



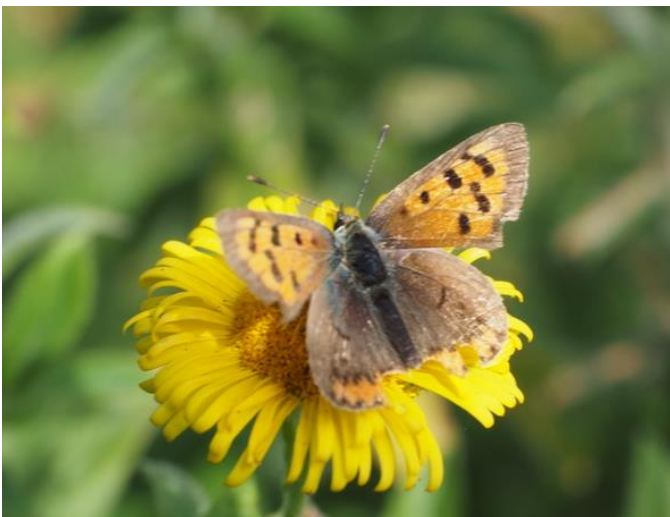
Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca* – a plant of unmanaged borders in gardens

April 2026 Newsletter – Garden Bird Watch 26th April to 2nd May

Carole from Old Granary: Spring has definitely sprung over the past couple of days which the birds have appreciated as much as us. The Bluebells were particularly early this year with ours coming into flower a couple of weeks ago and it's lovely to see the blossom on the fruit trees starting to appear. I was interested to read about David's sighting of a Garden Warbler as earlier in the month we were woken up several mornings at dawn by a bird song we didn't recognise, we assumed it was coming from the thicket close to us, after detective work and the use of the Merlin bird app we assumed it had to be a Garden Warbler. We did on just one night hear the distant call of a Barn Owl and at Lodmoor yesterday saw the first Swallows of the summer. It's fabulous to see that the Ospreys have returned from their long migration.

Sutton Poyntz Society AGM

David prepared a PowerPoint and told the meeting about the conservation work undertaken by the Friday volunteer Group mainly around the Wessex Water owned land including the innovative linear orchard alongside the Millennium Walk. Using pictures supplied by John, Colin talked about the recording of plants and animals around the village including the White Horse Hill S.S.S.I. In particular he mentioned the survey now in its sixth year for Butterfly Conservation. Colin also mentioned a survey he leads on recording bats, especially the summer roost count at the Waterworks Office in June. After the meeting, a number of people indicated they wished to take part in group activities supplying contact details. This was followed up by John, who explained the scientific basis on which, we naturalists survey UK wildlife, who gets the information and how. A simple one side of A4 accompanies this *Newsletter* as a reminder.



Small copper on common fleabane,

There was a lot of interest in butterfly recording. White Horse Hill and the calcareous unimproved south facing slopes of White Horse Hill, supporting plants such as kidney vetch, bird's-foot trefoil and rock-rose – all of which butterflies' favour is an important place to see many of the UK's resident butterfly population augmented by migrants e.g. painted lady from the continent. The hill is also an important locus for the rare Lulworth skipper. Colin is to organise a walk around the village transect walk probably on Friday or Saturday this week depending on the weather.

Should you not have attended the AGM, please contact Colin (Safcol@aol.com) or myself if you want more information.

Garden Bird Watch



On 25th March – a Friday, whilst out walking for my newspapers before 8:00am, I received two phone calls, which I did not hear on my mobile. Later, I learned that neighbour Penny had seen the bird in my garden and her garden. It subsequently flew across the road and turned up in Jon and Ian's garden and later in the morning, I received a telephone call from Anthea and Tony to report it feeding on their back lawn – the photograph.

An occasional spring visitor to Dorset. It prefers the warmer climate of France but I suspect that day, there had been strong south easterly winds and our specimen was blown across the Channel. A first for me and the few of us privileged to see it were delighted. Incidentally, I do not have a big telephoto lens so what you see is heavily cropped and blown up.

The .pdf of your garden bird records is attached. It looks like next year a further revision is required with garden warbler added. Forty-five species seen with contributions from 14 gardens. I was pleased to see tree creeper on the list. A lovely bird which I used to see quite regularly when I lived in Yorkshire but so rarely here. Three records of grey wagtail – a red listed bird are most welcome. First sighting of a house martin again from the Puddledocks. There are really good numbers of both blue tit and great tit benefitting from the mild spring of 2025 meaning hatchlings were well fed. Coal tits favour coniferous woodland and there is plenty at the back of the houses on Preston Road to the Bridge Inn. I have heard green woodpecker more frequently this year together with an occasional great-spotted woodpecker. With the windows open at night, my wife complains about tawny owl but I never hear it.

For new members, my computer handles Apples Numbers if you use that and I paste your results into Excel.

Butterfly Counts have started and I have the results from the first three weeks. Nothing much interesting or unexpected. I was pleased to see a wall as I walked to the gate before the hill last Sunday.

Wildflowers: Nothing special to report except that the very poisonous hemlock water dropwort is making its annual appearance. If you cut it down, make sure no seeds on the compost heap and do not eat it as a herb or let animals eat it, especially if chopped down.