

NATURE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Now including Bee & Mammal news

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NATURE SOCIETY
Making a real difference



A CAVALCADE OF INSECTS

What a month for insect sightings!

Blackthorn (Sloe) near to FB1. On the 31st May it was playing host to numerous ladybirds, ladybird larvae and various beetles. Far too many Ladybirds to count. Many were mating and there were lots of different species. 2 spot, 7 spot, 22 spot (yellow one). Also, black ones which could be a variation of the 2 spot. Many ladybird species are incredibly variable i.e. Ten-spot ladybirds vary in colour and pattern. They can be cream, yellow, orange, red, brown, purple or black, with up to 15 spots. This makes exact identification difficult unless an expert. Some even have rectangles instead of spots.

The lifecycle of ladybirds:-

October- February: Adult ladybirds spend winter in a dormant state, known as 'overwintering'.

March- April: Adult ladybirds become active and leave their overwintering sites to find food, aphids (greenfly).

May: Male and female ladybirds mate.

June- July: Mated females lay eggs which hatch into immature stages called 'larvae'. Larvae feed on aphids and then form 'pupae'.

August: The new generation of adult ladybirds emerge from the pupae.

September: These new adults feed but do not mate until next spring after they have overwintered.

Ladybird larvae also differ between species. This is a 7 spot



This is the larvae of a Harlequin ladybird, an invasive species which outcompetes our native breeds.

Many of the larvae and the adults feed voraciously on aphids which make them of huge benefit to both food and flower production. Some even lay their eggs in aphid colonies.

Did you know that the yellow staining you get on your fingers from handling a Ladybird is actually blood and the phenomenon is called reflex bleeding? The blood oozes out through the pores of the leg joints and contains several bitter alkaloids and smells strongly. It is probable that this gives early warning to predators of the beetles disagreeable nature.

On the same bush at the same time we saw *Mirius Striatus* (sorry no English name) an extremely beautiful bug. They have an appetite for young Oak & Hawthorn leaves as well as predated other soft-bodied insect pests and caterpillars.



Soldier beetle, *Rhagonycha fulva*, also there as well. The larvae predate on insect pests and the adults are attracted to brightly coloured flowers making them excellent pollinators.

Cottage garden On 10th June numerous insects were found in the garden. **Ladybirds and their larvae.**

Scorpion flies.

The Scorpion Fly is a strange-looking insect that is found in gardens and hedgerows, and along woodland edges, particularly among Stinging Nettles and Bramble. It has a long, beak-like projection from its head that it uses to feed. It scavenges on dead insects and frequently steals the



contents of spiders' webs. It lives up to its name by sporting a scorpion-like tail, which the male uses in courtship displays. Adults usually mate at night, but mating can be a dangerous game for the male, who might easily be killed by the female. So he presents her with a nuptial gift of a dead insect or a mass of saliva to placate her - the equivalent of a box of chocolates! The resulting eggs are laid in the soil and the emerging larvae live and pupate at the soil surface.

Interesting history:- Scorpion Flies belong to an ancient order of insects known as 'Mecoptera' which includes about 550 species worldwide. Mecoptera can be traced back to the Permian period, more than 250 million years ago, and are likely ancestors of butterflies and flies.

Mint moth:-



There are two generations of these Micro moths occurring from mid-April to June and again from July to mid-September. It has also been found in mid-March and sometimes into early October. Flies actively in sunshine and also at night. During the day adults are

often found sitting on the leaves of Mint or related species. The caterpillars feed on Mint, Marjoram & Thyme so are very happy in our herb bed.

This moth had been the focus of Butterfly Conservation moth night this year which they hold annually in June.

Wolf spider:- Not good for us arachnophobes. However this was a fascinating sighting. The Wolf Spider is a medium-sized spider that hunts on the ground during the day - chasing down its prey and leaping on it, just like a Wolf. It frequents gardens and grasslands, and can often be seen sunbathing or running across the ground. The female carries her round egg-sac underneath the back end of her body (attached to the 'spinnerets', the organs which produce silk) and will carry the young on her back for a few days after they hatch.

This was the amazing sight we had, fully loaded with her babies, incredible that we were busy in the garden just at the right time.



Field Cuckoo bumblebee:-



The Field cuckoo bumblebee, is a widespread species of cuckoo bumblebee, with no particular habitat preferences. Like all cuckoo species, they do not collect pollen for their offspring (and so have no pollen baskets or workers), but instead take

over the nests of carder bumblebees, mainly the Common carder bee

This is the Common Carder whose nests are predated and we see lots of them in the cottage garden.



BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS



There have been a number of sightings of a very pink butterfly/moth. In view of the location and time of viewing there is a very good chance that it is an Elephant Hawkmoth. It is fairly common and widespread even though it sounds very exotic. The English name of this moth is derived from the caterpillar's fanciful

resemblance to an elephant's trunk. The adults are attractive with a streamlined appearance. They fly from May to July, visiting flowers such as honeysuckle for nectar.

The larvae feed mainly on rosebay willowherb, but also other plants as well, including bedstraw. It is a common species in most of Britain, including Scotland, where it has increased its range in recent years.



The caterpillar is quite distinctive and grows to 85mm in length and is one of the largest and most distinctive

caterpillars to be found in the British Isles. It is the most frequently seen hawk moth caterpillar, often found feeding and wandering around in search of somewhere to pupate. When retracted the caterpillars head recoils giving the impression on a much larger head. The two large 'eye-like' markings behind the head appear startling to predators.

So, fingers crossed it is indeed the Elephant Hawk moth.

Green Hairstreak

Yet another under scrutiny is the Green Hairstreak butterfly. Seen about 3 weeks ago and again on 24th June in the same area. We have all its larval foodplants and plants the adults visit for nectar close by. However, there are no recorded colonies in this area and we are right at the end of its flight period. That being so we need to be on the lookout for its caterpillars.



Their food plants are Broom, Gorse, Dogwood, Buckthorn, Bramble and Birds-foot Trefoil. If spotted please let me know. They can be found May-July.

Butterfly Conservation has an interest in this.

Hover flies, Dragonflies & Grasshoppers are now appearing in abundance as well as many different flies & bugs.

WHY SO MUCH INTEREST IN INSECTS?

We hear so much about the loss of hedgerows, grassland, trees, meadows, marshes etc. and this is having a big impact on the insect population. Add to this monoculture of farmland, use of pesticides in agriculture and also in gardens and we are wiping out insects hand over fist. There has been a 75% decrease in flying insect populations since 1989. Each tree & hedgerow is host to thousands & thousands of insects. They are crucial to pollination and are food for numerous birds, mammals, amphibians and other insects. So, the knock-on effect of insect loss is profound.

Many of these insects are looked on as pests by gardeners, especially aphids and some caterpillars. Aphids are food for numerous other insects such as ladybirds, ladybird larvae, spiders, ants etc. so surely, we can leave them to clear them up. If not, we must be careful to use only pesticides which WILL NOT harm the environment. Always read the labels before buying as many will say dangerous to bees and other pollinators. There is one called 'Organic Green & Blackfly sticky control which uses a sugar mix and Bug Clear which is an emulsion of Rape seed oil.

BEES, WASPS & HORNETS.

This is the time of year when people get quite jittery about being stung by any of these creatures and often mistake them for something they are not.

Only bees & wasps have true stings and some ants. Only females have stings except for honey bees where most of the individuals carry a sting.



Solitary wasps use their stings to paralyse prey and although some will sting if handled, they are not programmed to attack large mammals. Some of their stings contain pain inducing histamine, but are

generally quite harmless to humans.

Solitary bees, such as Red Mason, Leafcutters and Mining bees have a very feeble sting, usually no worse than a pin prick, and use them only when mauled. They never initiate an attack.



The most powerful stings belong to social bees and wasps which sting in defence of their colonies. Honey bees and social wasps stream out from their nests at the slightest disturbance and often attack anything appearing in the flight line close to the nest. Alarm substances released by the front-line defenders summon additional workers from the nest.

Stings are housed in the abdomen and are hidden from view. In the Honeybee the sting is made up of a reservoir of venom and a set of three needles linked together to form a hollow tube. When a sting is made muscles pump venom into the wound. A honey bee has to tear the sting out of its body which is fatal to it but this is considered as a sacrifice to save the colony as a whole. The muscles around the sac continue to pump venom into the wound after the bee has gone which alerts other bees to continue the attack. Wasps and bumblebees have much smaller barbs, allowing them to withdraw their stings easily and use them again.

Hornets stings are more powerful but they are less aggressive than many more frequently encountered wasp species. In spite of their fearsome reputation, they generally only sting in defence of their nest or when someone picks them up and their stings are no more dangerous to humans than a wasp's.



Common Wasp 10-18mm



Hornet 20-30mm

Prevent insect bites and stings

There are some simple precautions you can take to reduce your risk of being bitten or stung by insects.

- Remain calm and move away slowly if you encounter wasps, hornets or bees – don't wave your arms around or swat at them.
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long sleeves and trousers.
- Wear shoes when outdoors.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin – repellents that contain 50% DEET (diethyltoluamide) are most effective.
- Avoid using products with strong perfumes, such as soaps, shampoos and deodorants – these can attract insects.
- Be careful around flowering plants, rubbish, compost, stagnant water, and in outdoor areas where food is served.

What to do if you've been bitten or stung

- Remove the sting if it's still in the skin.
- Wash the affected area with soap and water.
- Apply a cold compress (such as a flannel or cloth cooled with cold water) or an ice pack to any swelling for at least 10 minutes.
- Raise or elevate the affected area if possible, as this can help reduce swelling.
- Avoid scratching the area, to reduce the risk of infection.
- Avoid traditional home remedies, such as vinegar and bicarbonate of soda, as they're unlikely to help.

When to get medical advice

Contact your GP or call [NHS 111](https://www.nhs.uk) for advice if:

- you're worried about a bite or sting
- your symptoms don't start to improve within a few days or are getting worse
- you've been stung or bitten in your mouth or throat, or near your eyes
- a large area (around 10cm or more) around the bite becomes red and swollen
- you have symptoms of a wound infection, such as pus or increasing pain, swelling or redness
- you have symptoms of a more widespread infection, such as a fever, swollen glands and other flu-like symptoms

When to get emergency medical help

Dial 999 for an ambulance immediately if you or someone else has symptoms of a severe reaction, such as:

- wheezing or difficulty breathing

- a swollen face, mouth or throat
- nausea or vomiting
- a fast heart rate
- dizziness or feeling faint
- difficulty swallowing
- loss of consciousness

Emergency treatment in hospital is needed in these cases

If an anaphylaxis action plan has been established and an Epipen is available, don't wait; inject it. The less time wasted, the better.

REMEMBER THE MEDIA

They love to headline scare stories such as 'Killer bees swarm to the UK' 'Giant Hornets attack' 'People killed by hornet stings'

While stings may be painful it is those who are at risk from anaphylactic shock who are most in danger as they are from stings of our ordinary wasps, & bees.

Don't let the media scare you into swiping at any wasp, bee or hornet, just remain calm as you will only antagonise them and they will believe their nests are in danger from you.

AND FINALLY, FOLKS

Please don't forget to have a go at the Animalagrams available in the office. It is only anagrams with a wildlife twist. Each one has a clue to help you. All proceeds go to our chosen wildlife charities. If you are struggling never mind put it in anyway even if you have not completed them all. Here's one to get you started.

GROWLED ALONE Clue - night time bird

Answer LONG EARED OWL

Good luck everyone, it's not that hard, honestly.

LATEST NEWS

Baby birds galore, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Pied Wagtails, Blackbirds, Coots to name just a few.

Blackbirds seen nesting again. They can have many broods in a year.

Possible Green Hairstreak butterfly seen close to pedestrian gate by FB1. 24.06.18

Hedgehog had visited the Elsan by FB2 and left a little 'calling card' 26.06.18