



Sutton Poyntz Biodiversity News



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September 2019 Garden Bird Watch this month 22nd – 28th September

Just twelve reports from members this month, due to holidays and a not very busy bird season. Martins and swallows were still assembling on wires on Plaisters Lane during week ending September 14th although the occasional swallow was around at Lyme Regis on Tuesday 17th. In addition, the report from the Puddledocks of grey wagtail, I did hear of another sighting off Sutton Road. Jon and Sue have kindly sent me their records from Wessex Water land for August and September with no records of yellowhammer or skylark from West Hill but linnets gathering for the pre-winter migration. Jon and Sue also took me up the Waterworks hill on Sunday 18th August where they reported a hobby although even with their good binoculars, it was a mystery to me.

Back to garden birdwatch, there is evidence now from the British Trust for Ornithology of the benefits of householders feeding birds. I rarely do; due to the bullying effect of carrion crows and rooks raiding the feeders to the detriment of small birds, although many of you do quite successfully. So, evidence of success, here is twelve out of twelve people reported house sparrow but only ten reported blackbird, whilst nine reported robin and dunnock. Dave once again was the only person with nuthatch and I suspect that six siskin should have been entered on the line above.

Butterflies and moths:



Elephant hawk-moth caterpillar

My attention was drawn to the larvae illustrated on fuchsia planted outside one of the cottages by the mill pond. The adult is common enough in our moth traps, in late May and June whilst the larvae feed also on enchanter's nightshade, greater hairy-willow-herb common enough in the waterworks wet areas and rosebay, which is uncommon here.

Rita and Colin have started to report autumn moths from their moth trap with dusky thorn, square spot-rustic and pale mottled willow. Humming-bird hawk-moth has visited my garden whilst Dorothy had two oak eggars. The last Jersey tiger was seen in late August by Shirley.

Jon reported a last Adonis blue on the hill last week, other butterflies have included: brimstone, red admiral, common blue, painted lady, small tortoiseshell and peacock.

During the third week of August, following some rain, I stopped by the entrance to a house on Plaisters Lane to look at the front lawn. The first eleven spikes of autumn lady's-tresses were in flower. One of the last flowering of UK's sixty or so orchids, this time flowering spike may be only two- or three-inches high growing from a tuber. As you can see, the flower illustrated is spiralling clock-wise but the flowers may spiral anti-clockwise. One local orchid expert speculated that different genes were responsible then on the Golden Cap Estate, where there are upwards of 10,000 flowering spikes in some 30 fields he found plants with multiple flowering stems from a single tuber with both clock-wise and anti-clockwise stems. Although noted by several authors, nobody has a clue why with theories around pollination strategy for different insects. However, we rarely see an insect pollinating.

Winter reading?



Autumn lady'-tresses on Plaisters Lane.

Finally, a note on August winds. There has been some considerable damage done to trees across the area. I gather that some conifers on Sutton Road have been condemned and will be felled. However, whilst out and about in the Dorset countryside, trees exposed to sea winds, especially ash seem to have lost their leaves on the exposed side but have a full crop of leaves on the sheltered side. The persistent question asked "is this ash die-back?" The answer is no. We look at the condition of the buds on young shoots.

However, ash is susceptible to honey fungus with some taken down in our neighbour's garden for this reason. In other instances, the loss of leaves at this time of the year can be due to lack of water, especially on higher ground. Another problem is ash "canker". You are **likely** to see a swelling on the trunk – a gall containing a virus, which will ultimately kill a tree.