

Malborough Parish Council

Annual Update National Trust

Emma Reece, Ranger

20th April 2022

We have been continuing our project work at Southdown Farm, mainly funded through a Countryside Stewardship grant to further increase the value of this diverse farm for wildlife. Over the last year the Rangers with the help from many volunteer groups have planted over 11,000 hedging plants and 2,000 trees (these were funded through a private donation)

Over 1km of new hedge banks have been installed across the farm, to recreate old field boundaries and gap up areas where hedge banks had been removed. This is to create some smaller more sheltered areas for wildlife and to ensure a connected network of hedgerow corridors through the farm landscape.

We have also worked with the tenant to restore over 163 football pitches of grassland to species rich grassland full of wildflowers in the spring and summer.

The farm continues to be a mix of arable and permanent pasture with new wetland areas attracting different birds and lots of dragonflies and damselflies.

Volunteers have also been assisting in monitoring bats, butterflies, birds and plants on the farm – we have had record numbers of 60 breeding pairs of Cirl Bunting and over 270 breeding pairs of Skylarks (data: R Macklin) through the Bolt Head to Bolt Tail area – a great sign that wildlife is doing well through the management changes.

East Soar car park has finally had the Pay and Display machine installed after the delay with Covid, and both East Soar and Bolberry car parks have had some fresh gravel laid to remove potholes, with encroaching grass scraped back.

Over the next year we will be installing new footpaths and multiuser paths through Southdown Farm and at East Soar. We are also planning management changes to the other farms to further increase their value for wildlife.

We are also continuing the Heritage Project working with the South Devon AONB and Historic England on an archaeological project surveying and carrying out excavations and interpretation to the Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the area to ensure they are better understood and protected for the future.