

Beacon Hill LNR

Newsletter No 21

Autumn 2017

Note on Beacon Hill Birds, August-October 2017

21 Aug A pleasing variety of birds around on Steven's visit today. Along the western edge were 6 Whitethroat, 2 Wheatear and a Reed Warbler. Another Wheatear was on the Blind Veteran's fence, and a further 3 on the Hill. More Whitethroats were along the woodland edge as well as a Chiffchaff. A Sparrowhawk was noted and overflying were 40 House Martin, 3 Pied Wagtail, a Swallow and Linnets.

27 Aug A couple of Stock Dove were seen around the horse paddocks.

31 Aug Two Wheatears were near the dewpond this morning - report from Jay.

16 Sep A steady mixed passage of Swallow and House Martin at around midday numbering in excess of 150. At least one Sand Martin was with them. Other migrants in South Wood and the old allotments were 5 Chiffchaff and a Blackcap. Three Buzzards soared over.

18 Sep Hundreds of House Martins today on Steven's visit, with a few Swallows with them. Also noted were a Grey Wagtail over, 2 Blackcap and 3 Whitethroat.



Female Blackcap (SM)

21 Sep Bob reported a steady movement of Swallows heading to warmer climes, probably in excess of 100.

25 Sep A Spotted Flycatcher was in South Wood.

28 Sep Along the edge of the woodland at least 3 Chiffchaff, a Blackcap and a Firecrest heard. A few Meadow Pipits flew overhead.

13 Oct While helping to move the sheep, Jay found the feather below. It was later identified as being from the flank of a Red-legged Partridge, a bird which has rarely been reported on the reserve. He also noted 19 Skylark and 5 Swallow.



The feather



Illustration of the bird

14 Oct Jay reported another small movement of Swallow this morning. At midday Goldfinches and Skylarks were seen near the Hub.

15 Oct Andrew confirmed 2 Firecrests in the woods on a brief visit today. Steven found them still around the following day.

22 Oct Steven commented on a good number of Goldcrests today. Also noted 5 Chiffchaff, 2 Jays and a male Blackcap.

Butterflies & Miscellaneous

Belated news of some moth trapping by Jack Kellett in June - the most significant was a Nationally Scarce B species, a Kent Black Arches. Others included Shaded Pug, Ghost Moth, Common Swift, Reddish Light Arches and Large Yellow Underwing. There were also five species with latin names.

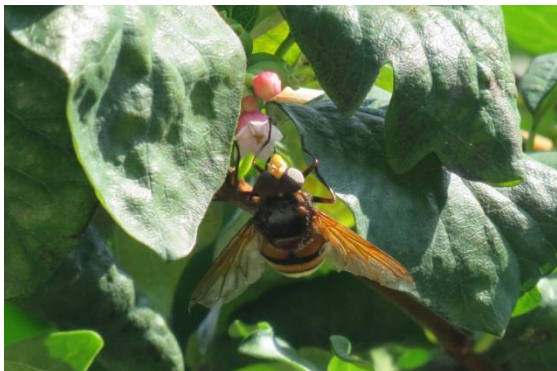


Kent Black Arches

15 Aug Angela spotted a Clouded Yellow.

21 Aug Moth species noted today were Common Carpet, Silver Y and Yellow Belle - thanks to Steven for the sightings.

27 Aug Two of Britain's largest hoverflies, *Volucella zonaria* were buzzing around the Snowberry beside Hog Plat allotments.



Volucella zonaria

28 Aug A pleasant surprise with the butterfly count after expecting a downturn - much higher than last week. The total of 97 included the second highest count of 51 Small Heath; others were 13 Common Blue, 24 Small White, 2 each Large White and Speckled Wood, 3 Meadow Brown and single Small Copper and Peacock. Two Wood Carpet day-flying moths were seen, also a Ruby Tiger caterpillar. The large patch of Hop in the old allotments were showing many flowers:



Of interest is a recent vintage postcard purchase showing a general view of Rottingdean and the allotments, taken from Beacon Hill:



29 Aug Jay saw some Small Coppers to the SE of the reserve this morning. Here is one of his photos:



31 Aug Having done over 20 walks around the Hill for my transect counts and not one Painted Lady seen this year, it was a surprise for Jay to see one this morning. Elsewhere the species has been reported liberally but on the coast they seem to have been rather scarce this summer. Later a Humming-bird Hawkmoth was seen.

9 Sep There was the expected downturn of butterfly numbers today with just a 31 total. The 16 Small Heaths pushed the overall year total to over 300 easily exceeding the previous high. This was one of the few success stories this year. A **Red-legged Shieldbug** was new to me and new to the Reserve:



16 Sep With more cloud than sun, but in less windy conditions than of late, the butterfly count today was 14 Small White, 5 Small Heath and 4 Red Admiral. A couple of dragonflies noted were probably Migrant Hawkers.

18 Sep A Yellow Belle noted today by Steven:



28 Sep My last transect count of the year and in spite of a bit of Autumn warmth there were very few butterflies around. The total was 2 each Common Blue and Red Admiral, and a Large White which could conceivably have come in off the sea.

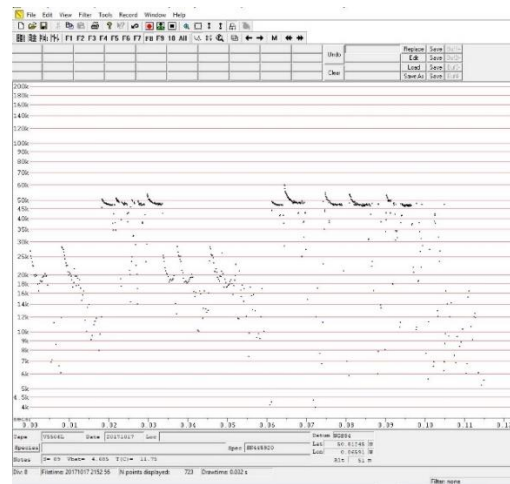


Common Blue

30 Sep Libby was very pleased to view a Clouded Yellow on the Hill today.

13 Oct Three Red Admirals seen by Jay this morning.

13-18 Oct Jack Kellett borrowed two sonogram detectors and positioned one on the edge of North Wood and the other near the slope between the woods. Common Pipistrelles and a Noctule Bat were identified, with a third species still to be ascertained. The sonogram of Common Pipistrelle is show below:



27 Oct A brief visit for coffee at the Hub and noted a few Red Admirals still on the wing.

Summarising the performances of butterflies throughout the year, the highlight was undoubtedly the success of Small Heath with a record count. Also in good numbers were Common Blue, but Marbled White and Large White had dismal showings. The overall total showed an increase over the last two years. My counts are weekly from April right through to the end of September and missing very few owing to unsuitable weather or holidays. As instructed by UK Butterflies they follow a set route with no deviations. Here are the year totals of my transect counts with recent year's comparisons:

	2017	2016	2015
Meadow Brown	444	454	353
Small Heath	314	82	66
Common Blue	189	51	145
Marbled White	111	150	149
Gatekeeper	81	80	134
Small White	80	123	100
Small/Essex Skipper	58	64	78
Red Admiral	11	16	8
Large White	10	31	51
Small Tortoiseshell	8	6	19
Holly Blue	7	15	7
Large Skipper	6	7	9
Peacock	6	3	6
Dark Green Fritillary	6	0	5
Speckled Wood	6	5	9
Small Copper	4	1	0
Clouded Yellow	2	0	3
Comma	2	1	1
Green veined White	1	7	0
Brown Argus	0	2	1
Painted Lady	0	0	4
Wall	0	0	2
Totals	1346	1078	1153

These Notes compiled by Peter Whitcomb with grateful thanks to all contributors - Jay Butler, Libby Darling, Jack Kellett, Steven Munday, Angela Swinn, Bob Webzell and Andrew Whitcomb.