

Solway Superstars

Report by: Norman & Florence Hammond

During the past few weeks walkers anywhere from the Grune west along the promenade and onto Beckfoot & Allonby via the dunes will have enjoyed the consistent and continuous song of the Skylark hovering on high all the way. Considering the UK precarious position of this airborne songster we are very lucky that throughout the Solway Coast AONB it is thriving.



House Sparrow

But what about the once abundant sparrow? Have you seen as many around in recent years as formally? A few years ago it was very common indeed, but according to the British Trust for Ornithology, who have been looking into the fortunes of our feathered friends, the national decline in sparrow populations is due to a lack of food at critical times of the year. Studies seem to suggest that this is directly linked to modern trends in gardening, which have resulted in tidier and more sterile gardens.

Scientists in Bristol have found a direct link between the number of sparrows and prosperity; the more socially deprived area with less manicured gardens, the more sparrows there are around. This may seem unlikely; but it arises because the number of insects in a garden is related to the tidiness of the garden. Insects are the main source of food for sparrow chicks, forming up to 80% of their diet. Other interesting snippets from this study informs us that

across the UK the house sparrow now averages 4.8 per garden, has declined by 52% since 1979 when an average of 10 birds would have been seen.

This lack of insect food is not thought to be the only reason for this tragic decline of the house sparrow. Domestic cats are more common today; pollution, disease and competition from larger birds such as crows and feral pigeons have all taken their toll whilst throughout the Solway Plain area as whole Sparrowhawks quartering estate gardens are common. Nesting sites are becoming harder to find as modern houses have fewer nooks and crannies for sparrows to nest in

This fascinating study was part of the BTO/CJ Garden Bird Watch where each week more than 17,000 garden bird watchers throughout the UK would note the birds seen in their gardens and send in their records to the British Trust for Ornithology. It would seem from the data so far, from North West England, that following a period of decline between 1997 and 2000 numbers have stopped falling, indicating that perhaps we are in a much healthier situation than the rest of the UK

What do you think about the Silloth sparrow? Without undertaking a systematic survey have you any views? If you have, then let us have them via the columns of the Buzz or perhaps drop into the Discovery Centre and let us know.



Poems

Summer

By Jodie Mathews, Year 10
Solway Community School

The blazing sun creeps over the shady trees,
Butterflies soar through the sky riding the breeze,
The atmosphere is so peaceful and quiet,
There is no one there to start a riot,
Out of the emerald green hedges sparrows fly,
Higher up in to the azure blue sky,

Children laughing happily and playing in the streets,
As the ice-cream man pulls up they all run to get their treats,
The fluffy clouds drift past the fiery sun,
Buzzing bees come out of their hives they leave it one by one,
The old oak trees sway from side to side,
The colourful leaves fall and in the grass they hide,

On the beach the crystal waters ripple across the golden sand,
Innocent children race across the beach hand in hand,
The seagulls glide silently through the air,
And perch themselves on the rugged rocks and stare
In the harbour a giant ship boldly rocks,
As it sails happily in to the seaside docks.



Happy Bee
by Lauren Roper
aged 5 from
Silloth Primary School

Abbeystown Methodists

Abbeystown Methodist Chapel wish to thank everyone for supporting their Bring & Buy sale on 15th May, we raised £231.

Emily
by Jessica Swan
aged 5
from
Holm Cultram Abbey School

Gulls & Us

Sent in by: Ralph P.

Seagulls gliding in the sky
Or strutting stately on the ground,
Call with their familiar cry
To tell their mates when food is found.

If we humans tried to heed
The lessons in that call,
And share with those in greater need
There'd be enough for all.

Embark On Stanwix Park

By Ron Gower

Hundreds arrive ..some .. time and again
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Entertainment at night .. is simply the best
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Early next day .. get up with the lark
And spend the whole day ... at Stanwix Park.

A week seems so short .. on this big site
So much enjoyment .. wher everything's right
You are assured .. Silloth has left it's mark
Thanks to the echo .. of this great Stanwix Park.



Goofy Bee
by Dawn Graham
aged 11 from
Silloth Primary School

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