

Beacon Hill LNR

Newsletter No 28

Summer 2019

Note on Beacon Hill Birds June-Aug 2019

Jun 3 Louise spotted a Whitethroat and a pair of Linnets over towards Blind Veterans.

Jun 14 There were good numbers of Starlings and House Sparrows feeding on the Reserve. With the sheep gone it was interesting to count singing Skylarks - a minimum of 5 but just as many were seen and probably now on their second brood. Goldfinches and a Buzzard were also noted.

Jun 22 A couple of Whitethroats along the western edge seeking insects.



Skylark

July 5 Three rather noisy Greater black backed Gulls flew south over the reserve. It has been very difficult to prove suspected breeding in the area. Small numbers of Swallows and Swifts were also seen.

July 6 An overflying Whimbrel was heard calling but not seen.

July 11 At least 2 Sand Martins were flying with a handful of Swallows this afternoon.

July 17 A Greater black backed Gull was flying along the clifftops. A handful of Swallows and Swifts were also seen on the school walk-about.

July 26 Dozens of Swallows today hawking low over the hillside. A flock of 60+ Starlings flying through and a hovering Kestrel seen. Of interest was a Meadow Pipit which may indicate local breeding.

Aug 3 A charm of about 30 Goldfinches were feeding over towards the western slopes.

Aug 22 Goldfinches were still present and a hunting Kestrel seen. A Whimbrel was heard calling overhead but could not be seen.

There were no reports of Autumn passage. My own visits were curtailed through circumstances.

Butterflies & Miscellaneous

Jun 10 Libby reported good numbers of Pyramidal Orchids along the west slope, in excess of 30 with many only just showing.

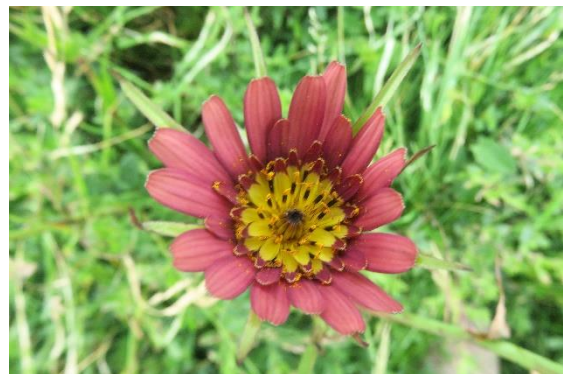
Jun 14 Yet again it was in rather windy conditions that I chose to walk my butterfly transect after days of unsuitable weather. The totals were poor for the time of year: 13 Small Heath, 10 Meadow Brown, 7 Common Blue and singles of Small White and Green veined White. Botanically it was interesting with Lucerne in with Common Poppies along the western fenceline. A single plant of Common Broomrape was the first to be recorded here, although they have been present on the adjoining allotments. They are a saprophytic plant feeding off clovers. Hedge Bedstraw is getting abundant and other plants were Bastard Toadflax and Small Scabious. At least five of the hybrids between Salsify and Goatsbeard were south of the windmill.



Pyramidal Orchid



Common Broomrape



Salsify/Goatsbeard hybrid

Jun 17 Jay spotted a Brimstone up in the NE corner of the reserve.

Jun 18 The first Painted Lady of the year was seen here by Libby. It is interesting to note that a mini-influx occurred recently along the east coast of Yorkshire and further north with probable wind conditions making them scarce further south.

Jun 21 Libby did a count of butterflies around the Reserve today - 20 Meadow Brown, 12 Small Heath, 7 Common Blue and single Marbled White.

Jun 22 The second day of Summer produced in excess of 100 butterflies on my count. The totals were 50 Meadow Brown, 35 Small Heath, 12 Marbled White, 2 each Large Skipper and Common Blue and singles of Green veined and Large White. Also noted were my first Round headed Rampions of the year, Lady's Bedstraw, Rest Harrow and Field Scabious, and a white form of Knapweed.



Round headed Rampion Greater Knapweed

Jun 24 Another butterfly count from Libby with 3 Painted Ladies, 30 Marbled White, 37 Meadow Brown, 15 Small Heath and 2 Ringlet. Well spotted Libby as the two Ringlets were the first since 2015.



Ringlet by Libby

Jun 28 A mini-heatwave certainly brought out the butterflies today and could have been even more had the wind been a little less strong. Twelve species totalling exactly 200: 83 Meadow Brown, 43 Marbled White, 37 Small Heath, 17 Painted Lady, 5 Small White, 4 Small Skipper, 3 each Ringlet and Dark Green Fritillary, 2 Common Blue and single Large Skipper, Large White and Red Admiral. Cinnabar and Hummingbird Hawkmoth also noted. Creeping Thistle joined Knapweed for nectar plants for butterflies. Plants now in flower included Meadow Vetchling, Black Horehound and Hogweed.



A rather worn Painted Lady

July 2 The Painted Ladies have started to disperse now as Libby only accounted for 1 this morning. Her other counts were 58 Marbled White, 38 Meadow Brown, 9 Small Skipper, 4 Small Heath, and 3 Dark Green Fritillary.

July 5 With little sun but humid and warm conditions there was another decent butterfly count this afternoon. The total was 230 consisting of 81 Marbled White, 70 Meadow Brown, 20 Small Skipper, 19 Small Heath, 17 Gatekeeper, 15 Small White, 4 Ringlet, and single Painted Lady, Brown Argus, Dark Green Fritillary and Common Blue. New plants in flower were Common Toadflax, Rock Sea-lavender, Spear Thistle, Stemless Thistle and Woody Nightshade.



Further colour variations of Greater Knapweed



Male Gatekeeper

July 6 Jay spotted a Weasel this morning.



The new Hog Plat sign

July 9 The first of the Fauna and Flora school trips was with St Margaret's. The colourful reserve was seen at its best with the yellows of Lady's Bedstraw, whites of Wild Carrot and Yarrow, the pink of Rest Harrow and the purple of Knapweeds. Dozens of Marbled White seen. Groups were split into three and it was pleasing that one young lady could identify from what species a feather came from. Afterwards they were given a tour of the Windmill.



July 11 Another nice warm afternoon, but the numbers of butterfly already seem to be on the decline with Gatekeeper being the only positive. The total was 177 consisting of: 55 Meadow Brown, 44 Gatekeeper, 32 Marbled White, 20 Small Skipper, 10 Small Heath, 8 Small White, 4 Large White, 3 Ringlet and a Red Admiral. I recently discovered there were more than two colour variations of Field Bindweed so on my walk round I noted four but will keep a look out for more on future occasions:



July 17 The second school walk-about with Our Lady of Lourdes took place late morning. The three groups saw a good number of butterflies, including Ringlet, Marbled White, Small Skipper and Gatekeeper. The children were pleased to find the yellow and black caterpillars of the Cinnabar moth on some Ragwort that the volunteers hadn't pulled. They were also shown Round headed Rampion, the Pride of Sussex - and the pride of Beacon Hill LNR! All in all they enjoyed the nature and the sunshine.

I did note the disappearance of Hemp Agrimony near the entrance to the allotments. This plant is an important one for butterflies and insects to nectar on in August and was coming in to flower when I last checked, so I am therefore sorry to see its absence.

July 24 An earlier start than normal as the forecast of high temperatures was a bit of an experiment. A slight downturn, with no Marbled Whites, but pleased with 3 Wall and 2 Dark Green Fritillary. Gatekeepers came out on top with 84, followed by 25 Meadow Brown, 10 each Large White and Small Heath. Others were 6 Small Skipper, 5 Small White, 2 Red Admiral and single Common Blue and Ringlet. Flowers noted were Squinancywort and Bastard Toadflax (short diversion to check the old dewpond) plus Melilot, Burnet Saxifrage, Marjoram and St John's Wort.



A rather worn Dark Green Fritillary



Wall Brown

25 July A sighting picked up on the Big Butterfly Count's website was for 20 Six-spot Burnet, 9 Gatekeeper, 4 Small White and 3 Meadow Brown.

26 July Unfortunately it has become a regular occurrence when the weather conditions change between leaving my home and arriving at the Hill. Today was no exception and although relatively warm, there was a strong breeze and little sunshine. The butterfly count was just over the 100 mark with 62 Gatekeepers predominating. It was a pleasure to see second brood fresh Common Blues, but a massive downturn in Meadow Brown and Marbled White. It was other sightings which prove that there is always the possibility of seeing something of interest here on our wonderful reserve. The first seasonal sighting of a Wasp Spider, a very small one beside a very small web; one of the UK's largest hoverflies - *Volucella inanis*; Wild Basil - a new plant which hasn't been recorded here before; a new species of moth - **Sulphur Pearl**; a fasciated Ragwort; and a handful of Six-spot Burnets.



Volucella inanis



Sulphur Pearl

27 July On Jay's walk this morning he spotted a Wall and 2 Common Blues.

3 Aug It was good to see an increase in numbers of Painted Lady, Common Blue and Small Heath with their second flights now emerging. The full list was as follows: 27 Meadow Brown, 19 Common Blue, 16 Small Heath, 15 Gatekeeper, 10 Small White, 6 Painted Lady, 5 Wall including a mating pair, and single Small Skipper, Red Admiral, Comma and Speckled Wood. The total was 102. The euonymus bushes alongside Blind Veterans were smothered in various species of hoverfly.



Small Heath

5 Aug Libby reported up to 3 Common Blues and 15 Gatekeeper, as well as single Painted Lady and Dark Green Fritillary.

20 Aug Jason saw 6 Painted Ladies on his walk this morning, plus a young Common Lizard. During the last fortnight there has been a mini-influx of Painted Ladies to the South, with even greater numbers further north spreading in to Scotland.

22 Aug An enforced gap in my coverage meant me missing a couple of weeks but today was another chance to check on the blue butterfly situation here on Beacon Hill. August is the second flight time for Common Blue, and there is always a faint chance of a Chalk Hill or Adonis Blue. The sun shone but only 2 male Common Blues counted. The total was 61 with 26 Small Heath and 21 Meadow Brown predominating. A poor total as there is already a lack of nectar plants around the reserve. However, it was pleasing to catch sight of a Wall and a Small Copper.

I regret a recent lack of visits owing to circumstances.

Thanks for contributions from Louise Arnold, Jay Butler, Libby Darling, Jason Fisher and Bob Webzell.

Nature Notes compiled by Peter Whitcomb.