

THE WILDLIFE OF BUSHELL'S LAKE, ULLENHALL PART 3 – PLANTS AND FLOWERS

You may well ask “what is the difference between plants and flowers?” As far as I am concerned they are all plants but some have flowers and some may not or at least they aren't obvious. I am also including trees in this section.

Let's start with trees. By water there are two that immediately spring to mind, the willow and the alder. I remember at one stage we were told that the alder was endangered and we could expect them to all but disappear, especially in Herefordshire. It didn't happen. We have several around the lake and they are easy to recognise from their tiny cones. Let's hope that the ash manages to resist the fungal attack that is now in Britain. We do have some and we hope we can keep them. What sort of willow do we have? Well, I believe them to be crack willows but if you know better then please let me know.

We do, of course, have some ornamental conifers and I'm told that people often curse them when they catch them with their flies. Another miscreant as far as these fishermen are concerned is the dog rose. The saving grace for these is that at least they are pretty! The other plant that sometimes causes a problem here is the blackberry or bramble.

Although there have been no sloes to speak of this year we do have some Blackthorn, pretty in blossom but mind the spikes; they can be very painful. With a less painful spike is Hawthorn or May. Sweet chestnut is to be seen together with cherry, hazel, lilac and, of course, oak, probably English Oak.



Blackthorn in blossom



Sloes, the fruit of the blackthorn

Flowers are in abundance at Bushell's, some natural and some introduced. As you enter the area the most obvious plant is the Norfolk reed otherwise known as *phragmites* reed. It looks great but it is very rampant and needs to be kept in check or it can cover a whole lake in a few years.

The best place to start with flowering plants is probably in Spring. One of the first flowers to show is lesser celandine with its bright yellow showing all over the banks. At about the same time, or slightly earlier, is coltsfoot, a bit like a small dandelion. One plant I do not recall seeing at Bushell's is the primrose which is quite a surprise; maybe I've just not looked properly! Soon after these comes the lady's smock or cuckoo flower followed by greater stitchwort, red campion and speedwell. There are many types of speedwell but I'll leave you to decide which one is present at Bushell's Lake. At around this time the marsh marigold or king cup appears close to or even in the water with its bright

yellow almost waxy looking flowers. At about this time the cowslips appear. I'm not sure if these are natural here, but they still give a splendid show. As we get into mid April the bluebells come into bloom. However, this is really a garden variety which originates from Spain. They differ from our native bluebell by having flowers on both sides of the stem whereas the English variety has flowers just on the one side.



Lesser celandine



Coltsfoot



Lady's smock



Greater stitchwort



Red campion



Speedwell

We soon have plants starting to show in the water, the most striking of which is the yellow lily otherwise known as the Brandy Bottle. The most beautiful, in my opinion, is the flowering rush with its lovely pink flowers. There are also white water lily, amphibious bistort, water dock, water mint, yellow iris, forget-me-not and the dreaded duckweed. Duckweed comes in two varieties, minor and major. We have the major one which is the more common. It is a plant which spreads by division and can double over night! The lake is fringed with common rush.



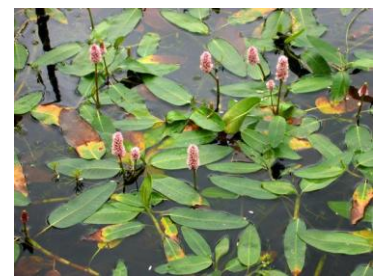
Marsh marigold



Brandy bottle



Flowering rush



Amphibious bistort

On the banks are a lot of small plants which last from Spring into Autumn. Amongst these are self heal, dandelion, daisies, red and white clovers, buttercups, common vetch and bird's foot trefoil. We also have garlic mustard or Jack by the hedge, a common plant of waysides, common nettle, gypsywort, which is similar to nettle but without the sting, dock, ox-eye daisy, daffodils, tansy, mallow, great and rose bay willow herbs, teasels and viburnum.

There are a number of thistles including creeping thistle, spear thistle and yellow thistle.



Self heal



Common vetch



Bird's foot trefoil



Gypsywort



Garlic mustard



Tansy



Mallow



Great willowherb



Rose bay willowherb



Teasel

Ladies bedstraw is a strange plant as it covers large areas with a tangle of stems covered in small yellow flowers. Other yellow flowered plants that grow in profusion are lady's mantle and alexanders. Neither of these plants was familiar to me until I was shown them and told their names.



Lady's bedstraw



Lady's mantle



Alexanders

Two other plants which I find pretty are the fleabane and the figwort. Fleabane is common with its purple flowers and yellow centres and figwort is less common but certainly appears near the lake.



Fleabane



Figwort

As I said in the first two parts of the Wildlife of Bushell's Lake I will have missed things and you will see things that I haven't. Well, if that applies to the animals and insects and to the birds then it applies very much more so to plants! There are so many and some look similar to others and the names often defy logic but they do make the whole scene so much more enjoyable.