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Boats stolen in marinas - one returned

Stealing boats in broad daylight from marinas most boaters would consider safe and secure has become something of a pattern in recent weeks, with one recovered and the search still on for the second as we write.

The first was spotted on the Staffs and Worcester and two people working in the Canal & River Trust's enforcement team helped reunite a stolen boat with its rightful owner after they spotted something suspicious in their boat sightings.

The boat owner and the Trust have praised data checker Nathan Arries and enforcement officer Liz Sollars for their initiative and support.

The alarm was raised when Nathan spotted an unidentified boat displaying only a name and sent in the details to the local team.

When Liz was looking over the sightings, she realized there was only one boat of that name on the Trust's database, and called the owner to check if it was the same craft. While the owner was describing the boat, and how it was currently in a marina, it became obvious that it was the same vessel. Someone had taken it from the marina, and was now cruising away with it.

The theft was reported to the police and Liz put all the Trust's local teams, from enforcement to customer service to the people working on the canal, on high alert. Nathan followed up a lead the owner had passed on and, confirming that it was



The boat stolen most recently - this one from Mercia Marina on the Trent and Mersey canal

the same boat, waited for the police and the rightful owner to get there. With the boat returned, the police are now searching for the thief.

Within days Mercia Marina's Manager Robert Neff was posting on Facebook that two of their moorers, Graham & Chris had arrived to visit their boat to find it missing.

He said: "Speaking to adjoining boaters reveals that one spoke to the man, to tell him which pontoon was called Moorhen, and him and two others saw the man drive off with the boat. There is some dispute whether this was one week ago or two. The man is medium build and nondescript.

"The boaters that saw the thief said he knew exactly which boat he was looking for because he went straight to it, used the keys he had to open the hatch, started the engine, unplugged the shore power and cruised off. He was a

boater as he drove off and did everything else with confidence.

"The neighbours thought nothing of it as they knew the owners were getting work done on the boat and the guy definitely appeared to know the boat. "The owners are distraught that their 16 month old new build by Stenson (aka MCC and Midland Canal Centre) has been stolen.

"The boat is not sign written. It is 50' NB cruiser stern in dark blue, maroon and cream stripes and a cream roof. It has the Stenson logo SB laser cut into the steel."

Most boating groups on Facebook now have the details and the picture and suspected sightings are coming in - most around the Atherstone area. It is not yet known whether the thefts were carried out by the same individual. Police are investigating.

Bargains

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The Common Blue damselfly, ladybird and watervole

Wet June threat to canal wildlife

Boaters weren't the only ones put out by one of the wettest June's on record - ladybirds face decline after a month of heavy rain and water voles, dragonflies and bats are also threatened by the weather.

The public is now being encouraged to 'Stop, Look and Listen' as they boat, walk or cycle along the Shropshire Union and other canals, and take part in canal charity's annual Great Nature Watch and test their own nature know-. Ladybirds are one of the prettiest beetle species, they are also among farmers' and gardeners' best friends with the ability to eat up to 5,000 aphids in their short life.

Having just faced the wettest

June on record, however, the ladybirds of Britain are facing a difficult time, with many recently hatched larvae likely to have been washed away.

The Canal & River Trust is warning that the recent wet weather could have a big impact upon much of the country's wildlife and is asking people to help monitor all wildlife they see as part of its Great Nature Watch campaign.

As the school summer holidays start, getting out to spot nature is a really fun, healthy and free activity to do with children of all ages. Ladybird larvae are particularly interesting to spot - looking almost like small alligators, the larvae have long tails, bumpy skin and are dark in colour, not at all attractive like their adult form.

Another species likely to be affected by June's unseason-

ably wet weather is dragonfly larvae (or nymphs).

Fluctuating river levels and fast currents are known to wash away dragonfly larvae and as they live underwater for up to three years, the recent heavy rain may also have a long-term effect on the population.

The larvae also need warm, still and sunny weather to emerge and if they don't, the following year's population will be significantly reduced.

Peter Birch, national environment manager for the Canal & River Trust, explains: "A month of heavy rain can have both a negative and positive impact on different wildlife. If we have a hot July and August, much of the negative impact will be offset, but if we continue to have a wet summer the effects on some wildlife could be a lot more long-term."

Central Shires region scrapped

One of the Midlands waterways regions has been eradicated and swallowed up by adjoining areas. At the start of this month, the Central Shires Waterway teams, and their roles and responsibilities, have been absorbed into the neighbouring East Midlands, West Midlands and Manchester & Pennine waterways.

The Canal & River Trust insists the change will have little or no impact on operational and customer service staff in Central Shires and adjacent waterways, with teams on the ground continuing as before.

Early in 2017, the Trust plans to close its Fazeley office and open a new base in central Birmingham. For the enlarged West Midlands region. All Fazeley-based office staff would move to central Birmingham and the Trust's front of house service will be transferred to Cambrian House in Birmingham.

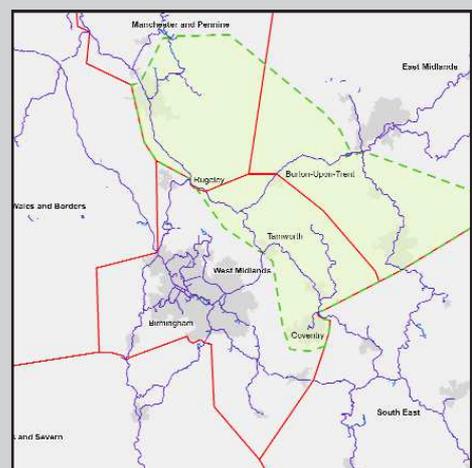
Ian Rogers, Customer Service & Operations Director, said: "I'd like to thank the Central Shires team, and its volunteer partnership, for all they have contributed over the past four years.

"By absorbing Central Shires into its neighbouring waterways we will be more aligned with our prospective partners, and better placed to establish and grow our local presence. This change will not affect the great work our staff and volunteers do out on the bank and in the communities around our

waterways".

Stuart Mills, Property Director added: "Moving into central Birmingham will give us greater flexibility, more connectivity and the opportunity to create a new national base."

The new office will overlook the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal's Farmers Lock flight and is in a building already owned by C&RT called Aqua House.



Blacking ... and beyond



Inside Norbury Wharf's large drydock - it was once the first lock of the Newport and Shrewsbury Canal

Blackening the bottom of a boat is one of those mundane, messy but necessary chores, best done as painlessly as possible – but like so many things it is not as simple as it might seem. Most places with the facility to get your boat out of the water can slap on a couple of coats of bitumen and plonk it back but you may be better served by having a more detailed conversation with the people doing the work. Would your blacking last longer if it were a more specialist product, like Intertuf or Comastic? Perhaps you should think about grit-blasting the hull back to bare metal and protecting it with a two-pack epoxy finish? Is this the time to smarten the

boat up with a repaint of your counter bands, return plates, gunwale tops and sides? David Ray, manager at Norbury Wharf on the Shropshire Union Canal says: "In any event, whilst your boat is out of the water, it is certainly the time to check all those other underwater bits you can't normally see.

Savings

"We always carry out a 13-point check once boats are in our covered dry dock, an advise clients of any work that might need to be done. "Our dock is very clean and is nice and dry and all hull work can be carried out from stern gear and anode replacement to hull plating by our on-site qualified engineers." Of course decisions about blacking are usually based on price – and Norbury is cur-

rently offering a ten per cent discount off of docking and blacking during August and September which could mean savings of hundreds of pounds – but there are other factors to be taken into account when deciding on where to black your boat. For instance Norbury welcomes liveaboard boaters and vee-bottomed boats into its dry dock, which was once the first lock of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal. The boat can be connected to free electricity if you stay on board whilst the boat is pressure washed and given three coats of whatever product you choose. Anyone interested in the discount can contact David Ray or Simon Jenkins on 01785 284292)

Holidays

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if booked in
advance.
All bookings
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Hoseasons.**

Boats for sale

Pensieve - a 70 foot traditional narrow boat built by John Pinder in 2002 and powered by a Beta BD3 Tug engine in its own engine room. From the rear you enter a single bedroom with bunk to one side, then comes the engine compartment, then a large fixed double bedroom, followed by a massive bathroom. The galley has a fridge and freezer and a washing machine. A rather large open plan saloon has a solid fuel stove, and there's a Kabola diesel fired boiler, A boat with a HUGE interior. **£39,995**



Ref 10384

Kitty Little - a 70ft traditional narrowboat with a vintage Lister HRW water cooled three cylinder genuine marine diesel engine in its own engine room. It has a beautiful traditional boatman's cabin, painted and decorated with roses and castles, and a magnificent Stratford cooking range for both heat and cooking.



Ref 10383

The boat has gas central heating with radiators throughout, as well as the solid fuel stoves. Built in 1991 by Fenmatch boat builders, with a safety certificate until May 2018. **£39,995**

Jess - a 60ft semi-trad built by Orion boat builders in 2006 and fitted out by Noble Narrow Boats. The layout is simple, from the rear door there's a permanently fitted double bed, then there is the shower room with a full sized glass shower cubicle, then the long galley with 240V fridge, hob and cooker and a built in Candy washing machine. This is followed by the large saloon area with loose furniture and a bench which also converts to a double bed. The boat is heated by a solid fuel stove, hot water is provided by a Morco boiler, the boat is powered by a Beta 43 HP engine (873 hours) with Aqua drive system and a hospital silencer. This boat would make an ideal live aboard home. **£35,950**



Ref 10388

Nekbor

55ft cruiser stern narrow boat built by JL Pinder and Sons in 2001, powered by a 3 cylinder Barrus Shire engine, which has the benefit of having a Travel Power 240 Volt generator fitted to the engine which provides 240V electrics through the boat, 1KW inverter, and an Adverc battery management system. The boat has utility room, shower room with newly fitted pump out toilet and tank, double bedroom, galley, saloon, heating is provided by a solid fuel stove, hot water is supplied by a calorifier, please be advised that this boat is in need of finishing off and does require a lot of internal work. **£27,500**



Ref 10385

William of Ockham - a 35 foot cruiser stern narrowboat built in 1999 by Liverpool Boats and fitted out by Black Country Narrow Boats. She has a three cylinder Beta Marine engine. From the rear is the double bedroom, next is the bathroom with full sized shower, pump out toilet and basin. The galley was completely refitted in 2011 with a new hob, grill/oven, fridge and sink/drainer. Finally is the compact saloon with reclining chairs and television. It had a full professional repaint in 2011 by Norbury Wharf Limited. Diesel central heating also supplies hot water. Cratch and cover fitted over forward well deck and also comes with a pram hood - not fitted. **UNDER OFFER**



Ref 10385

Slow n Easy

65 foot semi-trad all steel narrow boat built in 2002 by Burton Narrowboats and powered by a Beta Marine 43HP engine with twin alternators and PRM hydraulic operated gearbox. Hot water is via a twin coil calorifier, fed by the engine, gas central heating and a 240V immersion heater. The boat is wired for both 12 Volts and 240 Volts, with a Victron 1600 pure sine wave inverter with built in battery charger.

From entering the boat at the rear some steps take you to the rear cabin laid out as two single bunks, that can be made in to a large double bed across the width of the boat. Then comes the shower room and pump out toilet, Forward of this is the double bed, and then comes the galley before a large saloon with L shaped seating and lots of space with bow doors leading to the front deck.

£34,999



Ref 10381

Lady Emma Jean

60 foot Gary Gorton Traditional stern narrow boat built in 1989, and very much updated since then. Through the stern doors you come straight in to the engine compartment, a door then takes you in to bedroom area with two sets of steel opening side doors. There's a large galley, then the open plan saloon which houses a TV cupboard and a large multifuel stove. Front doors lead out on to the front deck which is covered by a cratch and cover. Powered by a modern Perkins 42 HP water cooled engine.



Ref 10364

£29,999.

Tomorrow

A 50ft all steel narrow boat built by Fernie Fabrications of Market Harborough with both semi-trad and trad stern.

Fully re-plated in 2008, it has been re-engined in its recent past. It has a current boat safety certificate and was last out of the water in 2014 for blacking. It is an unusual design at the stern as it has a large sliding rear hatch cover that turns the back of the boat in to a semi traditional stern, but in that hatch it also has a smaller sliding hatch which can be opened instead to create a traditional stern. A solid fuel stove with a back boiler serves radiators throughout the boat. In need of cosmetic renovation. **£24,950**



REF 10379