

Hall Farm Floodplain Meadow

Ann: Today I'm here visiting Swampy Meadow in Northeast Staffordshire. I'm here to meet Graham Prince, the farmer. I'm going to have a look at his meadow and see what he's been up to.

Graham: I decided to restore this meadow because it's on the side of the River Dove in the Dove Valley and it's a very good area for butterflies. I wanted to try and encourage them more to breed here really and the same with the birds. It's a very good area for birds and animals. It's just a case of trying to enhance what was here and give them more chance to survive really.

Ann: Swampy Meadow gets its name because it's adjacent to this fantastic fen meadow that's dominated by Meadowsweet but it has other species too. We are next to the River Dove so you get these kind of wetter habitats that then transition into the drier hay meadow.

Graham: We started to restore this meadow by introducing some seeds really to begin with, but mainly by hay making it, so managing it in a way that was spreading the existing wildflower seeds that were here already. I'm also hoping to introduce green hay in the future to introduce more variety of wildflowers here.

Ann The meadow was restored in 2018 with a small amount of Hay Rattle and now what's happened 3 years on since introducing that Hay Rattle is it started to spread quite nicely in the field, and we're getting some additional species spreading across the field. [Meadow vetchling, Common knapweed, Meadowsweet, Greater bird's-foot-trefoil]

Graham: More monitoring would be useful really of the water table both in the winter, where it's being flooded and in the summer when it turns into a hay meadow. A different variety of plants can thrive in both situations really, and that's where the dip wells come in really. We can monitor the information we've got from the dip wells to understand how the field is changing from year to year.

The thing I like most about this meadow is the fact that there are flowers right from the Spring through the Summer to the Autumn. There's the Lady's Smock for the Orange-tip butterflies in the Spring, a lot of it, and then you've got your Rattle and your Knapweed and Meadowsweet that comes through and it makes very nice quality hay.

The biggest challenge about this project is this particular field is a very small part of a bigger project that we've got down here. We've 40-odd acres down here which we are trying to restore into a wetland habitat, as well as wildflower meadows. We're trying to create scrapes for waders and the planning permission and all the research has had to be done, the monitoring and the funding that we needed has been quite immense. An agri-environmental scheme has helped a lot. I am a member of the White Peak Farmers Facilitation Group and I'd been struggling to get into a higher tier for several years and not been able to do it until I joined the group. We've been

able to join the scheme now, the higher tier. The key message to the government would be to make it easier for people to rewild an area without having to go through planning permissions and red tapes. It's a nightmare really and the expense of applying for planning permission and all the hoops you have to jump through. I'd say get all your research done and your funding in place because without it it's just too much of a job really, too big. You need to know what you're doing before you start and what you can do before you start. Get all your research in place, don't give up, keep going and get advice because without it you don't know what you're going to come up against.