

## THE WILDLIFE OF BUSHELL'S LAKE, ULLENHALL PART 1 – ANIMALS AND INSECTS

When we first took the fishing at Bushell's Lake I was asked if I would keep a record of wildlife seen at the venue. This I have done, and with a little help from others the findings are given here.

### Animals

The largest and most magnificent of all the animals at Bushell's is the Roe Deer. It has been seen by many and on many occasions. They can often be seen a couple of fields away below the lake. They are very agile and I saw two being chased by a dog and when confronted by a 10ft (3m) hedge they leapt it as though it didn't exist. The dog had no chance of keeping up with them. Interestingly they are now the only truly wild deer in Britain.



*Roe Deer*

The next pair of animals is the rabbit and hare, more correctly known as the brown hare. The rabbit is the more common but the hare is the nicer one to look at. No chance for a dog to catch these either as they can run up to 45mph (72kph). Once very common their numbers have declined so it is always nice to spot them.



*Brown Hare*

Grey squirrel are present but these are so common it isn't surprising. I have also seen rats which are not at all welcome although it wouldn't be possible to have a rural setting without them. Frogs and their tadpoles are to be seen in Spring when they are spawning although I have not seen frogs outside of this time. Toads are also present and it was nice to spot these less common of our two similar amphibians. The other common creature is the pond snail which abounds in the lake and I have cursed it a few times when the fish have been taking snails and I haven't been able to attract their attention!

The next animal, if you can call it such is the grass snake. This is a very handsome snake and our largest. Males are typically 3ft 3in(1000mm) long whilst females grow somewhat longer at 4ft 3in(1300mm). In Germany it's known as the ring snake due to its yellow ring around its neck. It can often be seen making its way across the lake surface. Delightful creatures and inoffensive but they do smell awful!



*Grass Snake*

Finally we have the Daubenton bats. They are amongst the larger bats in Britain and almost always appear at dusk over water, often catching your line as the fly. They are super sleepers and can hibernate for up to six months at a time. They roost in hollow trees and tunnels near to water.



*Daubenton Bat*

I'm sure that badgers visit from time to time but, as yet I've not seen one at Bushell's.

I've no doubt that there are other creatures around the lake, especially mice and voles but, as yet, I haven't seen them. If you do spot others I'd be pleased to hear from you.

## Insects

I'm sure there are many insects that I will not include here but these are the ones I have recorded.

Butterflies have been abundant at times but I'm no expert in these. I've have either identified the following or had them identified for me.

Red Admiral is probably one of the easiest to recognise and even I can do that. Then there are Peacocks, Painted Ladies, Lesser Tortoiseshell, which once became rather rare but has now recovered, Common Blues, Orange Tips, Cabbage Whites, Brimstones, Meadow Browns, Speckled Wood, Comma and Ringlet.



*Red Admiral*



*Peacock*



*Painted Lady*



*Small Tortoiseshell*



*Common Blue*



*Orange Tip*



*Cabbage White*



*Brimstone*



*Meadow Brown*



*Speckled Wood*



*Comma*



*Ringlet*

Next are blue damselflies where only the male is blue, the female being greenish brown. This is a very pretty fly and is certainly common in the Midlands. Similar but much larger are the blue dragonflies. There are also dragonflies of other colours that would need someone better informed than I to separate and put a name to. They have a reputation for not being liked by trout but having seen trout leap and take them in mid-air I do question this assertion.



*Blue Damsel (Female)*



*Blue Damsel (Male)*

We now get to those insects of greater interest to us as fishermen. The earliest to appear is the Hawthorn Fly which is like a large black gnat with long trailing hind legs. Its Latin name of *Bibio marci* gives it its other name of St Mark's Fly as it is supposed to appear on St Mark's Day, April 25<sup>th</sup>. A bit of nonsense of course as it is around long before and afterwards although you can always find them at the end of April.



*Hawthorn Fly*



*Pond Olive*



*Silverhorns*

The upwinged fly known as the pond olive is also to be seen on the lake at times and our trout most definitely feed on them. Then there is the caenis species of which there are several. The caenis is known as the Anglers' Curse as it is so small that it is considered too small to imitate. Again trout at Bushell's certainly take these. The other abundant fly at Bushell's is the Silverhorns, a sedge fly that is supposed to be disliked by trout. Whether this is true is open to conjecture but there are other sedges and fish can certainly be taken on sedge patterns of various sorts and in various stages of development. Finally, I must mention the Crane Fly or Daddy Longlegs. Familiar to most and when they fall on the water in Autumn an appropriate pattern can be a real killer.



*Crane Fly*

Again, I'm sure I've missed plenty so if you've seen more then I'd be pleased to hear from you.

Next time we will look at the birds seen at and on the lake.