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07/07/2014

Survey Report

West Meadows Primary School

A Healthy Biodiversity

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

Dear Samantha,

Thank you for giving your time to show me around your school grounds and thank you to the Head teacher, Margaret Marsh, for giving the time to introduce herself. I sensed a very pleasant, welcoming atmosphere in school.

The school is surrounded by a narrow but thick growth of small trees and shrubs which provide a good habitat for nesting birds. Seeing a **Song Thrush** and learning that they are often seen in the school grounds is exciting news as this is a red listed bird. Song Thrushes love snails, which frequent the Wild Walk area in large numbers.

A sad aspect of this wonderful news is that a herbicide has been used to create a half metre width (approximate) strip of bare earth along the whole length of the school fence that surrounds the school. However this does present the school with an opportunity to develop a significant **wild flower** margin and we will look into the possibility of providing the **wild flower seed** required. In the meantime the practice of spraying needs to be stopped as it serves no reasonable purpose and is significantly detrimental to a healthy biodiversity.

Once the principle of a **wild flower** margin has been established then we can consider the provision of **10 bee boxes** and **2 Hedgehog boxes** that would be placed along the fence line. **Hedgehog** numbers have plummeted from 30 million to 1 million in the last 50 years and the school could be involved with a local community campaign to help them. Certainly spaces under the fencing should be made for Hedgehogs to pass through to access feeding areas.

The fencing between the Wild Walk area and the playground presents an opportunity to place **8 Tree Sparrow nest boxes**. The nest boxes should have metal hole covers as American Grey Squirrels frequent the **woodland** and would regard nestlings as a good

food source. Ground cover grasses and wild plants need to be encouraged in this area by clearly defining study areas. Despite human erosion there are some good areas of Nettles, Dock, Clover Plantains and Ox-eye Daisies. Some **English Bluebells** and Wood anemones can be planted in more open spaces. There are plenty of berries for Winter bird food. Trees in the grounds include Oak, Field Maple, Rowan, Silver Birch, Cherry, Ash, and Hawthorn. Moth and Butterfly caterpillars on these trees and shrubs (eg Brambles) will provide nesting birds with the food they require. There is a large Ash Tree on the fence line and **3 Bat boxes** could be placed here.

There is a small tree on the school field in a large circle of sprayed bare earth. **English Bluebells**, Daffodils and Snowdrops could be placed under this tree in place of the 'herbicides' circle

The possibility of placing **3 Bat boxes** on the school building could be investigated.

There is a small **woodland**/wild area linked with the secondary school. This could provide an opportunity to work with and create community links with the Science Department of the school.

The possibility of creating a marshy area close to the Year 6 classroom could be investigated. Wetland wild plants eg Irises, Yellow and Purple Loosestrife could be planted.

**Invertebrates** are the bed-rock of a healthy biodiversity and it was pleasing to note that the Early Years children had created an insect 'hotel' and that fallen trees had been used for a **Deadwood** habitat in the Wild Walk area.

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.

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

We look forward to seeing you on September 12<sup>th</sup> for the presentation to a Year 4 class.

Kind regards,  
Colin Graham.  
Project Leader  
Biodiversity in Schools