

Nature Site report - for MAHS AGM 2018

For those of us born before 1970, we have lived through a 55% decline in wild species in Britain compared with before 1970. Plant species face the highest threat, followed by insects and other invertebrates (a 69% decline over the last 40yrs). Agricultural methods and urbanisation are the major causes, followed by climate change. – State of Nature Report

Scientist warned last year that the world is facing a sixth mass extinction:

'Species from hedgehogs to skylarks and birds of prey are being wiped out, the latest survey figures show. Numbers of grey partridges, corn buntings and tree sparrows have dropped by at least 90 per cent in 40 years, leaving them all at risk of vanishing from Britain. The number of hedgehogs in the countryside has more than halved since 2000. Nearly two-thirds of Britain's skylarks and lapwings have disappeared' - RSPB report for World Wildlife Day

The "alarming" declines in wildlife will threaten not just the richness of the planet but also our ability to grow food, according to the RSPB.

- taken from 'The Independent' newspaper 3rd March 18

Three full years have passed since we first started developing the Nature Site on a very steep, un-useable part of the site. Having cleared large areas of brambles, roots and all, we have established a sizeable area containing different habitats to encourage an increase in the numbers and range of wildlife species. Being within flying distance of both Stanmer Park and the Downs, we are adding a small stepping stone to the 'green corridor', used by wildlife to move and multiply.



Habitats are:

- **Sunny Flower banks:** planted with many different species of Downland wild flowers- to provide nectar and caterpillar food for butterflies, bees and other insects
- **Planted over 60 young trees:** introducing an additional 14 extra native species – to provide nectar, berries, roosting and nesting places for birds, insects and small mammals
- **Log Piles:** piles of rotting logs provide food and habitats to many insects, reptiles, and fungi.
- **Pond:** though small, the water and plants growing in it provide habitats and drinking water to frogs, dragonflies, bees, birds and other wild creatures.
- **Stone piles:** provide warm basking sites to cold-blooded creatures, and nesting sites for solitary bees.

- **Retained bramble patches:** good habitats for many creatures providing nectar, berries and safe and warm cover for hibernation and egg-laying.
- **Damson scrub:** closely packed damson trees, with dense ivy climbing up them provides food, nesting, hibernation sites and perching places for birds, bats, bees, butterflies and small mammals.

We have completed a circular path, building scores of steps, and installed several benches to encourage allotment holders to walk around, sit and watch.

What wildlife do we have, and has it increased?

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| Plant and tree species | 64 | 134 | 157 |
| Bird species | | | 14 |
| Butterflies and moths | 15 | 14 | 15 |
| Other insects | | | 11 |
| Reptiles | | | 3 |
| | | | |

(All sightings are of creatures with their 'feet' on our Nature Site. We have not counted birds seen flying past or in neighbouring trees. While we have done systematic counts of plants, birds and butterflies, other insects and reptiles show merely the few we can casually identify)

Who does the work?

A core of 5 people, spend a couple of hours a month maintaining the site. Most have been part of the group since its beginning, 2 have joined since. Some of the original people have dropped out, and some encourage from the sidelines but are not able to join in the work. Huw from Sussex Wildlife Trust has brought his 'Hit Squad' of up to a dozen volunteers twice in 2017 and again last month, to help keep on top of the work (beating back the brambles and keeping the paths clear).

Plants have been provided by:

Special Branch Tree nursery, Stanmer Park: volunteers who raise & sell native trees from locally collected seed

John Gapper, Stanmer Council nursery: who with volunteer help raises wildflower plants from locally collected seeds, donated to us by B & H Council

Sally Griffin: who has collected seed, raised and planted many wildflower plants.

Liz Yeats, Rachel Cohen: who collected and scattered locally collected wildflower seeds over the site.

