

Beckford Nature Reserve

Charity Number 1119366

Once again our nature reserve is a picture of fertility with swathes of colourful comfrey and cow parsley. The primroses and violets made a fantastic show in early spring, and are now becoming an annual attraction for visitors. Coltsfoot has also done well, as have buttercups, clovers, vetches and ox-eye daisies; many of these have been quite scarce in previous years. It was also good to see bluebells on the north side, although those were heavily grazed by rabbits, as is now happening to the bee orchids, which are now appearing in new places.

A start has been made to create a hedgerow on the north side of the reserve; 200 mixed hedging seedlings have been donated by Worcestershire Countryside Council; these were duly planted by a working party in early February, and they all appear to have survived the dry weather and have been helped by the recent heavy rainfall in April and May. Hopefully, these will escape too much attention from the deer.

We are blessed again by the return of the sand martins; these little birds are a delight to watch skimming over the lake early on summer evenings. There has been general concern about the falling level of the lake over the past two years and, having sought advice, it was decided that no action could be taken to alleviate this problem; however, recent rainfall has seen a significant rise in the water level. Wildfowl seem to have enjoyed the extra 'beach' areas, and mallards, Canada geese, coots, etc. are often seen to be sunning and preening themselves there. Ducklings, at the time of writing, appear to have escaped the attentions of the black back gulls this year, which has been great relief to all.

We have been very fortunate to have received a bequest from a local resident; some of this money was used to purchase two owl boxes and four bat boxes, which have now been installed in various locations, and we are eagerly awaiting tenants. Dormouse tubes are regularly checked for occupancy by a licensed handler, as there has been some evidence of connectivity in the area, but so far blue tits and wood mice have been the only takers; these tubes have been installed as a long-term project so we hope that these shy little mammals will occupy them.

Once again our thanks go out to all the volunteers and fund raisers who help maintain the nature reserve in so many ways, and we feel very lucky to have the advice and support from our experts and mentors, as well as continued interest and encouragement from local residents.