

NATURE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Now including Bee & Mammal news

October 2017 Issue 9



NATURE SOCIETY
Making a real difference



BUTTERFLIES

There are a number of butterflies still about this time of year. A good number of Red Admirals are still being seen basking in the sunshine. Also, keep eyes open for Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood, Peacock & Large Whites which we know we have here. Some of these overwinter as adults in sheds, beneath pram covers etc. They emerge again in early spring to feed and lay eggs for a second flight later in summer.



So, if you come across any please -



- Only 5% of the slug population is above ground at any one time. The other 95% is underground digesting seedlings, laying eggs, and feeding on roots and seed sprouts.
- A slug's blood is green.
- Most British slugs eat rotting vegetation, but a few are carnivorous.
- Slugs do play an important role in ecology by eating decomposing vegetation.
- A slug lays 20-100 eggs several times a year.
- Slugs have been present in the British Isles since the end of the last ice age.
- In favourable conditions a slug can live for up to 6 years.
- A slug is basically a muscular foot, and the name 'gastropod' literally means stomach foot.
- Unlike snails that hibernate during winter, slugs are active whenever the temperature is above 5°C
- A slug's slime enables it to glide without difficulty over glass shards, or even the edge of a razor blade.
- Slugs leave their own individual scent trail so they can find their way home.
- A slug can stretch out to 20 times its normal length, enabling it to squeeze through the smallest of openings.
- A slug has approximately 27,000 teeth – that's more teeth than a shark. Britain is home to around 30 species of slug.

SLUGS AND SNAILS

Wow! What a lot of slugs and snails about at the moment. As much as many people do not like them they are essential feeding for our mammals, especially hedgehogs. But how much do we really know about them?



Snails are really slugs in shells and the favourite food of one of our loveliest song birds. The Song Thrush uses an 'anvil' on which to break into them, often leaving a litter of shells behind.

BIRD SONG

Now is the time for many bird species to start singing again.



The Chiff-chaff is certainly becoming more vocal now, which helps with identification. We have a lot of these little brown jobs around but identifying Warblers is often tricky, so hearing this song removes all doubt.

Of course, the most obvious song bird of the moment is the Robin and there seems to be a Robin explosion around the Marina now. Robins sing in autumn, once the moult is completed. Their sweet, controlled song is often proclaimed from the top of a bush.

The function of autumn song is presumably to establish an autumn or feeding territory. However, the feisty defence of the feeding territory occurs at a time of plenty for food resources and these little birds will fight to the death. It is not uncommon to witness such fights during autumn and winter. In fact, a fight between a Robin & a Wren was witnessed close to FB1 very recently. Both combatants flew away so hopefully no real damage done.

COTTAGE GARDEN

While tidying up in the cottage garden recently it was wonderful to see such a lot of Carder bees still busy feeding on the late flowering plants.



Erysimum and Garlic chives are very popular with these lovely furry bees. However the favourite is Sedum and at times there were at least four bees on the plant at one time.



They are getting a bit tatty at this time of year and the furry bits can very pale or even worn away. However, they can still be seen even into November feeding on any flowers that are available.

Carder Bumblebees get the name from their habit of combing material together (carding) to create a covering for the cells containing the larvae. They usually create their nests above ground, often in grass tussocks, in old mouse runs through grass, in tangles of vegetation or just under the surface of the soil.

ACORNS & OAKS

There are at least twelve different species of oak tree which can be found in the British Isles. Many of them have been introduced and are planted purely as ornamentals. The most common ones found in the countryside are English Oak, Sessile Oak and Turkey Oak. Not only do they form part of our landscape but they also support an enormous range of organisms. Birds may make their nests in the canopy, spiders spin their webs in the twigs, squirrels gather the acorns, and many insects devour the leaves. However, some insects make a home in the tissues of the trees and create new structures; these are plant galls.

Galls are abnormal growths formed when plants are 'infected' with various insects or mites. Often these strange structures are formed as a result of the egg laying activities of certain wasps. Gall wasps are very small no more than 5mm long. There are 42 species of gall wasp which infect British oak trees. Now is the time to see these fascinating structures. As we are lucky to have a good number of oaks here at the Marina have a good look at them and see what you can find. Fortunately, these galls cause no harm to the trees.



Marble Gall



Knopper gall



Oak Apple



Hedgehog gall

Well done to our three crossword winners Janet Grundy,
Maria Frecker & Maisie Trotman.

Down

1. A baby hedgehog - HOGLET
2. Season when hedgehogs are at their heaviest - AUTUMN
3. Average number of hedgehogs in a litter - FOUR
5. Describes sleeping in the day and active at night - NOCTURNAL
6. Month hedgehogs are born - JUNE
7. Hedgehogs can be very noisy during this time - COURTSHIP
9. Hedgehogs have an acute sense of this - SMELL
14. Their preferred habitat - HEDGEROWS
15. Hedgehogs are born like this - BLIND
17. Check this for hedgehogs in November - BONFIRE
19. Hedgehogs use these as a form of self defence - SPINES

Thank you to everyone who took part in this crossword.

Hopefully there will be other puzzles with wildlife themes on a regular basis. Keep eyes open for a Butterfly & Moth word search.

**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 YOUR CROSSWORD FROM THE MARINA OFFICE

See below for answers.

Across

2. Direction a hedgehog's spines can point in – ALL or ANY
4. Ritual performed when a hedgehog encounters a new scent - ANOINTING
8. Hedgehogs are the gardeners friend because they eat these - SLUGS
10. Hedgehogs often die this way in certain garden features - DROWN
11. A group of hedgehogs - PRICKLE
12. A hedgehog makes this noise - SNUFFLE
13. A hedgehog's nest is made of these - LEAVES
14. What hedgehogs do in winter when food is scarce - HIBERNATE
16. Shape of a hedgehog's droppings - CYLINDRICAL
18. Number of spines on a hedgehog - THOUSANDS
20. Spines are made from modified what - HAIRS
21. Term used for the grey-brown fur on a hedgehog's flanks - SKIRT