

# Beckford Nature Reserve

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## Overview 2008/2011

A three-year maintenance plan was drawn up after the purchase of the reserve in 2008, and although most of the objectives in the plan have been achieved, certain projects had to be revised owing to constraints and changing conditions at the time. For this reason the 2011/2014 maintenance forecast takes on a more general format to encompass changes in volunteer work availability, wildlife conditions etc. and financial constraints.

We have concentrated our efforts mainly on the north and western side of the reserve during this time, as this was the area most in need: removing large quantities of white poplar suckers and American brambles.

**Regular advice is taken from various conservation bodies, and well-attended working parties are held at least twice a year to carry out routine maintenance.**

### Advisors

John Clarke	Kemerton Conservation Trust
Rob Allen	Worcestershire Wildlife Trust
Harry Green	Worcestershire Recorders

Some of the more important projects also carried out during the 2008/2011 period were as follows.

- Chippings laid on the permissive footpaths for easier and safer walking.
- Steps installed for safety using coppiced material off the site.
- Alder trees coppiced on the lake edge, and on the island.
- Felling of enormous *Leylandii* on the south side.
- An entrance for disabled visitors was enlarged, and the bank retained with large boulders; work, and costs, thanks to Huntsmans Quarries Limited. A pathway and hard standing for a hide was constructed as promised in the original pledge.
- Mowing and raking of grassed areas were carried out July/August annually on the north and west side to encourage the return of wildflowers.
- Dialogue has been encouraged with Natural England with reference to the SSSI, and permission has been given for volunteers to carry out limited maintenance.
- Efforts have been made to encourage the participation of young people in this project, and a Duke of Edinburgh student is currently volunteering as part of his brief for that award.
- Local children have made bird boxes for the reserve.
- Records of bird sightings are kept in the hide and are published on the Beckford Nature Reserve website together with sightings of flora, insects, grass snakes etc., and records are constantly updated on these pages. The village webmaster carries out this task free of charge.

Accessibility for all, and improved walking conditions have seen visitor figures rise considerably over the three years, and while there are some issues with the increased volume of human traffic, it does not seem to have significantly disturbed the wildlife. There are no stipulations for owners to keep dogs on leads at present, but notices are put up to advise of the bird-nesting season at the end of February asking owners to make sure their dogs are under control and that visitors keep to the footpaths.

We are now in a situation where we should consolidate and expand on past work with the help of our advisors.

## Proposed maintenance projects 2011/2014

### Trees and coppicing

Sycamore saplings and trees should continue to be reduced in number, and the stumps treated to prevent regrowth. Some of the larger sycamore trees could be kept and grown on with a view to being felled later and sold to give an income. It has been advised to fell the large Turkey oak at the bottom of the steps on the north-west corner, and the ash tree opposite, as these will be out of scale during the coming years.

Viewing from the hide on the south side will become obscured by the regrowth of trees cut down in 2009, so will need re-coppicing to maintain visibility over the lake.

Some of the oak trees around the site will need to have work carried out by contractors to raise the crowns.

Consideration should be given to creating spaces on the lake side of the western end to improve the vision over the lake. Consideration should also be given to creating another viewing area on the north side of the lake in the general area of the steps.

On the south side, clearing scrub/ field maple saplings should be undertaken land side of the lake to provide access for maintenance.

### Brambles and undergrowth

We should continue to reduce and eradicate the cultivated brambles, which are a non-native species, particularly on the western end of the reserve; this to protect and expand a previously prolific wildflower area. The native brambles, which are a good food source and provide good nesting sites, should be controlled to provide emergent areas for wildfowl around the perimeter of the lake and to keep footpaths open. Efforts should be made to control *some* of the stinging nettles, particularly on the north and west end of the site. This may have to be done by spraying, using qualified operatives. Advice will be needed.

Efforts should be made to control some of the native species of bramble on the south side to prevent their spreading.

### Island

Continue clearing some of the non-native brambles on the island; this will largely depend on the water level of the lake.

### Grasslands

Continue strimming grassed areas annually in July/ August and rake off arisings to reduce the fertility and encourage the regeneration of wildflowers.

### SSSI

To continue dialogue with Natural England for permission to remove shrubs and brambles from the quarry face, as, and when the need arises.

John Clifford  
Conservation Warden 11/2/2011