

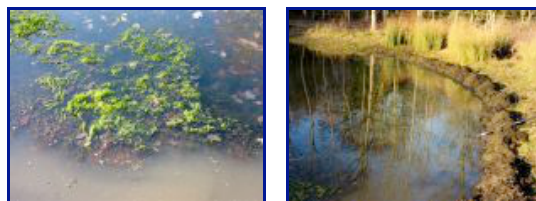
SFPT Orchid Glade report for December 2016

Springtime in December

Mid-winter is almost upon us. Today – 14th December – we are seven days from the winter solstice, and the noon-time sun hangs lower in the sky with every day that passes. In brilliant, warm sunshine I have just taken a photograph of my shadow on the grass – it looks as though I am standing on stilts. The sun is so low now that driving here required sunglasses, except that I have never owned a pair. The trust has recently carried out management work to control the spread of scrub at the Orchid Glade reserve. This is an important step, but checking the invasion of trees and shrubs that threaten our flower-rich grassland must be a regularly repeated process – not a one-off job. If we follow-up in years to come, we should succeed.



The pond also stands at the crossroads. Following the removal of most of the shading willows, it could develop into a key wildlife feature at the Orchid Glade. The profile of the pond is good – a deeper centre surrounded by a flat shelf with shallow water. The shelf is what is known as the drawdown zone, which becomes exposed when the level of the pond falls in summer. This alternately wet- then-dry habitat can become rich in plant and invertebrate life. At the Orchid Glade however, the shelf is smothered in a deep layer of moss that excludes light from the clay bed of the pond.



The moss is submerged when the water level rises, but it survives and keeps on growing, thicker and thicker. No sunlight reaches the clay bed of the pond beneath it, and that is serious. On a whim today, I raked some moss out of the water and was alarmed at how thick and blanketing it is. The trust will

experiment by removing some areas of moss this winter, and review the results next year. With the yelping of a green woodpecker ringing in my ears, the 2016 reporting year at Orchid Glade comes to a close.



Laurie Forsyth