



Wild About Barrow

September/October 2022

Once again it is that time of year when Nature puts on a spectacular show. The trees and hedgerows are displaying glorious red, amber and gold colours while their bountiful fruit hangs heavily on bended boughs. Spiders with their delicate webs and toadstools are to be seen in our dewy mornings alongside a few hangers on from summer such as hoverflies and solitary bees seeking out nectar from the remaining stalwart flowers.

Bat Boxes

Five 'Kent' bat boxes are now installed around the village. A big thank you to Nick Thomas for expertly making the boxes and to Mark Munroe for securing them on trees.

Two can be found on oak trees by the River Soar near the Mill Lane play area; one on the walk from the river towards Holbourne Close; one on the left of the new footbridge to Poppyfields and the fifth one is next to Fishpool Brook on the path just past the bridge to Newton Close.

Unlike birds, bats will hibernate in the boxes over winter. Some bats migrate to warmer climes and some do both. Our most common bat, the pipistrelle, hibernates from about mid October.



Mark Munroe securing a bat box

The colony finds a hollow tree, rock crevice or other small quiet place of safety. These little bats like to wedge themselves head down, gripping the surface with their feet. Bat boxes can be used by roosting birds but it is unlikely they would use our bat boxes as the space offers a snug fit for pipistrelles but is too tiny for birds. Bats will wake during warmer spells and fly around for food so they may be seen well into the autumn evenings.

Wild Celebration Sept/Oct 22



Chicken of the Woods
(*Laetiporus sulphureus*)



Turkeytail
(*Trametes versicolor*)



Shaggy Inkcap
(*Coprinus comatus*)



Ivy with hoverfly
(*Hedera helix*)



Hawthorn
(*Crataegus monogyna*)



Bramble
(*Rubus fruticosus*)

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

The chicken of the woods is a magnificent sight growing on an old walnut stump on the green at Nursery Grove. This edible fungus looks as though it is flowing out of the trunk. The other walnut stump there is host to the banded bracket fungus named Turkeytail after its striking colours, also known as Japanese ladies fan.

The third toadstool celebrated above also has wonderfully descriptive names: it is known as the lawyer's wig or judges wig mushroom and shaggy mane. One of these delicate mushrooms was reported as lifting a 75 by 60 centimetre paving slab 4 centimetres in 48 hours! This mushroom has the unusual feature of deliquescence which means to liquefy. It has the fairly rare property of autodigestion, a habit of destroying itself once it has released

a single round of spores. This mighty concrete-lifting mushroom turns to a black ink (yes, it can actually be used as a semi-permanent ink) in less than 24 hours. But why? Well, it's a selective death process, moving sugars out of the gills into the spores before the gills separate and curl back so helping the spores to be released far from the parent and giving them the best start in life.

What to See

1. Take a stroll through the wood at the side of Seagrave Nurseries and out onto the fields beyond.
2. Look out for autumn bird arrivals from the Arctic Circle and Scandinavia such as redwings, fieldfares, short-eared owls who frequently hunt during daylight, plus swans and geese over reservoirs and lakes. Try looking at Watermead Country Park and Groby Pool, reputedly the largest natural expanse of open water in Leicestershire, covering 38 acres.

What to do

1. As the nights draw in and there's less to do in the garden, it's time to plan for next year. What can you do to welcome nature into your garden? A pond, a log pile or insect hotel? Maybe treat yourself and insects to a glorious wildflower bed or pots of your favourite wildflowers such as ox eye daisies, foxgloves or knapweeds. Check out reputable British wildflower seed suppliers such as Landlife at <https://www.wildflower.co.uk/> or Naturescape at Langar, Notts or visit <https://www.naturescape.co.uk/>.
2. The highly pathogenic virus Bird flu is still prevalent in the UK. We are between a large Regional Avian Influenza Prevention Zone extending east from the wash to London and to the west at Stoke on Trent and Crewe which are in 10km Surveillance Zones so the risk to birds in our area is considerable. Therefore we need to take extra care to clean bird feeders regularly. It is wonderful that as a nation so many of us support our wild birds but we will end up doing the opposite if germs are spread from dirty feeders.

Alison Rushton

Think global: Act local

All photographs by A. Rushton