

## **Woodland & Waterways Steering Committee**

We have had an eventful year which has kept the steering group very busy.

The main problem was the lack of rain last summer and resulting drops in water level in the lake. It got very close to having to remove the fish but they held on until the rains came again. We are hoping for a bit more regular rainfall this summer.

We hosted a "Green Tales on Tour" event – which combined a bug hunt and an hour of nature-inspired stories told by Storyteller – This event was run by the Mid Suffolk Discovery Project Officer. This event was very well attended by young children from the local community.

Sir Robert Hitcham primary school once again helped us plant a further 20 apples trees (all Suffolk varieties). The Debenham Guides also planted some of the trees for "World Thinking Day". This brings the orchard up to 40 trees and in a few years will be able to supply the whole village (at least for a week or so) with free apples.

Another issue for us has been the rabbit damage to the hedge we planted. During the very cold spell in January they turned to the hedge for food and stripped the bark off many of hedge plants. We are keeping an eye to see whether they will survive or else they will have to be coppiced (which should result in new growth). Hoggs Kiss Wood also experienced a lot of rabbit damage.

We are going to be taking actions to try and reduce the number of rabbits across all of the sites.

In March Gerry Baxter and Kevin Voller attended the "Suffolk Creating the Greenest County Awards" where the woodland and lake were runners up in the "Landscape and Biodiversity" category. The winners were the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project" which is doing an excellent job in increasing the number of Barn Owls across the region.

### **Future Plans**

More fruit trees.

Benches in the woodland itself.

Greater use by schools, Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Guides.

Try to get more wildflowers in the meadow (proving harder than it looks).

Deal with rabbit problem.

### **Final Note**

The woodland is supported by a small core of dedicated individuals plus a large number of people who enjoy the site and help to keep it litter free.

However we are always on the lookout for new people – so if anybody wants to get involved then please contact the Steering Group for more details.

There are also vacancies on the Steering Group and we would welcome anybody willing to join.