



*Summer 2023*

## **Wildlife Gardener**

Despite previous disappointment (1961, aged four, made grass and mud nests on the lawn for birds - none came), I tried wildlife gardening again when I married in 1980. We dug a pond. More disappointment! Only gnats and a bunch of amorous frogs turned up. The sight of a hedgehog wrestling a saveloy near the chippy on our busy street made us hope again (while being carried to safety, it didn't curl into a ball but continued gobbling the sausage, evidently suspicious of our motives).

We moved to our Stourport suburban semi in 1999. The garden, adjoining a pocket of undeveloped land, brims with wildlife. Badgers snuffle for peanuts right under our windows and goldcrests, chiffchaffs, starlings and foxes visit. A frog shares a washing up bowl with my kingcups. Evening skies are tremulous with bats, martins and the sound of thrushes' songs.

Gardening-wise, wildlife calls the shots. We're merely the staff. We've planned to top the big conifer "when the pigeons stop courting and nest building" for 23 years. The badgers grudgingly allow me a lawn but myriad holes and excavations suggest that they are replicating the local golf course; they snout up new shrubs they judge to have impeded their sacred right of way (yet when I tried harnessing badger-power by inserting peanuts under tough weeds, their interest in 'snouting things up' evaporates).

It seems only yesterday that the horse chestnuts (sown by forgetful squirrels) were just trip-hazard saplings; now they threaten the greenhouse. Their treacly sticky buds, festooned with plumage-like feather dusters, are apparently utilised by birds, nature's waxing strips for moulting pigeons or a sparrowhawk's prey plucking tools?

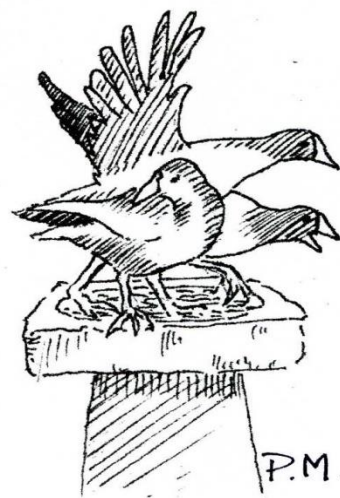
I plant annuals in containers to inconvenience slugs. Again, wildlife plans otherwise. When I emptied old compost from a pot, out tumbled over forty newts that instantly froze into orange-bellies-up poses of civil disobedience. You could almost hear them singing "we can not, we can not be moved" (without a license).

Toolshed toad is ultimate arbiter of our gardening activities. If he lunges and hisses disapproval of our disturbing his lawnmower, we don't argue.

Our little bird bath is popular but proved unequal to the task when three moorhens jammed themselves solidly into it. Their scornful expressions as they quit my inadequate facilities, unwetted, seemed to sneer 'call yourself a wildlife gardener?!'

Larger birdbaths we considered purchasing were so deep that sparrows would need snorkels to use them and so low that cats could swat them while remaining seated. A plastic kitchen drawer on a table now successfully accommodates everything from blackcaps to jackdaws. The critical moorhens, however, never gave us a second chance; where they strutted from or to is a mystery.

A bigger mystery, and harsher critique of our gardening, was the gravel path's disappearance. Or what I call, to paraphrase Robert Frost, "the path more taken". Twice we laid it. Twice it vanished, virtually overnight. But that's another story...



*Caroline Male*

*Thank you, Caroline, for this excellent contribution and also thank you to Peter for the lovely illustration.*

*Ruth, Editor*

## Indoor Meetings

Everyone is welcome to all meetings  
Holy Innocents Community Hall at 7.30 p.m.  
Admission £2.50

Thursday 3rd September 2023  
Dave Smith

**From Painted Lady to Old Lady:  
Those Incredible Butterflies and Moths**

As well as his interesting talk, Dave will bring examples of moth traps and tell us the best book to use for reference. If weather permits he may bring specimens. Not to be missed!



Jim Preston

Poplar Hawk Moth



Jim Preston

Buff Tip

Thursday 5th October 2023  
Ashley Grove

**Shetland to Scilly - Birds of the British Isles**

Ashley is a well-known professional photographer and he will take on a journey throughout the country; 130 species will make an appearance! The talk will be rounded off by a montage of more images set to music.

Thursday 2nd November 2023  
Phil Seaton

**Orchid conversation and the Millenium Seed Bank**

An informative talk from Phil, who runs the orchid seed banking network, about the work done at the Millenium Seed Bank.

Phil will also include the best way to store seeds. This is an interesting evening to look forward to.

Thursday 7th December 2023

A short A.G.M followed by our Christmas Social



For further information about the group please contact  
Joan Kearton-Jones joan.kj@sky.com

Would you like to suggest a walk or lead one that is special to you? If so, please contact Glyn Walters  
01562 637556

## Walks to enjoy in 2023

All start 10.a.m. Donations to the Trust

Sunday 10th September

**Tracks, Towpaths and Turrets with Jean Maffie**

A walk of approx. 2.2miles, which can be extended for those wanting a longer walk of 3.8miles. A flat easy walk along the disused Staffordshire railway line with no stiles and an opportunity to enjoy the local countryside.

**Meet:** Bratch Lane car park at the disused Wombourne railway station. GR 871938/Nearest PC WV5 9AD

Sunday 8th October

**Exploring the countryside around Burlish Top and the Rifle Range with Sandra Sharpe**

A circular route through undulating countryside, exploring the varied sights and views found in this interesting area. Approx 3-4miles long with no stiles.

**Meet:** Car park at the corner in Kingsway on the edge of Stourport. GR 806734/Nearest PC DY13 8NA

Sunday 19th November

**A walk around Chaddesley Corbett with Mervyn Needham**

An approx. 3.5miles walk through lovely countryside near Chaddesley Corbett. An opportunity to enjoy the autumn colours and benefit from Mervyn's local knowledge. Can be muddy at this time of the year.

**Meet:** In the lane next to Chaddesley Village Hall off the A448 Bromsgrove road. GR 888737/PC DY10 4QA



Ruth Howell



Ruth Howell

A walk led by Owen Raybold

Sunday 10th December

**A Wander around Astley Burf with Richard Jaynes**

A circular walk of approx. 4miles with four stiles. It goes through some of Worcestershire's most beautiful countryside, passing through river meadows, woodland and arable farms.

**Meet:** Car park of Hampstall Inn. Astley Burf.  
GR 812678/PC DY13 0RZ