

NATURE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Now including Bee & Mammal news

August 2018 Issue 19



NATURE SOCIETY
Making a real difference



DROUGHT

What is the impact of the drought we are currently experiencing likely to be on wildlife?



Sadly, we have already had one casualty, one of the White Swans cygnets has been taken ill with Avian botulism. So, what is the cause and the effects on the birds.

Avian botulism outbreaks in wild water birds occurs in ponds and lakes in periods when there is less oxygen in the water, such as during heat waves, because the bacteria which release the botulin toxin can occur in these conditions. It is a paralytic disease caused by ingestion of a toxin produced by the bacteria, *Clostridium botulinum*. This bacteria is widespread in soil and requires warm temperatures, a protein source and an anaerobic (no oxygen) environment in order to become active and produce toxin. Decomposing vegetation and invertebrates combined with warm temperatures can provide ideal conditions for the botulism bacteria to activate and produce toxin.

According to the Animal and Plant Health Agency, birds who contract the disease are unable to use their legs or wings and they can't fly. It can also paralyse a bird's neck muscles stopping it from holding its head. The creatures can remain in this state for a number of days and death is often due to respiratory failure and/or drowning.

It is not a risk to humans but precautionary measures should be taken. **DO NOT PADDLE, SWIM OR ALLOW DOGS INTO THE WATER AND DO NOT FEED THE WATER BIRDS.**

Where ponds & streams start drying up young amphibians, including frogs and newts, will be at risk - dragonflies and other aquatic insects may be prevented from hatching.

Wading birds could struggle to raise their chicks. Water voles are at greater risk from predators such as

stoats & weasels as low water leaves their water side burrows exposed.

Some trees such as beech & birch are at risk of dying off.

The risk of wildfires is greatly increased, killing birds, mammals, insects, endangered flora and destroying habitats.



Earlier this year the Brambles had a terrific display of blossom presaging an excellent crop of blackberries. Look at them now and a lot of the fruits are

withering away. Those that do form will be smaller and less juicy and may fruit earlier than normal. This obviously means much less food for birds, mammals even butterflies.



HOW CAN WE HELP?

We have a lot of grassland and trees all around us so we need to be vigilant about discarding rubbish especially glass & cigarettes, barbecues are obviously a high risk.

We can use waste water on trees & shrubs close to us which are suffering.

Be on the alert for any sick birds or animals and report to the office without delay. This is particularly essential for water birds.

Environment Agency says "Nature is very resilient, but given that we are seeing early summer droughts like this happening more frequently, then we can expect to see the real impacts of climate change on the numbers and distribution of some of our more susceptible wildlife."

BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS

On a much lighter note there seems to have been a plethora of butterflies over the last few weeks.



Small Tortoiseshell, loves Buddleia, Scabious etc. Caterpillars need Nettles. Overwinters as an adult. Now in decline in the UK.

Meadow Brown, feeds on nectar. Caterpillars feed on Grasses. Common & Widespread.



RINGLET. Likes Blackberries & Raspberries as well as other plants.

Drops eggs to the ground while in flight. Caterpillars feed on grasses. Relatively common

but can be localised.

PEACOCK. Feeds on nectar from many flowers. Lays eggs on Nettles. Male will defend nettle patch, even sees of birds. Overwinters as an adult. Widespread.



GATEKEEPER. Loves Bramble & Ragwort. Male actively defends its territory. Caterpillars feed on grasses, they are active by night and retreat to the ground in the day. Fairly common.



COMMA. Likes nectar, tree sap and fruit. Caterpillars feed on Nettles, Gooseberries & Redcurrants. Had declined but now making a comeback.



LARGE WHITE. Feeds on nectar. Caterpillars feed on Cabbage family, Nasturtiums. Two broods a year. Common & Widespread.



SMALL WHITE. Hard to tell apart from large white, size is best indicator. Caterpillars feed on Cabbage family, Oil seed-rape. Two/three broods a year. Common & Widespread.



SKIPPER (large/small)? Could have been either. Caterpillars feed on grasses in which they form a 'tent'. Widespread in England.



POPLAR HAWK MOTH Wingspan of up to 10cm. Adults do not feed. Caterpillars eat Poplar, Willows & Sallows. Common & Widespread where larvae foodplants exist.

FIVE-SPOT BURNET MOTH. Day flying. Caterpillars feed on Birds-foot Trefoil. Localised. Can be confused with Six-spot Burnet. (Photo courtesy of Ian Carroll. Taken in Cottage Garden)



CINNABAR MOTH Nocturnal, but often disturbed from long grass in the daytime. Feeds on nectar. Caterpillars feed exclusively on Ragwort.

(Caterpillar photo courtesy of Ian Carroll)





PAINTED LADY This one is not native.

Painted ladies do not hibernate in Britain; instead they migrate to and from northern Africa. They can arrive in early spring, but late May and June are more usual. They are fairly common across Britain, numerous in some years.

Females lay their small, green eggs on a range of species, such as nettles and mallows, but thistles are the general favourite. When the caterpillars hatch they begin to eat the underside of the leaf. As they grow, each constructs a tent of folded leaves fastened with silk.



Caterpillars pupate and remain suspended in a large tent of leaves until the adults emerge in August and September. The whole British

population dies or emigrates to Africa in the autumn. Caterpillars are black, speckled with tiny white spots and have a yellow stripe down each side. They are covered in spines

Adults drink nectar from flowers. Caterpillars eat thistles, stinging nettles and mallows.

So, we have recorded many butterflies this year and there are surely many other species we have missed or are still to come. What becomes very apparent is the importance of Nettles and Grasses.

We are a little early to see Red Admirals but they too are totally dependent on Nettles.



Red Admiral caterpillar

Let all of us, do all we can to preserve our nettle patches and grassy areas. Remember while we may not be a fan of nettles, without them many of our favourite species would die out. As with all pollinators the consequences of losing species is dire.

DRAGONFLY

This beautiful Brown Hawker was found by one of our moorers on her boat, it was quite weak & bedraggled. As these do not usually appear until July we assumed that it had not long emerged, as it takes several hours to fully dry off and get strength into the wings. (Picture courtesy of Garry Scott)



Mainly found in central and southern England. It breeds in standing or slow-flowing water laying its eggs in floating or emergent vegetation or timber. Hunts well away from water and may be found hawking woodland rides well into the evening.

A dragonfly has a life span of more than a year, but very little of that life is actually as an adult. There are three stages of the dragonfly life cycle, the egg, the nymph, and the adult dragonfly. Most of the life cycle of a dragonfly is lived out in the nymph stage.



Dragonflies mate while flying in the air. The female will then lay her eggs on a plant in the water, or if she can't find a suitable one she will just drop them into the water.

When mature and the weather is warm enough the dragonfly nymph will shed its skin onto the stem of the plant. The shed skins can often be found still clinging onto the stem. The dragonfly will hunt for food and begin to look for a mate. Once mated, the female will find a body of calm water that will be a good place to lay her eggs, and the life cycle of the dragonfly begins all over again. Adult dragonflies only live about two months.



Both the adult & the nymph are voracious predators even preying on their own kind.

ANCIENT HISTORY

The Dragonfly appears in folklore across the world. Sometimes representing love or even the devil's tool. In England it is sometimes called 'the devil's darning needle'

Dragonfly fossils have been found with a wingspan of 30 inches.

**UPCOMING
EVENT**



LATEST NEWS

Comma butterfly on Blackthorn bush. Also resting on Grebe pontoon woodwork. 12.07.18

Poplar Hawk Moth close to the office. 12.07.18

Band of young Long-tailed Tits looking for insects in the Birch trees. 15.07.18

Flying ants galore alongside of the footpath from pedestrian gate. 19.07.18

Hedgehog seen by FB3

Painted lady butterfly, new lake field 22.07.18

Garden bumblebee feeding on honeysuckle in cottage garden. They have longer tongues which enable them to feed on these types of flowers.

Young foxes heard, dog walking field 22.07.18

Female Tawny Owl in lodge woods 22.07.18

Family of Mink spotted under the road bridge, adult and four young.

Possible Grass Snake seen swimming to the bank near Heron pontoon. Very fast & distinctive swimming style.

Please keep your sightings coming in. This gives a good overview of the state of our wildlife. Maybe you are not sure what you have seen but a description, location, time of day would all help with identification. Don't forget that reporting dead wildlife is just as important, especially cat owners whose pets like to bring them 'little presents'.

Sometimes it is just signs, like half eaten prey, tracks through the grass, sounds, nests, smells even scratch marks on trees. All this information helps. You can put it on Facebook, let the office know or they will give you contact details for myself.

SAVE OUR BEES STALL AUGUST 12th.



A selection of bee products and other related items will be available. Mr Buzz should be putting in an appearance (depending on the temperature).

Of course, a Raffle and the very popular Lucky Dip for the little ones.

We will be giving out information on identifying common bee species and lots of other facts.

Please come along and give your support.

ANIMALAGRAMS WINNERS

A big well done and thank you to everyone who entered.

The lucky winners were Jo & Wynne, Claire Flint & Petra Cunningham.

Here are the answers.

ANAGRAM	ANSWER
Enlarged boat	Long eared bat
Author in name	Mountain hare
Ridge unbent	Reed bunting
Wart born	Brown rat
Sweetener had rice	Chinese water deer
Growled alone	Long eared owl
Me calm soon	Common seal
No amber seed	Red mason bee
Where straw	Water shrew
Back lawns	Black swan
Angry fold	Dragonfly
Whom sent to	Smooth newt
Owl braid	Wild boar
Vermouth seas	Harvest mouse
Askers sang	Grass snake
Azure home sold	Hazel dormouse
Loved life	Field vole
Not a jacket dart	Natterjack toad
Remain pent	Pine marten
Goads a canoe	Canada goose