

Warwick Natural History Society

Snippets

No. 158

12th August 2026

You can follow the Society on Bluesky

<https://bsky.app/profile/warwicknathistsoc.bsky.social>

A morning walk to get the paper from the local shop through the sun-baked Shrewley prairies!

23rd July LW



Society member Graham appeared on BBC Midlands Today following the death of **Bill Oddie** on the 25th July aged 85. The anarchic comedian in The Goodies reinvented himself as Britain's best-known bird-watcher. Bill Oddie was a very keen birder and a member of the West Midlands Bird Club, of which Graham has been a long-standing member. Bill used to go to meetings and was very well liked by members. He hated being recognised and said he would far rather be remembered for introducing people to bird-watching!

(27th July)

Jephson Gardens weir shows climate change very clearly, from full floods thundering over in January and now in July Canada Geese are foraging for food on the steps in a drought.



The gardens, as ever, have beautiful floral displays, thanks to the gardeners' tender care.

One Sunday it was pleasant just to sit and watch pigeons wheeling around and families enjoying an afternoon stroll.

27th July FW

Humming Bird hawkmoth in the garden on several occasions, whizzing around the garden and feeding on trailing geraniums and salvias.

1st August LW

Warwickshire Lavender Farm at Bubbenhall

Visiting on the last summer open day, the lavender fields were full of people walking through purple vistas. There are 3 different lavender flowers and they will soon be harvested now to make oils, creams, even ice cream which was on sale. Various lavender products were in the shop.



I was delighted to see something I had never seen before, Humming Bird Hawk Moths hovering on the flowers. Their tiny wings were invisible as they kept airborne, while using their long proboscis to extract nectar. None was seen resting, an exhausting life in this heat! They migrate from North Africa and southern Europe but some live here now it's warmer. They have orange hind wings, grey brown forewings and a black and white chequered body. Caterpillars overwinter in holes and buildings, pupating in a cocoon among foliage of foodplants such as

Ladies Bedstraw. They were regarded as a lucky omen when a swarm was seen in The English Channel on the day of the Normandy landings in WW2.

There were also many Painted Ladies butterflies who also migrate from Africa but they can't survive here in winter. It has been found they fly a round trip of about 7500 miles. Some years huge numbers come here, like this year. It all depends how they have survived the winter in the vegetation of Saharan Africa.

There were lots of bumblebees on the lavender too, such as Red Tailed bumblebee and White Tailed bumblebee. So good to see so many insects all at once.

3rd August FW



Yes, we had a shower of rain - what's that, you cry?



It brought the most beautiful double rainbow to brighten us up. This is from our garden.

8th August MP

It was very hard to get a still of the Hummingbird Hawk Moth which visited us many times but we had lots of visitors to the Marjoram – I think we counted 8 Gatekeepers in the shot attached to the email.

9th August MP



Surprised to have a Clouded Yellow butterfly in the garden earlier this week. It was well disguised against the Japanese anemone leaves where it landed, wings closed and stayed for quite a while. The white spot on the underside of the wing was diagnostic.

10th August LD



Pieris brassicae caterpillars gorging on a leaf ...

It wasn't exactly what I wanted to find. This year my garden is full of Large White butterflies but the pantry is devoid of broccoli.



Not far away a Sparrow Hawk is busy eating a young blackbird.

It was indifferent to my presence and determined to finish its meal no matter how close I ventured. I couldn't help wondering how many song birds the average Sparrow Hawk accounts for in the course of a long and interesting life.



Back in the kitchen an unopened packet of tomatoes is buzzing with fruit flies. Considering how tiny the adult insects are, the larvae must be microscopic, so it's easy to see how they can slip in there unnoticed. I wonder how many gourmands realise their insalata tricolore may be fortified with Drosophila melanogaster?

Fortunately, I wasn't feeling hungry that day...

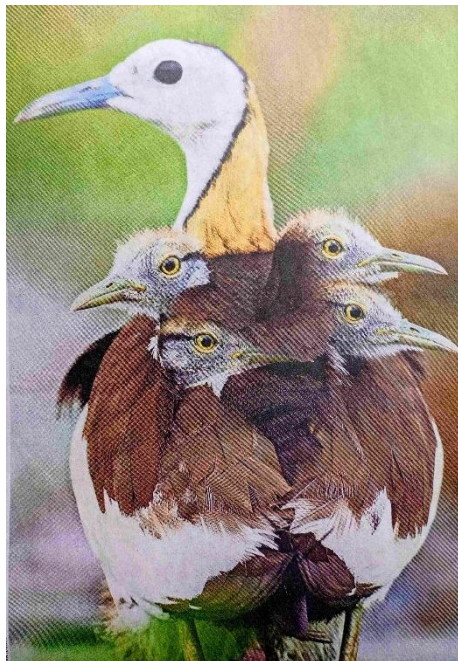
10th August MP

We found some lovely Elephant Hawkmoth larvae (green and brown forms) in the greenery over the brook in the garden.

Confirmed by David Brown – hopefully they won't get washed away when (if?) the water rises!



10th August BP



*Pheasant tailed jacana chicks peering out from the protection of their mother's wing.
(Daily Telegraph 1st August)*

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