



ORE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Saving and enhancing green space in the Upper Ore Valley

Speckled Wood Newsletter

June 2017

Welcome to the June edition of our Newsletter. An unusual statement to make in England in this month but: the canopy of Sycamore trees on the Old London Rd side of Speckled Wood are providing welcome shade from the beating sun! Be warned though, the mosquitoes are out, so if you intend to sit there for a while, make sure you are armed with insect repellent and don't wear bright pink, thin trousers (yes, I speak from experience, they seem to love these and are quite happy and well armed enough to pierce right through for a lovely meal!). On further investigation on the web, apparently mosquitoes are attracted to bright colours as well as smelling us humans out.

Record Making in the Wood!

We have some exciting news and a first recording in Britain! I will pass you on to Andrew Grace, our local Ecologist:

“Doing some wildlife survey work in the Ore Valley has opened my eyes to the diversity of plants and insects here. There are so many different types of habitat in the green spaces. Speckled Wood as a valley and stream with mature deciduous trees provides shade and cover during the hot summer months. A real surprise was recording a parasitic fly never found before on the mainland of Britain. It has been known from the Channel Islands but has now appeared in Britain and the first record was from Speckled Wood, an extraordinary event. After correspondence with experts at the Natural History Museum London a further three records were made in other parts of southern England by entomologists who are experts in this group of insects.

The fly is *Blepharipa pratensis* and is a parasite of the Gypsy moth. The moth has become quite scarce in Britain but is widespread in Europe and can become a forestry pest. The larvae of the fly eat the moth caterpillars.”

Many thanks to Andrew and congratulations on his find. This is a rare and exciting occurrence in an Ecologist's experience and for us, as the location of the find will be recorded as Speckled Wood. If you are interested in looking at a photo, please follow this link: https://diptera.info/forum/viewthread.php?thread_id=60949

Opportunities in the Wood!



Speckled Wood is dotted with water tanks left over from its old allotment/pig keeping days and we came across this sight in the undergrowth. The tree has grown right through the split in the abandoned tank. Why waste an opportunity!

Activities in the Wood

We have made a start on improving some of the steps in the wood. Many of the risers have completed their lifecycle and are in need of replacement and on some steps we are cutting away some of the earth to increase their size and ease of use. As per usual our needs are being met, as some wood was donated from the waste accumulated from a resident's new decking in Church Street.

We are also clearing pathways which have rapidly taken on a jungle appearance as all plants are racing to express themselves in the biggest way they can.

Herbs in the Wood



Church Street skip site -March 2017



Same site with Japanese knotweed -June 2017

The mere name of Japanese knotweed makes many people shudder as is well renowned as an invasive species (growing up to 4 inches per day), that can trouble the foundations of buildings, but there is a beneficial, less mentioned side that is worth knowing about.

Aside from its centuries old use in Asia as a spring vegetable, Japanese knotweed is a herb which contains resveratrol and it is this content which is known to have many beneficial effects. Resveratrol has been shown to have a measureable preventative effect against neurodegeneration in cognitive disorders such as Alzheimers and dementia. It is also known to have protective qualities against fatty heart conditions and maintaining the flexibility of arteries. Resveratrol also has shown to be beneficial in a number of gastrointestinal problems such as constipation, inflammations and also acts as a mild laxative. Research is being carried out on the ant carcinogenic properties of resveratrol and finally its ability to prevent insulin resistance in diabetic conditions.

Well, we may have people come flocking to Speckled Wood for their dose of knotweed in the future!

(Please note: the above is for information only. Please do not attempt to consume knotweed without professional advice.)

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