

# Biodiversity Action Plan

Report to EWCC SPC (September 2022)

from the Joint SPC Sub-committee for Biodiversity

Heritage Officer, 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022



# Governance of Biodiversity Action Plan

## Joint SPC Sub-committee for Biodiversity

- Sitting members: Cllr Yvonne Collins  
Cllr Eoin Ó Broin  
Cllr Gus O'Connell  
Deirdre Mooney, Sectoral/Business
- PPN representative – request for replacement PPN representative
- 2022 meetings: 10<sup>th</sup> February, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 23<sup>rd</sup> August
- Reports issued to SPCs

## Internal Working/Steering Group for Biodiversity

- 2022 meetings: 10<sup>th</sup> May, 23<sup>rd</sup> August

*Action 3.1c: Annual reporting on plan implementation*

# Projects – Heritage Plan Budget

- **Swan and Gull Tagging:** underway, plus draft report has been received which will present key successes from the last 5 years of support from SDCC. Final report expected in October 2022.

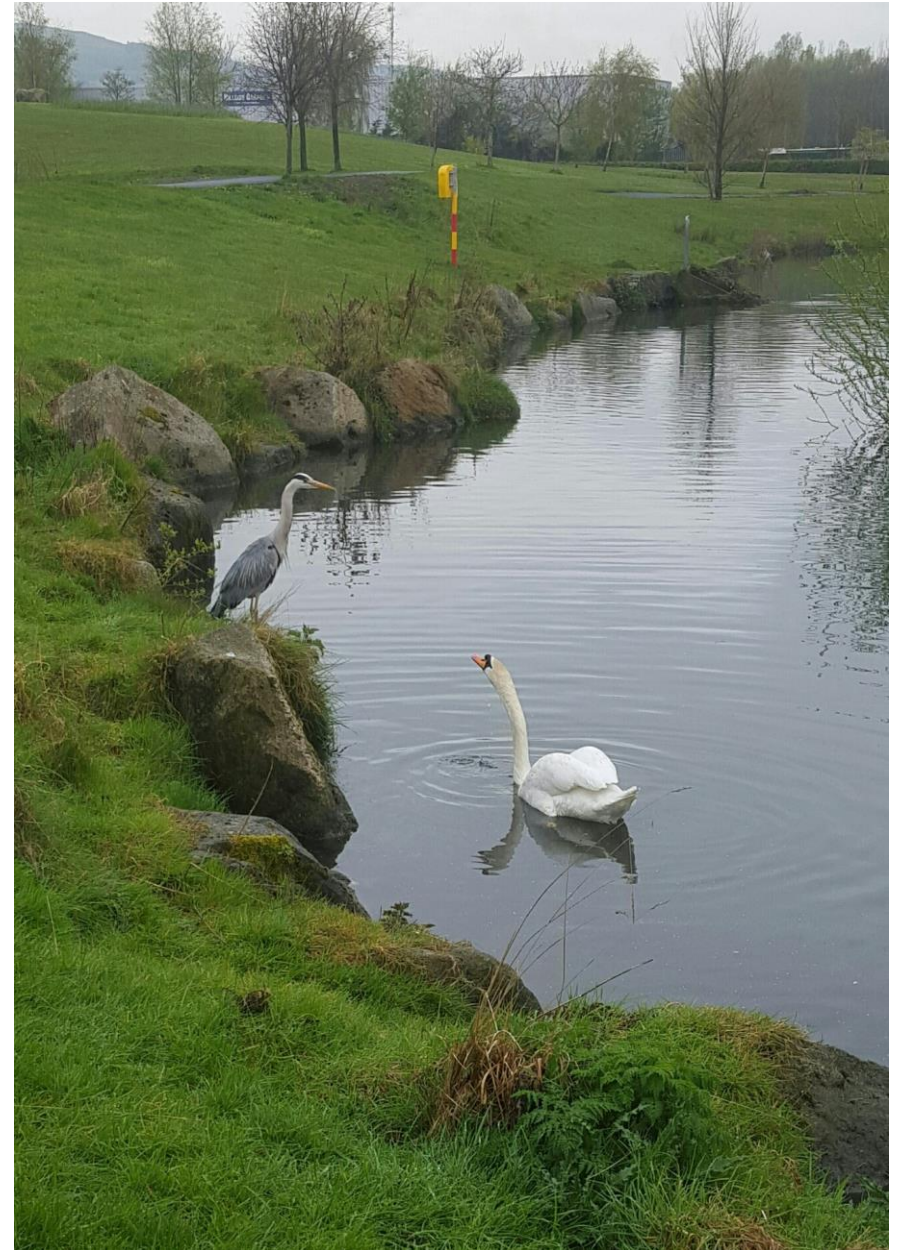
*Action 1.1: Collate ecological data and survey and map the County, to provide an evidence base for informed biodiversity decision-making and to form the basis for a Green Infrastructure network*

- **Mink Trapping:** Autumn trapping programme planned to commence in late September/early October, focussing on middle-to-lower Dodder in South Dublin County

*Action 1.1.ii: Map and manage the spread of non-native invasive species.*

- **Alternatives to Herbicides** project (Kildare Co. Co.)

*Action 4.2: To continue to research methods to further minimise the use of chemical biocides that are harmful to wider biodiversity.*



# Projects - Heritage Plan Budget

## Early season survey at pollinator sites in 2022

(Tymon Park, Waterstown Park, Lucan Demesne)

- Early season survey in 2021 was not possible due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- Survey was undertaken and completed in mid/late June 2022.
- Report is being prepared but early indications are positive, with good representation of floral and insect diversity.
- Final report will provide management recommendations for consideration for each of the key biodiversity meadow areas e.g. timing of cutting, and whether to prioritise management for either their floral diversity or their insect diversity.

*Action 1.1: Survey and monitor biodiversity at identified pollinator sites.*



# Projects - Heritage Plan Budget

## Nature on our Doorsteps

- Final formatting of Vol 2 is close to completion, after which a quote for printing from the Council's framework printers will be sought.
- to date, 254 weekly biodiversity articles in total have been written by the Heritage Officer and supplied to the Echo for publication

*Action 2.1: Develop a Biodiversity Communications Strategy, to celebrate and promote the enjoyment and protection of nature in South Dublin County.*



Holly berries are loved by thrushes and blackbirds.

Holly Blue Butterfly, hatched in...

### The holly and the ivy

The two native plants that we perhaps most associate with Christmas are the evergreen holly's bright red berries and glossy, prickly, leaves often include the robin, while the dark green leaves of ivy form the basis of many a Christmas wreath or garland.

Both plants are also important for wildlife. Holly berries are loved by thrushes and blackbirds and by migrating redwings and fieldfares in colder winters. Then, when all other hedgerow berries are gone, purple ivy berries will fill the hungry gap in early springtime until the weather warms up.

The prickly nature of holly bushes and the dense, heavy,

growth of ivy also make them excellent nesting sites for blackbirds and robins.

Both plants are also linked ecologically by the dainty Holly Blue butterfly. This butterfly lays its eggs on holly in early springtime. The caterpillars feed on its flowers and buds and when they transform into butterflies in early summer, a second generation of Holly Blues follows. This time around, however, the second brood of eggs are laid on ivy instead.

In Irish folklore, Holly is listed as one of the 'noble' 'tinne', meaning 'iron bar', reflecting perhaps the very dense, strong nature of its wood.

Article first published 21st December 2017

To mark 5 years of the weekly publication of the Nature on our Doorsteps column, the Echo requested a double length column for 28th July edition. This extended column focussed on the successful return and spread of a range of plant species to the Tymon Park grasslands, following Council's scheduled changes to the grass-cutting regimes.



# Nature on our doorsteps

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## Stars of the Meadows

OVER the past number of years South Dublin County Council has been operating a management programme of grass-cutting in selected areas for the benefit of biodiversity.

Meadows are allowed to grow and flower throughout the growing season and they are only cut once a year, either in autumn or in early spring.

The cut grass is also removed, so that nutrient levels in the soil are reduced. This suits wildflower species.

Many more wildflowers have time and space to bloom and to set seed, and this in turn offers much more pollen and nectar to a wider range of insects.

Also, because some areas are not cut until springtime, there are more places for insects to overwinter in dead stems and grassy tussocks.

To monitor the effects of this management, the biodiversity in the meadows is regularly surveyed, and the results are beginning to show.

Some unusual wildflower species that had not been recorded before in the meadows of South Dublin County are now appearing.

Some of these wildflowers are more commonly found in other parts of the country, but they can occur in South Dublin County because of the soil type that exists here, and also because of the way the meadows are now being managed.

These 'Stars of the Meadows' include high numbers of wild orchids, namely the Pyramidal Orchid and the Bee Orchid.

Letting the grass grow in June and July allows these to flower.

Other wildflowers like the lovely yellow Goatsbeard have a limited distribution throughout the rest of Ireland.

However, the number of



**NEAR-THREATENED:** The beautiful Moss Carder Bee depends on flower-rich meadows for its survival.

flowering stems of this plant have been gradually increasing in the meadows.

This is due mainly to the altered mowing patterns which allows the plant to flower, set seed, and spread.

The delicate blue Pale Flax is a delightful plant to see swaying in the breeze amongst the tall grasses.

This is much more common along the southeast coast of Ireland, but it too is becoming more frequent now in our park meadows.

Cowslips, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Red Clover, Self-Heal, Ox-eye Daisy, Vetches, Buttercups, and Knapweed, have all become much more plentiful.

For insects, this abundance of flowers has had very positive

impacts.

The park meadows have good populations of the Red-tailed bumblebee, a species which has declined in the countryside.

The Moss Carder bumblebee is described as being 'near-threatened' because of loss of habitat.

Because it prefers not to fly very far from its nest to find food, this beautiful bee needs to live very close to plenty of flower-rich meadows in order to survive.

Flower-rich grasslands and gardens are therefore very important for these and other insects.

This makes the flowering meadows in our public parks an incredible oasis for biodiversity in the urban environment.

# Projects - Heritage Plan Budget

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## Swift nest-box project

- Currently in discussion with BirdWatch Ireland in relation to 3 possible locations for nest box installation
  - Waterstown Park
  - Vessey Park ('Bird House'), and
  - Deansrath depot – subject to possible restructuring issues at the depot

*Action 1.1: Collate ecological data and survey and map the County, to provide an evidence base for informed biodiversity decision-making and to form the basis for a Green Infrastructure network.*



# 2022 Projects – External Funding

NPWS – National Biodiversity Action Plan



## Ponds and Lakes Wetland Survey

- Funding was secured from National Parks and Wildlife Service for a wetland survey under the National Biodiversity Action Plan Fund (NBAP)
- Delays experienced in acquiring consultants, but currently in discussion with a consultancy for a Phase 1 Wetland Survey (i.e. desktop collation and mapping of existing data and information)

*Action 1.1.iv – Survey and map wetlands in the County.*

## Corkagh Park Woodland and Hedgerow Survey

- Successful Public Realm application to the NBAP for the Corkagh Park Woodland and Hedgerow Survey. Project being managed by Public Realm.

*Action 1.1.i map the distribution of the habitats and species in the County*



# Projects – Pollinator Plan, in conjunction with Public Realm

## Information Videos

Heritage Officer assisted with the making and editing of three information videos for the Council's Pollinator Page:

- Long-flowering Meadows
- Short-flowering Meadows
- Wildflower Meadows management cycle

(link to videos on SDCC's pollinator page at [Pollinators - SDCC](#))

*Action 2.1: Develop a Biodiversity Communications Strategy, to celebrate and promote the enjoyment and protection of nature in South Dublin County.*

Short-Meadows-County-Map-2022



Long-Meadows-County-Map-2022



# Projects – Public Realm

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## Integrated Constructed Wetlands

- The first constructed wetland has been completed in Griffeen Valley Park, and works have commenced in Dodder Valley Linear Park (Old Bawn) on 2 new wetland areas.

## Woodland Management Plans for Parks

- Following the 2021 Tymon Park woodland and hedgerow survey, template woodland management plan is in development, **Invasive Species Management**
- The autumn programme of treatment for Japanese Knotweed is to commence shortly.
- The in-house training video on protocols for invasive species is being rolled-out to staff. The production of this video was supported by NPWS in 2021.

## Climate Change Week

- The Heritage Officer is scheduled to lead 2 biodiversity walks in Tymon Park and Waterstown Park during Climate Change Week



# On-going Inputs to B.A.P. by Heritage Officer

- On-going inputs on biodiversity issues to Council projects, planning applications, Part VIIIs, SHDs, SDZ, County Development Plan etc.

*Action 3.1a: Devise and implement good governance strategies to ensure the smooth integration of national and EU biodiversity legislation and policy requirements into all Council plans, projects, and services.*

- SDCC's Pollinator Sites – Monitoring and liaising with Public Realm re biodiversity monitoring and grass-cutting schedules at Council's parks pollinator sites, community and research groups etc.

*Action 3.1a: as above*

- Invasive Species Management Programme, including annual trapping for invasive Mink and inputting to the control of Japanese Knotweed.

*Action 1.1.ii: Map and manage the spread of non-native invasive species.*

- On-going input to SDCC Climate Change Action Plan under the Nature Based Solutions pillar

*Action 3.4: Coordinate with the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024 to identify impacts on biodiversity arising from climate change, targeting, and implementing necessary measures to assist biodiversity adapt to changing conditions.*

