

NATURE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Now including Bee & Mammal news

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NATURE SOCIETY
Making a real difference



ON & IN THE WATER

We often see shoals of very tiny fish, fish feeding on the weed on our boats, lazing in the sun or even jumping out of the water.

The large shoals of very tiny fish are called fry. Those which feed along the sides of our boats are most likely to be Roach or Rudd. If you see lots of small fish jumping out of the water in a given area there is most likely a Pike on the prowl. Carp will also leap from the water although these are the big ones which you will most likely see slowly drifting about near the surface, especially when it is warm. Apologies to the Piscatorial Society as they will probably know all the answers anyway, but for our less piscine friends this is what we have, to our knowledge, in the Marina.

ROACH

Roach are shoaling fish, silver in colour often greenish on the back tinged red on the eyes and lower fins. They grow to 10-25cm. Roach live for 8-14 years.



RUDD

Similar to the Roach but has a deeper body and can be slightly larger. Coppery

golden in colour and the lower fins are brighter red, The mouth is upturned for surface feeding. Rudd like reasonably still water and can often be seen 'dimpling' the surface of the water. They also live for 8-14 years

BREAM

The bream is a deep-bodied, shoaling fish with a high back and flattened sides. It has a slightly projecting snout. Typically it is



dark brown or greyish on the back with younger fish being much more silvery. Small bream are often called skimmers. A mature bream can grow to between 30-50cm and live for 15-20yrs.



PERCH

The perch has a greeny-brown back with a series of dark vertical bars across the upper sides and bright

orange or red pelvic and anal fins. They have a very spikey dorsal fin. Perch are also a shoaling fish and grow to about 25-45cm. They live in rivers, lakes and ponds. They can live to between 7-12yrs.



COMMON CARP

A shoaling fish of slow-moving waters, carp are easily recognised by their dark brown to bronze colouration. They

have a large rounded body and powerful fins. There have 2 short & 2 long barbels. They commonly live for 30yrs and achieve anything from 20-100cm. There are also Mirror carp living in our waters which are very similar but have larger scales.



PIKE

A fish most of us can recognise. They have large bony heads with prominent forward/upward looking eyes, a broad flattened snout and a large mouth. The mouth contains a fierce arsenal of teeth, with rows of backward pointing, razor sharp teeth in the top jaw and larger

needle-like teeth in the lower jaw. The head is mounted on a long, torpedo shaped body with fins being primarily rear positioned for fast acceleration. Individual marking patterns are unique to each pike, like fingerprints to humans. This olive and cream colouration helps the pike to camouflage itself, while it lies in wait for its prey. A voracious predator which can eat up to half it's own weight. It typically reaches a length of between 30-100cm and has a life span of up to 25yrs.

ZANDER

A top non-native predator Zander are a greeny brown colour with dark vertical markings similar to the perch and a cream or white belly. Their distinctive features are a double dorsal fin, with the front fin containing hard and quite sharp rays. They have two long sharp teeth at the front that are vampire-looking in appearance. Zander have large eyes that can often be opaque which is an adaptation to seeing in murky waters so that the zander can take advantage of its prey. Many of the native fish populations in the waters where zander have been illegally introduced have suffered greatly by the aggressive feeding of this top predator.



WHAT DO THEY EAT?

It's not a simple answer. While the specific diet of a freshwater fish depends on its species, most eat smaller fish, leeches, worms, insects, crustaceans, plankton and vegetation. While others like pikes & zander eat small fish, small frogs, tadpoles etc.

CRAYFISH

Crayfish look like very small greenish brown lobsters and can reach up to 12cm in length. Mostly active at night, hiding under stones or holes in the bank during the day. The native White-clawed crayfish was once a widespread and common species but has suffered a decline of 50 – 80% across its European range in the last ten years.

The decline has been caused in part by invasive non-native crayfish species such as the American Signal crayfish which have red claws.



RED-CLAWED CRAYFISH



WATERSIDE PLANTS

Throughout the year there are any number of plants in and alongside our water. The blue of Water-forget-me-not, bright yellow of Monkeyflower, the pale pink of the stately Hemp Agrimony. The Yellow Iris with its huge seed capsules, which often end up drooping under the water. The vibrant Marsh Marigold holding its flowers above the water.

However, one plant which is very apparent at the moment is The Great Willowherb, growing to 2mtrs in height. There are several other local names for this plant in Britain 'Codlins & Cream' (a codling is an elongated green apple which is used in Britain in cooking). Nicholas Culpeper the 17th century herbalist says that it was called this because it smelled of apples in milk. In parts of Britain it is also known as 'Apple Pie' 'Cherry Pie' even 'Gooseberry Pie'. RHS has it recorded as Hairy Willowherb.



Why particularly so noticeable now? Well, this is the one with its fluffy, feathery seed heads which have been getting everywhere. The pods burst and the wind takes the cottony seeds. If it is quiet you can hear the pods burst open with a little popping sound.

Its flowers are much beloved by bees as is the Water Mint which is still well in flower. Water Mint is also very attractive to Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma butterflies, as well as the Green Tortoise Beetle.

The Green Tortoise Beetle is one of a group of several closely related beetles. It feeds on White Dead-nettle, Hedge Woundwort and Water Mint, and is often found in gardens. When disturbed, the adults behave just like tortoises, retracting their antennae and feet, and pulling their 'shell' tight down around them as they grip tightly on to the leaf they are on. The Green Tortoise Beetle is round, flattened and lime green. It is common throughout Britain so eyes open everyone please, be good if we could add this to our list.



There are 15 different hybrids of water mint in Britain.





At the moment the Bulrush (Reed Mace) is very apparent. The brown sausages are in fact female flowers and the wispy, curly bits above are the male.

Like such a lot of other water plants their seed heads are dispersed in fluffy material. This is often collected by a variety of birds for nesting.



MOTHS & BUTTERFLIES

As you will notice from the Latest News column, butterflies & moths are still being spotted. Sometimes it is not always easy to tell which is which. In fact, even the Butterfly Conservation Trust will occasionally question a reported sighting, (are you sure it is not a moth)

To add to the confusion some butterflies are on the wing at dusk or night while many moths are day-flying. So other ways to help identification.

BUTTERFLIES – Have slender thread like antennae with tips thickened into knobs or spindles. When at rest the wings are closed together vertically. (except for some Skippers)



Peacock & Large White butterfly antennae

MOTHS – Have antennae that are very varied in form. They may be bristle-like, toothed, feathered, comb like or have tufts of bristles. The males have the more elaborate antennae as they have to detect, from a distance, the scents given off by females ready to mate. When at rest moth's wings are folded roof-like or flat over the body.



Vapourer & Pale Tussock moth antennae showing how elaborate they can be

OLD LADY MOTH

Spotted early August feeding on Marjoram. Quite large at 55-65mm. Distribution is localised. Favours wet areas, feeds on many plants. Caterpillars overwinter on Blackthorn. It gets its name because it is said to resemble the shawls worn by old ladies.



WASPS

There seems to have been a surge in wasps recently causing many people to question what good are they anyway.

In early summer wasps, like bees, pollinate plants and flowers as they feed on nectar. If we were to eradicate all wasps it would cause more problems than it would solve. So, despite being a problem at certain times of the year, they are a beneficial insect. In the natural world, wasps although irritating to humans, have their role to play.



Wasps and hornets are predatory insects and spend a lot of their time hunting and catching smaller insects including caterpillars, aphids, horseflies, bluebottles or scavenging dead animals/birds to feed to their larvae.

There is one variety which specialises in honey bees. The insect prey is killed by the adult wasps and chewed up into small food packages and taken back to the nest. These food parcels are then fed to the young wasp larvae which turn these prey insects into a sugary solution which they feed back to the adult wasps. At full size larvae spin a cover over their cell until they have developed into adult workers. These are the smaller wasps, seen later in the summer, who are gathering proteins to feed the larvae and sugars to feed themselves. It's this need for sugar that attracts them to your jam sandwiches or fizzy drinks.

DIGGER WASPS

We are currently seeing much activity of Digger Wasps. Particularly by the steps leading to Heron and also to Egret. However, there is no need to be afraid of these.

There are 110 species of digger wasp in the UK. Some Digger wasps resemble social wasps in appearance with their yellow and black patterns.



They are a type of solitary wasp, meaning that females make a nest for her own young. The sting of a female Digger wasp is not used as a defensive mechanism and is used only to paralyse her prey when she is collecting food for her young.



They tend to nest in soil, usually in open sandy

areas or vertical banks of light soil or sand. In areas of bare ground with several female digger wasps nesting in the same area, nesting holes may be numerous. The spoil heaps left beside their holes by some species look a little like a volcano.

Remember just because the wasp like creature is yellow & black it does not always mean it is going to sting us.



DESPITE THE WEATHER

We finally managed to have our Save Our Bees stall on Aug 19th after cancelling the previous week due to the weather. Well of course it had to rain while we were setting up but it did get better through the day and as you can see we were not short of lovely produce for sale.



We had difficulty with our usual supplier but as often happens this left the way open to obtain even better things to offer. We also included native wildflowers this time which were specially chosen to attract pollinators, many people were interested in these plants. There were lots of questions asked and interest shown in learning more about how to attract bees to their own gardens. One young couple had recently moved and were starting from scratch. They were delighted to take away information on what to plant.



Three happy ladies proudly showing of their S.O.B. tee shirts.

SOMETHING NEW

The Nature Society, in a departure for them, will be hosting a stall all about birds on Sept 23rd. There will be information on feeding birds correctly and many items for sale including seed, feeders, nest boxes and other accessories. Of course, the day would not be complete without a raffle and lucky dip, so please pop along and see us and bring the family.

LATEST NEWS

Old Lady moth feeding on Heather & Marjoram 02.08.18

Small Tortoiseshell also feeding on Marjoram & Mint 07.08.18

Very pretty Sloe shield Bug in cottage garden 07.08.18

Red Admiral, warming up in the sun on boat window first thing in the morning 10.08.18

A common wasp also on a boat window eating a spider from it's web 10.08.18

Speckled wood butterfly in dog walking field, settled on grass 10.08.18

Lots of tiny frogs all over the path by FB1 and on steps down to Heron 12.08.18

Reed Warbler with young, in willows by Grebe pontoon 14.08.18

Red Admiral settled on the pontoon on Grebe 22.08.18

Digger wasps on steps to Egret and Heron, carrying flies into the nests. 22.08.18