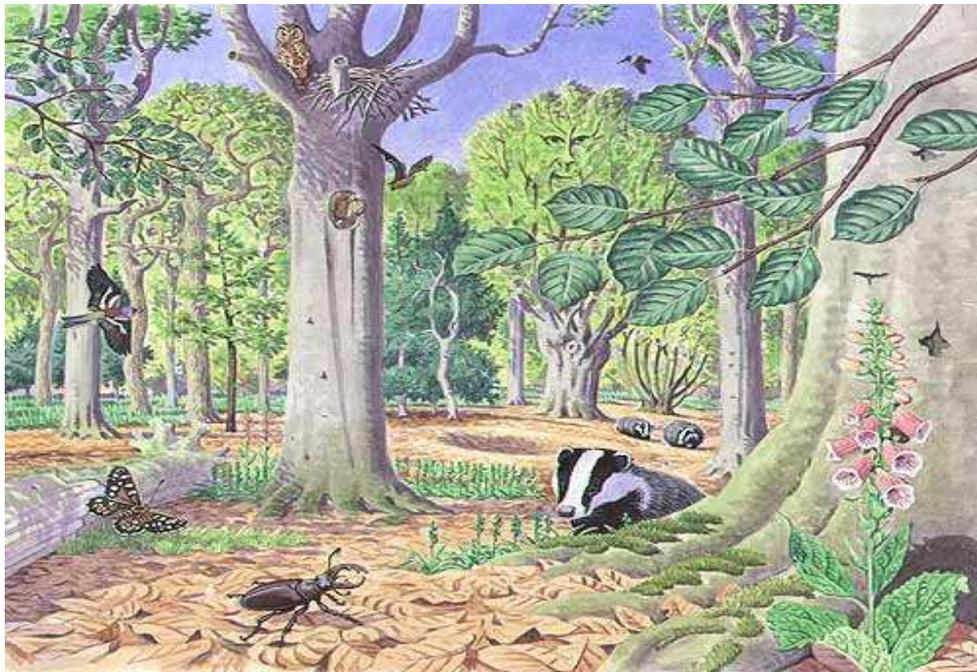




Stratford Park Biodiversity Newsletter
August 2012



Hi All,

The jet stream has been responsible for a record breaking wet summer to date, bringing in deluge after deluge of rain from the Atlantic. Stratford Park has had its fair share now therefore the above illustration reminds me of what we should be enjoying. In between the rain there have been a few hot spells and lots of wildlife to see at the Park, but butterflies have been almost non-existent. Some species such as Small tortoiseshell have been completely absent other than the odd singleton. Moths too have been down in numbers by around 60% on previous years and even running the Park moth trap on humid nights has yielded few species.

Park staff has had a very busy few months, and during this time, many new plants and flowers have been planted throughout the park. Last month I planted some Ox-eye daisies on the wildflower bank to increase the number of nectar bearing flowers for butterflies. These should self seed and create a lovely swath next year. The Stroud in Bloom judging took place on 10th July, and we will have to wait until next month for the judge's results. Biodiversity at the park will

hopefully, achieve another good score. 10 over last years 9 would be good. Next month sees the return of the Festival of Nature, and then we are heading once again for autumn and another colourful transition in the park.

Mike



News from the Supervisor's Trap



Prehistoric moth turns up in flower bed

Bindweed is the bane of our lives here in the park, and controlling it is a continual job. However we have a small moth belonging to a family called the *Pterophoridae* who's larvae feeds on this plant, and it is called *Pterophorus pentadactyla*. A common term for these moths is 'plume moths', due to their unusually modified wings which have symmetrical plumes. In fact they appear very prehistoric. On 5th July whilst weeding and planting the shrub bed by the leisure centre, several of these moths took to the wing from patches of bindweed. On the same evening, 2 more were recorded in the park moth trap. The moth is common but quite beautiful and delicate (see illustration below). Talking of bindweed, *Convolvulus* as it is scientifically named is the food plant for several other moths including the *Convolvulus Hawk* which is a scarce summer visitor to this country. In horticulture bindweed may be your worst enemy, but it also has its uses in biodiversity!



Pterophorus pentadactyla (white plume moth)

Don't jump the fence!!!!

This unfortunate young Roe Deer buck was rescued by staff trying to exit the park one morning. Roe deer are frequent in the Park's woodland and in adjacent Callowell fields. This one had unfortunately miscalculated the height of the fence, and although its leg appears to be in an extremely painful position, once we lifted it from the fence it ran off showing little discomfort or limping.



(Photo: Mike McCrea)

Nature Walk with the Museum in the Park 8th July 2012

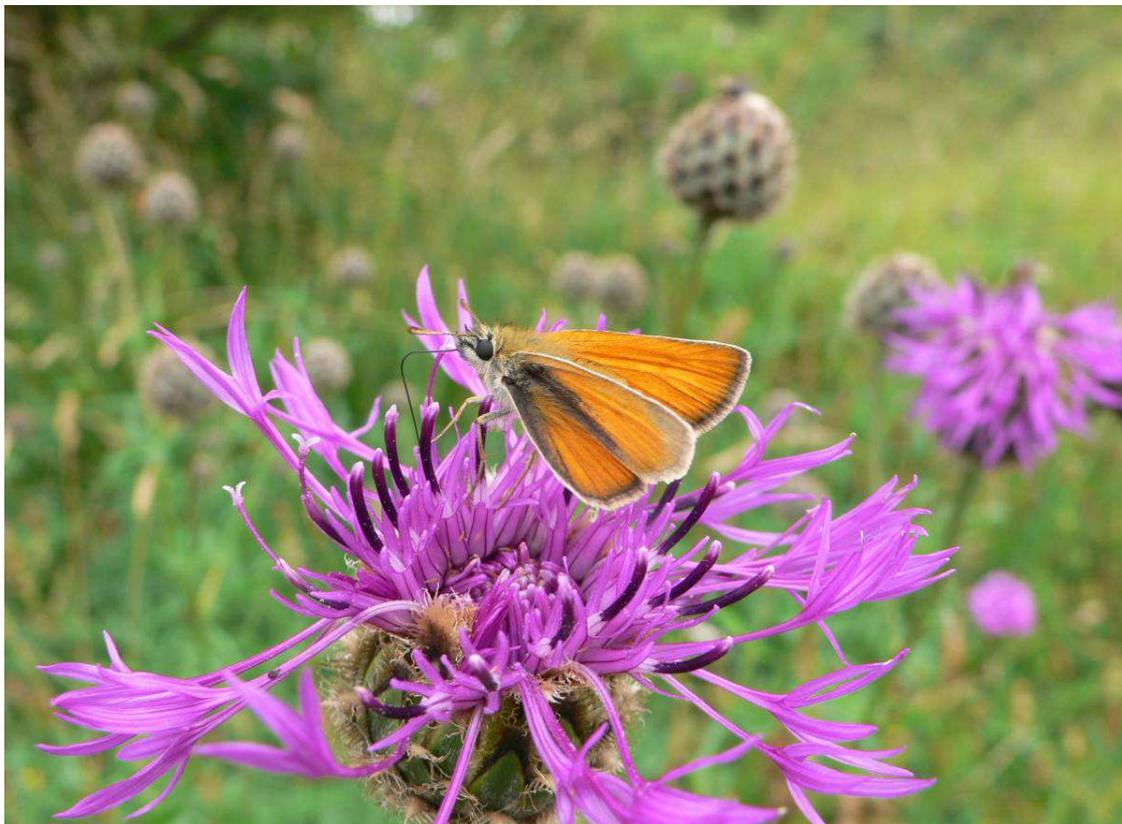
A small group gathered by the museum during a brief respite in the rain, to be greeted with a short interlude of bright sunshine. The previous evening had seen torrential rain throughout the Stroud area, and the result of this had impacted on the park's trees. One of the older Atlas cedars had lost 3 huge branches during Saturday night, and a large pile of debris was scattered on the ground. After introductions were exchanged the group proceeded past the orangery beds where I discussed the species of moths found there. Next, the group was shown a Wren's nest, well concealed in ivy. With the sun holding out, the wildflower bank was very active, with several

species of butterflies on the wing – Meadow brown, Ringlet, Red Admiral, Large skipper & Small skipper. Many Six-spot burnet moth cocoons were in evidence on the grass stems, but despite some over-eager predictions on my part, surprisingly no Scarlet tigers.

Soldier beetles, Bees and other insects were busily feeding on the flowers. Continuing into the Beech plantation, the group was briefed on the woodland management work being carried out by park staff. The group then proceeded through the main woodland observing, various wild bird nesting sites on route. A final circuit around the lake concluded an enjoyable walk. My thanks to Ann (Taylor), Museum in the Park for sacrificing her afternoon watching the men's Wimbledon tennis finals on TV.



Small Skipper & Large Skipper 2 species of butterflies seen on the wildflower bank



Small Skipper butterfly on wildflower bank Stratford Park 2010 (Photo: Mike McCrea)

Marbled white, a new species for the wildflower bank

Despite an almost apocalyptic summer for butterflies in the park, there have been some surprises. For the first time ever, Marbled white (below) has been recorded on the wildflower bank. During July a total of 6 individuals were seen flying there. A grassland species, the butterfly is locally common on hillsides and commons around the Stroud valleys. There are strong colonies at Edge Common and Painswick Beacon. It is possible that the butterflies seen in the park were blown from nearby colonies, and once here, may become established. The requirements for this butterfly are perfect on the bank, as it is south facing and contains poa grass and plenty of scabious and thistle for the adults to feed upon. This new addition adds to the 3 other species of 'browns' now established on the bank and is a welcome addition to the park's list.



Marbled White

Lime Hawk-Moth Larvae

Another interesting discovery recently was caterpillars of the Lime hawk moth feeding on lime above the main field. 2nd moult larvae were observed feeding on the underside of leaves on 2nd August. They were feeding again at the same location when I took Steve Roberts for a closer look on 6th August. The adult moth has been taken in the park moth trap in previous years, but this is the first time that the caterpillars have been located in the park.



Lime Hawk caterpillar



Lime Hawk moth

A bad year for the Park's trees

A succession of dry winters and wet summers has had a damaging effect on many of the park's trees. Some of the more mature types such as Atlas cedar have been worst affected, and some along the main avenue appear not to be regenerating. In July 3 huge limbs came crashing down from a cedar adjacent to the museum, and another large deciduous tree by the bandstand needed felling. Earlier this year, another of the monkey puzzle trees was removed. The council's contractors have been busy dealing with fallen branches and removing dangerous trees. Last summer the park's huge redwood trees appeared to be suffering badly due to the preceding dry winters, but this year they are showing signs of recovery no doubt due to the high volume of rainfall this spring. Recently, contractors have been removing ivy from many trees throughout the park to reduce overloading from rain and snow. In a public environment such as Stratford Park, safety is paramount. The council implements an annual review of its trees within the park, usually twice a year, and ensures that any suspect trees and those showing potential danger, are dealt with promptly. In many cases, the removal of damaged trees provides opportunities for recycling, and much of the debris generated from tree surgery and felling is shredded and recycled back into the park by way of mulch and compost. Bays constructed in the service compound are used to store this material.

With around 55 acres, the park still holds a large and diverse range of trees, and although we have lost some old ones, it hasn't impacted too much on wildlife. Many of those that are important to woodpeckers and nuthatches which show signs of decay are within the woodland and off the public paths. A good colourful tree guide is much needed for the park and would prove very useful for those wishing to identify the wide range of species.



Autumn trees in Stratford Park (Photo: Mike McCrea)

Wildlife to see now in Stratford Park

BIRDS: A female Carolina duck and tufted duck are on the lake this month. Green woodpeckers with young are feeding regularly on the main field and around the play area. Also on the main fields – Pied wagtail, Black-headed gull, lesser black-backed gull and Goldfinch. Generally quiet for small birds in August but Nuthatch is present around the orangery and in the woodland. Kingfisher is regular on the lake. Sparrowhawk can be seen most days over the park. Buzzard is frequent soaring over the main fields. Around the bowling green, Greenfinches are common this summer.

BUTTERFLIES & INSECTS: On the wildflower bank – Meadow brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Small copper, Small tortoiseshell, Comma and Red admiral. Some late Six-spot burnet moths. The empty pupal cases can be seen on grasses. Small and Large white along the stream and summer generation Green-veined white. Lime hawk larvae can be found on the limes above the main field. In this area can be seen a multitude of hoverflies and other insects feeding on umbellifers. Insect activity is also high around the pond and the butterfly garden at the orangery.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Moth event at the orangery with the Museum in the Park 14th September 2012 8.30 till late.

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LINKS

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