



LONG LANE PASTURE NEWSLETTER

No. 39 late spring/summer 2018

Goodness me, the winter did not want to give up! Just as we thought we saw the last of it in early March, another bitterly cold spell descended upon us usually cosseted Londoners; and the woolly gloves, hat and scarf were needed again to venture outside into the elements, as the Pasture turned into Narnia.



And it wasn't just the cold to attend to. We had too many days of rain, turning our gardens, allotments & the Pasture into a soggy & muddy unworkable mess.

Since the last newsletter, the main pond froze over again, & with all the rain, had filled to near bursting, giving the mallard ducks and moorhens a greater area to swim about in! Sadly, the poor frogs that froze in the icy ponds didn't produce as much spawn as last year; and who can blame them! Also affected was the fruit blossom with all plum species almost devoid of ripening fruit this year.



However spring did arrive later in April and we had a lovely display of wood anemones on the embankment, and we now hear that May was one of the sunniest & warmest on record, and everything delayed eventually caught up; but now things seem to be ahead of themselves with the blackberry blossom appearing at the end of May, and so it looks as if we're in for a bumper crop this year, providing it rains occasionally!

Do please remember to drop a few coins in the donations box by the entrance gate if blackberrying!

Birds Seen

The yearly RSPB Big Garden Watch was on the weekend of the 27/28 January and our modest list of species seen was duly added to the RSPB database.



At the beginning of May we had our annual 5am Dawn Chorus walk. The Sunday was a wonderfully clear morning and not too cold or dewy. It began with a pass of the International Space Station about 240 miles above, lit by reflective sunlight, while the last-quarter moon mirrored in the still pond as a dozen brave souls set off around the Pasture, listening to the crystal clear songs and calling of our local birds as a new day dawned; and what a welcoming sight it was when a red sun appeared among the trees above the far horizon...



And high up, the golden condensation trails of aircraft glistened as transatlantic flights made their way into Europe towards the sunrise, & the first aircraft passed slowly overhead on their way to Heathrow. Untidy formations of starlings and pigeons passed over too!

It's always been a special occasion this early in the morning on the Pasture, and this clear dawn did not disappoint; with the highlight of all the birds noted being the solitary cormorant silhouetted against a brightening sky as it purposefully headed west.

Our local bird enthusiast Derek Warren has recently compiled a much longer list, noting all the species seen on or flying over the Pasture for the first few months of the year. The tally stands at 39 so far, and should get to well over 50 by the summer's end, all being well.

In alphabetical order, the current list is: blackbird, blackcap, blue tit, carrion crow, chaffinch, coal tit, dunnock, feral pigeon, fieldfare, goldcrest, goldfinch,

great tit, greenfinch, heron, house sparrow, jay, long-tailed tit, magpie, mallard, moorhen, parakeet; (two landed on a tree and pecked at the blossom) redwing, robin, song thrush, sparrowhawk, starling, swift, white throat, wood pigeon, woodcock; (one was flushed up by Frank's pond) and wren. With these noted, heard or seen flying above: black headed gull, Canada goose; (8 in formation) cormorant, great blacked-back gull, green woodpecker, jackdaw, lesser black-backed gull, and two little egrets seen flying over!



The original 8 hatched moorhen chicks whittled down over the weeks to only two, and we expect them to be able to fly any day now. They were fed on a variety of things, including newts, which the parents would catch by the head as they came up for air, and then thrash repeatedly to death, to be torn apart and fed to the chicks.

This gruesome discovery was realised when looking at photographs taken of this vigorous behaviour, and the unmistakable brightly spotted patterning of the newts' under-belly was clearly visible... Nature can be cruel.

Flying Invertebrates

The late spring may also have had an effect on the distinct lack of butterflies seen earlier this year, with fewer white butterflies spotted, as well as a noticeable lack of the more colourful species.



As I write this in the 3rd week of June, the skippers are beginning to appear, so we hope there will be the usual grassland species that dominate the Pasture during the summer months. So far, 17 species have been seen this year; including a marbled white!

We have witnessed three species of damselfly & two dragonfly species laying eggs on various ponds, but I doubt they are much affected by a colder late spring



than the butterflies, as their numbers seem buoyant. As with the blue-bodied chaser, the male emperor dragonfly seems to patrol the pond chasing off rivals while the female lays her eggs below. The emperor lands on a plant above the water and dips the end of her long body carefully into the water; unlike the female chaser, resplendent in her yellow colouring who flicks her tail repeatedly into the water as she skilfully hovers above the surface; each to their own!



Give as you Live

Long Lane Pasture Trust has recently signed up to a scheme called Give as you Live. They are an online fundraising platform allowing users to shop at over 4,200 top stores and raise free funds for charity. The store pays Give as you Live a percentage of your total purchase price in commission and of this, 50% is passed on to charity.

If you already use the Internet to purchase goods, please visit their website: www.giveasyoulive.com and sign up. We would appreciate it if you selected Long Lane Pasture as your chosen charity. It will cost you nothing to join and use, and your local nature reserve will benefit from donations each time you shop!

Please consider volunteering at the Pasture, we do everyday maintenance each week on a Saturday from 10am to noon. We'd love to see you.

That's all for now; until autumn, adios! Donald

Please follow the Pasture on Twitter: [@LLPasture](https://twitter.com/LLPasture)

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