

Botany Bay Restoration Project

Botany Bay News 2018 Five Years On

Our restoration project at Botany Bay has now reached the end of its fifth year. Although it is still a “work in progress” we are happy with our achievements towards our initial aims to restore the site after its use as a fish farm. This year we have been able to improve the facilities for educational groups to come and enjoy this special wetland area.



Supported by SDNPA Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF), Chichester District Council, Seaford College and Portsmouth Services Fly Fishing Association (PSFFA), we have been able to have a classroom shelter and a new bridge built. Dylan Walker and his team from Artisans of Wood did an amazing job, working throughout the snow in February. They built the classroom (made of locally sourced sweet chestnut) with a stunning reciprocal roof and sedum covering. Paddy Cox designed the shelter, which seats a class of 30 children.



The bridge is made from Western red cedar, from the woodland at Seaford College, and was finished just in time to replace an old bridge which was near to collapse!



Another new addition is a noticeboard, made by Garry Passam, complete with a beautifully carved brown trout.



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School Visits



Although the site needed some recovery time after the building work, we were able to host some groups this year. The Countryside Management Btec students from Seaford have used the site for their Wetland Module and some of their individual projects, including clearing an old fruit garden to use as a picnic area.



One of the old fishponds has naturalised well and is now used for pond dipping. This year we have seen evidence of large numbers of frogs, toads and newts. Two groups of A Level biologists from Seaford surveyed the pond this summer, their findings showed good biodiversity including: tadpoles; damselflies; Ramshorn snails; greater and lesser water boatmen; diving beetles; newts; water mites; leeches; whirligig beetles; water fleas; mayfly, demoiselle and dragonfly nymphs.



We've also had junior school groups visiting from Seaford; the Year 5 classes

came for an afternoon of pond dipping, searching for mini beasts and sketching.



Duncton Junior School came for a morning of exploration and pond dipping in preparation for some further visits next year.



We've had some good suggestions for a name for our shelter – this is still undecided but the popular ones were: The Eco Shelter, Botany Burrow, The Green Eye and The Nature Den. I think we will need to put it to a vote!



Many thanks to the students and to the children for their interesting follow-up work; which included some excellent creative writing. We look forward to seeing you again next year.

More Visitors and their Findings

On a very wet day in April, Trevor Beattie and the SDNPA rangers came to see the progress of our project. Back in 2014 we made a five-year plan, much of which we have achieved. It is now time to plan for our next five years and SDNPA have kindly agreed to help us with this. Next year's plans will include naturalising the three old fishponds to make them more "wildlife friendly", and continuing to improve our wild flower areas in the field.



The Triangle Web Spider (*Hyptiotes paradoxus*) is a rare spider found on yew trees. In July Charles Winchester, with a group of SDNPA rangers, came to see if these spiders could be found in Botany Bay. They discovered a number of adult female and juvenile spiders; the photo below shows an adult female (looking a little like a drag racer!). The only other confirmed site for these spiders in Sussex is Kingley Vale.



During the summer term the FLOW (Fixing and Linking our Wetlands) conservation group visited to do a Bioblitz together with the Countryside Management students; they identified and recorded many of the wildflowers, birds, and dragonflies in Botany Bay. These records have been entered on iRecord (Biological

Records Centre www.brc.ac.uk). The birds identified included the black cap, Eurasian nuthatch, tree creeper, willow warbler, dunnock, common whitethroat and sparrowhawk.

Tanypeza longimana



Photo by Ben Hamers

The Sussex Fly Group (with Michael Blencowe) visited the site for their first ever field trip. One interesting finding was a little fly called *Tanypeza longimana*, one of the "stretched foot" family. This is the first time this fly has ever been recorded in Sussex! The photos below show an *Eristalis* hoverfly being eaten by a crab spider, and entomologist Tony Davis with his head in a net!



Other insects so far identified and recorded included the water ladybird, common cardinal beetle, black-headed cardinal beetle, and swollen-thighed beetle. Birds recorded included: firecrest and marsh tit.



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Botany Bay Woodland



In May Bob Epson (SDNPA Woodland Officer) visited Botany Bay to give his advice on management. The woodland includes: pedunculate oak, ash, alder, yew, grey poplar, lime, field maple, sweet chestnut, sycamore, hazel, sallow and planted black poplar; with plenty of signs of regeneration of many tree species. The ancient woodland indicators: bluebells, wild garlic, yellow archangel and wood anemone are also present.



Ash dieback is beginning to take affect and we are working with Arun Trees and SDNPA on a plan for the woodland. We've also had problems with leaning grey poplars; thankfully PSFFA helped us to remove one that fell into the lake this summer.



Two black poplars, dogwood, hawthorn, hazel and holly planted to re-wild the area in front of the lodge house are growing well. Next year we will be tackling the invasive cherry laurel and planting some mixed hedging from The Woodland Trust.

Meadow and Banks



In an effort to restore the grassland area from rough pasture to a wildflower meadow, we created a composting area for the cut grass from the banks of the lake with a trench to collect any run-off.

The strips of grass that we have been managing for the past two years have showed significant change as can be seen in the photo below. The flowers recorded this year included: ragged robin, cowslip, birds-foot trefoil, common knapweed, creeping cinquefoil, cut-leaved cranesbill, field scabious, large teasel, oxeye daisy, ragged robin, red clover, self heal, white clover, wild carrot and yellow rattle.



This year David Burden's sheep grazed our field and in September Matthew Sennitt dug 14 small pits to find the areas where the chalk was nearest to the surface.



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We are now experimenting in one of these areas with a scrape, which we have seeded with a chalk soil grass and wildflower mix. The upturned turfs have also been seeded. Graffham Down Trust helped us with a final cut to the field this autumn.



East Lavington Stream



One of our worries has been the erosion under Beechwood Lane, caused by the stream and various springs, which had resulted in a dip in the road and a large hole underneath it. Thanks to help from SDNPA and the work by A D-G Groundworks, the water has been directed through a pipe to join the main stream and the hole has been filled with chalk.

We have also increased the flow of the stream by placing faggots to narrow where the stream was widened artificially for ponds for the fish farm.



We are continuing to monitor the indicator species in the stream for The Riverfly Partnership (<http://riverflies.org>). Their interest focuses on three key groups of riverflies: the up-wing flies or mayflies, caddisflies or sedges, and stoneflies. Riverflies are at the heart of the freshwater ecosystem and are powerful biological indicators of water quality, the canary of our rivers! Between March and October we recorded scores between 11 and 13 (well above our trigger level of 6) with particularly large numbers of caddisflies, up-wing flies, and freshwater shrimps; indicating the good quality of the water in this chalk stream.



This year the SDNPA have trained a new monitor, Alfie Dudley-Warde, who volunteers in Botany Bay. He takes over from Josef Amin who is off to University. Josef is now writing articles for the SDNPA on his experiences of conservation after work experience with the Wessex Chalkstream and Rivers Trust. Look out for The Downland Thymes March issue!

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Thank You!

We would like to thank SDNPA SCF, Chichester District Council, PSFFA, and Seaford College for their support for our building project this year.

Charles Winchester, Alison Pitts and their wonderful SDNPA volunteers who have helped us in pouring rain...



and blazing sun...



by: removing grass from the banks to encourage wildflowers; improving paths and brash barriers; making steps and taking out invasive bamboo.



It has been great to have help from the Seaford College students: Josef Amin,

Alfie Dudley-Warde, Josh and Sam Brown and the Countryside Management team. They have been surveying, de-weeding and generally mucking in with whatever has been needed.

Steve Batten and Robin Bray (PSFFA) have given us a lot of support throughout the year, organising the fishing on the lake and helping us with grass cutting and weed clearance; removing the old bridge; and preparing the composting area. For our tree challenges Arun Trees, Weald Woodsman and PSFFA have been on hand to help.



Finally thanks to the help and advice from The Wild Trout Trust, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Graffham Down Trust and the members of our Community Interest Group (Clive Lightfoot, Matthew and Jude Sennitt, Graham West, Steve Batten, Miles and Emma Amin and Anne Dennig).



Artwork inspired by Botany Bay - Emma Lush

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