

MEDLOCK & TAME VALLEY CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Winter 2014



“No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden.”

Thomas Jefferson



“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 2012

Individual Adult: £10.00 per annum

Family: £15 per annum

Concessionary: £7.50 per annum

www.medlockandtame.org.uk

email: mtvca@yahoo.co.uk

tel: 07989 147095



Welcome to the 2014 Winter edition of the newsletter (no snow yet but it could still come!)

Since our last newsletter, not much has been done in the grounds of our HQ apart from sweeping leaves and keeping the pathways trimmed and clear. We are excited at the prospect of Spring coming so that we can get on with our outdoor projects such as the placement of our barn owl box and the renewal of all of the wooden bird boxes on the grounds, all of which are badly dilapidated (see further into the newsletter for news about this).

The winter months are the best time to plant trees and hedges so we will finish off the work of planting the small trees around the boundary of Burlinson House, kindly supplied to us by The Woodland Trust.

Trees are a fantastic resource for wildlife as they are the food sources for a huge range of caterpillars – the larvae of many butterflies, moths and other flying insects. These larvae are a valuable food source for birds. Many birds time their breeding so that they are feeding their chicks when caterpillar numbers are greatest. However, it is worrying that many gardeners destroy caterpillars (which in turn become our butterflies of course!). Please do not resort to this action as food webs and life cycles are impacted upon which will have devastating consequences for some species.

Tree and shrubs also act as a substrate for mosses, lichens and fungi; nesting sites for birds, as well as a food source for mammals and birds. Dense shrubs provide secluded shady homes for many creatures also. You may not have an immaculate garden, but you will have one that is friendly to wildlife – and it often takes only a small area to make a big difference.

Early Awakening from Hibernation

An extremely mild winter has led to signs of an early spring sprouting across the UK, from snowdrops and hazel flowering to sightings of ladybirds and butterflies. The Woodland Trust's network of nature watchers recorded snowdrops appearing as early as December, and have spotted budburst on elder bushes, plus butterflies including Brimstones, Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells. Naturalists said the number of hazel catkins out was particularly unusual, though the number of insects sighted has been relatively low despite the mild temperatures.

Lesser celandine (which normally starts to flower in late January) and cowslips, are in bloom in sites such as Leigh Woods near Bristol, while in south Devon red campion is flowering in the mild weather.

Birds including robins, song thrushes and mistle thrushes are already singing while wood pigeons are attempting to breed. Red admiral and brimstone butterflies have been seen on the wing and buff-tailed bumblebees have been spotted as wildlife makes the most of the mild weather.

2014 fits into the trend over recent years of traditional harbingers of spring arriving early because of rising UK temperatures. British flowers came out between two and 12 days earlier in the past quarter century than in any previous 25-year period, and the seasonal timing of reproduction has shifted forward by around 11 days between

1976 and 2005, previous research has shown.

Many of the signs of spring already out now, such as snowdrops and hazel catkins, used to appear more commonly in February. "It doesn't feel like it's exceptional compared to recent years," said Kate Lewthwaite, project manager for the Woodland Trust's Nature's Calendar. "But it is exceptional that this has become the norm because of climate change."

Guardian readers reported snowdrops out across the country, from North Yorkshire to Southampton, as well as irises in Brighton, crocuses in Reading and marigolds from last summer still flowering. Bumblebees were sighted in London and High Wycombe. Matthew Oates, the National Trust's naturalist, told the Guardian he was not surprised at the lack of insects. "I think what's holding them back is the incessant rain – the soil is saturated, and it stops bumblebees getting out, it slows down caterpillars. The butterflies being spotted are ones emerging from buildings. It doesn't surprise me that bumblebees and hoverflies are not out yet. It may simply be because they're in ground that is saturated." But a cold spell could spell disaster for many of the plants and wildlife emerging now, they warned.

This winter has been unusually mild, with the Met Office confirming December as the third warmest on record. The average temperature for the month was 8.7C, compared to an average of 6.7C over the years 1981-2010.

(Sourced from: The Telegraph and The Guardian January 2014)

Can I just take this opportunity to remind any of you who have forgotten to renew your membership/subscription fees for 2014 that Jean, our treasurer, can be contacted by email or phone jeanlythgoe@yahoo.co.uk or if you like you can contact me on 07989 147095 and I will endeavour to assist.

Sponsor a bird box £25 – gift for family/friend

The bird boxes in the grounds of Burlinson House are sadly now irreparable and have had to be taken down. A new bird box is currently on the market which is made of woodcrete. The boxes are warm and weatherproof during the winter, yet it is cool in the summer for the chicks. This is due to the unique 'Woodcrete' material used, (made from 75% wood and natural additives) to allow superb air-permeability. These boxes have been shown to consistently deliver higher occupancy rates than any other nest box and is backed up by a 25 year guarantee.

Each box costs around £25.

As a conservation group we would like to order some of these for the garden.



Would YOU or your family or a group of your friends like to buy one and provide food throughout the year for it?

We are drawing up a plan of our woodland garden which will be framed and hung in the main room of the house. The location of your box will be marked with your/your family's name on it for "2014" and so will become a part of the history of our garden.

If you would like to take part in this, please let me know by reply email or 07989 147095. MTVCA can arrange the purchase for you and you can post a cheque or drop the cost for it at Burlinson House.

Once received, we will let you know and you can decide where on the grounds you would like to place it.

PROGRAMME 2013/2014

2014

17th February – Amphibians

17th March - Energy Evening with Lee & Carl

Table Quiz as a fundraiser – 7pm – details coming soon

26th April – Pond Dip 2pm

12th May – Aquatic Birds

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 SMALL COPPER

Scientific name: *Lycaena phlaeas*

Bright copper with brown spots and brown margin. Undersides orange-brown with spots.

The Small Copper is usually seen in ones and twos, but in some years large numbers may be found at good sites. Males are territorial, often choosing a piece of bare ground or a

stone on which to bask and await passing females. They behave aggressively towards any passing insects, returning to the same spot when the chase is over.

Though it remains a common and widespread species, the Small Copper declined throughout its range during the twentieth century. Widespread through Britain and Ireland, and occasionally visits gardens.

Size and Family

Family – Coppers

Small Sized

Wing Span Range (male to female) - 32-35mm

Conservation status

UK BAP status: Not listed

Butterfly Conservation Priority: Low

European status: Not threatened

Caterpillar Foodplants

Common Sorrel and Sheep's Sorrel are the main foodplants. Broad-leaved Dock may be occasionally used.

Distribution

Countries – England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales

Throughout Britain and Ireland except the uplands of northern Britain

Distribution Trend Since 1970's - Britain: -16%

Habitat

Occurs in a wide variety of habitats. Commonly found on chalk or unimproved grassland, heathland, woodland clearings, waste ground and moorland. Warm, dry conditions are favoured.

HERE WE GO A-WANDERING – AROUND THE MEDLOCK & TAME VALLEYS

We have so much on our doorstep waiting to be explored and enjoyed! Have a look below.

THE MEDLOCK VALLEY

Park Bridge

In the Medlock Valley between Ashton and Oldham, Park Bridge was an early industrial settlement, based on an iron rolling mill and forge to provide mechanical parts for the cotton spinning trade and other industries. Although the works closed a long time ago, today you can still trace their fascinating history in the carefully restored remains of the buildings, old railway lines, and other artefacts. Visit the splendid Stables, now a Heritage Centre, to find out how wrought iron was made and rolled, and what it was like to work with 800 others amid the noise and heat of the furnaces and forges. You can also follow the local history and geology trails, and find out about your local countryside. Of course, there are streams and woodland paths throughout which are home to hundreds of birds and wildlife.

Rocher Vale

Part of the Park Bridge Ironworks, Rocher Vale was the site of the Top Forge, coal mining and quarry, remains of which are still evident.

Rocher Vale lies in the Medlock Valley between the Oldham boundary and Park Bridge Heritage Centre. It is a designated Site of Biological Importance and Local Nature Reserve for its interesting mosaic of habitats from riverbanks, to woodland and heath. It is also a locally important geological site with many rocky outcrops showing an array of geological features. The Oldham Way, Medlock Valley Way and Tameside Trail pass through the valley.

Hartshead Pike

Standing 267 metres above sea level, Hartshead Pike gives unsurpassed views

across the surrounding countryside. There are many legends surrounding the area. Stories include myths about old Celtic tracks and links with druid hilltop worship. The Romans had a watchtower on the hill during the reign of the emperor Hadrian and later it was used as a fire beacon hill to warn of the approach and later defeat of the Spanish Armada. It was also used as a lookout post in the Second World War.

The original tower which stood some 50 metres to the north of the present structure and is marked by a millstone, was built in 1751 but was split open by lightning in 1794.

The tower that is on the site today was built in 1863 to celebrate the wedding of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward V11) to Princess Alexandra of Denmark.

There is a substantial network of footpaths, bridleways and quiet country lanes passing through and around the area, making Hartshead Pike an ideal place to go for a stroll, to walk the dog or just enjoy the outdoors.

The grasslands and dry stone walls are home to a large number of insects and beetles that in turn support a population of mice, voles, shrews and weasels which are a source of food for kestrel, fox and owls which can be seen hunting across the area.

Hollinwood Branch Canal

Last used as a working waterway in 1932, the Hollinwood Branch Canal was built to link the Ashton Canal with Hollinwood, primarily to transport coal from the many collieries along its length.

There is a rich diversity of plant life along the canal including several species which are rare in Greater Manchester, making it a vitally important wetland area.

Whatever the time of year, you are likely to spot ducks such as moorhen and mallard on the canal and if lucky you may glimpse sight of a water vole. The canal also attracts many insects, and in summer the bright flashes of dragonflies and damselflies darting over the water are a frequent sight.

The hedgerows alongside the canal provides food, shelter and nesting sites for birds such as robins, wrens and blackbirds, and supports a range of woodland shrubs and plants within it.

Littlemoss Camp

This important grassland area, along with the Hollinwood Branch Canal, together form one of Tameside's eight Local Nature Reserves. The hedgerows and woodland areas are an important feature and link to other habitats in the area.

Knott Hill Local Nature Reserve

Knott Hill Reservoir was decommissioned by North West Water in the late 1970's and acquired by Tameside Council in 1989. Since the lowering of the water level, wildlife

has flourished and woodland has been establishing itself on the banks of the disused reservoir. With a rich mixture of habitats including open water, marsh, swamp, developing woodland and grassland, Knott Hill has become an area important for

wildlife.

It is an excellent place to spend some time watching wildlife. The woodlands support a large number of birds such as woodpeckers, owls and nuthatch. The grasslands and marshes are attractive to butterflies such as orange tip and small copper, while damselflies and dragonflies hunt by the reservoir.

Daisy Nook Country Park

Daisy Nook Country Park is managed by Oldham Council and information can be obtained at the Oldham Council Daisy Nook Country Park page .

THE TAME VALLEY

Apethorn Godley Trail
Haughton Dale
Hulmes and Hardy Wood
Portland Basin
Roaches
Silver Springs

Apethorn Godley Trail

The Countryside Service manages this 2.5 km section of disused railway between Apethorn Lane Hyde and Green Lane, Godley, on behalf of the owners, as part of the Trans Pennine Trail. This is a national Trail from the east coast near Hull and the west coast at Liverpool and Southport. The Apethorn-Godley section also provides a flat easily accessible route for local walkers, people in wheelchairs or with prams, cyclists and horse riders, from the Tame valley to the countryside at Godley and beyond.

The route of the old railway is green corridor with woodland, scrub and grassland creating a local wildlife haven and connecting with several woodlands, including Countryside Service site like Gower Hey Wood. In the grasslands flowers like knapweed, teasel, and clovers provide colourful displays for visitors and food for insect and birds.

The original railway was built in 1866 by the Cheshire Lines Committee, primarily as a freight link to Chester and Liverpool, avoiding Manchester. In 1954 the eastern mainline near Godley was electrified and a large turntable had to be built at that end so engines could be changed. You can still see the pit for this. With the closure of the Woodhead route in the 1970's the line became little used and was closed in 1981. It remained disused until the new TPT section of trail was created in 2000/01.

There are a few access points onto the Apethorn Godley Trail, the main one being at the bottom of Apethorn Lane.

Haughton Dale Local Nature Reserve

Sandwiched between the Peak Forest Canal in Hyde and Haughton Green, on the sometimes steep-sided Tame valley is our largest Local Nature Reserve. Haughton Dale is rich in both natural and industrial heritage on both sides of the river Tame. Ancient woodlands and meadows that survived the industrial development in the valley are now connected by newer woodlands that have colonised or been planted

on the footprint of textile mills, coal mining and early glassmaking (for which it is nationally important). Most of the wetlands now found on the site are relics of this industry but have now become wildlife havens and valuable educational resources.

Here are found species like bluebells, for which Britain has an international responsibility, and in wet areas the yellow-green of golden saxifrage. The woodland with its oak, ash and alder is also an important habitat for birds. With woodpeckers, owls, bullfinches and nuthatches often seen and heard alongside more common ones like blackbirds, thrushes and robins. Spring and autumn usually provide great shows of colour.

The meadows, some of which are cut annually for hay, attract butterflies and other insects, including some less common bumblebees, with their wild flowers such as meadow vetchling, birds-foot trefoil, betony and devils bit scabious. Our wetlands are home to frogs, toads and newts for much of the year, but then they disperse to the surrounding meadows and woods, leaving the ponds to the invertebrates like dragonflies, water beetles and pond-skaters. If you are lucky you may see kingfishers on the ponds or in the river.

On evenings in spring to autumn this mix of woods, meadows and wetlands has plenty of insects which attract our only flying mammal, the bat, with three species recorded so far of which pipistrelle is the commonest.

The site has an extensive path network for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and is an opportunity to enjoy the wildlife on your doorstep, or just take a gentle stroll in the countryside. For those who like to go further it is well connected to the public rights of way system and other local countryside sites. Or you can access both national and local trails such as the Trans Pennine Trail, the Tame Valley Way and the Tameside Trail. Part of the site is accessible to people in wheelchairs or with prams.

Simple orienteering courses are also available for schools and youth groups, details are available on request. There are a few access points into Haughton Dale Local Nature Reserve including Mill Lane, Gibraltar Lane, Apethorn Lane and Meadow Lane.

Hulmes/Hardy Wood and Lower Haughton Meadows Local Nature Reserve

Only a short distance to the west of Haughton Dale, between the river Tame and Haughton Green is this slightly smaller Local Nature Reserve. This has a rich natural heritage of Ancient woodlands and meadows that survived a 200-year history of coal mining and quarrying, which ended in the 1920s. New woodlands developed on these sites or were planted following a 1970s restoration scheme to cap shafts and landscape old spoil heaps, creating one of Tameside's larger woodlands. Now you wouldn't know that industry had been there except for the exposed ruins of Hulmes Pit that maintain the link with our industrial heritage. The older woodlands are carpeted in bluebells in spring, alongside the yellow of lesser celandines and white of the wood anemone. Woodpeckers, including the more rare lesser-spotted, can be seen and heard along with more common woodland birds like nuthatches, blackbirds, and summer visiting warblers. As the river quality has improved birds like grey wagtails in summer and dippers in winter can be seen on the river.