

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR NAILSEA ENVIRONMENT & WILDLIFE TRUST 2024

Very wet weather over the winter period was challenging, but the boardwalk maintenance and reed clearance was completed by March.

Spring continued with the cold and wet weather, but despite the challenges a **Tawny Owl** (*Strix aluco*) pair took up residence in the box near to the carr and produced 2 owlets which was a great success story given the unfavourable conditions. They fledged unnoticed sometime between May and June.

The Kestrel box was occupied for a short time in April, but 5 eggs were found to be abandoned later on.

New interpretation boards were installed in April to replace the faded originals.

The Orchids fared reasonably well, less numerous than usual and more spread out across the reserve.

Summer did not really get going until July when good weather allowed for the installation of the new boardwalk. The work was carried out by a company called Mike Watts Countryside Contracting with materials in recycled plastic supplied by Bison Bridges at a cost of £38,000, which was entirely met by North Somerset Council using funds from Section 101 money, a levy which construction companies have to pay to offset any environmental damage from their operations. The new walkway is raised higher off the ground than the old one and will not need to be replaced for a very long time! It also provides a much safer route for the many local people who use the footpath through the reserve on a daily basis.

We continued with butterfly and bird recording over the spring and summer months. First records for the reserve were **Grasshopper Warbler** (*Locustella naevia*) **Jack Snipe** (*Lymnocyptes minimus*) and **Mandarin Ducks** (*Aix galericulata*) - an introduced species.

Butterfly numbers continued to show dramatic declines, nationally as well on the reserve. Even the normally prolific Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*) hardly made it into double figures.

Dragonflies did slightly better - the **Scarce Chaser** (*Libellula fulva*) and **Brown Hawker** (*Aeshna grandis*) were both present in June and July (not commonly seen species)

Our wildflower beds were very successful, producing a lot of Ox-eye Daisy, Wild Carrot, Yellow Rattle and Ragged Robin.

In July we had a work party of 13 volunteers from Wessex Water giving their time to help clear and improve the drainage channels in the meadow, a very wet and muddy job.

Avon Wildlife Trust volunteers returned to help with grass and brush cutting over two days in August, when we had very warm weather and the Gordano volunteers assisted with the raking up on the third day.

Efforts to improve the drainage channels in the meadow continued throughout the remainder of the year. Wet weather from October onwards hampered the work to scythe the grass and reeds in the carr area. During the October workday we found 2 **Common Toads** (*Bufo bufo*) in the long grass adjacent to the carr. There had been no records for several years.

December workday was postponed by a week due to heavy rain and it was not possible to make a good bonfire to burn the reeds.

Volunteer hours total is **736** – slightly down from 2023 (757) probably due to poor weather and no events or group visits on the reserve.

There were 15 workdays – the usual one every month and 3 extra to catch up on grass cutting and raking. Volunteer numbers on the scheduled workdays ranged from 18-9, giving an average of 14 which is very encouraging. We are extremely grateful to all of our loyal volunteers without whom none of our work would be possible.