

Beacon Hill LNR

Newsletter No 19

Spring 2017

Note on Beacon Hill Birds, March - May 2017

Belated news of a Firecrest seen in the woods on a couple of visits during Feb/Mar by Steven Munday. Britain's smallest and one of the prettiest UK birds, and difficult to photograph, but here is Steven's best shot:



26 Mar Cliff's walk this morning produced a pair of Buzzard, a Sparrowhawk and a singing Chiffchaff. A dozen Meadow Pipits were likely migrants.

27 Mar My first singing Blackcap of the year on the edge of South Wood and further in a Chiffchaff singing his familiar song. Other birds noted included a pair of Long tailed Tit, an overhead Peregrine and three views of Buzzard. Of interest were two Meadow Pipits singing and parachuting with another 10 passage birds in off the sea.



Meadow Pipit on old pitch & putt course

31 Mar An afternoon visit produced a singing Blackcap, Long tailed Tits and one of the local Buzzards. A Great spotted Woodpecker was seen in North Wood.

2 Apr Andrew had a singing Yellowhammer in the west slope scrub this afternoon, surprisingly the first record for the Reserve.

6 Apr A pleasant warm day brought reports of incoming Swallows and House Martins. Bob also had 3 Willow Warblers seeking insects in the blossom at the top of Hog Plat, and Jay saw 2 Jays in North Wood. Steven added 3 more Willow Warblers, a few Chiffchaffs and a Raven over heading east.

7 Apr My walk round produced a Long tailed Tit carrying a feather to line its nest, a pair of Goldfinch and singing migrant species included 2 Willow Warblers and a Blackcap. A single Swallow flew swiftly northwards.

10 Apr A Wheatear was reported on the old pitch & putt course.

11 Apr The first 3 Whitethroats were seen this morning on Steven's walk round. Also noted were 3 Blackcap, 3 Chiffchaff and a Willow Warbler. The pair of Jays were seen again, and the local Buzzards also. A lone Swallow headed north.



Female Blackcap (SM)



Buzzard (SM)

17 Apr From Ovingdean churchyard I watched 2 Ravens overhead and heading SE and over Beacon Hill.

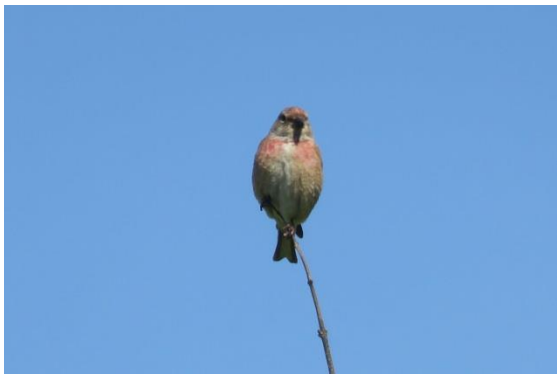
28 Apr Steven's visit produced a fine male Whinchat which is an infrequent spring migrant passing through. Singing warblers were noted and the residents such as Stock Dove, Long tailed Tit,

Jay and Buzzard seen. A Grey Heron headed inland from the rocks. A Great spotted Woodpecker was also seen. Meadow Pipits joined Skylarks over the hill and surrounding area.



Whinchat (SM)

29 Apr Some welcome warmth today after a period of cold weather. There were encouraging signs of breeding warblers with 3 singing male Whitethroats along the allotments/woodland edge and another 2 along the west slope scrub. Also noted were 2 each Blackcap and Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, a pair of Linnet, up to a dozen hawking Swallows and a Meadow Pipit on the old pitch & putt course. The distinctive call of a passing Mediterranean Gull was heard off the coast.



Cock Linnet

30 Apr Cliff reported 5 Whitethroat, 2 Swallow, a Wheatear and a possible Reed Warbler.

4 May Steven had a good bird this morning - a **Whimbrel** which stayed in the long grass for enough time for a photo. Previous records have been as fly-overs. He also noted 13 Swift, 2 House Martin and numerous Swallows. A Grey Heron flew over. Teenie Connolly also reported a Swift today.



Whimbrel (SM)

5 May Cliff saw a **Hobby** on his walk round today.

6 May Just four people attended the Bird Walkabout this morning. The wind probably reduced the chances of too many sightings, but plenty of species were seen and heard including Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, Whitethroats and Stock Doves. Earlier I had more luck with the birds with a singing Sedge Warbler and Willow Warbler, plus a Buzzard from South Wood.

9 May Jay watched 2 Sand Martins across the north end of the Hill today.

25 May At least two Blackcap and Whitethroats singing this morning, and also 2 Meadow Pipits. Of interest there were 2 Skylarks singing from the grazed area. Later a Sparrowhawk sped north over the allotments.

28 May Two additional Whitethroats on territory making a total of at least six pairs nesting. Many young Starlings seen feeding.

30 May Following the sighting of 2 Buzzards nearby, Bob had a **Red Kite** drifting over to the west.

4 Jun Jay saw 3 Greater black-backed Gulls along the western edge of the Hill today.

5 Jun Highlight of a morning's walk with Libby was a **Hobby** flying through low over towards the Blind Veteran's. A few Skylarks singing, and dozens of Starlings were feeding over the southern stretches.

Thanks to Jay Butler, Teenie Connolly, Libby Darling, Steven Munday, Cliff Nankervill, Bob Webzell, Andrew Whitcomb; compiled by Peter Whitcomb.

Butterflies and Miscellaneous

27 Mar Considering we are still in March there were a dozen butterflies counted on my usual transect route. This is easily the highest pre-April count ever here. Totals were 8 Small Tortoiseshell, 2 each Comma and Peacock. Honey and Bumble Bees were also noted. This spell of sunshine has brought out a few Cowslips and Blackthorn has just started to show.



Dog Violets on east facing slope

31 Mar No butterflies this afternoon but a *Eupeodes luniger* hoverfly was noted, and down in the horse paddocks a fine clump of Egghead Mottlegill fungi:



6 Apr Steven's butterfly counts were singles of Brimstone, Peacock and a Speckled Wood, the latter along the western edge.



Brimstone (SM)

7 Apr My weekly butterfly count was somewhat disappointing compared to higher numbers over a week ago: Singles of Speckled Wood, Peacock and Small White. Cow Parsley and Green Alkanet beginning to flower now.

8 Apr Libby spotted 2 Speckled Wood and a Peacock today. This photo of a Speckled Wood, seen in North Wood today:



Speckled Wood (LD)

28 Apr Steven found a few hoverflies, and this micro moth *Incurvaria masculella*:



29 Apr My first visit for a while so many plants now flowering including Apple, Wild Pear, Field Buttercup, Ground Ivy and that awful 'weed' Hoary Cress which seems to be spreading from the coast road verges. The butterfly count was 3 Small White and 5 Holly Blue - all along the eastern side.

2 May Libby spotted a Peacock flitting between the Cowslips today.

5 May The intended date for sheep to be re-introduced as an experiment to keep the early growth of Ragwort down. However the fences were put up but the 50 sheep will follow on a later date.

6 May The strong winds reduced the chances of butterflies as it warmed up late morning, but a couple of Holly Blues and a Small White were seen. Silverweed was beginning to flower. It was with some concern to see the spread of non-native Spanish Bluebells on the reserve.

25 May A hot day with an easterly breeze, and a really good butterfly count for the time of the

year. The totals were: 18 Common Blue, 12 Small Heath, 2 Small White and single Red Admiral, Green-veined White, Speckled Wood and Holly Blue. Meadow Vetchling and Greater Knapweed just beginning to flower. Also noted were Salad Burnet and Sainfoin - the latter showing well along the west facing slope:



Small Heath

28 May Another warm day although the sunshine was mostly hazy. Small Heaths were abundant in all sections, totalling 26. Others were 12 Common Blue, 2 Small White and single Speckled Wood and my first Meadow Brown of the year. This is actually the earliest recorded date here, and may well be the earliest date in Sussex so far this year. Steven and Tim were also in the area this afternoon and their sighting of 2 **Small Blue** were the first since 2010. They also spotted a number of moths including **Orange Conch**, Grass Rivulets, Meadow Greys, Cinerous Pearl, Common Carpet and Hook-marked Straw. A Garden Tiger caterpillar was found in the old allotments area. Two non-flowering Twayblade orchids were found in South Wood and a group of Common Spotted Orchids were in the usual spot.



Small Blue (SM)



Orange Conch on Yellow Rattle (SM)

4 Jun Libby reported a good number of butterflies around the Hill today including 12+ Common Blues and 6 Small Heath. Earlier there was a possible sighting of a very early Dark Green Fritillary.

5 Jun A walk around the area with Libby this morning but with very strong SW winds the numbers of butterflies were low. The totals were: 14 Common Blue, 13 Small Heath, 3 Meadow Brown and the first Cinnabar of the year. A really good selection of wild flowers seen including Pyramidal Orchid, Field Scabious, Goatsbeard, Salsify and one hybrid, Houndstongue, Sea Beet, Silverweed, Dog Rose and Knotted Hedge Parsley.



Houndstongue