



**Sutton Poyntz  
Biodiversity  
Group News  
October 2024**

## **GARDEN BIRD WATCH THIS MONTH 20<sup>TH</sup> TO 26<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER**

### **BUTTERFLY POLLARD WALK SY7084 ROUND THE RESERVOIR.**

These standard “Pollard” walks are one of the scientific ways Butterfly Conservation collects data on the state of Great Britain’s butterflies in a standard way. The objective is similar to the BTO Breeding Bird Census with the results of both used by the National Statistics Office to measure Quality of Life indices. Plant statistics are collected in a different but standard way.\

We have been doing this walk since “Lockdown” with five people involved. Sue and Jon, Rita and Colin, Penny and Mike, Lizzie and myself. We start at Wyndings, walking to the Beacon (a very difficult path) the down the slope to the Waterworks railings. We then walk north and turn left to walk across the chalk hillside, then right to the gate before going down the slope to the edge of the 1km square. It takes about one-and three-quarter hours, should be done with at least 50% sun and winds not above force 5 between 10:00am and 4:00pm from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September a total of 26 weeks.

Data is also collected casually, preferably using the Butterfly Conservation App and I have collected 211 records from where-ever I have been in 2024. There is also the *Big Butterfly Count* during mid-July to early August. This has been the poorest year ever with 22% of the correspondents sending a nil return for their 15 minutes of observations.



On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> October, a few of u walked across Ringstead o the little Church St Catherine’s by the Sea. In a brief spell of warm sunshine, we recorded six species of butterfly in the small churchyard, which overlooks the White Nothe, including this **peacock**, feeding on ivy pollen.

Later in the week, on an equally warm day, Colin did the final butterfly count of our walks and recorded just three species and five butterflies. 2024 has been a disaster for butterflies.

What we usually see, but not this year is a few dark green fritillaries. Green hairstreak usually seen east of the beacon, my grandson netted one male. We saw all the usual skippers, except they were concentrated into a couple of weeks but low numbers of dingy and grizzled usually seen April – May. The IUCN Endangered wall butterfly was seen on five weeks. Adonis blue had a

poor year but two small blue turned up, which is quite good as there is not much kidney vetch. No clouded yellow or painted lady both migrants. We recorded all the usual skippers but they were concentrated into a very short season and the only Essex skipper I have seen was in South Yorkshire near to the limit of its northern range. Ringlets and marbled white usually plentiful hardly seen and small tortoiseshell did not show until September, which usually would be a third generation. A grand total of 1252 observations of 22 species with the champion meadow brown.

If anybody will volunteer to take over my turn, usually just once a month between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 6<sup>th</sup> October in 2025, please let me know.

## BIRDS



About ten days ago, I managed this photograph of a male gadwall at the side of the pond. (Why visitors insist on dumping empty Coca-Cola cans in there I do not know.) Last weekend, Jack contacted me to say that for the first time, our male was joined by four females.

Also last week, walking along Mission Hall Lane, I was delighted to note a single grey wagtail, which has not featured in our lists for some time. House sparrows are showing a worrying decline both in the village and in Preston.

House martins were moving south towards Portland during the first week in October accompanied by the occasional swallow. Very few have bred in the area this year.

Very disappointed with just 12 returns for garden bird watch. Please do try to make a few notes in week beginning next Sunday. Only six gardens with blackbird, no thrushes. Only two gardens with greenfinch. Penny's sunflowers are awaiting their visitors. Interesting that both records of grey heron were from Preston as I also saw one near the Bridge Inn.

It is worth listening out for tawny owl just after dusk with only Ros reporting one from Sutton Court Lawns. It is also worth keeping an eye out for redwing as I have had one report from elsewhere in Dorset.