

BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS OFFICER'S REPORT

Asian Hornets

- Asian hornets have been seen in Cornwall (Liskeard) and east Yorkshire (Hull) and the National Bee Unit is asking for any suspected sightings to be reported.
- Asian hornets were sighted in Fowey in September, which is the peak activity time, and the nest was promptly removed.
- Although Asian hornets pose no greater risk to human health (their sting is less painful than a wasp) they can damage honey bee colonies.
- Any sightings should be reported through the Asian Hornet Watch app or by emailing alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk
- More information and identification guides can be found [online](#).

Urban Green Space helps Children's Brains

- Research by the University College London Institute of Education has shown that children living in greener urban neighbourhoods may have better spatial working memory.
- Spatial working memory, a measure of how effective people are at orientation and recording information about their environment, enables us to navigate through a city or remember the position of objects and is strongly inter-related with attentional control.
- The research, which looked at 4,758 11 year-olds, revealed that lower quality neighbourhood greenspace relates to poorer working memory, irrespective of whether the neighbourhoods were considered deprived or non-deprived.
- Spatial working memory is an important cognitive ability that is strongly related to academic achievement in children – if the positive role of greenspace and children's spatial working memory is causal then the research could positively influence decisions about education and urban planning.
- Read the full report in the British Journal of Educational Psychology (open access): Flouri, E., Papachristou, E. and Midouhas, E. (2018), [The role of neighbourhood greenspace in children's spatial working memory](#).

Big Butterfly Count 2018 Results

- 100,246 people submitted 964,480 counts during the 2018 Big Butterfly Count period of 20 July – 12 August which focussed on 17 butterfly species and two day-flying moth species.
- Some results may appear negative but can be accounted for by the warm April weather which led to many species starting their flight period. This resulted in many of the single-brood species, such as meadow brown, ringlet and marbled white, being past their peak during the count.
- The small white was the most recorded species with the large white being the second most abundant. Numbers of both of these species were more than double noted in the 2017 survey.
- Green-veined white was up 78% on the same period in 2017 and counts of the holly blue increased by 122% whilst those of the common blue increased by 51%.

- The silver y moth had its highest number per count since 2013 and a threefold increase on 2017 – it was the only migrant species included in the survey which did well with the red admiral decreasing by 73% and the painted lady which remained fairly stable. Red admirals did well in 2017 and it may be that the cold spells earlier in the year killed overwintering individuals – the species has fared well since the 1970s and this decrease is not cause for concern. This is also the case for the comma which showed a decline of 40%.
- A decline has been observed in the numbers of small tortoiseshells, which has lost 75% of its UK population since the 1970s.
- Meadow brown, ringlet, marbled white and six-spot burnet were recorded less frequently compared to 2017 due to their early emergence in the spring/summer.
- More results can be found at:
<https://www.bigbutterflycount.org/2018mainresults>

Tawny Owl Research Project

- The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) is asking for volunteers to listen out for tawny owl calls throughout the autumn and winter.
- This Citizen Science project is asking volunteers to listen out for tawny owls in their gardens or local green space.
- The results of the project will increase our understanding of the owls' calling behaviour and distribution and help discover the impact of urbanisation and artificial lighting on the birds.
- The BTO is also interested in knowing where tawny owls are not heard calling so all reports are important.
- Volunteers only need to spend 20 minutes one evening (between sunset and midnight) between now and the end of March 2019 to take part in the project. However, if you can repeat the survey in subsequent weeks the more information you can provide the better.
- Survey results – date, survey start time, an estimate of cloud cover and whether you heard a tawny owl call – can be submitted online
- If a tawny owl is heard calling at another time of the week outside the survey period this can also be recorded online.
- Download the survey instructions, listen to the calls of male and female tawny owls, or find out how to build a tawny owl box on the [BTO's website](#).
- Paper recording sheets can be obtained by emailing gbw@bto.org or calling 01842 750050.

Local Nature Reserve (LNRs) and Open Spaces

A range of projects have taken place at the LNRs and open spaces:

- The Aquadrome, Chorleywood House Estate and Leavesden Country Park have all been rewarded their Green Flag Awards for 2018/19. Green Flag judges visited

Leavesden Country Park and Chorleywood House Estate in May whilst the Aquadrome was the subject to a mystery shopper visit.

- There are eight categories upon which parks and open spaces are assessed. The site must, for example, be welcoming, safe and secure, clean and well maintained, sustainably managed, have community involvement and be well managed.

- For more information go to:

<http://www.greenflagaward.org/>

- New, five year, management plans are being developed for the Aquadrome, Oxhey Woods and Chorleywood House Estate and are due to be formally adopted in March 2019, once all of the consultation has been completed.

- The cattle left Croxley Common Moor in October. It was a very dry season which hopefully meant that the cattle ate more of the scrub than in normal years due to the reduced vegetation growth over the summer.

- A new footbridge over the River Gade is in the process of being designed and installed. There has been a delay in the installation due to the abutments being in a worse condition than originally thought.

- The Friends of Croxley Common Moor have commenced their autumn/winter programme of scrub removal. The next task will take place at 10am on Sunday 9 December – everyone is welcome, no experience needed.

- For more information about the work of the Friends and the upcoming events at Croxley Common Moor visit:

www.croxleycommonmoor.org.uk

- The cattle left Chorleywood House Estate at the end of September after being on site since mid-June. They grazed the field behind The Readings, Dell Field and the Dell.

- The Chorleywood Community Orchard group held their annual Apple Day on 6 October.

- The Countryside Management Service (CMS) and their volunteers have visited the Estate to augment the valuable work of the Friends of Chorleywood House Estate. They continued the on-going scrub removal in the Dell and Dell Field as well as laying a hedge.

- The Friends of Chorleywood House Estate carry out tasks on the first and third Tuesday of each month. They have recently been working to maintain the sculptures, clear the historic leat and worked to maintain a wild flower area on Dell Mound. Anyone is welcome to join the group – more information can be found on their website:

<http://www.chorleywoodhouse.org.uk/>

- New footpaths have been installed in Oxhey Woods in order to improve access and the easy access route has been repaired and improved with additional drainage.

- Areas of rhododendron, which have been previously removed due their invasive and dominant nature, continue to be treated in order to minimise their re-growth.
- Various family activities have been organised by the Council's Park Ranger. Activities have included welly walks, bug hunts and bat walks. For information on all of the upcoming events go to:
<http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/events-community-groups-and-volunteering>