



Gatley Carrs Conservation Group Notes from the Ordinary Quarterly Meeting held at Elm Road United Reformed Church, Gatley on 21st September 2022

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME (Peter Owen)

Welcome; Unfortunately due to illnesses and holidays we are a bit thin on the ground tonight. However, we have reports for the absentee officers so there's plenty to get through.

2. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Attendees: Jim Arkwright, Ali Davenport, Josie Harrop, Keith Holloway, Michelle Inwood, Stan Johnson, Lesley Larkin, Peter Owen, Stuart Priestley, Lesley Witton

Apologies: Adrienne and Russ Booler, Emma Burrows, Alan Butler, Janet Evans, Liz Latimer, Chris Mullin, Alan Musgrave, Chris Nield, John Pollard

3. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING

Approved

4. MATTERS ARISING

No matters were raised.

5. TREASURERS REPORT (Michelle Inwood)

- Balance as at **3 June 2022** of **£5032.93**
- Balance as at **12 September 2022** of **£5118.19** (increase of **£85.26**)

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Membership subscriptions (Bank)	167.50	Wildflower meadow	116.90
Membership subscriptions (Paypal; £7.50-£0.52 charge)	6.98	Gift card (as thanks to Signs & Display for free sign)	20.00
Re-imbursement of Paypal setup charge	0.01	Gatley Festival costs (re-imbursed to Emma Burrows)	147.00
Donation	35.00	Gatley Festival display boards (re-imbursed to Peter Owen)	20.00
Gatley Festival takings	179.67		

Total	389. 16	Total	303. 90

NB. In addition, Alan Butler has received 5x £10 cash in this period for membership subscriptions. Membership records have been updated and this has been allocated as £40 to Alan's float for maintenance and £10 to the purchase of duck food.

FUND RAISING: Our ongoing need; GCCG relies on donations and membership

As we have no other sources of income, we are very grateful to the numerous people who have made donations or subscribed as members during the year as they remain vital to our survival and the work we do on the Carrs. Thank you for your support!

If you would like to support the group there are different ways that you can pay:

1. Online automatic payment, regular or one-off, the account details are:
 - Gatley Carrs Conservation Group
 - Sort code: 01-01-75
 - Account no: 19082894
2. PayPal account.
 - a) Please click on the PayPal button on the GCCG website:
<https://www.gatleycarrs.org.uk/membership/become-a-member>
3. Cash
4. Cheque

6. SECRETARYS/MEMBERSHIP REPORT (Lesley Larkin)

There have been two areas of progress since the last meeting. Firstly, as per the approval and action from the last meeting I have updated Section 9 (Subscriptions and Expenditure) of the group's constitution document to include the words "The Group operates as a not for profit organisation". We needed to do this to make our status very clear as part of our setting up the Paypal account for the group. This updated constitution document will be emailed to all members along with the notes from today's meeting.

Secondly, further work on validating the membership records has been done and the summary, as at the beginning of September, is that we have 116 valid memberships (an increase of 5 since the last meeting). Of these 89 are Family and 27 are Single memberships. 9 of these are overdue on their subscriptions but as I have email addresses for them I'll send them a polite reminder and hope we haven't lost their support. The Gatley Festival was successful in that we got 7 expressions of interest from people wanting to support the group. 2 of these have

subsequently joined as members and I'll be following up further with the other 5. In addition, we are aware of another 47 members (down from 51 at the last meeting) for which there is no record from the bank statements of their subscriptions being paid in the last 2 years. I'm continuing to focus on these to hopefully encourage their continued support if they can. The number of members for which we don't have any email or postal addresses is also being reduced and is now 15, down from 21 at the last meeting. As these members are up to date with their subscriptions, it's a shame they're missing out on seeing the quarterly reports and any other info we send out.

7. BIRD REPORT - July/August 2022 (Chris Neild)

**** Good news. I can confirm the Willow Warbler pair did breed at Gatley Carrs. I eventually saw both the adults feeding 2 young. I am thrilled to confirm they have not bred here before so wonderful news indeed. Hopefully they will return next year****



Willow Warbler

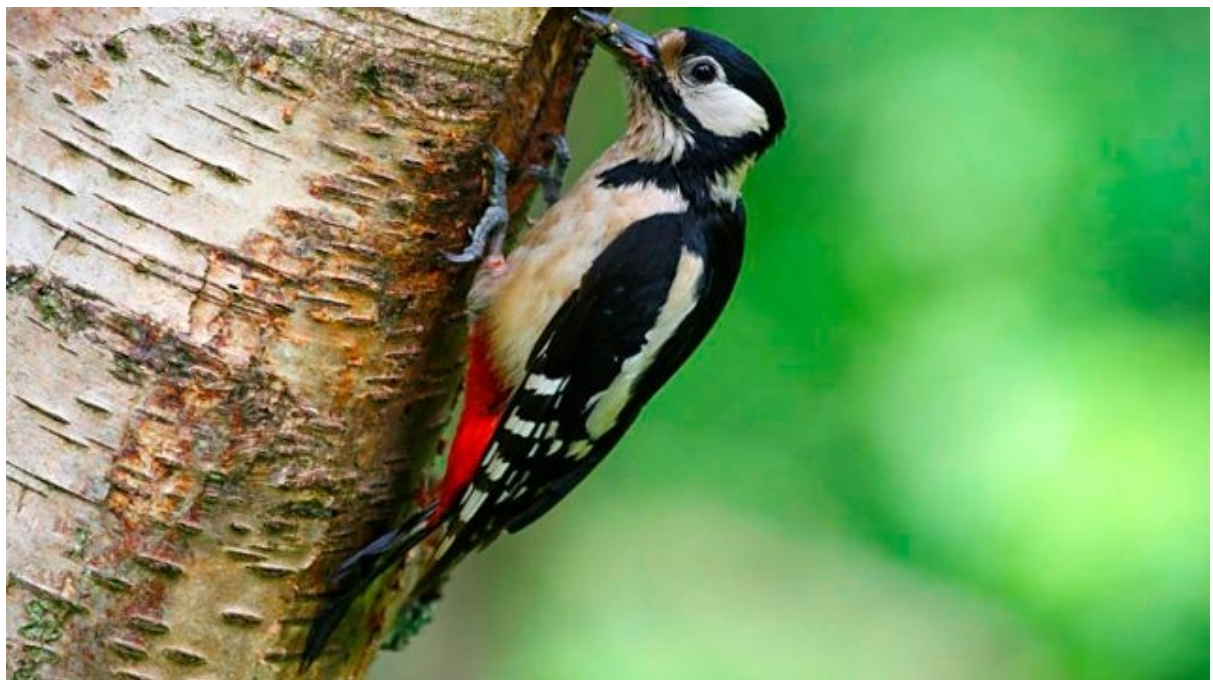
My visits were restricted due to the extreme heat that continued throughout July. Around the country grounded birds were found in great distress in many areas. This was due to dehydration leading to starvation. Sadly, although it affected all birds, Birds of Prey were the worst of all to be affected. These included Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Red Kite, Peregrine and Owls. They become grounded,

unable to fly due to exhaustion. The lucky ones were birds found by members of the public. Wildlife Sanctuaries were bursting at the seams struggling to cope with such a large influx. Thankfully many were rehabilitated and returned to the wild. Sadly, many did not make it. The RSPCA and RSPB urged us to put water out in our gardens to help the birds during this crisis.

Thankfully the Pond at Gatley Carrs did not dry up. The Mandarin was still seen occasionally but no sign by months end. Once more this year saw great breeding success on the pond for the Moorhen and Mallard. At least 3, but more likely 4 pairs, of Moorhen bred with up to 8 young seen. At least 20+ Mallards were also seen, including juvenile ducklings.

Thankfully, although the hot weather continued throughout August, there were showers and several thunderstorms. So badly needed. Trees had started dropping leaves much earlier than usual due lack of water. Many areas were tinder dry and desperately needed rain. Hopefully we will not experience these extreme weather patterns every year, but, somehow, I am not convinced.

Around the Reserve was much quieter than previous months as the birds have finished their breeding season. On the pond the Moorhen had increased to 12+ including the young birds. I feel this is a low estimate for this species as there are so many water channels it is not possible to view. At least 35 Mallard too. 2 Grey Heron were seen in the trees around the pond. Plenty of Wood Pigeon, Magpie, Robin, Wren and Blackbird around as usual. Along the Brook Path a Great-spotted Woodpecker was seen near his usual territory close to the Dipping Pond.



Great Spotted Woodpecker

I was pleased to see a juvenile Grey Wagtail "bobbing" on a shingle bank in the brook/ stream. A typical terrain for this colourful water bird. A few yards away, 2 Starling were enjoying a bathe too. Not as common as they used to be, I have not seen one at Gatley Carrs for quite a while, so I was pleased to see them.

Autumn will soon be with us. One of my favourite pleasures in nature is walking through the glades when they are covered with leaves. Hearing the rustling sound as you walk. Magic! Will not be long now.

8. WILDLIFE AND NATURE REPORT (John Pollard)

As John is incapacitated at this current time, there is no report this quarter. We all wish him well and hope to see him soon.

The talk on Gatley Carrs, which was due to be given to the U3A group in September was cancelled due to the Queen's funeral but will be re-arranged. Note to all, if you are members of other groups/organisations that you feel would like to know more about the Carrs, please contact Peter Owen (Peter.Owen8@virginmedia.com) who will be able to explain what's possible.

9. SITE MAINTENANCE REPORT (Alan Butler, Head Warden)

In writing this Autumnal report I'm still concerned about the lack of water in the country. Even on our recent visit to Northumberland, the reservoirs we passed on our journey are still extremely low, so let's hope for rain to charge the very low reservoirs and take the whole area back to an acceptable level.

Our own reserve has coped exceedingly well and the whole area has looked so good this year. The tasks needed were done again with the help of our brilliant volunteer group and the new sign installed on the 1st June in the car park asking visitors to vacate by dusk looked far better than the old hand-written board. On the 9th June the rotten fence by the Pickup Bench was replaced and made good. Thanks to Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) for their help and also Tree Station, the contractors who completed the job on time. On 16th June, Andy Day kindly took charge of the Sthill Hedge cutter and attacked encroaching foliage away from the pathways. The turnout for the Himalayan Balsam task day were quite disappointing as only 2 volunteers turned up to help on Sunday 26th June which, in turn, left a far greater amount of Balsam untouched than in previous years. It's a pity because this unwanted species if not checked will take over and kill our native wildflowers.

**** Note to all –** If you fancy doing a bit of Himalayan Balsam bashing any time you're passing, you can do. Guidance on what to look for and how to do

it are shown on the Groundwork website:

<https://www.groundwork.org.uk/.../himalayan-balsam-how.../> Note the difference though between Balsam and Japanese Knotweed.



Himalayan Balsam



Japanese Knotweed

JAPANESE KNOTWEED – KNOW THE DIFFERENCE! The pink flower to the left is Himalayan Balsam. Japanese Knotweed is on the right – it gets treated and is not to be touched!

On July 7th, Peter and I walked around the Carrs with Joe Faulkner from Signs and Display to obtain a costing for replacing 2 tired and untidy information boards. This is still pending, due to holidays, but I'm confident these will be replaced as soon as we know the cost. This of course will take a tidy sum out of our funds, but it has to be done to keep our reserve looking good. Another load of decent woodchip from our friends at Abortech Tree Surgeons was delivered and again the volunteers came forth and offered their services to spread it around the muddy areas. The annual Willow Cutting on the 30th July around the pond area was very productive with about 8 stalwart volunteers cutting them down to size and then Peter followed on later leading a team for a much-needed Bird Hide repair.

Thanks for your help and let's hope we can carry on the good work for the future of this lovely area.

STANDING INFORMATION: Volunteer work: We have a **WhatsApp** group set up for contacting volunteers and advising when and what tasks need doing. This is now working very well and any time that anyone can spare helps enormously. If you would like to be added to this group please let Peter Owen know via **07799 888049** and he will add you into the group.

COMMENT: Please note, Alan has a more serious health issue at the moment and we all wish him well for a speedy recovery. We must all rally round to cover the numerous tasks he took on so diligently.

10. WILDFLOWER MEADOW REPORT (Chris Mullin)



A man at work

The annuals planted, sown March did not flourish in quite the same way as the previous year. The diversity of species was greater however the quantity was less. The reasons for this are likely to be many and various. Possible reasons:

- a. The competition the annuals encountered from existing plants – we did not strip the turf this year from this new area?
- b. The seed sown was left over from the previous year and may have been less vigorous? However, with the aim that seeds internal clocks would be set fair, the seed was kept dry and stored outdoors throughout the autumn and winter?
- c. The sowing was conducted in March. Last year the seeds were sown in May?

On the bright side, Yellow Rattle is becoming firmly established at the northern end of the meadow. In November, I would like to sow the area to the right of the interpretation panel. This area is almost entirely dominated by grasses.

In the hope that there was a nascent seed bank, different parts (my patchwork idea, ho hum!) of this area were scythed at different times

during the Spring. Yet, by July, hardly any wildflowers were evident. Therefore if the area is mown by Stockport Borough Council in October then the very short cut employed by Stockport Borough Council will suit the sowing of Yellow Rattle. Incidentally, a favoured sites for bumble bee nests are compost heaps!

Over the summer I have been harvesting Yellow Rattle seeds from the wildflower borders at RHS Bridgewater and adding these to fruits of the Yellow Rattle harvest around Gatley Hill House and Scholes Fields. Thus, we should have seeds with internal clocks set at a similar time to the seeds at Gatley Carrs? I hope so.

Furthermore, I have been researching the planting of Broomrapes. The name Broomrape is a combination of the term 'broom', referring to a vetch-like plant which is often parasitised, and 'rape', which come from the Latin 'rapum' meaning turnip or tuber, to describe the lumpy node it uses to attach itself to the host plant. Broomrapes are parasites which work in a similar manner to Yellow Rattle. The idea is that Broomrapes will parasitize other plants, for example, the thistles and knapweeds. Broomrapes, like Cuckoos tend to be specialists. For example *Orobanche reticula* is known as the Thistle Broomrape and *Orobanche elatior* is otherwise known as the Knapweed or Tall Broomrape. I doubt life could become much more interesting!



Common Broomrape

However, I need to be sure that the Broomrapes won't, gradually, completely dominate the meadow. In certain parts of the world, certain types of Broomrapes have become dominant and are regarded as pernicious weeds - difficult to eradicate. Thus far I have established that without the host, the Knapweed Broomrape will cease to exist. Small steps.

Regarding the future, once the cutting has been completed, as an experiment, I think removing a small area of turf, spreading a layer of limestone chippings on the exposed ground, recovering with the turf then seeding with Yellow Rattle. If possible, the rest of the area should be sown with the same mix of annuals and perennials used in 2021.

By next August we will be able to compare the results of our three different approaches. Then decide on the most favourable method for the future.

11. SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT (Emma Burrows)

Facebook interest continues to grow and we are looking at the best ways to engage with this and other groups. Increased contact with the local schools is planned.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (All)

- a. Winter Bird Feeding:** The daily winter bird feeding programme will commence on Monday 17th October 2022 and finish on 31st March 2023. Many thanks to those volunteers on the rota either to do a daily topup of the bird feeders or to act as a reserve.
- b. Tip Smell:** Alan Musgrave has advised he is dealing with the problems of the smell coming from the tip at Sharston which have recently become a lot worse. As the smell can ruin the enjoyment of being on the Carrs, he has advised that if anyone experiences the smell when they are walking around the Carrs, they can report it to the tip operators on 07825 660327. As the call will initially go to Security who are not on site at Sharston, please tell them it is their site on Longley Lane.
- c. Gatley Festival:** A very successful event for us in terms of fund raising and raising awareness of Gatley Carrs.
- d. Fields in Trust (FIT):** Keith Holloway provided a brief update with a request for us to meet up with the new Council Cabinet Minsiter, Grace Baynham who is responsible for this. A meeting to discuss the FIT position between Peter Owen and Grace Baynham has been arranged for October 31st at the Carrs.
- e. Disabled Path:** This unfortunately seems to have hit another brick wall, with the Environment Agency contradicting what we thought were their previous intentions reference the stream diversion. David Jeffries is equally confused by their latest statements ref work he has done. Peter Owen has once more been in touch with Anthony Crook, of SMBC, to try to resolve this, or at least give us access to someone in the EA who can clarify.
- f. Green Flag Community Award:** Gatley Carrs has been successful in retaining the prestigious Green Flag Award for 2022. Serious thanks go to the volunteers who work hard in maintaining

this site. For awareness, the Green Flag judging assessment report will be issued to members along with these meeting notes.

g. Network Rail Work: Network Rail is planning substantial works on the rail track that runs along the side of the Reserve. We have objected very strongly to their plan to bring heavy trucks across the site as it will potentially destroy large areas of pathway and areas near the railway bank. We have suggested that they bring in their heavy stones etc via the railway line to avoid this disruption. We await their response.

h. Greenspace Contact: Daryll Falconer has replaced John Rowland as our Greenspace contact at SMBC. Peter Owen has arranged to show Daryll round the Carrs on the 19th October.

Many thanks for your continued support. We'd appreciate it if you could take any and every opportunity to spread the word about the Gatley Carrs Conservation Group.

Peter, Chairman

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NEXT MEETING: Proposed date of the next meeting, which will be the Quarterly Ordinary General Meeting, is Wednesday December 14th 2022.