

LYMM GOLF CLUB

Wildlife report for 2011

The first sighting of interest this year was the early frogspawn on March 15th in the second ditch adjacent to the bridge on the 18th hole.

The first brood observed was of Mallard on the pond in front of the men's 12th tee on April 12th. The brood had been reducing in numbers over the next few days when sadly by April 16th all had gone; I can only assume this was due to predation by wild mink which are prevalent in the area. There is a very simple method of getting rid of this voracious vermin which entails setting a humane trap, but it would need checking each day. On Captains Day, two adult Mallard with eight young casually walked over the first tee, which could have been a second brood for the same pair. Sadly they were not observed again.

In November last year the ever observant Steve Mooney saw a rabbit being chased by a stoat, which in turn was mobbed by Magpies.

Weasels and stoats are very similar but the way to tell them apart is a stoat is bigger; however the main difference is a stoat has a conspicuous black tip to the tail.

Whilst on the subject of rabbits, John Rankin saw a rabbit taking nesting material into a hole under the planter outside the secretary's office. Most of the rabbits suffered from Myxomatosis this year, but some seem to have survived this awful disease.

There used to be a small colony of black rabbits by the 11th tee and near the 13th green but it appears they have all now been wiped out.

You may have seen Springwatch on June 15th where Chris Packham said "In the old days golf courses needed rabbits to keep the grass down, now rabbits and wildlife need golf courses". Happily Stuart and his staff supported by the golf committee are doing a great job in managing the course in a responsible, wildlife-friendly way.

Compared with 2010 this year was a great success as far as breeding birds using the nest boxes were concerned.

Apart from the usual Blue Tits and Great Tits there was a first known breeding of Nuthatch in one of the boxes on the Greenkeeper's shed.



Nuthatch

A Nuthatch can be recognised as it moves both up and down the tree trunk, whereas a Treecreeper only goes up, then flies to the bottom and goes up again.

The Nuthatch has been scarce on the course, but the Greenstaff have a super feeding station outside their caravan which attracts Nuthatch as well as many other species such as Great, Coal, Long-tailed and Blue tits, Greenfinch, Chaffinch etc..

The other first for the club was a Female Redstart seen by the 12th pond on July 26th.



Female Redstart

The bird is a rarity in this area, but one was seen two days earlier on the nearby nature reserve

The spectacular bird of prey the Peregrine Falcon was once very rare in this area, but can now be seen regularly flying over the golf course due to the fact that a pair have bred on Thelwall viaduct for the last three years.

This year two chicks fledged, but sadly one was found dead under the viaduct: the theory is that whilst it was flapping its wings to strengthen them before taking its first flight, a gust of wind blew it off its perch and it did not have the strength to remain airborne.



Peregrine Falcon

Below is a chart of numbers and species occupying the nest boxes

Box No	Position	Brood	Date
No1	On Greenkeepers sheds	Nuthatch in one box Great Tit in another box	May 17th
No2	Tree left 10 th ladies tee	Half built nest, abandoned	
No3	Left 10 th Tee above halfway house	6 Great Tits +1 egg not hatched	
No4	Right 10 th Tee	2 Great Tits +4 Eggs not hatched	
No5	Right of 9 th green	7 Great Tits +2 Eggs not hatched	
No6			
No7			
No8	Right of 6 th Fairway	11 Blue Tits	
No9	Tree between 15&16 th F'way	9 Great Tits	
No10	East side of clubhouse	No brood due to abandoned wasps' nest	
No11	Right 2 nd Green	Predated by squirrel, all young eaten	
No12	Left of 8 th green	Predated by Woodpecker young eaten	
No13	Tree left 4 th F'way	12 Blue Tits	
No14	Tree between 3 rd green & 4 th Tee	8 Great Tits + 2 Eggs not hatched	
No15	Copse Rt. 18 th F'way towards green	8 Blue Tits + 1 Egg not hatched	

I managed to persuade one of the ringing group from Woolston Eyes Nature Reserve to come down to the club and ring as many young birds as possible whilst they were in the boxes. This entails putting a ring on the leg with a unique number which is then sent to the British Trust for Ornithology where the numbers are all put on a central computer. So, if any of OUR birds are caught anywhere else in the country or abroad we will be informed of their whereabouts.

Below is a photo of the box which was situated to the right of the 9th Tee. This damage was done by a Great Spotted Woodpecker, which besides eating grubs etc from tree cavities enjoy birds' eggs, or in this case young Great Tits which had just hatched.

I put metal rings round the holes on all the boxes which were supposed to stop the Woodpeckers and squirrels from enlarging them, but obviously it did not work on this occasion!



Woodpecker damage

Thank you to all those members who have contacted me with sightings of interest: please keep them coming as I do rely on members to report their observations, however commonplace they may seem.

Brian Ankers September 2011

