



Sutton Poyntz Biodiversity News



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February 2018 Garden Bird Watch this month 18th -24th February

It is quite some time since we have had so much rain, field gateways, footpaths everywhere are so muddy, I am beginning to have sympathy for people who walk their dog in the wider countryside. It is no wonder that beaches such as Weymouth and Lyme Regis have so many dog walkers. Never-the-less, the natural world is still awake. We have had early thorn and Hewbrew character in January moth traps; bats are flying in sheltered places and there are early beetles to be found.



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Ten gardens reported song thrush and there are many blackbirds in hedgerows and gardens, certainly numbers supplemented by migrants from the continent. One person reported mistle thrush, but no reports of redwing and fieldfare. Where have the house sparrows gone with only 70% of you recording them. The cold weather is making things harder for seed eating birds such as yellowhammer reported by three people. Janet Craig sent a list with 29 species of bird, which must be one of the highest scores ever on our garden bird watch

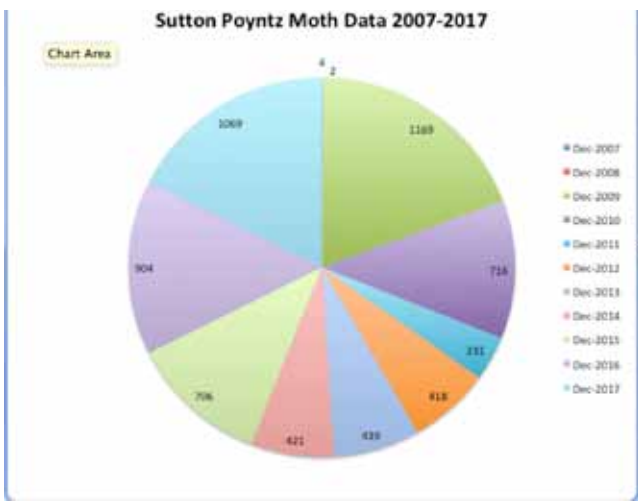
including, buzzard, kestrel and sparrowhawk. Five people reported blackcap, which is increasingly avoiding migration but it is sometime since anybody reported siskin, brambling and tree-creeper. We have had a small tortoiseshell butterfly in the house and thousands of harlequin ladybirds in Hardy's Monument, when Colin installed a bat meter.

Wild flowers seem ahead of their time.



Three corner-leak (above) by Southdown Cottage and plenty of snowdrops (below)

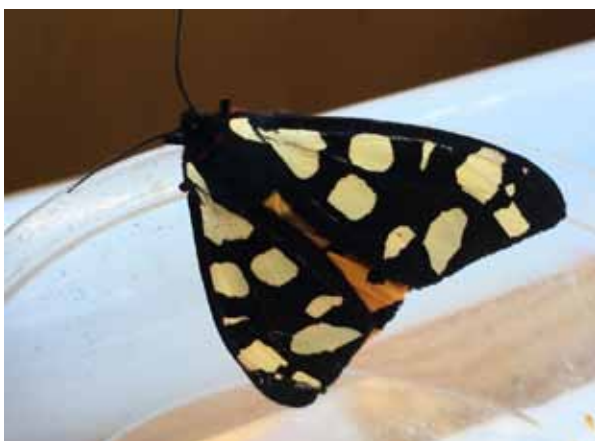




Moth recording in 2017.

During the moth recording season in 2017, we made 1069 records, which have all been forwarded to Dorset Environmental Records Centre for inclusion in their data base. Looking at the graph above, the numbers have increased markedly due to purchasing better equipment. These are mainly based on information from Sue and Jon Campbell, Rita Oxby and Colin Marsh and myself. If fact, numbers could well have been higher but my equipment is often loaned out to the National Trust. Interestingly, we did not manage to do a public session in the waterworks yard using mercury vapour bulbs, which are the best although we did place my battery trap in the meadows. This is a fun recording activity, which anybody can do in their garden with investment in a suitable moth trap. We can offer advice. The Sutton Poyntz total since 2009 is 487 species and I have submitted 6498 records in that time to the Dorset Moth Group. All the records to the end of 2016 will contribute to the National macro-moth Atlas.

Some of the most colourful moths we see are the Tiger moths of which there are seven species recorded in Britain. We have recorded four of the seven with only ruby tiger not illustrated here - the most common and plainest of the group. Wood tiger is a predominantly northern species but is recorded from Hampshire. Patton's tiger moth is a migrant, recorded one from Portland but only a handful of times elsewhere.



Cream spot-tiger on 26th May 2017 – a grassland moth.



Scarlet tiger photographed on a green bin 20th June 2016. Associated with common comfrey and hemp agrimony. Our first record in Sutton Poyntz.



Jersey Tiger moth is classed as a Nationally Notable b species, which I suspect will change, once the new atlas is published. A migrant on the south coast it is rapidly pushing north east beyond Sussex and into Devon and our Golden Cap ecologist reports it from Somerset. From our records, I can see that the earliest we have recorded the Jersey Tiger is 13th July in 2009 and the latest 4th September last year. It is the most commonly reported moth outside the moth group in the village, which is unusual and most Museums report the poplar hawk-moth is the most frequent query.



Red Admiral – my most common garden butterfly in 2017