

# MEDLOCK & TAME VALLEY CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Autumn 2013



**"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately... I  
wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow."**

**-- Henry David Thoreau**



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**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**

## Welcome to the 2013 edition of the Autumn Newsletter!

### Update on HQ and Garden

We continue to work inside the house to achieve our objectives from last year. The only outstanding job now is to finish in the kitchen and this will be (hopefully) achieved in the next couple of months. It will be a relief and a pleasure to have a fully kitted out kitchen where you can reach into a cupboard and expect to take out what you went in for!

As far as our outdoor projects are concerned we have three in mind for early next year. One is to repair our herb tablet to its former glory. The wooden frame which clearly formed the sections, has crumbled completely and so we need to make/purchase a new frame of some kind.

The second plan, (subject to funding) is to commence work on a wooden bridge across the pond to enable us to get a bit closer to the inhabitants during our pond dip and hopefully, to perhaps catch sight of a great crested newt! Our pond is one of several in the area to be a site of biological importance because it is the breeding ground of the great crested newt. Subject to funds being awarded, this will be an exciting outdoor project for us to undertake.

Our third project is to install a barn owl box (like the one pictured below) on one of the trees on our site. This was purchased last weekend for £40 from the Pennine Edge Barn Owl Group (PEBOG). Lee, Andrew and Susan went to Park Bridge to collect it from members of the PEBOG group. This will need to be fixed to a large tree with a direct flight path for the owl in the grounds of Burlinson House. The boxes are heavy and it will have to be hoisted up on a rope and fixed by some brave person high up on the tree! Actually we have an abseil-or in mind who has volunteered his services to us (relief)! We will keep you posted on that one but we do hope it is a great success, so watch this space!



(stock photograph only)

### YOU CHOOSE FUNDING

We (thankfully) managed to secure funding again this year at the Tameside You Choose Awards. With this award we hope to renovate the 'breakfast room' at the rear of the house to make a multi-purpose room for multi-media purposes and for

extracting and demonstrating the extraction of honey from 'the hive to the jar'. This will be another exciting indoor project for us and will be commenced toward the end of the summer 2014.

On Saturday **30 November at 11am**, we are hoping to walk around **Clayton Vale** to see the recent developments to improve the natural environment.

We could park on Assheaton Road off Berry Brow just over the railway line and then walk down from there.

Check it out on google maps for the exact location but if you can't manage this, please telephone me on 07989 147095 and I will give you the best directions I have.

If you do intend to come please wear the appropriate clothing for the day and wear sensible footwear. A packed lunch is also recommended and we can stop off somewhere on the way to have this.

Please let me know by reply email if you intend going or not, so we know whether to wait at the rallying point for you before commencing the walk.

We look forward to seeing you there!

### **GET READY FOR THE INFLUX** (Extracted from Ark Wildlife Newsletter Autumn 2013)



Although our hedgerows are currently bursting with fruit and berries, the surplus food will not last.

A British autumn is an unpredictable thing, on 26th October 2012 a large area of the UK woke up to sub-zero temperatures and snow in many areas. Roll forward to 2013 and the picture is quite different. Mild temperatures and plenty of food in the hedgerow and a happy and content population of birds.

However, as always change is just around the corner. We're already getting reports from around the country that large numbers of redwings, fieldfares and bramblings among many are arriving on our shores and just because we've had a good autumn, this is not true for all other countries. Tens of thousands of birds are arriving on our shores and spreading across the countryside, eating as they go, quickly depleting the natural food resources before moving on.



Birds choosing to spend their winters in the UK such as fieldfares, bramblings, not to mention many common garden species such as finches are coming in from Scandinavia, and the redwings from as far afield as Russia, all due to the comparatively mild climate compared to what they would have to endure at home.

Many of us notice a distinct lull in the number of birds visiting feeders in early autumn,



however – this is about to change. With so many bird species coming in from colder climes, the natural food supply will quickly dwindle as the weather worsens, our numerous foreign visitors as well as our own native birds will become much more reliant upon the famous generosity of the British bird feeder.

Stocking up for the winter is never a bad idea for ourselves let alone our feathered friends. It is always nice to have a little put away for that rainy (or hailing, or snowy) day. Unfortunately our birds do not have the opportunity to plan ahead and so it is down to us to give them that little extra they need as the winter draws in. Whatever the weather, the birds still manage to make it to our feeders when they are hungry. We on the other hand, cannot rely on the UK transport system to be as reliable when the weather shows it's true winter colours

*We had a really enjoyable and informative evening at our recent "Migratory Birds" public event in Burlinson House on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November. We heard and seen power point presentations about the Field Fare, the Waxwing, the Swallow, House Martin and Swift. The migration of birds is a spectacular sight as well as an amazing achievement calling into play the hormones, senses and genetic information of each bird and employing help from the sun, stars, thermal currents and earth's magnetic field. I would thoroughly recommend some in-depth reading on this fascinating subject and the ability of birds throughout the world to achieve it!*

## PROGRAMME 2013/2014

All events commence at 7.15 unless otherwise stated.

Other dates not listed will be confirmed in the next newsletter or by email

**30 November 2013 – 11am – Walk to Clayton Vale – please see details in the shaded box above.**

### 2014

JANUARY – Winter Walk

17th February – Energy Evening with Lee & Carl

17th March – Amphibians – format to be decided at the next meeting.

### **TABLE QUIZ – (Fundraising Event) April**

Water Birds - May

Spiders - June

Fungi - July

All dates coming soon!

***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

Scientific name: *Polyommatus icarus*



The male butterfly has blue wings with a black-brown border and a thin white fringe. Females are brown, similar to the Brown Argus, but with blue dusting near the body.

The Common Blue is the most widespread blue butterfly in Britain and Ireland and is found in a variety of grassy habitats.

The brightly coloured males are conspicuous but females are more secretive. The colour of the upperwings of females varies from almost completely brown in southern England to predominantly blue in western Ireland and Scotland, but the colour is variable within local populations with some striking examples. Unlike Adonis and Chalkhill Blues, the dark veins do not extend into the white fringes of the wing margins.

It remains widespread but there have been local declines within its range.

## SIZE & FAMILY

- Family – Blues
- Small Sized
- Wing Span Range (male to female) - 35mm

## CONSERVATION & STATUS

- UK BAP status: Not listed
- Butterfly Conservation priority: Low
- European status: Not threatened

## CATERPILLAR FOODPLANTS

Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) is the main foodplant. Other plants used include: Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil (*L. pedunculatus*), Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*), Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Lesser Trefoil (*T. dubium*).

## DISTRIBUTION

Countries – England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Found throughout Ireland and Britain

Distribution Trend Since 1970's = -15%

## HABITAT

Very common and found in a variety of habitats especially sunny sheltered spots. Examples of habitats include; down lands, coastal dunes, under cliffs, road verges, acid grass and woodland clearings.

It is also found on waste ground, disused pits and quarries, golf courses, and urban habitats such as cemeteries.

(Extracts taken from the Butterfly Conservation website)

In Memorium

## LEONARD KIDD

26<sup>th</sup> January, 1920 – 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2013

Leonard Kidd, who died in the Royal Oldham Hospital aged 93, was a founder member of the Medlock and Tame Valley Conservation Committee (MTVCC) in 1971.

At that time he was curator of the Natural History Museum in Werneth Park and a member of the Oldham Microscopical and Natural History Society.

In August of that year he chaired the inaugural meeting of the MTVCC and served variously as president, chairman, vice-chairman and committee member of the later renamed Medlock and Tame Valley Conservation Association (MTVCA) for the next 15 years or so.

Leonard had an extensive knowledge of local flora and fauna and he brought this expertise to contribute effectively to the Association's role as an environmental guardian.

His valuable contribution to the MTVCA is gratefully acknowledged.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his family and friends.



Don't forget to visit the MTVCA website. There are loads of interesting facts, information and links to other like-minded sites and the website is updated daily by Lee, our webmaster. Tell us what you think and why not add a few comments t'boot!

[www.medlockandtame.org.uk](http://www.medlockandtame.org.uk)

## AUTUMN CHANGES



**“Autumn, the year's last, loveliest smile.”**

**William Cullen Bryant**

Trees are symbols of endurance and strength as they grow and persevere year after year, even in adverse conditions. In temperate climates, trees have adaptations that allow them to live through severe winter cold, such as losing their leaves. Deciduous trees shed leaves each fall, many showing brilliant colour. Leaves, which would die on the tree if exposed to sudden freezing temperatures, are programmed to fall off each year before serious cold occurs, lessening the chance that decaying leaves on trees could spread infection to the parent plant. A number of changes occur in the leaf to allow it to detach from the tree.

### Loss of Chlorophyll

During spring and summer, leaves are food-producing factories. Chlorophyll, which reflects green light, is contained in special structures inside leaf cells called chloroplasts. Chlorophyll's job is to take water and atmospheric carbon dioxide and combine them in the presence of sunlight to form sugar, which is taken throughout the plant for food. Chlorophyll doesn't last long, so the plant has to make new chlorophyll all through the warm seasons of the year. When cooler fall temperatures begin, the plant stops making chlorophyll.

### Membrane Formation

Cooler temperatures, shortening day length and lessening of sunlight prompt the tree to gradually create a tough membrane between the leaf stem and the tree branch. The membrane, called the abscission layer or separation layer, gradually stops sugars from going from the leaf into the tree and stops water and nutrients from entering the leaf. This helps shut down chlorophyll production, revealing underlying orange pigments called carotenoids, and triggering production of anthocyanins, which are red and purple.

### Other Pigments

Carotenoids are naturally present in leaf chloroplasts along with chlorophyll, but are masked by chlorophyll's green. When chlorophyll production shuts down, the orange carotenoids are revealed. Other pigments, yellow xanthophylls, are also revealed as chlorophyll disappears. Anthocyanins are usually produced in fall in the leaf's cell sap. Increased sugar build up in the leaf because of the closing membrane, bright sunlight, dry weather and cool nights produce the most vivid red and purple anthocyanin colours. The acidity of the cell sap influences the colours, with acidic cell sap giving bright red and more alkaline cell sap giving purple.

### Falling Leaves

As the separation layer continues to form, leaf colour intensifies and the leaves become drier. Finally the veins that connect the leaf to the twig are completely sealed off, and the leaf is ready to fall to the ground with a passing breeze, a jumping squirrel or a stray raindrop. Without leaves to support, the tree can finish preparing for winter, entering dormancy. Fallen leaves decompose on the ground to return nutrients to the soil and furnish many organisms such as fungi, bacteria, earthworms and insects with food in turn. Layers of leaves furnish insulation to plants, tubers, and small animals that overwinter in the ground.

