

# BIODIVERSITY OF CARDIFF

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# Bluebell Carpet – Wenallt Wood



Bluebells can be seen in the spring. They carpet the ground under the Beech woodlands. Coming out early in the year allows the plants to take advantage of the light reaching the ground while the trees have no leaves. This is why we get a spectacular display of spring wild flowers in woodlands.

Our native Bluebells are under threat from the Spanish Bluebell. It was introduced to gardens in the 17th Century and now cross-breeds with the native species. When buying Bluebells for the garden try to get native ones from a trusted source. All wild flowers are protected by law. It is illegal to uproot them in the wild.

# Silver-washed Fritillary Butterflies – Forest Fawr



The Silver-washed Fritillary is one of the largest British butterflies. It is named after the silver streaks on the underside, which can be viewed as it stops to feed on flowers such as bramble. The upper wings are a deep orange with large black spots and lines. The male has four broad streaks of black scent cells along the central veins.

They can be seen in sunny openings in Forest Fawr from mid-July until early September. Look for them feeding on Buddleia.

# Rare Spider – Lesser Garth Cave



In Lesser Garth Cave, north Cardiff, there is a very rare spider. Called *Porrhomma rosenhaueri* it is only found in two caves in the UK. It is around 2mm long and is very pale in colour and blind – like many true cave dwelling species or troglobites.

Very little is known about this species and we are lucky to have it in Cardiff. Experts from the National Museum Wales keep a check on the population and are trying to find out more about this special spider.

# Orchids – Coryton M4



Coryton roundabout at junction 32 of the M4 is a special place in Cardiff. The habitat is completely man made. Because of the different soils used to create it, it has an interesting and mixed flora. This includes some spectacular displays of orchids.

Orchids at Coryton include Common Spotted, Pyramidal, Bee, Southern March orchids and Common Twyblade.

When Orchid seeds land on the ground they need to become infected by a soil fungus. The orchid takes nutrients from the fungus but the fungus also attacks the orchid and either one could become dominant.

Some orchid species can take more than 15 years to flower for the first time. This is why in some years there are spectacular displays and others no flowers at all.

# Heron nesting site – ASDA Coryton



Hérons are large birds that can sometimes be seen stalking fish in rivers and ponds. They also eat small mammals, birds, amphibians and insect larvae. Grey Herons have a wingspan of 175-195cm and can live for up to 25 years. They nest in trees, in colonies called heronries. There is a heronry at Coryton in the small woodland next to ASDA.

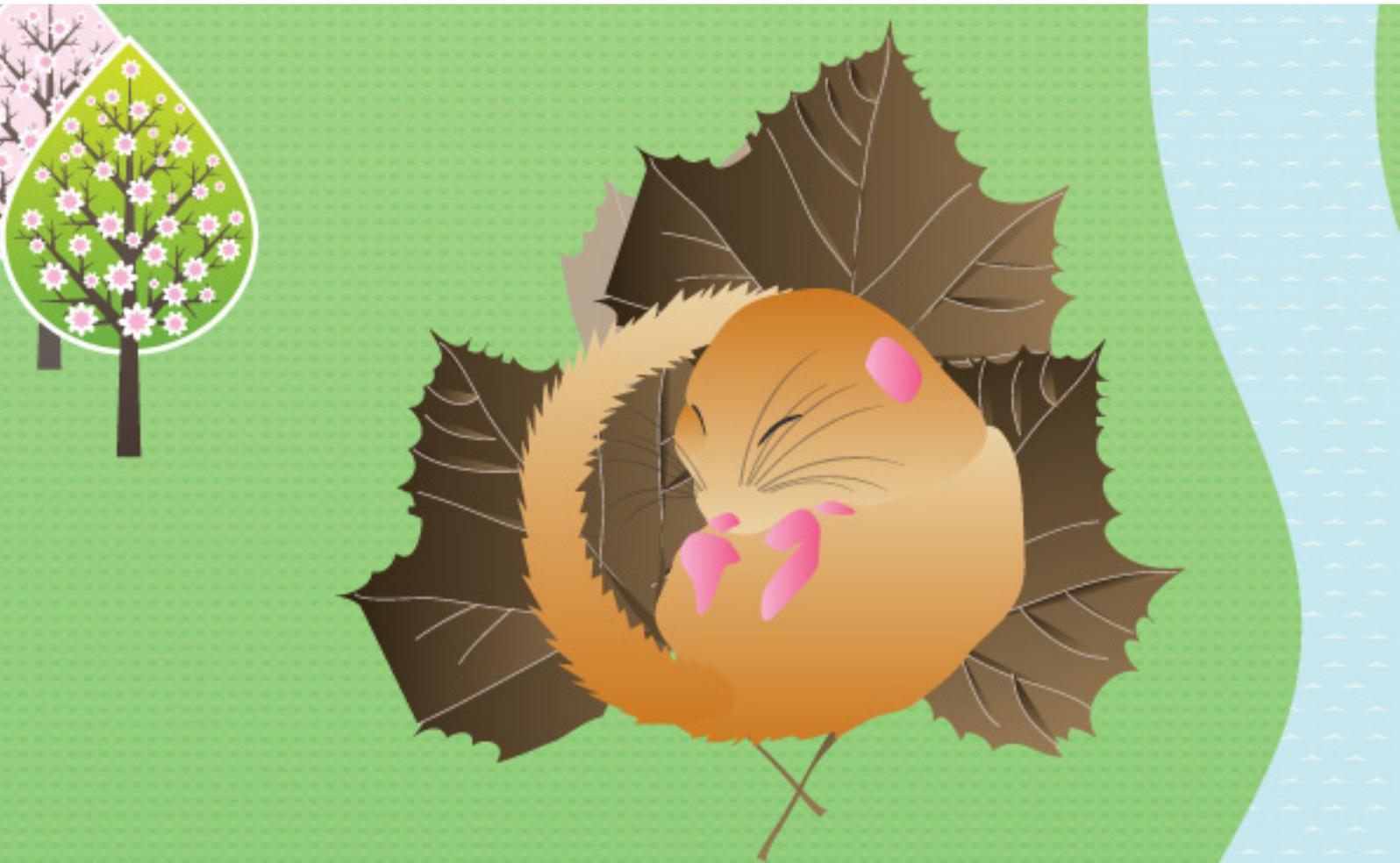
In late April the young Herons can be heard calling to their parents. The calls are a 'clacking' sound and can be clearly heard in the supermarket car park.

# Grass Snake – Hailey Park



The Grass Snake is the UK's largest reptile. They can grow up to 190cm (6 foot). They feed on amphibians, mammals and fish so are closely linked to water and are excellent swimmers. They are not dangerous to people and will pretend to be dead if threatened. They do this by becoming completely limp and producing a foul-smelling fluid. They can sometimes be seen basking in the early morning, particularly around Forest Farm and Hailey Park.

# Dormice – Howardian LNR



The Dormouse is a secretive, nocturnal mammal. They have golden brown fur and a long hairy tail. They can spend up to three quarters of their lives asleep, hibernating from October to April/May.

They are mostly found in woodland with lots of bramble and honeysuckle. However, recent evidence shows Dormice using coniferous woodland and reedbeds.

One of the easiest way to detect Dormice is by looking for opened Hazel nuts. They have a distinctive way of opening them producing a neat round hole on the side with smooth chisel marks.

Dormice are protected by European Law from being killed, injured and disturbed. The Friends of Howardian have special licences to carry out work on the reserve and to survey the Dormice.

# Great Crested Newts – Heath Park



The Great Crested Newt is the largest of three species of newt found in the UK. They grow to around 15cm. In the breeding season the males have a magnificent crest which runs along their back and a silver streak on their tail. The adults are dark with warty skin. Both males and females have colourful orange bellies with black spots. Females lay up to 300 eggs over several weeks between April and June. Although they lay their eggs and the young develop in ponds, they spend most of the year in damp places on land such as under logs.

# Otters – River Taff



Otters are shy, nocturnal mammals. Their diet is mainly fish but also includes birds, small mammals, amphibians, crustaceans (shell fish) and molluscs. Otters have very large territories, sometimes up to 40 km along a river. They rest and breed in underground 'holts' or in dense riverbank vegetation. You are more likely to see a 'spraint' than an Otter. These are droppings which are usually deposited in an obvious place such as on a large boulder in the water.

# Lesser Horseshoe Bats – St Fagans National History Museum



The Lesser Horseshoe Bat is one of the smallest British species. It is about the size of a plum. When resting they hang with their wings wrapped all the way around their body. They are named after the noseleaf which is in a horseshoe shape and helps them with echolocation – the 'radar' like system they use to locate their prey. They eat flies (mainly midges), moths, beetles and spiders.

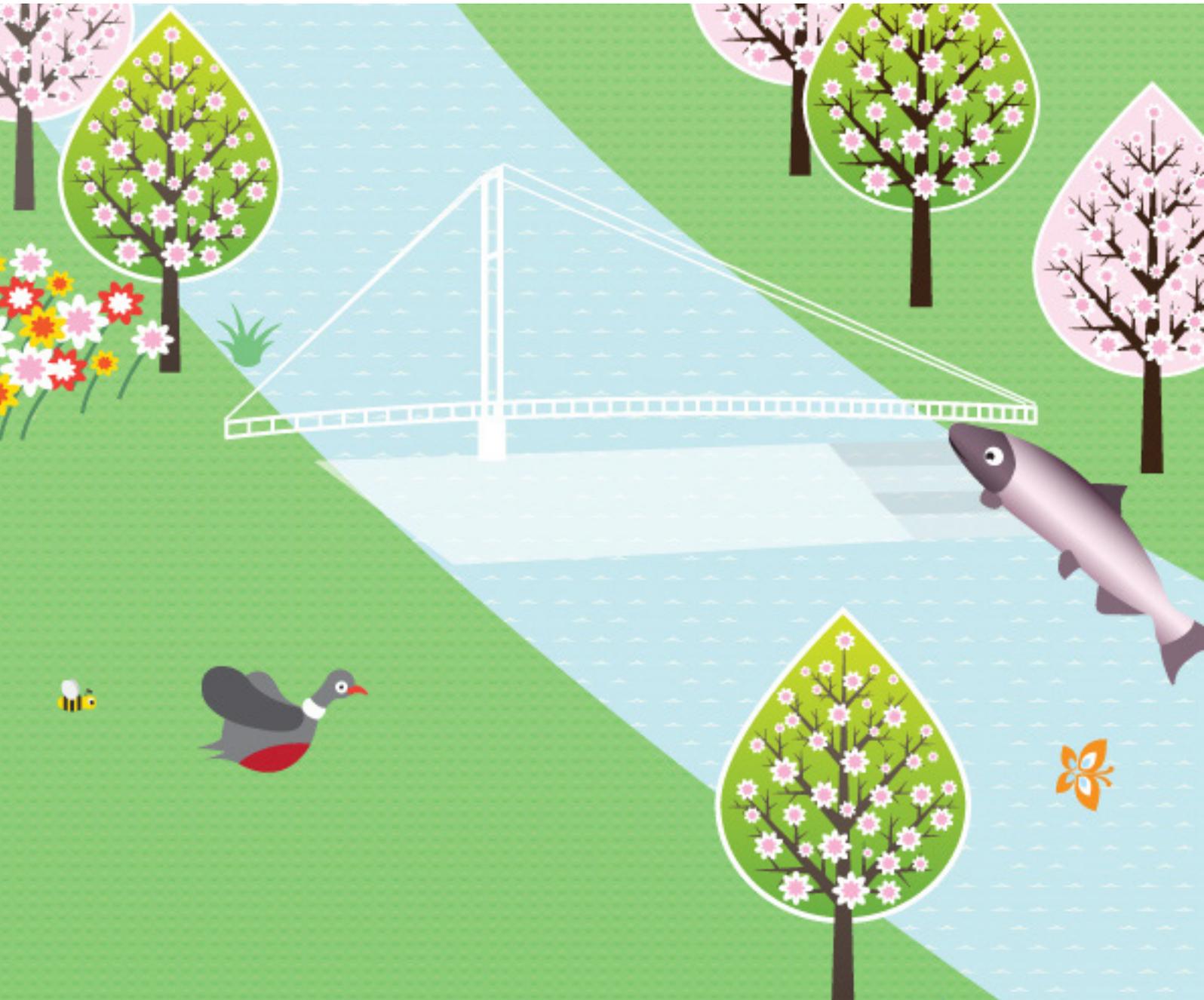
Lesser Horseshoe Bats have declined in number and distribution. However, there are a number of known roosts in Cardiff with more being found.

# Waxcaps – Cathays Cemetery



Waxcap are a distinctive and attractive type of fungi. They are brightly coloured with a waxy appearance. The best time to see them is October to December. You can see them on good quality grasslands that have not been fertilised. Sites like lawns, village greens, horse grazing land and churchyards are also good places for waxcaps. Cathays Cemetery has at least 12 species of Waxcap.

# Salmon – Blackweir



Leaping Salmon are usually associated with the wilds of Scotland. However, they can also be seen along the River Taff. In the autumn the adult Salmon migrate from the sea for many miles up river to the area they were born. This epic journey takes them past many obstacles which is why we see them leaping. There are specially built fish passes at most of the weirs. These make it easier for the fish to travel as they create steps for them to get up the weir.

Blackweir in Bute Park is an excellent place to see Salmon in the autumn. They leap up the weir on their way upriver.

# Monkshood – River Ely



This attractive plant is a feature of the River Ely Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as this is an important site for the species in the UK. It grows to just over 1 meter in height and has lobed purple flowers which form the shape of a hood. It is found on riverside banks in shaded locations and flowers from May to September. The plant is highly poisonous and even contact with the skin can cause severe irritation. It is best to avoid all contact.

# Dragonflies – Grangemoor Park



Dragonflies spend their early lives in water as larvae. They are ambush feeders. They wait in hiding for their prey then leap at it and impale it on a modified lower lip. They eat other insect larvae, small fish and tadpoles.

In late spring the larvae climb out of the water and the adult dragonfly emerges from the skin – like a butterfly from a cocoon.

Adult dragonflies are impressive insects. They often have bright iridescent colours. They are very fast and manoeuvrable with Hawker dragonflies reaching about 36km/hour. The adults feed on small flies including midges.

Several species can be seen at Grangemoor Park including Common Darter, Emperor and Banded Demoiselle.

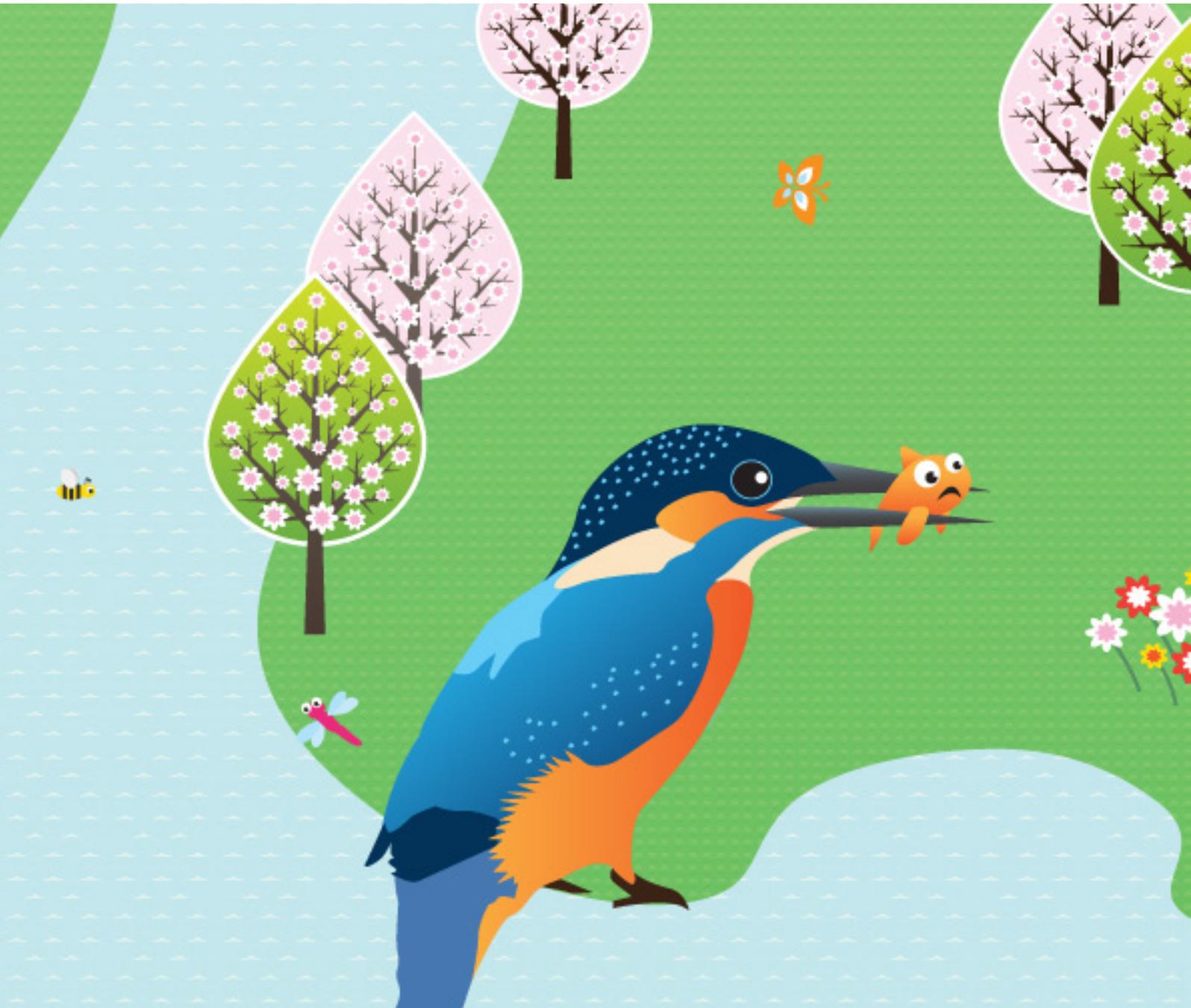
# Peregrine Falcons – City Hall



Peregrines are known for their amazing hunting behaviour. They fly high above their prey and fold their wings in to plunge through the sky at up to 200 mph. They are crow-sized with a blue-grey back, barred white underparts and a black head with a black moustache marking.

They declined in their natural range due to persecution and poisoning. Fortunately the population in the UK is now rising. Traditionally they are found nesting on cliffs especially in mountain areas and along the coast. It is no surprise then that they have chosen to nest in sites such as the City Hall clock tower. To them this is just another cliff with lots of food nearby in our parks.

# Kingfisher – Cardiff Bay



This well known bird is usually heard before it is seen. The call is a shrill 'chreee'. These striking birds are about the size of a sparrow with electric blue upperparts and orange underparts; they are usually seen as a blue/orange streak as they fly swiftly along a river. Kingfishers nest in tunnels in river banks. They eat fish and aquatic insects. If you are lucky you may see one fishing from a perch.

Kingfishers are often seen at Cardiff Bay Wetland Reserve in the winter and at Forest Farm Country Park in the summer.

# Reedbed – Rhymney River



Reedbeds are wetland areas dominated by Common Reed plants. They are found in places with shallow water such as ditches and the edges of ponds and lakes. Reeds are very good at mopping up nutrients from the water and so have been used to purify domestic sewage in some parts of Britain. Reedbeds also protect lake shores and river beds from erosion and are an important habitat for wildlife. Bird species found in Cardiff's reedbeds include Reed Buntings and Sedge Warblers.

There are reedbeds on the lower Rhymney and Ely rivers, at Howardian and Cardiff Bay Wetlands Local Nature Reserves and Forest Farm Country Park.