

Nature Site Report April 2019, Liz Yeats

“The Moulsecoomb allotment nature site acts as an important part of the “green corridor” linking the wild areas that run down from the hills above Bevendean and Whitehawk . This allows wildlife to move around in search of shelter, breeding and food relatively easily within the urban environment. The site offers excellent habitat for a wide range of creatures in an increasingly busy city.”

Huw Morgan
Sussex Wildlife Trust
Brighton & Hove Project officer

The Nature Site is now in its 5th year, and developing all the time. Trees planted in the first year now form a 7 foot hedge, flowering and providing berries for the birds. The Autumn colours were glorious last November.



This winter we expanded the site, with the help of Sussex Wildlife Trust & Brighton Council volunteers, clearing a huge new area of brambles, digging a large new wildlife pond and planting around 20 more native tree saplings. Sean found us 2 large logs for a bench, and made a top for it from a tree trunk. One of the regular volunteers brought a dozen tree saplings from his mother's garden in Ashdown forest, and Special Branch donated another 12 mixed native tree saplings. Henry (allotment holder) gave us four pot grown hazel trees.

SWT volunteers (15 of them with Huw Morgan in charge), also brought with them and planted hundred's more wildflower plugs – donated by Stanmer nursery when it closed in 2018. The very hot drought last summer made us anxious for their survival, but after some rain in September many of them had a late flowering.

None of this would have been possible with the original workgroup of only 4 or 5 of us, but we had a session where a large group of SWT volunteers came, and another when 5 Brighton Council volunteers came, working alongside us. With this number of people we can really get to grips with encroaching brambles. We also started to recruit more regular volunteers from these two groups, people who liked the site so much they wanted to be a regular part of maintaining & developing it. Our work group now regularly has 8 or 9 people, from a pool of 16.



The new pond is particularly impressive: 4mts x 1.5mts. Built on a sloping hill that needed terracing, we dug, lined and planted it in 4 or 5 work sessions- often in the rain! We created new paths and steps around it and through the damson copse behind. The reinforcing bank to the pond has been planted with wildflowers grown from seed collected on the Downs, and raised on my and Sally's plots. We expect it to attract frogs, lizards, newts, Damsel and Dragonflies. Birds, foxes and badgers already drink from it, as do many different bees and insects. We hope it will attract bats in the summer months feeding off the insect life.



This Spring we have seen a huge number of Queen bumble bees looking for nesting sites on the established wildflower banks.

Increase in biodiversity chart.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Plant species	64	134	157	175
Bird species			14	21
Butterfly species	16	15	15	25

Money.

Income since 2015

donation box (2015-18) 183.51

donations from Nori's apple tree sales (2018) 61.46

Total income 244.97

Exp

Tree saplings (2016) 43.80

1st small pond/ sand etc (2016) 72.07

2nd large pond- liner etc (2018) 90.87

Total exp 206.74

Bal in bank 38.23

5 yr old hedge flowers for the 1st time- March 19



Vivid blue fungi found-'Cobalt Crust'



Regular team digs new pond- in the rain!