

The school in New Arley will be visiting the site with the Trusts education team in March 2024 and will be taking wildlife inspiration back to improve their school grounds for wildlife on from the visit and supported by the Trust staff.

Guided walks across the LNR's were poorly attended this year despite a push on advertising, face book local groups and social media. This is something that will require consideration in the future.

Our volunteers enjoy working across the LNR and we receive many positive comments on our work parties. We continue to engage with local volunteers and keep local Councillors abreast of activities.

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