



Sutton Poyntz Biodiversity News



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April 2020 Garden Bird Watch this month 26th April to 2nd May 2020

I have been editing this monthly Bulletins for over ten years now, but these are the strangest times with the village in lockdown. It is possible to leave our courtyard reasonably safely as so through cars pass through with the main danger from courier delivery vans. However, it has not affected wildlife. Despite the breezy conditions, the sun has allowed us to see the bright colours of many birds in their breeding plumage.

Tawny Owl Calling Survey results 2018-19

Many of our group reported tawny owls during the 2018-19 survey from their home area, whilst those of us on sunset bath surveys reported owls from the Golden Cap Estate.

Did you know?

while small mammals such as mice, voles and shrews make up the majority of a Tawny Owl's diet, they will adjust their tastes to whatever is available. This will include earthworms, small birds, frogs and even moles. Moles can even make up to 45% of a Tawny Owl's diet during June and July as young Moles disperse.

The full report is available on www.bto.org.uk

Through the data you collected we have been able to identify the conditions under which Tawny Owls are most likely to call. Just after sunset was the most commonly reported time of day for hearing owl vocalisations. The weather also played an important part with clear, moonlit nights also increasing the amount of owl activity.

We saw the percentage of positive reports decline over the recording period, with October and November being the busiest time. We have also seen the effects urban areas have on Tawny Owls, with a negative correlation between light pollution and calling owls.

Roundup of bird sightings:

Dave from Sutton Poyntz saw a couple of swallows resting up on the way to Dorchester on 12th April. Early this morning (13th April), along Church Lane, Preston, willow warbler, chiff-chaff, Cetti 's warbler and blackcap all in song as well as a brief snatch from a **Nightingale**. On the same day, Jack about 8:30, a pair of little egrets loitered for 10 minutes in the field behind his house before moving off northwards. Too late to breed this year I would have thought, more likely failed breeders but would be good if they discovered the water works wood for next year. They may have come from the heronry at Nottingham which has both herons and egrets and is going to be inconvenienced by a housing development starting shortly and although the builders are to take care not to disturb them it might not be successful; so who knows? Sue and Jon visited Lodmoor R.S.P.B. on Sunday 19th Very

strong winds but saw sand martin, house martin, swallows, bullfinch and whitethroat. On Tuesday 21st Colin reported three swallows over Sutton Poyntz moving east.

Butterflies:

Numbers seem to have gone down this week with mainly green-veined white and female orange tips in my garden. To the north on West Hill, Sutton Poyntz Colin recorded fewer brimstone, with speckled wood in hedgerows and small numbers of peacock. Just added a holly blue prospecting ivy.

Moth Recording

I have not moth trapped as much since rain as forecast on Thursday when I put my trap away. I resumed on Sunday, when strong north easterly winds reduced the catch to zero. I tried again on Monday, night placing the moth trap on the ground in a more sheltered position resulting in one brimstone, 2 migrant silver Y and Hebrew character. Colin and Rita place their trap in a walled area, with some shelter. Since last week, pale mottled willow, streamer, both common and hemp agrimony plume moths. Also, brimstone, both common pug and double-striped pug.



Brindled beauty



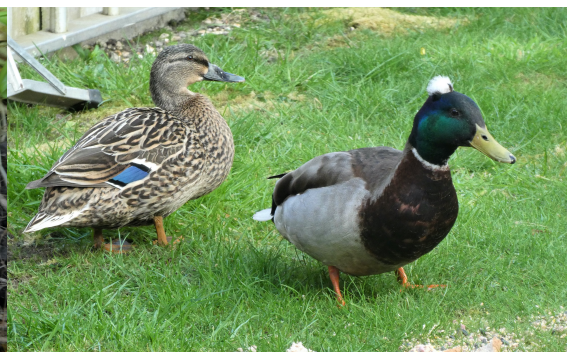
Early tooth-striped.

Both turned up in Rita and Colin's moth trap on Monday 20th. Again on the 21st due to the cold wind numbers were poor with just four species in my moth trap: Hebrew character, Muslim, common Quaker and nut-tree tussock. Colin reported a similar list but had angle shades.

Janet sent these pictures from her garden



Slow worm eating an earthworm



A pair of mallards

Garden birdwatch:

I had returns covering thirteen gardens. Please feel free to type a list as an email if you normally put a paper list through my door. Many Robins singing on my morning walk, reflecting in all gardens reporting the bird. A new hearing aid means I can hear great tits across the village and chiffchaff. Blackbirds were seen by everybody with three to four feeding on my lawn at any one time. Green woodpecker seems to have declined all though I keep hearing the yaffle occasionally and the tapping of great spotted woodpecker on Puddledock Lane. I had. A real close up view of a goldcrest on Puddledock Lane – beautiful bird. As usual, yellowhammers only at the top of Plaisters Lane. Dave reported his nuthatch and he suggests try downloading a recording because he hears them across the village.

Wildflowers:



Yellow flag iris has been in flower in the village pond since mid-March and is now looking even better than this photograph.

I was checking the state of ash on West hill recently, which reminded me of the old saying ash before the oak in for a splash. Oak before the ash, we are in for a soak. However, a little more rain than last week will help the vegetable patches no end. Hawthorn started to flower 16th April – a little early for May blossom.

Early purple orchids are out by the top gate on West Hill ransoms and blue bells are starting to flower. Bulbous buttercup (the one with the reflexed sepals, which flowers in May can be seen in front of the Springhead. There is a fine display of cowslips in my lawn and a new site: a grass verge on the bend on Puddledock lane.

Bees

There are not as many as I would like to see at blossom time. There are a few hone bees. I have seen a few tree bumble bees *Bombus hypnorum* in a stone wall on Sutton Road. A few tawny mining bee *Andrena fulva* were seen on Brookmead.

Bee flies

Martin Harvey from the National Biological Records Centre has produced a brilliant on line guide to bee flies. (Google bee flies) This year, I have sent in records of the dark- edged bee fly *Bombylius major* and the dotted bee-fly *B. discolour*. These are the bee-like insects with a long proboscis.

Bat Report

STATIC BAT SURVEY REPORT Waterworks woods

Period - 24th March to 6th April 2020

Equipment – Anabat Express.

Generally low levels of **Common Pipistelle** activity each night from 20 minutes after sunset with moderate intensity for the first hour falling to occasional. Generally higher levels of activity from 31st March for up to 4 hours with pre-dawn activity on 5th April from 1 to 2 hours before sunrise. Occasional presence of **Soprano pipistrelle** particularly on 24th March and 3rd April. All pipistrelle signals are relatively weak and representative of flight in light cover, indicating flightpaths along the edge of the wood rather than close to the meter which was placed centrally in the hollow and immediately to the east of the stream.

Occasional (single or a few transits) **Myotis sp** presence on 10 nights from 45 minutes after sunset and normally several hours after. No evidence of dawn return.

Based upon bandwidth, signal shape and slope these can be identified with high confidence as either Natterers or Bechstein. The call duration of 4.55 ms and time between calls of 85 ms favours **Natterers Myotis natterer**) which aligns with previous records in the area.

Levels of activity correlate positively with overnight temperature range which is typically between 10 and 3.25 degrees Celsius. Longer and more intense levels of activity align with temperatures above 6.5 degrees. The highest temperature of 13.25 to 10.25 degrees was recorded on 6th April which shows the highest intensity of Common pipistrelle activity, although Myotis activity is only single passage.

The overall pattern suggests a small local roost of Common Pipistrelle arriving to feed before moving on fairly quickly due to limited food supply which aligns with previous visual observations.

There is no strong evidence for a Myotis roost (most likely possibility would be a single male in the locality) during this period and further monitoring and exit surveys are required.

Supplementary Report for the period 4th to 13th April with the meter in the same location but facing south

Common pipistrelle were the most predominant species and emergence times replicated the above, except that activity following first detection was significantly higher (although temperatures were higher and in the range 6 to 17.5 degrees Celsius during this period except for the 13th April when the minimum was 2.75 degrees just before dawn and the activity levels were the lowest recorded during the period). Common pipistrelle activity was consistently high most nights for a period of 4-6 hours with some degree of activity until 1 hour before sunrise. This suggests use

of the area for feeding post arrival from a nearby roost, possibly buildings in Sutton Poyntz. Some limited interspersed Soprano pipistrelle on twonights.

Myotis nattereri Natterers were again present, being first detected several hours after sunset or during the period 1 to 3 hours before sunrise. In the latter period significantly consistent and high levels of activity for up to two hours are noted. Analysis consistent with the criteria used in the previous monitoring period confirms a very high likelihood that these are Natterers bat.

Brief transit of Serotine bat (*Eptesicus Serotinus*) occurred 1 hour after sunset and 1 hour before sunrise on consecutive nights (10th and 11th).

The meter was relocated to the north east corner and pointing north east.

Further report for the period 14th to 20 April with the meter located as above

Common pipistrelle activity was consistently high to very high each night with initial detection 10 to 30 minutes after sunset followed by on-going activity for 20 to 30 minutes on 14/15 and at least 4 hours on each of the other nights. Occasional presence was noted into the early hours and up until 35 minutes before sunrise. The very high and consistent presence after initial detection shows significant feeding activity as evidenced by the signal pattern. No Soprano Pipistrelle were detected.

Myotis nattereri Natterers were again present on three nights but at much lower levels and without the sustained presence seen in the preceding period. The earliest detection was 90 minutes after sunset.

At least one other *Myotis* species transited the area on 3 nights and based upon slope, call duration, bandwidth, time between calls and the characteristic 'S shape' at 40-45kHz can be identified as **Daubentons *Myotis daubentonii*** with a reasonably high degree of confidence.

Brief transit of Serotine bat *Eptesicus serotinus* occurred on two nights from 40 minutes after sunset.

A single brief transit of **Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*** was confirmed on 16th some 40 minutes after sunset and is likely to be passing rather than present in the immediate area. This is a rare record, although it has been similarly reported some years ago by external consultants from Bristol University.

The meter was relocated to the south east corner and pointing west towards the small area of open slow-moving water which may help to confirm the presence of Daubenton.

Colin Marsh