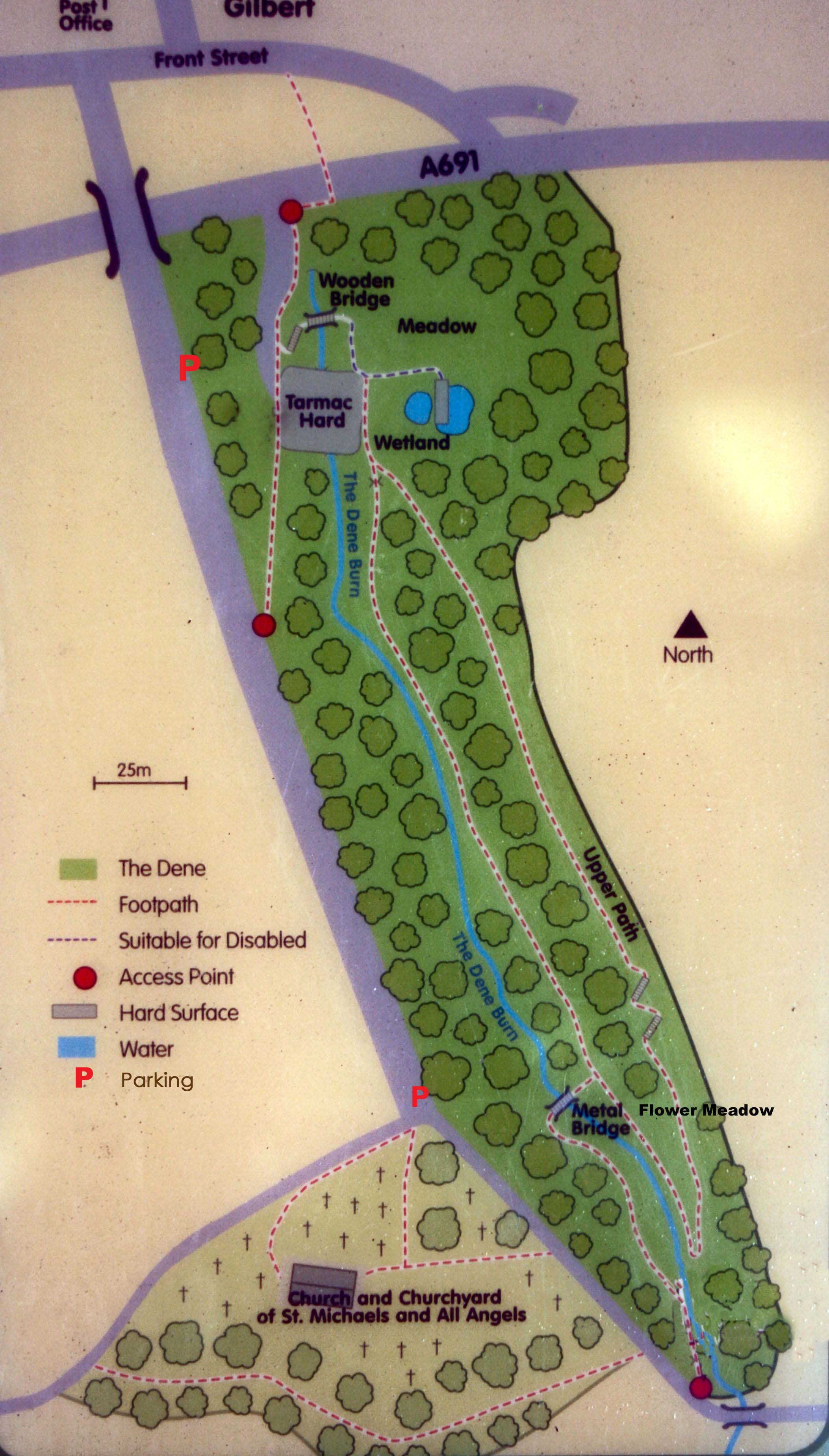


**Witton Dene Local Nature Reserve**



Durham County Council

**1:1 LOCATION**

Grid Ref NZ 234 454

Ordnance Survey Explorer 308

Postcode for GPS purposes DH7 6SU

Approx 3 miles from Durham City Centre

**1:2** **ACCESS AND VISITOR FACILITIES**

There are two parking areas (see key Map above) once entering Coach Lane from B6312.These parking areas provide immediate access to the entrances to Witton Dene. The first one is adjacent to the parking layby and consists of a kissing gate which leads down a ramp into the north end of the Dene. The second parking area is at the end of Coach Lane which is the parking area used for access to St Michael and All Angels Church. This leads down a slope adjacent to churchyard at the bottom of which is an open gated entrance to the south of the Dene. A further gated entrance is available for walkers crossing the busy Bypass from Witton Gilbert Village.

A circular walk enables the visitor to take in most of the Dene. The lower path follows the course of the Dene Burn southwards. An upper path branches up from a Pond at the north end and re -joins the lower path just before a metal bridge over the stream.

The area is ideal for walkers but unfortunately wheelchair users would find difficulty accessing much of the pathways excepting the main areas to the north of the Dene where access is also provided to a dipping platform over the pond.

**1:3** **LAND TENURE**

The land is owned by Durham County Council and is managed in partnership with local volunteers under the auspices of Friends of Witton Dene and Breathing Space Project.

**1:4** **SITE STATUS**

The site is designated as a Local Nature Reserve. The area is approximately 5.4 acres (2.2 hectares)

**1:5 PHYSICAL, BIOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC FEATURES**

Witton Dene is a steep sided wooded area which contains many ancient trees some of which are recorded as veteran trees. Some of the Beech trees were first recorded in1828 although the area most certainly has been used as a resource for timber and firewood for many hundreds of years probably dating back to Norman times when the church was first built and a Leper Hospital existed. (Part of this now forms part of the Farm House beside the Church). The Dene has in the past been occupied. The gooseberry and raspberry bushes are the remains of the garden of a cottage which was situated in the Dene. In 1828 Rector Richardson planted 4400 forest trees to create a wilderness. Some of these are still standing. In 1921 there was a scheme to turn the area into a park. A village war memorial, fountain, and seating area were provided as well as footpaths and stepping stones. The stream was culverted and a car park provided at this time for a picnic area. The war memorial was moved to Sacriston Lane in 1981. The fountain is now the site of the dipping platform pond and the stepping stones were replaced by a metal bridge in 2012. In 1996 the bypass cut off the Dene from the village and changed much of the access.

The mature woodland contains a mix of deciduous trees and provides for a variety of woodland flowers throughout the year. Similarly the site is a haven for wildlife. A list of the flora, fauna and wildlife which has been sighted and recorded in the Dene is appended (APPENDIX A)

1:6 **OBJECTIVES, AIMS AND VISION**

1. To provide the means to develop a wild life strategy together with educational and social resources.

The site has been utilised for bird and bat walks and local schools use the Dene to learn about the species which exist and partake in pond/stream dipping/identification of leaves and fungi. Groups such as All-age Working Parties and Nature Detectives (7 – 11 yr olds) have been organised on weekends and in school holidays. The Breathing Space project currently organises several sessions aimed at adults focused within the Dene such as mindfulness walks and weekly working parties providing emotional health and wellbeing to vulnerable people in the community. It also runs Woodland Wonders, a week-long Forest School in the summer vacation aimed at primary-age children which has proven popular and been over -subscribed.

1. To attract and engage more people in active conservation work.

The Friends of Witton Dene (FOWD) has operated for several years with the objective of opening up and developing the area so it can be used for educational and leisure use. FOWD has used volunteers to create pathways, steps, bridges, dipping platform, pond, wetland area as well as undertaking substantial tree planting. These have to be maintained year on year and can only be sustained by people willing to be engaged in wildlife activities.

1. To develop and maintain wild flower and insect friendly flora to encourage pollinators.

A woodland meadow was created in 2009 to the north of the Dene and a newer one is in process of creation at the southern end. In such ways local bio-diversity can be assured through management of the natural environment.

1. To provide information to the Community about the Dene and its place in the context of local walks and activities.

Information on local walks is available from the Countryside Section DCC and St. Michaels Church. In conjunction with the Local Parish Plan it is hoped that initiatives via publications and websites might share strategies of how best to inform and involve the community at large.

1. To form an Action Plan to detail objectives and record work plan activities as they occur.

This can be viewed as Witton Dene Action plan (see APPENDIX B). This will extend to 2020 when this plan will again be reviewed and updated as necessary.

1. **Health, Safety, Security and Public Liability**

To ensure the safety of volunteers, working parties and organised groups through continued supervision and planned risk assessments. FOWD have agreed to combine their activities with those of Breathing Spaces who have recorded a Generic Risk Assessment on file with the Countryside Ranger Section of DCC. This is because it is not always possible to have a Ranger on site whenever work and maintenance duties are carried out. A specific Risk Assessment will be carried out on the actual day of any activity. Presently this will be performed by Dave Tully whose Company “Woodwise “arrange, monitor and carry out duties and tasks as designated by the Breathing Space Project in conjunction with FOWD. Records to be kept in the Church Office for scrutiny and in any event of insurance claims arising as a result of injury or damage occurring whilst partaking in arranged Dene maintenance, improvement or organised activities.

**Appendix A**

**Species List**

**Dene Flora**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ground Flora** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Bent Grass | *Agrostis gigantea* |  |  |
| Biting Stonecrop | *Sedum acre* |  |  |
| Bluebell | *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus* |  | selfheal  Self Heal |
| Bracken | *Pteridium aquilinum* |  |
| Bramble | *Rubus fruticosa* |  |
| Broad Buckler Fern | *Dryopteris dilitata* |  |
| Broad leaved Dock | *Rumex obtusifolius* |  |
| Broad Leaved Willow herb | *Epilobium montanum* |  |
| Bush Vetch | *Vicia cassubica* |  |
| Canadian Pond-weed | *Elodea canadensis* |  |
| Celandine | *Ranunculus ficaria* |  |
| Cock's Foot Grass | *Dactylis glomerata* |  |
| Comfrey | *Symphytum officinale* |  |
| Common Duck-weed | *Lemna minor* |  |
| Common Hemp-nettle | *Galeopsis bifida* |  |  |
| Common Ragwort | *Senecio jacobaea* |  |  |
| Cow Parsley | *Anthriscus sylvestris* |  |  |
| Creeping Buttercup | *Ranunculus repens* |  |  |
| Creeping thistle | *Circium arvense* |  |  |
| Crosswort | *Cruciata laevipes* |  |  |
| Daffodil | *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* |  | hardfern  Broad Buckler Fern |
| Dog Rose | *Rosa canina* |  |
| Dog’s Mercury | *Mucurialis perennis* |  |
| Field Bindweed | *Convolvulus arvensis* |  |
| Figwort | *Scrophularia nodosa* |  |
| Forget-me-not | *Myosotis arvensis* |  |
| Foxglove | *Digitalis purpurea* |  |
| Garlic Mustard | *Alliaria petiolata* |  |
| Goose grass | *Geum aparine* |  |
| Greater Burdock | *Arctium lappa* |  |  |
| Greater Stitchwort | *Stellaria holostea* |  |  |
| Greater Willow herb | *Epilobium hirsutum* |  |  |
| Ground Elder | *Aegopodium podagraria* |  |  |
| Hard Rush | *Juncus inflexus* |  |  |
| Hart's Tongue Fern | *Asplenium scolopendrium* |  |  |
| Hedge Woundwort | *Stachys sylvatica* |  |  |
| Herb Bennett | *Geum urbanum* |  |  |
| Herb Robert | *Geranium robertianum* |  |  |
| Himalayan Balsam | *Impatiens glandulifera* |  |  |
| Hogweed | *Heraclium sphondylium* |  |  |
| Honeysuckle | *Lonicera periclymenum* |  | Umbel  Hogweed |
| Ivy | *Hedera helix* |  |
| Japanese knotweed | *Reynoutria japonica* |  |
| Lords and Ladies | *Arum maculatum* |  |
| Male Fern | *Dryopteris felis-mas\** |  |
| Marsh Marigold | *Caltha palustris* |  |
| Meadow Crane’s-bill | *Geranium pratense* |  |
| Meadowsweet | *Filipendula ulmaria* |  |
| Nettle | *Urtica dioica* |  |
| Nipplewort | *Lapsana communis* |  |
| Primrose | *Primula vulgaris* |  |  |
| Purple Loosestrife | *Lythrum salicaria* |  |  |
| Ragged Robin | *Lychnis flos-cuculi* |  |  |
| Ramsons | *Allium Ursinum* |  |  |
| Raspberry | *Rubus idaeus* |  |  |
| Red Campion | *Silene dioica* |  | *Ragged_RobinIMG_0447small_edited-1.jpg*  Ragged robin |
| Rosebay Willow herb | *Epilobium angustifolium* |  |
| Selfheal | *Prunella vulgaris* |  |
| Sweet Cicely | *Myrrhis odorata* |  |
| Teasel | *Dypsacus fullonum* |  |
| Water Avens | *Geum rivale* |  |
| Water Starwort | *Callitiche stagnalis* |  |
| White Dead Nettle | *Lamium album* |  |
| Winter Aconite | *Eranthus hyemalis* |  |
| Wood Anemone | *Anemone nemorosa* |  |
| Wood Sorrel | *Oxalis acetosella* |  |  |
| Woodrush | *Luzula campestris* |  |  |
| Yellow Flag | *Iris pseudacorus* |  |  |
| Yorkshire Fog | *Holcus lanatus* |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Trees and Shrubs** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Alder | *Alnus glutinosa* |  | *Hchestnut* |
| Ash | *Fraxinus excelsior* |  |
| Beech | *Fagus sylvatica* |  |
| Bird Cherry | *Prunus padus* |  |
| Crack Willow | *Salix cracca* |  |
| Elder | *Sambuccus nigra* |  |
| Elm | *Ulmus sp.* |  |
| Goat Willow | *Salix capraea* |  |
| Gooseberry | *Ribes uva-crispa* |  |
| Hawthorn | *Crataegus monogyna* |  | Horse Chestnut |
| Holly | *Ilex aquifolium* |  |
| Horse Chestnut | *Aesculus hippocastanum* |  |
| Mock Orange | *Philadelphus sp.* |  |
| Rhododendron | *Rhododendron sp.* |  |
| Rowan | *Sorbus aucuparia* |  |
| Sessile Oak | *Quercus petraea* |  |
| Sycamore | *Acer pseudoplatanus* |  |  |
| White Willow | *Salix alba* |  |  |
| Yew | *Taxus baccata* |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Fungi** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Bark Bonnet | *Mycaena speirea* |  |  |
| Candlesnuff Fungus | *Xylaria hypoxylon* |  |  |
| Coral Spot | *Nectria cinnabarina* |  | stinkhorn |
| Common Puffball | *Lycoperdon perlatum* |  |
| Common Eyelash | *Scutellinia scutellata* |  |
| Dryad’s Saddle | *Polyporus squamosus* |  |
| Honey Fungus | *Armillaria mellea* |  |
| Jelly Ear | *Auricularia auricula-judae* |  |
| King Alfred's Cakes | *Daldinia concentrica* |  |
| Shaggy Scaly Cap | *Pholiota squarrosa* |  |
| Silky Rosegill\*\* | *Volvariella bombycina* |  |
| Stink Horn | *Phallus impudicus* |  | Stink Horn |

\*On original list but not found

\*\* 5th record for Co Durham



Silky Rosegill

**Mammals**

|  |
| --- |
| Hedgehog |
| Mole |
| Wood mouse |
| Brown rat |
| Short-tailed vole |
| Grey squirrel |
| Rabbit |
| Roe deer |
| Fox |
| Pipistrelle bat |
| Otter (In River) |
| Mink (In River) |

**Birds**

Blackcap

Blackbird

Blue Tit

Brambling

Bullfinch

Carrion Crow

Chaffinch

Chiffchaff

Coal Tit

Collared Dove

Dunnock

Fieldfare

Goldcrest

Goldfinch

Garden Warbler

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Great Tit

Greenfinch

Green Woodpecker

Blackcap

Blackbird

Blue Tit

Brambling

Bullfinch

Carrion Crow

Chaffinch

Chiffchaff

Coal Tit

Collared Dove

Dunnock

Fieldfare

Goldcrest

Goldfinch

Garden Warbler

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Great Tit

Greenfinch

Green Woodpecker

Grey Wagtail

House Martin

House Sparrow

Jackdaw

Jay

Kestrel

Linnet

Long Tailed Tit

Magpie

Mallard

Mistle Thrush

Nuthatch

Pheasant

Pied Wagtail

Red Wing

Redpoll

Reed Bunting

Robin

Rook

Sand Martin

Siskin

Song Thrush

Sparrow Hawk

Starling

Swallow

Swift

Tawny Owl

Tree Creeper

Tree Sparrow

Whitethroat

Willow Warbler

Wood Pigeon

Wren

Yellow Hammer

**Additionally on the River**

Dipper

Grey Heron

Kingfisher Mallard

Mute Swan



**Invertebrates**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **INSECTS** | | | |  | |  | | | |
| **Lepidoptera** | | | |  | |  | | | |
|  | | | |  | |  | | | |
| **Butterflies** | | | |  | |  | | | |
| Comma | | *Polygonia c-album* | |  | |  | | | |
| Meadow Brown | | *Maniola jurtina* | |  | | *Comma_rd.jpg*  *Comma* | | | |
| Orange tip | | *Anthocharis cardamines* | |  | |
| Peacock | | *Inachis io* | |  | |
| Red admiral | | *Vanessa atalanta* | |  | |
| Ringlet | | *Aphantopus hyperantus* | |  | |
| Small tortoiseshell | | *Aglais urticae* | |  | |
| Small white | | *Pieris rapae* | |  | |
| Large White | | *Pieris brassicae* | |  | |
| Speckled Wood | | *Parage aegeria* | |  | |  | | | |
|  | | | |  | |  | | |
| **Moths** | | | |  | |  | | |
| Silver-ground Carpet | | *Xanthorhöe montanata* | |  | |  | | | |
| Common White Wave | | *Cabera pusaria* | |  | |  | | | |
|  |  | |  | |  | | |
| **Diptera** |  | |  | |  | | |
| Black-fly (larvae in stream) | *Simulium sp.* | |  | |  | | |
| Bluebottle | *Calliphora vomitoria* | |  | |  | | |
| Dolichopodid fly | *Poecilobothrus nobilitatus* | |  | | *Dytiscus-sub_9889_1.jpg*  *Dytiscus nymph* | | |
| Flesh-fly | *Sarcophaga carnaria* | |  | |
| Greenbottle | *Lucilia caesar* | |  | |
| Hover-fly | *Eupeodes nitens* | |  | |
| Hover-fly | *Volucella pellucens* | |  | |
| Mosquito | *Culex pipiens* | |  | |
| Muscid fly | *Phaeonia pallida* | |  | |
| Muscid fly | *Phaeonia pallida* | |  | |  | |
| Muscid fly | *Phaeonia angelicae subventa* | |  | |  | |
| St Mark’s-fly | *Bibio marci* | |  | |  | |
|  |  | |  | |  | |
| **Scorpion Flies** |  | |  | |  | |
| Scorpion Fly | *Panorpa germanica* | |  | |  | |
|  |  | |  | |  | | |
| **Dragonflies** |  | |  | |  | | |
| Common Blue Damselfly | *Enallagma cyathigerum* | |  | |  | | |
| Large Red Damselfly | *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* | |  | | *Gerris_9853_1.jpg*  Pond skater | | |
| Southern Hawker | *Aeschna cyanea* | |  | |
|  |  | |  | |
| **Hymenoptera** |  | |  | |
| Bumble Bee | *Bombus pratorum* | |  | |
| Common Wasp | *Vespa vulgaris* | |  | |
| Solitary Bee | *Andrena cineraria* | |  | |
| Spiny Mason Wasp | *Odynerus spinipes* | |  | |  | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Coleoptera** |  | |  | | |  | | |
| Great Diving Beetle (in pond) | *Dytiscus marginalis* | |  | | |  | | |
| Whirligig Beetle (in pond) | *Gyrinus natator* | |  | | |  | | |
|  | | *Helochares lividus* | |  | | |  | | |
|  | | *Hydrobius fuscipes(in pond)* | |  | | |  | | |
| Ladybird larvae | |  | |  | | |  | | |
|  | |  | |  | | |  | | |
| **Hemiptera** | |  | |  | | |  | | |
| Pond Skater | *Gerris lacustris* | |  | | |  | | |
| Water Boatman | *Corixa punctata* | |  | | |  | | |
|  |  | |  | | |  | | |
| **Mayflies** | |  | |  | | | *Mayfly_9924(2).jpg*  *Mayfly nymph* | | |
| Mayfly nymph (in pond) | | *Cloeon dipterum* | |  | | |
|  | |  | |  | | |
| **Stoneflies** | |  | |  | | |
| Stonefly nymph (in stream) | | *Leuctra??* | |  | | |
| Stonefly nymph (in stream) | | *Nemoura??* | |  | | |
|  | |  | |  | | |  | | |
| **Crustacea** | |  | |  | | |  | | |
| Water louse (in pond) | | *Asellus aquaticus* | |  | | |  | | |
| Water flea (in pond) | | *Daphnia pulex* | |  | | |  | | |
| Cyclops (in pond) | | *Cyclops sp* | |  | | |  | | |
|  | |  | |  | | |  | | |
|  | | | | |  | | |  | | |
| **Mollusca** | |  | |  | | |  | | |
| Great Pond Snail (in pond) | | *Limnea stagnalis* | |  | | |  | | |
| Jenkin's Spire Shell (in stream) | | *Potamopyrgus antipodarum* | |  | | | *Limnea2_9948.jpg*  *Limnea* | | |
| Banded Snail | | *Cepaea hortensis* | |  | | |
| Banded Snail | | *Cepaea nemoralis* | |  | | |
| Trichia | | *Trichia hipida* | |  | | |
| Slug | | *Arion ater* | |  | | |
| Slug | | *Limax sp.* | |  | | |
|  | |  | |  | | |
| **Platyhelminthes** | |  | |  | | |  | | |
| Flatworm (in pond) | | Polycelis nigra | |  | | |  | | |

**Appendix B**

**5 Year Action Plan 2016 - 2020**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Aims** | **Project description** | **Personnel** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** |
| Conserving  Habitats | Thin sycamore | Contractor |  |  |  |  | \* |
|  | Maintain woodland. Monitor newly planted trees. | FOWD | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Strimming footpath verges | DCC/FOWD | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Mow Meadows | DCC | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Remove Balsam | FOWD/Volunteers | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Clear Stream | FOWD | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Clean/maintain Pond | FOWD | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Maintain Newly Laid Hedges | DCC Rangers | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Strimming Verges | DCC/FOWD |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Conserving species | Survey nest and owl boxes | FOWD/Contractors |  | \* |  | \* |  |
|  | Erect more bird boxes as necessary | FOWD/Contractors |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Maintain existing and create new ground hibernation sites. | FOWD/Men’s Shed | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Public enjoyment | Improve and maintain Footpaths and access. | Men’s Shed | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Maintain Interpretation Boards | FOWD | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Improve signage at Access Points to Dene | FOWD | \* |  |  |  |  |
|  | Maintain safety of public by regular site inspection | FOWD/DCC | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Enforce Dog Fouling Programme—erect warning notices. | FOWD | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Admin and publicity | Record and archive | FOWD | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
|  | Prepare leaflets/notifications | FOWD | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |

**Record of Work undertaken/completed**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **TASK** | **DATES COMPLETED AND BY WHOM** | **DATES COMPLETED AND BY WHOM** | **DATES COMPLETED AND BY WHOM** | **DATES COMPLETED AND BY WHOM** | **DATES COMPLETED AND BY WHOM** |
| HYMALAYAN BALSAM BASHING |  |  |  |  |  |
| LOWER PATH MAINTENANCE/IMPROVE |  |  |  |  |  |
| UPPER PATH MAINTENANCE/IMPROVE |  |  |  |  |  |
| NORTH MEADOW MOWN/MAINTAIN |  |  |  |  |  |
| SOUTH MEADOW  MOWN /MAINTAIN |  |  |  |  |  |
| PATH VERGES STRIMMED |  |  |  |  |  |
| YOUNG TREES INSPECTED/MAINTAINED |  |  |  |  |  |
| LITTER PICKING |  |  |  |  |  |
| CLEAN INTERPRETATION BOARDS |  |  |  |  |  |
| MAINTAIN/ERECT BIRD/OWL BOXES |  |  |  |  |  |
| CLEAN POND/AREA |  |  |  |  |  |
| MAINTAIN HEDGES |  |  |  |  |  |
| CLEAR STREAM |  |  |  |  |  |
| THIN SYCAMORE AND DISEASED/DANGEROUS TREES |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |