

Wildlife at Lymm Dam

Woodland

Much of the lake is surrounded by woodland, the canopy species being mainly oak, beech, ash and sycamore. The mature woodland is probably a legacy of the days when the area was a private estate,* beech and oak underplanted with rhododendron being typical of woodland managed for game in the 19th century.

The tall Lombardy poplars along the eastern and western edges of the site date from a more recent period in Lymm Dam's history. Lord Leverhulme's planned housing scheme** was to be based around three avenues and each was planted with alternating English elm and Lombardy poplar. The elms were lost to Dutch elm disease in the mid 1980s, but the poplars remain and are one of the Dam's most recognisable features.

The semi-mature woodland below the poplars along the bridgeway is self-seeded, as is that on the eastern side of the upper Dam. These areas were once subject to mowing/grazing, but began to develop their own woodland cover when these activities stopped in the second half of the twentieth century.

The youngest woodland areas at Lymm Dam are those planted by the Ranger Service with local school and community groups since the mid 1980s. Some twelve thousand young trees have been planted, usually to provide an understorey in existing woodland or increase the area of existing woodland.

* For more details of the Estate, see the information boards at the entrances to the site

** For more details of the planned housing scheme, see the information board at Crosfield Bridge



The lake is flanked by many impressive beech trees



Heron at Dam by Julie Scott

Birdlife

Lymm Dam's variety of habitats mean that a good cross section of bird species can be seen at the site. Some of the more interesting species in woodland areas include nuthatch, treecreeper and lesser spotted woodpecker. Herons are a common sight fishing in the shallow waters of the top Dam and at quieter periods kingfishers can be seen in this area perching as they scan the water for a meal. The best time and place to observe the kingfisher though is late spring and early summer over the main Dam. Kingfishers nest in the banks over the main Dam and when they are rearing their young they can be frequently seen streaking low over the water as they return to the nest with food for their offspring.

The lake itself is home to several species of wildfowl with mallard, coot, moorhen and great crested grebe are all resident and several tufted ducks spend each winter here. Occasional visitors include Canada geese, mandarin, teal, muscovy and pochard. The inconspicuous observer may sometimes be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the small and elusive little grebe or dabchick. The great crested grebes are particularly watchable in springtime for their elaborate courtship display. Notice also how young are carried round on the mother's back for the first few days after hatching

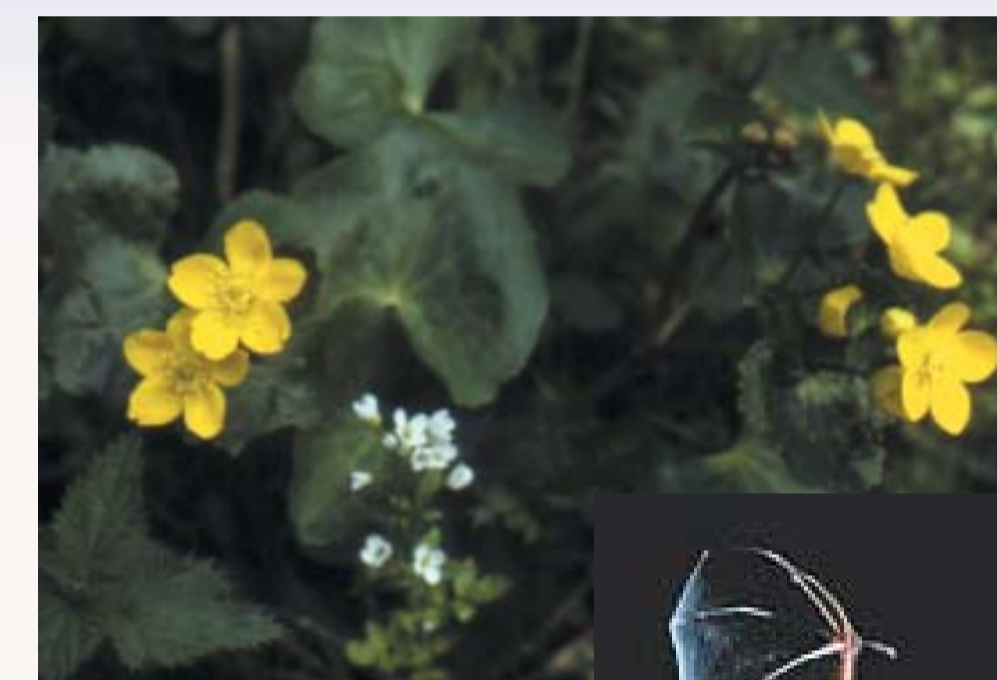


Lymm Dam by Eve Melling

Wildflowers

With its various habitats, Lymm Dam has a good range of wildflowers. Species growing in woodland areas include lords and ladies, wild garlic, wood anemone, herb bennet, dogs mercury, lesser celendine and wood sorrel.

In damp and marginal areas marsh marigold, bittercress, and water mint grow. In meadows and on sunny banks, wild flowers include meadow cranesbill, tormentil, ladies bedstraw and meadowsweet.



Marsh Marigold and Bittercress



Pipistrelle Bat

Mammals

A number of small mammals make their home at Lymm Dam, though most of them are very secretive and elusive. One mammal which is very conspicuous however, is the grey squirrel. The grey squirrel is not native to the British Isles, having been introduced from North America in the 1850s. The animal thrived in the conditions it found in British woodland and its competitive and sometimes aggressive nature pushed the native red squirrel out of its traditional territory. Nowadays there are only a handful of areas in the country where red squirrels can be seen. Grey squirrels will strip the bark from some trees to get at the sap underneath and the animal is regarded by many as a pest. People who like to feed birds in their garden will be familiar with the battle to stop the local grey squirrel stealing food put out.

Perhaps the most interesting mammal activity at Lymm Dam is the area's bat population. On a warm summer evening there are many bats on the wing over the meadows and the lake itself. The majority are pipistrelles, Britain's smallest and most common bat, but Daubentons and noctules (Britain's biggest) are also present. To really appreciate the level of bat activity around the site, a detector needs to be used. However some creatures can be seen with the naked eye. Try looking around tree top height over the meadows on the eastern side of the site shortly after sunset.

Lymm Heritage Trail

Lymm Heritage Trail is a self-guided trail exploring the built and natural heritage of the village. The route is based on the north/south valley which runs through the village centre (comprising Lymm Dam, The Dingle and Slitten Gorge) and two east/west routes – The Bridgewater Canal and the former Warrington to Altrincham Railway (now part of the Trans Pennine Trail).

The full route is 3 1/2 miles but the trail can be walked in shorter sections if desired. The route is waymarked and route maps can be found on each of the eleven information boards along the trail.

