

## **Progress of the Wild Flower Meadows in Coopers Field 2015**

In January 2015 badgers decided that the ground in the first wildflower meadow was quite tasty and dug up quite a large area, but all was not lost as we thought, as it might help the seeds to germinate and flower. It turned out that this was the case.

Turning the existing Cooper's Field into a flower meadow is now into its third year. The project was inspired by one solitary orchid that had decided to make its home in the field four years ago or was it the last one standing! The management of the grass has been the key to encourage not only the orchids, but other wildflowers to grow in the field. The woodland margins are also important, and a different mix of woodland flowers are taking these areas over, such as the foxglove, teasel and thistle. The mixes of different grasses within the meadow is also very important. Many people tend to forget that a grass head is actually a flower providing pollen and food for a large selection of insects. Their seed heads then provide seed for birds and small mammals, such as the field mouse, that in turn provide food for larger mammals and birds of prey.

It was pleasing to see that this year there were 15 orchids spotted and crow garlic was identified as growing in the second meadow – something not seen here before.

For the first time this project became self-funding. £195 was raised from the sale of yellow rattle seed which was collected by hand. This money will be used to purchase wildflower seed for the new third meadow. The largest sale of 2 kilos of seed was to a national seed company Emorsgate Seeds, who specialise in wildflower seed. This enabled us to also purchase wild daffodil bulbs which had been a popular request by many. It was hoped to sow the seed and plant bulbs the half term week so that children could be involved.

The yellow rattle sown last Autumn helped reduce the growth of grass, which was just as well. With all our regular rakers, (with the exception of Chris and Laura) being ill or on holiday we had our work cut out but with a lot of hard work the whole area was cleared. It will have to be done all over again in about October as the grass has not stopped growing.

On 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015 plug plants of selfheal, meadow sweet and ragged robin planted, and snakes head fritillary bulbs all planted in the 1<sup>st</sup> flower meadow. In addition, wood anemone bulbs were planted in Coopers Wood and wild daffodil bulbs along the edge of the wood up from the see saw

In November 2015 the grass was cut in both the second and third meadows and then the hay was raked up by hand.

Late that month yellow rattle seed was sown in the 3<sup>rd</sup> meadow and then plug plants of purple loosestrife, ragged robin, primroses and wild marjoram sown.