

News From Friends of The Hook Nature Reserve – November 2022

Recovering From the Drought

The hot dry summer caused some casualties on The Hook, so we've been taking steps to remedy these. The **Wildlife Pond** dried up completely, affecting dragonfly larva and other underwater creatures. We don't want this to happen again, so we've bought a powerful water pump. Once the conditions in the dyke are right we'll pump water into the pond and keep it topped up over the winter. In the meantime we've cleared all the invasive reeds from the dried up mud. Many thanks to the band 'Morris Convertible' who are playing two fundraising gigs to raise £500 towards the cost of the pump.

The **Riverside Avenue of Trees**, planted by Trent Rivers Trust did not survive the drought, despite our best efforts at watering (it's hard work heaving buckets up the river bank!). We've been growing on donated whips of oak, birch and hawthorn in pots over the summer and will be planting them as replacements. Join us Sunday December 4th and Sunday January 8th 2pm at Mona Road Entrance. Email friendsofthehook@gmail.com if you'd like to get involved – or just turn up.

Wildflower Walk

A 'Boost for Biodiversity' grant from Severn Trent is helping us to continue our work creating a Wildflower Walk through the orchard and central part of the reserve. Contractors will be harrowing parts of this area as well as sections of the main field and sowing a 'long season wildflower mix' from Naturescape. It takes many years for wildflower meadows to establish, but by managing these areas with an autumn cut and collect we hope to see plant diversity increase, which will in turn lead to more insects and wildlife.

Dogs and Wildlife

There has been a huge increase in their numbers since the start of the pandemic. The vast majority of dog owners are responsible and want both themselves and their pet to enjoy the reserve without spoiling it for others or for wildlife. To this end we ask people to:

- Keep their dog in close sight and under control
- Keep to the paths and do not allow their dog to disturb wild areas
- Clean up after their dog and dispose of poo bags in the bins

Thanks to the many responsible dog owners who already follow these guidelines.

For the few forgetful ones we'll be spray painting any offending piles of dog poo. This highlights the safety issues for the volunteers and also warns people to watch out. It's no joke if you're on your hands and knees tending to the shrubs and trees!

Bird Nesting Season

Since becoming a nature reserve in 2010, The Hook has changed a lot, with bramble and scrub allowed to grow in designated areas to create wildlife habitat. Birds such as Song Thrush, Whitethroat, Robin, Blackbird, Wren and Dunnock can nest low down and are very vulnerable to any disturbance, so next spring we will be asking that dogs are put on leads in the central area of the reserve from 1 March to 1 October.

We'll be putting up signs to make clear which are the sensitive areas.

Butterfly Update from Dave Pratt

2022 is the third year in which we have completed a weekly survey of butterflies on the Hook. The surveys always start at the beginning of April, and continue until the end of September. The results contribute to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. Four people have taken responsibility for the monitoring, Annette Roe, Rob Gornall, Phil Read and Dave Pratt, assisted by Jane Ibbett and Sue Mallender. Grateful thanks to all.

The trend over the 3 years is encouraging. Total numbers have increased (see the attached table), as have the number of species. In 2022, we have recorded Brown Argus and Small Copper for the first time. The 'Froth' policy of planting native wild flowers and shrubs, does seem to have helped attract more numbers and species.

The Brown Argus on the Hook, the star of 2022



Butterfly Species details and numbers						
Species	2020 Total		2021 Total		2022 Total	Comments
Orange Tip	66		30		48	Starts to appear in April, stays around for a few weeks, rarely seen later.
Small Tortoiseshell	27		56		28	Most common from mid-April for about 2 months.
Peacock	23		5		9	Declined here since 2020, only seen in ones and twos.
Comma	10		9		19	Stayed around longer in 2022, from mid-April onward
Small White	194		111		184	Seen throughout the season, in very good numbers
Large White	76		37		41	Sometimes difficult to distinguish from Small White, but the total for the Small and Large whites together is correct
Speckled Wood	30		39		45	Generally seen in the shady areas
Brimstone	6		2		1	Disappointing not to see more
Holly Blue	8		4		20	Around mostly from April until June
Green Veined White	5		2		3	Not seen enough!
Meadow Brown	12		31		32	First appears in June
Ringlet	28		39		65	A big surge in late June
Large Skipper	3		1		9	Around in June and July
Small Skipper	1		21		10	Around in June and July
Essex Skipper	0		15		7	Used to be rare, but small numbers have spread from the south.
Red Admiral	4		2		12	Seen in ones or twos, from late May
Common Blue	1		1		4	Seen in July, and early August
Gatekeeper	14		47		84	A big surge in July 2022,

Painted Lady	0		1		2	Never sure about whether they will get blown across from the continent.
Small Copper	0		0		2	New species for us in 2022
Brown Argus	0		0		1	Thrilled to see one on the Hook. Rare in these parts
Total	512		470		631	

The totals include a few additional brown butterflies, where we were not sure of the species.

Friends of The Hook produce a newsletter every month or so, with details of what's happening and wildlife observations. If you'd like to go on the mailing list email friendsofthehook@gmail.com

Jane Browne

Secretary Friends of The Hook