

What wildlife to look out for this summer!

Summer is a time of abundance, colour and life - an especially busy season for wildlife. However with all this rain most of the wildlife may be a bit wetter than usual.

Insects



Look out for butterfly species such as the Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) or the Peacock (*Inachis io*) as you walk along the canal. These large winged butterflies are frequently seen on wild flowers, in particular Hemp Agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), as pictured here on the left. Peacock butterflies get their name from the large eyespots on their wings, which resemble those on the tail of the peacock.

Another sign of summer is the chirping of crickets late in the evening. These long-legged relatives of the grasshopper perch in hedgerows and can often be spotted around our rivers and canals, but you have to look closely as they are well camouflaged from predators.

You may also see many varieties of damselflies along the canal during the summer months. One of the best places to spot dragonflies and damselflies is between Sampford Peverell and Ebear Bridge. Within this section you may spot the Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*). Alternatively if you walk from Greenway Bridge around the Swan's Neck towards East Manley you may catch a glimpse of the Red-eyed Damselfly (*Erythromma najas*).

Birds

Probably the most impressive bird to look out for along the canal during the summer is the Kingfisher. By August this regular visitor has finished breeding on nearby rivers and has brought the family onto the canal. Occasionally it is possible to see two or three around together until such time later in August when they begin to disperse.

Another common sight along the canal is the moorhen families - complete with the clumsy teenagers and the more appealing new-born chicks. Devoted moorhen parents raise two or three broods of offspring every summer and usually the young 'teenagers' from earlier broods tend to stick around to help their parents with subsequent hatchlings.

In late summer, look out for groups of swallows and martins as they prepare to fly south on a long trip back to Africa.

Mammals

The canal is an ideal habitat for the Daubentons bat, which hunts along watercourses. They are very agile fliers, gliding just centimetres above the water catching flying insects. There are also many ideal tree roosts along the banks, giving the bats enough shelter to sleep during the day and emerge to hunt at dusk.

The Rangers will be leading a Bat Walk on Friday 24th August 2007 where you can learn more about the bat species found along the canal. To book a place on this event please contact the Ranger Service on 01884 254072 or email gwcanal@devon.gov.uk

A Grand Western Weekend

The Grand Western Canal Country Park will be hosting the 2008 Inland Waterways Association National Trailboat Festival next year on the last bank holiday weekend in May. The event will be known as '**A Grand Western Weekend**...a canal and countryside fair incorporating the 2008 IWA National Trailboat Festival'. The committee organising the event on Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th May 2008 has had several meetings to date and at present are looking for suppliers of site equipment, potential stall holders and entertainment ideas for the event which is to be held on part of the Mid Devon Show ground next year. If you or someone you know may be interested in being involved with this event please contact the Ranger Service on 01884 254072 or email gwcanal@devon.gov.uk.