

Turnpike Fields Working Group  
Ecological Report for Meeting held on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### General Remarks

The disruptive weather of the Spring continues to be felt. There has not been the same number of flowering plants as last year also far fewer bees and butterflies.

There are signs that those that feed in the grassland such as Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Gatekeepers are now increasing in numbers.

The grassland itself is more variable this year, in places it has grown well and others quite patchy.

Most of the wetland area has dried out now and the boggy area also seems quite dry.

### Wildlife "Safaris"

Two have now taken place . The first with the Guides Group, which included Pond Dipping, Insect Trawling, Grass Collecting and Wildflower Spotting. Given the unpredictability of wildlife, the evening was very successful and much interest was engendered.

The second, was with members of AWEG which focussed on the different habitats. It is hoped to run more "safaris" in August.

### Pond

The introduction of barley straw together with a quantity of Barley Straw Essence seems to have had a most remarkable effect on the pond. Hopefully this will improve the aeration of the water with hopeful more life flourishing. On the Pond Dipping with the Guides a number of beetles , dragonfly nymphs and caddis fly nymphs were found and a young frog. There have been an increased number of dragonflies and damselflies over the ponds in recent weeks. They have also been visited by Grey Wagtails and Mallard ducks.

Since the Guides visit thought has been given to the possibility of installing a Pond Dipping Platform. I have contacted CWT with regards to this and made one or two inquiries about cost. The thoughts of the Working Group would be welcome before taking this further.

### Trees

The trees that were planted in May are doing well. The grass around each has been strimmed to provide light and air. In addition a group of very small self sown oak saplings has been found in the same area which have been marked. It maybe possible to transplant several in the future. Other small oak saplings have also been found in other places in the Fields which could be transplanted.

### Tree Planting Policy

It would be helpful to approve the policy so that arrangements can be made for planting in the Autumn.

### Canal Bank Update

The latest response from CRT (Paul Reynolds) with regards the canal bank over the culvert is as quoted:

*I spoke with our ecology team and our engineering team regarding the badger activity, and while there has been historic badger activity at this location they believe that the droppings indicate that this activity is rabbit related.*

*I have passed it over to the new A.O.M for the Shropshire Union canal (Kate) and she will take it forward from here.*

As the CRT should be speaking to the landowner, ie Parish Council, it would be helpful if a Parish Councillor was involved in these discussion.

### Boggy Area in Lower Field

It has been suggested that an alternative to a Board Walk might be a third pond which would drain water from the area. This was suggested by Joe Pimblett, CWT, as an alternative. I have raised this again with him and his response is:

*As for the third pond, yes I think an area of open water in that boggy area would really enhance its value for wildlife. I suspect it would attract lots of dragonflies/damselflies. The challenge with that site will be the access over the bridge. Given the ground conditions, it will need excavating from the edge of the bog and will therefore need a machine with a long reach, which means a heavier machine, which may exceed the weight capacity of the bridge over the brook.*

*My colleague, Ralph, copied in, is leading on the pond scheme now and will be to get a contractor to look at this to see what's possible. I will let Ralph get in touch with you to discuss further.*

### Invasive Species

If anything is to be done about culling common ragwort it should be done in the very near future. It was recommended in the maintenance plan that areas of grassland in the top field be cleared of common ragwort so that the cut haylage may be used for feed. I suggest a team of people walking done through the top field pulling the plants that they come across. The plan is to leave the plants in the Mound area and the lower more wetland areas.

It will also be necessary soon to plan for the culling of this year's Himalayan Balsam plants.

### Britain in Bloom

Neil has asked me to meet with the judges and share with them the wildlife aspects of the Fields. This taking place on 16<sup>th</sup> July. I have prepared a "dossier" to give to them.