



Stratford Park Biodiversity Newsletter
September 2015



(Holly blue butterfly on marjoram Photo: Laura Jarman)

Hi All,

The recent announcement from head office that the Landscape Group was running another photography competition prompted our seasonal Laura to snap as much as she could before the close of entries on 1st September. She has captured lots of images of the park including the flower beds and staff working, but the image above, of a holly blue butterfly was particularly nice, so I included it for the introduction to this months' newsletter. It seems like only yesterday that we were planting the summer bedding, but already, preparation for the winter / spring bedding is underway. With a new cut and collect ride on mower, the clearing of leaves this autumn will be less of an annual struggle. This month will see the results of the Stroud in Bloom judging, and we all hope that Stroud achieves another gold award. Whatever the result for the town, I feel reassured that the park played its part in the overall scoring. As we head towards autumn, the time approaches to look at further development in the park, and scheduling the next

phase of woodland management work for the winter. At the time of writing, the Walled Garden project is moving forward with the entranceway works, and the new sensory garden project is coming along nicely; all positive things which underpin the uniqueness of this park. By the time the next newsletter is circulated, I am sure that the leaves will be starting to fall, heralding in shorter days and colder nights.

Mike



The Landscape Group

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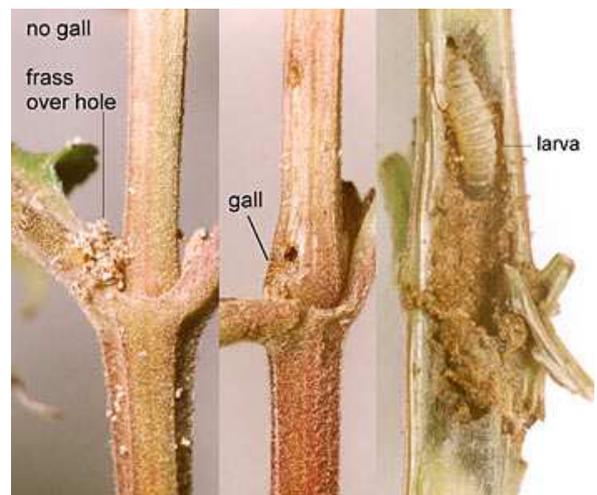
News from the Supervisor's Trap



Adaina microdactyla on the wildflower bank

Whilst surveying the wildflower bank recently, I was pleased to discover the presence of the smallest of our British plume moths *Adaina microdactyla* on *eupatorium* Hemp agrimony. We have a few established clumps growing on the bank, and I have been searching for the moth for several years, having previously recorded it on Edge Common. To date, my searches have been unsuccessful, but this year I have found the exit holes in the stems of the plant which reveals the presence of this species, and on opening up one of these stems, found a small larva. Further searches on other hemp agrimony plants around the park have not produced the moth. *Adaina microdactyla* is the smallest of our plume moths, and until this year, absent from the park's moth list. It is double brooded producing a generation in May and June, and again in August. The illustration below shows the small exit hole which the moth emerges from, usually at the branch of a stem. I would be interested to hear from anyone visiting the park, who has found any of these small holes in hemp agrimony.

Adult moth



New Sensory Garden project progressing well

Now that momentum has been restored to the new sensory garden project (both Richard Lewis Stroud Valleys Project and myself were off work ill during the summer), progress is moving along well. A consultation meeting was held during July between SDC and those associated with the project, to agree a schedule and completion of the first phase. Richard and his volunteers have been throwing themselves into the project, and helping with work to the new walls and steps. Now, in September, we can finally see the shape and structure of the hard landscaping. It is hoped that subject to good weather, we can complete the hard landscaping by the end of the month and start planting in October. This will be a variety of plants for pollinators, herbaceous perennials and sun loving rockery plants. We also intend to divide many perennials from other areas of the park to ensure sustainability. A late addition proposed by Rozelle is the addition of a kidney shaped flower bed in one corner of the existing green. Here, we will eventually establish shade loving plants. With the stone walling and steps almost completed, I am already envisaging what the banks will look like planted, with lovely blue aubretia tumbling over the edges, and blankets of pink sedums and osteospermums. We must also remember that this work is a community based project, and the SVP volunteers have had a crash course in dry stone walling and are helping park staff with the construction works.



(Stroud Valleys Project volunteers working on the new walling Photo: Laura Jarman)

Special innovation award for Stratford Park

I am delighted to announce that the park has won a prestigious Special Innovation Award for its improvements to encourage pollinators. The award is being presented to Green Flag Award winning parks and green spaces in England that have made improvements to encourage pollinators across towns, cities and the wider countryside. Here at Stratford Park we have been proactive in establishing sustainable varieties of nectar bearing flowers and plants to encourage pollinating insects, and in particular, moths and butterflies. At the orangery, a succession of colourful plants provides nectar for a multitude of invertebrate species between March and November. Many other areas throughout the park have also been developed to encourage insects. With habitat loss being a key factor affecting pollinator populations, the award is looking to increase awareness and contribute to improved pollinator-friendly environments.

Applicant sites were required to prove that they are making positive changes to their green spaces that encourage and increase pollinator-friendly habitats and food sources throughout the year. The award, supported by Defra and the National Pollinator Strategy, follows another year of Green Flag success for Stratford Park. The park was in the top 12 Green Flag award sites in the country to receive this prestigious Special Innovation Award, underpinning yet again, Stroud District Council and the Landscape Groups' commitment to enhancing and conserving habitats for pollinators.



Stroud in Bloom achieves 4th year of gold

Despite huge adversity, Stroud has won a 4th gold award at the Heart of Britain in Bloom awards held on September 10th at Rugby. This is particularly rewarding to me as Malcolm's recent ill health was a concerning prelude to this year's entry. Malcolm has been the 'engine room' of Stroud in Bloom for many years, and its main driving force, and I know that he will be proud of the achievements of not only those who contributed throughout the town, but especially Doreen, who carried the banner with great fortitude. This is evident in the judge's comments. Of course, the contribution made by Stratford Park is always a good barometer for highlighting achievement and areas for improvement, and again, this year, the judge's have praised the park and even commented in their report - "Stratford Park is wildlife heaven". The score in the biodiversity and conservation category was 9 out of 10, and this should send out an inspiring message to Stroud District Council that how the Landscape Group is managing and developing the park is bearing fruit. This result is also pleasing for me because due to my own health problem this summer, I had to resign from the bloom team and therefore was not active on the practical front. In retrospect, this may have been a wise move, as it allowed me more time to focus on the park, which again, was excellent.

Due to work commitments I was unable to attend the annual awards, but Laura (our seasonal) attended on behalf of the park and the Landscape Group along with Jim Matheson (Stroud Town Council) and Doreen Frusher (Stroud in Bloom acting chairman). The picture below shows a 'beaming' Laura (centre); who has excelled in the park this summer. Congratulations to the Stroud in Bloom team and all those associated with the award.



National Moth Night at the orangery 11th September



This, our penultimate moth event, was organized as part of National Moth Night and was well attended, and even by Kevin (Ward) Museum manager, who was returning for a second time with his children. “Could you be nurturing a new found interest in moths Kevin”? The event was also attended by Mark Graham (SDC Public Spaces Officer), so a good contingent of SDC representatives was present. The weather was as we ‘bug men’ say – textbook, with an overcast sky. On arriving at the orangery just before dusk, I was greeted by the usual loud cacophony of Jackdaws returning to their night time roost next to the museum.

As I set up the moth lamp, a very swift hummingbird hawk moth was seen hovering over the orangery flowers. As this year’s Moth Night theme was migration, this was a great start to the evening. After the usual introductions and Health and Safety briefing, everyone set off down to the pond area where we established our usual sugaring route. Sadly, this proved a blank during the evening with not even one moth visiting. However, surprisingly, a copper underwing came to the lamp (a species usually found at sugar). The moth count was small, another surprise given the good conditions, which prompts me consider another location in the park for next year’s moth events. All the species were written down diligently by Ann ‘under Kevin’s strict instructions, I believe’. Regardless of the amount of moths that are recorded, those that attend these events thoroughly enjoy themselves, especially the children. In that regard, the evening was a success. We have our last moth night of the year on Friday 9th October where we hope to have better luck with the sugar.

(Moth night at the orangery Photo: Kevin Ward)



Wildlife to see now in Stratford Park

BIRDS: Soon we will be expecting the autumn visitors – Fieldfares and Redwings. The woodland has been very active this month as birds take advantage of a bounty of fruit. Common buzzard over the park most days, green woodpeckers are regular on the main field and the grass banks above the car park. Great-spotted woodpecker is also in the woodland along with nuthatch and treecreeper. In the arboretum – song thrush, mistle thrush, goldcrest, robin, wren, dunnock and Jackdaw (huge roost by the museum) by the lake – grey wagtail and kingfisher most days and dipper is occasional on the stream.

BUTTERFLIES: The butterfly season is almost over, but speckled wood is still in the woodland and small tortoiseshell and red admiral can be seen around the orangery and bowling green.

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USEFUL LINKS: www.museuminthepark.org.uk www.stroudinbloom.co.uk
www.stroudnature.co.uk www.birdhols.com www.thelandscapegroup.co.uk www.thebto.org
www.theaes.org www.butterflyconservation.org www.ianpetersphotographer.co.uk

EVENTS: Stroud Nature Forum (Subscription Rooms Stroud 30th September)
Autumn moth event at the orangery (Friday 9th October 7.30pm) for further information go to www.museuminthepark.org.uk

