



Garden Bird Watch 23rd to 29th October 2022

Well what a month with dramatic early morning skies, warm sun up to 21^oC, strong winds, heavy rain, autumn colours and falling leaves on the trees. There are still plenty of tasty blackberries and many apples on trees. However, the natural wild seems to be very quiet.

Wild Animals:



Colin and Rita organised some small mammal trapping using Longworth traps, along the eastern edge of Veterans Wood on the edge of the meadow. This is becoming increasingly difficult, with no management taking place the grass is becoming very overgrown and brambles are taking over. Good result here with seven wood mice from 12 traps. All were released safely alive having received a good breakfast of chicken feed. The following evening traps were placed on the western edge of the fen with just three trapped in sheltered places. This boundary is generally too open for mice and voles.

John generally walks for an hour before breakfast and has seen green squirrels regularly raiding the walnut on Sutton Road by the old Church. Dorothy reports seeing a pair roe deer regularly in her garden, not only eating the grass but weeds as well. Both the male and female are now in their winter coats. She still has rabbits, which are becoming quite scarce due to disease and of course Mr Badger.

There are a few bats around. We needed to test one of the National Trust bat meters we use for surveys, as we were not sure the microphone, which picks up the acoustic signals was working properly. We left this out for three nights in a garden off Sutton Road where there were a few passes of common pipistrelle and a serotine. A bat meter was also deployed for one night on the Waterworks meadow in the middle of the hedge line pointing north picked up Common Pipistrelle at 19.09 and good emergence for over two hours at moderate levels indicating a nearby roost emerging to feed in area. Occasional presence after this until the period 05.26 until 07.00 when low to moderate level consistent with return. One transit of Serotine. Several traces of *Myotis* in the early hours all Natterers or Bechstein (which cannot be separated). However, as with our National Trust surveys activities levels are much lower than usual.

Butterflies and other insects:



Very few around. John has checked out ivy on sunny days but only the occasional hoverfly. Dorothy had a single peacock and a few whites but even these are finished here now.

We finished the butterfly transect walks on the first Sunday in October. This was really quite poor with just four insects seen on a sunny afternoon, but there were so few flowers with pollen on the hill.



Common Mullein still in flower on the hill on October 2nd



On Plaister's Lane, these apples were photographed alongside yellow berberis in full fruit.

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The spreadsheet contains data from 12 gardens and one extra column for the pond, where a grey wagtail has been around on a few days. Surprisingly only nine people reported blackbird. A pair of bullfinch and greenfinch at Wyndings were good. Chaffinch numbers are well down with three people reporting. There were stragglers of house martins at Northdown Farm. No song thrushes and unusually near the houses a pair of Stonechat at Northdown Farm. Only three reports of starlings but a good flock of 20 on Puddledock Lane.

The mystery agaric – Any clues anybody? A grassland fungi.

