



Stratford Park Biodiversity Newsletter
October 2013



Hi All,

Almost another summer has passed and the transition into autumn is more normal than in previous years. The park has retained its Green Flag status for a 10th year and it has contributed significantly to Stroud in Bloom achieving another gold award. Although Stratford Park was entered for a BALI award this year, unfortunately we were unsuccessful. However it is not all about winning awards. My work ethic is that regardless of these awards grounds maintenance should be maintained to the highest standard all year round. Green Flag, BALI and Stroud in Bloom remind you that complacency is not an option in maintaining high standards. As a barometer for quality and achievement they enable us to re- assess and consider our strengths and weaknesses, and hopefully deliver an even better service the following year. Biodiversity remains high in the judging criteria, and it is within this category that we continue to score highly. As we are learning more about the ecosystems within the park and its wildlife, we are able to structure our grounds maintenance to not only serve its main purpose for the public, but to enhance and improve areas for wildlife. The year to date has produced many new

sightings and unusual discoveries in the park, partly due to the contrasting weather conditions, but also due to our work in developing new areas for wildlife and maintaining existing ones. At the time of writing there is an unprecedented crop of fruit, berries and nuts heaving from every tree in the park, and it will be interesting to see what influence this has on immigrant and overwintering birds during autumn and winter. It has been a record year for butterflies nationally, and the park is no exception, with numbers of some species up 100% from the previous 2 years. Stratford Park is a beautiful place in the autumn and those who visit this month will be greeted by a tapestry of colours.

Mike



News from the Supervisor's Trap

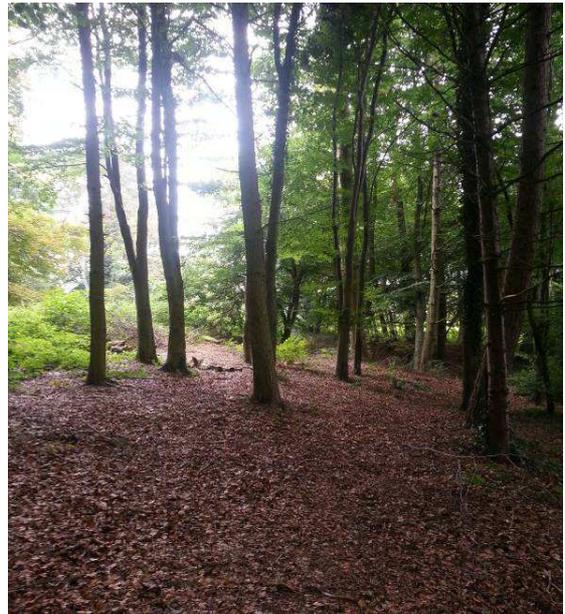


Tawny owls breed for the first time in 42 years!

Yet another success with our bird boxes – Tawny owls have bred in the woodland for the first time since 1974. Ash Ryder (local bat expert) has recently informed me that during his night time bat excursions to the park he observed 2 young owls in our owl box, and has also seen one of the adult owls in the box. These owls have been following him around the woodland when he is bat detecting. This is another breakthrough for birds of prey in the park, especially after the success with the Little owls. The specially built owl box was placed in the woodland in February 2009. Although we have found pellets in the nearby vicinity we have not recorded any evidence of breeding. As mentioned in the park bird report 2009, Tawny owls once bred in the old oak tree situated in the present car park. This was pre-1975. To my knowledge there has been no further records of Tawny owls breeding in the park since 1974, this is supported by my own observations and records from the period following this. Although the woodland provides suitable habitat for Tawny owls, there are no large hollow trees anywhere for them to nest. Most large decaying branches in our oak trees have been removed for public safety. Part of our next box scheme in 2009 was to specifically target and support hole nesting species that had seriously declined in the park with the top 4 being Little owl, Nuthatch, Kestrel and Tawny owl. To date we have had great success with the first two species through the introduction of nest boxes, but this is the first time during the scheme that Tawny owls have used the boxes. There is every possibility that we have previously overlooked this, and that Ash Ryder's work on the bats in the park has allowed him more nocturnal opportunities to observe the owls. Even so, this is another great result for birds of prey in Stratford Park and shows once again that the introduction of such schemes can bring back lost birds that were once more common in the park.



(Tawny owl box in woodland)



(Tawny owl habitat in Stratford Park)

Stroud in Bloom 'Another Gold'

Being a relatively new committee member for Stroud in Bloom and also being involved in the horticulture of the park, it is extremely rewarding to hear that Stroud in Bloom has achieved a second gold award following its success last year. This is no doubt testament to those involved around the town that provide colour through planting schemes, hanging baskets and containers, and of the individuals who do great work in enhancing Stroud. It is also pleasing to read the judges marking sheet and their comments, which once again shows the strong link between the park and Stroud. This relationship was one of the reasons that I joined SIB, because Stratford Park plays an important part in the judging criteria and is pivotal to the first stage of the judge's visit. Their visit starts and ends in the park with the central part of judging taking place around the town. This year we raised the bar with the bedding and ensured that the park was immaculate. Biodiversity and conservation once again scored highly – 9 out of 10 for a fourth year running. Of course this section of scoring is not generic to the park but it does play a large part in achieving points. The edible gardens theme incorporated in our works compound and at the orangery also received positive feedback from the judges. The introduction to the marking sheet and comments specific to the park are as follows:-

On a gloriously sunny day the judges were greeted by members of the committee and the ever so enthusiastic town crier. The tour started in Stratford Park and it did not disappoint. The edible garden theme was very much in evidence throughout the tour from both young and old alike. Surely no other entry will have done more!! The maturing 'adopt a plot' sites brighten up an otherwise barren land. The many wildflower borders throughout the town were viewed and in time will mature very nicely. Excellent partnerships are being formed with all the local authorities and numerous business

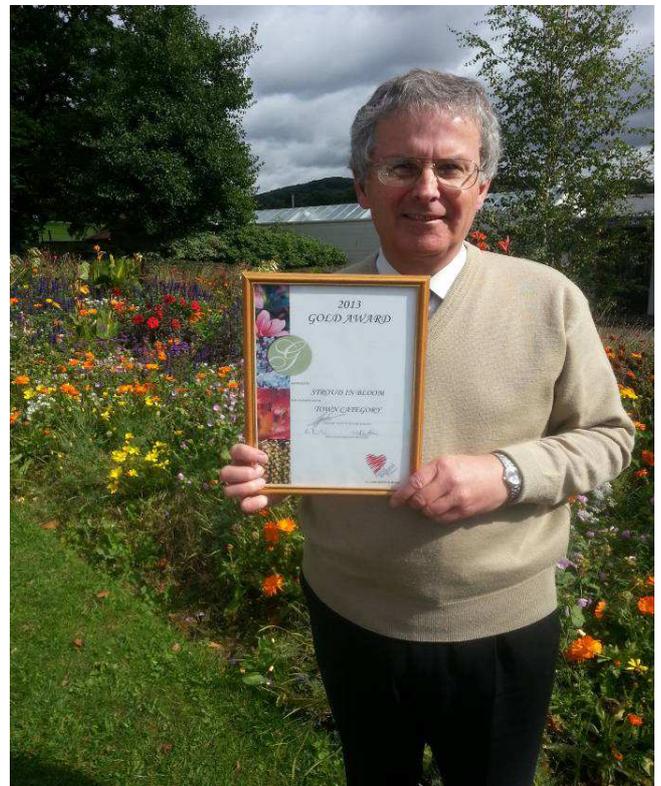
outlets, along with the increasing number of conservation groups. *'A well deserved Gold'*.

'And on Stratford Park'

Much improved hanging baskets in Stratford Park
Mike McCrea's work in Stratford Park is the jewel in the crown for this entry
New interpretation boards in Stratford Park
Bulb planting in Stratford Park with pupils from St Mathews Primary School
Section B Environmental Responsibility of the judges marking sheets – Conservation and Biodiversity has achieved 9 out of 10 points 4 years running 2010 – 2013.



(Park and town staff celebrates gold)



(Malcolm Tarling Stroud in Bloom Chairman Proudly displays the award)



Moth night at the orangery 20th September



Our last moth event of 2013 was again well attended. This was the last moth event to be held through the Museum in the Park this year and attracted a completely different range of attendees. Many of those attending tonight had learnt about the event from the Festival of Nature. Unfortunately Ann and I had organized the event for 7.30pm and had underestimated the amount of daylight still present at that time. As a result a large crowd started to assemble well before dusk (see photo below), which presented me with a small dilemma – how to keep them occupied until dark. After the usual introductions and risk assessments it was decided to kill half an hour with a walk around the lake which met with the enthusiasm of the children in attendance. Some bats were in evidence hunting over the lake and a brief stop at the new interpretation board by the lake afforded some time to update the group on our activities there. As dusk was approaching more people started to arrive, and it was clear to Ann and I that these moth evenings are becoming more and more popular, and is something that we may expand on next year.

The weather had been very mild and humid during the day and temperatures were still quite mild when I turned on the moth trap. Many people had arrived expecting me to establish a sugar round in the woodland (a particular favourite activity for the children), but on this occasion I had forgotten to mix up any sugar prior to the event and this proved a notable disappointment with the youngsters. However, as night fell the group was showing lots of enthusiasm for the moths arriving to the sheet and were also checking the orangery flower beds for other moths which were feeding on various blooms. Despite a warm evening the catch was rather sparse but included some noteworthy species including Burnished brass which Ian Peters was able to capture close up in the fantastic picture below. The evening concluded around 11.00pm. I handed out Landscape Group brochures to everyone and the general consensus by all was of another very enjoyable evening, and with Ann and me exiting through the jubilee gate due to the late hour, that concluded yet another year of successful moth events in the park.





(Burnished brass moth: Photo courtesy of Ian Peters)

Autumn bird observations

The prolonged summer and warm conditions has meant that some birds are producing very late broods of young in the park, particularly wildfowl. During September Mallards and Moorhens have produced late broods and this is very unusual for Moorhens. Robins have also continued breeding well into September. The Ravens have returned this month and several birds have been seen in the arboretum during the first week of October. Chaffinches are flocking throughout the park, and these will soon be joined by other species such as Long-tailed tits, Blue tits and Nuthatches. Adrian Watts sighted what he thought could be a Grey Partridge on the main fields, but a positive identification was not confirmed. Grey or 'common' partridge is a Red Data Book species in decline. Red-legged partridge has previously been recorded in Callowell fields. Common buzzard has been showing well over the park this month and Sparrowhawk is also present. We have been observing Grey wagtails on the stream and lake, and it is intended to build 2 special nesting boxes for them next month which will be placed on the bridge at the Salmon Springs end of the stream. Grey wagtail has not bred in the park for over 20 years and these boxes should provide good nest sites for them next spring. At the time of writing – early October, Redwings and Fieldfares are still to arrive in the park. 3 species of gulls have been feeding on the main fields and our Little owls are still present in the oak and walnut trees.

The Stratford Park annual bird report will be circulated in January's biodiversity newsletter



Wildlife to see now in Stratford Park

Birds: In the woodland this month – Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Great-spotted woodpecker, Green woodpecker, wren, Jay, Sparrowhawk, Coal tit, Song thrush, Chaffinch and Buzzard.
Lake / stream – Grey wagtail, Kingfisher and Tufted duck. Raven is also present by the orangery among the tall conifers.

Butterflies: On sunny days Comma and Red admiral on ivy blossom around the walled garden.

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USEFUL LINKS: www.stroudnature.co.uk www.museuminthepark.org.uk
www.stroudbloom.co.uk www.thelandscapegroup.co.uk www.theaes.org www.thebto.org



Bumble bees (picture sent in by Doreen Frusher Stroud in Bloom)