

Moulsecoomb Allotments Nature Site

Review 2020-21

by Liz Yeats

It's amazing to remember that we only started work on this totally overgrown patch of ground in February 2015. We've achieved so much!

We've cleared large areas of brambles and nettles, created paths, established wild flower banks and planted around 80 native trees. In the past year alone we have transformed a whole new area.



Astounding! December 2018 we were wallowing in the mud digging out a new large pond, having previously cleared the area of 8 foot brambles, roots and all. Yet by June 2019 it was a mass of wild flowers & insects. We've seen foxes, squirrels and birds drinking from it, seen marks of badgers rooting out worms around it. We've seen so many different bees, bumble bees and solitary bees (there are 250 different species of these in Britain). We've watched Azur and Red Damselflies and



two species of dragonfly feeding, mating and egg-laying in the pond.



The whole site was awash with wildflowers last summer, and it has attracted so many different butterflies, bees and other insects, and of course the birds who feed on seed or insects.

Last summer (2020) we saw a rare Large Scabious Mining bee, confirmed by the Biodiversity record centre.



The bank of kidney vetch flowers attracted a number of 'Small Blue' butterflies in. These are getting Nationally scarce so we hope they have established a breeding colony on the Nature Site. The eggs are laid on the seed heads of Kidney vetch flowers – on which the caterpillars are dependent for food.

This multitude of life and colour is the result of the work carried out

over the previous winters. And every year the Site gets better!

Winter is the time for most of the exciting work on the Nature Site. Most species of wildlife are



hibernating or dormant at this time, and we can safely coppice or plant trees, dig ponds, mend steps, build benches and other structures and clear brambles & scrub for new areas of habitat. And it's not too hot to work! Until Covid 19 stopped our monthly work session we were well on the way to completing a 'roof' to collect water for the large pond during dry summer months. The structure is in place, but has yet to have a

roof fitted! We also planted around 20 more young native trees, all donated by members of the group, or by Special Branch tree nursery.



The group has 16 people on the mailing list. 9 of them don't have an allotment here but care about nature conservation work and love working on our site. There are usually 7-9 of us at our monthly work sessions. We write up each session and the reports and photos are on our website [Moulscoomb Allotments Nature Site](http://Moulscoomb%20Allotments%20Nature%20Site)

Wildlife species count.

Each year we count and record the different species of living things seen on the site. Records of Plant, Butterfly and Bird species are accurate as we are confident we can correctly identify them. Bees and other insects are extremely under-counted - we are just not skilled enough to identify more than a handful. Despite under-recording of insects, the numbers reflect what we can hear and see, which is many more species now than when we started 6 years ago.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Plant species	64	134	157	175	210	
Butterflies & moths	16	15	15	25	21	
Bees & other insects			11	15	29	
Birds			14	21	23	

Money	Income	Expenditure	Bal
Balance as AGM April 2019			£38.23
Donation box in shop 3.12.19 & 8.3.20	14.85		
Pond plants May 19		29.21	
Poster printing		1.00	
Balance at AGM May 2020			£22.87

What members of the work group said.

"The nature site is a fantastic way to connect with nature in the middle of the city. Sitting by the pond watching damselflies, listening to the birds, watching bees fly around wildflowers, spotting the shy resident frog on site, and enjoying the growth of lush greenery on the site is a joy like no other. I am really glad to be part of this project." **Kasturi**



'I am extremely grateful to have the nature site close to my allotment plot and home. For my allotment it means increased wildlife in the vicinity, including pollinators and predators of unwanted pests. This helps my organic growing methods and increases yields. On a local level, I appreciate the efforts made to support the nature of the area where I live. I wish more people nationwide would do the same, it would bring amazing results.'

'Working in a team, sharing the same goals is really fun and I enjoy the sessions immensely. It's a wonderful feeling assessing the day's work, and watching out for new or returning plants and creatures.'

*'I have learnt a lot since attending the sessions. I now know more conservation methods, species of plants, insects and birds. I really enjoyed spotting a partridge at the top of the site, a pheasant on my plot, plus a woodpecker and sparrow hawks in the trees neighbouring the nature site.' **Tara***

*'I feel so lucky to have been involved from the start in creating the Nature site. It's wonderful to do something positive for wildlife when all of our species are in such a massive decline. I enjoy working with everyone in the group and being inspired by their enthusiasm. And a visit to the Nature site really makes my day!' **Dave***

*'I still get this surge of excitement about seeing different species of creatures, especially when we've not seen them here before. This Spring on the Nature Site, I've seen a Whitethroat singing and displaying to attract a mate after it's long migration from Africa, and the wonderful metallic green butterfly the Green Hairstreak. It's so brilliant to think we've created habitats for all these plants and animals, which will continue long after my knees can no longer cope with working on the steep slope!' **Liz***

