

SFPT November 2016 report for Orchid Glade

A big step to boost the flora

November 12th, and the Orchid Glade is soaking up autumnal sunshine. The nature reserve has got a lot larger since September, when I was last here. It is an optical illusion of course, brought about by the recent enlargement of the open flowery glade at the heart of the reserve, and the felling of large alders and some willows beside the pond. This is a big step toward achieving two important management aims: the control of young scrub, and a reduction in the number of established trees casting seeds, shade and autumnal leaves upon the meadow flora. The work shows what can be done to arrest the encroachment of woodland in the nature reserve and it is impressive. Funds permitting, similar work in future years will be required, because the mowed scrub and felled trees will begin to regrow with astonishing vigour next spring unless the Trust exerts terminal control on the stumps now.



Like the rest of the reserve, the pond also seems larger now that most of the large willows have been felled. A duck teal was dabbling in shallow water and she has just rocketed up and away over the trees. Deer tracks are cut into the muddy pond margins: probably the fallow preferred the reserve as it was, thickets and all. In warm sunshine, several ruddy darter dragonflies are whirring low over the pond, and a pair joined in tandem is repeatedly dipping to drop eggs onto waterlogged moss showing above the water. Unusually, the clay soil of the Orchid Glade is comparatively dry, despite recent rain, and I love it. My past photographs of the reserve in autumn and winter have a common refrain: squishiness, flooding, bogginess and inundation.



Laurie Forsyth