



Wild About Barrow

May/June 2022

Spring In Full Swing

With hawthorn boughs hung low, heavy with blossom, verges frothing white with cow parsley and birdsong filling the air, spring is undoubtedly in full swing. The village verges have been putting on a good show of golden buttercups and pretty white daisies too. Spring is such a joyful time of year with all the promise of a wonderful summer to come!

There is a tapestry of young plants rapidly growing on the bank of Millennium Park which can be seen as you pass by on Fishpool Way. Wildflowers are growing vigorously too in the wildflower area of the park, tucked away by the Paudy Road entrance. Indeed, most of the Wild Celebration flowers are from Millennium Park this time.

Bird box Update

Wild About Barrow has been busy installing more bird boxes around the village and there are now 11 boxes for the lucky birds to choose. The wood for five boxes was sourced, mostly from a generous donation by Barrow Timber Station, and skilfully made into boxes by Nick Thomas. There is a robin box in the hedge by the recently tarmacked path at Mill Lane and tit boxes can be found on or near the canal path near Mill Lane play area. There is also a box on Breachfield Road near Melton Road as grey wagtails have been seen sweeping along the stream gathering insects, so we hope they make use of this prime real estate.

Three further starling boxes have been installed on a silver birch tree at the Bridge Street green. We are still awaiting news of the swift boxes being installed in Holy Trinity church tower.

Wildlife ID courses and Verge Open Days

Would you like to learn more about the diversity and role of wildlife verges plus shadow specialist wildlife volunteers and county recorders from Naturespot in a wildflower survey?

Then you may be interested in FREE courses being run by NatureSpot on behalf of Leicestershire County Council (LCC). Courses are at various local verges and conveniently timed at weekends or evenings. If you are interested in attending any of the verge open

days or would like more information please register your interest via: Environment Policy and Strategy Team EnvironmentTeam@leics.gov.uk.
Or contact Wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com for list of course locations and dates.

If that's not for you, perhaps you can be tempted by one of 3 short courses being held by NatureSpot on behalf of LCC which will give help in identifying wildflowers, grasses and invertebrates. All are in May and July and start at 2.00p.m. Contact: wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com for more information or Roseanna.Burton@leics.gov.uk to book.

Wild Celebration May/June



Speckled wood butterfly
(*Pararge aegeria*)



Blackbird
(*Turdus merula*)



Cowslip
(*Primula veris*)



Hawthorn
(*Crataegus monogyna*)



Borage
(*Borago officinalis*)



Cow Parsley
(*Anthriscus sylvestris*)

Have you spotted any nature delights around the village? Send your photos to Wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com or just let us know where you saw it and we'll take a snap.

The blackbird is undeniably one of our most prolific singers, a bird with a gloriously rich, mellow, 'fluted' and carefree song. This bird appears to display a remarkable aptitude for

both mimicry and learning. I had to smile this morning when I heard in my garden a blackbird imitate a child's squeaky toy and a mobile phone ringtone. I much prefer its original tune though. The song serves two main purposes - to attract a mate and to ward off any potential rivals.

Cowslips in bloom take me back to walks with my grandmother through fields full of this lovely wildflower. It is used in the manufacture of perfume and is an important source of nectar for bees and many other kinds of insects. In addition, it is host to caterpillars of the grandly named Duke of Burgundy butterfly. Conservationists are working hard to avoid extinction of this beautiful insect which has suffered greatly through loss of habitat.

Borage has edible flowers but other parts of the plant are poisonous. A type of tiger moth caterpillar has evolved to take advantage of this, absorbing the poison and consequently escaping unharmed if caught by orb-weaving spiders that would normally eat them. This life-saving adaptation demonstrates clearly the importance of growing native species.

Millennium Seedling Hopes



The wildlife posts are back in the Millennium Park. Last year Wild About Barrow worked hard to scarify and sow a wildflower seed mix and this year we have fingers crossed that the recent rain will spur the seeds into germination.

No Mow May

Once again No Mow May is here. A hearty congratulations to those of you who left the lawnmower in the shed and put their feet up!

It's not too late to join in though, whether it's just a strip, a patch or the whole lawn. Plantlife, the botanic charity that started this campaign back in 2019, recommends a combination of shorter grass and areas of longer grass to boost floral diversity and nectar and pollen production throughout the year.

Last year's results showed that over 465,000 flowers, 25 moth species and 24 bee species were counted. It's amazing what is waiting to grow in your lawn.

What to see

1. Enjoy the colourful village verges before they are mown

2. Look for signs that the newly installed bird boxes are being used (without being too close and disturbing the birds) and let Wild About Barrow know at Wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com: we'd love to know!

What to do

1. Plant/sow seed/encourage plants recommended by Plant Life as the best nectar producing lawn plants: White clover (*Trifolium repens*),
Dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp)
Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*)
Common Daisy (*Bellis perennis*),
Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*),
Oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)
Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*)

Enjoy a lawn full of colour and life and help nature at the same time.

2. Give your children or grandchildren (or yourself!) a garden patch or tub where they can grow their own mini cornfield. Cornflowers zing with colour all summer and bees and other insects love them.

Other wildflowers that will give a colourful display this summer include corncockle, common poppy, corn marigold and corn chamomile.

Alison Rushton

Think global: Act local

All photographs by A. Rushton