

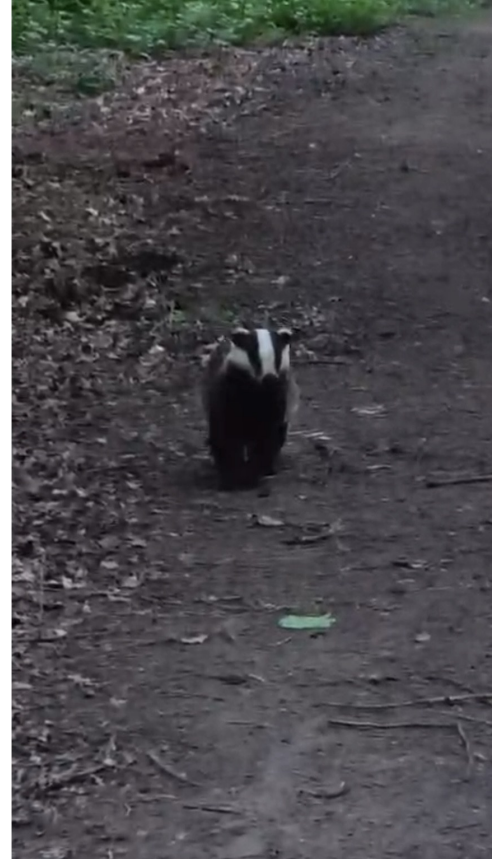
Summer Wildlife Newsletter

Badgers

Badgers are predominantly nocturnal and crepuscular (active at dusk and dawn) and in Britain most live in social groups of approximately five to 12 individuals – comprising male (boar) and female (sow) adults, sub-adults and cubs. A social group lives in a series of underground burrows called a sett, with each social group normally having a litter of one to five cubs each year. Cubs stay below ground for eight to ten weeks, before slowly venturing out from late April. What surprised me initially was the discovery that badgers can vary from their common appearance and be a variety of colourations; albino (pure white), Erythristic (ginger fur) and Melanistic (black fur).

Badgers are particularly active during the summer months as they search vigorously for earthworms, which make up a large part of their summer meals, but they will also eat plants, insects and small mammals. This period is critical for badgers as they need to build up their fat reserves for the cooler months ahead.

Previously, in conjunction with Cheshire Badger Vaccination Program (CBVP), Tatton Park ran a 6-year program between 2018-2024, successfully administering TB vaccinations to 146 badgers on the estate across 15 setts. This is done by deploying traps near signs of badger activity. Traps are checked early morning to minimise the amount of stress the animal is placed under. Captured badgers are vaccinated, temporarily marked and then released. The marking process is used to ensure that if badger individuals are recaptured, they are not given a 2nd dose. The great job completed by those involved in the vaccination programme ensures that one of the UK's most iconic mammals is protected.



Special Points of Interest

- **Badgers out snuffling for worms**
- **Fledglings finding their feet**
- **Calves and Fawns hiding in the vegetation**
- **Butterflies are basking in the sun**

Birds

With breeding season well underway, fledglings leaving the nest, and a mixture of resident and migratory birds present, an abundance of different species can be seen throughout the summer months. A great spectacle within the park is the hirundines swooping over Tatton Mere, hunting for insects. Hirundines refers to birds belonging to the family hirundinadae, in the UK these include sand martins, swallows and house martins. All 3 of these species can often be seen flying together over Tatton Mere, low to the water hunting for insects. They are often joined by swifts, who share many similarities with hirundines, yet are part of a different family group. Look closely and you will see the subtle differences that aid in their identification. Goslings from greylag, egyptian and canada geese can be seen following their parents' every move. Differing to other birds, goslings are highly developed at the point they hatch, becoming able to forage themselves within 24 hours. They are not reliant on their parents for food, but they are reliant on their guidance on what to eat, along with other survival skills such as predator avoidance and navigating their environment. For the frequent visitors to the Al-len Hide you may have noticed a change in our feeding habits. Following RSPB guidance, we are now only providing small amounts of fat balls, along with cleaning bird feeders weekly. This is to minimise the transmission of trichomonosis. Throughout the summer months, birds do not rely on additional feeding due to the availability of natural food sources. So although our bird feeders may seem quieter than usual, rest assured this is beneficial for our resident birds in the long run.

For red and fallow deer, summer begins with one of the most special times of the year: calving season. Between the months of May and July, hinds and does give birth to a single calf/fawn. They are usually born in areas with dense vegetation which provides protection for them while the mother will go off to graze nearby. During the first few weeks of life, the calves remain hidden, and their mothers return regularly to feed them. The calves are born spotty which helps them to remain camouflaged and protected from disturbance or predators in the early stages of life. Public awareness during this period is especially important and we kindly ask that if you come across a lone calf to please leave it as its mother will return knowing full well where she left it. Please note that dogs must be kept on leads in all areas of the parkland from the 1st May until 31st July to minimise the risk of disturbance. We thank you for your co-operation.

Did You Know?

The fastest Butterfly in the UK is the Skipper, which can fly at speeds of up to 37mph.



Butterflies/pollinators



Our involvement in the UK butterfly monitoring scheme is well underway, with weekly surveys showing positive results. The best time to see butterflies in the park would be on a warm, dry day with less than moderate wind and activity peaks between mid-late morning. Some of the species recorded so far include painted lady, holly blue, orange tip and red admiral. Often seen flitting in and out of Millennium Wood. Head over there on a warm, sunny day and you won't be disappointed.

Summer is a great time to see lots of different pollinators in the park, with the UK's most important pollinator, the hard-working bee, taking on the bulk of the workload. They are supported by hoverflies, wasps, butterflies, and beetles who all contribute to the mammoth task of pollination - working hard all day until the moths turn up to cover the night shift. When I use the word pollinators I am referring to over 1500 insect species in the UK which I don't have the word count to name. Often overlooked, these insects are vital for the reproduction of plants and as a food source for many species. If you look closely, you'll be amazed what you might find.

Grazing Sheep

As well as the rare breed Soay and Hebridean Sheep that reside in Tatton all year round, we have a mixed breed flock come in from a nearby farm to graze the park. Sheep grazing is a natural way to improve soil health as their hooves produce small indentations into the soil, which breaks up compacted layers and exposes bare soil for a variety of plants to germinate. With manure deposits fertilising the soil, grazing is a historic natural way to improve soil fertility and manage the land. Some of the breeds that roam the park include texals, black texals, jacob's and suffolk. Please enjoy both the sheep's looks and the great job they do from a distance, as we don't want to disturb them. Have a great summer :)