

# Buckden Parish Biodiversity Action Plan

*A plan to protect and enhance the wildlife and environment of Buckden Parish.*

## Section 1: Introduction and background

Buckden is exceptionally rich in biodiversity due to its rural setting, plentiful green space (including within the built environment), diverse wildlife habitats and connectivity to the wider ecological network: most notably on the east side of the Parish through the presence of the hugely-important Great Ouse Valley and its surrounds. There is also great quality, not just quantity. The Parish is home to more than 100 Priority Species for conservation with many Red and Amber List birds (including breeding Nightingales, Barn Owls, Spotted Flycatchers and Skylarks to name just a few), notable flora (including rare orchids); mammals (with several setts of legally-protected Badgers and many bat species), fungi (including a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species: the Sandy Stiltball) and insects (with a particularly rich, well-recorded, bee, butterfly and moth assemblage).

Buckden Parish Council (BPC) wanted to take the next step after the approval of the Neighbourhood Plan by commissioning a practical and accessible strategy to ensure its aims are achieved; taking policies “off the paper” and into real action for the environment and wildlife of Buckden that everyone can contribute to.

### 1.1: Maintaining the status quo

A crucial point to establish is that Buckden is already excellent for biodiversity, so maintaining the status quo, and a mindset of “protect and maintain what is already here”, should be at the forefront of decision making.

Letting nature do its own thing and natural regeneration through allowing wildflowers, scrub and trees to colonise, works and saves time and money, but there is much that can be done in the Parish to increase biodiversity alongside protecting and futureproofing what is already here.

Additional habitat improvements, or creation, should always be genuine gains to biodiversity abundance and diversity without damaging, or losing, what is already there. The buzzwords of “mitigation”, “biodiversity net gain” and “offset” should be treated with caution, especially where development is concerned. These terms are frequently used in conjunction with a loss of existing habitat and species. It takes hundreds, even thousands, of years for wildlife and ecosystems to establish, so a few tree saplings or wildflower seeds are unlikely to compensate for the loss of an established habitat and the associated ecosystem. Once lost, it is very hard to get species back. Additionally, “biodiversity net gain” does not always take into account the range of species present on sites, or “scores” all habitats when calculating the value of sites targeted for development.

### 1.2 Buckden Neighbourhood Plan and its biodiversity policies

Buckden has completed its Neighbourhood Plan, and it has been approved by an Inspector, so it carries weight in planning matters and should now drive other strategies and work in the Parish. Its Biodiversity section includes the identification and location of Key Wildlife Sites and a full list of Priority Species present to 2019.

The Biodiversity Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan focus on ensuring Buckden’s Priority Species (those carrying weight in planning and other matters due to their local or national significance and featuring in the National Planning Policy Framework) are protected and their populations enhanced. They also aim to ensure the Key Wildlife Sites and additional sites where Priority Species occur are not negatively impacted by development and are preserved and enhanced. Actions and management in the Parish should not conflict with these policies and everyone should be familiar with and live and breathe the democratically agreed policies.

#### **Buckden Neighbourhood Plan Biodiversity Policies:**

- 1) “Sites of biodiversity value and importance for Priority Species in Buckden Parish, as identified and mapped in the Neighbourhood Plan, will be safeguarded from development, with protection prioritised (as informed by the Wildlife Review evidence document). Development proposals that have a significant adverse impact on biodiversity will not be supported unless they retain and enhance the existing network of wildlife-rich habitats, ecological networks, wildlife corridors and

stepping stones that connect them, especially where Priority species and the habitats they depend on are known to be present.”

- 2) “All developments will be expected to provide net gains at both habitat and species level, (i.e. increasing species diversity), that does not come from the detriment of Priority Species and the important wildlife sites in the Parish identified in this Plan. Developments will be expected to design in green infrastructure measures that are sensitive to the Parish’s particularly rich biodiversity with generous biodiversity Implementation and Management Plans part of design and layout.”

It is recommended that all individuals elected to BPC, and sitting its key groups such as Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Advisory Group and Climate Change Advisory Group, are familiar with the Key Wildlife Sites, which are further explored in this Plan (including the two additional sites that have come to the fore since the Wildlife Review), plus the Neighbourhood Plan Biodiversity Policies. It is also advisable for residents to be made aware of the Key Wildlife Sites, so they can be extra “eyes and ears” on the ground and help care for these areas, protect them and record the wildlife there.

### **1.3 Species recording - the Parish’s strong wildlife evidence base**

As part of the Buckden Neighbourhood Plan creation and in response to large scale planning applications for housing, the richness of the Parish for biodiversity, especially Priority Species, was investigated by the author in detail (note - a “CV” has been supplied to BPC). The author kept detailed and extensive wildlife records from January 2011-January 2022, while resident in Buckden, and supplemented by records from other naturalists, has created an up to date record for decision-makers in the Parish and beyond in the form of a Species Database. Records are broken down by species groups (eg birds, mammals, moths, beetles, flora) and recorded using the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Records Centre (CPERC) standard, including a grid reference, so records for the Parish can be filtered and mapped by site and area. The Database captures what species are present and where, along with information such as dates recorded, numbers, when they are present, if they are Priority Species and if they breed in the Parish. This evidence can be used by BPC in many matters and supplies a solid evidence base of what is in the Parish already and has been recorded historically. These records played a key role in the identification and mapping of the Key Wildlife Sites in the Parish.

CPERC is contacted by developers to see what species have been recorded on sites they target for development and the Buckden records should always be kept and used by them as well as BPC. The Records Centre can face a backlog and may not have all the records uploaded, so BPC should always check with them when planning matters arise and actively use the records themselves.

With professionally gathered, recorded and analysed data for biodiversity across the Parish, Buckden is in a strong position in knowing its biodiversity assets and where they are. The next stage is preserving them and for BPC, landowners, local decision makers and residents to protect and enhance habitats and populations of important species present in Buckden as the Parish and surrounding areas changes, development takes place and further development pressure arises.

Formal data on species present in the Parish is also held by specialist wildlife groups, such as the Cambridgeshire Bird Club, County Moth recorder Barry Dickerson and the Huntingdonshire Fungi Group (through County Recorder Alan Robbins), the Cambs and Beds branch of Butterfly Conservation, but also other recorders and groups including flora and these records contribute to national recording schemes. All moth, butterfly and bird records in the Species Database have been verified by county recorders for those groups.

Local residents can submit their bird records to Jon Heath, Cambs county recorder, and more information is here: <https://www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk/records>

CPERC can be contacted about species recording and records at <https://www.cperc.org.uk/contact-us/>

The Wildlife Trust for Cambs, Beds, Northants and Peterborough are also extremely knowledgeable and helpful with local wildlife matters and BPC should continue to engage with them.

The author is available to provide clarity on anything in the database at any time. The records carry weight and should be used in all elements of nature protection in Buckden and as a source of inspiration and pleasure regarding the wonderful array of wildlife that calls Buckden home. Due to the sensitive nature of many species present in the Parish, it is recommended BPC do not publish the database, but interested parties and those wanting to use it for the benefits of wildlife protection and enhancement could be given access.

#### 1.4 Key Deliverables from the Buckden Biodiversity Action Plan

The Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan encompasses the area and biodiversity contained within the Neighbourhood Plan Parish Boundary shown below:



*Image 1: Buckden Parish area covered by the Buckden Biodiversity Action Plan (area marked in red)*

##### Key deliverables from the Plan

- Inform and guide BPC, landowners and other decision makers on how to protect and enhance sites and habitats of high biodiversity value within Buckden Parish
- Ensure all are familiar with the location of Key Wildlife Sites in the Parish and what is found there, so they can be preserved, enhanced and protected from damaging actions, on and adjacent to them
- Practical guidance for preserving and enhancing Buckden's Priority Species and sites where they occur
- Ensure BPC (and HDC and Planning Inspectors) are well prepared for development applications and are not reliant solely on data from surveys by developers and ecologists who will be less familiar with Buckden, its wildlife and important sites as well as the surrounding area
- Guidance on best practice for key routine management such as hedge and tree cutting, verge maintenance, mowing of greens, wildflower, tree and hedgerow planting to ensure handymen and contractors enhance Buckden's biodiversity and environment
- Advice on how to actively address problems/conflicts that arise, eg cutting trees and hedges, the law on birds' nests and using biodiversity in planning discussions. This will enable BPC to swiftly resolve challenges in a collaborative way as well as equipping handymen with best practice guidance
- BPC can use funds (especially CIL – Community Infrastructure Levy from the new developments) and volunteer and resident time to improve and protect the biodiversity that such a high percentage of residents said they wished to preserve as part of the Neighbourhood Plan Consultation
- A copy of the recommended handbook and guidance for biodiversity and new developments

- Equip BPC with the knowledge to stop and report wildlife crime: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/wild-bird-crime-report-form/>

## Section 2 – Roadside Verges, green spaces and mowing

Roadside verges can provide huge areas of attractive and wildlife-friendly habitat. Sadly, many are not managed well, but the tide is turning. Many local authorities are seeing the light, saving thousands of pounds and making verges more attractive and better for wildlife, and people, in the process.

Roadside verges, if left alone for nature to do as it is intended, can look beautiful from spring to autumn, full of a wide range of valuable native wildflowers and grasses and insects, but the trend for health and safety overcaution and “tidiness”, plus society’s well- documented disconnection from nature, means they are cut far more extensively and aggressively, than they need to be. This also costs taxpayers, and Buckden residents, money which is a key driver for making a change, alongside the biodiversity gains. There is a real appetite for changing this in the climate and ecological emergency facing the UK and BPC and HDC can, and should, join the many authorities adopting a cheaper and more wildlife-friendly approach to verge management.

This section outlines the recommended management of the Parish’s verges and grassed open spaces, which in some cases are cut too often and too severely with little middle ground of leaving some areas for wildlife. What follows is the very best practice, and guidance materials, that is not only good for wildlife but will save the Parish Council and District Council significant amounts of money by only mowing when necessary.

There is a significant area of grassland in the form of the shared green spaces and road verges in the Parish and managed correctly, these existing habitats will play a significant contribution to the environment and wildlife populations. They provide some of the best wildlife corridors connecting up as they do alongside our roads, lanes and paths and with the loss of so many of our meadows in the UK, they are needed more than ever.

### 2.1 - Good and bad verge management in Buckden Parish



*Image 2: An early summer roadside verge on Leaden's Lane, looking north from the sewage works - an exemplar of verge management that lets nature take its course with no cost for seeding or cutting.*

The white flowers of Cow Parsley dominate Buckden's roadside verges in May and June and it is an important and attractive flower for a wide range of insects. The verge in Image 2 was uncut in May 2020, creating an attractive landscape for residents, visitors, drivers and walkers, a rich home for insects and a wildlife corridor

for other wildlife such as birds and mammals. This Plan recommends verges remain uncut in May and June as a minimum and only cut where visibility is impaired for drivers and so pedestrians can use footpaths.



*Image 3: Roadside verge on Mill Road, looking east towards the Marina – where roadside verge management can be improved to leave more verge uncut and more wildflowers in situ on the left of the path.*

Verges, such as the long and valuable ones on Mill Road, host a strong assemblage of wildflowers and insects and are a crucial wildlife corridor to and from the Great Ouse Valley. Image 3 is an example of where verge on the roadside should be cut, but the section on the hedgerow side could have been left completely uncut. This was also taken in May (compare Image 2), so the action destroyed wildflowers and insects and potential nests. Many birds, such as warblers, nest on the ground or in low cover such as this, not just in trees and bushes. It is good to see uncut verge nearer the hedge, but the aim should be more wildflowers and long grass.

The verges from the A1 sliproad at Silver Street to the Parish's northern boundary at Brampton are excellent for wildflowers. In 2021, the author found Cornflower, a virtually-extinct species in the wild, here.



*Image 4: A particularly rich wildflower roadside verge in the Parish, between the A1 and the A14 flyover at Brampton, containing Common Poppy, Ox-eye Daisy, Bird's foot-trefoil and the now very rare Cornflower, plus many other colourful, and valuable native species. Many roadside verges are planted with short-lived non-native species that are not as valuable as a rich native verge like this. Letting nature take its course on roadside verges is the best policy for wildlife and to keep costs low. This cost nothing to plant.*

#### **\*\*Actions for protecting Buckden's wildflowers and verges\*\***

- BPC should contact and lobby HDC (which is also making many positive steps for biodiversity) about road verge and green space management and both sign up to the Plantlife (the UK's leading wildflower organisation) roadside verge initiative (<https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign>). This would save BPC and HDC money and resources. This guidance should become the norm for managing verges in the Parish and BPC should advocate it to private landowners who also manage areas of grassland, pathside and trackside vegetation. A free handbook for managing verges for wildlife is found here: <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/our-work/publications/road-verge-management-guide>
- Read and become familiar with the law and best practise of road verges through these FAQs: <https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign/your-questions-answered>
- Signs should be made and erected on areas with wildflowers to safeguard them from mowing eg, "Don't mow me: I'm providing a home for bees and butterflies" or "We've left this area as nature intended to provide beautiful flowers and food for bees and butterflies"
- Be inspired by, and share, the work of other local authorities: [https://www.inkcapjournal.co.uk/how-is-your-local-council-managing-its-roadside-verges/amp/?\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://www.inkcapjournal.co.uk/how-is-your-local-council-managing-its-roadside-verges/amp/?_twitter_impression=true)

## **2.2 Shared greens and greenspace**

The greens in Buckden's built area, such as those on School Lane, Mill Road and Greenway are Key Wildlife Sites in the Neighbourhood Plan (featured in the Key Wildlife Sites section of that document, but also featured in Section 8 of this Plan). Currently, nothing is done to actively maintain wildlife there apart from the author putting up cages periodically to protect the variety of colourful fungi that grow there in autumn. The choice of

trees on the greens in the planting scheme that was used (including elms, oaks, whitebeam, silver birch, lime and others) is good and it is this mix, combined with the large amount of grass, which has led to the list of 50+ species of toadstools, many rare, that grow here as many fungi grown in association with particular trees.

### **\*\*Action to enhance Buckden's shared green spaces\*\***

- To protect fungi, talk to HDC about its mowing regime on the shared greens in the Parish and lobby to reduce/remove mowing between September and December and leave some marked areas for wildflowers to grow such as around the tree bases and towards the centre of the greens (see Image 5) in spring and summer.
- Wildflowers do not always need to be planted through expensive packets of seeds every year. Simply letting nature take its course will ensure native species, such as Daisy, Yarrow and many others thrive and grow as the soil is full of wildflower seeds and wildflowers will colonise naturally. These species are the most valuable to wildlife compared to many of the colourful annual mixes available now.

## **2.3 Private lawns and “plastic lawns”**

It is encouraging to see several gardens in the village taking part in the successful and fast-growing “No Mow May” campaign in spring where you leave parts of your lawn to grow long, attract insects and have lovely wildflowers, all contributing to a more attractive, wildlife-friendlier and healthier environment in Buckden.



*Image 5: Keeping grass shorter and managed doesn't have to come at the expense of wildlife, or mean every lawn is a “bowling green”. Buckden's ample green space could be so much better for wildlife, and more colourful, if areas of wildflowers were left to grow as here in the author's garden in a neat patch, home to grasshoppers, butterflies, 10 species of hoverfly and 10 species of bee in summer 2021. Wildlife needs long grass to live in and lay its eggs on and there should always be some longer grass and vegetation left in gardens and green spaces over winter.*

### **\*\*Action – making our greens, lawns and grassland better for wildlife and more colourful\*\***

- Promote, and encourage residents to take part in, “No Mow May”:  
<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/no-mow-may>
- Residents already leaving parts of their lawns unmown in spring could put signs up and their efforts showcased on the BPC website, social media and in *The Roundabout*. This Plan recommends that

other residents are encouraged to go and look at those doing this for inspiration - who wouldn't want a beautiful front lawn full of bright yellow Primroses and Cowslips?

- Explore an "open day" in spring to tour and spotlight the lawns in the village managed for wildlife and looking great with wildflowers with the owners perhaps sharing how they do it. There are such lawns on School Lane, but there are others.

The environmentally-damaging product and practise of plastic lawns is the subject of campaigns and awareness-raising initiatives calling on them to be banned. Their impact on biodiversity and the environment is incredibly negative in every way and they should not be encouraged within the Parish. It is not just the complete lack of any opportunity for flowers, bees and butterflies to exist, the plastic that is left once the "lawns" wear out degrades into the atmosphere and our ecosystem.

An excellent summary of the issues is at [https://community.rspb.org.uk/nature-on-your-doorstep/b/nature-on-your-doorstep-blog/posts/for-the-love-of-natural-lawns-great-green-spaces-for-wildlife-and-people?utm\\_source=notes\\_on\\_nature\\_20211127&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=&utm\\_content=button-partnership-bird-robin-top-headline&utm\\_campaign=notes\\_on\\_nature&sourcecode=&cta\\_sourcecode=PAIAHC2644%C2%A0&modulecontent=](https://community.rspb.org.uk/nature-on-your-doorstep/b/nature-on-your-doorstep-blog/posts/for-the-love-of-natural-lawns-great-green-spaces-for-wildlife-and-people?utm_source=notes_on_nature_20211127&utm_medium=email&utm_term=&utm_content=button-partnership-bird-robin-top-headline&utm_campaign=notes_on_nature&sourcecode=&cta_sourcecode=PAIAHC2644%C2%A0&modulecontent=) and <https://www.jackwallington.com/17-reasons-to-avoid-fake-lawns-how-bad-is-artificial-grass-for-the-environment/>

#### **\*\*Action – Plastic lawns\*\***

- Actively discourage the use of plastic lawns in the Parish, especially to replace existing grass lawns - and promote the information linked above for education purposes above to raise awareness

### **Section 3 – Trees in Buckden Parish**

This section outlines current best practice on the management and maintenance of trees in the Parish, enhance the "which trees to plant" information supplied to BPC and ensure the crucial importance of leaving standing and fallen old and dead wood is recognised and actioned.

Planting trees is felt to be a quick fix to mitigating climate change. Buckden Parish would definitely be enhanced by tree planting and a much greater tree cover, but there are several nuances around tree planting to keep in mind. There is too much "wrong tree, wrong place" happening in the UK due to well-meaning, but badly informed local authorities and individuals. BPC has a tree group and literature on the dos and don'ts of tree planting and it is recommended this is regularly shared with residents and sent to landowners. Certain trees are far more valuable than others and many species of wildlife are associated only with a particular tree.

This guidance will ensure Buckden has an exemplar model of protecting and managing existing trees, planting the right new ones, removing those contributing little to biodiversity and maintaining a stock of dead wood on living trees and as log piles. Dead wood is one of the most valuable wildlife habitats there is, but "chipping" and tidying up are consistently removing this valuable natural asset. Nature has its own "tidiers" in the form of fungi and a variety of beetles and other species that break down dead wood.

#### **3.1 Planting new trees and protecting existing important ones**

Buckden has a very low level of tree cover, mirroring the trend across the sparsely-wooded county of Cambridgeshire. Opportunities for creating the right trees in the right place are extensive and there are plenty of areas in the Parish where tree planting would enhance the environment, help mitigate climate change and provide wildlife habitats. This includes the large areas of arable land, much of which is low-value for wildlife.

However, there are places, eg meadows, grassland and wetlands (including the newly-created wetlands at the north end of Paxton Pits and west of the A1) where trees are not desirable. These habitats need to be kept open for the species that live there, so it is very much the right tree in the right place as a mindset that the Parish Council should adopt and ensure planting is not too close together and that species and species mix is suitably native. In the main, coniferous trees are best avoided. Yew is our only real native species and it takes

many decades to get to a decent size. It is recommended any planting in and close to the Great Ouse Valley, Buckden and Stirtloe Pits, Anglian Water Road etc is done in consultation with the Great Ouse Valley Trust and Paxton Pits to ensure meadow and wetland habitat is not negatively impacted.

The Parish's low level of tree cover also means the mature trees we do have should be treated as some of our most important assets, like Buckden Towers. Sadly, there have been instances of old trees being removed (eg the Incredibly beautiful and valuable oak on Lucks Lane) that cannot be replaced with new planting. Our old and especially veteran trees should be a conservation priority and "health and safety" should always be challenged as frequently the whole tree does not have to be removed, if indeed at all. If parts of old trees have to be removed, deadwood should be maintained nearby, not chipped, and sent away somewhere or burnt on fires, killing wildlife living in it and contributing to climate change.

It is important to remember it takes decades for a tree to start to have real biodiversity value, so BPC should prioritise protecting existing mature trees as a focus moves onto new tree planting and developers promote this as "mitigation" for the loss of existing hedgerows and trees.

### **3.2 \*\*Action – valuable wildlife trees to protect and plant\*\***

This list is by no means exhaustive, but provides a varied selection of recommended trees to plant. There is a list of recommended shrubs and hedgerow species in Section 4, but those can also work well as singles.

- Willows and Sallows
- Black Poplar (a planting priority for the Great Ouse Valley Trust in that area - it is recommended the Parish Council contact the Trust to look for opportunities to plant this species)
- Pedunculate Oak (3,000 wildlife species associated with it).
- Birches
- Alder
- Beech
- Hornbeam
- Aspen
- Common Whitebeam
- Crab Apple
- Fruit trees
- Alder Buckthorn
- Wild Cherry
- Bird Cherry
- Holly
- Hazel
- Field Maple
- Rowan
- Spindle

### **\*\*Action - Ivy and Bramble\*\***

Ivy, like Bramble, is one of our richest plants/climbers for wildlife and yet too often, and in many cases incorrectly, it is seen as a nuisance. It is one of the few things flowering in late autumn and attracts huge numbers of bees (especially the ivy-dependent, recently arrived in the Parish, Ivy Bee that is only on the wing in late autumn) as well as smelling and looking great.

Ivy provides great cover for nesting birds and due to it being evergreen crucial cover for roosting birds like House Sparrows and overwintering insects and other wildlife such as ladybirds of which Buckden has several species. Contrary to popular belief, Ivy does not "choke" or instantly kill trees it is on – it is a native natural species that lives alongside all others should be encouraged and not badged as "problematic" by default.

Bramble is widespread in the Parish and provides excellent homes for wildlife. There are more than 400 different microspecies of bramble in the UK and Buckden has several, with different fruit, leaves and flowers and flowering times appealing to a wide range of insects, birds and mammals.

Bramble can take over if left unmanaged and shade out ground flora in woods, but it should be encouraged in hedgerows, field margins, rough ground, between houses etc where it is very valuable for butterflies and bees, provides fruit for animals and birds and is a great source of safe cover for House Sparrows and other birds.

#### **Cultivated fruit trees**

These are generally always very good for wildlife and should be encouraged for wildlife and scenic value as well as providing community fruit for residents. Apples, pears, plums, cherries can all provide food for birds, insects and animals, look great and the spring blossom is excellent for insects.

#### **\*\*Action - Undesirable trees\*\***

In general, if a tree is not native, it will have far less wildlife value and there is a risk it could even bring unwanted or pest species with it. For large scale planting schemes, such as new shelter belts, woodland, hedgerows etc, native trees should be used. Variety is good though, but native trees should proliferate.

**Coniferous/evergreen trees** are best avoided, as so few are native (only the native Yew is really beneficial locally), especially *Leylandii* which is a well-documented, menace in the built environment and of little wildlife value, as well as shading everything out and killing grass and other vegetation below. *Leylandii* come with a serious health warning due to its root systems that can damage property, drains and foundations. There are other trees and hedgerow plants that could be used to provide attractive and equally effective boundaries and hedges, such as Beech, Privet, Box, Hawthorn and Blackthorn.

**Laurels and related non-native evergreen species** are used extensively around houses and gardens and shared spaces in the generally very wildlife-poor new developments being built (including in Buckden at Lucks Lane). These should be avoided in any new planting and where possible, discouraged on new developments in favour of the many more attractive, native and wildlife-friendly shrubs featured in this Plan.

### **3.3 Dead and decaying wood and cut trees and branches**

A crucial output of this Plan is to ensure the importance of dead and decaying wood is realised by decision makers, landowners and gardeners and for BPC to lead the culture change. The amount of decaying wood left in the Parish also needs to be maintained and enhanced. As many species live in dead and decaying wood as in live wood, but there is a culture that dead and dying branches and trees have to be removed. A huge number of species, such as beetles and fungi, require deadwood and it is crucial to maintain plenty of old and dead and decaying wood in the current drive to plant new trees and hedges.



*Image 6: More old, dead and decaying wood needs to be left in situ in the Parish. These stunning Wrinkled Peach fungi appear on an old elm log in the front border of a garden on School Lane each year (and are also found on deadwood piles left in Buckden Towers). Fungi helps decompose deadwood too, so to let nature take its course, more dead and decaying wood should be retained around the Parish, for beautiful species like this.*

If trees and branches need to be removed in the Parish because they are deemed to be dangerous, they should be transported to a quieter place, or simply tucked under hedgerows in neat piles that add interest and can be made into attractive features. Cut sections of trees and logs make attractive and valuable logpiles for Hedgehogs to hibernate in and if holes are drilled in them, bee hotels. The one I made in my garden is home to 12 species of bee. A magnificent many hundred-year-old ancient oak on Lucks Lane was removed in the Parish as part of the development works there. Maintaining the wood to allow it to make a home for wildlife would have gone some way for the loss of this much-loved, ancient tree.

Making bee and bug hotels and logpiles from cut and dead wood is a great family activity and something the school and other groups could enjoy doing. These can be made in private gardens and shared spaces so people can enjoy the comings and goings of the insects and hopefully be inspired to make one themselves. There are no rules for making these but for bees, some guidance is here.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/04/how-to-build-a-bee-hotel/>

<https://community.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/b/natureshomemagazine/posts/the-biggest-bee-hotel> (featuring the author's Buckden garden and hotel)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9-gJuDgKnU>

A single section of tree trunk, drilled and hung securely can also be of value – the bee hotel I built in my Greenway garden is large, and is also a handy feature for covering a broken fence, but smaller ones hung on, or attached to, houses, fences, trees and walls will be just as effective.



*Image 7: This much-used insect and bee hotel was created by the author in his Greenway garden using cut sections of willows and poplars that would have been burned after tree removal at the marina; old bricks and roof tiles and filled with leaves, pinecones and twigs. The roof is a “green roof”, covered with soil, sedum, mosses, grasses and other plants growing naturally on top. It is an attractive feature of the garden and always a talking point for visitors and shows that wildlife homes do not need to be messy.*

### 3.4 **\*\*Actions for maintaining and enhancing dead wood habitat in the Parish\*\***

- **Collect and stack fallen branches and twigs.** Establish volunteers and groups to collect fallen branches and stack them under hedgerows and trees to create piles for hibernating wildlife, places for fungi to grow and homes for insects. It is tidying up but also ensuring wildlife doesn't lose out as a result, so a real win for all. In autumn and winter, the greens on Greenway and School Lane have many fallen branches, some small, some big and instead of just removing and taking away previous wildlife living on and in them, arrange for them to be collected and stacked, ideally near to where they have fallen. I have done this on Greenway in the past and hopefully the legacy can continue – again a fun activity for children.
- **Chipping** - On no account should trunks or large branches that have been removed or found fallen be chipped as this kills all the wildlife living in (or in the case of lichens and mosses, on) them.

## Section 4 – Hedgerows

### Why are hedges so important?

Hedges are crucial wildlife corridors, allowing all sorts of species to move around between sites from birds, mammals and insects to amphibians and reptiles. They are best known in a biodiversity context as a nesting place for birds and they are vital nesting sites for all manner of resident and summer-visiting migrant birds. However, their blossom also provides vital nectar and pollen for a huge range of insects from bees and butterflies to flies and hoverflies. They are also important foraging sites for bats who hunt insects along them. In the autumn, berries from species such as Hawthorn, Spindle, Blackthorn, fruit trees and brambles that grow in hedges are a vital food source, so cutting should not take place until most of the fruit has gone.

Buckden has a strong network of mature hedgerows which should all be maintained. They provide wildlife corridors all over the Parish for wildlife and provide colour all year round.



*Image 8: The beautiful white flowers of Blackthorn (which emerge before the leaves) are a striking feature of Buckden's hedgerows in March and April. It is one of the first species to flower and a vital source of early nectar for bees, butterflies, hoverflies and a range of other insects. This is a section of the important hedgerow that is part of the Key Wildlife Site in the Neighbourhood Plan of Land east of Greenway and north of Mill Road.*



*Image 9: The same Mill Road hedgerow in late summer when the red berries of hawthorn (and Rosa species) dominate providing colour and food for birds and animals. This hedgerow shows how standard trees (a Pedunculate Oak can be seen by the entrance to the field here in this hedgerow) should be allowed to grow in hedgerows to vary structure.*

**\*\*Action – When and how to cut hedges\*\***

- From the point of view of nesting birds, no hedges in the Parish should be cut, or removed, between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> August. Indeed, any removal of hedges should be strongly opposed and discouraged unless there is a very good reason. As with trees, good hedgerows take decades to establish and mature, so protect rather than replace should continue to be the guide. Some birds may nest outside this period, so it is important to always check carefully for nests prior to cutting.
- Hedges provide an abundance of berries and fruit through autumn and winter, so the ideal time for hedge cutting is after Christmas when supplies are exhausted and before birds nest again in March.
- The RSPB provides clear and expert guidance on hedge cutting in relation to nesting birds and this Action Plan promotes the same guidance for use in Buckden Parish for all hedgerows, whether in gardens, green spaces or farm hedgerows. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/plants-for-wildlife/garden-hedges/hedge-law/>
- The law: “It is an offence under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built, or to intentionally kill, injure or take chicks or adults, or intentionally take or destroy any eggs. It is an intentional act, for example, if you or your neighbour know there is an active nest in the hedge and still cut the hedge, damaging or destroying the nest or contents in the process. If someone is cutting a hedge during this period, speak to them and politely mention the risk to birds’ nests, and the laws protecting nests. If they proceed, and you know there is an active nest at risk, contact the police on 101, and ask for a reference number.”
- An awareness-raising programme on when to not cut hedges and trees with signs around the Parish and notes on village noticeboards, website, social media groups and in the Buckden Roundabout.

#### **4.2 \*\*Action – what to plant in new hedgerows and supplement existing ones\*\***

In Buckden, many hedges are made up of Hawthorn, Field Maple, Blackthorn and Rose with some Elm, Bird Cherry and Oak and Ash as “standards” – that is actual trees growing in hedgerows and allowed to grow to full height, which is to be encouraged. This mix should be encouraged in the built area too where frequently non-native and extremely low wildlife value hedges are planted (especially on new developments – the Lucks Lane development’s hedges near and at the front of the houses is a prime example).

Replicating the makeup of Buckden’s existing and valuable mature hedgerows should be the aim for any new planting, including smaller hedges in private residences and the built area. A mix of the following will ensure any new planting is good for wildlife. The more species that can be included, the better.

- Hawthorn
- Blackthorn
- Field Maple
- Oak (as a standard)
- Elm (for White-letter Hairstreak butterflies)
- Bird Cherry
- Dog Rose
- Field Rose
- Spindle
- Wild Privet (important to use the native *Ligustrum vulgare*)
- Holly
- Hazel
- Hornbeam

## **Section 5: Wildflowers**

There is no such thing as a “weed” – they are merely successful wildflowers growing in places that many

humans do not want them to be. Partly because of this misconception, we feel the need to bring in non-native colourful species that may only last a year as annuals. Allowing native species to flower and reproduce is better – and cheaper. Daisies, Yarrow, campions, dandelions and many more are all much-loved by our native species of bee, insects and butterflies. They all easily colonise and grow in the Parish in areas of grass. If planting is done, the best mixes are perennial ones and of native species.

There are more than 110 microspecies of dandelion in the UK, some virtually endemic to the UK. The author has identified at least 10 in Buckden (there will be more). Dandelions, as they flower early, provide nectar for bees and they should be allowed to grow as they also provide a welcome splash of colour at a time when it is much needed – another species with a wrongly-deserved bad reputation.

The following section is a guide to the best native, and non-native, species to plant for wildlife and should give confidence and clear guidance for everyone hoping to sow for wildlife.

### 5.1 Wetland planting

The planting scheme proposed for The Valley wetland by the Village Hall Trust is an exemplar for Buckden's wetlands and could be recreated for smaller wetlands and even ponds.

#### **\*\*Action: Recommended species for wetlands and ponds\*\***

- Marsh Marigold
- Yellow Flag Iris
- White and Yellow Water Lilies
- Marsh Woundwort
- Common Club-rush
- Flowering Rush
- Purple Loosestrife
- Hard Rush
- Water Mint
- Lesser Pond Sedge
- Hemp-agrimony
- Reed Canary Grass

#### **\*\*Action: Recommended flowers for wildlife to plant and sow in gardens and shared spaces\*\***

The below recommendations are not all native, although many are. These are all extremely valuable flowers for bees, butterflies and other insects. For larger areas of sowing (eg greenspaces and verges), fully native mixes are best and BPC can refer to <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-on-your-doorstep/garden-activities/create-a-wildflower-meadow/>

- Red Campion
- White Campion
- Greater and Common Knapweed
- Sunflowers
- Yarrow
- Field Scabious
- Corn Marigold
- Candytufts
- Birds-foot-trefoil
- Garlic Mustard
- Sages (*Salvias*)
- Rosemary
- Coneflowers (Echinacea)
- Catmints (*Nepeta*)

- Globe thistles
- Borage
- Bugle
- Clovers
- English Lavender
- Coneflower
- Cowslip
- Primrose
- Globe-thistles
- Hemp-agrimonies
- Lamb's-ear (*Stachys*)
- Marjoram
- Meadowsweet
- Common Poppy
- *Rudbeckia*
- Tansy
- Common Fleabane
- Verbenas
- Ice Plant - sedum

#### **\*\*Action – recommended bulbs to plant\*\***

These are all beautiful flowers in their own right, but are particularly high value for nectaring insects such as butterflies and bees. This is a mix of native and non-native species.

- English Bluebells \*
- Wild Daffodil
- Snake's Head Fritillary
- Grape Hyacinth
- Snowdrops
- Wood Anemone
- Winter Aconite
- Wild Garlic
- *Nectaroscordum* (Honey Garlic)
- Crocus
- Allium

\*It is crucial not to plant the invasive Spanish Bluebell, or any Bluebell other than English, as they hybridise and crowd out the native Bluebell. Spanish Bluebells should be discouraged completely and removed. More on bluebells including an ID guide can be found here: <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/blog/whats-the-difference-between-spanish-bluebells-and-english-bluebells>

#### **\*\*Action – Stinging Nettles\*\***

Stinging Nettles understandably have a bad reputation, and are classed as an unwanted “weed”, but we only enjoy beautiful butterflies such as Small Tortoiseshells because of the existence and presence of Stinging Nettles on which they lay their eggs and eat as caterpillars. Stinging Nettle is one of UK's most important plants for wildlife and supports more than 40 species. Nettles should always be allowed to grow in the Parish and gardeners should also be encouraged to leave a patch in a quiet corner.

#### **\*\*Action – Pesticides and Herbicides\*\***

It is concerning to see the use of pesticides in the Parish, including to remove Brambles, for example. Pesticides can enter the food chain, our waterways and kill wildlife and in the case of insects and can have a detrimental effect on birds that need them to eat and survive. In the climate and ecological emergency, pesticides should not be used and all other alternatives should be considered and used first. Pesticides do not

just affect or remove the perceived “pest” and this plan recommends phasing out the use of pesticides and herbicides in the Parish. Slug pellets are covered later in the Plan in the section on Hedgehogs.

## **Section 6: Wildlife corridors and ensuring wildlife can move freely around**

BPC should plan, and advocate, for future enhancement of wildlife corridors and links to the wider environment so key wildlife areas do not become encroached on, isolated by or lost to development. A wildlife corridor is essentially habitat that allows wildlife to move safely and freely between sites and around the area. They can be as simple as ensuring streets are tree-lined, hedgerows are used instead of fencing and that “bee lines” are created through planting wildflowers in continuous lines.

The Key Wildlife Sites (Section 8) highlights existing key wildlife corridors in the Parish (as does the Wildlife Review Document) and provides guidance on preserving and enhancing them, as well as opportunities for creating new ones.

The land east of Greenway and Mill Road (see Wildlife Review document and Section 9 of this Plan) with the adjacent old quarry, County Wildlife Site of Settling Beds east of Silver Street and adjacent hedgerows and land down to Buckden Pits is a valuable example of a wildlife corridor, with a large species assemblage evidenced in the Species Database and free movement of many species, from Badgers and migratory birds to hunting bats and hundreds of species of moths, including some Priority Species. The Wildlife Review shows clearly, illustrated with photographs, how a valuable wildlife corridor exists here and why proposed development in this area would be so damaging for Buckden’s biodiversity. Development proposals fail to take into account the impact on adjacent sites and where wildlife has moved freely for years. Erecting hundreds of houses and concreting over with roads, pavements effectively removes wildlife corridors.

### **6.1 Resident’s gardens and shared space**

The scope of this report does not include private gardens. Wildlife gardening is a vast area and beyond the scope of the commission, but the RSPB website contains all the recommended information and it should be referred to for any questions about how to make private spaces and gardens better for biodiversity in Buckden. The RSPB is very much an “all nature” organisation, not just birds as is often assumed.

For wild bird feeding advice this is the best advice possible and from the RSPB and it is recommended as the go to place for any matters where residents may have questions or need advice on what to feed their birds: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/feeding-birds/safe-food-for-birds/>

The same applies for gardening with wildlife in mind as the website and organisation has excellent advice and schemes to sign up to for more advice for free at [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk) In particular, the author recommends the books, advice and blogs of the RSPB’s Adrian Thomas, especially <https://www.amazon.co.uk/RSPB-Gardening-Wildlife-Adrian-Thomas/dp/1472938577>

## **Section 7: Development and housebuilding in the Parish**

A brief note on this subject as it is well covered elsewhere, such as in the Neighbourhood Plan. One of the biggest threats to Buckden’s biodiversity is the targeting of green space by developers. As the Neighbourhood Plan evidences, the degree of development proposed exceeds capacity for the village and its services and transport problems. It will also place a strain on wildlife and will lead to loss of habitat and species. As mentioned previously, be wary of “biodiversity net gain” claims, as it does not always mean there will be more wildlife, or existing species will survive after concreting over existing habitat, combined with the arrival of hundreds of extra people, dogwalkers and their cars on a permanent basis.

With the Silver Street development approved and putting strain on Key Wildlife Sites adjacent to it such as the Old Quarry and Settling Beds East of Silver Street, it is even more crucial the Mill Road proposed development does not take place. It will have a hugely detrimental effect on wildlife due to so many Priority Species using that land and adjacent sites. Any development on the east side of the built area will be damaging to wildlife as this is the most important area for wildlife in the Parish as the Species Database shows.

Development proposals also fail to take any account of impact on adjacent sites and species where wildlife has moved freely for years (see wildlife corridors). For new developments, the author has supplied the Parish Council with a “Biodiversity in new housing developments” detailed guide to help mitigate adverse effects of modern developments on wildlife and this should be the BPC go to regarding new developments and wildlife.

### **\*\*Action for development in Buckden Parish\***

- Continue to oppose development on the east side of the Parish, beyond the existing built area. This is the most important area for wildlife in the Parish and a key wildlife corridor, proven and illustrated by the thousands of species records in the database for this area.
- Read, use, and refer to, the supplied “Biodiversity in new housing developments” guide supplied in addition to this Action Plan to show what developments should be doing and use it to lobby and for conversations and comments made on development proposals as well as improving developments already in place.
- Use the Species Database, and not rely solely on developer’s ecology reports, which are usually only for a certain time period in one year and for only some groups of wildlife, in development proposals, as evidence.

## **Section 8: Domestic pets**

Pet owners can help protect wildlife in Buckden with some simple actions.

- Keep dogs on a lead, especially during the bird breeding season between March and August inclusive. In the Great Ouse Valley, it is recommended signs are erected requesting dogs are kept on leads at all times in this sensitive, wildlife-rich area. Many dog owners simply have no idea of the damage their pet could be doing, or is doing, by disturbing birds from their nests, or by forcing birds to waste valuable energy in winter through being disturbed.
- Fit a bell to the collar of cats that go outdoors. Domestic cats are said to kill millions of birds every year and fitting a bell helps to give many the chance to escape if they are being stalked.

## **Section 9 - Key Wildlife Sites in Buckden Parish**

The Neighbourhood Plan process encourages Parish Councils and local authorities to map Key Wildlife Sites to help with the planning and development process and preserve those sites of high biodiversity value through their value to Priority Species (such as Red and Amber listed birds, but also species of Principle Importance in the NERC, which includes species from other groups such as insects, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and flora).

The following sites were mapped for the Neighbourhood Plan following the production of a top-level Wildlife Review. Biodiversity data continues to be added to and it is important to monitor the sites to see if key species remain and how they are being managed, but other sites may emerge. The Wildlife Review commissioned by BPC as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process contains much information and further images, plus a map, of where the sites are located and it should be used in conjunction with this Action Plan (note 2 additional sites sites, Lucks Lane Cemetery and the hedge on High Street, have been added since then and feature here).

### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 1 - The Great Ouse Valley**

An important section of this crucial wildlife-rich area lies in Buckden Parish and this is by far the most important area for biodiversity in the Parish. A variety of stakeholders and landowners and residents are already doing great things in the Buckden part, but the Parish Council should remain vigilant as a delicate balance can soon be tipped through change. Currently excellent work is taking place at the marina and the amount of wildlife found here (refer to the Buckden Species Database) shows this.

The fact that this area is so rich in biodiversity and unspoiled means this is a classic case of the best management being to maintain the status quo as much as possible. This means not unduly removing existing trees and hedgerows, clearing scrub or allowing additional leisure activities here that are damaging (such as motorboating on the pits, excess fishing and additional walking routes - there are ample public footpaths).

The following sections outline some of the key individual sites in the Great Ouse Valley.

### **1a) - Anglian Water Road and its adjacent verges, scrub and Diddington Brook**

This site, a key part of the Great Ouse Valley, has long been known to local birdwatchers as a good site for a range of breeding warblers (including Cetti's Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler and eight other species of warbler) and some rare birds have been seen here (See Wildlife Records Database). It is also an important site for flora, including rare orchids.

The key areas are the scrub and trees along the brook running along the east and south sides of the road itself, and the brook itself, which are home to Grass Snakes, a rich warbler and other breeding bird assemblage, Water Rails, Water Shrews and much more and the verges of the road which host a very rich flora and insect assemblage including many notable bee species, hoverflies and butterflies. The flora is very rich here and includes many notable species found only rarely in other parts of the Parish.

#### **\*\*Action to protect our Lizard Orchid\*\***

A leaf rosette of a Lizard Orchid (an Amber-listed plant, Vulnerable or Near-threatened) was found by the author in March 2020 and a single magnificent spike flowered that summer (see photograph below), increasing to 3 flowering spikes in 2021. The plant is fairly-widely known now, but I do not recommend publicising it widely. It occurs by the fence line at the north end of Pumphouse Pit which is just inside the Parish boundary and is one of our rarest species, so needs protecting. It is the second record for Huntingdonshire and as it has persisted for three years at the time of writing, is genuinely established here.



*Image 10 – Buckden's one and only Lizard Orchid – an extremely rare, range-restricted and beautiful plant*

The plant is by a footpath, but set a few feet back so should not be trampled. It is recommended BPC engage with Paxton Pits (who know about the plant) to ensure it is not at risk of mowing at any point or by any actions from Anglian Water and others in the area. The Plantlife species page on Lizard Orchid for more information: <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/plant-fungi-species/lizard-orchid>

#### **\*\*Action for Green-winged Orchids\*\***

A colony of this much-declined and localised orchid was known for several years on the grassland on the

south-east side of the old Brompton railway bridge. I have been unable to locate any plants in my time here, but it is desirable to check for its presence each year. The author did locate two Green-winged Orchids growing c50 metres south of the bend in the Anglian Water Road in the pasture grazed by cattle on the west side of the small lake there in May 2020, which was a new site.



*Image 11: Green-winged Orchid flowering in May in the cattle-grazed field at the bend in the first section of the Anglian Water Road south of Stirtloe Sewage Works. This is a Priority Species, (classified as Amber – near threatened and vulnerable by Plantlife) that could be helped by working with the landowner here.*

It is a desirable to have these orchids caged when they come up to protect them from being eaten by cattle (and to help them spread), so this Plan proposes the landowner is engaged regarding the presence of this rare flower and it is looked for in the field and caged each year, perhaps by volunteers.

Information from Plantlife on Green-Winged Orchid: <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/plant-fungi-species/green-winged-orchid>



*Image 12: Pyramidal Orchids flowering on the Anglian Water Road verge at the north end of Pumphouse Pit, Paxton Pits, very close to the southern boundary of the Parish. A localised, but strong population of Pyramidal Orchids flowers every summer in two places in the Parish.*

#### **\*\*Action to protect Pyramidal and Bee Orchids\*\***

The Species Database records and maps the precise locations of Bee Orchids and Pyramidal Orchids in the Parish seen in the last decade. A small colony in the Knott Garden at Buckden Towers was caged in 2021 and this is ideal practise to be applauded.

Bee Orchids that grow along Anglian Water Road should be protected too and the Parish Council should approach Paxton Pits and Anglian Water to ensure the verges there (among the most important ones in the Parish) are not cut between May and July when they will be present.

Pyramidal Orchids also grow here along the section on the north side of Pumphouse Pit and are equally important to protect. Some also grow along the west side of the field adjacent to Leaden's Lane and these seem to be able to flower without damage or interference with, so it should be a watching brief on those and to be aware of regarding any land use changes or development threats.

#### **\*\*Action for Nightingales\*\***

An important population of the greatly-declines and highly-localised Nightingale breeds every spring and summer in the extensive scrub sandwiched between the north margin of Pumphouse Pit all along the northern pit edge and the Anglian Water Road. Protecting this scrub and ideally working with Paxton Pits to ensure it is managed effectively for the continued long-term presence of Nightingales is a priority of this Action Plan. The presence of telephone wires along Anglian Water Road does mean that trees are cut and this cannot happen in the bird breeding season. BPC should talk to Paxton Pits and Anglian Water about this situation to ensure cutting does not take place between March and August, which it has recently.

#### **1b) Great Ouse Valley Key Wildlife Site 2 - Stirtloe and Buckden Pits**

The pits found south and north of Mill Road in the Great Ouse Valley are very important wildlife sites. Counts of wetland birds found here have taken place regularly through the national Wetland Bird Scheme (WeBS) and this information is held by CPERC, Cambridgeshire Bird Club and the Wetland Bird Survey. The author also has copies and this information has been used in the Wildlife Database. There are important populations of many species of wildfowl and other rare wildlife is found both in and around the pits where rich scrub and tree diversity, and ample deadwood is found. The pits south of Mill Road up to Anglian Water Road are known as Stirtloe Pits and those north of Mill Road from the Marina northwards are Buckden Pits. These are also County

Wildlife Sites and BPC should maintain contact with the local Wildlife Trust to ensure the area is preserved and what more they could do because designation of County Wildlife Sites is overseen by the Wildlife Trusts.

### **1c) The River Great Ouse and adjacent habitats**

Rare and localised Scarce Chaser (and Hairy Hawker) dragonflies emerge each May along the river and the adjacent meadows both north and south of Buckden Marina. Three figure counts can be made, so it is an important area. Once emerged, the insects head for the hedgerows and meadow areas to mature before they set up territory along the river where the males spar with each other for territory.

#### **\*\*Action to protect the Great Ouse Valley's riverside vegetation\*\***

- Ensure vegetation alongside the river is not damaged or removed. Swims are "cleared" by people fishing and it is important to ensure only a small area is kept clear and it does not become common along the riverbanks.

#### **\*\*Action for Kingfishers\*\***

- All of Buckden's Kingfishers (5 pairs) nest along the river and adjacent Buckden and Stirtloe Pits. They are sensitive to disturbance due to being a shy species and we are lucky to have a strong population that brighten up a visit to this area for walkers, residents and fisherfolk. Kingfishers nest in steep banks and need quiet, secluded areas to breed and fish. This currently exists in the River Great Ouse, Buckden Pits and Stirtloe Pits and the birds breed successfully, so advice is to leave things as they are and ensure that unnecessary access to quieter areas is not granted so the birds can be left in peace.

#### **\*\*Action for Otters\*\***

A sure sign that Buckden's waterways are clean and healthy is the presence of Otters. They are a native species that disappeared from most of the country due to pollution of our waterways. They are a key indicator of a clean river and a healthy environment and ecosystem, so despite the protestations of some fishermen at their presence, and that of other fish-eating native species, such as Cormorants and Grey Herons, we should be delighted these beautiful animals are present in the Parish to showcase our clean waterways.

- "Otter-proof" fencing around waterways looks ugly, unappealing and unwelcoming for all, so it should be opposed should it be proposed on wetlands in Buckden Parish (see what has happened at River Lane, Brampton around the pits by the footpath there to see the negative effect on landscape).
- Otters do not need special measures (other than opposing otter-proof cages/fencing and general awareness raising and myth-busting to show they are a sign of a healthy aquatic environment), other than preserving the healthy environment of the River Great Ouse and its surrounds in Buckden Parish.

### **1d) Buckden Marina poplars**

These trees (there are several species and hybrids) are rare in Buckden and where they do occur, at Buckden Marina (around the car park) rare species are found that depend on poplars. Unfortunately, a second "colony" of poplars were removed to the north, meaning the loss of one of our pairs of Red-Listed Spotted Flycatchers and the second site for the spectacular Hornet Moth in the Parish. It does mean that the remaining poplars are even more important and should be preserved.

- One of Buckden's two pairs of Spotted Flycatchers nests in the tall poplars by the Marina car park and raises young each year after arriving back from Africa in May (departing in August/September).
- The trees could be topped if there are fears they are becoming too tall, but it is crucial to maintain an extensive, thick, canopy for the birds to nest and find food and other poplar-specialist wildlife to live.

#### **\*\*Action for Spotted Flycatchers (Red-listed bird)\*\***

This insect-eating, migrant bird arrives from Africa each May and raises 1-2 broods before departing in August and September. It is Amber-Listed and is a Priority Species for Buckden. One pair breeds regularly in the Great Ouse Valley, in the poplars in the car park at the marina.

- The key action for this species here is to preserve the remaining poplars in the vicinity of the car park at the marina. The flycatchers, Mistle Thrushes and other Priority birds nest in them and without them, or if they are cut too much, they will be lost. The poplars can be topped, but it is vital to leave enough canopy and branches for the birds – pollarding would see them lost. It is suggested open-fronted nestboxes: <https://shopping.rspb.org.uk/bird-feeders-boxes-tables/bird-houses-nest-boxes/garden-bird-nest-boxes/apex-open-front-nestbox.html> are placed on the poplars and other trees in the area to help mitigate and encourage other pairs to move in. Spotted Flycatchers are insect-eaters so allowing vegetation to grow in the area is vital to ensure there is an ample supply of food for the birds to feed and raise their young.

#### **\*\*Action for the Great Ouse Valley - key contacts to help protect and enhance its wildlife\*\***

- The **Great Ouse Valley Trust** should be a key partner for BPC in all decisions in the Valley. It can also advise on how to enhance the landscape by planting of native Black Poplars and other species.
- **Paxton Pits Nature Reserve/Friends of Paxton Pits** - the most northern part of the Paxton Pits complex falls in Buckden Parish boundary. Additionally, the 5-6 singing Nightingales in the scrub along Diddington Brook are in Buckden Parish and a management plan for the scrub in this area is needed. The author recommends consultation (and regular contact) with Paxton Pits Nature Reserve.
- **The Wildlife Trust for Cambs, Beds and Northants** as general guardians of local wildlife, but also because Buckden Pits in the Great Ouse Valley is a County Wildlife Site that the Trust helps designate.

#### **\*\*Action for Hornet Moths\*\***

This beautiful Hornet-mimicking, day-flying moth is totally reliant on poplar trees as its larvae live inside the trunks and emerge as beautiful adult moths in June and July each year. There is a good population at the marina in the poplars there and it is imperative to retain the poplars to ensure the survival of this species. This is the only location in the Parish they have been found and the second colony to the north has been lost.

As with Spotted Flycatcher, the priority action is to retain the mature poplars this species breeds in. Its round exit holes are easy to see in the bark around the base of the mature poplars. On the rare occasion that a poplar is removed, it is recommended the stump is retained as Hornet Moths can and will still emerge.



*Image 13: Freshly-emerged Hornet Moth on a poplar at the Buckden Marina car park in June*



*Image 14: The author photographed this pair of mating Musk Beetles (a rare species of longhorn beetle) in the flower-rich meadow area north of the last group of chalets heading north from the marina on the west side of the footpath along the river/Ouse Valley Way. This important site needs to be preserved and protected.*

## **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 2 - Greenway and School Lane Greens**

Greenway is an exemplar of when new housing has been added to the village, but ample green space is provided for wildlife and people. This is quite a contrast to the small areas of green space most new developments have. On Greenway and School Lane, ample greens were located between small blocks of housing with large gardens and a mix of trees and large areas of grass make this the fungi hotspot of the entire Parish. A selection of boletes, including Lurid and Brown Birch, and all manner of other species such as the fascinating White Saddle, Deathcaps, Fly Agarics (the only population in the Parish) all occur here adding colour and fascination for residents.

The most damaging action here is the intensive mowing that takes place regularly by HDC that mows not only all the wildflowers in spring and summer, that can leave yellowing short grass and/or mud, but in autumn when the grass does not even grow much, toadstools are systematically chopped up and destroyed.

The current HDC mowing regime for Greenway takes place too often, is too severe, and uses money and resources that could be much better employed elsewhere. I have known contractors to come and cut the greens when the grass is barely two centimetres tall since the last cut. The wonderful array of August-December fungi is frequently chopped up, including the Fly Agaric colony.

The Greenway/School Lane greens are designated a Key Wildlife Site to a large degree because of the rich array of toadstool species there, so it is vital that to honour the Neighbourhood Plan, conversations are had with HDC to ensure that some areas are left unmown for wildflowers (some residents have planted their own bulbs and flowers and put up protection and signs), but also that the toadstools are caged off and signs put up to ensure the mowers go around them.

### **\*\*Action for Greenway, Mill Road and School Lane Greens\*\***

- Contact HDC about the greens to ensure they are aware these are Key Wildlife Sites in the Buckden Neighbourhood Plan and so steps should be taken to protect and enhance the rare wildlife and important habitats as part of the routine maintenance that is needed. Talk to HDC about its mowing regime on the shared greens in the Parish and lobby to reduce/remove mowing between September

and December and to leave marked areas for wildflowers and wildlife on the greens that are unmown. Note: wildflowers do not need to be planted and simply letting nature take its course will ensure native species, such as Daisy, Yarrow and many others can grow – these are the most valuable to wildlife. Highlight this will not only be good for the environment and wildlife, but that everyone will save money and time by cutting less frequently.

- The HDC maintenance team has been great at avoiding areas of bulbs fenced off by residents and the same has happened with fungi when caged. Encourage residents (especially of Greenway and School Lane) to have a sense of ownership of “their” fungi and wildflower areas on the greens through awareness-raising so they can become community guardians of the toadstools, flowers and the greens. Identify and enlist or advertise for volunteers who are residents to erect (chicken) wire cages and signs around the toadstools when they appear between August and December. This could be fun for children as well. Outside this period there should be few fungi fruiting and mowing is fine, but see section on wildflowers that advocate leaving areas uncut and wildflower-rich in spring and summer.
- Ensure branches that fall on the greens are stacked in piles at the bases of trees or under hedgerows and not just removed or destroyed. They will decompose naturally.
- The Fly Agaric toadstool has a colony on the green opposite numbers 5 and 7 School Lane, growing in conjunction with a birch tree there alongside several other species. This colony should be marked with canes and string each year to protect it when the toadstools have emerged between September-November. Other greens with trees in the Parish built area in locations such as Lucks Lane, Vineyard Way etc would all benefit from less mowing in autumn and would ensure even more money is saved.



*Image 15: the greens on Greenway and School Lane and Mill Road are Key Wildlife Sites in the Neighbourhood Plan and the best site for toadstools and other fungi in the Parish. This beautiful colony of Fly Agarics (the only known one in the Parish) fruits in autumn on the green at the Greenway/School Lane junction opposite numbers 5 and 7 School Lane, but is destroyed by mowing every year. Here the colourful colony was photographed at its best, but days later all were chopped up by mowing by HDC.*

### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 3 - Land east of Greenway and north of Mill Road**

This wildlife-rich and attractive area of hedgerows, wildlife-friendly managed farmland, wildflower margins, set aside, bank and scrub has unfortunately been targeted by developers proposing adding another dense housing development onto another end of Buckden. The many reasons why this site is important for wildlife, and the large number of species recorded here, is evidenced in the Wildlife Review and Species Database. This is a Key Wildlife Site in the Neighbourhood Plan and building houses here conflict in multiple ways with the biodiversity policies in the Neighbourhood Plan regarding Priority Species, wildlife corridors and much more.

The site has many wildlife-friendly practises such as the significant areas of set aside/stewardship land, the margins and the rich hedgerows and scrub and it is no coincidence why so much rare wildlife is found here. The area of scrub is on and below the bank in the north-west section of the field is home to at least seven species of breeding warbler and much more including numerous Priority Species. The Wildlife Review document depicts this area clearly. It should be a desirable for this management to be adopted in other arable areas of the Parish as it has been an exemplar site and the landowners are to be congratulated on the important wildlife area and rich assemblage of species they have ensured thrive here. The Wildlife Database has thousands of records from this extremely well-recorded site.

With the site formally recognised as a Key Wildlife Site and the protection of the Great Ouse Valley area so prevalent in the Neighbourhood Plan Consultation process, the best outcome for the 100+ Priority Species recorded here and the habitats here is for development to not occur, especially now the Silver Street Development is agreed in very close proximity (which will impact on species movement from the north).

Unfortunately, the development proposal would ensure existing wildlife, significantly the rare arable avian species of Skylark, Grey Partridge, Linnet, Yellowhammer, owls and many more lose their home and this vital wildlife corridor, and attractive site, would become a concrete barrier. The Parish Council should continue to oppose development here and with two more suitable sites at Lucks Lane and Silver Street now providing new homes, the Parish's richest area of biodiversity, the east side from Greenway to the Great Ouse Valley, should be free from development.

If development does occur, the Parish Council should continue to ensure the rich habitats around the edge of the site, particularly the species-rich margins and the bank and scrub that joins the adjacent quarry (another Key Wildlife Site) are at least preserved, plus the mature and rich hedgerow on the southern side as well as using the "Biodiversity in new developments" handbook to push for as greater benefits to wildlife as possible.

### **Buckden Key Wildlife Sites 4 and 5 - Elms on Stirtloe Lane and A1 central reservation**

Elms were hit very badly by Dutch elm disease in the 1970s and mature ones are still rare ("suckers" – that is those formed of multiple shoots from the ground - are more widespread). There are several insects associated with elms and no other trees. In Buckden some of these are present and include the Priority Species White-letter Hairstreak butterfly which lays its eggs on elms and can be seen in the treetops and nectaring on adjacent brambles from late June into August in some years.

The elms on the south side of the new development, on Leaden's Lane, and in the central reservation of the A1 between the roundabout and Diddington turn are a Key Wildlife Site and priority for protection due to the fact they host colonies of White-letter Hairstreak. This beautiful butterfly needs the elms for all elements of its life cycle and can survive on nothing else. The author discovered this colony in 2019 and it has thrived every year since and has found the butterfly all the way along Leaden's Lane to Stirtloe Sewage works.

Eyes need keeping on these elms and this area so that no harm befalls them as part of the new development works. This includes the brambles also found there as the hairstreaks nectar on the flowers. Elms are spread through the Parish area, including the west side, so it is not possible to protect each one, or the "suckers" that come up in hedgerows, but awareness of the importance of elm and protecting the Leaden's Lane ones is vital.

There are more than 50 different species of elms in the UK and a local expert and Chief Executive of the Cambs, Beds and Northants Wildlife Trust, Brian Eversham is an expert on them and associated wildlife.

### **\*\*Action to protect White-letter Hairstreak Butterflies\*\***

- Ensure the elms in the hedgerows all along Leaden's Lane are safeguarded and that the new development does not lead to removal of the elms, during the remaining works or in the future.
- Make and maintain contact with Highways England to ensure elms in the central reservation of the A1 south of the Buckden roundabout are not removed and any management to the trees is minimal.
- Allow other elms in the Parish such as those on the west side in the hedgerows there, around the Buckden Towers boundary and Anglian Water Road to thrive and not be removed.
- Ensure handyman, landowners and others are able to recognise elms and do not remove them.

### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 6 - Buckden Towers**

This important historic site is also important for wildlife and the management of the grounds encourages much wildlife in general as well as providing a home for some Priority and specialist species. There are some wonderful mature trees, including a several hundred-year-old Pedunculate Oak and mature plane trees.

The retention of dead wood and log piles here is an exemplar for the rest of the Parish and they make attractive features among the mature trees and path sides and are home to notable insects such as Lesser Stag Beetles and many other species reliant of dead and decaying wood.

In May and June, a beautiful display of Cow Parsley occurs by the paths and lake, but this has been cut down before so the retention of this beautiful and important flower here and everywhere in the Parish in spring and early summer should be prioritised.

The lake hosts breeding Little Grebes, Mallards and Moorhens and Willow Emerald Damselflies are here too, along with a wide range of aquatic wildlife. Notable hoverflies have also been recorded here.

The many good activities for wildlife at the Towers include caging off and protecting the small colony of Bee Orchids in the Knott Garden (below).



*Image 16 – protecting Bee Orchids in the Knott Garden from mowing- Buckden's residents have a strong association and love for its wildlife and the Neighbourhood Plan consultation showed overwhelming desire to protect and enhance the Parish's biodiversity. Actions like this go a long way to making a difference.*

Spotted Flycatchers also nest and use the tall trees opposite the entrance and within the grounds close to the main entrance. These trees should be preserved and it is recommended Spotted Flycatcher nestboxes are placed in the grounds, especially this area.

### **\*\*Action for Buckden Towers\*\***

- The landowners and team at the Towers clearly do much excellent work for wildlife already, so it is recommended the Parish Council ensure conversations are had with them to keep information flowing – do they know the Towers have been designated as a Key Wildlife Site for example?

### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 7 - St Mary's Church and Churchyard**

An excellent example of the needs and wishes of residents balanced with maintaining space for wildlife has occurred at the church. There was a significant area of bramble providing cover for nesting birds, fruit and flowers for a range of butterflies and bees had overgrown many of the gravestones here and there had been complaints about it looking untidy. To replace this habitat, a large area of annual wildflowers was sown in 2021 which looked beautiful and attracted many insects. A log pile was also created in one corner.

Recommended advice is to sow perennial mixes of wildflowers too in the future, so they come back each year without any further sowings needed and to reduce the mowing regime a little to allow flowers and fungi to flourish for a time. I would also recommend collecting the seeds from the annual plants for resowing and spreading to other areas.

### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 8 - Stirtloe Sewage Works & adjacent scrub and trees**

The sewage works seems an unlikely Key Wildlife Site but its sheltered warmer climate attracts a lot of insects which in turn provide food for birds such as overwintering Chiffchaffs (there have also been sightings of rare Siberian Chiffchaffs here) and good numbers of Pied Wagtails, Grey Wagtails, Meadow Pipits and Starlings.

Recommended advice is for BPC to make contact and work with Anglian Water to ensure the cover around the works is not removed. On the east and south side of the works are some excellent elm trees where White-letter Hairstreaks have been seen.



*Image 17: a microspecies of the spring-flowering Goldilocks Buttercup that is probably endemic to the UK and restricted to the local area that was found by the author growing on the verge at the start of the Anglian Water Road near Stirtloe Sewage Treatment Works in May 2021.*

### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 9 – Path side hedge on High Street**

In September 2021, the author discovered the extremely rare and bizarre Sandy Stiltball (*Battarrea phalloides*)

while giving management advice to the Parish Council Chair on the hedgerow opposite the Towers entrance. This is only the second ever occurrence of this species in Huntingdonshire and ensured this unlikely spot was added as a formal Key Wildlife Site for the Parish.

The village handymen were quickly contacted to ensure they and the area around them were not interfered with or damaged. It was decided that fencing off the fungi would draw unnecessary attention to them. It is recommended the species is looked for each year in this area and if any work takes place in this area, the stiltball location and area around it is avoided. Further investigation by the author revealed the presence of three more stiltballs still present into January 2022. This meant this site is an even more important site, as a genuine colony, and becomes a key priority for the Parish Council to look after. Drawing attention to the site through signs, is not thought to be the best course of action at this time.



*Image 18: Sandy Stiltball found by the author in autumn 2021: probably Buckden's rarest species and legally protected, it is a top conservation priority*

### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 10: Lucks Lane Cemetery**

Since the Neighbourhood Plan was written and approved, Lucks Lane Cemetery has also been identified as a Key Wildlife Site due to the author's discovery of a rare species of fungi, the Daisy Earthstar, growing under the Holm Oaks by the southern path in 2020. Hunts Fungi County Recorder Allan Robbins was asked to come and view it and he confirmed from examination of spores this was the first Hunts record of the species.

Two other Earthstar species were found by the author at the same time: one in good numbers of up to 35 (the Striated Earthstar) and one unidentified. Additionally, the western part of the cemetery hosts a rich assemblage of waxcaps and other notable species of unimproved grasslands. In the grassland in front of the bench at the western end, where there are no graves, the author found Parrot Waxcaps, Snowy Waxcaps and Meadow Coral with White Spindles the following August (2021) and an even large number of Parrot (c80 at a time) and Snowy Waxcaps (c70 at a time), plus 2 examples of *Trichoglossum hirsutum* (Hairy Earthtongue) – only the second time this species has been seen in the county and the first record since 1986. This assemblage

indicates an important, species-rich piece of grassland. The ancient Yews in the cemetery should also be preserved at all costs.

The cemetery is hard mown across its entire area, and frequently, so the interesting fungi here is periodically destroyed. It should be a priority for BPC to ensure this key wildlife site gets some management for its rare wildlife and those conducting the work are made aware of the presence and location of the earthstars.



*Image 19: Rare earthstars collected in Lucks Lane Cemetery for identification before being returned.*

#### **\*\*Action for protecting rare fungi in Lucks Lane Cemetery\*\***

- Three earthstar species in one small area is rare and as the only site in the county for Daisy Earthstar, it is a priority that mowing avoids the small area around the Holm Oaks during September-November (when the grass will not be growing much anyway). It is suggested BPC work with the cemetery groundspeople to mark off the area or at least be aware where the earthstars are to avoid mowing when they are fruiting. For the rest of the year, there should not be a conflict here, or any complaints.
- Ensure other areas are left unmown in the cemetery to balance the hard and frequent mowing regime, so there is always some longer and unmown grass for wildlife and flowers. Reduce the amount and frequency of mowing in general and raise awareness of the balance between short grass and some areas left – it also looks so much better visually to have attractive flowers growing.
- Ensure those commissioning and doing works in Lucks Lane Cemetery know the Cemetery is a Key Wildlife Site and share information about the rare fungi with them



*Image 20: Lucks Lane Cemetery is heavily and extensively mown regularly and as this photograph shows, any toadstools, wildflowers and wildlife in general has been destroyed by hard mowing. This is a Key Wildlife Site in the Neighbourhood Plan. As has been shown in St Mary's Churchyard the environment in cemeteries can be made to look so much better for everyone by making it better for wildlife, too.*



*Image 21: The above scene was discovered by the author in Lucks Lane Cemetery in late October 2021. These harmless and attractive Agaricus mushrooms had been pulled up and "stacked" under a hedge. Such actions are in conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan and the aspirations of the village to protect our biodiversity.*

### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 11 – The Valley/Village Hall Trust land**

At the time of writing, the Village Hall Trust has been engaging with the author, and environmental specialist contractors and advisors on managing the lake and surrounding grassland and woodland. The site is a Key Wildlife Site and was designated before this work due to the presence of good populations of nesting Song Thrushes, waterbirds such as Little Grebes, Goosanders, Gadwalls and fishing Common Terns. Improving the water quality of the lake, connecting it up to the feeder stream and extra planting are expected to boost the biodiversity of the site and it is important that deadwood is maintained on site. Maintaining the balance between access for residents and other activities with the interests of the wildlife at this Key Wildlife Site is something that should be monitored.

Plans to greatly improve the wetland flora with planting and wildflowers among the thinned-out woodland to allow more light to reach the floor are positives for boosting biodiversity here.

#### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 12: Quarry east of Settling Beds East of Silver Street**

This site needs further study and it would be greatly desirable if access could be arranged for naturalists to study it, especially as the site is adjacent to the County Wildlife Site of Settling Beds East of Silver Street and it forms a key component of the three-pronged wildlife corridor and block of important and wildlife habitat that also includes the land east of Greenway and north of Mill Road. See the Wildlife Review document created for the Neighbourhood Plan for aerial photographs of this area and more information on it.

The quarry is a known site for breeding birds such as Buzzard and wintering Woodcock occur here. Such sites are frequently made into nature reserves after extraction has finished and it is a great shame this has not happened here. Proposals for housing here would continue to greatly negatively impact on Buckden's biodiversity especially as the north side will have houses built, and the threat to the Mill Road Key Wildlife Site on its south side remains.

The quarry floor is likely to be very rich in bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and notable fungi and the area is an important hunting area for Noctule and other bats as well as Badgers, Foxes and other animals. The trees and scrub in and adjacent to the quarry are also key habitats and temporary wetlands also form in it.

#### **Buckden Key Wildlife Site 13: Settling Beds East of Silver Street**

This area is one of, if not the, most extensive area of woodland in the Parish with a lot of mature trees which provide valuable cover, carbon storage and nesting and roosting sites for birds. The site was designated a formal County Wildlife Site by the Wildlife Trust for its wildlife value, as with Buckden Pits, and it is a Key Wildlife Site due to this and its key part in the wildlife corridor on the east side of the village.

A large and impressive Jackdaw roost occurs here in winter and there are many species of breeding birds here.

It is important to note that at the time of writing, the land to the north of here off Silver Street has been approved for house building as part of the Local Plan and this will place a strain and negative effect on the wildlife of these sites, so it is crucial to maintain it and the quarry from any development.

### **Section 9. More “generalist” Priority species found in Buckden Parish**

Buckden's Priority Species are not just found in its Key Wildlife Sites: the built area and gardens are valuable for many species, especially in the well-designed and “green” built area. Good management of gardens and a sensitive approach to management of shared species and privately-owned areas means people and wildlife live side by side in harmony. Greenway is one exemplar of where this has been achieved and the Species Database shows the range of wildlife living happily there due to the layout of gardens and the generous areas of greenspace and tree planting between houses. Continuing and replicating this layout and provision of greenspace should be demanded from all new developments to continue wildlife corridors and integrate.

Buckden's built area is exceptionally rich in biodiversity like the rest of the Parish due to the fact there are few modern developments that are frequently very badly designed for wildlife, too densely housed and with too many people living in a small area.

**\*\*Action for Hedgehogs - Red List mammal – Vulnerable to Extinction\*\***



*Image 22 - Hedgehogs have undergone a dramatic and deeply worrying decline in the UK. They are still present in Buckden and everyone in the village can help this much-loved species by following the advice below.*

- Buckden Parish Council should lobby for “Hedgehog Holes” in fences in all new developments, and all fences in the Parish, both privately and publicly owned, to allow Hedgehogs to move around freely.
- Promote planting hedges for boundaries in the Parish in general, rather than using fences that restricts movement of Hedgehogs (and other wildlife).
- Create log and leaf piles around the village where they can hibernate and encouraging everyone to check for hibernating Hedgehogs before Bonfire Night and if any clearance of scrub has to happen.
- Encourage residents to create hedgehog homes such as the one in Image 23, made by the author in his Greenway garden (one of two in the front border). These are used by Hedgehogs and resulted in Hedgehogs appearing more regularly in Greenway where the greens provide safe feeding areas.
- To not advocate the use of slug pellets, which kill and remove a major food source for Hedgehogs, as well as other wildlife.
- Implement and share this Hedgehog advice with residents, landowners and developers:  
<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/leaflets/Hedgehog-Street-top-tips.pdf>



*Image 23: This hedgehog home, one of two adjacent to one another, was made by the author at the front of his Greenway house. Within a short time, Hedgehogs became a regular site in the garden and adjacent Greenway greens. It has some old roof tiles to waterproof it on top, planted with sedum and moss, two cuttings of poplar from the marina donated by a resident, and five old garden wooden decking pieces arranged to make a box.*

#### **\*\*Action for Swifts (Red-Listed bird)\*\***

Modern houses rarely allow space or opportunity for swifts to nest in their roofs/under the eaves and frequently deliberately have “bird excluders”, but properties in Buckden can definitely provide nesting sites for these most aerial of our migrant birds.

- Ensuring “bird excluders” are not place by builders in existing houses and new ones and for the Parish Council to not advocate their use in Buckden
- Encourage the erection of Swift nestboxes, or bricks, on existing buildings in the Parish
- Make contact with Action for Swifts <http://actionforswifts.blogspot.com/> which has a website full of advice and would be happy to provide advice on how to make Buckden swift-friendly. Some of the CIL Money from permitted developments can be used to buy and erect Swift nest boxes in the Parish
- Ensure all new developments have a box or brick for nesting swifts. Currently a handful are proposed in new developments, but all newbuild houses and buildings could easily have space built in

#### **\*\*Actions for House Sparrows (Red-listed bird)**

Buckden is fortunate in still having a good population of the much-declined, and much-loved, House Sparrow with several breeding pairs. It is a fairly widespread breeding species in the Parish, occupying several houses and other buildings in the village and good flocks can occur in the mature hedgerows and areas of Bramble that are left alongside residential areas. Flocks roost communally in area of ivy and other evergreen cover.

The following advice will help maintain Buckden’s sparrows and help them spread into new areas.

- Leave areas of scrub (especially Brambles, Ivy and hedgerows alongside residential areas) for them to feed and roost in.
- Discourage use of bird excluders in houses as sparrows nest under the eaves of houses.

- Encourage any new built houses to have space for nesting House Sparrows. Modern developments, such as the one on Lucks Lane, had a very disappointing and small number of boxes in its plans, for example. The Parish Council should lobby for space in every new house, not just a handful of boxes.

#### **\*\*Action for Starlings (Red-listed bird)\*\***

- Encourage the erection of Starling nextboxes above others, due to the species' rarity:  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-on-your-doorstep/garden-activities/create-a-cosy-starling-home/>
- Discourage "bird excluders" in existing, and new, houses so Starlings can raise their young and have safe places to nest.
- Starlings nest in holes in old and dead trees, so some should be left. A longstanding nesting site was removed close to Stirtloe Sewage Works, on Leaden's Lane, depriving one of Buckden's few nesting pairs of their home in 2021.

#### **\*\*Action for Song Thrushes (Red-listed bird)\*\***

- Do not use slug pellets on pesticides in any shared spaces and discourage its use in private spaces. Snails and slugs are key food sources for the song thrush.
- Ensure there is plenty of scrub in the Parish (brambles, Ivy, other bushes) as well as trees, as they nest in these places.

#### **\*\*Action for Skylarks (Red-listed bird)\*\***

The location of Buckden's strong population of nesting Skylarks is featured in the Species Database. The strong population of nesting, and wintering, Skylarks east of Greenway and north of Mill Road is thanks to excellent management for this species by the landowner and this is to be encouraged across the Parish area.

Additionally, not building on the Mill Road proposed development site will safeguard the biggest population of Skylarks in the Parish.

- Recommended advice for farmers and landowners on making Skylark Plots:  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/conservation-and-sustainability/farming/advice/managing-habitats/skylark-plots/>

#### **\*\*Action for House Martins (Amber-listed bird)\*\***

House Martins are another of the Parish's Priority Species of migratory breeding birds. These small, highly aerial black and white birds feed on insects caught in flight. They nest on houses and other buildings and it should be a privilege to have them building their beautiful, mud, cup-shaped nests under your eaves.

- The largest breeding colony of House Martins in the Parish is on the old mill. Stand on the road bridge there or by the river and you can see up to 20 pairs flying in and out of their nests high up under the eaves between May and August. This is a priority for protection. The same protection should apply to homes in the village where they nest and awareness raising to ensure the nests are not pulled down. Flying all the way from Africa, painstakingly building a nest from mud and vegetation over several days and having it pulled down is a very sad outcome for these delightful birds.
- House Martins are colonial so protecting the nests there are in the Parish, and ensuring people welcome these lovely birds, should mean they maintain their population and spread. In very dry and hot weather, ensuring there are puddles for them to use to stick their nests together is a desirable.
- People may complain about the droppings from House Martins, but a simple shelf, fixed under the nest, solves that.

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*Mark Ward, January 2022*