

Shropshire Wildlife Trust Ellesmere Branch

The Branch has been active for over 25 years and attracts between 40 and 60 people to most of its monthly indoor meetings, the most popular subjects are those with a local wildlife element, especially when birds are involved. Michael Leach and Keith Offord, two local professional naturalists and photographers, have proved exceptionally popular, as well as our own John Hawkins, who is warden of Wood Lane Reserve.

As we run two reserves, we do need some members willing and able to come to work parties and help with maintenance. The Plantation, overlooking the Canal on a ridge close to the town, is wooded. We have, under the guidance of Robin Jagoe the site warden, gradually removed some of the sycamore, planted a variety of native local tree species and opened up south facing glades, which are developing a good varied flora. The snowdrops this year have been a particular feature. We have 30 nest boxes on trees, which attract a number of blue and great tits, although not recently pied flycatchers. The Plantation is fully accessible both from Sandy Lane and from the canal towpath, and paths through the woodland form part of well signposted walks around Ellesmere.

The other reserve is Birch Road Pond very close to the centre of Ellesmere. Until 2005 this corner of Birch Road recreation ground was hidden away behind a high fence with a locked gate. Willow and reed mace had almost filled the pond, and maintenance had ceased. Then Lottery funding was obtained. We were able to remove the fence, clear much of the willow and reed mace, and hire excavators to remove silt from the pond. A path was built around the pond, with sections crossing water on board walks, and a viewing platform was put in. As well as now being a popular spot with local people, a wide range of wildlife has been recorded, including nesting moorhens, spotted flycatchers, tits, finches and warblers and several species of dragonfly. Newts, frogs and toads all breed, and several species of wildflower now flourish including yellow iris and cuckoo flower.

Visitors and new members are always welcome to our meetings, which are held at Ellesmere Town Hall, usually on the first Thursday of each month. Details can be found on the What's on pages, or phone the number below.

For information on Branch activities please ring 01691 622497.