

# Beckford Nature Reserve

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We were delighted to see the return of the Sand Martins in May after several years' absence. Natural England had given us permission to clear some of the vegetation from the SSSI during the winter, giving the birds a more direct run into the sand bank. It is a delight to see them again hawking for insects over the lake, and we think that there are about six breeding pairs. We were not so delighted to see our lovely baby ducklings and moorhens picked off by the Black Back Gulls; it would appear that only two young coots have survived.

As the early part of this year has been so dry there has been a noticeable effect on the level of the lake which is now very low. Early violets and bee orchids however, seem to have weathered the dry spring successfully, and are now starting to appear in greater numbers than in previous years.

March saw the completion of the new easy access hide dedicated to the memory of Rupert Ellis. It is an attractive building, and has already been much appreciated by the visitors.

Our three year maintenance is now complete; one of the last elements was to partly coppice the alder trees on the island allowing more light to penetrate, and to encourage a more diverse under storey. We continue to take frequent advice from John Clarke of the Kemerton Conservation Trust, and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust who are both most positive and encouraging about our efforts to maintain the Reserve.

Successful working parties have been held throughout the autumn and winter, thanks to all our volunteers, and we now have Trevor McGill as an additional conservation warden to ensure the continuation of the future management of the reserve. As ever, our heartfelt thanks also go out to our very dedicated team of fundraisers whose financial contributions pay for contract work and equipment. A Duke of Edinburgh student is assisting us as part of his voluntary unit, and local children have made, and installed four additional bird boxes, all of which appear to be inhabited.

We have seen a marked increase in the number of visitors to the reserve, but as always it is our priority to maintain and improve its varied habitat for wildlife.

John Clifford

Conservation Warden