



Wild About Barrow

May 2021

What a joy it is to see nature unfurling, the glorious blossom adorning our many fruit trees and the sound of the dawn chorus.

The Maidenhair fern at the junction of Nottingham Road and Cotes Road is our May Tree of the Month, nominated by Dr Karisa Krcmar. The fan shaped leaves are unique in trees and look more like a fern. This tree has survived, unchanged, since the Triassic, 252 – 201 million years ago and is the only living species of its division.

Wild populations are threatened with extinction due to logging in its native China but it owes its existence to Buddhist monks who valued and worshipped the tree. Today this tree grows on every continent except Antarctica.



Studies have shown that trees hundreds of years old show no sign of aging because they produce a range of immune-defence chemicals. Another amazing fact is that its genome (the total of genetic material in each cell) is 10.6 billion DNA nucleobase 'letters' whereas we humans have only three billion!

Wild Celebration

All the wildlife captured on camera this month, except for the colt's-foot, was found in Barrow's wonderful Millennium Park, or on its verge, so definitely worth a visit. At first glance the colt's-foot flowers, growing on Salter's Lane, might be mistaken for a dandelion but look out for the distinctive scaly purplish flower stems and fan-shaped leaves with a lovely felted underside.

What have you seen? Send your pictures to wildaboutbarrow@gmail.com for inclusion next month.



Wild strawberry
Fragaria vesca



Hoverfly
Myathropa florea



Speckled Wood
Pararge aegeria



Primrose
Primula vulgaris var
Rhubarb and custard



Cowslip
Primula veris



Colt's- foot
Tussilago farfara

What to see/hear

1. Look out for this year's newly arrived **migrant birds** such as house martins.
2. Listen to the wonderful **dawn chorus** as it reaches its peak during the months of May and June. Resident songbirds like the great tits and robins are the first to join this performance and as migrants arrive the range of song will increase over the coming months.

What to do

1. **Join the *No Mow May* campaign** being run by Plantlife to increase the nectar produced in our lawns. Put your feet up and leave the lawnmower in the shed! A recent study has shown that by leaving our lawns uncut plants can, amazingly, produce enough nectar to support 10 times more bees and other insects. With insect numbers plummeting since the 1970s this is a fantastic find. Check out the full story at Plantlife's website and join their campaign:
<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/about-us/news/no-mow-may-how-to-get-ten-times-more-bees-on-your-lockdown-lawn>
2. **Put away the herbicides and insecticides** and let nature take care of the pests. Plants and the animals that feed on them have evolved an intricately balanced web of life

over millions of years. Since Rachel Carson's hugely influential book, *Silent Spring*, was published in 1962 the damage caused by DDT and other pesticides has been recognised but some are still being sold. Allow ladybirds to eat aphids; let birds be the pest controllers; use biological controls and have a frog friendly garden to control slugs.

3. **Grow herbs** such as geraniums, marigolds, dill, parsley and thyme. Not only will you enjoy them as flowers and flavouring but they will provide ladybirds with a source of pollen as they do not just feed on aphids.
4. **Check bird baths have water**, especially over dry periods.

Think global: Act local