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16/10/2013 Survey Report (Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan Species/habitats are in **bold** Print)

Royston Summerfields Primary School

Dear Deborah, Lyndon and School's Eco Council,

Thank you for a very warm and caring welcome to your lovely school and grounds. Five magnificent Oak trees on the school field provide the richest of all habitats for invertebrates which are the bed rock of a healthy biodiversity. They are laden with acorns and it would be interesting for children to try and grow them into small trees.

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

The Forest School or Wildlife Area.

This area is already rich with wildlife possibilities with both mature and young trees growing. In particular Alders, Silver Birch, Rowans, Willows, Hawthorn, ash, elderberry and Brambles will provide much food for birds (berries, seeds and invertebrates). There are two **Hedgehog** boxes which should remain in place. The existing nest boxes should be repositioned to face North/East and metal plates placed over the entrance holes to prevent Grey Squirrel and Great Spotted Woodpecker predation. The open Robin/**Spotted Flycatcher** nest boxes should be removed and placed in more Squirrel free or bushy areas. We can help with this work and provide an extra 3 **Tree Sparrow** nest boxes.

Under the mature trees a bed of native **Bluebells**, Wood Anemones, Snowdrops and Daffodils could be planted.

We could provide three Solitary **Bee** boxes which could be placed in this area.

Log piles are providing excellent areas for **invertebrates** and it would be beneficial if the school community was involved in the building of two insect 'hotels'. This would mean that one would be used for study while the other rested/recovered from investigative learning. Wooden pallets could be used as a base for the 'hotels'.

There is a small depression near the mature trees that could have a pond lining fitted to provide a shallow marshy area which may encourage marsh plants or even a few **amphibians**.

Access for study in this area needs to be carefully managed if it is to encourage wildlife. Children should only use allocated, mown pathways to allow natural development and then continue their studies in the circular 'benched' area.

The fence line between the benched area and the allotment could have a few bee/insect friendly shrubs (eg native Buddleia, Rosemary, Lavender, Hebes) planted.

The exciting arched Willow area is developing and should continue.

The School Field

A Bird feeding station could be positioned to the right of the Oak tree next to the wonderful allotment area and 4 **Bat** boxes could be placed on the tree. Woodland flowers such as **Bluebells**, Wood Anemones and Snowdrops could be grown around this tree where children have worn the grass away. Children could view this area from the benches under the Oak Tree next to the school building and record the visitors to the station.

The enclosed area next to the Garden Centre contains Nettles, Thistles, Dock, Dandelion, Buttercups among other wild flowers. This area could remain wild with the addition of butterfly and bee friendly shrubs such as Buddleia, Gelder, Ragusa other wild Roses. Four **Bee** boxes could be placed in this area.

The large Oak tree in the South West corner could accommodate one **Tree Sparrow** and four **Bat** boxes. The semi wild children's play area next to this tree could remain intact but a large section of the park boundary has a very good, mature **Hedgehog** (with Elderberry, Ash and Hawthorn) which needs to be allowed to develop. An additional **Hedgehog** box could be placed here. Gardeners have cut away too much undergrowth which has not encouraged birds to nest or feed. They could be instructed to leave it alone as there is plenty of space for play areas/sport. They could also be instructed not to use herbicides around the edges of fields as this is unnecessary, unsightly, costly, environmentally damaging (especially for **Hedgehogs**) and potentially dangerous to children. Herbicides may have already killed ornamental shrubs outside the school entrance near the car park.

The large Oaks and Ash tree in the North West corner could accommodate four **Tree Sparrow** and two **bat** boxes.

The orchard is a great acquisition. Any rotting fruit could be left lying for Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Fieldfare, Redwings and Mistle Thrushes in the Winter.

As Lyndon suggests the bare exposed fencing could be made less unsightly and more environmentally friendly by growing climbing plants on it eg Honeysuckle and ivy (wonderful for invertebrates). Spaces under the perimeter fencing could be created for **Hedgehog** access.

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.

We would provide all new nest boxes free of charge, 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.

Thank you once again for a lovely morning in your happy school. I look forward to seeing you on Thursday 7th November at 9.15am.

Kind regards,

Colin Graham (BBT and Biodiversity in Schools)