



Biodiversity Newsletter

May 2011

Hi all,

May is a lovely month to see wildlife at the park, as everything is bursting into life. The trees are in full leaf, and the green canopy in the woodland covers a carpet of wild garlic. Standing in the woodland in May is like looking up into a living cathedral, with warblers singing and woodpeckers cackling. Plants have been flowering earlier than normal due to the warmest April on record. The UK average temperature was 10.7C (51.3F), exceeding the previous warmest April in 2007. Despite this however, nights have been cold and the start of May has been very windy. The delphiniums at the orangery have blossomed early, and are showing huge blooms. This spring has produced a bumper year for nesting birds throughout the park, and some very interesting finds have been made, including 2 new species to the park's bird list.

I have seen a huge leap of public interest in the park's biodiversity in recent months, and through the events held with the museum, public feedback and interest has resulted in new people visiting the park and reporting sightings of birds and insects to me. One such report was the discovery of a dipper's nest at salmon springs by Ashley Ryder of Paganhill. This is the first record of dipper nesting within the park's boundary in 25 years. Ashley attended the recent moth event on 13th May, and enjoyed it so much that he has started visiting the park each week to record birds and butterflies. Our swans produced a brood of 5 cygnets. Of these, only 3 have survived. One of the two cygnets killed was attacked by an uncontrolled dog, and the other was sadly washed over the waterfall and disappeared beneath Tesco. The recent meeting to discuss this year's festival of nature was very productive, and an exciting programme of exhibitors and events is scheduled. In conclusion, there is so much being discovered this month, that I could easily fill 10 pages. I just hope that things calm down, including the present wind, and allow me to do some further moth trapping in the park. Enjoy the fine weather and the park's wildlife.

Mike



Willow Warbler



News from the Supervisor's Trap



Wryneck spotted in Park!

A Wryneck has been spotted in Stratford Park. The bird was seen and reported by Ashley Ryder on 18th May in one of the large oaks on the main field. Although the sighting was not confirmed by my self, Ashley's description of the bird and its movements was quite accurate. He further mentioned the characteristic 'jerky' head movements which gives the bird its name. The Wryneck is a very rare summer visitor to the UK. Although a member of the woodpecker family, it is not a true woodpecker. The bird is small, about the size of a large sparrow and has a barred, cryptic plumage (see illustration below). With the recent continental winds we are experiencing, it is possible for any unusual bird to turn up in the UK. From a birders view, this would be an outstanding species to see, not only in the park, but anywhere in the country



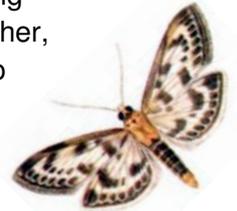
Wryneck

Moth event proves a hit again

It was a slightly chilly night that greeted a group of enthusiastic members of the public to our first moth event of the year. Although the event was scheduled to be held in the walled garden, an earlier inspection concluded that the ground conditions were too dangerous to be navigating in the dark. It was decided to run the moth trap by the orangery, but before dusk, Ann invited the group for a short walk around the walled garden.



Your host was becoming increasingly concerned with the drop in temperature, but despite this a steady flow of moths arrived at the lamp including some delicate geometer moths, including light emerald, silver ground carpet and Brimstone moth. The group interacted well in identifying the moths arriving, and were keen to use our reference guide to help with this. As another event was being held within the museum, no space was available for exhibits, but I brought along a few drawers of moths for people to view, and my daughter and young nephew handed out leaflets and pencils to all of the children. Despite the chilly weather, a great evening was had by all. The next moth event scheduled for July, promises to be another hit with the public, especially given the feedback after this event. Thanks once again to Ann Taylor who took care of everyone as usual, and offered complimentary coffee to those who lasted until the late hours.



Interesting bugs turn up at the Orangery

Anyone walking through the park this month will not fail to be impressed by the flowers of the new butterfly garden at the orangery which are resplendent in the May sunshine. When staff planted the beds last year, we wanted to provide a succession of nectar bearing plants that would attract insects throughout the spring and summer. As the flowers are becoming more established, new species of insects are arriving to exploit these. Amongst them two very interesting species of moths that have occurred for the first time in the park. Mullein larvae have been spotted feeding on figwort. I transplanted seedlings of this plant from another location in the park last year, and already they have attracted this moth. The caterpillars are quite striking when fully grown with distinctive yellow and black markings (see right)

The second moth of interest is a beautiful little species called *Pyralis aurata* (below)

A small pyralid which can be seen flying over the catmint in sunshine.

The caterpillars of this species feed on *origanum*, *menthe* ssp and *Salvia*.

This is another example of attracting moth species through the introduction of the food plant. The butterfly garden is attracting other insects including many species of Bees. With all these dazzling little insects flying against a backdrop of colours, the orangery has proved a great success for conservation.



Mullein larva



Pyrausta aurata

School children enjoy park's wildlife

24 primary school pupils from St Mathews School Cainscross had an introduction to the park's wildlife on the morning of 26th May. Arriving with their teacher and carers, the budding young naturalists were first located in the museum's gallery 2, where Ann was briefing them on the activities of the day. The weather had turned wet (after weeks of previous dry weather), so Ann devised a quiz for pupils to locate as many signs or objects as they could associate with nature around the museum. They were soon exploring the many exhibits and displays with a very competitive zest. By mid-morning it was evident that the kids were eager to get out into the park, and as the clouds lifted and the sun came through, the group very orderly, proceeded out. First task was to do some bark rubbing from the park's trees. Pupils were instructed to form teams, and do as many trees as possible. With their red uniforms, the group ran around like an army of red ants before mustering with their completed tree rubbings. There followed a walk around the park and lake, taking in the birdlife and other wildlife including squirrels, ducks and swans. Next came a 'bird box' hunt, and pupils were asked to spot as many as they could. The group explored the woodland and visited the orangery butterfly garden before returning to the museum for a well deserved lunch. Lunch was quickly despatched and everyone was keen to get back out into the park for the afternoon leg.

The walk around the park for bird boxes together with a visit to the wild flower bank in great hit, as Scarlet Tiger several day flying moths and along a butterfly net and the bugs close up. These



resumed with another search million and one questions! A glorious sunshine proved a moth was flying along with butterflies. I had brought boxes to secure and show were quickly taken by the

kids who then came to me with their captured bugs. A photo call was held where after the group returned back to the museum for the final bird box count. It was evident from the enjoyment they had, that the group would have stayed another few hours, and final thanks and goodbyes were said. This is the first time during my tenure at the park that a group of school children have visited the park to engage in nature and learn what's on their doorstep. It was a great success and very rewarding to see children interacting and showing so much enthusiasm for the park's wildlife. I have no doubt that other schools will follow, and that the park will become more popular as an undiscovered nature reserve and repository for wildlife knowledge.

My thanks again to Ann (Taylor) for assisting with the visit during a heavy work schedule, and Mrs Gleed (St Mathews School) and her staff for bringing along a delightful bunch of children.



Wildlife to see now at Stratford Park

BIRDS: (In the bird boxes) Great & Blue Tit, Nuthatch Treecreeper. (Woodland) Willow Warbler, Black cap, Chiffchaff, (all nesting). Song Thrush (several pairs nesting this year). Wren, Robin, Buzzard, Little Owl (2 birds in the oaks on the main fields), Great-spotted woodpecker (nesting in the woodland). Mute swan & cygnets, Coot (nesting on the lake). Bullfinch (a pair in the woodland by the model railway).

INSECTS: Butterflies: Common Blue (wildflower bank). Large White, Small White, Brown Argus, Speckled Wood.

Moths: Scarlet Tiger (wildflower bank) *Pyrausta auralis* (orangery).

Also, many species of Bees at the orangery.

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Further information on wildlife events www.museuminthepark.org.uk www.stroudnature.co.uk

