

NATURE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Now including Bee & Mammal news

September 2017 Issue 8



NATURE SOCIETY
Making a real difference



NEW LAYOUT

So much of wildlife is intertwined that now the three newsletters have been combined to give an overall picture of all the different elements of the ecology we have here at the marina. For example, just see to the right how mammals and butterflies are important to each other. Hope you all like the new format.

WILDLIFE DAY

Last month saw the final wildlife weekend event for this year. As it turned out it was just Sunday but nevertheless a good day was had by all and the weather was very kind to us. By now the children's Lucky dip has become a firm favourite and Mr Buzz was also there to entertain the young ones as well as a lot of the parents.

We had sourced more local honey products for the SOB stall which proved to be a hit.



Here's Pam checking the layout of the stall.

The best part of these events is the interest the public have in everything. We now more questions and spend a lot of time actually talking and explaining various aspects of wildlife to people. We caught a number of different species of bee in a viewing box which really drew a lot interest. People wanted to know how we could tell it was male or female, which led on to talking about the life cycles of the different bees and how they are really very gentle. Some of us had them on our fingers which helped to prove the point. The best thing we can do is get the young ones

involved and the mammal display area certainly did that. There was one little girl who came back three times and was fascinated. Talking to her mum raised an interesting point, she said "If she was interested in sport there are lots of places she can go to get involved and learn more but nowhere to help her with nature & wildlife" A very good point as most things run by DWT or NT are one offs.

MERCIA BUTTERFLIES EVENING

August also saw the long-awaited Mercia Butterfly talk. We had a good evening finding out about these lovely creatures which are seen at the Marina. Did you know that some butterflies take very little nectar but prefer to feed on carrion and poo? Just one of the fascinating facts we discussed. Very importantly we also looked at caterpillars and their food plants. No caterpillars no butterflies. So please don't complain if we have long grass and nettles around as these are vital for so many of our butterfly species. Another important point about caterpillars is how many other creatures depend on them as food. They are a huge source of protein for baby birds, other insects feed on them and even some bats can hover and pick them straight from leaves.



This is the Long-eared bat whose echolocation is so silent and acute it can actually tell the difference between a leaf and a caterpillar.

Most bats find their way about by means of echolocation. They emit ultrasonic sounds that reflect from objects during flight. From the patterns of the echoes, bats quickly interpret their surroundings and so avoid obstacles.

Echolocation is used by bats to catch insects. Echoes bounce off the smallest flies and alert the bat of a potential meal. All British bats catch insects this way. But this leaves potential food untouched such as non-flying insects, caterpillars and spiders that crawl about tree-tops. Most bats fly *too fast* to detect non-flying insects and, therefore, cannot differentiate between the echo of a caterpillar and the leaf the larva is eating.

However, the long-eared bat has little difficulty telling the difference between the two objects. Instead of emitting loud echolocation sounds that only bounce off objects indiscriminately, the long-eared bat 'whispers'.

The bat's ultrasonic voice is so quiet and sensitive that the animal can distinguish between an echo from a caterpillar, say, and the leaf it is crawling on. The mammal's oversized ears enable it to detect these *almost silent* echoes.

In fact, the long-eared bat can interpret reflections of sounds in a split second. This is a remarkable feat, considering that the bat's brain is smaller than a pea.

HEGDEHOGS

Please keep those sightings of Hedgehogs coming in, on Facebook if you have access or just let the office know if you have seen any. Other information such as time of day, condition and if adult or young would be very helpful. Now is the time of year they will be starting to feed up in order to get a good body weight for hibernation. At the event day we gave a lot of information to people about the hogs and it was sad to hear that a lot of those who had them in their gardens in the past now seem to have lost them.

As their name suggests hedgerows are important for them and when we look around everywhere hedges are being removed in order to build houses on grassland and ancient fields.



If concrete, walls, block paving and tarmac is the only environment we can provide then there is no hope at all for hedgehogs.

There is loads of information on 'The British Hedgehog Preservation Society' website.

We are currently running a 'Hedgehog Crossword' of which all the proceeds will go to The British Hedgehog Preservation Society.

So please pop into the office and pick up a crossword, only £1. All answers returned by Sept 10th please and prizes for the lucky winners.

**ALL ABOUT HEDGEHOGS
CROSSWORD**

COMPLETE MY CROSSWORD AND WIN SOME GREAT PRIZES INCLUDING A VOUCHER FOR THE WILLOW TREE TEA ROOMS £1 TO PLAY AND ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE HEDGEHOG PRESERVATION SOCIETY.

NO NEED TO GET PRICKLY IF YOU DON'T KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS JUST HAVE A BALL SO I CAN CONTINUE TO ROLL INTO ONE!

PICK UP YOU CROSSWORD FROM THE MARINA OFFICE

As well as reporting hedgehog sightings if you see any other small mammal either alive or dead please let us know. Sadly, we have had quite a lot of deceased shrews and voles of late many caught by cats. However, if we have reports of them it still allows us to plot what and where we have these little creatures.



FUNGI

Maybe we all associate the appearance of fungi with Autumn. However, some appear much earlier and this year we have seen a huge amount of Birch Boletus. Many people who have been at the Marina from the start have said there has never been so many, so perhaps this year's strange weather pattern suits them well. As the name suggests these appear beneath or close to Birch trees.



They appear from July to October and make good eating for slugs, beetles, fly larvae and mammals such as wood mice. Again, here we can see the close relationship between all our wildlife. Flies are food for birds, slugs and beetles for hedgehogs and shrews etc.

Another fungi making an appearance is the Shaggy Inkcap, in fact these can be seen throughout the summer.



They can be seen in meadows, woodland, roadsides and even have the strength to push up through tarmac.



Initially egg shaped.

They soon turn black and start to liquefy.



While many fungi are edible many more are not. Some will make you feel ill some will cause death. The important rule is

NEVER TOUCH, COLLECT OR EAT ANY FUNGI UNLESS YOU ARE FULLY AWARE OF WHAT IT IS. THE CONSEQUENCES MAY BE FATAL.



If you are particularly interested in fungi foraging there are a number of courses you can go on to learn more about what is and is not suitable for eating. Better safe than sorry.

Happy nature spotting everyone and keep those reports coming in please no matter what type of wildlife it is about.