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15/12/14

Survey Report Thurgoland C.E. Primary School A Healthy Biodiversity

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Species and Habitats (see website) are in **bold** print and suggested nest boxes/feeding stations/ponds to be placed in the school grounds are in red print.

Dear Suzanne,

Thank you for your warm and positive welcome to your lovely school. The grounds provide interesting opportunities for developing a healthy biodiversity.

Car Park Area.

There are two large trees (Sycamore I think) on which 6 **Bat** boxes could be placed. The base of these trees is an ideal place to plant **English Bluebells**, Snowdrops, Wood Anemones and Daffodils, all of which can be obtained by internet shopping. It is important to ensure that native species are bought.

The Wild Area. (South East of School)

This area has some promising features such as a small **pond**, Hazel and Silver Birch trees and a substantial **Deadwood Habitat** to encourage **invertebrates** which are the bedrock of a healthy biodiversity. Frogs, newts and dragon flies visit the pond which needs some it's vegetation to be thinned out. Hardy native marsh plants such as Yellow Flag Iris, Purple Loosestrife and Marsh Marigold could be planted near the edge of the pond. It would be advantageous not to mow the edges of this area to allow hibernation areas for amphibians. **2 Tree Sparrow** nest boxes could be placed on the trees here. 4 **Bee** boxes could be placed around the edges.

Hedgehogs have declined in numbers from 30 million in the 1950s to 1 million today. They are in danger of extinction and many of our schools are thinking of running local community campaigns to help this iconic British species. They are largely a suburban species and school grounds can be ideal places for them to forage and hibernate. However, the fencing and walling of both school grounds and nearby gardens is not

helpful to a creature that can travel 2kms per night in search of food. Consideration could be given to creating intermittent spaces under the fence line so that **Hedgehogs** can travel freely to new feeding areas. If this was done we could provide 1 **Hedgehog** box to be placed on the fence line near to the pond area.

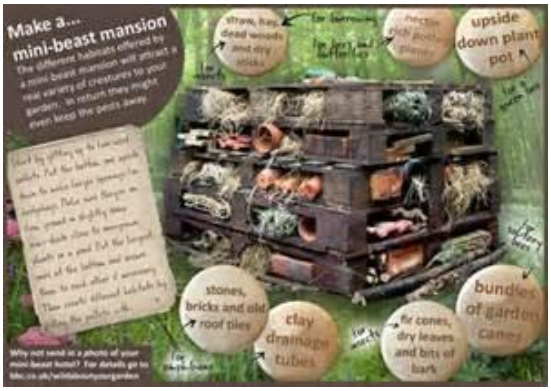
The School Field Area.

The fence line which runs along the edge of an arable field has a good number of mature Silver Birch and smaller Oak trees. The Oak trees will provide invertebrates (mainly moth caterpillars) to feed nesting birds and so we could place 8 **Tree Sparrow** boxes along this fence line. It is strongly recommended that a margin of two metres should be left un-mown along this fence line. This would allow wild flowers to grow, invertebrates to thrive and hedgehog/amphibian hibernation areas to develop. It would also provide an opportunity to place 6 **Bee** boxes. A small area next to the wild area (South East) could be prepared for **wild flower** seed.

Birds were feeding in the copse at the South West corner of the fence line where a plastic sheet had been placed to prevent animals from entering the school grounds. The evidence points to this being a traditional **Badger** pathway. It is likely that the badgers were marking this route by creating a latrine area. The main food of badgers is worms and I would suggest that they would be coming on to the school field to suck them up. I can't see that the latrine would be a danger, especially if the children were informed of this wonderful addition to school wildlife. I have a wildlife camera which would prove or disprove my theory. Let me know if you wish me to use it.

On a more serious 'health and safety' note the regular herbicide and pesticide spraying of the intensively farmed field to the South of the school field could be an issue at playtimes.

The fence line leading north to the road has Oak and Cherry trees and an additional **Tree Sparrow** box could be placed here. Again it would be advantageous to **wild flowers, bees** and other **invertebrates,** wood mice and **hedgehogs** if the grass was not mowed right up to the fence line. A huge pile of wood has been accumulated behind the 'ball' fence. This is an excellent insect 'hotel' that will harbour a wonderful variety of **invertebrates** and provide food for birds. It should be left to rot naturally. The children could be involved with building their own **invertebrate** 'hotel' next to it by using palettes (see picture below).



Native deciduous and fruit trees have been planted on the bankings leading to the school field. The grass at the base of the trees needs to be cut while they are small. However, the remainder of the banking grass could be left uncut to encourage **invertebrates**.

The Woodland Habitat.

This area is next to the school building and would be an ideal place to plant many **English Bluebells**, Snowdrops, Daffodils and Wood Anemones. A narrow, mown pathway could be maintained in this area to enable study of plants etc. A bird feeding station could be installed and viewed from the nearby classroom.

Conclusion

We would provide all new nest boxes free of charge, present them at a whole school assembly, help with their installation, set up a mapping and recording system and follow up with nest box cleaning and recording nest box contents in the Autumn. All activities will involve children and the school community. Please share this report with appropriate staff, governors and children and let us know whether you wish us to proceed.

Maintaining a healthy biodiversity is probably the most important challenge human beings will need to face in the future.

Once again, thank you for welcoming me to your school. We look forward to working with you. The class presentation is on Tuesday 13th January 9.15am

Kind regards,

Colin Graham

Project Leader.

Biodiversity in Schools