Medlock & Tame Valley Conservation Association Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2015/2016

Welcome to the Spring 2016 edition of the MTVCA Newsletter

It's been wet, VERY wet, but we have had little snow – probably a relief to those of us over 30! BUT it could still come! In spite of the cold, wet weather, the workdays each Sunday at Burlinson House have persisted with much of the work being done inside the house whilst waiting for Spring to arrive.

Our fundraiser, David Renshaw, is busy all seasons trying to raise funds to enable us to gain the materials to do much of the work we undertake in the house and around the gardens. Like any house and garden, there is necessary maintenance to do all year round. Not only does this take money but we need people power! If you can't be there in person to help on a Sunday from 12 – 4pm, please can you consider supporting the work in other ways? I have listed some ideas later in the newsletter.

Burlinson House, 5 Oaken Clough Terrace, Ashton under Lyne, OL7 9NY
E: mtvca@yahoo.co.uk W: www.medlockandtame.org.uk T:07989 147095

Registered Charity No. 504558

Work inside the house comprised of sorting out the two upstairs bedrooms (one of which is a box room). The energy labs now occupy the box room as much of their equipment was spoiled in some way because of dampness in the cellar they using (see photographs).

The larger bedroom upstairs is currently used for storage of other things. Both rooms have been cleared and painted and in the case of the box room, there was substantial plastering which had to be undertaken and having cupboards installed to hold equipment.

Both rooms have had carpet floor tiles laid.

The breakfast room off the kitchen has been repainted and the chimney breast stripped of old wallpaper (ongoing). The kitchen and breakfast room also have had flooring put in (medium-cushion lino).

Outside several wooden structures have been purchased for the top and middle garden. As well as being aesthetic structures for the garden, they are also functional. These include a rose trellis arch to hold back branches and keep a clear pathway down into the middle garden, two arbours for the side garden and one other observational point and one corner pergola to cover the intersection between the butterfly and bee garden and the pond area.

The pergola will be used as a structure for climbing plants to facilitate the pollinating insects in this area. All of the manual work will be undertaken by just a couple of the committee so if you are good with woodwork, any help would be much appreciated. We are there every Sunday from 12 – 4 pm. Sadly, the practical side of the work of the MTVCA is usually down to the efforts of 5 - 6 people at most and if you are a member who feels they cannot do any physical work, there are many other ways your help would be appreciated.

The inside of the house is looking really well at the moment even though there are still some basic maintenance jobs to be done. Pointing the side front wall of the house is a priority and cleaning the front guttering.

The butterfly and bee garden is complete and we await Spring/Summer to see the rewards of our labour! Before that, we seriously need to have SOME branches removed from the tree to allow light into the side garden which was seriously dark last year and does not facilitate the object of the garden.

Lee continues to add to our website www.medlockandtame.org.uk. If you need updates between newsletters, this will offer a lot to you by way of information about Burlinson House and is a useful general resource. We are also on Facebook under "Medlock and Tame Conservation Association" where articles of interest are published regularly and news of our forthcoming events.

Programme of Events 2016

We have another year of exciting events lined up and we hope you will be able to attend and spread the word amongst your family and friends. Emails will be sent confirming times nearer the time.

May 24 –(fundraising evening) more information to follow

June 14th – Hobby night (Committee and members)

April 28th – Owls evening (Committee)

June 26th (Sunday) Walk to the source of the Tame reiver. Time to be arranged.

July 19th- Wine making (David Borrell)

13 Sept. – Moth night (Bryan Stringer)

13 October – Arachnids (Committee)

PLANT A SPRING TIME WINDOW BOX

If you have never done this, it's well worth a try and is particularly useful for all of our pollinating insects. Here are some ideas…

Sweet alyssum: Stalwart, reliable, fragrant trailer in white, cream, pink, and purple. Alyssum is exceptionally easy to grow and fills in beautifully, often reseeding itself.
Lobelia: Sound familiar? Yes, we often call on this little annual with clouds of cascading color in white, sky blue, dark blue, rose, lavender, and cobalt. Simply great in window boxes.
Pansies: Perfect in any box, pansies offer prolific color in many hues and quickly fill gaps between permanent plants or other annuals, offering long-lasting color.
Petunias: Choose these when you want a stunning summer box that shines in the sun. Try cascading varieties, as well as multifloras, for an abundance of blooms in a wide range of colors.
Impatiens: *The* plant for shade, and awesome in window boxes — especially valuable for continuous color in a range of hues. Use low-growing, dwarf varieties. New Guinea hybrids also offer excellent foliage.
Dianthus: You get the bonus of fragrance with the gift of color. Plants are well behaved. If all goes well, a breeze blows, sending sweet scents through your open windows.

Kitchen flooring

Upstairs box room which Lee and Carl will use as their renewable energy workshop.

Inside of green room now

Ivy geranium: Yep. The selfsame winner in hanging baskets, this one also works really well in window boxes, gracing us with wonderful trailing stems covered with bright flowers. In cold climates, grow it as an annual.
Geraniums: Bedding geraniums are the classic window box plant — grown for clusters of brilliant flowers in colors ranging from white to crimson to apple blossom pink. Plants are easy to grow. Consider geraniums an annual in cold climates.
Dwarf bulbs: Forgive us for lumping so many bulbs together, but the miniature nature of many flowering bulbs — daffodils, crocus, grape hyacinth, cyclamen — makes them ideal players in the window box.
Ground ivy: Impressive long stems spill from your window box in shimmering green or variegated tones. Ground ivy can survive through winter in milder climates.
English ivy: Hardy, versatile, attractive.

CAN YOU DO SOMETHING PRACTICAL to help the work of

•Introduce a friend/neighbour to the work and bring them to our events

•Hold a coffee morning to raise funds for our special projects

•Nominate a person you think would be interested in serving on the committee

•Provide bird food and/or feeders for our feathered friends. We are very short of feeders!

•Come to no. 5 to maintain the garden usually every Sunday from noon for a couple of hours. Please contact 07989 147095 beforehand.

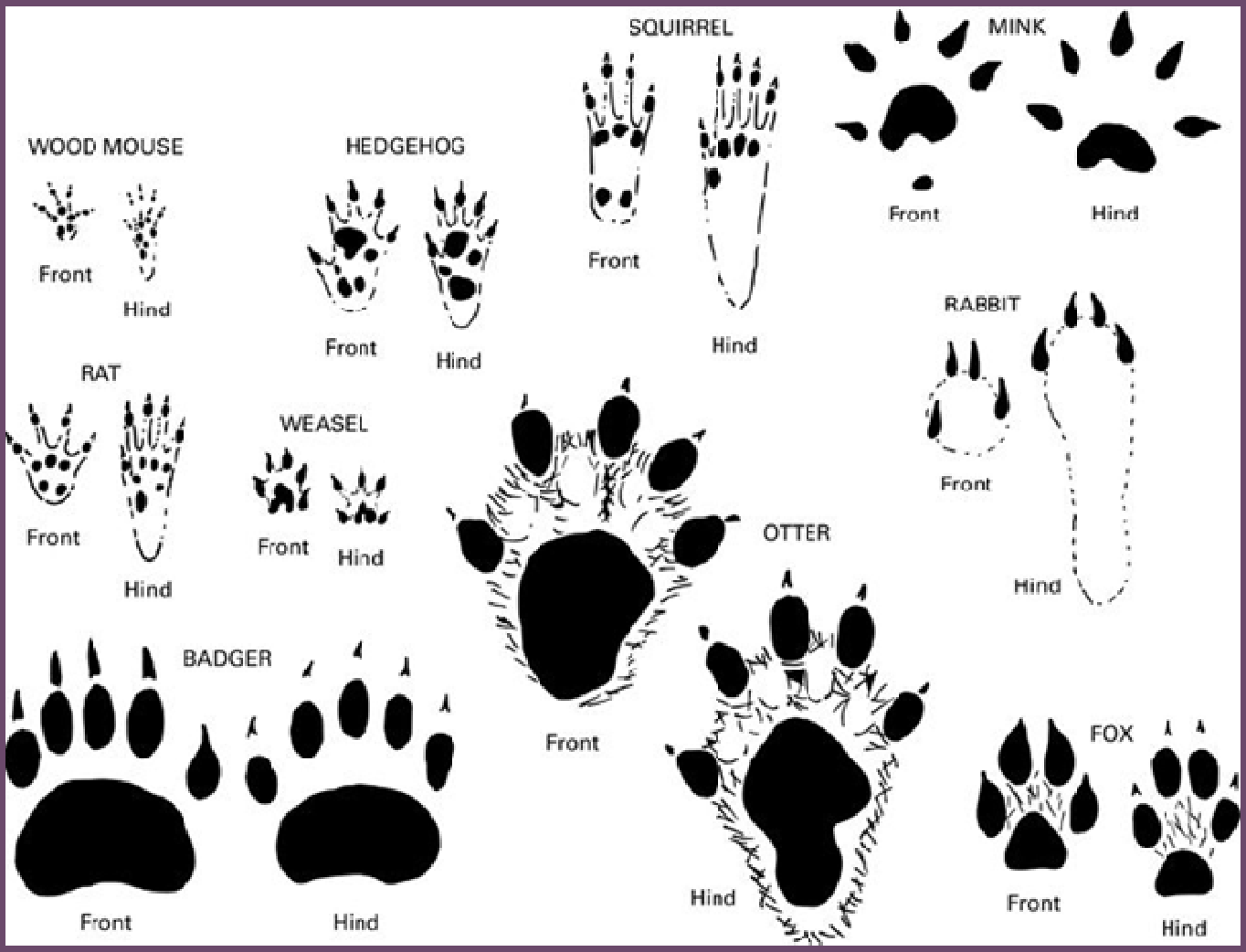
•Provide some vegetable/flower seedlings for the greenhouse

• Invite a friend to one of our events in the Springtime and pass on a membership form.

• Encourage us by writing and article for the newsletter

If you would like any further details of how you can help us fundraise, please contact Susan on 07989 147095.

It's almost the end of February and we haven't seen much snow. In anticipation of what is forecast, please see our guide which many of you appreciate each year.



I've included some things on the next page if you are thinking about a nature ramble in the snow! Don't forget to take some photographs and we can include them in the next newsletter and on our Facebook page! Do send us some photographs of anything of interest for the next newsletter.

EQUIPMENT needed:
Notebook, cancel, camera, guide

1. Be aware of what types of animals reside in the region (see Resources)
2.Count the number of toes in one of the footprints, if the tracks have toes. Double-check yourself by counting the toes in several different prints to make sure another animal hasn't come by on top of the tracks.
3.Take note of the shape of one of the footprints. If the shape is more oval, it may be a hoof print and could easily belong to a deer or elk. If the print is broad with distinctive toe marks, the tracks may have been made by a cougar or wildcat. Coyotes and other canine species will have a print similar to a feline, but the toes won't usually spread out as much.
4.Determine the approximate size of the footprints. Remember that the snow may have melted a bit, making the print appear larger. Or more snow may have fallen, partly covering up parts of the tracks.
5. Combine your findings to narrow down the animal you think may have left the tracks. Omitting fowl because the footprint was made by a hoof, or crossing out elk because the print is a paw print are simple and obvious ways to start narrowing down the possibilities.
6.Make a list of all the animals in that particular region in the animal family you narrowed the tracks to. For instance, if you decide the tracks were made by a feline, create a list of all the felines found in that region.
7. Use the size and shape of the tracks to determine the animal species that made the tracks. If the tracks are large, for instance, you can omit smaller felines. The elimination process should reveal the mystery animal. The more you decipher animal tracks, the better you get.

BUMBLE BEES

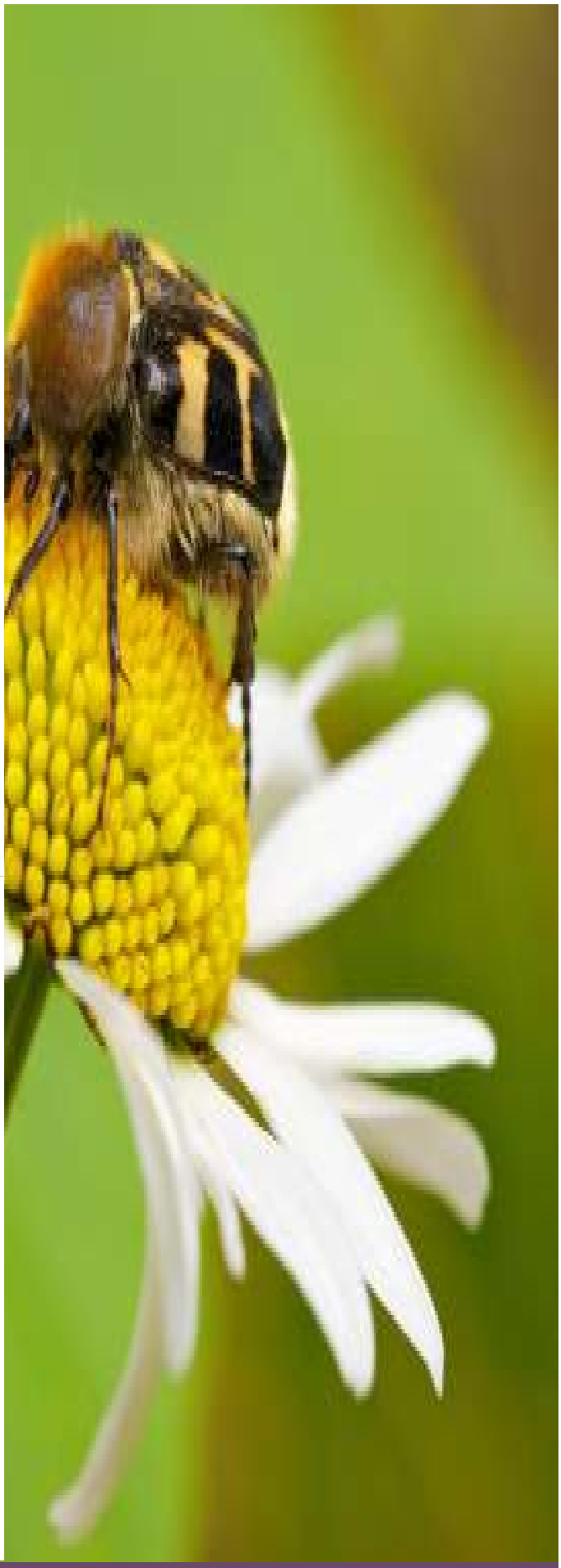
Classification:
Kingdom - Animalia
Phylum - Arthropoda
Class - Insecta
Order - Hymenoptera
Family - Apidae
Genus - *Bombus*

Most people recognize the large, furry bees that visit backyard flowers as bumblebees. Fewer probably know that they are social bees, with a caste system of queen, workers, and reproductives cooperating to meet the needs of the colony.

Bumblebees range in size from about half an inch to a full inch in length. Patterns in their bands of yellow and black, along with the occasional red or orange, help indicate their species. However, bumblebees of the same species can vary quite a bit. Entomologists rely on other features, such as genitalia, to confirm a bumblebee's identity.

Cuckoo bumblebees, genus *Psithyrus*, resemble other bumblebees but lack the ability to gather pollen. Instead, these parasites invade *Bombus* nests and kill the queen. The *Psithyrus* bees then lay their eggs in the collected pollen in the conquered nest. This group is sometimes included as a subgenus of Bombus.

Diet:
Bumblebees feed on pollen and nectar. These efficient pollinators forage on both wildflowers and crops. Adult females use modified hind legs equipped with corbicula to carry pollen to their offspring. Nectar is stored in the honey stomach, or crop, in the digestive system. Larvae receive meals of regurgitated nectar and pollen until they pupate.



MTVCA

Life Cycle:
Like other bees, bumblebees undergo a complete metamorphosis with four stages to the life cycle:
Egg – The queen lays eggs in a pollen clump. Then she or a worker bee incubates the eggs for four days.
Larva – The larvae feed on pollen stores, or on regurgitated nectar and pollen provided by the worker bees. In 10-14 days, they pupate.
Pupa – For two weeks, the pupae remain inside their silk cocoons. The queen incubates the pupae as she did her eggs.
Adult – Adults assume their roles as workers, male reproductives, or new queens.

Special Adaptations and Defences:
Before flying, a bumblebee's flight muscles must be warmed to around 86 °F.
Since most bumblebees live in climates where cool temperatures may occur, they cannot rely on the ambient warmth of the sun to achieve this. Instead, bumblebees shiver, vibrating the flight muscles at a high speed but keeping the wings still. The familiar buzz of the bumblebee comes not from the wings themselves, but from these vibrating muscles.

The bumblebee queen must also generate heat when she incubates her eggs. She shivers muscles in the thorax, then transfers the heat to her abdomen by contracting muscles down her body. The warmed abdomen stays in contact with the developing young as she sits on her nest.
Female bumblebees come equipped with stingers, and will defend themselves if threatened. Unlike honey bees, bumblebees can sting and live to tell about it. The bumblebee's sting lacks barbs, so she can easily retrieve it from the flesh of her victim and attack again, if she chooses.

Habitat:
Good bumblebee habitat supplies adequate flowers for foraging, especially early in the season when the queen emerges and prepares her nest. Meadows, fields, parks, and gardens all provide food and shelter for bumblebees.

Range:
Members of the genus *Bombus* live mostly in temperate areas of the globe. Range maps show *Bombus spp.* throughout North and South America, Europe, Asia, and the Arctic. Some introduced species are also found in Australia and New Zealand.

At the time of writing 24 bumblebee species are found in the UK and there are plans to reintroduce the Short-haired bumblebee. Two UK species have become extinct in the last 80 years the reason being far fewer flowers to provide bees with the pollen and nectar they need.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION and RENEWAL FORM. (due October)

Please tick appropriate box.

Individual: £10 each year [ ]

Concessionary: £7.50 each year [ ]

Household: £15 each year. [ ] (For 2 or more people at the same address)

Donation (Optional): £…… Name(s):

……

Address……

…… Postcode…… Phone No…… Mobile Phone No……

Email ……

Signature: ……

If you are a taxpayer and complete a simple Gift Aid declaration we can reclaim the tax paid on your donation and significantly increase the value of your gift at no extra cost to you.

I would like the MTVCA to treat all donations I make on or after the date of this declaration as Gift Aid donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature…… Date……

Do remember to tell us if you no longer pay an amount of income or capital gains tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations.

Please either send your completed form and cheque made payable to: "MTVCA"

To: MTVCA, Burlinson House, 5 Oaken Clough Terrace, Ashton under Lyne OL7 9NY

OR:

Pay by Bank Transfer to our account: MTVCA Sort code: 010608 Account number: 43550452

Please type your name in "reference details" when making the transfer.

If you e-mail or scan this form to: mtvca@yahoo.co.uk with your details, we will e-mail a receipt when payment has been received.

Membership Fees

- Individual Adult: £10.00 per annum
- Family: £15 per annum
- Concessionary: £7.50 per annum

Committee members

Chairman: Bryan Stringer

Vice Chairman: Paul Lythgoe

Secretary: Susan Stewart
Tel: 07989147095

Treasurer: Jean Lythgoe

Newsletter: Susan Stewart
thepliedes@yahoo.co.uk

Webmaster: Lee Borrell

Other committee members: Katie Caine

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