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11th September 2013.

To Elizabeth Wilson and Julie Brown.

Gawber Primary School – Possibilities for a Healthy Biodiversity.

Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan Species/Habitats are written in **bold** (please see www.barnsleybiodiversity.org for further information .

We spent a most enjoyable morning with an enthusiastic teacher and children.

1. The Lower Field Area/Car Park Area.

A Speckled Wood **butterfly**, a Sparrowhawk , a Sparrowhawk kill and a small group of **House Sparrows** (now red listed by RSPB) informed us that this area is already of interest to wildlife. The narrow piece of unmown land between the fence and the graveyard wall is probably responsible for this as it provides food for birds and **insects /invertebrates** (the bedrock of biodiversity). There are three trees, a Rowan, a Cherry and a Hazel along the entrance way. We would suggest that native **bluebells**, daffodils and snowdrops be planted at the base and these small, circular areas be left unmown to encourage insects. Two **Tree Sparrow** nest boxes could be placed on the trees.

Several **Tree Sparrow** boxes could be placed on the trees in the graveyard with the vicar's permission.

A **Tree Sparrow** nest box could be placed on the large Weeping Willow in the car park area.

2. The Garden Area.

There is a small but successful **Orchard** area which will encourage bees and other **insects/invertebrates**. A developing log pile is becoming an 'insect hotel'. A small sensory garden with herbs could be created here. Two **Bee** boxes could be placed in this area.

The pond could be enlarged to encourage amphibians, water based invertebrates and **wild marsh plants**. We could do this free of charge. It is clearly and safely visible from the school building.

The area down the slope towards the fence, woodland and open fields could be a wonderful place for wild flowers. Here Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Elderberry shrubs provide much food and cover for birds and invertebrates. This whole area could be left unmown to encourage wild flowers. Pathways could be mown through it to provide study access. A second 'insect hotel' could be developed by children to relieve the pressure of invertebrate investigation on the wood pile. This is a good place to put a **Hedgehog** box. However the old, original wire fencing needs to be cut in places and lifted to

provide access for **Hedgehogs** who will happily feed in this area. One small part of this space could be used to grow **wild meadow plants** from seed. First the top soil needs to be removed and used for the pond's edge. Then the seeds can be sown in poor soil. Some sand may need to be added. Two **Bee** boxes could be placed in this area. Compost could be maintained in the garden as it is good for Grass Snakes and Slow Worms.

The area next to the Foundation Stage is ideal for a bird feeding station as it has tree and shrub cover from Sparrowhawk attacks. We may be able to help with this construction. The Playground structure would be an ideal bird watching hide.

3. The Main Play Area.

There are two large trees on which 2 **Bat** boxes could be placed.

Opposite Class four 4 **Bat** boxes and 2 **Tree Sparrow** boxes could be placed on trees.

The new Local Authority grass cutting regimes which are designed to help wildlife could be studied and applied to the field edges.

Efforts could be made to discover the ownership of the **mixed woodland** and fields beyond the school grounds. It may be a good area to place a **Kestrel/Owl** box.

Again the wire fencing could be cut and lifted to allow movement of **Hedgehogs**.

Permission needs to be sought to place a **House Sparrow** colony nest box on the school roof.

The vegetable garden should remain as it is intended.

4. Conclusion

This report should be discussed with children, staff and governors. All nest boxes would be provided free of charge and presented at a whole school assembly. Arrangements would then be made to number, place and map the nest boxes in readiness for data collection and recording.

We are holding a Volunteers Training Day at Shawlands Primary School on Saturday 19th October 9.15am. If anyone in the school community is interested in helping with the wildlife at schools they would be most welcome to attend and should contact us via our website or at this email address.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Colin Graham

Biodiversity in Schools.