

PERDISWELL WILDLIFE MONITORING 28/29 APRIL 2019

BACKGROUND

This is the fourth wildlife survey the Worcester Canal Group has undertaken. In 2016 we concentrated on the mile long stretch of canal from the Marina to Bilford bottom lock. A bat walk, a moth breakfast and a wildlife walk were included in that survey. In 2017 we used the CRT workboat the Wanderer to look at wildlife habitats along and adjoining the canal towpath. In 2018 we concentrated on Barbourne brook, especially where it runs through Gheluveldt Park. This year we have taken a closer look at Perdiswell. The Worcester Canal Group has recently adopted more of the canal and now covers Perdiswell.

These wildlife surveys are not purposeless. Nor are they searches for the unusual or spectacular.

The canal is a wildlife corridor. The experience of conservation work everywhere is that wildlife habitats which become isolated decline and fail. In areas like cities a corridor which connects wildlife habitats is necessary if that wildlife is to spread and thrive.

Our wildlife corridor consists of more than just the canal and the towpath.

The canal is part of a six mile long circuit of water within the city of Worcester consisting of the canal, the River Severn and Barbourne brook. At the southern, Diglis, end the canal connects with the river, with Cherry Orchard Nature Reserve, with Chapter Meadows and with the countryside to the south and west. At the Six Ways end of the city it is linked to the countryside to the north and east. For much of its course through the city the canal runs very close to Barbourne brook which as a largely unrecognised wildlife habitat links the canal to the river Severn at Gheluveldt and on to the countryside to the north and west.

In the course of our surveys we have identified some twenty areas, some large and some small, which adjoin the canal and are wildlife habitats. Some are managed, many are not. These areas could be linked and enhanced.

PERDISWELL PARK

Our aim was to use the weekend to take a closer look at wildlife in and around Perdiswell Park. We were hoping that this would involve some new people, and it did. We used the workboat the Wanderer as a focal point and asked people to take a walk along the canal, across the park to Barbourne brook where it is not culverted and then back to the Wanderer.

1 CANAL SIDE

Animals- squirrel

Birds- collared dove, blue tit, crow, sparrow, robin, gull, black backed gull, swan, duck, blackbird, magpie, moorhen, starling, redpoll, mallard, crow, great tit, wren, kestrel, chiffchaff, jackdaw, gold finch

Butterflies- small white, common blue, speckled wood, orange tip,

Trees- hazel, hawthorn, cherry, elder, field maple, sloe, willow, lime, buddleia, ash, wayfaring tree,

Insects- bumble bee, other bee, blue bottle, hoverfly, spider, ant, midges

Plants- cuckoo flower, cow parsley, common nettle, water meet, dog wood, white dead nettle, bramble, geranium, dandelion, plantain, rose, canary grass, bluebell, common vetch, smooth tare, teasel, mullein, buttercup, cow parsley, speedwell, lords and ladies, grape hyacinth, rushes,

Fish- jumping

2 GOLF COURSE AND OPEN PARK

Animals- squirrel, dog (racing), badger runs

Birds- magpie, crow, pigeon, blue tit, blackbird, sparrow, long tail tit, great tit, buzzard, cettis warbler, wren, chaffinch

Butterflies- orange tip, white, fritillary, meadow brown

Insects- horse fly, hoverfly, caterpillars, common bee

Trees- twisted trees, pollarded willow

Plants- wild garlic, sorrel, bluebell, speedwell, daisy.

3 BARBOURNE BROOK

Birds- Pigeon, blue tit, crow, great tit, magpie, robin, sparrow, whitethroat, jackdaw, wren, song thrush, green woodpecker

Butterflies- orange tip, speckled wood, peacock, moths

Insects- water boatmen, bees, hoverfly, wasp, damsel fly, spider.

Trees- old hawthorn, wild service tree,

Plants- spear thistle, lesser celandine, bluebell, yarrow, mistletoe, mallow, dandelion, dock, nettles, daisy, cow parsley, clover, butter cup.

BILFORD DUMP

Previous surveys have identified the way in which industrial development along the canal cuts across roads and housing developments at odd angles with the result that pockets of undeveloped land have been left like beads on a string. These `pockets` or `nodes` are wildlife habitats of real interest. To find out more about them and start to look at ways of connecting them in a planned way has emerged as an important part of the work we are doing.

A good example of a node is the area adjoin the canal and behind the council tip on Bilford road. This is a substantial area of land belonging to Worcestershire County Council. With the help of Councillor Matt Jenkins six of us were able to gain access on the 29th.

What we found was even more interesting than we had been expecting. The area falls into two quite distinct parts. The lower area, near the housing, is rough ground under thick vegetation with a real variety of species of trees and shrubs which seems to have been undisturbed for some time. We believe that the capped pipes we found are there to allow the water table to be monitored. It is likely then that this is an area unsuitable for housing development.

The upper area is more open, with a mixture of low tress and grassland.

Our general impression was we should visit again at different times of year and different times of day. If people with specialist knowledge for example of bats, moths or butterflies could be part of those visits it would be useful. Our findings were:

Animals- Squirrel, badger runs

Birds- blackbird, pigeon, sparrow, coal tit, buzzard,

Butterflies -Peacock, speckled wood, small blue, orange tip, large white,

Slow worms (3), slugs, snails,

Insects - wood lice, hoverfly, bumble bee, wasp, garden bee, lady bird

Trees- sycamore, holly, silver birch, hawthorn, crack willow, goat willow, ash, horse chestnut, Norwegian maple, field maple, hazel, laurel, elder

Plants- Garlic mustard, yellow rattle, bluebells, common vetch, bramble, ivy, moss, herb robert, daffodils, lichen, nettles, fern, thistle, bindweed, dandelion, dog wood, rose, cotoneaster, strawberry, ragged robin, dock, dandelion, goose grass, cow parsley, celandine, cuckoo pint, buttercup, forget me not.

FROM THE CANAL TO ASTWOOD CEMETARY

For the sake of comparison two of us also surveyed the wooded path between the canal and Astwood cemetery which in itself is worthy of a future survey.

Animals – fox (dead)

Birds- ducks, moorhens, Aylesbury duck, gull, sparrow, pigeon, blue tit, wren, magpie, blackbird, finch, turtle dove, green finch, sparrows,

Butterflies- little blue, common blue, orange tip, brown, white, peacock, speckled wood, meadow brown

Insects- bluebottles, greenfly, honey bee, other flying yellow and black insects, flies.

CONCLUSIONS

Our surveys demonstrate that there is a wide variety of wildlife to be interested in and there are people who are interested in it. This is vital if the corridor is to be protected and enhanced in the future.

Twenty five people took part in the Perdiswell survey. In total over a hundred people have taken part in our surveys. They range in age from seven to over seventy. Some people have taken part in every survey.

In addition to the people we are also building up other resources. For example, the Wanderer has been used in two of the surveys. It makes a fantastic focal point, gives access to wildlife habitats on the canal itself and gives people who live close to the canal a chance to experience it by boat.

Similarly, a bank of photographs is being built up which can be found on the Worcester Canal Group website.

City Councillors Joy and George Squires and Lyn Denham and the County Councillor Matt Jenkins continue to support the work at every stage.

Many organisations large and small have taken part. These include; Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, the Arboretum Residents Association, St Barnabas school, Wild and Rooted CIC, Friends of Gheluveld Park, Birmingham and Droitwich Canal Society, and Holidays Afloat. Some, such as The Canal and River Trust, St Pauls Creative Group, the Duckworth Trust and Worcester City Council have taken part in every survey. By being members of the Worcester Canal Corridor Group convened by the CRT many also continue to support work with wildlife along the canal.

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