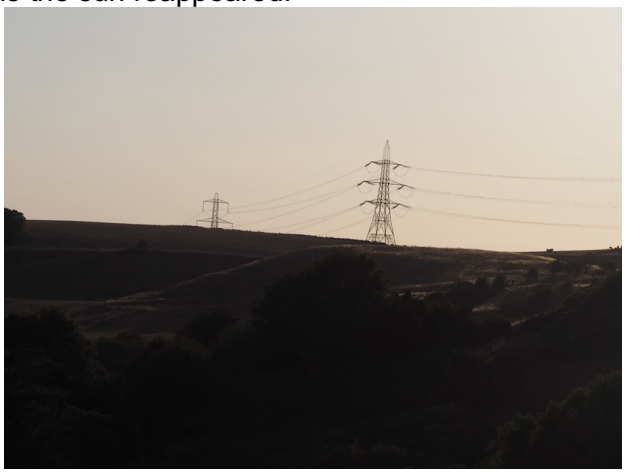
Garden Bird Watch runs from 23rd to 29th August (if away do before or after)

The Eclipse:

My family managed to drag me up West Hill to the Beacon for around 7:00pm. The eclipse was scheduled for 7:15pm. They were armed with cullenders and white paper with such simple tools we watched the moon go over the face of the sun. Maybe my eyes are getting less responsive and of course, we were on a different trajectory but it did not go dark as in August 1999 when we watched it from the valley bottom. The birds must have suspected something as there was no bird song before or after. (Was this caused by my hearing aids being not turned up enough.). In 1999 everything went totally quiet a few minutes before the total eclipse and then a repeat dawn chorus as the sun reappeared.



7:15pm

7:20pm

Technology proved the answer using my SLR – it did happen. One member of the public had a pair of special glasses, so I did get a look of the sun emerging from the moon's shadow. Thank you!

West Hill is in a fragile state. Tinder box dry with a single discarded cigarette end meaning there will be a gigantic fire, with the potential to spread east towards Osmington. Very few herbs in flower, those surviving are the tough course ones such as yarrow and bristly ox-tongue. Bird's-foot trefoil at the track side was virtually burnt out with a very occasional minute yellow flower present.

However, as I write the weather seems to be changing. I am getting up to dull overcast mornings with a reasonable temperature. Then around 10:00am the sun reappears, the temperature goes up and I cannot cope with outside. The lavender in my garden is usually still in flower now hosting many bees, butterflies, hoverflies etc. That is now over so few invertebrates with both green veined white and small white being the most common butterflies in my garden. However, watch

out for clouded yellow as there seems to be a few of these emigrant butterflies about. Migrant hawkers are patrolling in my garden in small numbers despite no pond.

I am still looking at wild roses:

Sweet Briar

Rosa rubinignosa

My technique is to collect the fruits, checking the bush to see if the sepals are dropping off (as here) or remaining. Either an *in-situ* photograph or a sample taken (as here). I find. A good quality photograph saves messing about with a magnifying glass especially when viewed on a desk-top monitor. Are there glandular hairs or simple hairs? If so where? on the leaves, the pedicels (stem) or the sepals if remaining?

I work out my answer using the new Botanical Society *Handbook.* Note the record including its location in iRecord (www.brc.ac.uk/iRecord) add the photographs to the record, which interrogates the huge data base of records with pictures held by iRecord and suggests you have it right or you have got it wrong but look at these suggestions. If one agrees with the suggestion, leave the record alone, amend, otherwise I delete it. In science we require the correct answer.

Garden Bird Watch and small animals.

Maureen from Sutton Road sent this image of a fox in her garden. Other mammals include a roe deer by Sutton Farm and a number of grey squirrels including a pair of young together.

It is always a quiet time of the year July and August. The swifts disappeared during the last week of July with three proven nesting places. The star for me and possibly Penny has been a grey wagtail, which sauntered up my garage roof, whilst I sat quietly in my porch.

Only ten people sent lists, which I am disappointed about. Whilst I prefer excel, please use the red form accompanying the *Newsletter* as it allows me to drop the results directly into my master spreadsheet. House sparrows seem to have favourite locations *e.g.* between the Puddledocks and Cob Cottage, west end of Verlands around Fox Cottage and in Preston and the junction of Telford Close and Stanier Road where there are around 30.