

DITCHEAT PARISH PLAN – ACTION PLAN 5

Wildlife & Conservation

Priority: To address concerns raised in the survey about retaining & maintaining the orchards, wildlife, countryside and character of the Parish

Target(s):

- Preserve and enhance wildlife habitats
- Conserve the character of the Parish by maintaining traditional orchards, hedgerows, open views and countryside
- Formation of a group with an ongoing brief to pursue the priority

Impact/Success Criteria:

- Use of land management practices beneficial to wildlife and their food sources
- Local planning bodies are aware of the Parish's concerns and take these factors into account in making planning decisions
- Traditional historic orchards continue & flourish in commercial use

June 2015

The Seasonal Changes Diary

Following on from the article in the April/May FTN, it has been decided to start the year on 1st June for the purposes of observing the comings and goings of the Parish wildlife.

So it is time for everyone in the Parish to start spotting and jotting! Wildlife is anything from the humble house sparrow to the more exotic during all four seasons. Who, for instance, has heard a Cuckoo this year? We need to know What, Where and When you spotted something interesting, whether it be a creepy crawly, a flower, a bird.....

Please let me know your findings and I can add them to the diary. Then we can begin to build up a picture of the flora and fauna in the Parish. My telephone number is 01749 860444 or email: annejan@robson2.plus.com

April 2015

Update on the Wildlife & Conservation group's progress

After the Parish Plan was published a group of volunteers' came together to discuss and move forward the aims set out in Action Plan 5. Just to jog your memory they are as follows:

1) The use of land management practices to benefit wildlife.

If we are concerned about what wildlife we have in our Parish and its conservation, we thought that, besides looking at what flowers and animals can be found in our surrounding countryside, we should also try to encourage diversity in our own gardens. At some time we aim to give information on ways in which we can provide or improve habitats for fauna and flora to flourish.

We recognise that farming is an industry so it is not always economically possible to combine conservation with production. There might be ways, however, in which a landowner could change practices without compromising productivity and greatly benefit wildlife.

Planting our grass verges with native species of wild flowers is something that has been discussed.

It has been suggested that a diary could be kept showing what seasonal changes in wildlife occur in the Parish over the course of a year. The project would require at least one volunteer (who might be willing to collate observations from others) from each of the hamlets featured in the original Parish Plan ie Alhampton, Sutton, Wraxall, Kilkenny as well as Ditcheat. It is amazing what can be seen whilst out and about and your observations would help build a fascinating picture of the variety of wildlife to be found in our Parish. The setting up of a BLOG, to collate information gathered has been discussed. The level of response from you will give an indication of enthusiasm for the idea. Anyone interested in helping should contact me, Vee Lees, on 860 542 or by email at gvs@btinternet.com.

2) Local planning bodies take into account the Parish's concerns about wildlife and conservation when making planning decisions.

In order to preserve the open views and countryside as much as possible, we feel the aims of this Action Plan should run in tandem with how Ditcheat is developed. Note that as far as Mendip Council is concerned it is only Ditcheat (classed as a primary village) that is required to provide land for housing during the next decade or so. A primary village is one that is deemed to have a good infrastructure; one which has public transport, a school, a Church, a pub and a shop.

3) Traditional historic orchards continue to flourish in commercial use

Work has been carried out to locate all the orchards in the Parish. An assessment of their fauna and flora would be incorporated into the diary if that comes into being. Again there could well be a conflict between maintaining these orchards

for cider production and wildlife, but it is recognised by the group that for the current orchards to survive they must be productive.

We will endeavour to keep you informed as things progress.

March 2015

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July 2014

Environment

What we've done so far

- Our initial work is centred around the traditional orchards in the Parish, to prepare a record of orchards and identify those in production.
- We've undertaken a survey of one orchard in Alhampton to identify apple varieties, flora and fauna. This exercise was as a trial to understand what would be involved in order to roll out trials across more orchards.

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What happens next

- We'll complete a report on the orchards in the Parish as a definitive record of the present compared with the past in order to have some evidence to defend any planning application coming forward.
 - We'll identify orchards that are not currently cropped and attempt to link the owners up with the growing number of micro cider producers.
 - We believe a survey of some of the grass verges in the Parish would be of interest and we want to encourage residents to have wild life friendly gardens.
 - We want to explore working with Ditchheat School as a way of promoting good environmental and conservation practices.
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