

MEDLOCK & TAME VALLEY CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Summer 2013



"Burlinson House
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Registered Charity No. 504558

MEDLOCK & TAME VALLEY CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIRMAN: Bryan Stringer

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OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Katie Caine

Address of the Headquarters of MTVCA:

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MEMBERSHIP FEES 2012

Individual Adult: £10.00 per annum

Family: £15 per annum

Concessionary: £7.50 per annum

Welcome to the 2013 edition of the Summer Newsletter.

We have had our first thunder storm of the summer as I write after a two-week spell of hot glorious sunshine – and doesn't nature yield its own delights! The garden of Burlinson House has grass 4 foot high and definitely needs a visit from the strimmer!

We are continuing to mark the boundaries of the property with the tree saplings obtained from The Woodlands Trust which will form a good hedge of fruit and supply a good habitat for small mammals and insects on our grounds.

Our pond continues to buzz with life. The survival of the pond depends on the environment in and around it. All of the living things which use our pond as a habitat help nurture and maintain it.

We have a lot of plants in the pond which provide food, oxygen and even shelter for animals living in and around the pond. On our pond dips we have observed pond skaters, water boatmen, water beetles, snails, mayflies, and caddis flies. Unfortunately, very few frogs have been seen but a couple of ducks seem to have taken a liking to it and have been regularly spotted there! Because plants need sunlight for photosynthesis, sunny ponds are more successful than those situated in shady areas. At the moment our pond is shady as there has been a lot of growth in the trees surrounding it and we need to curtail this if we hope to see dragonflies and damselflies making use of it. It is lovely to boast of a pond the size of ours and more so when it is home to the great crested newt which makes it a site of biological importance.

So far as work to the inside of the house is concerned, whilst a lot of work has been done, much more is needed to reach our goals of a completed reception room, hall and kitchen by the end of the Autumn. The reception room is almost completed and hopefully the next newsletter will show the end result. All the painting has been done, the old carpet lifted and new carpet tiles are to be laid. New blinds are being measured and purchased in the next couple of weeks.

The kitchen is currently being painted with tiling and flooring still to be done. The hall is to be painted and needs the floor laid. Apart from all of that – we are doing well and still on schedule!

OUR RECENT MOTH IDENTIFICATION EVENING (on 15 July)



Whilst few in number attended, we had a very interesting 'hands on' evening with the moths which surround Burlinson House, and what a variety there are!

Bryan, our Chairman, had left the moth trap out the day before in the side garden and the ultraviolet light had attracted in the region of some 35 moths. The moth trap itself consists of a black basin (about 12" depth and 24" across) containing egg boxes (for the moths to nestle in comfortably) with a plastic cover so they couldn't escape once they had entered.

The cover with a large hole in the middle allowed an ultraviolet light to be placed in it and on top of this was a square plastic 'roof' about 7" square to shield the contents of the basin from rain.

The covered petri dishes were numbered and a corresponding sheet was on the table together with books and photos of moths of various shapes, sizes and colours. They were all very beautiful in their own way. Some were iridescent, others had really interesting patterns and shapes of wings and would sit very still on your hands. As soon as they were identified, we set them free so as not to cause too much stress. All in all, we identified 9 various types but there many more which we couldn't find in the books available to us.



It certainly gave us an incentive to set up some moth traps of our own to catch and identify these papillons de nuit!



Helping wildlife in a long hot Summer



The RSPB has made a series of excellent TV adverts to support their latest "Give Nature a Home" campaign. They really do highlight the fact that we can interact with nature and, as well as bringing a lot of interest into our own environment, we can improve living conditions for small mammals and amphibians in our gardens by providing habitat and food.

With temperatures of 30C forecast for parts of the UK next week, there's little respite in sight for wildlife that is wilting in the sun. Here are six tips to help pets and garden fauna to beat the heat.

Birdbaths



A simple yet effective way of providing relief. Val Osborne, head of the RSPB's wildlife enquiries team, explains: "The hot weather could be causing natural water sources to dry up, meaning birds and hedgehogs could be left without anything to drink. Turning your outside space into a home for nature by doing simple things like topping up your birdbath, creating a make-

shift pond from a washing-up tub or putting down a saucer filled with water could offer a vital lifeline to some of our garden favourites that are already fighting against declines."

Supplementary food

Drier conditions make worms tunnel further into the soil, becoming scarce for the wildlife that usually feasts on them, such as blackbirds, robins, hedgehogs and frogs. To compensate, additional food should be left out to make sure suitable nutrition is provided throughout the summer to such animals. A novel substitute to earthworms is dog or cat food, which blackbirds readily take and feed to their chicks. The texture of tinned meaty chunks is perfect as it avoids hard lumps that cause birds to choke. Black sunflower seeds, mild grated cheese, and of course, bird seed, are also recommended, but make sure to **steer well clear of any salts, which are toxic to birds.**

Taking care of gardens and allotments

Regularly watered plants, and habitat-orientated gardens are a lifeline for bees and butterflies. If the hot, dry conditions carry on we may see wild plants start to die. If that happens, our gardens and the well-watered plants in them will become even more important to these insects. Maintaining allotments is also vital for providing respite from the weather – log or stone piles are inviting for their damp, shaded conditions. Plan ahead for next year too – do you have enough space to incorporate a few hedges, a wildflower and herb patch, a pond or bog area, and an overgrown/undisturbed section? Linking gardens together enables creatures, such as hedgehogs and toads, to move between your garden and those of your neighbours. Creating such nature highways and corridors – ie shrubby borders; leaving gaps beneath fences – raises the quality of the whole street for wildlife.

Be aware of the time (and think about your own pets!)

Please remember to walk your dog in the cool of the evening and not midday/mid-afternoon. Dogs like lollies too. Refreshing treats can be a brilliant way to help dogs cool down in the heat: Make ice lollies or ice cubes for dogs by mixing their food with some water and freezing it in a plastic cup. Remove it from the cup or tray before giving it to your dog. Just like us, dogs and cats can get very uncomfortable in hot weather.

It is with sadness that I report to you the death of one of our members, Don Taylor. Don was involved with the Tameside Green Interest Group and had been a member of the MTVCA for a couple of years. He was a dedicated "Eco-Warrior" all of his life and a great friend to nature and the well-being of planet Earth. He was an interesting character with a great sense of humour and he will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

PROGRAMME 2013/2014

All programmes commence at 7.15 unless stated otherwise and will be taken by a variety of people connected with MTVCA.

19 Aug - A presentation on Trees (and a tree identification walk in the grounds)

16 Sept - Urban Wildlife

21 Sep – AGM – 2pm (Saturday) Notice of the meeting, Agenda and a covering letter from the Chairman will be sent by post/email but please note that the minutes from last year’s meeting can be collected on the day to save postage costs). The AGM is an important meeting for members today and voice their opinions and votes on the life and work of MTVCA. If you cannot attend, please remember to send your apologies so we can ensure a quorum on the day.

21 Oct - Pollution in the Environment

18 Nov – Migratory Birds

2014

17 February – Sustainable Energy Projects of MTVCA

17 Mar - Amphibians

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.

BUTTERFLIES



The Large White is one of two species (the other being the Small White) that can claim the title of “Cabbage White”. It is the bane of allotment holders all over the British Isles. The larva of this species can decimate cabbages. The female is distinguished from the male by the presence of 2 black spots, together with a black dash, on the forewing upperside. This is one of the most widespread species found in the British Isles and can be found almost anywhere, including Orkney and Shetland. This species is also known to migrate to the British Isles from the continent, augmenting the resident population in the process.

Large holes in the leaves of brassica crops and nasturtiums are usually the work of cabbage white caterpillars. Before an attack you may notice large numbers of white butterflies around your plants, as they lay eggs. These hatch into larvae which make small holes in the leaves as they start to feed on them, becoming much larger as the caterpillars start to feed more vigorously. Caterpillars also produce small brown or dark green granular deposits as they feed.

About Cabbage white butterflies

- Two species are particularly important pests: the large white butterfly, *Pieris brassicae*, and the Small White butterfly *Pieris rapae*.
- Both species are commonly seen flying within our gardens and are affectionately called 'summer snowflakes'.
- While the small white is a native species, the large white has usually migrated from southern Europe because they don't often survive a north European winter.
- Large white butterflies have often been seen crossing the English channel in swarms of many hundred individuals.
- Cabbage white butterflies overwinter as pupae. Those that survive the cold months will hatch into butterflies during the spring.
- The butterflies mate then each female lays a few hundred eggs, on the leaves of cabbages, other related plants and nasturtiums.
- The large white's eggs are often laid in batches of ten to 20, which hatch into yellow and black slightly hairy caterpillars in about two weeks.
- Large white caterpillars feed for a month or more and can reach 50mm in length before they turn into pupae.
- The small white's eggs are laid singly and hatch into bright velvety-green caterpillars. Unlike the large white, these caterpillars often burrow into the hearts of cabbages to feed.
- Cabbage white caterpillars leave their food plants when ready to pupate and usually attach themselves to a vertical surface such as a fence or wall with a silk girdle before their final skin shed.
- During the summer months, the pupae soon hatch into the next generation of butterflies and the cycle continues.
- The severity of cabbage white problems can vary considerably from year to year due to weather, immigration and diseases.

Prevention

- Inspect susceptible plants on a daily basis during the growing season and remove any eggs or caterpillars that are found. The appearance of white butterflies hovering around susceptible plants almost certainly means that eggs have been laid.
- Cover plants with insect-proof mesh or fleece, although this can lead to overheating during the warmer summer days.
- Avoid planting colourful, high nectar plants near the cabbage patch as these will encourage adult butterflies into the garden.

GREEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT

It is a growing concern with many of us that green spaces are being sold and used by developers for new housing. With this in mind MTVCA has written to the Councils throughout the Medlock & Tame Valley to state our views with a note of caution of what this means for years of conservation in those areas. Our letter to the Councils is shown below and also a letter written in relation to Park Bridge.

Dear Sir/Madam

As Secretary of the Medlock and Tame Valley Conservation Association (MTVCA) I am writing to you on behalf of the Committee and Membership... The Association was founded in 1971 and its sphere of influence covers Oldham, Tameside, Stockport and Manchester.

The MTVCA's main objectives are as detailed in our Constitution (see attached). We fully understand the need for social housing and regeneration within earmarked areas within the boundary, but the consideration for the existing residents, flora and fauna should not be overlooked or dismissed. This is an important issue...

The increase in road traffic, pollution issues in terms of local tributaries and rivers, the removal of green spaces, disruption and confiscation of wildlife habitats and the destruction of trees all give us great cause for concern. If we continue to build without regard to the above, then hundreds of years of ecosystems will be destroyed.

We trust the Planning Department will consider all of the above factors as of paramount importance when assessing any planning application.

*Yours faithfully
Susan Stewart
Secretary, on behalf of MTVCA*

As some of you are already aware the owners of the Bottom Forge at Park Bridge made it known at a meeting of the Park Bridge Focus Group that they intended to apply to Tameside for permission to demolish the building and construct 26 houses on the site. The MTVCA believed that this would be a disaster for Park Bridge and would destroy the last remaining industrial building of historic significance in the village. Anticipating the owners' future strategy the Association applied to English Heritage to have the site designated as a listed building. Unfortunately they rejected our application on the grounds that it was not "under serious threat of demolition or serious alteration" was not a "strategic priority" nor had any "evident significance" as a building.

We then corresponded with Tameside MBC Planning Department to consider designating the Bottom Forge as a Conservation Area with the aim of conserving the basic setting and structure whilst considering the long term potential for the building and site. Their reply offered some hope of commitment in that Park Bridge as a whole is among the top five sites in Tameside which are to be appraised. Sadly they do not envisage starting this process before late 2014. It is hoped that the Planning Officers take these proposals into consideration when determining the application made by the site owners.

As expected the owners of the Bottom Forge submitted an Outline Planning Application (13/00182/OUT) to Tameside MBC to demolish the existing warehouse (Bottom Forge) and redevelop the site with 26 houses. The MTVCA wrote a letter of objection to this application which argued on the following points: i) Presence of contaminated land. ii) Proximity of culverted watercourse. iii) Presence of unstable, in-filled ground. iv) Surface water run-off down old chimney flues. v) No sewer connections, inappropriate for septic tanks. vi) Insufficient land for sustainable surface water drainage system. vii) Poor vehicle access to the village. viii) Narrow steep sided valley – privacy issues, confined aspect, flooding. ix) Badly designed,

elevated gardens on some of properties. x) Presence of protected fauna (bats) xi) Potential infestation by rats. xii) Destruction of industrial heritage of Park Bridge.

As Chairman of the MTVCA I attended a meeting of Park Bridge residents held on 2nd April in Park Bridge Institute where I outlined our objections to this application as listed above.. I attended the Tameside Planning Committee meeting on 29th May with several residents of Park Bridge. Gareth Lawler, a Park Bridge resident and Cllr Mike Whitley (Waterloo ward) spoke briefly and succinctly against this application. Sadly the Planning Committee decided to vote in favour of the outline plan. On a positive note the Planners' report does stipulate sixteen conditions which have to be met before any development of the site can proceed. The developer now has to submit a full application to the Council within three years with details of the layout, scale and appearance of the houses. Building must then commence within two years if the full application is granted.

Bryan Stringer (Chairman), MTVCA

VISIT TO LEIGHTON MOSS RESERVE 12 May 2013

8 of us arrived at 9.30 am to Oaken Clough with great expectations for an interesting and enjoyable day ahead. 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. Deer can be seen on occasion, not to mention butterflies aplenty! When we started off it was reasonably dry and overcast and we made it to the first hide before the heavy rain came on. The hides themselves (4 in all we visited) had really nice interiors and were right at the edge of the reed beds giving us various scenes from different directions. From the hides we observed Cormorants, many black headed (noisy!) gulls, shovlers, swans, moorhens and cootes and even spotted a couple of lapwings. It was (apart from the gulls) a quiet and overcast day but was truly beautiful and relaxing just watching and experiencing the peace of the location. The reed beds certainly gave colour, texture and so much protection to the birds who inhabited the space. There were others there, not too many, with their photographic telescopic lenses taking in the scenes and behaviours of the birds.

Leighton Moss is a very attractive setting and is extending it's front area to construct a garden/picnic area for visits. It has a lovely café (upstairs) and bird feeders placed throughout the paths and buildings accompanied by signs depicting various birds and describing the sounds they make along the trail.

The gift shop too displayed a wide variety of wood carved habitat for birds and accessories for the garden to help the local wildlife.

Another great day out. Thank you to Paul and Bryan who took their cars to ferry all of us back and forward. We would thoroughly recommend this site for a visit and applaud RSPB for the brilliant work they have done and are doing here.



NEW PROJECT

We have arranged with the Pennine Edge Barn Owl Group to purchase and sponsor an owl box for somewhere within Tameside (a location hasn't been decided yet) and receive updates on its use and development. Historically there are records of Barn Owls in the Oldham and Tameside areas until about 5/10 years ago so we know they are able to live in the area. The main reason for their disappearance is believed to be the lack of nesting sites due to the demolition of old buildings and barn conversions which inevitably blocked up any previously used roosting sites.



The idea which PEBOG has is to create a corridor of suitable nest sites, close to feeding grounds for the owls, along the Pennine edge to link up with known populations of Barn Owl. MTVCA concur wholeheartedly with their idea and aims, and congratulate them on the excellent work they do.

We hope to be working closely with PEBOG to find a suitable location and we will keep you briefed and include a photograph hopefully with our next newsletter.

THE BADGER BURGLAR OF “Burlinson House”.



This was taken by our wildlife camera in the grounds of Burlinson House and he/she was a very unexpected guest! But the camera got a great shot and it was nice of him/her to look straight at it for us – very obliging!

Nice to know what lurks in and around the grounds when the rest of us are tucked up in bed! Nature doesn't sleep.