



## Wolves Play Cafe Community Interest Company

### The Playce Project supported by Severn Trent Community Fund

#### Boundary Way Allotments - Environmental Site Survey

Date of report: 06/03/2023

Author of report: Dr Christopher Young

#### About Dr Young:

Chris joined the University as a PhD student in 1996, progressed first to a postdoctoral position in late 1999 and then to a full-time lecturer in 2001. Since then he has moved on to the position of Senior Lecturer where he is now subject leader for all Animal Behaviour and Wildlife Conservation awards (Msc, MSci, BSc and HND). Prior to a career in academia Chris developed his skills as a field ecologist whilst working for organizations such as MAFF, ADAS and the Wildlife Trusts partnership in a range of locations across England and Wales. Chris's main teaching responsibilities lie in delivering topics including wildlife conservation, conservation biology, landscape ecology, applied animal behaviour, geographical information systems and fieldwork at all levels. As part of the fieldwork remit, he also leads the annual first year field trip to the Lake District and has led or co-led field trips to Poland/Slovakia, South Africa, India, USA, Azores and a range of other European destinations. In addition to his teaching, Chris has developed his research interests through engagement with both technical and subject-related activities. This has included collaborations with the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country and colleagues across the University in other subject areas. He has successfully supervised four PhDs to completion and is currently supervising two PhDs.

#### Current site overview:

Allotments are inherently good for wildlife, with the main issue being the use of herbicides and pesticides, issues that can easily be circumvented through developing some good practice. I don't think there is a huge amount that needs to be done. All-in-all there are plenty of things already working, but there are lots of cost-effective or straightforward activities which could have a significant wildlife benefit. Even doing some of these would be a positive move.



#### Suggestions for improvements:

##### Woodland

Thin the woodland area to let more light in - this will provide better conditions for ground flora. Take care to make sure brambles don't take over (though some are good!). Use the wood on-site (poles, log piles)  
Composting and Habitat Creation

See about having 3-4 semi-permanent compost heaps that are not touched from 1st October until 1st April - these are perfect habitat for a range of amphibians and reptiles, let alone invertebrates and hedgehogs as well. Similarly some useful piles of logs/wood across the site as these provide a similar function. They need not be large (e.g. 1mx1m) to be useful to wildlife



Pollinator mixes – encouraging this on allotments if there is a spare bed or pot. Alternatively or additionally spreading some on grassy areas that can then be left during April-June just to grow flowers. The grass can then be cut, taken off and used in compost. If in doubt it is easy to plant herbs or nasturtiums. These are all good for invertebrates.

Bird boxes – there are plenty of opportunities for putting in further bird boxes around the site on suitable trees or permanent buildings.

Bee boxes – bug hotels, bee boxes etc. are easy to put up and have a big benefit across the site. Pretty much every shed could have one.

Bat Boxes – you could go further and there are opportunities to put up bat boxes as well – there would be fewer than bird boxes but they can be valuable

#### Ponds

Ponds are a must for encouraging wildlife – there is no doubt scope for a couple more proper wildlife ponds. There is also the potential for lots of small ponds on the spaces on allotments, even if this is just half a sunken bin or barrel. Really nice plants can be planted, within 2 weeks things arrive and within a year there is a thriving ecosystem.

#### Community Involvement:

Finding out what is there is also important so you can adjust things as needed.

Young children – just finding out if they can see a robin or a centipede or something similar is a good way to get interest. ‘Tick off 5 creepy crawlies’ – type activities also work well.

Allotment holders – Giving them a list of ‘20 things to find on my allotment’ then seeing what they find and where this would be useful. Many are no doubt interested in wildlife anyway and know a lot and just harnessing this will be powerful. Encouraging holders to ‘host’ any of the basic ideas above would also be helpful.

Systematic surveys – Unless there is an allotment holder/group who are keen to do this, this is more the area for the University or similar group. This could include camera trapping exercises, small mammal trapping, bird surveys, butterfly/bee surveys etc. of varying detail and complexity. From the university standpoint we have a particular interest in butterflies and also herptiles (reptiles and amphibians) so these would be straightforward to offer/do.

#### Next Steps for Networks and Partnerships:

Undertaking a project/research activity to find out the wildlife knowledge of allotment holders would be useful exercise and then build on that.

The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country is a good first port of call. Holly King (Community Engagement Officer – [Holly.K@bbcwildlife.org.uk](mailto:Holly.K@bbcwildlife.org.uk)) would be a good first step.

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