

STOUR VALLEY WILDLIFE ACTION GROUP



NEWS LETTER JULY 2011

Although not the target species, above is the second family of Kestrels raised in this barn owl nest box from the Stour Valley Barn Owl nest box project. The project was funded by Stratford District Council and Stour 2020 Vision Group. 26 boxes were distributed throughout the Stour Area. Nest boxes for barn owls are not just important for nesting but also for safe roosting. Barn owls have suffered a severe decline over the last 2 long hard winters so the boxes have become even more important in assisting the recovery of the species in the Stour Area.



ANOTHER NATIONALLY NOTABLE AND LOCALLY SCARCE SPECIES.

This beetle may not be as striking as the Hornet moth in last months news letter but, it is an uncommon species that has only been recorded 3 times recently in Warwickshire and all from the Stour Area. A Darkling Beetle, (*Pseudocistela ceramboides*) breeds in the rotting wood of dead and dying trees.



The beetle above was found on Hogweed, the flowers of this plant attract many interesting insects.

OPERATION NECTAR

NEWS OF OUR "OPERATION NECTAR" IS SPREADING AND BUGLIFE ARE NOW AWARE OF THE PROJECT THANKS TO STEVEN FALK.

AWARENESS OF THE PLIGHT OF OUR IMPORTANT INSECTS IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS AND WE WILL BE ARRANGING PUBLIC TALKS ON BUTTERFLIES, BUMBLEBEES AND MOTHS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

DON'T FORGET, ALL MEMBERS HAVE A 10% DISCOUNT ON PLANTS AND GOODS AT BATSFORD GARDEN CENTRE!

SEE THE EXCITING B LINES PROJECT NEWS ENCLOSED!

BUGLIFE WEB ADDRESS <http://www.buglife.org.uk/>

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership subscriptions are now due, if you haven't already renewed, please get in touch with Mervyn Bonham on ukmbon1@btinternet.com. If you know someone who wishes to join the group, a membership form can be downloaded from our website address below!

<http://www.stourvalleywildlifeactiongroup.org/index.html>

UPDATE FROM TIM HASELDEN, WETLANDS OFFICER, WWT

A little update for you that you could pass on to the group if you wouldn't mind please: half of the mink rafts that will be going out as part of the project have now been put out and we hope to get the others out soon. We also have several otter holts that need installing and it would be great if we could do this as part of a volunteer day with the group's help. One of the holts is destined for Richard's farm and we should be able to install 2 or 3 in a day (each holt should take a few hours). Would it be possible to ask the group if anyone might be interested in helping out please and also what day (weekend or week-day) would be preferable to do this in July or August. Currently, the only weekend that I can't do is 20th August.

Each owner / host of a mink raft will also be given an information pack on how to monitor / control mink, further landowner liaison will also be carried out before the end of the project, and we will also be popping into the high school and primary school in Shipston to spread the word about water voles and the project. I have also recently met with the Flood Risk Team in Long Marston and the storage depot. Last but not least and all being well, we should be able to create the scrape / ponds on Richard's land in August / September time. I hope to get the project wrapped up around this time too, at which point I'll produce a report and put on an end of celebration evening at the Townsend Hall. I'll keep you informed!

Best wishes Tim

STOUR VALLEY WILDLIFE ACTION GROUP

This is Your group, please let us know what you want from it, projects, news letter items etc?

CONTACT... e-mail info-svwag@tiscali.co.uk Tel. 01608 664353.

WEBSITE www.stourvalleywildlifeactiongroup.org

INTERESTING SIGHTING

From June news letter 2011

Phill,

Thought I would just let you know. Whilst out walking on 29th April, in the vicinity of Hill View Farm at the foot of Brailes Hill, we saw and heard distinctly a pair of curlews. We have never seen any before in this area and would be interested to know if anyone else has?

Regards Adrian Morley

REPLY.....

Hi Phill:

It was interesting to read of Adrian Morley's sighting of Curlews near Brailes Hill reported in the last newsletter. He inquired if anyone else had seen or heard Curlews in the area.

I can inform him that in the 70's and 80's and into the early 90's Curlews did actually nest here. In 1974 a pair of Curlews nested in an old meadow near Armscote, and during the 80's there was a pair nesting regularly around the Crimscote-Admington area. The farmer who farms at Crimscote Fields Farm informed me that he had a pair nesting on his land about 20 years ago, and during the 90's a pair nested on set-aside land at Sweet Knowle Farm near Wimpstone.

Unfortunately as old traditional hay meadows have been ploughed up or re-seeded, Curlews have gradually disappeared from the area and with the discontinuation of set-aside it would appear that nesting Curlews are now a thing of the past locally. The nearest nesting pair now is apparently somewhere near Kineton, though I don't know the exact location.

Normally, by the end of April, Curlews are back in their breeding grounds, so I wonder if what Adrian could have seen was a pair of Whimbrel. The Whimbrel is a close relative of the Curlew and a few pass through the area each year on their way to their breeding grounds in the Shetland Islands. They are almost identical to Curlews, and make similar calls, so unless you can observe them on the ground it is almost impossible to separate the 2 species. The Whimbrel is slightly smaller and has slightly shorter legs and bill. The best distinguishing feature though is the 2 black bars Whimbrel have running long ways over the top of their crown.

The best place to see Curlew and Whimbrel together locally is Coombe Hill Meadows, which is a Gloucester Trust Nature Reserve. Curlews still actually nest there, but some Whimbrel pass through each year. The 2 species can often be seen side by side during the Spring and the differences between them become much more obvious.

There is a chance that what Adrian saw was a pair of Curlews, but if they were Whimbrel it is still an excellent sighting and nothing to be disappointed about.

All the Best

Conrad and Mervyn Print.

If you have or have had any interesting sightings of wildlife, we would love to share these with other members. Also, Mervyn is making records of sightings for the group. If possible, please send species details, Photo's, numbers and a six figure grid reference if you can. *(These can be kept confidential if you wish!)*

Having trouble with grid references?.....go to:

<http://wtp2.appspot.com/wheresthepath.htm>