

NATURE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Now including Bee & Mammal news

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NATURE SOCIETY
Making a real difference



SOWING & PLANTING

Over the last few weeks a small border has been created alongside the path above Nuthatch/Owl. Some wildflower plants have been put in and it has also been sown with a bee mix from Burt's Bees. The copper hangings are to help keep birds off and the blue gloves on the canes are to make the canes visible to everyone.



No, not being lazy but we have deliberately left some of the plants in which were there already, such as Red-dead Nettle and thistle as these are excellent for the insects.

The plants put in last month along the path from FB1 have taken well and many are flowering. Burt's Bees seeds have now also been sown along this area.

Surprise, surprise many of the Bluebells planted last month are actually flowering, let's hope they expand year on year.



Forget-me-not and Ground Ivy also flowering. We always seem to get yellow flowers first then everything is coming up blue. Anyone know why?

In addition to all this sowing there has been more plants added to the cottage garden. Although it has been in flower for many months some of the more tender perennials had sadly succumbed to the weather.



But how good does this look?

When we got this garden going we would not have believed how well it has taken. While we were planting this month the first Red-mason bee made a visit as well as a lovely Carder bumblebee and Ladybird.

Of course, the garden also seems to attract those elusive Lesser-spotted photographers who regularly make their appearance on the Community Facebook page!!

BEE NEWS

While walking around the Marina you may come across some green nesters on the bushes. There are three in total and designed specifically for solitary bees such as Masons and Leafcutters.



There are also a couple of bunches of canes. These contain the Leafcutter nests from last year. Like the Masons they are very gentle so please don't be alarmed by them.

There has been a lot of Buff-tailed bumblebees about this year.



Also seen has been the Tree bumblebee, who often chooses to use bird nest boxes for making their own nests in.

These will all have been Queens at the moment with this year's worker bees appearing in a few weeks.

CHARLES DARWIN?

Any idea what Charles Darwin claimed were among the most important animals in Britain? Answer WORMS

It must be admitted that they are some of the most often seen creatures, especially after damp weather. They are all over the paths, roads and grass. So much so it is often difficult not to read on them. But why are they so important and how much do we really know about them. One thing I do know after digging over the ground for the wildflowers is they are amazing. A lot of the soil was solid clay and these guys had gone through it making it look like Gruyere cheese. Have you ever tried to stick your finger into garden clay? Almost impossible.

They do it by secreting a lubricating fluid that helps them move through any soil and still keeps their bodies moist.

They seem to come in so many sizes and colours from thin reddish ones to huge fat grey, brown, beige ones.



While they repulse many people, just like pollinators we would struggle to survive without them as they are a very important part of the ecosystem.

If earthworms are native to the area, then they will help gardeners and plants by mixing air with the soil and loosening it around the roots of various plants. Worm tunnels also help to hold soils in place and stop erosion through water.

The castings produced by worms (or earthworm poo) is actually a very desirable natural fertilizer for plants. Some gardeners even purchase earthworm castings to mix with their soil.

So what else is fascinating about the earthworm.

The earthworms that you see after heavy storms are usually from the species commonly known as the rain worm.

Worms that typically come out at night are known as night crawlers.

The worms that you might find being sold as fishing bait are called angleworms.

Earthworms have no ears or eyes. They do have one end of their body that is more sensitive to light than the other.

The digestive system is a tube running straight from the mouth, located at the tip of the front end of the body, to the rear of the body, where digested material is passed to the outside.

They have no bones or skeletons.

They actually breathe through their skin.

Do not cut a worm in half! You will kill it, just like you would any other living creature.

Earthworms have red blood, just like humans.

If an earthworm gets injured and part of their body is cut off from another, they can replace that part by growing another. This only works for the part of the original worm that still has the head.

Most worms will live between 1 and 2 years. However, they can live as long as up to 8 years.

If an earthworm stays outside in the light for more than an hour, they will die.

Worms can dig down over 6 feet underneath the surface of the soil.

Worms eat both soil and fallen leaves. They eat their own body weight each day.

Each small part of the body of the earthworm (segments) are covered with hair like bristles that are used by the worms for wriggling through dirt. These same bristles allow worms to sense touch.

Worms can crawl both backward and forward in the soil.

Each earthworm is both male and female, producing both eggs and sperm.



They mate on the surface of the earth, pressing their bodies together and exchanging sperm before separating.

Later, the clitellum (a collar-like organ that goes around the worm's body the way a cigar band does a cigar) produces a ring around the worm. As the worm crawls out of the ring, it fills the ring with eggs and sperm. The ring drops off, seals shut at the ends and becomes a cocoon for the developing eggs.



Baby worms emerge from the eggs tiny but fully formed. They grow sex organs within the first two or three months of life and reach full size in about a year. When earthworms hatch, they look like tiny adults

Lots of other animals eat earthworms in the wild. This includes toads, foxes, moles, birds, snakes, slugs, and beetles.

Important & amazing? Definitely. They keep the soil fertile helping us to produce food, they in turn are food for other animals which form part of the whole ecosystem of the planet. Incredible, how so many of the vital components for this world and our survival are so small and seemingly insignificant.

So please mind where you tread we do not want flattened worms but nice juicy ones.

BIRD FOCUS

We have some Great Crested Grebes at the Marina now. In fact, three have seen having a bit of a face off.



What beautiful birds they are.

The largest and most often seen grebe, with an impressive plume on the head and ruff around its neck during the breeding season. It has white cheeks, a dark cap, an orangey ruff, a white neck and a dark body.

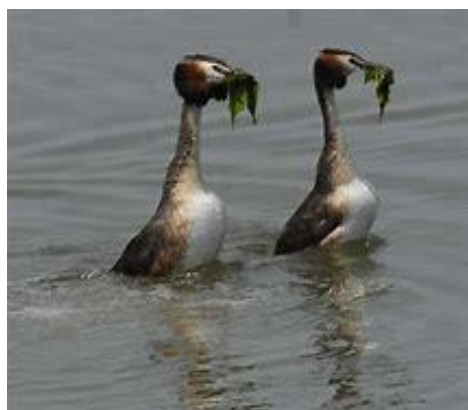
Great Crested Grebes struggle to get airborne and require a long run-up, something that sees them avoid our smaller lakes and ponds. Yet, when on the water, they are graceful-looking birds, whose ornate plumage and stunning courtship displays make them a firm favourite with birdwatchers.

They feed on fish, caught by diving in clear water. When diving underwater, they are propelled by their feet alone.



The Great Crested Grebe is monogamous, and pair-bonds are maintained throughout the year.

Much of the Great Crested Grebe's courtship display is centered on strengthening the pair bond, and a number of distinct behaviours are recognised. The head-shaking display is probably the most familiar; in this, the head plumage is fanned into a ruff before the birds then face each other and shake their heads from side to side. The display is seen predominantly during the early stages of courtship and is usually performed when the pair is reunited after a period of separation, suggesting that it is used as a greeting and for reinforcement.



The most elaborate of the great-crested grebe's displays is the 'weed ceremony' which, as its name suggests, takes place

just before the pair begin to build their nest platform. As part of this ceremony the two birds make a slow and deliberate dive to collect weed, before returning to the water's surface and swimming towards each other, their heads held low to the surface. As they meet, the birds rise from the horizontal to adopt a rigid vertical posture, which they hold by paddling their webbed feet rapidly, treading the water.



The nest is constructed from a mass of dead water-plants, weeds and mud, usually attached to reeds, fallen or drooping

branches or a submerged stump, and is found on or near the vegetated margins of large open waters, among reeds, water ribbons Both parents incubate the eggs and tend to the young. The sitting bird will slip off the nest if it spots a distant predator. If it has more time when leaving the nest then it will cover the eggs with waterweed, which is why the eggs quickly change colour from white to a muddy brown. This reduces the chances of the eggs being spotted. The resulting chicks would also be at risk were they to spend long in the nest, which is why they leave with their parents within a few hours of hatching. At this young age the parents often carry the small chicks on their back, which can make them surprisingly difficult to spot.



The Great Crested Grebe was nearly hunted to extinction in the UK for its elegant feathers. They have made a comeback and are now regularly seen

on waterbodies, including man-made lakes, flooded gravel pits and reservoirs.

GREEN WOODPECKER

Just a note about last months mistake. The Green Woodpecker NOT the Great spotted is the one that makes the laughing call.

Green woodpeckers are the largest and most colourful woodpeckers native to Britain. They are easily recognised by their laughing 'yaffle' call, which they use to demarcate their territory. They also drum on trees, though the sound is not as resonant as that made by the other two British species (the greater and lesser spotted woodpeckers). Green woodpeckers survive on a diet of insects and have a particular fondness for ants. They return day after day to their favourite ant hill to feed. Green woodpeckers spend most of their time feeding on the ground. Look out for them on lawns or in parks - short grass provides good feeding opportunities for them. Like other woodpeckers, these birds breed in holes they peck in dead wood.



The laughing is called a 'yaffle' and of course who does not remember Professor Yaffle in Bagpuss?



LATEST NEWS

First Ladybird and a Red Mason bee seen at cottage garden 22.04.18

Rescued a Red-tailed Bumblebee Queen on 15.04.18. found her on the end of Grebe pontoon just lying there. She climbed onto my finger and I took her and put her on some flowering heather then gave her some warm water and sugar. She climbed back on my finger, gave her wings a good buzz and off she went. Feels good to help.

Watched a Buff-tailed bumblebee looking for a nest, she went into hole in the bank and came out very quickly with another bee chasing her. Think that spot was well and truly taken.

Peacock, Brimstones and a Large White butterfly all been noted.

First swallows on 25.04.18

Mute swans have seven eggs and she is sitting tight while the male guards the site and sees off anything approaching.

First bats have been reported, a small one and a larger. Most likely a Pipistrelle and the larger one a Daubentons. Both are fairly commonly seen here. Daubentons feeding over the water.