

Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 6/9/20.

Swallows are still to be seen in our area - they are currently feeding-up in preparation for their long migration to southern Africa. They will probably not be with us for long, and large numbers have been reported to be gathering on the south coast.

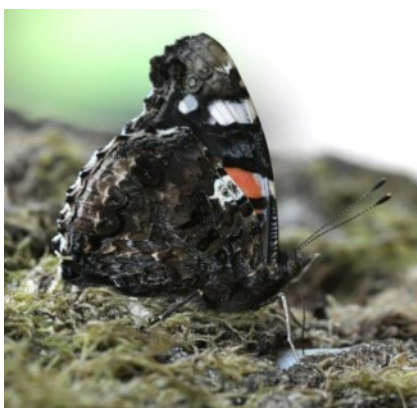
Insects are often active on warm September days. Dragonflies are still busy, and may be seen laying eggs in water. A Southern Hawker, however, was observed laying eggs on damp wood adjacent to a pond, and this may protect the eggs from aquatic predators, and anticipate higher water levels to come. A splendid Bog Bush-cricket was seen on a local heath.

It is often noticed that late-season butterflies, especially Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells, feed on over-ripe windfall fruit, favouring plums. Another source of food for them is the fermenting sap of diseased trees, and one old oak in our area attracted several Red Admirals, along with wasps and hornets. Moths attracted to light this week included the tiny but highly distinctive Chinese Character. Bats were active, as were Tawny Owls, which will consume bats as well as rodents.

Woodland fungi emerged in some quantity. Many of the fungi growing on the ground in woods are saprophytes (gaining sustenance exclusively from rotting plant material), but early in the autumn mycorrhizal species are more conspicuous: these have a mutually beneficial relationship with trees, via attachments to roots.

(These observations and photos have been compiled principally from postings by Haslemere Natural History Society members to the Members' Facebook group).

Photos: Bog Bush-cricket (by G. House); Red Admiral feeding on tree sap (by A. Swan); Chinese Character moth (by M. Tomsett); the bolete fungus *Xerocomellus cisalpinus* (by M. Tomsett); Southern Hawker dragonfly laying eggs (by F. Line).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 13/9/20.

The transition from summer to autumn is a time of migration for many animals: many leaving, some arriving, and others passing through. Our Swallows have now largely gone, but the Hobby, their predator, has been seen on several occasions locally. In addition to taking Swallows, Swifts and House Martins, Hobbies prey on dragonflies, and they were taking advantage of an abundance of these on recent warm days.

The migrant birds transiting through the area have so far been modest in numbers and variety; there have been some Spotted Flycatchers, but not as many as the 70 estimated on Black Down on one day a year ago. However, Ring Ouzels have been seen this week.

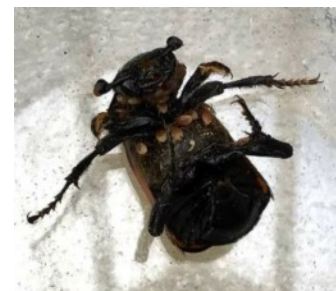
Perhaps surprisingly, some migrant butterflies move northwards across the Channel on warm September days, as their populations on the continent reach a peak. Painted Ladies have occasional boom years as migrants, but this certainly hasn't been one of them; however one was seen locally this week, plus small numbers of Clouded Yellows.

A sexton beetle was found that was carrying a number of mites. Sexton beetles bury small items of carrion on which their larvae feed; it is thought that the mites benefit the beetle by disembarking at the site of burial and attacking fly maggots attracted to the carcass.

The previous week's rain left a legacy in the form of an exceptional abundance of woodland fungi. Most were large mycorrhizal forms (symbiotic with trees), including boletes, brittle-gills (*Russula*), milk-caps (*Lactarius*) and Amanitas. One of the most beautifully coloured boletes – the uncommon Bitter Beech Bolete – and one of the brightest *Russulas* – the Yellow Swamp Brittle-gill – were found in local woods.

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Photos: Bitter Beech Bolete (by A. Swan); Yellow Swamp Brittle-gill (by A. Swan); Southern Hawker dragonfly (by M. Tomsett); Painted Lady butterfly (by C. Lemka); sexton beetle with mites (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 20/9/20.

Despite the lack of further rain, woodland fungi continued to emerge. This week, an abundance of the genus *Amanita* was noted, including the striking Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) and very large quantities of The Blusher (*A. rubescens*) plus Tawny Grisette (*A. fulva*), Panther Cap (*A. pantherina*) and False Death Cap (*A. citrina*). There have been no reports of the notorious Death Cap (*A. phalloides*) yet. A splendid specimen of the wood-rotting Dryad's Saddle was found.

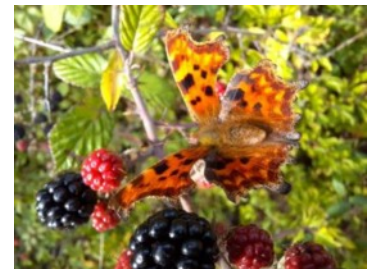
Perhaps the most notable bird sighting this week was a report of several hundred Siskins in the pines on Black Down, and smaller flocks were seen elsewhere. The general pattern is that they are heading south-east on migration. The sub-tropical Glossy Ibis made an appearance near Farnham on one day this week, and we hoped that it would appear on our local sites, as did the bird of this species that was seen by many at Frensham in 2014.

Thanks to the warm weather, Red Admirals, Small Coppers and Commas continued to be seen in gardens and hedgerows, and Speckled Woods were numerous in woods. A single Hummingbird Hawkmoth was reported; among the night-flying moths the Lunar Underwing was abundant, but otherwise the range of species was quite low.

The warm weather also encouraged late-season flowers. Common Eyebright was still flowering in abundance, and the non-native Montbretia introduced a splash of colour to roadsides and commons, where it can occupy large patches. Looking ahead to the next season, it seems that there are plenty of berries on the Holly this year!

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Photos: Fly Agaric (by A. Swan); Panther Cap (by C. Lemka); Comma (by V. Carter); Montbretia (by A. Swan); Dryad's Saddle (by V. Carter).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 27/9/20.

One of the most attractive of autumn moths, the Merveille-du-jour, was attracted to light during the mild nights at the beginning of the week. The strong, cold northerly wind that dominated the second half of the week was not favourable for insects, so it was a surprise that butterflies were still active: Small Coppers and Speckled Woods were seen in sheltered and sunny patches.

Windy conditions also don't encourage fungi, which favour still and misty conditions. Nevertheless, an abundance of fresh Fly Agarics and False Death Caps was noted in several sheltered places. The "coral fungus" *Ramaria stricta* was found on wood debris in woodland; this was formerly an uncommon fungus but it has increased in frequency thanks to the ubiquity of wood chip mulch, which is a good substitute for its natural substrate.

The attractive fruits of the Spindle Tree were observed to have split their pink husks to expose the orange seed coverings: always a delightful sight to seek out at this time of year.

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Photos: Merveille-du-jour moth (by M. Tomsett); Small Copper butterfly (by A. Swan); False Death Cap (*Amanita citrina*) (by A. Swan); *Ramaria stricta* (by A. Swan); Spindle fruits (by A. Swan).

