

NATURE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Now including Bee & Mammal news

May - July 2019 Issue 28



NATURE SOCIETY
Making a real difference

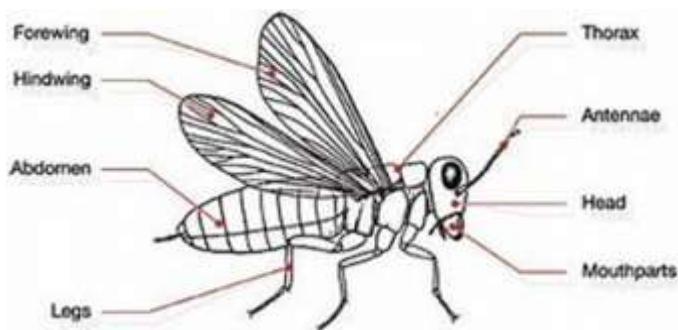


Welcome to the new revamped newsletter which will now be produced quarterly. The contents will still aim to be informative, highlighting what has been going on around the Marina and answering any questions which have been raised. There will also be a new regular feature 'SPOTLIGHT'.

YELLOW AND BLACK?

There is always much confusion over our yellow and black insects, bees, wasps, hover flies, horse flies, beetles, even dragonflies. The list is endless and in fact some of these species even have the experts baffled and they need to have their very private parts inspected under a microscope in order to identify them correctly, (that is the insect not the expert by the way).

Mostly we jump straight to the internet to help us. So, what do we actually search for? We need to have made a decision first about whether it is a wasp, bee, beetle etc. We may be totally wrong in that assumption. Another important factor in correct identification is knowing the component parts of an insect. Old-fashioned, I know but this is where books come into their own by giving us not only descriptions but plenty of comparison pictures.



Then there is the Pronotum

The pronotum is a prominent plate-like structure that covers all or part of the thorax of some insects. The pronotum covers the dorsal surface of the thorax.

Got all that? I wish I had...

Insects use color for a variety of reasons. Some use it to blend in with their surroundings to avoid detection, others use it to signal their presence from afar. Would-be predators typically associate bright color and contrasting patterns with danger and learn to avoid such animals. Yellow and black stripes are a common example of this sort of warning coloration.

Differences between wasps, bees and hornets

Bees - You can easily distinguish honey bees and bumblebees by their round bodies covered with hairs. Their colouration is not that vibrant — black with golden stripes. Bees' eyes cover much of the surface of their faces and they have a set of three simple eyes above their ordinary ones.



Bumble Bee & Honey Bee
25 species of bumble in UK

Bumble bee coloration is iconic. Even taken out of context, the yellow body and black stripes quickly bring to mind the humble bumble bee. Bumble bees have a sting and they also taste pretty nasty, so their contrasting stripes serve as a warning to avian predators. The coloration of the bumble bee serves to protect both the insect and the predator. It is nature's way of saying "don't even bother"



Honey Bee

Wasps - Unlike bees, wasps aren't fuzzy. Some species have tiny hairs but they are not as evident as in bees. You can distinguish a wasp by its striking black and yellow stripes and slightly more elongated bodies. Each wasp species has its own characteristic body markings which you can spot only up close.



7 different species of wasp in UK

Similar to bumble bees, some wasps have evolved to carry a warning to predators that attempting to eat them would be folly. Not all wasps have stings, but those that do have the brightest patterns. Non-stinging wasps are typically duller in colour and have fewer, if any, stripes. Their means of avoiding predation is to blend in, while their striped, stinging cousins, like the hornet do the opposite.

Hornets - The largest of the three, hornets have a reddish-brown thorax, C-shaped eyes and a striped abdomen. Hornets, as opposed to wasps, have lots of tiny hairs but not nearly as much as bees have.



Others species

There are many insect species that get mistaken for wasps, so you shouldn't run at the first sight of black and yellow stripes.

Bees and hornets are the most common lookalikes. But some species of flies, beetles and even ants look very similar to wasps, especially to the uneducated eye. Not all of those wasp-resembling bugs have the wasp's temper and most don't even sting.



Potter/ Mason/Digger Wasps

More than 130 species in UK

The mason wasp is stunning in appearance and less harmful than other varieties of wasps, bees, hornets and yellow jackets. The mason wasp--also known as the potter wasp--is so named because it likes to tunnel into the mortar between bricks and its nest often resembles tiny clay urns. Discerning mason wasps from other kinds of wasps or flying insects is easy, if you know what to look for.

Hoverfly

Over 200 species in UK



While bees and wasps

evolved to have a sting, the hoverfly evolved to simply look like it has one. These flies are perfectly harmless and have no sting, but they carry all the warning signs of an insect that does. For this reason, predators avoid hoverflies just as they would avoid bees and wasps

Wasp Beetle



The wasp beetle is a small, narrow-bodied longhorn beetle. The larvae live in warm, dry, dead wood, such as fence posts and dead branches, and particularly favour willow and birch. The adults can be found feeding on flowers along woodland rides and hedgerows during the summer. The wasp beetle lives up to its name by mimicking the common wasp in both colouration and in its behavior, moving in a jerky fashion similar to a wasp's flight. This mimicry keeps it safe from predators, even though it is actually harmless.

Wasp beetles sometimes hatch out of firewood that has been brought into the house to dry over the winter.

Hope some of this helps. Please do not jump to conclusions about our wonderful yellow & black insects there are thousands and thousands of things they can be.

As much as I love nature. Entomology is a living nightmare!

-----ooooOoooo-----

WOODLICE

Sticking with all things creepy crawlly, if you have walked along any of the tarmac paths from the office perhaps you have seen the many Woodlice scurrying backwards and forwards across the paths. I did not use the word insect here as they are in fact terrestrial crustaceans, not insects, so are more closely related to crabs and shrimps.



There are about 30 species of woodlouse in the UK, which range from pink to brown to grey in colour.

Also known as ‘sowbugs’ or ‘slaters’ and some species, known as pillbugs, can roll themselves into a ball when threatened.



During the day, woodlice hide in dark damp places so they are often found under logs, stones and flower pots. At night they move around in search of food, which is mainly rotting plant material.

Woodlice produce eggs in spring and these are retained inside the female’s body until they hatch. The newly hatched woodlice, known as mancas, are kept in a brood pouch on the underside of the female for a few days before they disperse.



Immature woodlice are similar in appearance to the adults and they shed their outer shells on a number of occasions as they grow bigger. They become adults by late summer and overwinter before reproducing in their second year.

-----ooooOoooo-----

BATS

On June 1st, we had a fascinating talk from Steve Roe, Vice Chair of Derby Bat Conservation Group. We learned a lot of interesting facts about our local bats. The last time a sustained study was undertaken here at the Marina was in 2012 and a number of different species were identified.

As we made our way round the Marina this time, all provided with bat detectors by Steve we only managed to pick up two species, both of which were also seen.

PIPISTRELLE

The common pipistrelle is our smallest and most common bat. So small in fact it can fit into a matchbox!

Length: 3.5-4.5cm

Wingspan: 20-23cm

Weight: 3-8g

Average lifespan: 4-5 years

Despite its size, it can easily eat 3,000 insects a night.

All UK bats are nocturnal, feeding on midges, moths and other flying insects that they find in the dark by using echolocation.

Common pipistrelles feed in a wide range of habitats from grasslands to urban areas.

They roost in tree holes, bat boxes and even the roof spaces of houses, often in small colonies.

During the summer, females form maternity colonies and have just a single pup. Look out for common pipistrelles jerkily darting about as they hunt for insects in gardens, over wetlands, or around street lights at dusk. They hibernate over winter, usually between November and April, although they may come out to feed on warm days.



The common pipistrelle has dark, golden-brown fur, a slightly paler underside and a dark mask around the face. Its flight is rapid with lots of twists and turns. The soprano pipistrelle is similar in appearance, so the two can be difficult to tell apart.

So, from one extreme to another.

NOCTULE

Length: 3.7-4.8cm

Wingspan: 32-40cm

Weight: 18-40g

Average lifespan: 4-5 years

The Noctule is our largest bat. Noctules roost in holes in trees and bat boxes, but rarely in buildings. During the summer, females form maternity colonies and have just a single pup. Noctules can be seen feeding on insects over

the tree canopy, they particularly enjoy eating flying beetles, such as the large Cockchafer. They hibernate over the winter, between November and April.



The Noctule has rich, golden-brown fur, with darker wings, ears and face. Its flight is characteristically strong and fast.

The Noctule flies fairly high and can be easily mistaken for a bird.

The calls of these two bats is very different. If you would like to hear what they sound like visit www.bats.org.uk You will find the calls of all our bats here.



After the bat night some of our fellow moorers purchased their own bat detectors. Anyone can buy these, they are not specialist items and usually come with a guide to bat calls.

If you want something to download to your phone to hear what the bats sound like (it is not a detector) then 'BATLIB' is a good app.

Another bat talk and walk night has been arranged for July 5th but this is already completely fully booked.

If you are coming along please remember that warm clothing and sensible footwear is advisable. It will be a late night as last time we did not get back until 11.00pm.

That's at 8.15 in the Willow Tree. Tea and coffee available as usual.

In the next issue will report what happens on the 5th.

-----ooooOoooo-----

COOT BEHAVIOUR

The question was recently asked about a Coot family which had a lot of young and a few days later only two were seen. Sadly, this is commonly what happens with Coots.



Chick mortality occurs mainly due to starvation rather than predation as coots have difficulty feeding a large family of hatchlings on the tiny shrimp and insects that they collect. Most chicks die in the first ten days after hatching, when they are most dependent on adults for food. Coots can be very brutal to their own young under pressure such as the lack of food, and after about three days they start attacking their own chicks when they beg for food. After a short while, these attacks concentrate on the weaker chicks, who eventually give up begging and die. The coot may eventually raise only two or three out of nine hatchlings.

-----ooooOoooo-----

SPONSOR A RED MASON BEE NESTER

This seems to have gained an element of notoriety in local newspapers, radio and apparently a mention on East Midlands Today. Well done everyone for your support of this project, lets hope that it leads to many people in the area taking up the challenge to help this lovely, essential little bee.

Well, how are our nesters doing? As expected some much better than others but at the moment it seems that most of them have attracted some interest from the red masons.

They will be left out for a while yet even though the masons will have died out by July. Often these nesters will be used by the Leafcutter bee as well. It will be obvious if this happens from the beautiful shaped leaves which seal the tubes.



-----ooooOoooo-----

SPOTLIGHT - STEPS TO WOODCOCK.

Take just a few minutes to sit on the bench at the top the steps leading down to Woodcock.

What do you see?



Probably not much to start with as we all tend not to ‘look’ properly. The grass has been cut so not much there! Wrong, the grass is full of tiny flowers bright pink, yellow, white. Then look up at the bank and you will see all those flowers in full size. Mown they may have been but they still survive in miniature, make a lovely ‘carpet’ and still feed the insects.

In June there were many different wild flowers blooming in this small area. Cut-leaved Cranesbill, Yellow Lesser Trefoil, Common Vetch, Prickly Sow Thistle, Yellow Flags, White and Red Clover, Dandelion, one of the many Hawkbit varieties, Buttercup, Plaintain, Docks. All interspersed with seven different types of grass. There are also many other plants waiting in the wings for their turn to flower.

In just twenty minutes sitting quietly this small area was visited by a variety of Hoverflies, numerous Blue damsels, Bumblebees happily feeding on the clover, many species of flies, Brimstone and Small Blue butterflies, spiders scurrying about in the short grass, a wasp busy scraping wood from the bench to make its nest.

Just before sitting down a Carrion Crow was using the back of the bench as a perch. Undeterred by my arrival it just jumped down onto the ground, hopped sideways a few times before soaring off to other interesting places. Blackbirds, Robins, Blue and Great tits, Dunnocks all busy in the bushes. A lot of bird song to be heard as well, too confusing for me but I’m sure a lot of you would be more than capable of identifying our tuneful summer visitors.

Why not take just a few minutes out of your busy day, sit quietly, really look, close your eyes, blot out the sound of the road and listen to the birds and you may be amazed at what is actually going on right beside you. Too busy?

Think how busy all those tiny creatures are, working away non-stop all around you just to survive for a few weeks or months.



RESPECT AND APPRECIATE OUR LOVELY HOME. WE HAVE SO MUCH THAT CAN BRING ENJOYMENT IF WE ONLY TAKE A LITTLE TIME.

Spotlight on another area in the next edition