



Darlington & Teesdale Naturalists' Field Club 2020 Project Update

Blackwell Hill Meadow

This is looking much improved following winter grazing by sheep and they returned after lambing. We await to see what blooms this summer. The Tees Rivers Trust donated daffodils and fritillary which were planted at the riverside by their volunteers, residents and members of the Field Club. There was a beautiful display in the Spring.

Snipe Pond

This is now looking most attractive and apart from the fishermen, it is being used more by families who are taking their children for exercise and picnics. There has not been any evidence of antisocial behaviour since improvements have cleaned up the area.

The meadow continues to be a challenge although some yellow rattle that we sowed last autumn is now beginning to flower. The Tees Rivers Trust kindly offered to donate plug plants but unfortunately they were not able to carry this out due to lockdown. In conjunction with Durham Wild Life, we have since planted small trees along the boundary fence with the Golf Club. We are grateful to the Badminton Club of Hummersknott School for giving us these whips. We have met with DWL recently to formulate a plan which will include mowing and raking. Through this contact The Friends of Snipe Pond have enlisted the help of Brightwater to advise about accessibility as there is an awkward point for wheelchair access near a bridge where the path gradient is too steep. This consultation will be on-going.

The Parkland at Blackwell Grange

Fortunately, this precious and historic parkland has been saved and the Council have abandoned plans to chop down trees and build more houses as has happened across Carmel Road on the former Blackwell Golf Course. I gave an archaeology report to the Friends of the Parkland and they have included the Historical Society to enable this to happen. The Friends keep in regular contact with me and will include us in any future management plans.

Marine Biology

We have worked over the years with the Marine and Coastal Section of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union and have undertaken joint marine surveys with them which have contributed towards the designation of Marine Conservation Zones. On June 8th which was World Oceans Day, the Benyon Report was published to call upon the Government to establish Highly Protected Marine Areas (HMPA's) to allow the marine ecosystem to develop. The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust will keep us informed of progress.

Additionally, over this difficult time for a more elderly group, we have had some great ideas and challenges. Derek Risbey our Botany leader has been sending Flower photos for members to identify. Not as easy as it sounds - we only received part of the photo and he has set in place a scoring system based on whether you ID the flowers on the 1st, 2nd or 3rd time. This has been well received and made more interesting. This is a sample of the ones from this week.