

Barford Road Pocket Park Quarterly Newsletter.

August 2010

It's Wild Out There!

The park is bursting at the seams with wildlife at this time of year. Summer wild flowers have come out in force in the meadows and along the edges of paths.

This year has been a fantastic year for **Vetches**, including **Birds Foot Trefoil**. This plant is also known as **Egg and Bacon** due to its rich yellow (yoke like) colour, with streaks of red in the flower representing the ba-

con. This and all other vetches are members of the Pea (legume) family and all have seed pods similar to peas that you grow in your garden!

Himalayan Balsam and can be seen around the edges of wetter areas of the site at this time of year. This plant isn't native to this country and can spread very quickly, smothering



Almost looks good enough to eat! The egg and bacon plant with its yellow petals and red streaks.

out other plants, but hasn't done so far in the park.

Himalayan Balsam at its full height. **Orange Balsam** can also be seen in the park at this time of year.

Special points of interest:

- The Bat House has been bricked up recently due to the door frames rotting. No-one needs access to the old pumping station and this added quiet will provide more safety to the park's Bats. It will soon get a new paint-job too!
- Enjoy the park at this bright time of year!



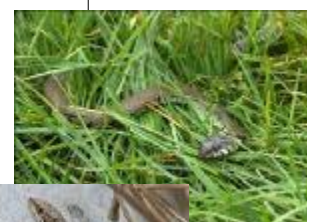
Snakes and Lizards.....

A company of ecologists working on behalf of Taylor Wimpey have approached me recently asking about doing a **Reptile** survey in the park to establish whether or not the park could sustain a bigger reptile population. Basically, on the

"Poppyfields" site behind Tesco's is a large population of **Grass Snakes** and **Lizards** which have to be moved before they can start building on the field. Barford Road Pocket Park is the obvious choice as a new location for these scaly

creatures to be relocated to. We already have quite a large population of snakes and a small colony of lizards, but there is always room for more!

Lizards could soon be more popular in the park! I'll keep you posted!

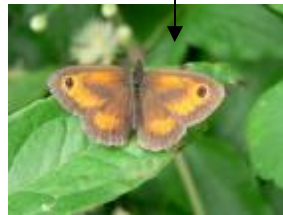


At this time of year the insect life at the park is fantastic too. We currently have quite literally thousands of 5 and 6 Spot Burnett Moths all over the site. I don't know of any site that we look after that has such a huge population. You can see their cocoons all over the park attached to grasses and flowers, and even on the stock fence around the lake. Butterflies are also numerous at this time of

year, including another special species. The Small Heath butterfly has been seen in several areas around the site.



We have also seen Small Skippers and Meadow Browns.



Other things to look out for include Grass Snakes. These slithery serpents can be seen basking in the sunshine all over the site on the paths and grassy areas. Careful where you tread, these snakes are not poisonous, but can make you jump as they tend to sit very still until you are right on top of them!



These moths are everywhere at the minute. Watch out for some still hatching out of their cocoons.

Events!

The summer season is the most popular time for events at Barford Road Pocket Park. We have just had our annual 'Evening Stroll', which was a great success, 7 people turned out on a lovely summers evening to enjoy the park at that time of day. We saw lots of Burnett moths, aswell as a huge variety of wildflowers and generally had a good natter about the parks features and management work.

Coming up at the start and throughout the summer holidays, we have our annual fishing events. Where children can come along and learn to fish. These are free events, but spaces are limited so if you want to come along please phone Hinchingbrooke Country Park on 01480 451 568 to book your place!

I have also had a good report of Water Voles being seen in the park. This is great news as these furry little rodents are now quite rare. It is estimated that from the 1960's to the mid 90's that the population of water voles in the UK dropped by 90-95%!!!! The numbers are now starting to increase again and it's great to see these mammals at Barford Road Pocket Park.



School Environmental Project

I have spent quite a bit of time over the last few months at St. Neots Community College, helping them with their new Environmental garden and outside learning space. All the work I have been doing with them reached its climax at the end of term with a half day for year 8 students to build an environmental garden in an area of the school known as

'The Quad'. We have put in a raised wildlife pond and sown a wild flower meadow. The school have also set aside 2 areas, 1 as a herb garden, with an interesting feature (a huge Herb head), and 1 as a small allotment area complete with potting shed/greenhouse.



Above: The raised wildlife pond waiting to be filled up!

Below Left: The potting shed and veg plot.

Below Right: 'Herb'ert the giant Herb head!



This project will hopefully teach the students about the environment and sustainable living as well as nature. There was one more feature to the Environmental day, a huge mural painted on a blank brick wall in the area with a sculpture made from recycled materials. Other activities on the day included minibeast hotel making and the construction of a huge mosaic with an environmental theme made from recycled tiles.



This was the winning entry in a competition run throughout the school to design a mural for this wall. The painting was done by a local graffiti artist. The sculpture was built by the students and the owner of a local business who "won" an investment from BBC's Dragons Den to fund his business of building furniture and sculptures out of recycled materials.



Recent Happenings at the Park

The last few hotter weeks of weather have brought with them the annual problem of people swimming in the river, barbecues and life-buoys going missing.

Although nothing is better than a nice cold dip at the end of a long hot day, unfortunately it just is NOT SAFE to swim in the river at the park and especially not near the weirs. PLEASE DO NOT DO IT. The police are being informed every time people are swimming and they are doing regular patrols of the park.

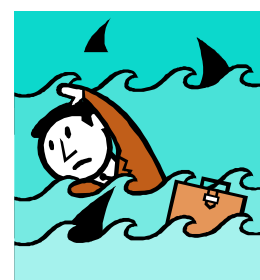
Although barbecues are welcome in the park during the summer, the broken glass and food packaging that is often left behind are not welcome. I have installed new benches in the park for people to enjoy. Unfortunately, have had several acts of vandalism here. PLEASE

HELP ME OUT AND PHONE ME OR THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY if you see any vandalism going on. Also, If you see any life-buoys missing from their holders, please phone me so that I can retrieve them. They may be needed in an emergency.

I have installed more bins around the park and there is still more to come so please use them.

Hopefully I will be installing some permanent barbecue sights in the park soon so disposable barbecues will become a thing of the past! Please feel free to use these when they are installed for family picnics or even birthday parties.

Lets just hope that we get some warm evenings for the rest of the summer for bar-bequing!!



One last note.....

I'd just like to say a huge thank you to all of those regular users of the park who have been litter picking for me recently. This has not only saved my time so I can be making other improvements, but has kept the park clean all the while. I am very grateful to you all!

For more information of forthcoming events or just more information about the park, please contact:

Phone: 01480 406 795

Email: paxpits@btconnect.com

Many thanks and see you around!

Matt Hall

Ranger, Barford Road Pocket Park