

Warwick Natural History Society

Snippets

No. 156

9th July 2026

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We've had quite an interesting time this Spring with activity in our pond. When we installed it in 2023 we didn't quite expect that we'd have to wait till 2026 to see the results of the visits from a variety of dragonflies.

We'd seen a few nymphs in the water and when accidentally netted when clearing blanket weed.



Then this larvae crawled out of the pond and up an iris leaf. It was about 5 or 6cm long



and a dragonfly started to emerge.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to photograph it when the wings were fully inflated before it had flown off.

I believe it is a female Emperor dragonfly. We found 10 or 12 of their exoskeletons on the irises but the rest of them had emerged and flown away without us seeing it happen.



We did however find the exoskeleton of a Four-spotted Chaser. This one was only about 3cm long and it had already emerged. Unfortunately, one of its forewings didn't develop properly. How did it ever fit into a 30mm exoskeleton?



17th June ID

We've had a fairly resident male Broad-bodied Chaser, together with intermittent visits from a female who also laid some eggs.

I didn't realise that the life cycle of a dragonfly was often about 2 years between egg laying and emerging and that as a nymph it could have up to 20 changes of its exoskeleton.



On our recent visit to Yorkshire, it was lovely to hear the sound of curlews flying overhead on the moors with their haunting call and unmistakable curved beak. One pair were very insistent that we move on and we realised why when we saw this tiny chick hunkering down in a nearby wall.

19th June LW

Visit to Ryton Country Park – 18th June

Ben Coleman, WWT ranger at Ryton Country Park, once again gave us an excellent talk on moths and produced some large specimens caught in moth traps for us to see close-up



several splendid pink and gold Elephant hawk moths;

and one of the UK's largest – a Privet hawk moth with beautiful black and pink markings;



an Eyed moth with its dark camouflage and a Buff Tip moth that looks just like a birch twig, plus several micro moths and one with stripey body that looks like a wasp – a Clearwing moth.



Once the moths were released, we had a guided walk around the lovely central flower meadow where specimens included Oxe eye daisies, pink Grass vetchlings, Birds foot trefoil, and Lesser stitchwort. Butterflies were elusive but there were plenty of Blue Damsel flies.



On the Pirate path we saw some Bee orchids nestling by the path.

It was a lovely sunny afternoon for a nature lesson in green pastures our thanks to Ben and his team who pointed out items of interest to our group.
23rd June FW

(Thanks to members for all their photographs!)

Rick's Bird count was limited with not many in song – 15 in all:

Blackbird, robin, magpie, crow, long-tailed tit, lesser black-backed gull, wood pigeon, feral pigeon, swift, dunnock, stock dove, whitethroat, herring gull, wren, goldfinch.

An unusual visitor to Little Shrewley on the 20th June, seen walking up the lane with her chicks ... a Red-legged partridge.

*They are reluctant to take to the air when disturbed and are often seen scurrying comically along the ground. They are a widespread and common gamebird introduced from continental Europe in the 17th century and released annually for shooting. This one had obviously escaped!
(photo by my neighbour)*



We have a small waterfall going into the garden pond and in the current hot weather, entertainment is provided by watching the birds cooling down in the water. The blackbirds enter the water fully and have a good splash around. However, the sparrows and tits perch daintily on the edge in the flowing water, drinking and having a bit of a shower! The young robins are a delight hopping in and out of the water. We've had 5 or 6 birds at a time, lining up for their turn and then drying off at the side! They seem to prefer it to the bird bath.

23rd June LW



I was suddenly confronted by a multi-headed monster in the garden: a foxglove with seven branching flower stalks! Apparently it's a horticultural variety, specially cultivated to produce a large floral display, so it must have hopped over the wall from one of my neighbours.

I've never seen anything like it in the wild.

29th June MP

Just walking down the canal towpath south of Ugly Bridge I saw a red admiral, a comma, a peacock and a painted lady all settled on one (large) patch of bramble. There were also a couple of whites and a blue but they were moving too fast for my id skills!

30th June TS



Sabina will no doubt be able confirm the ID of this spider found on my garden thistle. I think it is a Flower Crab spider (*Misumena vatia*), about 1cm long and possibly a female. They are masters of camouflage and can change colour between white, pale green and yellow over several days to match the flowers where they lie in wait for their prey. They do not spin webs and are found between April and September usually in flower meadows.

2nd July LD

My moth trap has attracted bumper catches over the recent warm nights. Record numbers of Swallow-tailed moths, about the size of Brimstone butterflies, have been recorded with several settling on the vegetation around the trap.

This one found on the underside of some Japanese anemones was obviously camera shy!

2nd July LD



Half the mini meadow in the garden is full of scabious which over the last few days has attracted large numbers of bumble bees and butterflies including peacocks, painted ladies, meadow browns and all the 'whites'. Probably some of the most prolific insect attractant plants in the garden.

2nd July LD

Clouds of Peacock butterflies today on the buddleia, which is looking spectacular this year, together with a Small Copper on the daisies.

4th July LW



Epic flight of Painted Lady butterflies

Following a quiet June, July butterfly numbers will be bolstered by an influx of migrant butterflies with June heatwaves and southerly winds ushering in what is predicted to be the largest arrival of Painted Lady butterflies for nearly two decades. They head north from sub-Saharan Africa at the turn of the year and make their way across Europe during breeding cycles. Because of the mammoth distances and multitude of landscapes they cross, these butterflies are not fussy feeders and do particularly well on thistles, buddleia, bramble and bindweed.

(Daily Telegraph 4th July)

Before my small pond became covered in summer vegetation, I kept snapping away as the tadpoles developed. I was lucky to find a couple with legs and the tail still attached.

Now I'm left with the odd late developer and, one day, by a very large frog resting under a lily leaf.
6th July SG



Flight of a lifetime

The ants are flying early this year and cracks in the paving stones are disgorging swarms of winged black ants in the current hot spell. It's a wonderful phenomenon and the winged ants are either male drones (which soon die after mating) or queens that will bite their wings off after mating and start a new colony, living for perhaps 15 years and getting on busily without a fuss. The total weight of the world's thousand trillion ants is said to equal that of human beings.

(Daily Telegraph 8th July)

BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT - Friday 17th July to Sunday 9th August

Don't forget to take part in the Big Butterfly Count which is so important to monitor butterfly populations.

It was first launched in 2010 and Butterfly Conservation says that counting butterflies can be described as taking the pulse of nature. Just 15 minutes counting butterflies and dayflying moths in a sunny spot – what's not to like? You can record your sightings on the app or website:

<https://bigbutterflycount.butterfly-conservation.org/>



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