**Gilcrest Wood (SK301855)**

**Surveyed 14.6.2013 & 2.7.2013**

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**Surveyed by the Friends of Gilcrest Wood**

**& M. Senkans (SCC Biodiversity Monitoring Officer)**

**Brief Site Description**

Gilcrest Wood is situated in the Fulwood area in the west of Sheffield and is also known as Crimicar Lane Open Space. The site itself sits on a south – east facing bank, sandwiched between Crimicar Lane and Canterbury Crescent. The main habitats include deciduous woodland, scrub woodland and cut amenity grassland. It is owned and managed by Sheffield City Council’s Parks, Woods and Countryside department. For the sake of this survey the site has been divided in to 3 compartments based on typography and habitat type.

**Hydrology**

Though no water course is present above ground, there are areas of the site which remain wet throughout the year. These occur within the amenity grass area and maybe the result of failed drainage. At the junction of the wooded bank and the amenity grassland there is what appears to be a dried out ditch (mostly hidden by vegetation). A‘seepage’ within the woodland flows down to this ditch.

**Access**

Access is available from both Crimicar Lane and via a public footpath that links Castlewood Drive and Canterbury Crescent. Desire lines occur throughout the wooded bank.

**Compartment 1 / Amenity Grassland**

**Brief compartment description**

This is a narrow strip of amenity grassland cut throughout the summer. It contains a section which remains wet and contains wet grassland species such as **lesser spearwort** *(Ranunculus flammula).* This compartment had been unfortunately cut just prior to this survey.

**Species list**

***Herbaceous plants***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Creeping buttercup** | *Ranunculus repens* |
| **Meadow buttercup** | *Ranunculus acris* |
| **White clover** | *Trifolium repens* |
| **Daisy** | *Bellis perennis* |
| **Broad – leaved dock** | *Rumex obtusifolius* |
| **Common mouse – ear** | *Cerastium fontanum* |
| **Geranium** species | *Geranium sp.* |
| **Greater plantain** | *Plantago major* |
| **Lesser spearwort** | *Ranunculus flammula* |
| **Germander speedwell** | *Veronica chamaedrys* |
| **Ivy – leaved speedwell** | *Veronica hederifolia* |
| **Thyme – leaved speedwell** | *Veronica serpyllifolia* |

***Grasses, rushes & sedges***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cock’s – foot** | *Dactylis glomerata* |
| **Common couch** | *Elymus repens* |
| **Crested dog’s – tail** | *Cynosurus cristatus* |
| **Meadow foxtail** | *Alopecurus pratensis* |
| **Rough meadow – grass** | *Poa trivialis* |
| **Yorkshire – fog** | *Holcus lanatus* |

***Fauna***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Speckled wood** | *Pararge aegeria* |

**Compartment 2 / Ornamental Woodland**

**Brief compartment description**

This comprises of a narrow band of woodland, a mixture of exotic and native species occurs in all field layers.

**Species list**

***Shrubs, trees & woody climbers***

**Canopy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Beech** | *Fagus sylvatica* |
| **Silver birch** | *Betula pendula* |
| **Norway maple** | *Acer platanoides* |
| **English oak**  | *Quercus robur* |
| **Balsam poplar** | *Populus balsamifera* |
| **Sycamore** | *Acer pseudoplatanus* |
| **Willow** species | *Salix sp.* |

**Shrub layer**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Common alder**  | *Alnus glutinosa* |
| **Cultivated apple** | *Malus domestica* |
| **Cherry** species | *Prunus sp.* |
| **Cherry laurel** | *Prunus laurocerasus* |
| **Holly** | *Ilex aquifolium* |
| **Leyland cypress** | *Leyland cypress x Cupressocyparis leylandii* |
| **Garden privet** | *Ligustrum ovalifolium* |
| **Spruce** species | *Picea sp.* |
| **Swedish whitebeam** | *Sorbus intermedia* |

**Ground flora**

***Shrubs, trees & woody climbers***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Common ash** | *Fraxinus excelsior* |
| **Common hawthorn** | *Crataegus monogyna* |
| **Garden honeysuckle**  | *Lonicera sp.* |
| **Ivy** | *Hedera helix* |

***Herbaceous plants***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Allium** species | *Allium sp.* |
| **Green alkanet** | *Pentaglottis sempervirens* |
| **Variegated archangel**  | *Lamiastrum galeobdlon* ssp *argentatum* |
| **Wood avens** | *Geum urbanum* |
| **Bindweed** species | *Calystegia sp.* |
| **Spanish bluebell** | *Hyacinthoides hispanica* |
| **Bramble** | *Rubus fruticosus agg.* |
| **Lesser celandine** | *Ranunculus ficaria* |
| **Creeping buttercup** | *Ranunculus repens* |
| **Cleavers** | *Galium aparine* |
| **Columbine** species | *Aquilegia sp.* |
| **Cornflower** species | *Centaurea sp.* |
| **Broad – leaved dock** | *Rumex obtusifolius* |
| **Herb – Robert** | *Geranium robertianum* |
| **Hogweed** | *Heracleum sphondylium* |
| **Iris** species | *Iris sp.* |
| **Stinging nettle** | *Urtica dioica* |
| **Enchanter’s – nightshade** | *Circaea lutetiana* |
| **Cow parsley** | *Anthriscus sylvestris* |
| **Raspberry** | *Rubus idaeus* |
| **Common sorrel** | *Rumex acetosa* |
| **Bush vetch** | *Vicia sepium* |

***Grasses, rushes & sedges***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cock’s – foot** | *Dactylis glomerata* |
| **Rough meadow – grass** | *Poa trivialis* |
| **Pendulous sedge** | *Carex pendula* |

***Ferns, horse – tails, Etc***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Male fern** | *Dryopteris filix – mas* |

**Compartment 3 / Gilcrest Wood**

**Brief compartment description**

This comprises the main block of older woodland. The northern half of the compartment is dominated by **English oak** *(Quercus robur),* with occasional **silver birch** *(Betula pendula)* and **holly** *(Ilex aquifolius)* occurring in the shrub layer. **Creeping soft – grass** *(Holcus mollis),* scattered **wavy hair – grass** *(Deschampsia flexuosa)* and **bilberry** *(Vaccinium myrtillus)* are present in the ground layer. **Bluebell** *(Hyacinthoides non – scripta)* can also be found. The southern section of the woodland bank is dominated by **common hawthorn** *(Crataegus monogyna)* with **sycamore** *(Acer psedoplatanus)* and holly. There is also an area of coniferous species, **larch** *(Larix sp.)* and **pine** *(Pinus sp.)* at the very southern end of this compartment.

**Species list**

**Canopy**

***Shrubs, trees & woody climbers***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Common ash** | *Fraxinus excelsior* |
| **Silver birch** | *Betula pendula* |
| **Horse chestnut** | *Aesculus hippocastanum* |
| **Common hawthorn** | *Crataegus monogyna* |
| **Holly**  | *Ilex aquifolium* |
| **European larch** | *Larix decidua* |
| **English oak** | *Quercus robur* |
| **Pine** species | *Pinus sp.* |
| **Poplar** species | *Populus sp.* |
| **Sycamore** | *Acer pseudoplatanus* |
| **Grey willow** | *Salix cinerea* |
| **Willow** species | *Salix sp.* |

**Shrub layer**

***Shrubs, trees & woody climbers***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cultivated apple** | *Malus domestica* |
| **Common ash** | *Fraxinus excelsior* |
| **Cherry laurel** | *Prunus laurocerasus* |
| **Elder** | *Sambucus nigra* |
| **Common hawthorn** | *Crataegus monogyna* |
| **Hazel** | *Corylus avellana* |
| **Holly**  | *Ilex aquifolium* |
| **Honeysuckle** | *Lonicera periclymenum* |
| **Ivy** | *Hedera helix* |
| **English oak** | *Quercus robur* |
| **Garden privet** | *Ligustrum ovalifolium* |
| **Dog rose** | *Rosa canina* |
| **Field rose** | *Rosa arvensis* |
| **Rowan** | *Sorbus aucuparia* |

**Ground layer**

***Shrubs, trees & woody climbers***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Holly**  | *Ilex aquifolium* |
| **Bilberry** | *Vaccinum myrtillus* |
| **English oak** | *Quercus robur* |

***Herbaceous plants***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Wood avens** | *Geum urbanum* |
| **Heath bedstraw** | *Galium saxatile* |
| **Bluebell** | *Hyacinthoides non –scripta* |
| **Bramble** | *Rubus fruitcosus agg.* |
| **Foxglove** | *Digitalis purpurea* |
| **Japanese knotweed** | *Reynoutria japonica* |
| **Enchanter’s – nightshade** | *Circaea lutetiana* |
| **Garden lady’s – mantle** | *Alchemilla mollis* |
| **Stinging nettle** | *Urtica dioica* |
| **Cow parsley** | *Anthriscus sylvestris* |
| **Bush vetch** | *Vicia sepium* |
| **Rosebay willowherb** | *Chamerion angustifolium* |
| **Strawberry** species | *Fragaria sp.* |
| **Tutsan** | *Hypericum androsaemum* |
| **Woodruff** | *Galium odoratum* |

***Grasses, sedges & rushes***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Wavy hair – grass** | *Deschampsia flexuosa* |
| **Pendulous sedge** | *Carex pendula* |
| **Creeping soft – grass** | *Holcus mollis* |

***Ferns, horsetails, Etc***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Broad buckler** | *Dryopteris dilatata* |
| **Hard fern** | *Blechnum spicant* |
| **Field horsetail** | *Equisetum arvense* |

***Fungi & slime moulds***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Artist’s fungus** | *Ganoderma sp.* |
| **King Alfred’s cakes** | *Daldinia concentrica* |

**Target Notes**

1. A wet area within the amenity grassland with the potential to become wet grassland. **Management proposal:** Reduce mowing, remove cuttings and plug plant native wetland species.
2. Another wet area within the amenity grassland, contains **lesser spearwort** which is not a common species within the Sheffield area. This wet area is adjacent a dry ditch that runs between Gilcrest Wood itself and the amenity grassland. It is hidden by tall ruderal species such as **stinging nettle**, **rosebay willowherb** and **bramble.** **Management proposal:** mowing should be reduced in areas where this species is present. Reduce to a single cut a year. Arisings (cuttings) need to be removed. As with TN1 plug planting would increase the diversity of this developing habitat.
3. This targets a multi – stemmed **English oak**. Though Gilcrest Wood appears to be a recent feature in the local landscape (maps from the late 19th century show no woodland present), there are several noteworthy trees found within the site, this being one of the best.
4. Another mature tree, also a large (single – stemmed) **English oak. Management proposal:** Below the tree are dense **bramble,** this stops access to this feature tree. Cutting back the bramble would enable users to appreciate its size (?). A potential seating site?
5. The main area of oak dominated woodland. **Management proposal:** access to the woodland from the amenity grassland needs to be better defined. At present a steep muddy desire line is the main option to access the slope. Steps will be needed if better public access to the wood is to be encouraged. The ranger service could help the friends of group with their construction.
6. This is the location of a large colony of **bilberry**. This species is a typical element of the steep valley side woods found within the Sheffield area and should be retained and encouraged to spread. **Management proposal:** young oak self – sets are shading out the bilberry, these are small enough to be removed as part of a ranger led workday. Brash should be stacked on site to encourage invertebrates and fungi.
7. In the southern scrub dominated arm of the wood there is a large fallen **common ash.** Though decay has set in, the base to the tree has new growth. **Management proposal:** Dead wood is a vital part of any healthy woodland eco – system. Not only does it provide a potential habitat for burrowing invertebrates and the birds that prey on them, but it also creates the ideal substrate for a lot of woodland fungi. Leaving dead wood in situ encourages diversity and this fallen giant ticks all the boxes if it is left to decay where it fell. Ring barking unwanted ‘weed tree species’ should be considered as this creates standing dead wood. This is best practiced away from well used paths but is used regularly in Sheffield’s woodlands to encourage species such as woodpeckers and if pollarded, open up the canopy. Brincliffe Edge Wood contains a number of these dead standing pollards.
8. This marks the location of an isolated **bilberry** colony and a clump of **hard fern**. The latter species tends to be found in the steep thin soiled woods to the south and west of the Sheffield area. **Management proposal:** as with TN6 overhead shade needs to be reduced if the bilberry is to survive and proliferate. In this case a balance is needed as the hard fern prefers some shade!
9. At the base of the wooded bank is what appears to be a ‘wall’ of **holly**, which on further inspection is actually a large single specimen (veteran?) whose branches have rooted to the ground (layering) creating a curtain of living holly. **Management proposal:** Clearing away some of the taller vegetation from around this feature tree would further its appreciation. Below this holly is where the ephemeral wet ditch seems to end (TN’s 1 & 2)
10. This is where a large patch of **Japanese knotweed** is located. .**Management proposal:** The **Woodlands Project Officer** needs to bring in a licenced contractor to spray this out. This could take 2 0r 3 years to eradicate. As this invasive species is also present above the woodland, the group needs to be vigil and note the location of this species should they find it elsewhere or on the site.

**General Management**

**Compartment 1 / Amenity Grassland**

At present this is cut throughout the summer and the arisings left to breakdown in situ. Where the grass is wet, species such **lesser spearwort** can be seen, suggesting that this part of the site has potential to be managed as wet grassland. This could be done by reducing the grass cut to one single cut carried out early autumn. Due to the small size of the area, this could be cut by hand and the cuttings left elsewhere on site to break down. Plant plugs could be used to increase the diversity of these wet areas.

Leaving a margin of longer grasses along the Gilcrest Wood edge would also encourage diversity. At present a band of tall ruderal species (bramble, stinging nettle, rosebay willow, Etc) separates the woodland from the amenity grassland. Leaving a strip of taller grasses between would be beneficial for invertebrates and could be further enhanced by planting wildflower plugs. This would be managed by a single early autumn cut. The arisings should be removed and composted on site, this could be done as part of a workday with the ranger service.

**Compartment 2 / Ornamental Woodland**

This strip of native and exotic species trees is shady and lacking in healthy structure. Selected thinning would open up the canopy and allow light to reach the ground layer. Species such as **Norway maple**, **sycamore** and **cherry laurel** could be targeted. Discussion with **John Gilpin** / Woodlands Project Officer (SCC) should be sought.

**Compartment 3 / Gilcrest Wood**

Evidence that protected mammal species use the wood was found during these site visits, To avoid infringing on the safety of this species careful consideration will be needed as to the route of any path constructed through the woodland. The presence and location of this species should be kept quiet so as to lessen the chance of persecution. **Natural England** provide downloadable information regarding working within close proximity of these protected animals.

As with compartment 2, opening up the canopy, would reduce over shading and benefit areas where the ground flora struggles. Ring barking to create standing dead wood should be considered. Any cut timber should be left in situ to breakdown (habitat piles could be constructed as part of a workday)

The addition of bat and bird boxes to the site goes without question. These can be purchased either in kits or fully built or can be easily made from scrap timber (another activity for a potential workday / event?). There are numerous websites dedicated to simple nest and bat box construction, namely the **RSPB** and the **Bat Conservation Trust**.

**Japanese knotweed** occurs in this compartment. This needs to be sprayed out by licensed contractors. The woodlands Project Officer is the point of contact for this invasive species.