

NATURE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Now including Bee & Mammal news

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NATURE SOCIETY
Making a real difference



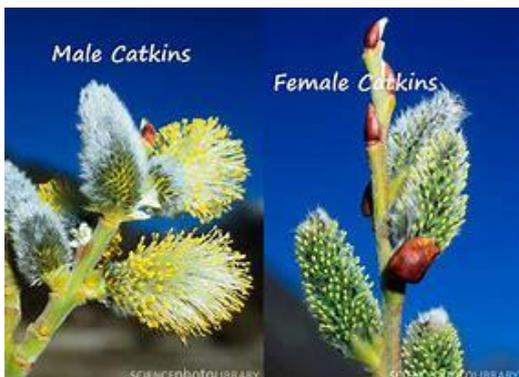
SPOTLIGHT ON OUR TREES

A lot of our catkin bearing trees are now beginning to get into production. However, do we know what they actually are? We are all familiar with willow catkins but many trees of different species also bear catkins.

We often tend to think of willows as having long, thin slender leaves as you see on a weeping willow. However, many of these trees have broad leaves which can be dark green and shiny or pale green and downy. Depending on species they can be pollinated either by wind, insects or simply by touching the ground with their branches.

Goat willow and other broader-leafed species of willow (including grey willow) are sometimes referred to as 'sallows'. Goat willow is known as 'great sallow' and grey willow as 'common sallow'. Both species are also sometimes called 'pussy willow' after the silky grey male flowers, which resemble a cat's paws. The male & female catkins appear on separate trees. They occur very early in the spring before the leaves.

GOAT WILLOW



Male catkins are grey, stout and oval, which become yellow when ripe with pollen.

Female catkins are longer and green. Once pollinated by wind, female catkins develop into woolly seeds.

GREY WILLOW



Like the goat willow the male catkins are yellow and the female green, appearing early spring on separate trees.

BAY WILLOW



Male and female flowers are found on separate plants, in late spring, after the leaves. Male catkins are yellow and female catkins are greenish.

Once pollinated by insects, female catkins develop into a fruit capsule which contains a number of tiny seeds embedded in white down, which aids dispersal by wind.



WEeping WILLOW (Hybrid)



This particular tree is outside the tea rooms. They produce their catkins in April/May and tend to be androgynous (male & female in one catkin).

Other catkin bearing species found at the Marina.

HAZEL



Male catkins appear short and green in autumn but this time of year they become pendulous, yellow and up to 8cm long. Very noticeable.



Female flowers are tiny and bud-like with red styles. Hazels are monoecious, which means that both male and female catkins and flowers are found on the same tree, although hazel flowers must be pollinated by pollen from other hazel trees. Bees find it difficult to collect hazel pollen and can only gather it in small loads. This is because the wind pollinated hazel has pollen that is not sticky and actually repels one grain against another.

SILVER BIRCH



Silver birch has both male and female flowers (catkins) on the same tree. The male catkins are formed in the autumn and will remain on the tree all winter – only opening in April or May. The female catkins appear in spring with the new shoots and release their pollen in clouds during April.



The leaves emerge shortly after. After successful pollination (by wind), female catkins thicken and change colour to a dark crimson. Masses of tiny seeds are borne in autumn, which are dispersed by the wind.

ALDER

The catkins which appear between February and April. Are monoecious, appearing on the same tree. The male catkins are yellow and pendulous, measuring 2–6cm.



Female catkins are green and oval-shaped, and are grouped in numbers of three to eight on each stalk.

Once pollinated by the wind, the female catkins gradually become woody and appear as tiny, cone-like fruits in winter. They open up to release seeds, which are dispersed by wind and water. The small brown cones, which are the female catkins, stay on the tree all year round.



HORNBEAM (two of these were planted in the hedgerow last year)



Hornbeam is monoecious, meaning male and female catkins are found on the same tree. The male catkins are yellowish green with red outer scales up to 5cm long.

Pollinated female catkins up to 14cm long contain 8 pairs of small hard-cased nuts within a 3-pointed papery wing. After pollination by the wind, female catkins develop into papery, green winged fruits, known as samaras.



Why not get out and about and see which ones you can find even take some photos for the monthly competition?

LITTERING

Sadly, while walking round the north car park field last week there was lot of rubbish. While



we have had strong winds of late it was not strong enough to blow glass bottles into ditches and rusty cans under the hedges.

The dangers of plastics into the sea has been well documented of late but the RSPCA receive more than 5,000 calls a year regarding litter. Unfortunately, wildlife is the main victim when it comes to these situations - wild birds in particular. On average they receive 14 calls a day about animals affected by litter. What can we do to help this situation?

Plastic bags

Animals can climb inside plastic bags and suffocate, or eat them and choke. Simply tying a knot in the top of plastic bags before recycling can help prevent deaths.

Balloons

Animals can eat balloons and choke or become impacted. Help protect animals by cutting up balloons before putting them in the bin. Balloon releases threaten wildlife, even balloons marked as degradable may take a number of weeks to degrade but it only takes a second for an animal to swallow a balloon.

Containers and cans

Animals looking for food can get trapped in cans or injured by sharp edges. To help prevent this clean and empty containers, pinch cans shut and cut containers in half and recycle



Elastic bands

These can wrap around small animals and beaks of birds. If swallowed they can cause choking. Reuse bands when possible or cut them open before putting in a bin.

Glass

Broken glass can cause serious injury and animals can get trapped in jars. Be sure to clean and recycle glass to help prevent injuries

Plastic can holders

Animals can get entangled in plastic can holders, and suffer deep wounds or choke. Help prevent suffering by cutting the loops before recycling.



Fishing litter

Fishing litter can cause needless suffering to wildlife. Line can wrap round an animal and cut the blood supply to parts of its body. Hooks, line and weights can be swallowed and cause internal blockages or injury. Please take unwanted fishing line home and cut it into small pieces before putting it in the bin.



We have all of these species pictured here at the marina and it takes but a second to think before we discard, but any animal caught in this way will face many hours or days of suffering.

We live in a wonderful habitat but we share it. Please respect our wildlife and remember that it was here before we moved in.



HEDGE LAYING

February is a good time for hedge laying and some of the team have been learning how to do just that. But why did we feel this was a good thing to learn?

Hedge laying is a country skill that has been practiced for centuries. Although a well-laid hedge looks beautiful, the original aim was to create a fence to stop sheep, cattle and other stock from straying. Styles vary across the country but the principles of hedge-laying remain the same. By laying the hedge you not only create a living fence, you also help to encourage new growth, making it an excellent way of regenerating an old, overgrown hedge without replacing it. Hedge laying is a seasonal job carried out between October and March when trees and shrubs are dormant, and birds have finished nesting in the hedges. While initially quite tricky to grasp, it's a skill that really is a case of practice makes perfect. Once laid, a hedge simply needs regular trimming to keep it in good order for decades – far longer than a wooden fence and infinitely more beautiful. As the hedges we plan to work on have not been laid for 40-50 years and have become very neglected it was apparent that something needed to be done. This wonderful country skill will enhance the landscape and benefit the wildlife.

Training day and the weather was abysmal, rain, snow, sleet, wind. Were they downhearted? Not a bit of it. Everyone got stuck in, learned a lot and really enjoyed it.



What a difference, it looks drastic but will soon start to put up new shoots. The hedge itself has not been cut down completely but a small bit is still attached and this is more than enough for it grow from. Any gaps we will fill in with native hedgerow plants such as Blackthorn.



Learning the techniques as well as a bit about the hedge itself. It is estimated at a good 150yrs old if not more.

EVENTS FOR MARCH

The monthly quiz, March 28th, has been hi-jacked by the wildlife team. Don't be put off by that, we have done it twice before and it has always been real fun. You do not have to be a wildlife genius, just ready for a good laugh. All the proceeds will go towards our chosen charities. This year we are supporting The British Hedgehog Preservation Society and The Freshwater Habitat Trust.

The quiz will still be £1 per person but there will also be a raffle. Sandwiches provided of course but please bring your own drink.

AN EVENING WITH MERCIA'S WILDLIFE

Find out what has been happening in the last year, what our wildlife gets up to in the hours of darkness, meet the Red Mason bees, get stuck in to some owl pellets and discover what has been eaten.

It is amazing how much is contained in one pellet. Last time we did it we had people boasting that they had more skull's in their pellet than anyone else. It certainly brings out the child in you!



**Remember March 16th
19.00 in the Willow Tree.
£1 entry tea & coffee
provided.**



WORD SEARCH WINNERS

Well done to Wendy Bourne, Angie Stone & Claire Flint.

Thank you everyone who took part, proceeds to our charities.

Look out for further competitions in the months to come.