



Biodiversity Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2010

Hi all. Firstly, thanks to you all for the kind comments about the first newsletter and particularly Steve Roberts for posting it on the festival of nature website. Well, autumn is almost upon us at the park, and with it the arrival of the first Redwings (top left). These beautiful thrushes arrive from Scandinavia, along with Fieldfares, and can be seen throughout winter on the main field. During the very cold, winter weather earlier this year, these birds moved closer into the park, in search of food, feasting on yew and holly berries. Many finches are starting to flock in the hawthorn hedges above the play area, sometimes up to 100 Goldfinches can be seen early in the morning, along with Chaffinches, Great and Blue Tits.



This newsletter sees the completion of the first stage of the new wildlife pond, and Wyevale have completed the main excavations, shaping of the contours and retaining wall. Interest from the public has been very high, with families watching and asking about progress every day. Work to connect the water feed to the new pond is well underway, and we hope to fill the pond by pumping water from the adjacent stream, by the end of the month.

The park lost one of its largest and oldest woodland trees at the end of August, when a Willow was felled due to decay at the base. This impressive tree was popular with Great-Spotted Woodpeckers, but public safety is paramount, and therefore it had to be felled. Tree Maintenance contractors have been cutting up logs and clearing the main trunk sections, which will provide new homes for beetles and other insects.

During the coming weeks, we will be emptying and cleaning all of the bird boxes throughout the park. The bird nest box scheme has been a great success, and I will provide a full report on this year's results in this newsletter at the end of the year. Autumn is a great time of the year to see wildlife at the park, so as well as this, enjoy the myriad of different colours over the coming months.

Mike





NEWS FROM THE SUPERVISOR'S TRAP



Red Underwing steals the show at recent moth event at the park

The recent moth event on September 3rd was a great success. The orangery, 'illuminated beautifully' behind our moth lamp, was the setting for this year's final moth event, in collaboration with the museum in the park. Visitors attending were treated to a lovely variety of moths, which captivated the children present. 3 new species were added to the park's list, including a magnificent freshly emerged Red Underwing, which alighted on some of the spectators clothes, and started a flurry of camera flashes.

We established a sugar round on the trees adjacent to the woodland, and this attracted some Copper Underwings. An enjoyable night was had by all, and well done Ann, (Taylor) for marshalling the group in her fluorescent waistcoat.



Insects 'buzzing' around new Buddleia at Orangery

The butterfly garden, planted in the orangery earlier this summer, is attracting lots of insects. Elizabeth Sargeant kindly donated some buddleia plants called 'Buzz', which are a new dwarf variety, and moths were seen feasting on them at the recent moth event. These and other flowers are attracting lots of insects during the day including butterflies and hoverflies.



Jackdaw roost at museum brings evening cacophony

Anyone visiting the museum in the park at dusk this month will be greeted by the calls of hundreds of Jackdaws that are roosting in the tall Wellingtonia tree opposite. The birds have been using this roosting site for the last two years, but numbers have increased considerably this year.

Jackdaws are very social birds, and nest in the walnut tree by the play area and in the woodland. At this time of year, they will gather in very large numbers to roost communally. The roost we have in the park is the largest roost in the Stroud area, so bring your binoculars to the museum one evening just before dusk to see the birds arriving with a cacophony of calls.

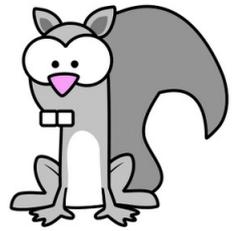




Park's Moth Trap Reaches 200!

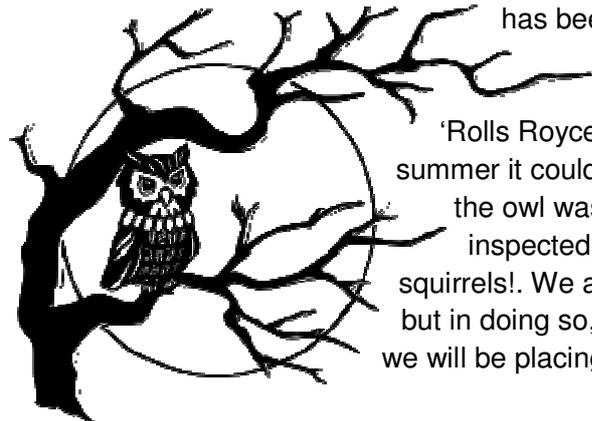
Moths recorded at the park have reached 200 species during the first 18 months of recording. For those that are unaware, I am currently monitoring the moth population at the park, and operate a mercury vapour lamp on mild evenings throughout the year. This is set up in Wyevale's service compound. To my knowledge, no previous recording has been carried out on the park's Lepidoptera, so it is exciting to know that everything we record is a first for the park. The list has turned up some interesting species, and local ones, and these will feature in my butterfly and moth report in January 2011. Rozelle Jachowicz has kindly agreed to fund the purchase of a new moth trap for the park, next spring. My thanks to her for this.

Squirrels evict Little Owls



One of the main target species in our nest box scheme is the Little Owl. Our little friend has been around since April looking for a place to nest.

Bullied out of the walnut tree by Jackdaws, this mercurial little bird has been viewing and considering it's new 'Rolls Royce' nest box in the fork of one of our larger oaks, and during the summer it could be seen perched on top of the box. I was mystified as to why the owl was not using the box to breed, until Wyevale staff this week, inspected the box. Whilst climbing the ladder, out popped 4 grey squirrels!. We all know that the public and children love to feed the squirrels, but in doing so, they are contributing to they're continuing increase. This winter, we will be placing the box in another Oak and hoping the squirrels keep out.



A Word of Warning for Mushroom Pickers

September is the best month to search for field mushrooms, which grow all over the main fields, and I have often picked enough myself to provide a hearty supper. However, when picking mushrooms, do not confuse these with the similar yellow-staining mushroom (*Agaricus xanthodermus*), which is presently growing around the bandstand. Although these appear almost identical to the common field mushroom, there is one important separating feature. When the fleshy cap is rubbed, or the stalks broken, it displays a strong yellow colouration. Although it is poisonous to most people, it is eaten by some without apparent negative effect.

On the subject of mushrooms and fungi, the Beech woodland in the park is a good place this month, to see some very interesting fungi.

Yellow-stained Mushroom



The Goldcrest (regulus regulus) Stratford Parks little Jewel

The Goldcrest is our smallest native bird. It is a species of coniferous woodland and parkland, where it is inconspicuous amongst the branches of Cedar, Larch and Wellingtonia. It's minute size and presence is often only given away by it's high pitched song, a continuous 'tsee, tsee, tsee'. The park provides ideal habitat for this little bird, with most sightings around the orangery and banks below the museum. The Cedar of Lebanon below the museum is the best place to catch a glimpse of a Goldcrest, and a good tip is to stand beneath the cedar around mid morning with the sun overhead. Looking up through the canopy, the sun will illuminate all movement, and the birds are then easy to spot. Quite often though, they will feed on the lower extremities of the branches, and if you keep very still standing by the bench there, the birds will show beautifully. Despite a cold winter this year, numbers appear stable and an autumn walk through the park during this month will usually produce a few birds.



Speckled Wood



Wildlife to look for now at Stratford Park

Birds Redwing, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, (all along the top fields, and in the trees around the orangery). Buzzard (still over the woodland), Green Woodpecker (wildflower bank), Goldcrest (good numbers amongst the conifers and cedars below the museum). Nuthatch. Kingfisher, Dipper (woodland end at salmon springs), Jackdaw (roosting by the museum), Look in the large cedars below the museum for Coal Tits.

Cormorant. 3 birds still on the lake. The first Siskins should be arriving at the end of the month. Look for these among the birch trees below the play area and the alders along the top fields.

Butterflies Late summer species such as Painted Lady and Red Admiral may be seen at the orangery flower beds and buddleias by the walled garden. Comma butterfly can be seen on ivy blossom throughout the park. Speckled Wood, A partial 3^d generation is in the woodland on sunny days. (Look in the dappled shade areas of bramble)

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