



July 2019

Catch up on our latest activities

It's been a while since we gave you an update on the growing number of activities undertaken by WildCookham to address the threats to our wildlife and to make Cookham a community that is doing something positive about it. Already several hundred people have shown that they want to be involved and the projects and activities we have started are already making an impact. Read on!

Our own Cookham wildlife reserve

We have taken over the management of the Harris Woodbridge Reserve off Dean Lane, Cookham Dean. It's small but a great opportunity for us to learn how to approach such a project and to involve a team of volunteers.

Led by Mike Day (with the fork, plus volunteers in our photo) they spent the Winter and Spring clearing a lot of the overgrowth, completed the pond that lay there unfinished, created bug homes and let light in. Already we have frogs in the pond, dragon and damselflies, several species of butterfly (those are Cinnabar Moth caterpillars on the Ragwort below) and an array of new plants. There's more work to do but we've made a great start.



More meadow on the Commons

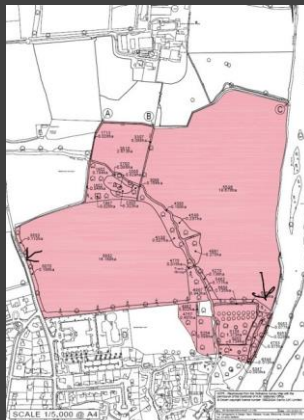
We are so fortunate with our National Trust commons but there's still an opportunity to make them more welcoming to butterflies, bees and insects. So John Southgate is just starting a project with the National Trust to introduce more meadow flowers to some of the smaller commons (the National Trust itself is looking at doing the same for the larger areas they own). We're looking at the best way to do this - with the focus on encouraging the right types of plants to entice the pollinators but we hope it's going to look great too. You may have seen some of the efforts being made locally to encourage wild flowers in our roadside verges: that's great to see. But we have also been dismayed at the brutal mowing of some of the verges and have raised this with the Council who are hopefully adopting a more wildflower and wildlife-friendly policy.

Mapping our precious trees

We have a wealth of trees in Cookham but there's no definitive map of where they are and so limited protection for them in the future. They are important to us not because of the way they define the landscape but for the incredible variety of life that they support: an oak can sustain around 500 different species of insect and birds. A project is just starting up, led by Lars Ahlgren, to map them, drawing on experience in nearby Wokingham. He'll be building a team to do this, working closely with our Hedges and Footpaths Group under Rob Acker.

Battling for wildlife at Battlemead

Following the acquisition of 110 acres of farmland adjoining Widbrook Common, WildCookham, with our colleagues at Wild Maidenhead, has been heavily involved in discussions about the future of the land. We are now one of the Friends of Battlemead and are pressing for the unique nature of site, with its precious wetlands and considerable biodiversity (with the potential for much more) to be maintained as a wildlife-rich amenity in the heart of our community. Not surprisingly there are differing views about the future of the land but we hope that, in the face of the growing threats to wildlife habitats, good sense will prevail. The map below shows Battlemead as the coloured area bounded by the river (right) and the A4094 and Widbrook Common (left).



John Lewis on our side



Local resident Peter Comport is working with WildCookham committee member Brian Clews and Bumble Bee expert Adrian Doble to encourage the John Lewis Partnership to support the wildlife at the Odney Club in Cookham village. The Partnership is enthusiastic and we're now looking at plans for more wild flower meadows, nest boxes for birds and bats, as well as ways to involve Odney visitors to play their part. The photo shows the Odney water gardens.

And someone else on our side?

Another new project is helping Holy Trinity Church to draw up plans to make the most of the paddock adjoining the churchyard for wildlife. It's part of the church's application for a lottery grant to pay for restoration work and we hope that the result will be an area for exploration and learning about our local environment. Graham Pockett is kicking off this project.

Gardens go wild

The 2019 Wild About Gardens Awards deadline is at the end of July and there's been a healthy increase over the 50 gardens signed up this year with perhaps as many as 100 gardens now involved. For many this is the most obvious and easiest way to get involved in making Cookham a place fit for wildlife and we're really grateful to those who have joined in. For them, and those still thinking about it, use the coming months to think through what you can do to be ready for the arrival of 2020 Awards.

Get ready for the 2020 WildCookham calendar

We had a great response to our photo competition at the Cookham Festival in May and now thirteen of the photos, all taken in the village, will appear in our 2020 calendar. It will be available early September and you can get your copy from the Stationery Depot (our thanks to the team there). For the first time we will also have a stand at the Cookham Dean Village Fete on 14th September, so come along and meet us and pickup a copy at the same time.

WildCookham events

Our programme of walks and continues. Here's what's in the pipeline. More details on all of them at www.meetup.com/WildCookham.

Tuesday 13th August *What's about Cookham?* A holiday walk led by local naturalist Brian Clews.

Sunday 18th August *Open Day (and Plant/Seed Exchange) at the Harris Woodbridge Reserve.* Come and see what we have achieved and plan for the future at our nature reserve off Dean Lane and buy seeds and plants for your wildlife garden.

Saturday 14th September Join us at the **Cookham Dean Village Fete**. Our thanks to the Cookham Society for inviting us to share their tent. There's always plenty to do and see at the Fete - and you can buy your WildCookham calendars there.

Sunday 13th October Our annual **Fungi Walk** led by local mycologist Andrew Padmore.

To find out more about WildCookham visit our website www.wildcookham.org.uk, register for updates on events at www.meetup.com/wildcookham and join the conversation at www.facebook/groups/wildcookham - or email us at wildcookham@gmail.com