

Habitat enhancement work Royal Oak Valley

After a cut in late September



Yearly Meadow cut Royal Oak Valley

The wet meadow at Royal Oak Valley is approximately 0.3 HA in area and is primarily semi-improved grassland, which is seasonally flooded. It is situated within a sheltered location, in the centre of the valley and at one time would have been one of a series of wet meadows within the region, but is now an isolated relic, amidst urban conurbation. This little meadow is one of the main criteria used to give the site designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

(SINC). The meadow is cut yearly in late September with the help of The Blackwater Conservation Volunteers and the Yateley Society. This year we cut the meadow with a dedicated team of 14 volunteers and three Hart District Council rangers, it was a productive day and thankfully the rain held off.

Uncut in mid-summer

According to the Yateley Society the meadow was grazed some fifty years ago and at that time wild orchids grew their in abundance (species unknown). The meadow has undergone restoration work over several years and botanical surveys has indicated that plant diversity, especially native flowering plants, has improved, from thirty seven species recorded in 1988 to over seventy one species in 2005,



this was after some years of management, notable scrub clearance and mowing. The meadow provides a home to a good range of invertebrates including the rare bee *Macropis europea*, and small mammals such as field voles. Roe Deer are seen in the meadow on a regular basis. In summer the lush grass growth and presence of several flowering plants within the meadow provides aesthetic appeal to site users and is highly valued by local residents.



New Homes for bats

We have recently installed two new bat boxes on trees adjacent to the meadow. We hope to improve the habitats for local bat populations by providing as many places for them to roost as possible. Several UK species

will use bat boxes as summer roosts including Common and Soprano Pipistrelle's and Brown Long-eared bats. All three of these species have been recorded within the valley and so there is a good chance that they may use these and other existing boxes during the spring and summer months.

Retaining some dead standing timber and preserving old trees with cracks and holes is also a vital way of providing food and shelter for this fascinating group of animals.

