

Walk round reserve, 18 June 2005

Rupert Higgins from Wessex Ecological Consultancy led the group on a walk round the reserve and identified some of the species there, as well as discussing some of the work needed.

By the school perimeter fence next to Savage's Wood:

- Broad-leaved spurge, traditionally an arable plant but excluded by modern agriculture. The seed lies dormant for a long time until disturbed, hence it thrived on ploughed fields. In the reserve it will need to be deliberately disturbed every three years, perhaps by rotavating the verges.
- Scarlet pimpernel
- Field pansy
- Danish scurvy grass, a tiny plant with tiny white flowers, normally a seaside plant.

Entering Savage's Wood:

Holes made in dead tree by woodpeckers

Hornbeam and beech have been planted

Ground cover includes enchanters' nightshade (with paler leaves) and dog's mercury (darker).

An issue here is how to block off unofficial paths. This has been done in Gorse Covert, Patchway.

On the other side of Savage's Wood (the side nearest the newt ponds):

There is a new plantation here, which needs thinning, and more shrubby species planted as an understorey – e.g. blackthorn, hawthorn, spindle.

The path into the plantation needs surfacing.

On walking towards the pond:

The brambles need to be occasionally flailed.

In the grassland beyond the plantation:

Bird's foot trefoil grows in the grass here.

In the middle of the grassland is an old field boundary of hazels. These could be managed via a mix of coppicing and hedgelaying – Paul could assess.

Two newly created newt ponds:

Newt habitat piles have been created at both ponds.

Dragonflies – broad-bodied libellula – seen at both. We also saw tadpoles in the pond nearest the wood.

After 12 months the group might take on the upkeep of these ponds.

Walking from Savage's Wood towards the Tump:

The school banks are within the LNR but still under the control of the education department. The area could be rotavated every 3 years in late summer, starting *this summer*. This is a good opportunity to start a grassland from scratch. We could spread hay from a wildflower meadow – e.g. from Wapley Bushes LNR.

The soil on the other side of the path, next to the brook, is very fertile and so is unlikely to be flower-rich – it is best left alone.

- Charlock (yellow)
- Common vetch (purple)
- Mayweed
- Common field speedwell

On the Tump:

- Celery-leaved buttercup
- Smooth tare (type of vetch)
- Grass vetchling
- Bird's-foot trefoil
- Redshanks (related to Japanese knotweed)
- Sainfoin – food for clouded yellow butterfly
- Small heath butterfly – quite rare.
- Burnet moth
- Burnet companion moth

The sides of the Tump should be kept as rough grassland. The ideal solution would be to graze cattle, but ponies would be easier to find; this would require fencing off the Tump. If this were not possible it should be mown occasionally.

Near the corner entrance to Webb's Wood, next to the school fence/Champs-sur-Marne;

Remove saplings

Infill the deadhedge with hawthorn.

In Webb's Wood:

Keep coppicing to maintain the understorey.

Walking up the cycle path from Webb's Wood:

On both sides of the path, thin the plantation and plant shrubs.

Plant hedging along the fence line where there are gaps, to maintain wildlife corridor.

Corner next to Sherbourne's Brake and Brook Way:

Treat as a wetland area. Create small pools/ditches.

Dig out montbretia (crocsmia).

All woods:

Survey bluebells next spring for Spanish bluebells.