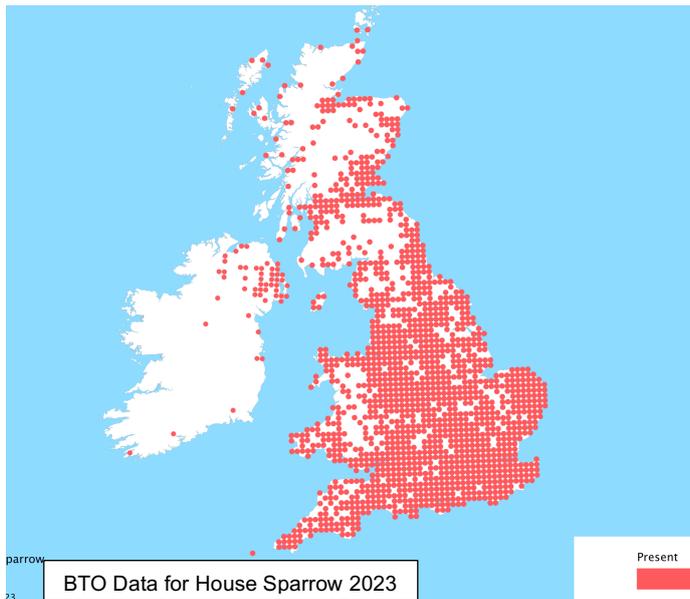




## Garden Bird Watch starts 24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023

On Friday 15<sup>th</sup> three parties of residents were taken round the SSSI section of the Wessex Water woodland. The area is not particularly safe unless you are acquainted with the area and the Company has restricted access. Whilst, not an ideal time to see the area in its spring glory, it was the safest time to show people the work the conservation volunteers do managing the hedgerows and coppicing to a management agreement approved by Natural England and Wessex Water. One of the visitors downloaded a bird song recognition app. These should never be taken solely on trust and a second preferably visual confirmation or an experienced bird recorder who is familiar with bird calls is available to verify. On the one occasion, one was used in my presence, I did not accept two out of twelve potential records on the grounds the birds did not live in that habitat. However, all is not lost. Look on line at BTO Garden Bird Watch. Their brilliant scientists are working towards a credible electronic detection system. Look for BTO Acoustic pipeline.



British Trust for Ornithology garden bird watch scheme publishes data for some birds: [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org) The data left shows the 10km distribution for house sparrow for 2023. Using this data, the bird does not appear to be in trouble nationally. Yet, every day I walk somewhere round Preston and Sutton Poyntz. There are places, where over the years good numbers of house sparrow have been present e.g. the bank to the north of Verlands Road. Very few if any today. The footpath linking Maunsel to Preston Road – there two years ago gone today. Latest regular good place is Puddledock Lane in two spots: the hedgerow south of the farm buildings and the old donkey stables.

### Garden Bird Watch September 2023

We recorded a total of 36 species from 18 gardens averaging 12 species per garden. It would be a useful exercise to map the location of each garden but the best results are from houses that have a rural back, rather than an urban back and supplementary feeding takes place, but rats can be a problem and large birds. We take birds such as kestrel that fly over, whereas BTO stipulate that birds should use the garden. Maureen fairly certainly had a hobby fly over chasing her migrating swallows and house martins. We also are less strict about defining our own garden boundary so would include a bird on next door's hedge or tree. Ros still had a few martins in her nest box. Green woodpecker numbers have dropped. Really good to have a record of the call of barn owl and a single call of tawny owl, which I can no longer hear.

We move onto the winter list so start looking out for redwing.

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## Butterflies and moths

We have hardly bothered moth trapping this year. Cold north-easterly winds at night have scuppered proceedings but Sue and Jon put there trap out on Saturday night and despite the thunderstorm had a reasonable catch for the time of the year including two rarely recorded convolvulus hawkmoths. The five teams who do the Butterfly Conservation walk round the Waterworks have managed most weeks this year. At the time of writing, just one more list to do as the scheme ends on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Notable over the past couple of weeks have been singles of dark bordered fritillary, wall and small numbers of small heath all on the red list. Jon was lucky to get a session on Monday this week before the horrible windy and wet Tuesday and Wednesday. Banner photograph is a small copper.

## Fungi



This London plane *Plantanuss x hispanica* leaf is infected with a fungus *Evysiphe platani*. I have seen it on the tree on each side of Fisherbridge Road and one tree planted in some amenity grassland on the west side of Sevenacres Road, where the road turns west. Just seven records on the NBN atlas [nbn.org/atlas](http://nbn.org/atlas) and Bryan Edwards from Dorset Environmental Records Centre tells me new to Dorset.

Somebody has to look at obscure things.

## Flowering plants:



Sweet briar *Rosa rubinigosa*



Large house spider *Tegenaria gigantea*.

The rose is nearest to sweet briar but is fairly certainly a hybrid. There were still a few herbs around on the calcareous grassland last week including slender centaury, harebell, marjoram and small scabious. Really good year for blackberries, hawthorn and rose but not so many sloes.

The spider right was big. It needed a whole jam jar to eject it from the house before Liz saw it. Identified using iNaturalist but confirmed from *Spiders of Britain*.