

What's happening? In the garden



Autumn 2020

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE KNOLL GARDENS FOUNDATION

The Knoll Gardens Foundation is registered as a charity in England and Wales: 1159390

Experts and volunteers unite for annual garden wildlife survey



Covid-19 restrictions have presented huge challenges this year, initially preventing any of our regular wildlife surveys from taking place.

Thankfully, despite still not being open to the general public, we were able to go ahead with our well-established annual garden wildlife survey in August.

Our thanks are due to an incredible team of experts and volunteers who came together to ensure the continuity of our annual wildlife count. This vital 'snapshot' not only puts on record what was found on one day, but also provides an annual 'health check' of the garden, allowing us to compare year-on-year records.

The Foundation's new Wildlife Survey Co-ordinator, Mitch Perkins is now busy collating information and liaising with the experts to help identify tricky species. Updated information, with further images, will be on the Foundation website over the next few weeks, go to www.knollgardensfoundation.org.

All our data will also be entered onto the Dorset Environmental Record database (Living Record) contributing to the wider picture of the health and abundance of Dorset's wildlife. You can find out more about their work at www.derc.org.uk

More survey images inside . . .



*Clockwise from top left:
Setting up bat survey equipment;
Using mobile phone cameras to
capture insect images for later
identification;
Expert identification of individual
specimens takes place in the
garden marquee*

Pilot pollinator survey

As part of this year's survey we also trialled a new way of looking at the relationship between our plants and their pollinators.

Five 2-metre square sections of the garden were selected, each offering different types of planting. Volunteers spent set time periods at each location recording the visiting pollinators. Mitch is now looking at the data from each area to see if there are any notable differences.

As well as feeding into the annual garden wildlife survey results it is hoped that the trial will provide a good basis to enable visitors to take part in future surveys of a similar style, highlighting the benefits of particular plants for certain species.

Could you identify these creatures?

A small selection of 'finds' from the 2020 garden wildlife survey



Caterpillars of the Rosy footman moth (*Mitochrista miniata*) feed on lichens growing on trees.



Micro-moth *Metalampra italica*. A rare find in Dorset this tiny moth was once thought to only be found in Italy. It lives under the bark of dead wood.



Damselfly larva found in the pond. There are three stages in the lives of damsel and dragonflies: egg, larva (also known as nymphs or naiads) and adult. Voracious feeders, each larva captures its prey by shooting out a long, hinged lower lip. When mature, the aquatic larva crawls out of the water for its final moult to become an adult damselfly..



A Green-eyed Flower Bee (*Anthophora bimaculata*) spotted in the new Dry Meadow. Only found in the south of England this sand-loving burrowing bee has a high pitched buzz and is often heard before it is seen.

Lots of tiny burrows were identified during the survey and Neil is now going to plan in more areas of bare soil to provide further habitat for these amazing creatures.



Hard to spot, this young grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) is having a dip in the pond.



The Comma butterfly, (*Polygonia c-album*) derives its name from the small, white, 'comma-like' marking on the underside of the otherwise camouflaged, hindwing.

Like many other species, they are attracted to the Eupatorium.

The garden's open and it's looking good!

We are delighted to be able to welcome visitors back to the garden.

Having been closed throughout the summer months it is a real joy to be able to share the garden again, especially at what is undoubtedly the perfect time of the year to see our grasses at their very best.

Currently we are working to our pre-Covid opening times, opening Tuesday - Saturday from 10am - 5pm.

We will also be re-starting our event programmes with both our ornamental grass and naturalistic design masterclasses. These will now enjoy vastly reduced numbers - and a lot more personal attention! Details are online, with early booking strongly recommended.

PROGRESS IN THE NEW DRY MEADOW

The garden has missed the combined effort of our volunteers throughout most of the season so it has been a joy to welcome them back, albeit as two smaller teams each coming in on alternate Fridays. Thanks to their hard work we have caught up with a lot of smaller maintenance jobs and the garden is looking pretty good right now.

The biggest single effort this year has gone into the gradual planting of the new Dry Meadow and associated rain gardens. In March we thought the whole area would remain unplanted until the autumn but in fact we have most of the plants in and they are beginning to establish. As we could only partial plant over the last few months we have not been able to mulch (in fact there has not been any mulch available), so in this instance the volunteers have resorted to hand weeding - a little each week.



Nepeta Walkers Low (above), is an older cultivar but still one of the best and most reliable. In the new Dry Meadow it is already producing lots of soft blue flowers that are especially loved by bees; including the rather fascinating Green eyed Flower Bee



The magic of autumn in the garden

With the sun getting lower in the sky the light is just beginning to take on that almost magical autumnal quality. In high summer the Long Walk mirrors the fresh flowers of many perennials including repeated groups of persicaria, echinops, rudbeckia and veronicastrum. Then, as summer turns into autumn, the stage is set for a dramatically different view. Now the grasses now take centre stage and will hold the scene with their subtly changing drama right through autumn and deep into winter.



CAN'T VISIT US? Luke is making daily posts on Instagram @knoll_gardens and he's getting rather good at capturing the spirit as well as the beauty of the Knoll. You can also view Knoll Gardens' facebook pages at your leisure, follow us on twitter for regular updates or check out Neil's posts on the website at www.knollgardens.co.uk



Facebook: @knollgardens

Instagram: @knoll_gardens

Twitter: @KnollGardens

Bee alert

Now is a good time to start looking again for buff-tailed bumblebees in the garden. Just before lockdown several buff-tailed queens were spotted searching for nest sites at Knoll. These nests generally only last 2 - 3 months. Then, the queen,



her sons and workers die whilst her daughters look to establish nests of their own.



Bumblebee surveyor Rowena Jecock spotted what she first thought was a red-tailed queen bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*) during the wildlife survey, but having looked more closely at the photo above she's not certain: could it be a female *B. rupestris*? (a cuckoo bumblebee that parasitises the red-tailed bee). The image above is now being checked with i-spot to see if other experts can help.

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Simply adding a couple of clicks every time you do your normal shopping allows you to support us and costs you nothing at all! With more and more shopping being done online this really is a great way you can keep supporting the Foundation without leaving home.

The Knoll Gardens Foundation

The Knoll Gardens Foundation is dedicated to refining and promoting a wildlife friendly naturalistic gardening style, using the garden at Knoll as a practical example and base for experimentation.

The Foundation relies on donations, legacies, fundraising events and grants to finance its work and welcomes contributions from those who share a passion for gardening and wildlife.

knollgardensfoundation.org

NATURE NEEDS US

Would you be interested in getting involved in a national effort to record wildlife without leaving your home?

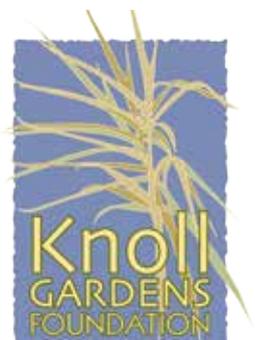
The Association of Local Environmental Record Centres has put together a list of recording schemes you can take part in, helping local and national wildlife organisations build a better picture of the spread of the wildlife right across the country.

More information at www.alerc.org.uk/schemes

Knoll's birds eat £25 of sunflower seeds every month! Luckily that fills a very big feeder so it doesn't have to be quite so expensive to feed the birds in your own garden. And providing suitable food can offer a real boost particularly when the natural food supply is low or a brood needs feeding. As a single brood of bluetits can consume around 1,000 caterpillars a day it's nice to know you can help out a bit!

With around 2,500 species in the UK moths play an important role in the ecosystem. Their caterpillars are a major food source for many birds, whilst bats feed on the flying adults. Yet worryingly, in southern Britain moth numbers have reduced by around 40% since 1968.

In the UK the largest moth is the Clifden nonpareil with a wingspan of up to 12cm: the smallest moth has a wingspan of only 3 - 4mm! So much variation and so many species can make it rather tricky to identify individual specimens! To help get you started Butterfly Conservation has a very good moth ID section on its website, go to www.butterfly-conservation.org/moths



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