



*Stratford Park Biodiversity Newsletter*  
*July 2016*

(Vapourer moth caterpillar Photo: Doreen Frusher)

Hi All,

Two species are occurring in Stratford Park as a direct result of habitat enhancement, the Linnet (top left) and Marbled white butterfly (top right). Linnets once nested around the perimeter of the park along with yellowhammers. Sadly the latter bird has long since disappeared, but it is good news to see Linnets once again singing in the hedgerows in the park. The marbled white butterfly, although not yet established on the wildflower bank, is appearing in larger numbers each year, happy with a good supply of its food plant and large swathes of knapweed to nectar on. July is almost a time to stop and catch your breath as the hectic schedules of May and June dictate less time for biodiversity work. It is a month when the park is in 'full flow', but, the most productive month for butterflies, and time to see the rewards of all of our habitat management. With a large remit of variation work in hand, it is reassuring to see a light at the end of the tunnel with this, and opportunities to spend more time observing, recording and collating wildlife. With



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Laura now firmly in place at Stratford Park, it provides me with much valued assistance with the biodiversity work, and she, together with our French placement Ann-Sophie, are making good progress surveying the flora on the wildflower bank. Finally, the photo above of a Vapourer moth caterpillar was sent in by Doreen Frusher, and what an exotic looking beast it is. This month I have added quite a few wildlife images captured over the past few months by park staff and others. Let's hope that August brings us hot and sunny weather, something that seems all too rare these days.

Mike



### *News from the Supervisor's Trap*



### *Nature Festival a 'huge success'*

If anyone deserved the crown of 'Ambassador of Nature for Stroud' it must surely lie on the head of Steve Roberts, not only for his long term vision and inspiration within the community, but for his tireless efforts and work to promote nature. With a newly formed board of directors, Stroud Nature produced a superb day event on the best stage in Stroud – Stratford Park. It's hard to understand how Steve manages to juggle such a busy schedule, yet, remains so committed to his cause, but when you talk with him about Stroud, the park, and its wildlife, it's clear to see his enthusiasm exude through every pore. This year's Festival of Nature held on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July follows on from a disappointing 2015 festival. However, with an increase in support and exhibitors, and relocating to the bandstand area, a successful day was reassured. The weather too was kind, with only a short shower early in the morning giving way to a dry and relatively sunny day.

It was nice to see fellow director Anna Bonallack working with Steve and his team, and she radiated enthusiasm throughout the day. It's clear to see that the present team of organizers within Stroud Nature have lifted the momentum and spirit of the event with Steve's son also taking an active role on the stands. For any individual or organization exhibiting at the festival, it is a long day, with all of the setting up, dealing with the public throughout the day and then clearing away at the end of the day, and I include myself along with many of those who were 'knackered' by 6.00pm.

Once again the Landscape Group supported the festival and provided another opportunity to discuss and illustrate all of the biodiversity and development work we have done in Stratford Park during the year. To say that Laura and I were rushed off our feet throughout the day would be an understatement. On top of addressing a constant flow of people to our marquee, Stroud Nature had delegated me with the job of 'nature expert' for entomology as part of their children's nature detective scheme, which saw me flooded by kids all day requesting a nature task and a

stamp in their log book. This was proving very popular with children who were seeking out the various 'experts' at the festival for their chosen task. I was also subjected to a constant stream of visitors wanting identifications for the various butterflies and caterpillars photographed on their phones. Our marquee contained a large spread of illustrated displays which proved very popular with visitors. As usual, I had many entomological exhibits on display including what became the showpiece of the day – a bird eating spider (not a living one), and this gave me much amusement seeing many women recoil in horror, but equally, with fascination from children. The day was an opportunity to meet up with others associated with the park who have a vested interest in its wildlife, and especially gratifying to receive so many nice comments about this newsletter. Laura was also hands on throughout the day manning our small plant sale as well as ferrying us both tea throughout the day. The most popular comments from those visiting our stand were "we never knew Stratford Park had so much wildlife" and "we didn't know those areas existed in the park". The display boards on show highlighted these areas and reminded people that there is much more to see in Stratford Park away from its main attractions.



**(Visitors to the Landscape Group stand)**

Visitors to this year's festival were treated to a wide range of exhibitors and activities including Birds of Prey, tree climbing demonstrations, various arts and crafts stalls, wildlife organizations including Butterfly Conservation and local beers, all of these positioned around Steve's central stand which included a menagerie of animal artefacts and some of his exquisite wildlife art. During the day I did a butterfly walk with Ann which was enjoyed by those who attended. It was also great to see marbled whites flying on the wildflower bank (as mentioned in the introduction to this newsletter) and also both adult moths and caterpillars of the cinnabar moth following a re-location of stock from the Walled Garden last year. As mentioned, it is a long day, but one which was very rewarding and enjoyable. I must say that I could not have done this without the help of

Laura who worked so hard with everything. Final congratulations must go to Steve and his team for really 'pulling it off' this year. The comments and e-mails circulating around from those who attended also indicate a huge success. I would also like to thank Tracy Achy (Marketing Officer The Landscape Group) at head office for printing some of the lovely images of the park for our stand.



(Display boards)



(Visitors to the Stroud Nature stand)



(Stroud Festival of Nature Stratford Park 2016)

## *County Moth & Plant Gall Recorder visits Park*

I recently received the following records from Robert Homan (County Moth & Plant Gall Recorder), who visited Stratford Park on 30<sup>th</sup> June.

“During a brief visit to Stratford Park on 30<sup>th</sup> June I recorded a number of micro-moths, plant galls and leaf mines as listed below. They are, I think, all new species for the park.

Micro-moths –

*Stigmella aceris*: two vacated mines in Norway Maple.

*Ectoedemia heringella*: vacated mines in Holm Oak. (First recorded in the park in February 2015)

*Coleophora limosipennella*: one larval case and larval feeding evidence on Enchanter’s Nightshade.

Plant galls –

*Aceria campestricola*: galls on Elm

*Aceria erinea*: galls on Walnut

*Dasineura tiliae*: gall on Lime

*Eriophyes laevis*: many galls on Alder

*Taphrina caerulescens*: galls on Red Oak (this seems to be the first Gloucestershire record of the species)

Other leaf miners –

*Phytoliriomyza melampyga*: mines in Himalayan Balsam

*Ochestes fagi*: vacated mines in Beech

Having received these records from Robert, it only reminds me again that the smaller moths in the park are often overlooked and not recorded as frequently as the larger moths.

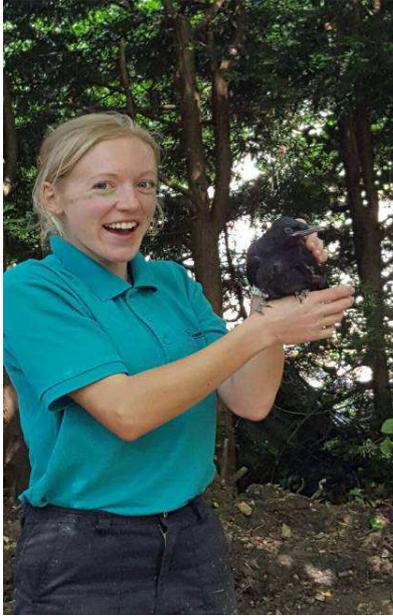
Mike



**(*Taphrina caerulescens* galls on Red Oak)**

## *Snapshots of nature in the Park*

Over the last few months, many photos and observations have been made by park staff and others, and I have only now had time to put some of these together as shown below.



In May, a young carrion crow was found in the compost area and proved very tame, as seen above left with Laura. Incidentally, the green slime on Laura's face was where the bird defecated on her in flight. Sadly in June, Kevin Ward found this dead kingfisher in the Museum Courtyard, apparently undamaged and well off of its normal habitat range. Paul Woodward had a nasty surprise on arriving at work on July 19<sup>th</sup>, a Pipistrelle bat was found in his work boot below. It could have proved a sad end for the bat had Paul not seen it first!





## *Short update on recording the Park's Lepidoptera*



Earlier this year I gave an update on the park's butterflies, which showed an upward trend with many species. Monitoring the butterflies is a much easier process than moths as they are day flying insects, and often seen in areas where core work is being carried out. Population densities are relatively consistent in the park, and as long as the habitat is being maintained and improved, butterfly numbers will remain stable. The recording of moths however, is restricted by their mainly nocturnal movements. I am disappointed to say that the monitoring of the park's moths has lost some momentum in recent years, not through lack of input or interest by my self but due mainly to poor weather and recording conditions. Because of cold and clear nights, running the moth trap is often not a feasible option. Moths are more active on warm, muggy nights such as we are experiencing in this short heat wave 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> July. Unfortunately these conditions are less common these days, and although we are experiencing some sunny days through the summer, often the nights will become clear and cold. I have therefore, not been running the park moth trap as frequently as I would like to. Moth events held in the park are also producing very small numbers of moths which is disappointing for those attending. It would appear that the seasons are fluctuating and overlapping with bad consequences to Lepidoptera. Having said this, Robert Homan's report of micro moths found in the park on 30<sup>th</sup> June has rekindled my interest to resume moth recording more regularly and to try and devote more time to observing and recording the smaller moths.

During late summer and into the autumn, running the park moth trap either in the work's compound or on scheduled moth events in the park can be severely affected by light pollution generated from the outdoor sports pitch floodlights, and on many of these evenings, we have noticed moths flying to these instead of our MVL light. Add to this the personal commitment of time required to carry out moth recording, and one can see how absorbing and time consuming this can be.

When I started working in the park in 2008 the contract was run by Wyevale and as a result of this, the volume of admin and H&S was small. A day's work either on the ground, in the park or in the office, was not as demanding as it is these days, so spending evenings and weekends to record Lepidoptera and birds was no problem. These days the contract requirements have expanded to such a level that it leaves less time to redirect any energy and time to recording wildlife. One of the park staff said an interesting thing to me recently during preparation work for the Festival of Nature, and said "When you are 'in that club' Mike, you have to do it". I reiterated to him that I do it because I am passionate about the park and its wildlife, and that it is the demands of my work role that now dictates how much time and energy I can devote to the biodiversity work. After 8 years of recording Lepidoptera in Stratford Park, I am still acutely aware that many more species still await discovery and that many more are overlooked. From August through to November I will be setting up the park moth trap whenever weather conditions allow, and despite the foregoing comments, I hope to get that momentum going again and discover new species.



## *Wildlife to see now in Stratford Park*

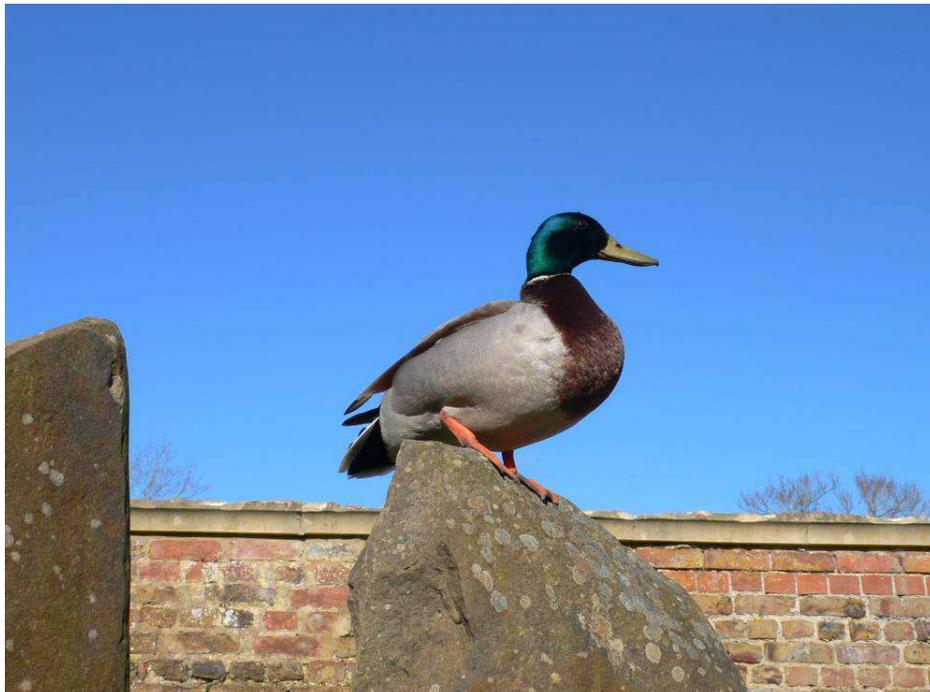
**BIRDS:** Linnets have been sighted on the top field this month which shows evidence that they are established. Other than this, it has been a quiet month for birds in the park. Kingfisher has been showing well over the lake most days. A Sparrowhawk was flying over the arboretum on 16<sup>th</sup> July. A dipper was on the stream on 9<sup>th</sup> July and grey wagtail is nesting near salmon springs. It has been a very poor year for blue and great tits despite some nest box activity, and few birds are being seen in the park this summer. Another red kite flew over the park on 29<sup>th</sup> June and common buzzard is present over the woodland most days. The resident heron is on the lake every morning and 5 cygnets have survived to date.

**BUTTERFLIES:** Despite wet weather dominating from May to July, many species are showing in good numbers this month. On the wildflower bank and green corridors – meadow brown, gatekeeper, ringlet, marbled white, common blue, small tortoiseshell, comma, small white and speckled wood all common.

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**EVENTS:** Moth event in the park Friday August 5<sup>th</sup>. For more information go to [www.museuminthepark.org.uk](http://www.museuminthepark.org.uk)

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



(An unusual visitor to the Meningitis Garden Sculpture Photo: Mike McCrea)



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