

I was asked to look at the health of Gainsborough Road pond, particularly the Water Speedwell hybrid growth.

My advice would be to keep the plant confined to only a third of the pond or if this is too much of an annual task then try and eradicate it. Of course the other option is to just leave it and let it do its own thing after all Water Speedwell has found its ideal habitat ie. Shallow stream/water body. There were around 20 Mallards on the pond which seemed to be finding food within its root systems and were actively uprooting it in places.

There is nothing to suggest that just by looking, that it is improving the quality of the water, as when ponds attract relatively large numbers of ducks the water is muddy any way. There were not any invertebrates seen as the water is muddy but without a doubt it will be used by far more invertebrates than when it was more stagnant. The pond isn't as rank as it once was as it has been cleared of a lot of rotting material and now has more light etc. Clearing the pond has given ideal conditions for a plants like Water Speedwell to thrive.

With a water body such as this pond it is all about micro managing the habitat which can entail annual clearing of vegetation. In essence you are holding back 'natural succession.' The alternative is to leave it for longer periods of time letting nature take its course which means various transitional stages of stagnation to a much drier area. The grass pond margins could in places be left wider ie not mowing right up to the edge. This would provide habitat for amphibians such as frogs and newts.

I think that this particular pond hasn't got the depth for much of the year to become anything else than it is but because it is shallow it lends itself to plants such as Water Speedwell to thrive which can then be removed to prevent this part of the transition. I would say though that after the major clear out of debris etc that there must undoubtedly be more water life such as dragonfly and damselfly larvae than before.

Feeding ducks at/on the pond will almost certainly end up reducing the life in the pond. This is caused by the build-up of nutrients, causing lower oxygen levels, as feeding ducks will result in artificially high numbers ducks to be present. The 20 or so present did seem an artificially high number to be there?