



## Sutton Poyntz Bio-diversity Group News

### Garden Bird Watch this month 19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023

David Emery reported an interesting result from a Wessex Water invertebrate sampling taken from the new watercourse in the northern S.S.S.I, wood last year. They found a caddis fly *Synagapetus dubitans* which is a **nationally rare** species associated with calcareous springs. The species was only identified in the UK since 2010 with only one other record in Dorset. That record is from Owermoigne (SY768853) in the upper reaches of a network of streams, which join the River Frome at Wool. There are just 46 records shown on the map on the National Biodiversity Network Map ([nbn.org/atlas](http://nbn.org/atlas)) .

Caddis flies have two pairs of quite broad wings, held roof-wise over the resting body. Often seen flying over water bodies at dusk, they are sometimes found in moth traps away from water. The larvae have a long abdomen and three pairs of legs, passing through five stages and one pupal stage. Many protect their abdomen with a distinctive larval case covered with sand and small stones, whilst some live in the open without a case. Non-experts do use these larval stages to identify caddis flies, which generally are under-recorded.

### Ash – die-back

There is quite a lot of interest in the nature conservation and forestry circles about ash-die back caused by *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*. – a fungus to which European ash may be very susceptible or in some cases tolerant. However, research led by the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew is investigating the genome of different ash trees to seek why some trees are less susceptible and other are tolerant to the disease. In Sutton Poyntz, Rita, Colin and John just after Christmas, investigated one such dead tree, which appears to have succumbed. However, what interested John is that this tree also had a larger canker.



Some years ago, a friend of his pointed out this canker gall on ash *Nectria galligena* page 117 of the second edition Aidgap *British Plant Galls*. It certainly seems to be involved in killing off ash trees or at least weakening them. Recently, he went to enter a record on iRecord ([www.brc.ac.uk/iRecord](http://www.brc.ac.uk/iRecord)) and it was not there but a search on the NBN atlas ([Nbn.org/atlas](http://Nbn.org/atlas)) revealed it is now *Neonectria galligena*. with an English name of Apple and Pear canker. It is also described on the NBN as a fungus, whereas Redfern and Shirley describe it as a bacterium. So I asked the British Plant Gall Society for help. Peter Shirley commented:” In the Third Edition of the keys (in press), this is now *Neonectria ditissima* in the fungal order **Hypocreales**, family **Nectriaceae**. It is noted that the gall is similar to galls caused by bacteria. The question is “are they both present when a tree dies?” I have not seen the question asked.

Regarding the lichens present, we recorded 17 species, which have all been submitted to Dorset Environmental Records Centre for verification. None were rare with *Phycia leptalea* being the most interesting as it is confined to the south-west. Since undertaking this survey at the end of December, we have all been on a British Lichen Society training course on lichen identification on trees and have started recording species new to us. I have no doubt that before long we will go back to this tree and see just what we have missed.

## Garden Bird Watch

Thirteen people sent replies this month. We really could do with new members on the north of Plaisters Lane, especially with gardens backing onto West Hill, from where we are missing usual records of yellowhammer. Winter thrushes appear absent but three records of song thrush and one of mistle thrush are most welcome. Also six records of grey wagtail mostly from houses alongside the River Jordan but also two from Puddledock Lane. Robins are active seeking mates, even I can hear the loud call. Although there were five records of great-spotted woodpecker there was only one of green woodpecker.



With the early part of this week cold and frosty, there were not many birds about in the early morning but the second half of the week is much warmer. I hope not so hot as last year but look forward to spring arriving.

Please report any frog spawn and the date you first saw it. There has been an occasional red admiral sighted and honey bees on warm mornings. Spring flowers include primroses starting to flower and there are some large patches of snowdrops.