

MEDLOCK & TAME VALLEY CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Spring 2013



"Burlinson House
5 Oaken Clough Terrace, Ashton under Lyne
OL7 9NY

mtvca@yahoo.co.uk

www.medlockandtame.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 504558

MEDLOCK & TAME VALLEY CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIRMAN: Bryan Stringer

VICE-CHAIRMAN: Paul Lythgoe

SECRETARY: Susan Stewart **Tel: 07989 147095**

TREASURER: Jean Lythgoe

NEWSLETTER:
Susan Stewart **thepliedes@yahoo.co.uk**

WEBMASTER: Lee Borrell

OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Katie Caine

Address of the Headquarters of MTVCA:

“Burlinson House” 5 Oaken Clough Terrace, Ashton under Lyne, OL7 9NY



MEMBERSHIP FEES 2013

Individual Adult: £10.00 per annum

Family: £15 per annum

Concessionary: £7.50 per annum

Welcome to the 2013 edition of the Spring Newsletter.



(Our new back door in the HQ).

As you can see things have been happening at Burlinson House! We have now had our front and back doors replaced which have resulted in a new and very satisfying look to our H.Q.

In the garden, we have much work to do after a soggy summer and harsh winter. The pond isn't showing as much frog spawn as usual and few frogs have been spotted. There does appear however to be many more birds of all types in the garden and with a few more really lovely bird feeders given to us recently by a member with loads of seed, they will be out tweeting it to more of their friends!

Further into the newsletter there is an excellent report on how the prolonged winter has had an effect on our wildlife and is definitely worth a read.

Over the next few months, there is much to do inside the house with wallpapering and floor coverings to be replaced. Our new kitchen is being installed with our webmaster, Lee Borrell and his dad David doing most of this work. Thank you very much to you both.



One of our members, Don Taylor, has also donated some lovely tiles to part-tile the walls and they tone in beautifully with the colour of the cupboards and worktops.

We are also going to finish off marking the boundaries of our wildlife garden with the remaining saplings which we received from the Woodland Trust. We were able to plant around 55 trees late Autumn and still have around 90 still to do. This will save us having to buy or make fencing for our boundaries. In years to come they should form a good hedgerow and provide fruit and habitat for the wildlife in the garden.

Most of our bird boxes too will need replacing. It's been a few years since we have done this and many of them are beginning to rot, so if you would like to buy a small bird house or donate toward buying some, please let us know.

On Sunday 12 May we are hoping to have a "**Day Out to Leighton Moss**". We will try to organise car loads amongst the membership, but we need to know the number of interested people at this stage.

If you wish to go, please let us know as soon as possible by email or telephone mtvca@yahoo.co.uk or 07989 147095.

We will probably be leaving around 10.00 am from Oaken Clough. Admission fee is £3 per person plus £3 per person toward the cost of petrol.

"Leighton Moss is the largest reed bed in north-west England, and home to some really special birds such as breeding bitterns, bearded tits and marsh harriers. You might see deer too, not to mention butterflies aplenty!"

Choose from a selection of trails and hides, most of which are suitable for wheelchairs, and get right to the heart of the reed bed. Or take the nature trail alongside two coastal lagoons to see lots of wading and water birds (ask in the visitor centre for more details).

Children will love finding out more about the reserve from the displays in the visitor centre and you can also enjoy a home-made meal and a drink in the tea room.

RSPB Leighton Moss nature reserve is an ideal place for people new to bird watching with a wide variety of birds to be seen throughout the year."

BUTTERFLIES



The Brimstone Butterfly, yellow-bird butterfly - *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Insecta: Lepidoptera :
Family: Pieridae
Subfamily: Coliadinae
Genus: *Gonepteryx*
Species: *Rhamni*

These bright yellow butterflies are often the first butterflies to be seen in Spring.

Physical description

Male brimstone butterflies have sulphur-yellow forewings and hind-wings with an orange central spot. The female's fore and hind-wings are a delicate yellow or pale green with an orange central spot. Both butterflies have greenish veined under-wings.

Caterpillars are bluish-green with a pale line low down on each side.



The pupa looks like a curled leaf.



Distribution

They are widespread throughout Europe and North Africa.

Habitat

Brimstones are found in woodland and gardens.

Diet

The caterpillars feed on buckthorn and alder buckthorn and the adults can be seen in meadows, sipping nectar from teasel, knapweed and buddleia.

Behaviour

New adults emerge from their chrysalis in July and live until the following July. Adults hibernate over winter in woodlands and emerge on warm spring days. Last year's brimstones are often the first butterflies to be seen in spring.

Reproduction

Pairing in early spring is followed by a long courtship prior to mating. After mating the female lays pale green eggs on the undersides of buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*) and alder buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) leaves. If the leaves haven't yet opened, eggs will be laid on twigs or leaf buds. The eggs soon turn darker and finally become a dull grey before the tiny caterpillars hatch some 10 days later and feed hungrily on the fleshy leaves.

Conservation status

Brimstone butterflies are common in most of the UK. They have been spreading in recent years, particularly in northern England. They are protected in Northern Ireland but they are not listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List 2000 (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

Notes

It is thought by some that the term butterfly originally referred to this insect because of its butter-like yellow colouring. There is little agreement on this

matter, other theories stating that the name refers to the butter-coloured faeces of butterflies or to the mediaeval myth that witches transformed into butterflies to steal butter.



How our long winter has hit our wildlife

Based on an article on Daily Mail Online 6 April 2013

Conservationists fear for hibernating species because of the prolonged winter weather. Many won't have the energy reserves to see them through. Many early varieties of flowers are still to make an appearance and this of course impacts on our insect life.

We've shivered all through winter and put up with a freezing March but there is hope that higher temperatures are on the way. However, it could be too late for many of our wildlife.

Forecast

Those which come out of hibernation face frozen ground and a lack of insects caused by the late budding of plants. Many early varieties of flowers are still to make an appearance. Almost a thousand wild bluebell flowerings were recorded at this point last year, but only four have so far been reported by conservationists. The prolonged winter has resulted in a significant drop in early spring wildlife compared with last year, according to the Woodland Trust, which compiles public reports in its Nature's Calendar recording scheme.

Ladybirds

Numbers are lower both in terms of sightings and also more importantly their distribution across the country. The number of common seven-spot ladybirds seen this year has fallen ten-fold, from 1,169 last year to 119.

The RSPCA are expressing concern over the apparent loss of fledglings. Last year, the charity was looking after 130 fledglings in March, but only has a handful in its centres this year, suggesting fewer births due to a lack of food. In Swindon, hundreds of thousands of starlings were spotted over the town centre in what experts believe was an attempt to keep warm.

Britain's rarest flower has also failed to bloom this year because of the washout winter. The majority of Britain's population of snake's head fritillaries grow in a 110-acre meadow near Cricklade in Wiltshire. But last year's deluges have left the ground saturated and the plants are showing no signs of blooming, as they usually do in April.

Dr Kate Lewthwaite of the Woodland Trust: 'The records we've received clearly highlight the prolonged delay to the arrival of spring with birds, insects and flowers all weeks behind compared to where we were last year. It is too early to say if there will be any long term impact this year but nature is remarkably resilient in the face of such extremes in weather.'

Hedgehogs

Early sightings are down by half compared with last year. There are fears those emerging from Fay Vass from the British Hedgehog Preservation Society, said: 'You can pretty much guarantee hedgehogs will be dying because of the bad weather. They have gone into hibernation at a weight that is expected to see them through a certain amount of time and that time is extended so they won't have the energy reserves to wake up.' Those that are emerging from hibernation are failing to find insects due to the low temperatures. There are half as many sightings as this time last year and conservationists fear that other hibernating species such as dormice, and bats will struggle to find food as they wake up from the longest winter for 50 years, if they wake up at all. There are concerns many will have died because they went to sleep without enough energy reserves to see them through the prolonged chill.

Owls

High winds and snow have made hunting much harder for birds of prey, with the RSPB receiving greater reports of dead owls. 'Owls like the tawny and barn rely on hearing their prey – mainly voles, shrews and mice – as they scuttle across the ground. But in snow or hardened ground that is very difficult,' said Ben Andrew of the RSPB. 'As a result, owls need to hunt during the daytime, leaving them open to attacks by other birds or predators.'

Bees

After months of cold weather, the stores of honey which bees rely upon to see them through winter will be running low. Gill Maclean of the British Beekeepers Association said they were expecting bee losses, adding: 'What would normally happen at this time of year is the colonies would be growing in size and building in numbers and in order to do that bees would be out foraging, collecting nectar and pollen. 'The problem is they can't get out because it is cold and we are expecting there will be losses because of the weather. '

Bluebells

Only a handful of the spring flowers have been spotted. Dr Trevor Dines, of the Plantlife charity, said: 'This time last year we were filming bluebells, but I have yet to see one in 2013. They are all waiting for warmer weather, and what will likely happen is we will have a colourful but very short-lived spring.' Only a handful of bluebells have been spotted

Fledglings

Birds are struggling to mate and hatch eggs because of difficulties in finding food, caused by the frozen ground and insects failing to flourish due to a lack of blossom. Several species have been affected, including blackbirds, thrushes, pigeons and

mallard ducks, with the RSPCA only treating a handful of young birds compared with more than 100 last year.

Tree Buds

Sightings of blackthorn buds have been scarce. Their late arrival is bad news for insects which really rely on them for an early source of food ... and the birds that eat the insects.

Puffins

Thousands of young birds are expected to die of starvation, unable to find food in the rough seas. Hundreds of emaciated corpses washed up on the East coast last month.

Daffodils

One of the first flowers normally to appear are daffodils and in some parts of the country they are still in tight bud.

In many ways, this is a depressing report so we must do all that we can, to sustain the wildlife that we see in our woodlands and our own gardens through planting appropriate flowers and plants and providing suitable habitat and foods.

PROGRAMME 2013/2014

See below a list of some brilliant programmes being planned for Autumn 2013 – 2014. Dates will be published in the Summer newsletter so watch this space.

Urban wildlife - September - Paul Lythgoe

Pollution - October – Bryan Stringer

Water birds/winter migratory birds – November – speaker to be arranged

2014

Sustainable Energy – February -Lee & Carl Borrell

Trees - ALL - March – speaker to be arranged

Camouflage and patterns in nature – speaker to be arranged

Spiders - May – Bryan Stringer

Fungi – speaker to be arranged

Please ensure if you are coming to the events by car that you park at the Oldham Road End of Oaken Clough, as parking is strictly limited. Alternatively, a bus from Ashton bus station runs regularly and stops almost at the end of Oaken Clough.

Don't forget ...
our next event is

“A Pond Dip”

on

Saturday 18 May at 2pm
In 5 Oaken Clough Terrace,
Ashton under Lyne
OL7 9NY

£2 each including light refreshments
£5 per family

Nets provided

*Please park your car at the top of Oaken Clough
as parking is restricted.
Walk toward the wooden gate at the end of the lane and turn right.
Walk to the end and
5 Oaken Clough Terrace is the corner house at the end of the terrace.*