

## Maintenance plan 2014 – 2017 Beckford Nature Reserve

We have been awarded 450 saplings from the Woodland Trust thanks to the WI and are hopefully able to complete planting the hedgerow on the northern boundary. We have been dependent on free issue of young trees from Worcestershire Countryside Council up until now. This will consolidate our boundary which at the moment consists of a single strand of fencing wire and dilapidated posts. When the hedge matures it will provide good nesting sites for small farmland birds. **Volunteer work.**

Trees on the north side of the reserve are overdue for thinning out. We should mark out the best shaped trees for retention as future veterans before commencing work. Removal of those remaining will allow more light to reach the woodland floor and encourage the colonisation of wildflowers etc. Some tree thinning of wild cherry and field maple on the south bank of the lake ought to be carried out as the area is now very overgrown, and we should endeavour to keep the lower lakeside path clear for maintenance and not public access. **Contract work over a minimum 2 year period**

Continue to control bramble and brash area in front of SSSI face as requested by Natural England. This will give the Sand Martins a clear run into their nesting holes. **Volunteer work**

The west end bank has a re-growth of brambles, so may consider treating with a herbicide spray. (Alan Marsh has a spraying certificate and would be happy to give advice.) This is necessary to keep the area open; more light will penetrate the ground which in turn will encourage flora thus providing a valuable food source for young birds etc. in the spring. **Contract and Volunteer work**

Before BNR was purchased by the village there was a walkway running parallel to Court Farm Lane from the kissing gate up to the entrance on the northwest corner. This became overgrown during the foot and mouth disease and has never been reopened. In years to come work may need to be carried out, and it would allow volunteers access for maintenance and possible tree planting (not generally for public access.) **Volunteer work**

Apply another coat of wood preservative on the old hide. **Volunteer work**

Continue making contact with Andy Tustin (tree surgeon) for more wood chips as and when needed for the maintenance of paths particularly on the steps and the area between Andrew Fritchie's gate and the old hide, also the path between the Rupert Ellis hide and John Hall's seat. Andy provides these free of charge.

Continue grass cutting on the north side at the end of July/beginning of August. It is advisable to leave the arisings on the ground for a few days for the grass to wilt and seeds to drop. Rake off and pile onto existing dead wood heaps to help provide a good habitat for invertebrates and reduce soil fertility. As the ground is not naturally grazed it is beneficial to keep the grass short which will encourage and help wildflowers regenerate; these do not thrive on highly fertile ground. This may

be an ideal time to refurbish the bug hotels which have been plundered by other inhabitants on the reserve. **Contract work and Volunteer work**

There are two clumps of hazel (one by kissing the gate entrance and one near the old hide) which would benefit from being coppiced (not both in the same year.) This would help to encourage a more vigorous re-growth and better fruiting; good for small rodents. A similar exercise was carried out in Beckford Churchyard and the hazel generally produces a lot of nuts. **Volunteer work**

Depending on how ash die back affects the reserve it may be worth thinking about planting a few trial trees like sweet chestnut and beech saplings as a possible suitable replacement (good broadleaf species) may be three or four of each to see how they perform. **Volunteer work**

Continue laying aggregate to the Rupert Ellis hide kindly provided free of charge by Huntsmans Quarries. Depending on when the level of the lake recedes and when the old path dries out, the two remaining bags of coarser aggregate will need to be laid at the west end path. Ivan Jones has kindly offered to transport this material free of charge with his mechanized wheelbarrow and digger. On completion, this should be overlaid with wood chip. This will not stop the path from flooding but may provide a better walkway for longer. Because of recent flooding on the west end we should install two or three steps to allow for future access to the higher path adjacent; this at present used to bypass the muddy and flooded path.

It has been our intention to lay the large hedge adjacent to the above path but due to flooding this has had to be put back for a second year. When carried out this hedge will regenerate and provide a good habitat and nesting site for birds and small mammals - especially if we can thicken it up with additional saplings. **Contract and Volunteer work**

Continue keeping the brambles at bay where we starting clearing them in 2012 on the north west corner of the lake. Reasons apply same as west end. **Volunteer work**

We should consider starting to make inroads into the dense bank of brambles on the boundary of Mr Andrew Fritchie's orchard. This area is impenetrable and clearance should be carried out in small areas, some by a contractor as it is a very steep bank with deep water at the bottom.

#### **Contractor work**

Clear area of north side of Mark's garden wall (talk with Mark re removal of ivy etc) **Volunteer work**

Try to remove some of the ground hugging ivy in the ash poles on the east end; this could be carried out by a working party; again bit at a time, and it would encourage more wildflowers particularly snow drops. **Volunteer work**

**We continue to seek advice from our mentors prior to carrying out major works on the reserve and invite them to visit the reserve on a regular basis.**