



The Henley Wildlife Group



Report for the Annual Town Meeting 7 April 2016

Mill Meadows

A visit to the Meadows on Easter Monday revealed that the Snakeshead Fritillaries are already flowering, as is one clump of Marsh Marigolds. It is always pleasing to see the Meadows coming to life in Spring.

Our management of the wildlife areas continues to focus on controlling non-native invasive plants, e.g. Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, and managing habitat diversity by reducing some species that would otherwise become too dominant and crowd out more attractive ones. The reeds and pond sedges have become increasingly dominant around the ponds in recent years so we are now cutting them more often to reduce their dominance.

The normal course of succession for ponds is for the surrounding vegetation to slowly engulf them leaving little or no evidence that there was ever a pond there. Our first two ponds were dug in 1995 and 1996 and we were slowly losing them to succession, despite a few attempts at halting it, so it was time for an overhaul. We consulted our pond expert and arranged for him to re-design them. The work was completed in December 2015 and now have ponds that are much improved for wildlife and people. For example, the River & Rowing Museum now has much better access to the ponds for their education events. Our thanks go to Rod d'Ayala, and all his helpers, and to the Town Council who provided funding and manpower to make the work possible.

Valley Road Chalk Bank

The chalk bank is a natural area that largely looks after itself. The main tasks are litter picking and keeping the paths open. These are undertaken as and when required.

Gillotts Field

The Town Council continue to cut the field to control the Ragwort but they leave some areas uncut for the benefit of the more attractive wild flowers like the Pyramidal Orchids that have been seen there in recent years. Volunteers hand pull the Ragwort in these areas. Hound's-tongue, Musk Mallow and Fox and Cubs, an attractive orange hawkweed, are also found on the field.

Other Points

The Group thanks the Town Council for all their support throughout the year.

HWG and Henley in Transition arranged for the Town Council to leave parts of the Greys Road embankment unmown again last year and we were rewarded with another display of wildflowers including a few Pyramidal Orchids.

The annual toad rescue on the Henley to Marlow Road outside the Henley Business School has more or less come to an end for the season. Dedicated volunteers ferry them across the road in buckets to their breeding ponds to prevent them being squashed by passing traffic.

We would be pleased to welcome people to our work parties. We work on Mill Meadows on the first Wednesday of the month, meeting in the River & Rowing Museum car park, and there are occasional work parties on the Chalk Bank and Gillotts Field. All work parties run from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30, with a break for tea or coffee and cake at around 11 a.m.

For further information, please visit our web-site <http://www.henleywildlifegroup.co.uk/> , or contact Sally Rankin on 01491 578633 or s.rankin@btinternet.com.