



Biodiversity Newsletter

December 2010

Hi all, we are approaching the season of goodwill, and will be soon enjoying the festive break. 2010 has seen so much development at the park; the creation of a new pond, a butterfly garden at the orangery and great success with the bird boxes. These initiatives are just scraping the surface of the huge wildlife resource at Stratford Park. It has been a privilege to have been involved in promoting the biodiversity of the park this year, to work with the museum in the park and its staff, Stroud District Council and Steve Roberts Stroud Nature in creating public awareness of our stunning park and its wildlife. In 2011 we intend to continue public awareness of our wildlife heritage through a series of interesting events in conjunction with the Museum in the Park www.museuminthepark.org.uk

In the New Year, we have a winter bird walk on 9th January, so do come along to that, and look out for future wildlife events on the museum in the park website.

It just remains for me to say happy Christmas and a prosperous and healthy new year.

Mike

News from the Supervisor's Trap



New Pond Completed



There could be no better way of ending the present year, than for me to mention the completion of our new pond. Since its conception in June at the festival of nature, it has been very much a labour of love, from digging it out and building the wall, to diverting the flow of water through the pond to the lake and finally the planting and construction of the path. There have been a few challenges along the way which nature has thrown at us, but finally, we have our pond, and as nature has given us challenges along the way, nature can now 'finish the job' and bring everything to life in the spring. Once again I would like to thank Rozelle Jachowicz and Carlos Novoth of Stroud District Council for providing the funding to make this a reality, especially

during these times of cutbacks. I am sure that the future educational and recreational benefits to the public will justify the costs, and not least the benefits to biodiversity in Stratford Park.



Bramblings arrive in the Park

The recent cold snap has brought a few Brambling to the park. A winter visitor from Scandinavia, this finch (top right) is usually found in Beech woodland. 4 birds were seen feeding along with Chaffinches in Callowell fields on 5th December, presumably on route to the Forest of Dean, where it occurs most winters. This very attractive bird is another addition to the park's list.



Nature's Winter Feast

Has everyone noticed how wonderful the berries and rose hips are this winter. We have some lovely Holly trees in the park, including some interesting variegated ones.



My favourite one is a stunning yellow variety called *Ilex opaca* or 'American Holly' (left) which can be seen growing between the museum and the bandstand. The rose hips (right) and Hawthorn berries have also been stunning this year. All of these will provide a bumper harvest for our visiting thrushes, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes.

Bird of the Month 'Kingfisher'



With Christmas on the doorstep, you would probably expect bird of the month to be the Robin.

However, our resident Kingfisher is showing so well this month, that it deserves a mention. Firstly, Stratford Park is not normal habitat for this bird. Kingfishers prefer shallow streams and water courses, and our section of the Painswick stream is too deep, and often contains moving silts and other deposits washed down from further upstream. Not to be outdone, our kingfisher has been 'high diving' for fish in the lake. Quite often you can see the bird 'plopping' in and out of the water from one of the angling platforms (usually the second one along from the far end

gate). More recently, it has been fishing from one of the adjacent alder trees, and from a height of over 20ft!. I'm wondering if fishing from this height enables the bird to reach deeper feeding depths.

Because the banks of our section of stream are too low, Kingfishers are unable to nest. We have attempted to build a bank in the woodland from material excavated from the pond, and we will have to see next spring if the Kingfishers excavate a nest hole there. Kingfishers are generally distributed along the Frome and its tributaries. For those working at Ebley Mill, there is

a nest used every year, behind the staff car park adjacent to the stream there. The entrance hole is disguised by overhanging grass and vegetation, but anyone wishing to watch the bird going in and out of its nest hole should make their way to the far end of the car park (Ryeford side) and sit quietly at the water's edge in mid April. In the meantime, pop down to the lake to see our bird flying up the stream like a streak of sapphire and high diving into the lake for fish.



College students 'brighten up park'

Wyevale staff have been working with special needs students from Stroud college to brighten up the park for next spring. The students have been helping to plant hundreds of daffodil bulbs around the park and around the new pond. As well as this, they have been helping to clear leaves from the grass areas. The students have clearly been enjoying their afternoons out in the park every Wednesday, and it's great to see them contributing to the park. A big thank you to Oliver Beaumont of Stroud College and his students for all their hard work.



Stratford Park Bird Report 2009 (new species to the list for 2010)

Since the compilation of my Stratford Park Bird Report this spring, 5 new bird species have been recorded at the park during 2010. These are:- Garden Warbler, Cormorant (which was present on the lake for a few weeks in September), Shelduck (2 juvenile birds on the lake in October), Brambling and Red-Legged Partridge (2 seen in adjacent Callowell Fields in October). In general, birds have had a good year at the park, and the breeding status of hole nesting species has been exceptional, in particular Nuthatch and Coal Tit, (the latter species not previously recorded as a breeding species at the park). During winter 2011, we will be erecting another 12 nest boxes throughout the park, bringing the total to 36. It has become evident that providing these boxes for our birds, has had a positive impact on their numbers. For instance, 2 years ago, Nuthatch was a scarce breeding species in the park due to lack of suitable nesting holes. This year 2010, Nuthatches occupied 4 boxes, producing 3 clutches of eggs, which produced 14 young birds. That's 14 more Nuthatches gracing our trees. The evidence of this can be seen any day throughout the park, where their piping call is a regular sound in the park's cedars.

Sadly, during May we lost a whole brood of Nuthatch chicks, which were predated by a Great Spotted Woodpecker that bored through the nest box. Metal plates will be installed on the entrance holes to all of our boxes this winter, to deter future predators. Finally, our swans had a good year, raising 3 healthy young. Although one of these has 'disappeared', the remaining 2 are a regular feature at the lake, and have become very tame. This concludes a great year for our birds at Stratford Park.



'And Finally' Stratford Park receives BALI award'



I am delighted to say that Wyevale have been awarded a BALI award for Stratford Park in the category Grounds Maintenance – Free Public Access. Stratford Park was in the top 6 in the country for this category, and myself, Rozelle Jachowicz (Public Spaces Officer, SDC) and other members of Wyevale attended the awards ceremony in London on 3rd December, where we collected our award. It is personally pleasing to hear that our development of biodiversity at the park was a key factor in achieving the award, together with our excellent relationship with Stroud District Council.

Wildlife to look for now at Stratford Park

BIRDS: Brambling (Callowell Fields), Kingfisher (Lake), Flocking finches amongst the hedgerows above the play area, including Goldfinch and Chaffinch. Coal Tit, Nuthatch Long Tailed Tit (all showing well in trees around the orangery), Black-Headed Gull (Large groups on the lake) Redwing and Fieldfare both present above the main fields and by the orangery.

Forthcoming Events

Winter Bird Walk Sunday January 9th 2011. Meet in museum courtyard at 2.00pm. Stout footwear recommended. All ages welcome. Free. www.museuminthepark.org for further information.

CONTACT: Mike McCrea Tel: 07833091294 e-mail: stroud@wyevale-landscapes.co.uk
mike@media-maker.com

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

