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Ludwell Life

Sharing Enhancing Enjoying Protecting...
Ludwell Valley Park



This beautiful autumnal photo by Sue Keatt - thank you!

November 2023 Newsletter

There's lots to cover in this newsletter. First, what will be happening about conservation tasks this winter. Then there's a message from DWT explaining why we have cattle and see agricultural machinery in the Valley. We follow this with some thoughts about what to look out for in the Valley this month.

As several people pointed out, we made a mistake in the answers we gave for

the quiz in September's edition. Well, actually it was me made the mistake - so, with apologies, that is corrected in this newsletter.

One more piece of news: our website is undergoing a major refresh thanks to a very talented Ludwell Lifer and we hope to launch it later this month.



Conservation Tasks

Here we were a couple of years ago, planting more fruit and nut trees in the community orchard. There will be another planting session this winter, probably in January. If you'd be interested in sponsoring a tree, having it dedicated to someone special, do get in touch at LudwellLife@gmail.com.

Other than this, there is going to be a slightly different approach to conservation tasks this winter. DWT is starting a new regular Tuesday work party. These volunteer days will include raking, scrub clearance and tree planting. The first session will be this coming Tuesday, 7th November in Ludwell Valley Park. Do get in touch with DWT direct if you are interested: e-mail them at valleyparks@devonwildlifetrust.org.



Ludwell is a Working Farm

Some people have asked why we have cattle in the Valley and why there are sometimes large agricultural machines working there. Devon Wildlife Trust has given us this helpful explanation which we think is worth sharing with everyone:

'A large part of Ludwell Valley Park is also a working farm and so certain agricultural practices happen every year that help keep Ludwell Valley a beautiful piece of traditional Devon farmland.

From April to October every year a small number of beef cattle systematically graze different fields to help with the management of the wildflower meadows. A vital practice to accompany the cattle grazing is to cut the most diverse wildflower meadows in the late summer / early autumn for hay. This hay cut requires tractors with toppler cutters, rakes and baling machines to work in the fields and the work helps to reduce the fertility of these fields that is so vital to increasing the numbers of wildflowers found in them.

Another agricultural activity in the early spring is when the spring-sown barley / cornfield annual seeds are planted in the wild bird mix fields dotted around the valley park. This requires large tractors with ploughs and then seed drills to work in the fields to get the barley and cornflowers planted to produce the fantastic displays we see in late June/ July and later, the winter seed for farmland birds to feed.

These practices are vital if we wish to carry on seeing Ludwell Valley Park as a wildlife-rich, beautiful landscape reserve that brings a small part of the Devon countryside into the city.'

We are also likely to see the sad sight of diseased ash trees having to be felled before they become dangerous in the coming months.



In the Valley in November

Winter is fast approaching, but wildlife is still very active. Herons have been spotted nearby - you might see one having a fish in the pond in Butchers Field. If you are walking in the valley at dusk, keep an eye out for starling murmurations (although maybe not as spectacular as in the photo!) or mixed flocks of jackdaws and rooks on their way back to their roosts near the Panny.

Other creatures active at dusk are bats. Ludwell Lifer Helen Trebble took part in the Devon Bat Survey 2023 for the Southbrook estate and parts of Ludwell. She shared her results in our Facebook group, but we'd like to share them here too. Using an acoustic bat detector borrowed from DWT, Helen detected no less than 10 different types of bat, including two rare ones, with a fairly high degree of confidence! Lots of pipistrelles, but also brown long-eared bats, whiskered bats, natterers, a rare barbastelle and a rare grey long-eared bat amongst others. (Don't you just love the names these little mammals have

been given!) You might glimpse bats at dusk or dawn yourself, but either way, it's good to know there are so many here, doing so well. Thank you Helen.

November is also a great month for fungi, and this year is looking particularly good. See how many different types you can spot in the valley, share photos - but please don't touch unless you are an expert - some of them are dangerous!

Last Time's Quiz

As some of you quickly spotted, number 4 was a goldcrest, not a goldfinch, and definitely not a female chaffinch! Sorry about that.

The gold crest is a tiny bird. In fact, it and its cousin the firecrest, are the smallest of all European birds. It is found mainly in woodland, especially pine woods. Always busy, not not so easy to spot.



Goldcrest



↑ Goldfinch



Female Chaffinch

Ludwell Life is an independent community group, set up to protect and enhance Ludwell Valley Park

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