

This leaflet mentions only a small selection of plants, animals and other living organisms found in the park. You should be able to find most of these without too much searching. While we were reviewing the wildlife we found far more species identified and photographed than are included in this leaflet. For example, in 2002 a survey of the bank near the central steps identified over 40 species of wild flower.



Ragwort



Entrance Sign

The Millennium Park

In the 1990s developers bought land and wanted to build a new estate off Fishpool Way but they were only allowed to do so if they gave a portion of it to the public for community use. People in the village set up a 'Millennium Group' to raise funds to create an interesting and environmentally friendly public open space. Over the millennium year of 2000 an amazing £12,000 was raised through numerous events including a garden party, a river festival and a Last Night of the Proms. In 2002 the Parish Council acquired and adopted the land as a celebration of the Queen's Silver Jubilee. And that's when the space was given its name: the Millennium Park.

With an additional £20,000 from grants, the Millennium Group bought native wild flowers, trees and bushes, commissioned a giant sundial, and information board and created the paths. They all enhance the park we know today. Village groups took part in the tree planting which got people really interested in the site. The park was formally opened in 2004.

The wild flowers sown or planted included primroses, cowslips and wild daffodils along the bank beside Fishpool Way and bluebells and snowdrops on the top side near to the bridgeway. A summer wild flower meadow was created on damp ground near the Melton Road end of the park.

Various wild flower and other surveys had been carried out and in early 2009 the Parish Council and Barrow Community Association decided to sponsor an illustrated leaflet to record the development of the park and its natural history.



Millennium Sundial



Robin



Daffodil



Turkey Tail Fungus

Spring

(March, April, May)

**"Come gentle spring, ethereal mildness come!
And from her wintry grave bid drowsy nature
rise." Joseph Haydn**

During the winter most of our wildlife has been resting. Now as the days lengthen and the temperature begins to rise there is an eruption of new life. Trees start into life with fresh green leaves and burst into bloom. Early spring flowers light up banks and hedgerows with their yellow flowers. Blackthorn bushes are covered with white flowers and later in spring our hedgerows are brightened with hawthorn blossom.

Our migratory birds will be starting to return from the far south and winter visitors will be making their journeys back to the north. Our breeding birds will be establishing their territories and the males will be singing for their mates. Nest building will begin followed by mating and egg laying. All the common garden birds are seen or heard in the park.

Insects become active with ladybirds, bees, wasps, flies, beetles and others taking advantage of sunny days. According to the charity 'Buglife' there are over 23,000 known species of insect in the UK. For example there are over 59 species of butterflies, 22 bumblebees and 42 ladybirds. Most of the invertebrates will be mating at this time.

Warm sunny days will enable butterflies which have hibernated over winter to take flight and mate. These include brimstone, small tortoiseshell, peacock and comma. Red admirals will return from hibernation in Africa or southern Europe from April onwards, having already mated, and start the next generation.

Other types of living things can also be found in spring including fungi and lichens which are species which can be found throughout the year.



Cowslip



Tortoise Beetles Mating



Small Tortoiseshell

Produced by www.millenniumsquare.co.uk
or clerk@barrowpc.org.uk
Contact us via The Parish Office (01509 416016)

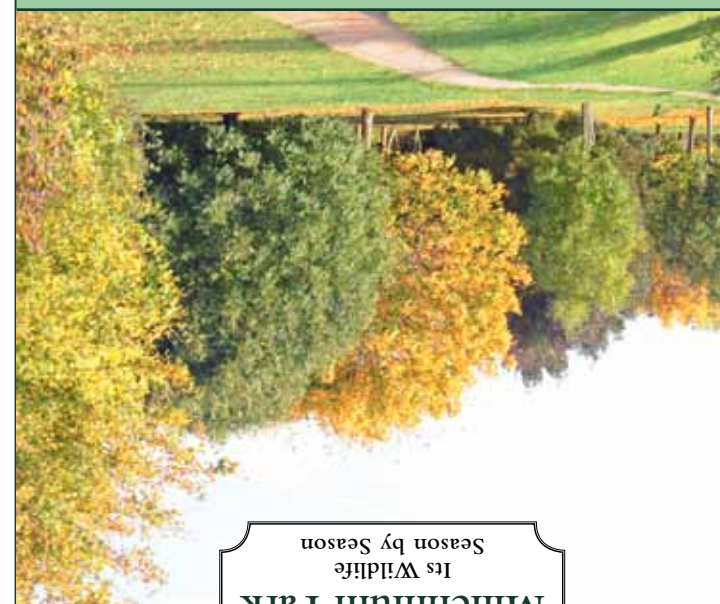
Stepping Stones Project Community Green Space Grant 2012.

Stepping Stones Project is a partnership project delivering exceptional green spaces in the central Leicestershire area. Encouraging community involvement and raising awareness of the countryside around us is a key element to achieving this. This leaflet has been funded through the

Thanks to our sponsors:

Thanks to Bob Mudge for collecting the data on which this leaflet has been based and for writing the text. Thanks to Bob and to Judith Rodgers for taking the photos in the Park in all seasons and all weathers.

Acknowledgements



Barrow upon Soar's
Millennium Park
Its Wildlife
Season by Season

Barrow upon Soar NATURAL HISTORY

BUSCA
BARROW UPON SOAR
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

HERITAGE GROUP

Barrow upon Soar's
Millennium Park
Its Wildlife
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Butterfly on Knapweed

Birds Foot Trefoil

NATURAL HISTORY



Summer

(June, July, August)
“We'll talk of sunshine and of song, and summer days, when we were young.” Wordsworth

This is the most prolific season for most of our wildlife with large numbers of flowering plants in a rich selection of colours, birds busy raising their young and invertebrates and mammals at their most active.

The park has benefited from sowing and planting of wild flowers to add to species which were already present. While spring flowers are mainly pastel shades, in summer we are treated to an outburst of all shades and colours, especially in the damp meadow. All the various habitats within the park display different species because they provide different living conditions.

The wooded area at the top of the park has few flowers in summer compared with other habitats. There are more spring flowers such as wood anemone, herb bennett and lords and ladies. The canopy of leaves blocks the light and the only ground plants that thrive are brambles, ivy and ground ivy with a pretty blue flower.

Some early flowering plants including lords and ladies, dandelions and field maples have now developed their fruits.

The delph hole in the middle of the park is predominantly inhabited by stinging nettles. Though these can cause pain to us they are a wonderful food plant for some of our butterflies eg. small tortoiseshells. There are also great willowherb and elder bushes whose heavy cream flowers give off a heady perfume on June days.

On warm summer days you can see many different kinds of insects amongst the vegetation including hoverflies (look like wasps but are harmless flies), shield bugs and grasshoppers.



Yarrow



Red Clover

The shrub plantation near the sundial has several species that we don't find elsewhere in the park eg. yarrow, birdsfoot, trefoil and ragwort.

The damp meadow has been sown with flower seeds which would have been common in hay meadows before the days of selective weedkillers and artificial fertilisers. The area is not mowed from springtime until autumn. This allows for a grand show of colour from the 15 species that have thrived from the planting.

Insects are especially abundant in the damp meadow including bumble bees, butterflies.



Hoverfly



Seven Spot Ladybird on Hogweed



Meadow Cranesbill



Lords and Ladies Fruit



Common Toadflax

Autumn

(September, October, November)
“Autumn is a second spring when every leaf's a flower.” Albert Camus

Season of mellow colours; gold, russet and red predominate. Most flowers and plants have now set their fruit, many of which act as food for birds during the coming winter. The birds and plants help each other; the birds get to eat and the plants get their seeds distributed through the birds' droppings! The dog rose beside the fence and common rowan give a spectacular show with their red fruits.



Rowan



Crab Apples

There are still some flowers to be found. The tiny cream ivy flower is a late one and important for birds feeding in late winter. The scarlet pimpernel flower (on the top path near Melton Rd) is only about 5 millimetres across but is extremely beautiful when studied under a magnifying glass (see front cover).

The common toadflax is at its best during summer but can also be found in autumn as can red campion. Both do well in the meadow.

Hedge bindweed is hated by gardeners because of its rampant growth. It does nevertheless give a wonderful show with its white trumpet flowers in the delph hole. Field bindweed can also be seen, especially along the Fishpool Road verge.

The English oak is identified by acorns on long stalks. This is the sort that is in the park. It is called the pedunculate oak which means the acorns are stemmed like a pipe. The other common oak, the sessile oak has stalkless acorns and long leaf stalks. As autumn progresses the leaves on deciduous trees change colour with their variety of colours.

There are crab apple trees in the park along the top path. Their fruits change from green to yellow as they drop off.

The autumn is the best time for fungi. They are found near the northern end under the mature trees.

Spiders can be found from spring to autumn. Autumn dew makes their webs look magical.

Shield bugs are common in the park particularly amongst the hawthorn bushes along the top hedge.

Galls on the underside of an oak leaf are caused by a wasp which is about 2 mm long. The female wasp lays eggs on the underside of oak leaves stimulating the growth of a gall. The emerging wasps live in the gall until the leaves drop. Galls are common among the small oak trees planted along the top path.



Autumn Colour



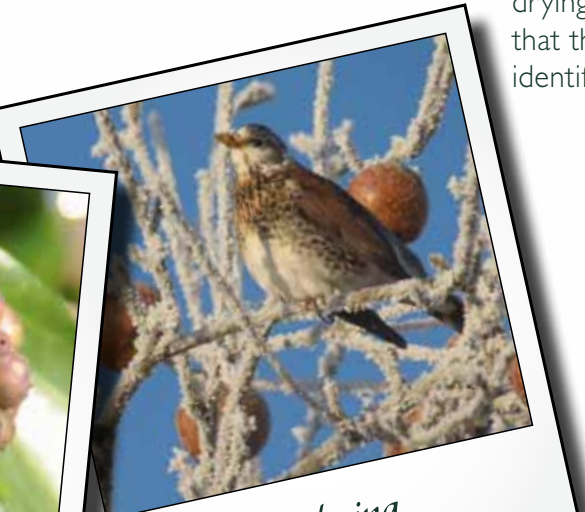
Garden Spider



Sycamore Wings



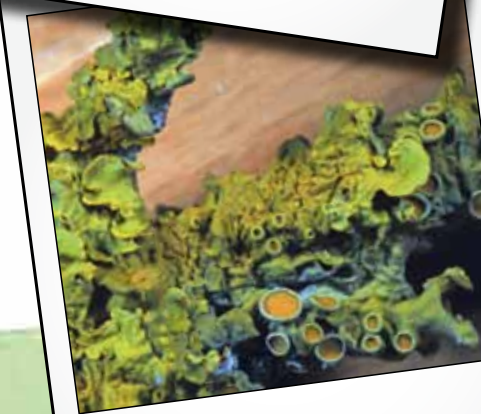
Ivy Fruit



Redwing



Snow Drops



Lichen

Winter

(December, January, February)
“See winter comes to rule the varied year, sullen and sad, with all his rising train.” James Thomson

Most poetry on the subject of winter seems to focus on the 'sullen and sad' aspects of the season. It must have been tough for our ancestors before the age of electric lighting and central heating. Indeed it is a season when most of nature rests; surviving rather than flourishing. For plants and animals it generally means shutting down or slowing down. It is a quiet time in the Millennium Park.

There are few wild flowers in bloom during the three darkest months. Snowdrops are one notable exception. Also if the autumn has been mild, plants such as hogweed can show late growth and support some flowers into December. Perennial flowering plants will have died back though new leaves may start to show as winter progresses. Annual and biennial plants will have shed their seed which will be waiting for the lengthening days to germinate.

Most of the trees and shrubs in the park are deciduous and by December they will have shed their leaves though some may hang on to the dead leaves until new buds burst in the spring. Some such as sycamore may hang on to their seeds into winter. Those which produce berries will still have some left providing food for the birds. Ivy berries ripen in winter and provide food when other berries have gone. Some trees such as hazel have catkins during the winter months. The crab apples which litter the ground miraculously vanish shortly after the field fares and redwings arrive from northerly lands.

Most of our mammals such as badgers and rodents (e.g. voles, shrews, mice, rats, squirrels) become less active while others such as dormice and bats hibernate. Some of these will bury their winter provisions or otherwise store them for the winter. Incidentally, this is one mechanism which helps plants to reproduce, using the animals to sow their seed for them!

The molluscs (slugs and snails) are inactive in the winter with some species hibernating. Snails which hibernate secrete a thick mucous which seals the opening in the shell. The photograph of a collection of snail shells is a sign of a song thrush feeding on brown-lipped snails. This is one of the most common snails in the park. You may notice pebbles which are being used as a 'thrush's anvil' to beat the snail out of its shell. You may also see that some snails are brown, some are pink and others are yellow but all are brown-lipped.

Other forms of life which can be seen in winter are fungi and lichens. There are over 1,500 species of lichen in Britain. Each species is a combination of a fungus in symbiosis with an alga which cannot exist independently. The alga uses the sun's energy to synthesise sugar to feed itself while also providing vitamins and sugar to the fungus. In return the fungus protects the alga from sunlight and from drying out. Some species are so similar visually that they can only be identified by microscopic identification or using chemical indicators.