

Sharphill Wood Workparty 27th November 2011

In January this year the Government announced that populations of breeding birds on farmland are at their lowest levels since 1966 and that populations have fallen by almost 50% in the past 44 years. Of course there are variations in breeds. Pressure on habitat due to farming methods seems to be the cause. Currently in danger are kestrels, lapwings, skylarks, tree sparrow, yellow wagtail and starlings. Wood pigeon, jackdaws, stock doves and greenfinch populations have however increased.

Among woodland birds, huge falls have been recorded for wood warbler, willow tit, tree pipit, lesser spotted woodpecker, blackbird, dunnock, song thrush and tawny owl, among others. Yet black cap, great spotted woodpecker, green woodpecker, nuthatch and long-tailed tit are thriving.

This makes the work the Friends are carrying out with Notts Wildlife Trust hugely important as we try to balance the need in the area for recreational space, with managing what is a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation. If we erect notices, (as we are currently planning) it means that we are trying to influence some users of Sharphill Wood who are damaging its fragile infrastructure through a lack of understanding of how to protect it or the pressure that is currently affecting it.

The work on this Sunday focused on reinforcing the Northern/Eastern Boundary to provide a barrier against entry into the Wood via many paths (there are three official Rights of Way entrances which are clearly signed), especially important when pressure on the Wood increases with the new housing. This barrier will also create habitats in itself with nesting opportunities for farmland and woodland birds, and a host of invertebrates, insects, small mammals and flora. Work started early when three of the Friends arrived via 4 wheel drive carrying approximately 500 whips (young hedging plants) :- Dogrose, Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Holly. Also on board were canes to support the young plants and guards to stop the hungry rabbits from feasting on them whilst they are young and tasty. Later on the regular volunteers and three new volunteers arrived to start the planting work.

At the end of the day approximately only half of the whips were in the ground, planted by 30 volunteers including Friends, 3 young people on Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and 10 West Bridgford Explorer Scouts. The work involves clearing the ground and pruning overhanging branches, digging planting holes and lining them with mulch, planting the young plants with their canes and guards, and topping off with mulch to keep them damp.

As well as all this work, we managed to clear the usual large bag of litter including bottles, cans and broken glass. There was also the usual large number of plastic bags by the paths and hanging from the bushes, containing dog faeces. Dog walkers were numerous, with all dogs appearing well behaved and in control of their owners.

We also started to plan our online Nature Trail in line with what people have told us they want to see happen.

If you would like to help plant the remaining whips, another work party is planned for Thursday 8th December at 10 pm, meeting at the top of Peveril Drive. You will receive guidance and we have tools, first aid kit and protective gloves available. Bring stout shoes, weather and sun protection, lunch and drinks and if you have a wheelbarrow and/or spade, so much the better! We look forward to seeing you.