

Friends of the Hook update

February 2023

It's the last tree planting session of the season on The Hook Nature Reserve this Sunday, 5 February. We'll be planting a silver birch grove in the woodland to the east of the Holme Grove path. Meet 1.30pm at the Mona Road entrance (we have 2 large trees to carry and woodchip to transport). Everyone welcome, we can supply equipment.

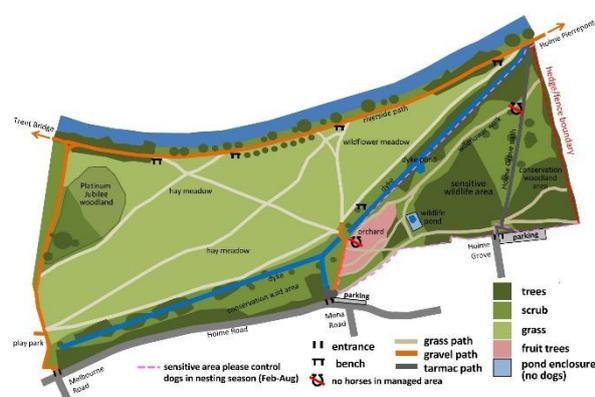
We have been slowly building up this woodland area, shown on the attached map as 'Conservation Woodland Area'. We began in 2013 with an 'Autumn Harvest' collection of whips donated by the Woodland Trust and have added to it each year with native trees and shrubs. In time, these will fruit and shed their seeds so that further regeneration can take place. The extensive patches of bramble are great for wildlife and will allow tree seedlings to grow without being browsed.

Previously there were many cut-through paths which meant a lot of disturbance to any nesting birds and mammals. We asked the local community just to use the paths at either end and had a great response, which means that there is now a large undisturbed area which is getting better every year for nesting birds.

Natural England designates Bird Nesting Season from February to August and birds are now beginning to look for sites. Last year Keith Rainford installed nest boxes in some of the quieter areas of the reserve and they attracted nesting birds. When he checked the boxes in late autumn, ready to clear them, he found some over-wintering mice, so left cleaning them until now. Keith organises regular Saturday morning 'Hook Watch' bird walks on the reserve and welcomes new people. See Lady Bay Birdwatchers for more details.

The reserve is becoming richer in wildlife thanks to its improving habitat, but it's also attracting a lot more visitors – especially dogs since Covid – which can cause problems for wildlife. We've become aware that we need to manage this potential conflict so that people can enjoy the reserve, but wildlife doesn't suffer. We feel the best approach is to raise awareness and explain to people which are the particularly sensitive areas. We're also allowing natural barriers of blackthorn and bramble to protect these zones.

Thanks to volunteer Roger Ibbett for drawing up the map of the reserve. This is still at the draft stage and we welcome comments. We are planning to put up some interpretation boards which will give additional information about the flora, fauna and history of the site. We are busy approaching various organisations to explore grant funding, so if you have any ideas, let us know!



The map shows the particularly sensitive wildlife areas outlined in pink. We ask that dogs are kept under close control or on a lead in this area, particularly in nesting season February to August. It's fine to let dogs run free on the main field.

And finally, thanks to Jeff Mackintosh for spreading two builder's bags of gravel on the muddy sections of path. This will settle into the mud and stabilise the paths.

Advance notice that we are planning our AGM for Tuesday 9th May 7pm at Breckles Hall All

Hallows Church, if you'd like to discuss any of the points.