

# Boddington's Green Spaces

## by Chris Colles

Biodiversity, the number of species in an area, is on the decline, with 19% of species lost on a global scale since 1970. Looking at the Boddingtons, surrounded by green fields, you might think it doesn't apply to us, but when did you last hear a Cuckoo in Boddington, or see a tree sparrow or willow tit? All these were common 30 years ago, but have quietly disappeared and 60% of our wild life species like hedgehogs, frogs and even blackbirds and thrushes are in danger of following.

Does the loss of species really matter? There seem to be plenty of birds and flowers around us, and with hundreds of thousands of species of animals and flowers surely the loss of a few is not important? The truth is all species play their role in the balance of nature, and the loss of one species can have severe repercussion on many others, and potentially affects us at the top of the tree. Maintaining the environment for wild-life is important, if only because we do not know what we may be losing, for example, species like fungi remain an enigma. We have known about them for years but know so little of their biology. Recently we have discovered they are more closely related to animals than plants. They play a vital part in the survival of plants, and trees, and play an important part in natural recycling. Consider all the leaves that fall in autumn, and the dead trees. Without the rotting process, our world would be lost under feet of dead plant material. Fungi also provide many antibiotics, and medicines on which we rely very heavily.

We have plenty of green space around Boddington, yet much of the green space around us is agricultural land, a green desert for many species. This is no criticism of our local farmers who are mostly very nature conscious and look after the hedgerows and headlands with care. Farming however has to provide the food we need - currently only about 46% of our food is grown in the UK. This will need to change with progressing climate change, and wars in various parts of the world, leading to global food shortages.

What can we do to help? The causes of diversity loss are many, but as individuals we can have a positive input on two major causal factors, climate change and local environment. We have several areas around us already dedicated to supporting wild life. Firstly, Boddington meadow, a small Wildlife Trust reserve near Boddington reservoir, is a well-established wildflower meadow managed as a traditional hay meadow. Best seen in June/July, it remains unploughed, and free from fertilisers and herbicides, simply being mowed each autumn for hay, then used for grassing. It has an impressive list of wildflowers, and is regularly monitored for bird and insect life.

A more recent addition to our wildlife friendly areas is Boddington churchyard. Managed as a quiet contemplative space, it has been part of the Northampton churchyard conservation scheme since 2013. It has been largely undisturbed, other than mowing, for hundreds of years. This is a small area, but carefully managed for the wildlife it contains. There is a long list of wild flowers, insects, mosses and lichens seen, many quite rare in Northamptonshire. Its species list includes, the first spotted Bee fly recorded in Northants. In 2022, the churchyard won a gold award, and was designated the best conservation churchyard in Northants. The church itself is home to Swifts, Jackdaws, and two species of bats. If you would like to help maintain this special place, please contact Kate or Chris Colles

The jubilee field is starting the journey to become a wildlife friendly space, as well as a peaceful place for the residents of Boddington to walk, picnic, or generally chill out. It already contains areas of wildflowers, as well as trees and shrubs, but there is a need to control the more thuggish flowers such as stinging nettles, brambles and thistles. Although good in limited numbers, if not managed these plants will take over the whole field. There has been some monitoring of wildflowers, birds and other wildlife over the last few years, which we are increasing as time goes on. We have



*Boddington Meadow in June*



*Dark Bordered Bee fly*

insects. Stop using chemicals to clean paths or control weeds (these inevitably adversely affect the environment). There are many beautiful wild flowers that can add to your garden's attraction (to humans and wildlife). Finally, don't be too tidy! Much of that leaf litter and moss is home to insect larvae which in turn are food for other insects and birds, all part of the balance of nature that we so easily upset by thinking we know best! Rather than sweeping up all the leaves, sit and enjoy a drink in the evening, enjoy the environment don't try to control it.

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already recorded two spotted bee flies, and the more common dark edged Bee fly, as well as two species of moth not previously recorded in Boddington. The jubilee field, owned by the village through the parish council, is managed by the Jubilee field community group, a band of volunteers who would welcome your help and ideas looking after this village asset. If you have the time, there is usually a working party on the second Saturday of each month.

Importantly a huge fourth area of green-space exists – local gardens. Gardens make up about 5% of the UK landscape, and you can help biodiversity caring for your own patch. Look for flowers that attract



*Rosemary Beetle in the Churchyard*



*Merville de Jour, a moth found in Boddington*