



Brimpsfield Common and Caudle Green, 2025

Wildlife Enhancement Opportunities

Introduction

I visited both sites on a very rainy day in December, to be able to advise on the management of both areas for wildlife and the local community.

Brimpsfield Common is less frequented and therefore has more opportunities for wildlife enhancement, a really interesting site with riparian (riverside) woodland, boggy/wet meadow and south-facing sloped meadow. During our visit here, there were Bullfinches and Marsh Tits flying around – a sign that the habitat is already doing great things for nature.

Caudle Green's spaces need to have a balance between management for nature, but also to be appealing for the local residents and visitors. There is also a small section of woodland which leads down the valley. This space would benefit from a community based approach to ensure the local residents feel proud of their green space.

Recommendations

Brimpsfield Common

Area 1 – south-facing sloped grassland with some scrub

The area begins with some scrub, mostly bramble; it's good to leave some of this for wildlife to shelter beneath, but to be conscious of managing it to avoid it encroaching too much onto the meadow area. There have been a couple of Oak trees planted in this area too in addition to the tree already standing, I would avoid planting more trees onto the meadow itself as the open habitat is an asset, but the edges may benefit from the addition of species such as Hawthorn or Blackthorn to increase the diversity and vary the height alongside the road. When cutting the grass, it would be ideal to leave a small area around the trees uncut.

To get the most out of the meadow area I would recommend cutting it in rotation – this could look like cutting some of it in June/July, and the rest in August/September, or cutting one half one year, and the other half the next, and so on. Cutting in rotation allows for areas of long grass to provide shelter for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. If rotational cutting isn't viable, one cut as late into the summer as possible would best support wildlife in the area. Ideally, when the vegetation is cut, the cuttings will be left to dry and drop their seeds for a couple of days and then removed.

To increase the diversity in this meadow, I would recommend either using wildflower seeds or, for instant impact, wildflower plug plants. EcoHab Wildflowers in Churcham offer native wildflower plug plants that you would be able to plant straight into the area. For this particular area as it's not as damp as the section below, some species to focus on trying to increase would be: Wild Daffodil, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Knapweed, Horseshoe Vetch, Red Clover, Tufted Vetch, Primrose, Field Scabious.



Area 2 – wet meadow

This area was very wet underfoot, and whilst not actively flooded by the river it clearly holds a lot of water especially over the wetter months. With this in mind, it would be ideal to treat this as a floodplain meadow to connect the slope with the riparian habitat and river.

This area should be cut in the same methods as recommended above, again ideally in rotation. It may also be beneficial to seed or plant plug plants to this area which are partial to floodplains. Species that would thrive here are: Meadowsweet, Fleabane, Purple Loosestrife, Devil's-bit Scabious, Ragged Robin, Great Burnet, Lady's Bedstraw, Betony.

Area 3 – riparian woodland (river bank woodland)

The woodland is already somewhat managed to keep the vegetation away from the overhead cables, this has created some dead wood piles which are fantastic for wildlife in wet woodland areas like this. To continue the amount of dead wood on site, the addition of dead hedging could create pathways for species to travel through and hibernate within.

There would be an opportunity here to plant additional wet-loving tree species to ensure regeneration and to diversify the habitat already there. Species such as Alder and Downy Birch thrive in these riparian habitats, and the Willow currently present can be pollarded and managed to vary height and size.

Planting and management would ideally be done in a way that reduces the height difference between the woodland edge and the grassland area, so keeping some trees on the edge pruned back could improve this.

Caudle Green

Area 1 – small area of woodland

We slipped our way into this area to have a look, and I understand that there are quite a few Ash trees suffering from dieback. Where possible, leaving these trees to naturally fell themselves and then leaving that fallen wood in situ is the best option for the habitat and species within it. Where safety is an issue, felling the Ash trees and moving the fallen wood to a safe place within the habitat will replicate natural felling as closely as possible.

There is a fair bit of Hazel coppice within the area that hasn't been coppiced for a while, introducing a rotational coppice will vary the height and density within the woodland which will help to increase species diversity.

The first step for this area would be to survey the species within it, ideally in May/June, and then create a woodland management plan with this in mind. Felling and coppicing should be done in the height of winter as to avoid disturbance to breeding species, but it's worth noting that Tawny Owls and some other birds can begin breeding as early as February.



Diversifying the species within the woodland will improve the habitat for wildlife, particularly creating bare areas on the ground with an open canopy above (perhaps naturally created by an Ash tree coming down) may naturally reveal species like Bluebells or Snowdrops that have laid dormant – if not, plant them!

Good species to have in this woodland could include Spindle, Blackthorn, Bird Cherry, Yew. There is also the border of the dry stone wall that is pretty fallen down... that's great! Habitats like old stone walls are fantastic for nesting birds like Wrens and hibernating species too.

Area 2 – smaller pockets of grassland

The grassy areas in Caudle Green are not diverse in their species, but they have the opportunity to be! In this area however, I would be inclined to encourage a few more woodland edge trees to help graduate the change between woodland into grassland.

The addition of trees such as Rowan, Crab Apple, Birch and Hawthorn will increase the interest of the area both for people and wildlife, with these trees being particularly attractive year-round.

The grass here could continue to be cut fairly short, but with encouragement to leave the grass uncut around the tree trunks themselves. This intentional cutting still allows the area to look landscaped, but provides more variety and shelter for wildlife.

Area 3 – large area of grassland

It may be a little more challenging to develop this space as leaving it to grow completely wild may not be to the liking of neighbours! So, I have come up with a few ideas and suggestions that might help to bring the community alongside whilst also increasing diversity for wildlife.

Introducing rotational cutting here would make a huge difference, leaving pockets uncut throughout the year, followed by leaving different pockets uncut the next. However, if you're looking to increase diversity the cuttings need to be removed.

Another option here may be to remove the turf entirely in some areas and heavily sow wildflower seed or, again, plant in plug plants. The removal of the turf will give the wildflowers a chance to grow without being swamped by the nutrient rich grasses currently growing here.

Introduction of Yellow Rattle will help to keep the grasses at bay and allow the wildflowers to thrive. You could plant plug plants straight into the ground whilst the grass is short too. Species that would thrive in this spot would be: Lady's Bedstraw, Betony, Snowdrop, Ox-eye daisy, Meadow Crane's-bill, Field Scabious, Yellow Rattle, Cowslip, Primrose, Wild Strawberry, Horseshoe Vetch.

To add further variety and interest, there is an opportunity here to add some hedgerow and orchard tree species. A couple of orchard trees on the larger green would look really pretty, provide food for people and wildlife, and diversify the height and density of the habitat. Opting for local orchard species would help increase the vital orchard species we are at risk of losing, and is a lovely way to bring the community together too. Planting more hedgerow species along the stone wall will again provide shelter and stop-off points for species travelling between the woodland either side of Caudle Green, and will look very appealing!



For Caudle Green, I would recommend conversations with local residents to see what things they might like to see. Whilst manicured grasses look neat and tidy, so can intentional cutting and tree/flower planting. It would be great for this space to be something residents of Caudle Green are really proud of, and something that visitors will look at and be amazed at the beauty and variety in front of them!

Summary

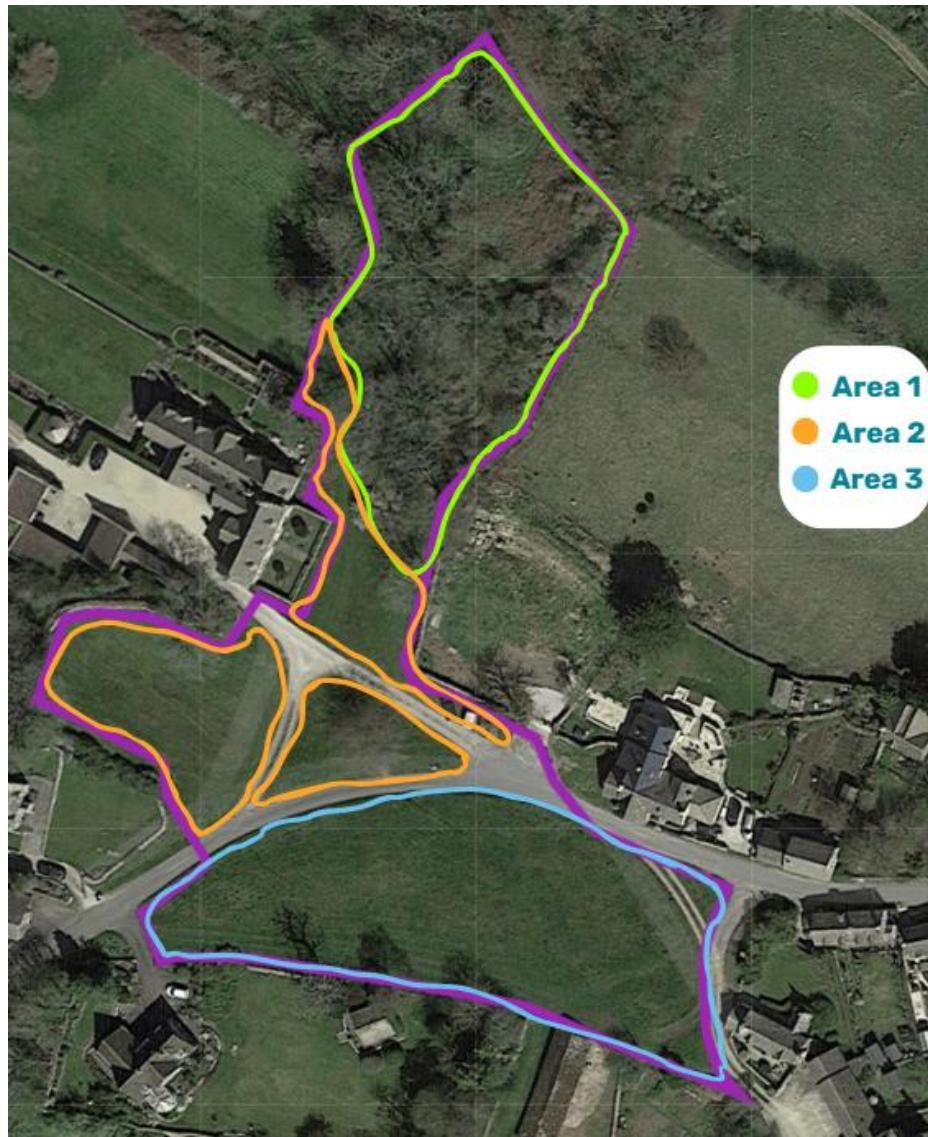
Both sites have an incredible amount to offer for wildlife and to aid nature's recovery in Gloucestershire – the key here is to establish the capacity for management and to undertake actions a little at a time, to ensure that the natural integrity of the sites is not only maintained, but improved.

Particularly in Caudle Green, it would be wonderful to see the hyper-local community involved and excited about the area being developed with wildlife and people in mind. This is something we would love to continue supporting with.

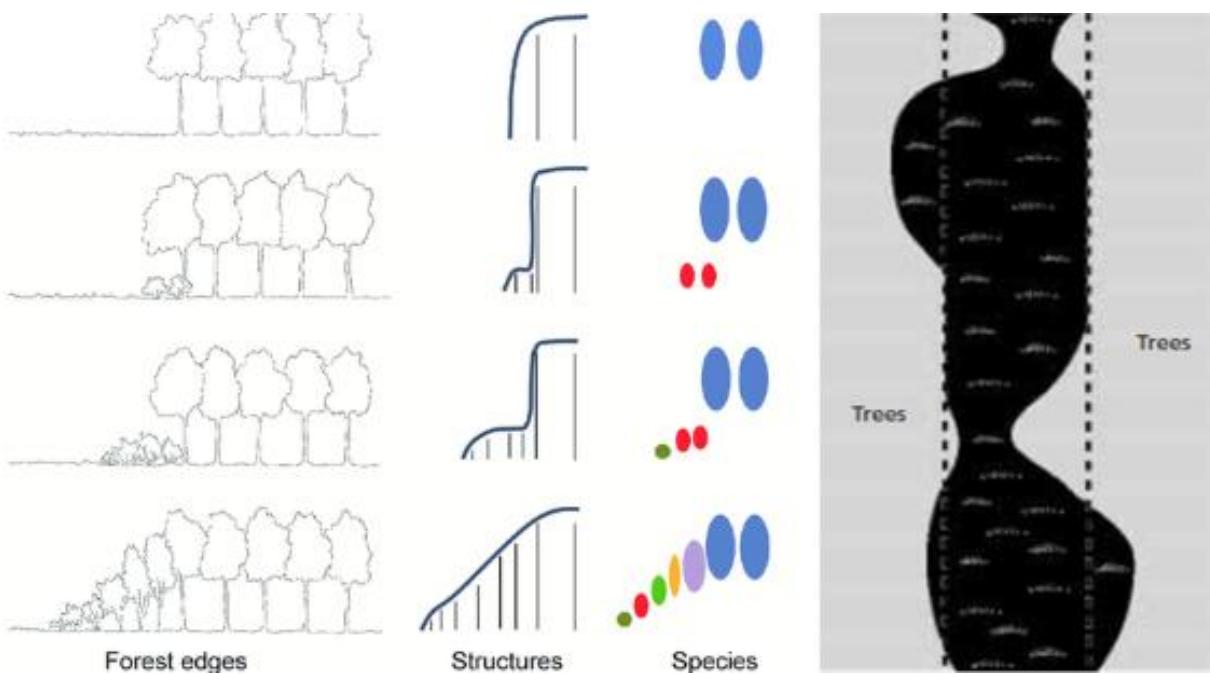
There are maps of the sites below, along with a few graphics to help tie the recommendations above together.

Maps





Caudle Green



*Diagrams
showing
graduated
woodland
edges*