

AGAA Environment Group walk -19th August 2012 –approx. 1 hour

The Wood - From the composting toilet, we're taking the pathway into the wood, past the bug hotel made by Rebecca and the brownies. As the path goes into the wood there is an area on the left which there is less dense growth and which could be made into a clearing to encourage more flowers (bluebells, yellow archangel, wood mainly alder, elder, oak, hawthorn, holly brambles and ivy). As the path reaches the cemetery railings, you can see the hedge we have planted- mixture of field maple, holly, hawthorn, hazel with a wild service tree (a fairly rare native tree) in the far corner. We have put some weed suppressant sheets around each plant but they still need to be kept weed free until the hedge is more established – if you would like to adopt a few hedge plants to look after, please let us know. We want to continue the path so it loops around the edge of the wood. We would also like to fix some bat boxes and nest boxes in and around the wood. Perhaps you would like to make and donate a box!

Perimeters -The plan is to combine the path work with the planned planting of a prickly hedge along the bottom boundary edge with the cemetery in Autumn/Winter 2012/13. (Natural England suggestions include holly, blackthorn, hawthorn and pyracantha). Where there are chain link fences, NE suggest bramble, dog rose and sweet briar to grow through them to make a 'fedge'. Retrace our steps through the wood and, out of the gate **A** and into the cemetery to view the wood boundary **B**. Then to the main gate to look at the hedging planted near the manure bay – in need of maintenance. Down the narrow path and through the side gate to the lower field. There is a wide variety of plants along the railings between the two sites which creates a green corridor – a refuge and food source - for wildlife. We have added some native hedging – hawthorn, field maple, hazel - to the existing bramble and blackthorn. While it needs managing to keep tidy and not cause too much shade on the plots, we need to keep the density at the base and to leave pruning until late winter, after the berries have gone, but before the start of the nesting season as it is illegal to disturb nesting birds. Some plot-holders have volunteered to look after part of the hedge from the main gate to the gate between fields. Turn right and walk down to the...

Meadow and Copse - Continue walk to pass bee hives **C**, pond, stag beetle pile **D**, meadow **E**(reserve part uncut for most of the year to allow for damp meadow flowers?). Ragwort is now in flower – cinnabar moths lay their eggs on the underside of the leaves. You might see the caterpillars now which are black and yellow striped. Hornet hoverflies (harmless) and dragonflies have also been seen recently on the lower field since the warmer sunnier weather.

Pond - Walk to site of possible natural unlined pond **F**. Even though a natural pond is likely to dry out during normal summers, such ponds are still valuable habitats. Some dragonfly larvae survive in the mud for a couple of years. Hedging was planted at the edge but is now very overgrown – need help to clear a path and see if they have survived.

Brambles and edges- plan to cut swathes in on 3 or 4 year rotation, so that there is always a mixture of new shoots and mature growth for habitats. We also want to move brambles further back to allow space for us to plant a wildflower strip. Our aim is to preserve and construct a wide range of wildlife habitats to attract the widest range of wildlife possible.

If you see anything unusual, please record it on the blog, or put a note on the shed.

AGAA Site Nature Walk

