



Sutton Poyntz Biodiversity Group June 2024 Newsletter

Garden Bird Watch 23rd to 29th June 2024

What a strange year we are having with the weather. Strong cold north easterly winds again making moth trapping quite poor and as a side effect numbers of bats are down. At the time of writing, we have done the summer roost counts of common pipistrelle on the 6th June with 47 seen emerging from the Museum office building and just two from the main building, whilst on 20th June we had a total of 57. Most headed east following a hedge line. Once the emergence had stopped and we returning home on 6th June, past the pond a couple of soprano pipistrelles and a small number of common pipistrelles were feeding on midges on the pond.



Generally, I think insect numbers are well down, although the creeping cinquefoil illustrated above was a single flower in dense grass there is a pollen bug and a fly on the flower, there was also a swollen thigh leaf beetle on a leaf cropped out of the photograph. Bees seem quite scarce but interestingly, there seems decent numbers of ladybirds and hence, so far, no blackfly aphids on runner beans. Walking round, I have stood watching flowers with open pollen with no insects approaching. Some recent research, using seed collected 30 years ago against seeds from recent plants show plants have responded by creating more flower heads.

However, putting this *Newsletter* together on 20th June, the afternoon temperature is approaching 23^oC and the insects are busy pollinating in my garden in the middle of the day. The go to flower is a *Campanula*, which I rate as a weed because it is everywhere and will be chopped back once flowering is over. Insects include flies, flower bugs and both honey bees and the specialist *Andrena* group. There is a micro-moth pollinating mints such as catmint, which is the straw-barred pearl *Pyrausta despicata*.

On an interesting note, Jon Campbell recorded a Norfolk hawker dragonfly or green-eyed hawker *Anaciaeschna isosceles* on the path by Veterans Wood. This insect has been known from Radipole for the past three years having previously only been known from the Norfolk Broads in Britain, but known from continental Europe.

Garden Bird Watch:

Between us we saw from 15 gardens a total of 39 species and 246 records, averaging 16 per garden. There has been an increase in green woodpecker, five people reported swifts; small numbers of house martins, which have failed to breed at Sutton Park Lawns and very low numbers of swallows. Interestingly, we have just returned from Cornwall where numbers on the Lizard were down and not breeding at the Hounsell Bay Hotel, where we have often seen nests. Most people have seen house sparrows, except me but numbers are down. There are plenty of goldfinch about and I suspect both blue tits and great tits are having a good year, but where are the caterpillars. One Mistle thrush and two song thrush are always nice.

A number of people are using this AI based software Merlin to identify birds by song. It seems to be OK; but kingfisher came up in gorse one day so be aware. One very keen bird watcher who writes in the *Financial Times* claims it has improved her id skills but does like to see the bird to confirm it.

Butterflies:



Christine sent me this photograph, taken late May of a marsh fritillary butterfly in her Old Bincombe Lane garden. Totally out of place. It feeds mainly on Devil's bit scabious or small scabious and we have only a little of both on the hill. The record has been accepted by Butterfly Conservation so thank you Christine.

The good news here is that numbers are picking up at last with good numbers of Lulworth skippers on West Hill. Meadow browns, marbled white, small heath, a couple of Adonis blues and large skipper amongst those seen in sunny spells on Wednesday. We have manged the counts most weeks, but I am hearing reports of very poor numbers in West Dorset.

Plants:

Over the twenty plus years, we have lived here, it has never ceased to amaze my how plants come and go. For many years, we have had evening primrose in the verges of Sutton Road, but these have gone.

This one is strange, because it is a plant of rush pastures and then not common. It is false fox sedge *Carex otrubae*. I noticed it early one morning on Mill Lane, near the Bridge Inn. It was not in the ditch, where I would have expected it, nor in the River Jordan but on the west side of the road. You can see the new tarmac laid in December. How did it get there? Possibly seeds from a passing vehicle, which had used a damp countryside lane.

Other plants, which have moved in to the area include ox-eye daisies spreading from road improvement verges from Cornwall to Dorset.

