



Hi All,

With the park firmly entrenched in winter weather and floods, it is a fitting time to reflect on what's been discovered and documented here during the last 5 years. This could be no more apparent than from the thick tome on my office desk containing 4 years worth of printed newsletters representing a wealth of wildlife notes and observations. With ongoing monitoring of the resident wildlife, each year brings new discoveries. Since childhood I have often looked at Stratford Park as one of the 'undiscovered' nature hotspots within the Stroud district which encapsulated for me, a childhood spent chasing butterflies and drawing wild birds. Even now, almost every tree or landmark brings back some memory of those early years and quite often during a litter walk or park inspection, I will stop and pause to remember a bird's nest I found or an unusual animal discovered. In fact when Adrian (Watts) and I are patrolling the park that same old cliché becomes quite repetitive – 'remember when this was here, or 'remember that bird'. I consider myself very lucky to be able to observe and record biodiversity more closely here, but with an added beneficial objective; to inform and educate the public and make them aware of what they have on their doorstep. This was recently demonstrated by a visit from Minchinhampton School where we were able to show pupils some of the wildlife in and around our stream and lake. With a pro-active and supportive local authority and a committed grounds

maintenance contractor managing the park, 2014 looks to be another great year for biodiversity in Stratford Park.

The peripheral rewards of working with others associated with the park, adds extra momentum to all that is going on here. Another programme of wildlife events with the Museum in the Park for 2014 will continue to reach new visitors. People are now coming to the park, not only for its excellent recreational, leisure and sports facilities but for its diverse wildlife which until recently had remained untapped. I look forward to the next 5 years and to working with those who I have had the privilege of working with during the past 5 years.

Mike

News from the Supervisor's Trap



Blair's shoulder-knot (established in Stratford Park)

Blair's shoulder-knot *Lithophane leautieri* is a moth belonging to the family *Noctuidae*. The species was unknown in the British Isles until its discovery on the Isle of Wight in 1951. Since then it has spread northwards and is now found fairly commonly throughout much of England. Originating from Southern Europe, its larva feeds on various species of Cypress trees, especially Lawson's cypress and Leyland cypress. Stratford Park has a good representation of *cupressidae* and the moth is being recorded here at light every autumn. 2013 has been a good year for the species, with strong numbers occurring in October and November. Newton J. 'The Macrolepidoptera of Gloucestershire:1982' indicates previous records for Stroud – 3 on 30.09.1982 L Price, and further comments ' It seems possible that this species has settled down as a resident in Gloucestershire, although I have not heard of the larvae being found here'. From the regular records taken in the park during recent years it would indicate that this species is now firmly established here.

Blair's shoulder-knot (Stratford Park 2013)



School visit to study aquatic habitats

On Tuesday 22nd and Wednesday 23rd October the park was visited by pupils of Minchinhampton School as part of an educational programme, organised with the Museum in the Park, to survey and learn about aquatic habitats, water erosion and deposition. The visit had been arranged several months previous and I had expected to assist with this on the ground. However, due to other work commitments in the park I was not able to help out on the day so this duty fell to Adrian Watts who proved a worthy guide during the school's visits. The 2 day programme co-ordinated and arranged with Ann (Taylor) Museum in the Park covered survey modules associated with water, habitats associated with water and the reasons for erosion and deposition. Pupils also spent some of their day inspecting and learning about the Museum's collection of fossils with quiz trails throughout the Museum and a visit to the walled garden to look at inspection pits. Ann has kindly forwarded details of the itinerary and posted the following:-

'The route started at the Museum where we then went down to the weir by the new pond where we looked at water power, then around the lake where Adrian did a talk on the swans and other birds, and the problems posed by amphibians by the wooden 'tidy' boarding around the lake's edge. Then we went along the lakeside, past the railway, and down to the stream at a point I'd fixed as being the least dangerous in what turned out to be awful weather on Tuesday – but good on Wednesday. Then we crossed the railway bridge, where we saw holes made by water voles / rats, I can't remember which. There were bits of pottery washed down from up-stream in the water, which made the children think about where the stream was coming from and where going to. Adrian pointed out other creatures in the water.

We went back to the iron bridge, where we did a 'pooh sticks' activity, looking at the pace and water. We looked at plants growing on the water's edge, and at the colour of the water, which was very clear. We paused at the new pond, to see where the water was channelled in and how it was managed. On the second day, Adrian led the walk himself, as I had to deliver the other Museum sessions. Unfortunately, we were so busy, we didn't take any photos! One person took the children's wellingtons lined up- and I have asked the teacher to send us some photos, but I have never had any- I expect the teachers have been too busy, really. So this is all I have to show for two action packed days, I'm afraid! '

I would like to thank Ann for her report and Adrian for assisting with the visits. This is another example of how The Landscape Group's Staff at this contract is working with other organizations at Stratford Park to help with education. Adrian was pleased to receive a letter of thanks from the pupils (shown below).

Mike

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Thursday 24th October 2013

Dear Adrian,

Thank you for helping us on our school trip and showing us all the interesting places in Stratford Park. We are grateful that you even getting yourself wet to show us water lice and other on rocks on the river bed.

As well as that, you told us all there is to know about the lake, river and animals (you must of spent loads of time studying).

Thank you

And best wishes ,

Ollie Lewis, Sam Davis-Berry and the whole of year 5/6 😊



(The Stratford Park Heron Photo: John White)



Christmas storms batter Park

During the end of December and into January 2014 the UK has experienced some of the worst storms and flooding for over two decades. Gloucestershire has been particularly affected particularly at lower levels. In late December the park was subjected to a battering of high winds during the days leading up to Christmas and during the holiday week.

Although it did not experience any major storm damage, some of the park's oldest established trees were hit, especially along the 'avenue' of trees to the jubilee gates. Park staff arrived on the morning of Christmas Eve to a debris strewn park which ensured that no one would be leaving early for seasonal mince pies! The strong winds had taken down some large branches from the cedars and other conifers. The company has put some park staff through chainsaw crosscut courses which proved invaluable on this occasion and especially so close to Christmas, and the tree debris was quickly processed and cleared. The woodland also lost some trees but these fell well off the normal public routes and park staff will be dealing with these during the next phase of woodland management work next month.



(A trail of storm damage on Christmas Eve in Stratford Park)

Bird Walk Sunday January 12th

On arriving at the museum for our first bird walk of the year, I was greeted by an enthusiastic group, several visiting for the first time. The local press was also there and the photographer asked the group to assemble for some photographs. I was a bit surprised as the press have not been out to cover any previous bird walks. In any event, the weather was dry and after the usual introductions from Ann and my self, everyone headed up through the woodland and onto the main field where we had a discussion about the owls and how they have benefitted from conservation work being done in the park. We walked the usual route along the field perimeter and past the woodpecker tree, then into the far beech woodland where I got the group together to talk about the next phase of woodland management which Landscape Group staff is about to undertake. Ann also gave everyone an interesting anecdote about her experiences with erecting owl boxes in her woodland. Continuing along the top of the woodland I was able to show where we have placed new boxes for Grey wagtails and the kingfisher nesting chamber.

Next stop was the pond and another discussion on our biodiversity work. We then proceeded past the lake where a few were lucky to catch a fleeting glimpse of a kingfisher as it darted across the lake. Several Great and Blue tits were in the willows. The adult swans on the lake were displaying some aggression and territorial behaviour to the two juvenile swans, and I informed the group that these would soon be relocated to another water system. A final ascent back to the museum concluded another lovely bird walk. Those who's first time it was in the park said how much they enjoyed it and after some final handshakes it was off home to a much anticipated roast lunch!



The group walking through the woodland



Ann Taylor discusses the pros and cons of owl boxes

1000 new trees for the Park

Stratford Park is to receive 1000 new trees which are being supplied by Stroud Valleys Project. SVP has managed to obtain funding for the new trees and are kindly donating these for the park.

The planting of the trees is being co-ordinated by Mark Graham (SDC Public Spaces Officer) and it is hoped that volunteers from various sources will provide the man power to plant these. I recently met with Mark in the park to identify locations for the new trees which include *Field Maple, Hornbeam, Rowan, Small leaved lime, English Oak, Wild Cherry, Common Alder and Silver Birch*. Areas for tree planting are indicated in the Stratford Park Landscape and Biodiversity Action Plan which highlights the need for future sustainability for trees in the park. The trees should all be planted by the end of February.

Red Kites seen over Stratford Park

Red Kites have been seen over Stratford Park. Single birds have been seen over the park in December and again on January 3rd. Red Kites have had a remarkable comeback during the past two decades and are now established along the Southern Oxford corridor. Although their stronghold still remains in Wales, birds are now turning up across England and are frequently recorded throughout Gloucestershire. These sightings add another species to the Stratford Park bird list. For those not familiar with the bird in flight, the main distinguishing feature is the forked tail (right).



Wildlife to see now in Stratford Park

Birds: Birds are showing well this month, throughout the woodland large parties of small birds including long-tailed tits can be seen feeding in trees especially by the orangery and the conifers there. Also in the woodland this month – Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Great-spotted woodpecker, Green woodpecker and Sparrowhawk. On the main field – Common buzzard, all corvids, pied wagtail, Goldfinch, Chaffinch and Kestrel. Look out for Red kite (recently spotted). Ravens are present this month. By the lake / stream – Kingfisher most days and Grey wagtail on the stream. Goldcrest can be found in the cedars below the museum.

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Useful Links: www.museuminthepark.org.uk www.stroudinbloom.co.uk
www.stroudnature.co.uk www.ianpetersphotographer.co.uk www.thebto.org www.theaes.org
www.thelandscapegroup.co.uk

STRATFORD PARK ANNUAL BIRD REPORT

The 2013 annual bird report for Stratford Park will be circulated with next month's biodiversity newsletter.



Stratford Park Lake December 2013 (Photo: Mike McCrea)