

# NATURE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Now including Bee & Mammal news

January 2019 Issue 24



NATURE SOCIETY  
Making a real difference



## A WILDLIFE HABITAT

Any thriving wildlife environment requires a diversity of habitats i.e., hedgerows, woodland, grassland, wetlands.



These areas support bacteria, fungi, soil invertebrates and plant life. Which in turn provide the basis for a crucial element of any wildlife environment namely the abundance of insects.

These tiny creatures are the bedrock of any eco-system. Providing food for each other as well as birds, mammals, fish & amphibians.

These in turn are preyed by birds of prey and larger mammals.



As much as we do not like to see baby birds and eggs taken by Magpies or Rabbits by Buzzards even Voles killed by Weasels, this is the natural system and how they survive. We like to see and hear birds of prey soaring on the thermals or calling to each other but without their prey food they would cease to exist. So, keeping a mixed thriving eco-system is vital for all levels of wildlife.

Although entomology is a very specialised area and difficult to study and assess properly without appropriate knowledge, we have indeed spotted many invertebrates and insects during 2018 which previously we had not been aware of. This seems to have been reflected by the abundance of other wildlife we have managed to record.

Let's all keep our eyes and ears open, observe as we walk around and take note of what we come across. So what did 2018 bring to our attention?

## A REVIEW OF 2018

What a year, despite extreme weather conditions we have seen and heard a mixture of wildlife.

**January** – Surprise sighting of a Water Rail. Pair of Black Swans look interested in nesting. Big litter pick, and what a collection of 'interesting' items including bunches of Christmas baubles, brush & dustpan as well as the usual rope, plastic, bottles, cans etc.



**February** – Some of the landscape team and a very hardy bunch of the Nature Society volunteers learned how to hedge lay. Jon Leweny from the National Trust came to teach this ancient skill. The weather was abominable with snow, rain strong winds and very, very cold. However, they all battled on regardless and made a good start on one of our very old hedges.

**March** – A lot of Queen bumblebees spotted. Barn Owl quartering the weather station field. Brimstone butterflies seen and a badger caught on camera. The Red Mason bee nesters and cocoons were put out again. Native wild flowers planted alongside the path from FB1. There was also a Wildlife Evening looking back at all the achievements from the previous year and of course by popular demand an owl pellet dissection.



**April** – Peacock & Large white butterflies seen, Mute swans nesting on seven eggs. First swallow seen on 24th and Red Masons recorded on 22nd.

**May** – What a lot of sightings this month. Red Kites in flight, Oystercatchers and Common Terns reappear, Damselflies now about, Holly Blue butterfly, Hedgehog seen and Pipistrelle, Daubentons and Noctule bats recorded on bat detector. Cockchafers also seem to be in abundance this year. A small team of volunteers spent an interesting evening with Alastair learning how to weave and maintain the willow spiral.



**June** – A huge month for insects. Ladybirds and their larvae, many different bees, Soldier beetles, Scorpion flies, Wolf spider carrying its young as well as many butterflies and moths. Possible sightings of an Elephant Hawkmoth and a Green Hairstreak butterfly. Of course, baby birds of all kinds recorded.

**July** – We thought June was good but July proved to be amazing despite the weather which sadly caused one of the cygnets to be very ill with avian botulism. So many different species of butterfly and moths including a Popular Hawkmoth by the office. Numerous dragonfly species as well as Grass snake, Hedgehog, Fox, Bullfinches, Mink Leafcutter bees, Froglets the list goes on.



**August** – Digger wasps caused alarm this month making piles of spoil beside a number of paths. Many thought they were ordinary wasps but these are harmless. Numerous shield bugs in the cottage garden as well as butterflies and bees.



**September** – Moths and butterflies continue to be recorded as do Hornets as well as a speckled Bush Cricket, New lake attracting birds already including, Green Sandpiper & Redshank. Very colourful beetles and an unusual orange shield bug in the cottage garden. The latter turned out to be a newly emerged bug which had not achieved its normal colouring. Nature Society held its first bird stall and despite the weather it went very well raising £220 for the wildlife charities.

**October** – Still seeing Hornets, Carder bees, Mink and extremely large Pike.

**November** – Amazingly ladybirds and tiny shield bugs are still being seen in Cottage garden, wasps also around and an occasional Honey bee. Redwings have now arrived and the Tufted ducks are also back. Biggest surprise of all was when the Red Mason bee cocoons were cleaned and we discovered 483 new ones, amazing.



**December** – Quite a bird month this one with Bramblings being noted on feeders by the lodges and on Grebe and a Chiffchaff also seen here. Green sandpiper on lake again and Green woodpecker back in laughing mode. Song Thrushes singing already. Winter Moth and November Moth also recorded. Bird stall held again on one of the Makers markets.

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### HELP US TO KEEP ON RECORDING

Information being recorded is in the form of a spreadsheet of sightings. This includes corpses, if they are identifiable, birds heard as well as seen. Wild (not domesticated) plants and fungi too are important. Everyone has a part to play in this. If you see or hear anything please let us know either on Facebook, direct e-mail or through the office. Information recorded includes location, date, by whom, and any other details.



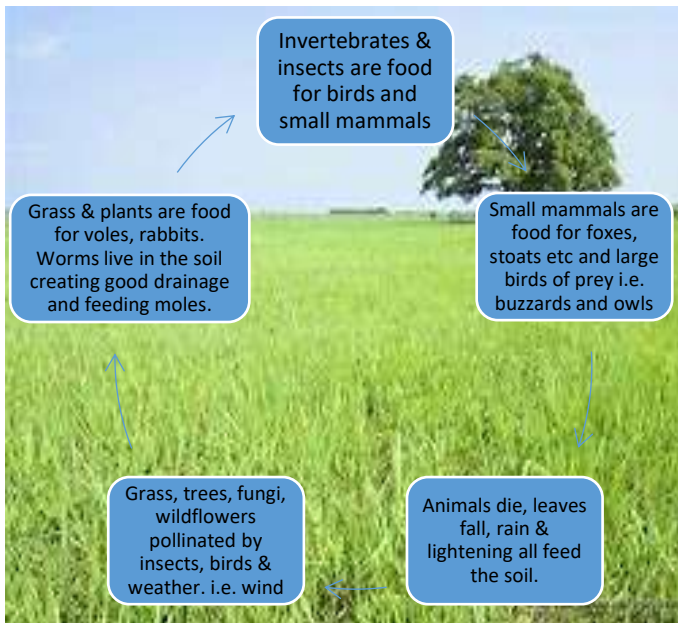
Example:- July 7th, Cinnabar moth caterpillars, Dog walking field, Spotted on Ragwort, Ian Carroll.

If you are in doubt about what you have seen, a picture will often help in identification.

Obviously, there are some things we do not need to know about such as every single Rabbit seen but a new area of Mole hills would be of interest. This would indicate a good food source for them which in turns helps us assess the condition of the soil. Everything links to everything.



## A TYPICAL GRASSLAND CYCLE



Please be an active part of our very own eco-system.

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## BATS

In the summer we will be having a talk by Derby Bat Group. There will be an hour talk followed by a bat walk around the Marina. Derby Bat Group will help us by providing bat detectors for us to use and will guide us around. The talk will start one hour before sundown. The date will be confirmed once the speaker has seen their timetable for 2019. However, it will probably be beginning of June, thus avoiding the longest day or July/August. We will publish the date as soon as we know, as numbers will be limited. However, if enough people are interested they may be able to carry out the talk/walk on a second visit.



## NATURE WALKS

In addition to the bat event we will also be running occasional nature walks at the Marina. Suitable for beginners or those with more knowledge. We learn from each other so those who know more about birds can help those who are more into mammals. Everyone welcome.

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## TUFTED DUCKS

One of the characters of the duck world is the 'Tufty' and beloved by many. This time of year, they hone in on the Marina and there has been quite a gang doing the rounds. Throw some seed in and watch them under the water. If it is clear, it is amazing, see them shine with the air in the plumage, if the water is murky just look for the bubbles and whirlpools on the surface and wait for them to suddenly appear, almost horizontally, often popping up beneath an unsuspecting Mallard. They can stay down for a surprising length of time. They really are very comical and when looked at from above seem to be almost circular. Just look at them full on with beautiful yellow eyes, blue beak and chubby 'cheeks', who can not be enchanted. If you watch them cleaning it almost looks as if they are in distress, as they turn on their sides while preening, displaying the white side feathers.



In summer male tufted ducks have black heads, breasts and upper parts and white flanks and underparts. They have white flight feathers with black tips and pale grey underwings. They have black heads with purple and green iridescence and a long black crest at the back of the head. They have pale blue bills with black tips, yellow eyes and black webbed feet and legs.

During winter their crests are shorter and their plumage is brown or buff.



Female tufted ducks are dark brown with a white area on the belly and her crest is shorter. Juveniles tufted ducks are similar to females with a darker bill and duller brown eyes. They do not have crests.



Tufted ducks eat mainly plant matter such as roots, seeds and buds of aquatic plants. They will also eat molluscs, crayfish, snails, crustaceans and aquatic insects as well occasionally small fish and amphibians.

Much quieter than many duck breeds they have a deep grating growl while the male uses a nasal whistle during courtship.



Tufted ducks nest in pairs or loose groups with nests near water about 10 metres apart. Females

build a bowl-shaped nest on the ground from grass and feathers and lined with down and vegetation.

They lay 8-10 olive grey eggs which the female incubates alone for 26-28 days. The ducklings fledge about 45 days after hatching.



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## BIRD STALL

On December 2nd the Nature Society held their second

Bird stall, this time to coincide with the first Christmas Market. As well as the usual feeders, various seed and

other items there were Gift/Starter Packs. These contained a number of different seeds, feeders, fat balls, suet cakes etc. as well as information and identification sheets on how to spot garden birds, best way to feed them



and how to care for the feeder. These proved quite popular with many people buying them for presents. We had an amazing ten people volunteer to help out on the stall so no-one had to stay in the cold all-day long. Nancy had crocheted a delightful bird character which people paid £1 to guess the name, which turned out to be Caroline and was won by our own Sarah Cunnington. Well done to all the helpers we could not have done it without you.



Also, a big thank you to the office for getting a wonderful banner made for us.

## BIRD SEED FOR SALE

If anyone wants to purchase seed etc. there is a selection still available. Just let the Office know or any one of us Jane Wakeham, Jane or Nigel Hunt, Jo Lousvet, Pam Griffiths.

Songbird mix, No-mess mix, Sunflower seed, Sunflower hearts, Niger seed, Peanuts all £2 kilo

Basic seed mix £1.60 kilo

Mealworms £2 100g

Fat ball £1.60 for 10

Suet cakes and coconuts £1.20

A variety of feeders, prices vary.

Remember proceeds from all sales go to our chosen charities.

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## JANUARY QUIZ

Just to remind all you quizzers out there that on the January 30th the quiz will be called MEDIA MAYHEM and include rounds on TV advertisements, Cartoons, Film, Newspapers/Magazines etc. They will also be a raffle.

Although not a wildlife quiz this time the proceeds will still go towards our charities. So please come along, give you support, have a good laugh and heckle the opposition. Hope to see lots of you there.

**HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR TO ALL**