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04/04/14

Survey Report

Brierley C.E. Primary School

A Healthy Biodiversity

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Species and Habitats (see website) are in **bold** print and suggested nest boxes/feeding stations/ponds to be placed in the school grounds are in **red** print.

Dear Sharon,

Thank you for a warm welcome to your lovely school and grounds. The school grounds are already encouraging for wildlife. The Spring songs of many species of bird were heard including that of an African migrant warbler, the Chiffchaff, which seemed to be trying to set up a territory in The Wild Area.

The main feature of the school grounds is an extensive **Hedgerow** of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Field Maple, Sycamore and Elderberry. Increased Biodiversity, in terms of invertebrates and nesting birds could be achieved by allowing the **Hedgerow** to develop 30 to 50 cm beyond the fence line towards the school. Also grass cutting could be stopped a metre to 50cm from the fence line to encourage **wild flowers** and **invertebrates** (mainly **Bees**). **Invertebrates** are the bedrock of a healthy biodiversity. Regarding the edges of the school field consideration could be given to the new grass cutting regimes being adopted by Barnsley Council (contact Trevor Mayne, Biodiversity Officer at TrevorMayne@barnsley.gov.uk . These will help wildlife without interfering with play areas.

Hedgehogs have declined in numbers from 30 million in the 1950s to 1 million today. They are in danger of extinction and many of our schools are thinking of running local community campaigns to help this iconic British species. They are largely a suburban species and school grounds can be ideal places for them to forage and hibernate. However the fencing, walling and tarmac of both school grounds and nearby gardens is not helpful to a creature that can travel 2kms per night. Consideration could be given to creating intermittent spaces under the fence line so that **Hedgehogs** can travel freely to new feeding areas.

There are existing nest boxes throughout the grounds that are being used by birds and care should be taken not to inhibit this use.

My observations of the school grounds with possible improvements for wildlife are as follows:

The School Entrance.

There are 5 mature trees, including some Cherry trees, with seating around the base of each tree. The underneath of these seats are ideal places for **Hedgehogs** to hibernate and spaces could be made for **Hedgehog** access. Also dead leaves and dry grass could be pushed through these access spaces to provide nesting material.

Consideration should be given to the installation of a **nest box with camera** on the nearest tree to the school building which would be provided free of charge.

Wild flower seed could be sown along the edge of the **Hedgerow**.

Existing Buddleia Rosemary shrubs just outside the entrance wall will provide nectar for **Butterflies**, **Hoverflies** and **Bees**.

The Car Park Area.

An Elderberry and a Cotoneaster shrub could provide winter berries for birds if they were allowed to grow and cut back more sympathetically. Again the fence line could provide a haven for invertebrates if allowed to grow. Two Apple trees are to be planted and some fallen apples could be left for thrushes in the Winter.

It is pleasing to note that herbs are being grown in the vegetable garden. **2 Bee boxes** could be placed here.

We could re-establish the existing **pond area** free of charge. The Willows would be cut back to provide access and the pond lining examined and replaced if necessary. There is a ready-made pond dipping platform and native marsh plants could be planted around the edge.

The Wild Area

This is a wonderful area of mature trees and shrubs including Silver Birch, Cherry, Field Maple, Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Buddleia. The ground cover plants need to be allowed to develop to encourage low nesting birds such as the Chiffchaff. A 'litter pick' prior to the breeding season would be advantageous to wildlife. We could install **5 Tree Sparrow nest boxes**, **1 Hedgehog box** and **2 Bee boxes** in this **woodland** habitat. It is an area which needs quiet space to develop. However consideration could be given to

mowing one access pathway into the wood for careful, quiet study. Also, an insect hotel could be developed near to the wood using the discarded wooden seating at the back of the metal container as a base.

The Key Stage 1 School Field

There are four mature trees and a lone Beech tree on which **3 Tree Sparrow nest boxes** could be placed. **6 Bee boxes** could be placed along the **Hedgerow** fence line and would be hidden by the **wild flowers** that are allowed to grow there. The trees in the 'church yard' corner could have **2 Tree Sparrow nest boxes** installed. **Wild flowers** could be allowed to grow around the several small areas isolated trees and shrubs. Climbing plants such as ivy could be encouraged to grow on the bare parts of the fence line next to the graveyard. Ivy is excellent for **invertebrates**.

A possible Laburnum tree in this area needs to be monitored as the Autumn seeds are poisonous.

The Key Stage 2 Field

The Mature trees in the corner next to the church provide an excellent opportunity to grow and develop **woodland flowers** such as **English Bluebells**, Wood Anemones, Snowdrops and Daffodils. Already there are beautiful Dog Violets in flower. This corner should be left un-mowed. A Ragwort plant in this area may need to be removed as it is poisonous to cattle and, possibly, to humans. **5 Tree Sparrow boxes** could be placed on the trees.

Buddleias and other Butterfly friendly shrubs could be planted in the other corner next to the houses.

10 Bat boxes could be placed on the mature Black Poplars next to the football pitch.

2 Tree Sparrow boxes could be placed on the trees nearer the school building.

The Quiet Garden Area.

This is a lovely area for quiet study. The ivy here needs to be protected to encourage invertebrates.

Conclusion

We would provide all new nest boxes free of charge, present them at a whole school assembly, help with their installation, set up a mapping and recording system and follow up with nest box cleaning and recording nest box contents in the Autumn. All activities will involve children and the school community. Please share this report with

appropriate staff, governors and children and let us know whether you wish us to proceed.

The next stage is to arrange for us to work with your class in September. Please contact us regarding a date when you have had time to digest this report.

Maintaining a healthy biodiversity is probably the most important challenge human beings will need to face in the future.

Once again, thank you for welcoming us to your school. We look forward to working with you.

Kind regards,

Colin Graham

Project Leader.

Biodiversity in Schools