

WOKING BIODIVERSITY GROUP

VOLUNTEER WORK PARTY REPORT 2020

GENERAL

Activities in 2020 were greatly affected by the Covid 19 virus. However, total hours were only 12% down on the previous year. Unfortunately, we did not receive any help from the Army or private companies due to the virus restrictions in the year.

Our volunteers were able to go out in controlled numbers when allowed and the hours completed by volunteers alone actually rose by 40% compared to 2019. A new site for wildflowers was prepared in the Waitrose Car Park which helped to increase hours by volunteers. Some volunteers also spent time on sites outside of work party days.

VOLUNTEERS

At the end of 2020 we had over 60 volunteers who put their names forward to attend work parties on our sites. In addition, we arranged morning sessions on St Johns Lye and Millmoor Common for sixth form students from Byfleet and Woking Colleges and for Woking youth forum members



A barn owl pictured on Millmoor Common

SITES

During 2020 WBG carried out activities at:

- St Johns Lye
- Millmoor Common
- Mayford Meadows
- White Rose Lane
- Waitrose Car Park
- 6th form college, Old Woking

- Advice on various sites

All these sites were supported by Woking Borough Council. Advice was also given at various other sites in Woking.

Thames Water /Carters Lane was not worked in during 2020 due to lack of funds at Thames Water.

HOURS/DAYS EQUIVALENT

A total of 878 hours (125.4 days equivalent) were completed on these sites. A more specific breakdown is shown below under each site heading. The time shown in brackets is for the previous year 2019.

Location	Hours Spent		Day Equivalent	
St Johns Lye	311	(182)	44.4	(26)
Millmoor Common	321	(276)	45.85	(39)
Mayford Meadows	159	(36)	22.7	(5.1)
Thames Water – Carters Lane	0	(5)	0	(0.7)
White Rose lane	5	(15)	0.7	(2.2)
Waitrose Car Park	82	(-)	11.6	(-)
Army/Corporate days	0	(480)	0	(74)
Total	878	(994)	125.4	(147)

Total overall hours decreased by 12% this year. However, there were no hours by Corporate and Army volunteers during the year. Therefore, the hours recorded by our own volunteers increased by a creditable 40%. This was due to work at Mayford Meadows during 6 summer sessions, work at the new site at Waitrose, an increase at St Johns Lye and help by 6th form college students.



Sixth form biodiversity group students from Byfleet on site at St Johns Lye a week before lockdown

ST JOHNS LYE

This Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) has recreational grassland, woodland, heathland, drainage dykes with running water and a pond area. Approximately 65% of the work undertaken was the removal of invasive species such as cherry laurel and the thinning of holly in accordance with our site woodland management plan. Logs/brash were used to create wood piles for insects and other animals. A small amount of brash was burnt on site.

Our main objective for 2020 continued to be the prevention of further spread of laurel from the east side to the west side of the site. Work was undertaken in the woodland area immediately to the east of the tarmac road running from the village up to the pedestrian railway bridge. Continued work will be carried out in this area during 2021. Also, laurel was removed from small areas alongside the canal.

The rest of our time was divided between protecting the remaining heather on the heathland (10%) and creating wildflower beds around the old football pitch (25%). No further work was carried out around the larger pond whilst awaiting work to be started by WBC on the drainage situation.



Volunteers creating a wildflower area on St Johns Lye

MILLMOOR COMMON

Another SNCI site. Volunteer hours were again high on this site and significant progress has been made. Increased numbers of wildlife were spotted. A local bird review found over 40 different species. The wild flower area is increasing and over 40 species of wildflowers were recorded during the year. Time was spent on the wildflower area and in the woodland around the pond and other copse areas. Further nettles have been cleared in the designated areas and other overgrown areas along the main stream have been cleared.



Noticeboard by the Millmoor Common pond

MAYFORD MEADOWS

Work was carried out in conjunction with the local residents to remove invasive Himalayan Balsam along the sides of the Hoe stream from the Guildford Road (Bird in Hand end) up to the bridge opposite Willow Way. The area is now almost clear along the banks and back into the woods. However large amounts of balsam were found in the area near to the Willow Way bridge. More work will be needed this year up to Kingfield. There were 6 work parties during the summer totalling 159 hours (22.7 days).



Group of volunteers removing invasive Himalayan balsam at Mayford Meadows.

WHITE ROSE LANE

Due to the amount of work needed at Mayford Meadows there was only a small amount of time at this location. There has been a considerable amount of balsam growth in the old nature reserve area which will need attention this year.

WAITROSE CAR PARK

A total of 81.5 hours (11.6 days) were carried out clearing existing areas and preparing the ground for wildflower areas around the car park edges. Seeds will be planted early this year.

THAMES WATER SITE, CARTERS LANE

Unfortunately, there was no work undertaken in this area. Thames Water did not commit any funds for 2020. They will be reviewing the situation for this year.

OTHER SITES

Advice was given on Goldsworth Park, Rylands Way, Woking sixth form college and various roundabouts.



Burning cherry laurel brash on site

SUMMARY

Whilst 2020 was disrupted several times, we did manage a significant amount of work on some sites and the development of a new site around the Waitrose car park. Volunteer hours were up on the previous year. We were not able to get support from the Army or arrange any corporate days due to virus restrictions. However, we will continue to look for support from outside companies and organisations in the future.

BLOG

We continue to post blog notes on the Council Woking Environment Action site re progress and next work dates when we are able to continue.

Ian Gammans

Woking Biodiversity Group, 14 January 2021