Hedgegrove
Sorley Cross,
Kingsbridge. TQ7 4BS

To whom it may concern:

Reference to wildlife areas South of Inner Hope Cove Reading Room.

These areas have a diversity of wildlife that makes them a good example of how simply managed 'waste' lands can make very rich habitats. The stream and wall add to the variety. Small mammals, common lizards, grass snakes, adders, frogs, toads and palmate newts have all been recorded there. On a visit in July 2019 the bramble blossom was alive with honey bees, several species of hoverfly and gatekeeper, peacock, red admiral, comma and small tortoiseshell butterflies.

The Wall: This has Red Valerian which is attractive to many insects, including the Humming-bird Hawk-moth. Thrift and Rock Sea Lavender (an uncommon coastal plant) grow on the rocky wall of the cottage immediately to the south.

The Stream: Water Figwort, a foodplant for figwort weevil and mullein moth, and Great Willow-herb, a foodplant for Elephant Hawk-moth, grows by the stream. The invertebrate fauna, includes freshwater shrimp, water hog-louse, damselflies and flatworms. As well as providing food and breeding territory for frogs and newts, it will be used by small mammals and hedgehogs for drinking water.

Wildlife Gardens: Thanks to being left to develop naturally the two spaces south of the Reading Room have become wildlife gardens. From the road it is possible to watch the growth and bird and insect visitors through the year without disturbing the wildlife. Immediately south of the Reading Room are a group of Elm trees. Mature elm trees have become a rarity in most of Britain but In the South Hams some elms have shown resistance to Dutch Elm Disease and these are a fine example.

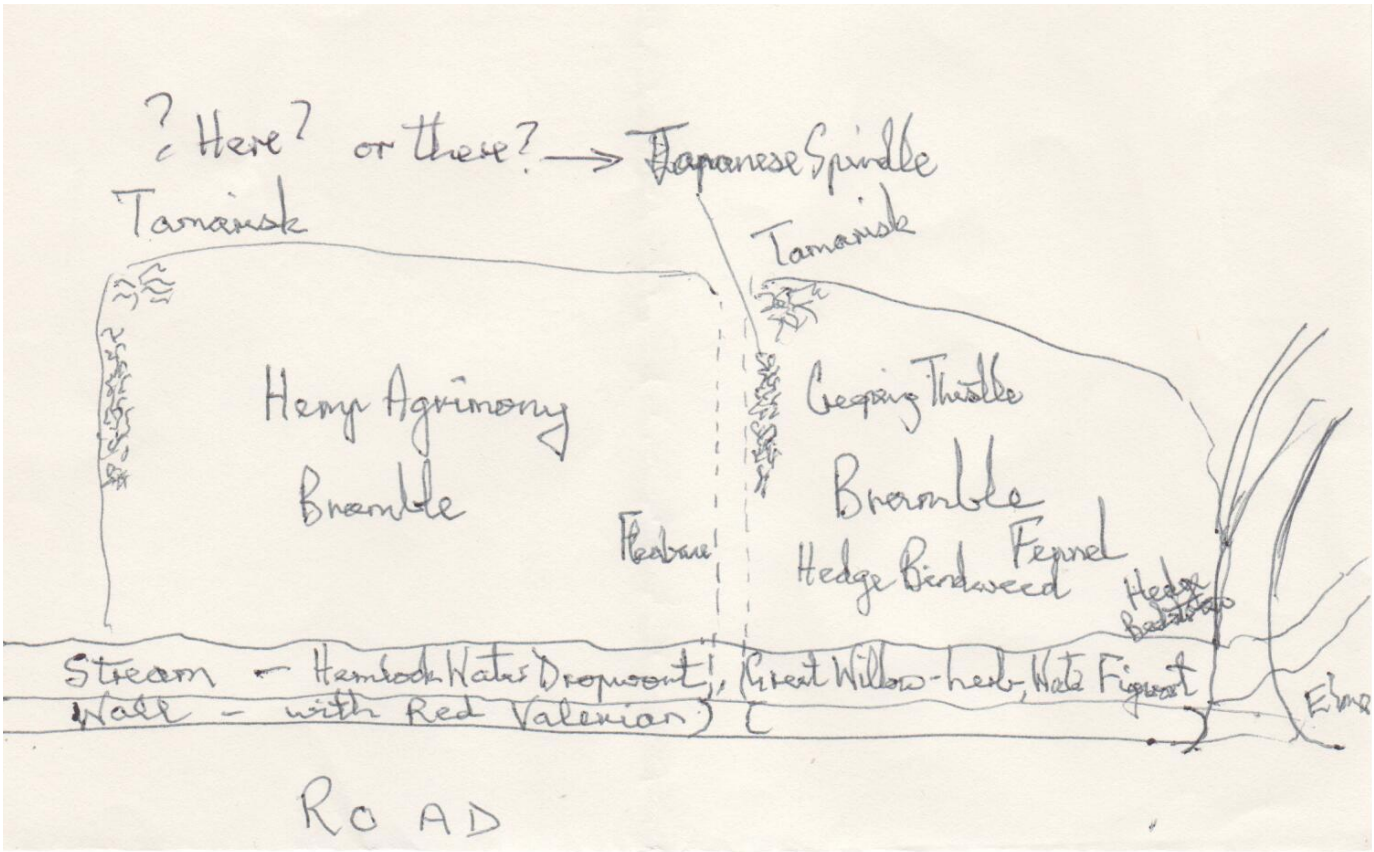
The wildlife gardens have extensive bramble patches, some of which have been allowed to mature into dense clumps. Bramble is a rich natural recource. These are a favourite breeding place for Dunnock, Blackbird and Song Thrush and the Blackcap, that makes its nest in the upper domes of the thicker patches of bramble. At the other end of the scale, it is the foodplant of the Golden Pigmy Moth, whose white feeding tunnels can be seen making squiggley patterns on the leaves. The blossoms are a rich source of pollen for many insects in the summer – butterflies, hoverflies and pollen beetles. In ten minutes watching from the road on a summer's day one should see half a dozen different species of butterflies. The blackberry fruits attract resident birds and the autumn migrants such as chiffchaffs and blackcaps. These will also be seen in the Tamarisk bushes and Japanese Spindle hedge, along one corner of the gardens.

In the southern part of the gardens Hemp Agrimony, a tall plant with mop-head flowers of a pinky-grey, is abundant in the later summer. This is particularly attractive for butterflies. Patches of Fleabane and Creeping Thistle are also an attraction for pollinating insects. Both also have their own species of tortoise beetle feeding on their leaves. The big, white trumpets of Hedge Bindweed, which clamber over the bramble bushes, attract different insects, including hoverflies, and their leaves are the food for a beautiful, white Plume Moth. The patches of Hedge Bedstraw, with their clouds of tiny, white flower and whorled leaves are one of the food plants for the larvae of the Bloody-nose Beetle.

An annual cut, leaving some clumps of bramble to mature, would ensure these wildlife gardens continue to give a home to wildlife and pleasure to us, both residents and visitors.

Gordon Waterhouse (Dip. In Field Biology – University of London.)

Rough sketch with ecological notes



Google Earth view of green area