



## July 2023 Next Garden Bird Watch starts Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> July

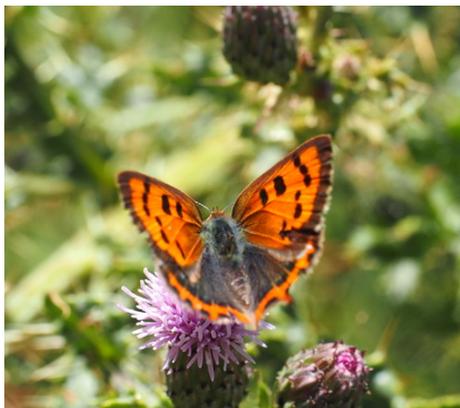
The banner photograph taken on Sutton Road, shows an uncut bank with common ragwort, which is becoming an increasingly common sight on Dorset's so called Biodiverse roadside margins. However, ragwort is a persistent weed toxic to livestock with conservation organisations and livestock farmers having to hand pull the plant out, then dispose of it in a safe way. Whilst present in the fields, livestock instinctively avoid consumption, but cut and left in fodder is a different story.

Leaving Plaister's Lane going north onto Coombe Valley Road is requiring increasing care as the junction is not cut. It is not all bad across the County. I recently had course to using some B rated roads near Wimborne St Giles, where the junctions had been cut, probably regularly, and was pleased to see a verge with lady's bedstraw and dark mullein.

### Bat surveys:

At the beginning of June, a few of the group assembled at the Waterworks, with permission, to do the annual Bat Conservation Trust summer exit count for the roost usually in the old Inspector's House. On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June, we counted 58 common pipistrelles emerge. The following week, just 16, but they seemed to come from the south and circle over the Inspector's House. These were the figures reported to Wessex Water and the Bat Conservation Trust. However, Colin was not satisfied so the following Saturday (24<sup>th</sup>), Rita and he went back. He reported: "After last week's low count and sighting of bats emerging from building to the south of the House we did another survey tonight (24<sup>th</sup> June). One out of the House and 57 from under the eaves of the central building of the block 25 metres south (a total of 58 which equates to that out of the House a couple of weeks ago - pure coincidence?). We know that Common Pip roosts move. Is that what has happened here?" The numbers are still down on last year and may well reflect the poor levels of insects out and about, especially moths.

Whilst on the subject of mammals, a badger ran towards me on Puddledock Lane, just after 7:00am recently.



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### Butterflies and Moths:

We have had strong north easterly, winds for most of the period, with a reasonable amount of rain, followed in the last few days with gusting strong south westerly winds. Totally unsuitable for moth trapping in my garden. However, I have seen by day some Jersey tiger moths (right last page). Interestingly, no cinnabar moth larvae or ragwort and no mullein moth larvae on common mullein in my garden.

We have continued doing the standard butterfly walks, with large numbers of Lulworth skippers being reported on the hill slopes with a similar number seen on the wet patches on the Millennium Walk. Currently there are good numbers of red admirals and small whites. Colin reported a brown Argos on his walk. Around bramble, there are currently many gatekeepers and meadow browns, although numbers do vary on locations. Left picture on previous page shows a small copper.

### Birds



Searching for a useful picture has reminded me to ask all you photographers who have some suitable equipment to supply pictures such as this one of house sparrows by Janet. I am rarely so lucky.

Sixteen people submitted just over 200 sightings of 45 species of birds at an average of 15 per garden. I think that is brilliant, especially those who have house martins nesting. I did check the nest on Mission Hall Lane recently and only saw four swifts fly by. We are missing the records from Wyndings as Dot is no longer in residence.

For me, the interesting thing is the disappearance of house sparrows from my garden. In addition, despite many meadow ants in the lawn, apart from a pair of magpies and wood pigeons, only a single blackbird is feeding on the lawn – no starlings this year. Do I blame the neighbour's cat or is something else happening? But seriously, house sparrow numbers and gardens holding them are down from five years ago. We did start our own garden bird watch 14 years ago, so one of your statistical analysts might like to put some numbers on change.

Personal joy of the month. On my last afternoon staying in Blakeney, I watched a barn owl quarter up and down some marsh grassland for at least 20 minutes, supervised by 14 swifts.

If you are away for garden bird watch, please look out and report for a few days before and after the usual week. It is often so quiet in late July and August as birds moult.