



***Stratford Park Biodiversity Newsletter  
October 2015***

**(The Orangery early October 2015 Photo: Mike McCrea)**

Hi All,

With the last gasp of summer extending into a glorious first week of October, the picture above was captured on a very sunny and unusually warm day during the first week of the month. October is a busy month in the park, with the transition between summer and winter bedding and the usual annual audits taking up much of my time, the frustration of missing the ever present wildlife, may appear evident in the brevity of this month's newsletter.

It has been a summer of successes, and the park has emulated previous achievements and awards beyond our expectations. With the onset of autumn and winter, it allows me more flexibility to collate and review the park's wildlife during the year, and the many notes and observations I have made, will be transferred into newsletter reports during the long, dark winter

months ahead. The park continues to draw new visitors, and in particular, schools, who are connecting with nature, through a series of activities in the woodland.

This month saw the departure of Laura, our seasonal, who will leave a huge gap in the team, and for me especially, an endearing and loyal employee and friend. The good news is that Laura returns next spring for a second spell of seasonal employment. I have been inundated with positive comments and praise from many members of the public as well as volunteers that have worked with her in the park, and who have all praised her friendly manner and proactive work ethic to her daily duties. I suppose too, that I will have to go back to making my own tea now!

With many projects on the horizon, biodiversity has never been more prominent or important in Stratford Park, and 2016 will see us entering a 5<sup>th</sup> year of its Biodiversity and Landscape Action Plan. Enjoy the many varied colours and tones in the park this month.

Mike

The Landscape Group   
idverde

## *News from the Supervisor's Trap*



### *'Live radio link for special award'*

Following the Special Innovation Award for Pollinators recently awarded to the park, I was invited to chat about this, live on BBC Radio Gloucestershire on Monday evening 28<sup>th</sup> September. I have never shielded away from doing radio broadcasts if they are pre-recorded, but, doing live interviews can be quite daunting because you never know if you are going to be asked a difficult question. Also, you have to remember that you are indirectly representing SDC (who own the park), and The Landscape Group, so, thinking on your feet is a prerequisite for any live radio interview.

The interview was mainly to discuss the award and what we are doing to attract pollinators. The questions came thick and fast, as were my replies and answers; I discussed the areas that we are developing, the Biodiversity Action Plan and what varieties of flowers are good for pollinators. All was flowing well until a question was thrown at me that took me well off my guard – “What would you say to those who might think it’s a bad idea to attract all of these bees, wasps and other bugs into a park”. After a quick gulp of water, I replied “Well, it depends on the size of the park” “We have 56 acres here, so there is enough space to accommodate the public and wildlife”. I further added “It’s about getting the balance right between the more formal areas

of the park and the wilder, more natural areas, that is what we have achieved here in Stratford Park, and that is why we were given the award”.

In concluding the interview, I was keen to express the support of Stroud District Council who, after all, owns the park, and we are really just the present custodians. The interview went well and I think it ticked a big box for PR, though I feel that a request for a small pay rise will probably fall on deaf ears!

## *Woodland plays host to Forest School*

On a very wet afternoon on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September the park was visited by pupils of Stroud Valleys Forest School for the first of a series of autumn activity days in the woodland. The children, under the supervision of 3 school staff, all arrived in their high-vis waistcoats to the sound of rain beating down through the tree canopy.

Suzanne Byrne (Principal) and I had agreed a location in the far beech woodland where many tree trunks and branches still lay from recent management work. Once the children had set up ‘base camp’ and received some stern boundary instructions from the staff, I introduced myself as a latter day ‘Percy the Park Keeper’, which had them all giggling.

We talked about the woodland and the owls that live here, then, as the sun finally came through the trees, off they all scurried to their various activities and den making. It was great to see these young children engaging with nature. The group are set to make a weekly return to the park during the autumn. Thanks to Suzanne for the photo below.



**(Stroud Valleys Forest School pupils in the woodland Photo: Suzanne Byrne)**



## ***Moth Event at the Orangery Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015***

How ironic that this, our last moth event of the year, had one of the best attendances to date, yet, fell on the coldest night of the year so far. As I arrived at the park to clear skies, I knew that this would not be a productive night. I knew also, that establishing a sugar round would be a folly due to the cold temperatures. Nevertheless, the lamp was turned on and a sugar round was established along our usual route. The first inspection of this yielded nothing other than 2 slugs and a harvestman! (Graham Best) – ‘if you are reading this, you will know the feeling’.

As the temperature dropped and people started exhaling breath into the cold air, I knew that the night was doomed. With nothing arriving at the light, I was almost tempted to deliver a stand up comedy routine to keep everyone interested. The total night’s catch was a paltry 3 moths! Despite this, those that stayed until the end said that they had enjoyed themselves, which, for me, was a merciful redemption.

With Ann doing her best to console my disappointment, the light was unceremoniously switched off at 9.00pm. In discussing the night, and future events, we feel that perhaps a good idea would be to set up a communication link through e-mail, and notify people at short notice of a moth event if the weather is suitable. This way we would guarantee a productive night. Temperature is so critical for moth activity, and as we schedule the events many months in advance, it is very, hit and miss whether you will get a warm night on the scheduled day. We may also consider the option of running the moth trap further into the woodland next year using a portable generator. So, this ended another year of moth events (my 7<sup>th</sup>). They have all been enjoyable to do, especially with Ann (Taylor). Let’s hope next year, for a very hot summer and lots more moths!

## ***Seasonal appreciates the wildlife of the park***

Laura (our recent seasonal employee) has submitted the following comments about her time in the park.

*“I have really enjoyed my seasonal employment with The Landscape Group working at Stratford Park. I have learnt lots about the varieties of plants and wildlife which grows and resides within its perimeters. I had not seen a green woodpecker before I started working at the park, but saw one during my very first week, and also a great-spotted woodpecker! By the time my six months was coming to a close, I think the total green woodpeckers seen came to twenty. These green woodpeckers were not just spotted singly each time, but several, in pairs, at four locations. There are lots of moths, butterflies, and other insects and creepy crawlies almost everywhere one looks! I am super grateful to have been given the opportunity to work at the park, and very excited to be back next year for another six months as a seasonal employee with The Landscape Group”.*

## *Marketing Manager pops in for pumpkin hunt*

Head office based Jason Smith, who is covering for regular Marketing Manager Melinda Richardson, whilst on maternity leave, made a recent visit to the park with his family to join in with the Museum in the Park 'Pumpkin Lantern Trail' on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October. Jason said "My children really enjoyed their visit to the park and playing on the toddler area and seeing the swans on the lake. Then we did the trail, they thought it was fantastic being in the park at night looking for the lit up pumpkins, including their favourite pumpkin (Minion)".

'Kevin – looks like you had some satisfied customers' (Mike)



## *Stroud in Bloom Award for Biodiversity Achievement*

The annual Stroud in Bloom AGM was held in Stroud on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October which I attended. I admit to feeling slightly uncomfortable attending due to the fact that I myself had stepped down from their committee during the summer due to a short illness and over commitments. I knew also, that due to circumstances, the bloom group had struggled with great

fortitude without some key members. Despite this however, their efforts yielded another gold award for the town.

To be sat on the other side of the committee table, as opposed to being on it, seemed slightly uncomfortable for me, but, I was very humbled when during the awards ceremony, I was awarded for a second time in 3 years, an award for biodiversity achievement.

I was naturally delighted to receive this again, and also that it represented a good endorsement for The Landscape Group who has supported my biodiversity work here in Stratford Park. Let me now add that I am associated and work with many other individuals within the park on conservation projects, all of whom have individual expertise, and through their own knowledge, enrich my work in the park. So, in receiving this award, I would like to receive it on behalf of those who are continuing to help in the enhancement and conservation of wildlife in Stratford Park including Stroud District Council.

## *Wildlife to see now in Stratford Park*

**Birds:** Birds are very active this month as they build up their winter food reserves. In the far beech wood, parties of long tailed tits, blue tits and great tits are forming large groups as they forage through the trees. These are often joined by nuthatches and chaffinches. Along the top field goldfinches can be seen most days.

Despite a mild month, redwings and fieldfares are arriving from Scandinavia, and can be seen on the main fields. Common buzzard is frequent over the woodland and a kestrel was sighted over the park on 29<sup>th</sup> October. Green woodpecker is present most mornings on grass verges along the rear service road, and pied wagtails are feeding on the main field. On the lake kingfisher, tufted duck and grey wagtail. Dipper has been seen on the stream at the salmon springs end. Evidence of Tawny owl has been found in the woodland with several pellets discovered beneath conifers. It is hoped that the owls will once again, use the nest box in the beech wood.

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**Events:** Bird walk in the park Sunday November 15<sup>th</sup> 10.00am. Go to [www.museuminthepark.org.uk](http://www.museuminthepark.org.uk) for details.

### **Useful Links:**

[www.thelandscapegroup.co.uk](http://www.thelandscapegroup.co.uk) [www.stroudnature.co.uk](http://www.stroudnature.co.uk) [www.museuminthepark.org.uk](http://www.museuminthepark.org.uk)  
[www.stroudinbloom.co.uk](http://www.stroudinbloom.co.uk) [www.ianpetersphotographer.co.uk](http://www.ianpetersphotographer.co.uk) [www.birdhols.com](http://www.birdhols.com) [www.thebto.org](http://www.thebto.org)  
[www.theaes.org](http://www.theaes.org) [www.stroudvalleysproject.co.uk](http://www.stroudvalleysproject.co.uk)



*In memory of Ann McCrea*

**02.04.1936 – 05.11.2015**

*'Who loved the Park'*

