

Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 6/4/25.

There were a number of firsts for the season: a few Willow Warblers have joined the Chiffchaffs; Tree Pipits and Redstarts were reported at Woolmer Pond; Adders were found during a heathland reptile survey; and both Orange-tip and Green-veined White butterflies were seen in or near their preferred habitat of damp lowland grassland. There were reports from the coast that Nightingales and Cuckoos are on their way! Other notable bird reports were a flock of Little Gulls over Frensham and Crossbills at the Punchbowl (these have been sparse this year). In Petworth Park a pair of Egyptian Geese were seen with goslings: it is curious that they have bred successfully so early, considering that the species originates from warmer climes!

There was one particularly warm night when a good set of moths were attracted to light. The most surprising was a magnificent Emperor Moth, which is normally a day-flying species. These breed in heathland areas and are most often found as caterpillars: they are quite elusive as adults. They have striking eye-spots for startling predators, in the same arrangement as the more familiar Peacock butterfly. Also interesting was the unusual Chocolate-tip moth, the purple-spangled micro-moth *Dyseriocrania subpurpurella*, and the accurately named Lead-coloured Drab, which has undergone a dramatic population reduction in the last 20 years and is now rare - its caterpillars feed on Black Poplar, which is an increasingly uncommon tree.

The parasitic Purple Toothwort is now flowering along the banks of the Wey: look for the flowers at ground level under willows. The display of Primroses in open areas on wooded commons is now about at its peak, but they are a little faded due to the dry conditions.

A Brown Long-eared Bat found dead in a garden was thought by our expert to have probably died of natural causes in the winter, and just been blown to the ground by the keen east wind. The ears of this species are spectacular, and have evolved to detect the slight noise of flying moths. Other bats emit clicks and detect the sonic reflections from prey items, but that method can alert insects to the bat's presence.

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

Photos: Emperor Moth (by A. Swan); Purple Toothwort (by A. Swan); Chiffchaff (by A. Swan); Emperor Moth (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Dyseriocrania subpurpurella* (by A. Swan); Chocolate-tip moth (by A. Swan); Brown Long-eared Bat (by M. Tomsett); Green-veined White butterfly (by M. Tomsett); Lead-coloured Drab moth (by M. Tomsett); Egyptian Geese (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 13/4/25.

This is one of the highlights of a birder's year: the migrants are arriving in waves, with a familiar succession of species settling down or passing through, and the chance of some rarities. Also, for another week or two the leaves on trees will still not be fully unfurled, so there is a reasonable chance of good views of the songsters. The headline this week was a fleeting appearance of a Hoopoe at Thursley Common – there are a good number of these scattered around the UK at the moment, so there may be other opportunities (most of us have never seen this amazing species locally). Some local birders reckon that this season has become excellent for numbers and variety of species. New arrivals this week included Nightingales, Sedge Warblers, Cuckoos and a Hobby, whilst Willow Warbler numbers swelled. Hobbies fly north escorting flocks of martins and swallows but these hirundines are only here in small numbers so far.

A very early Painted Lady butterfly was photographed: like the migrant birds, this will have crossed the channel (unlike the Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks, it is thought that they never survive over-wintering here). Orange-tips became more numerous, and Holly Blues were seen, including one sipping minerals from drying mud. A Purple Thorn was among the moth highlights, whilst the first Brimstone Moths, Muslin Moths and a Scalloped Hook-tip provided a feel of early summer.

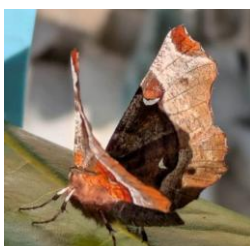
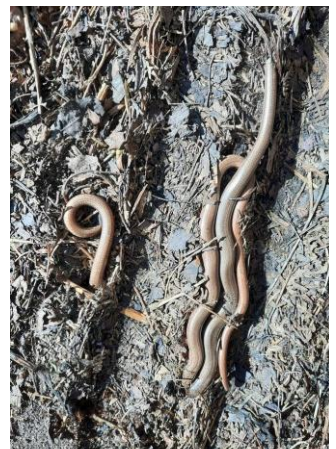
Sheets of corrugated iron lying flat on the ground in heathland are often a sign that reptiles are being monitored: they enjoy the protection and warmth under the sheet, and this helps to reveal their presence. A concentration of Slow-worms was found in a survey this week, plus Common Lizards.

Blackthorn was in full bloom locally, although it is earlier as well as more abundant on the chalk downs. On banks in woods, Wood-sorrel is a delight, especially the pink-flowered variety that is regarded as rare nationally, but seems to be commoner than that in our area.

Among the insects becoming active in the increasing warmth are tachinid flies: these are smart, compact and often bristly insects. They are ecologically significant in that their larvae consume the larvae of other insects, especially butterflies and moths: a relationship known as parasitoid. After noting the local abundance of Winter Moths early in the year, it was interesting to find *Lypha dubia*, its parasitoid tachinid, on the wing this week. Also seen in a local garden was the tachinid *Tachina ursina*, the larval prey for which is unknown – after centuries of natural history study, there are still gaps in our knowledge.

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

Photos: Painted Lady butterfly (by P. Nevett); pink variety of Wood-sorrel (by A. Swan); Brimstone Moth (by A. Swan); Slow-worms (by V. Carter); Purple Thorn moth (by M. Tomsett); Muslin Moth (by M. Tomsett); the fly *Lypha dubia* (by A. Swan); Blackthorn (by A. Swan); Scalloped Hook-tip moth (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 20/4/25.

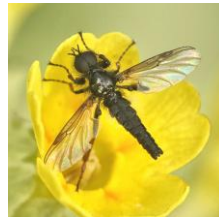
This must be the peak time for spring flowers. Bluebells are looking particularly good this year, especially when seen against a backdrop of white Greater Stitchwort, and Early Purple Orchids may be found in woods on clay in the Weald and in grassy places on the chalk downs. Along the Wey near the town, the air is scented with alliums: Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*), Few-flowered Garlic (*Allium paradoxum*) and Three-cornered Garlic (*Allium triquetrum*); only the first of these is a native species. Less appealing is the aroma of American Skunk-cabbage, which is so abundant in some places that it is regarded as a nuisance.

There were a couple of outstanding moth records from a garden to the east of the town. The Sloe Carpet is a rather drab species, but it is a rarity: it is rated as "Nationally Scarce" and there are very few records of it in west Surrey or adjacent parts of Sussex and Hampshire. The Scarce Prominent lives up to its name, and was one of several "Prominents" encountered this week: Great, Iron, Swallow, Lesser Swallow, Pebble and Coxcomb Prominent were the others (the "prominent" is a tuft on the thorax). Other attractive moths were Foxglove Pug (among large numbers of less attractive pug species) and Scalloped Hazel. The delightful Orange-tip butterflies were more numerous this week, and there were firsts of the season for Small Heath and Speckled Wood. Appropriately for Easter, a bee found basking proved to be a Chocolate Mining Bee – but this is named from its colour, not its food! Wasp-mimic nomad bees became common, and numerous *Bibio lanigerus* flies were noticed perched at the top of Cowslip blooms.

Nightingales were reported from several places, with Ebernoe seeming especially favoured. Cuckoos, Blackcaps and Whitethroats became widespread, and Woolmer Forest also had Garden Warblers, Redstarts and Crossbills. The first Reed Warblers could be heard around local lakes. A Hoopoe was reported at RSPB Farnham Heath (perhaps the same one that was at Thursley previously). Late in the week a Little Ringed Plover was reported from Thursley Common: a very unusual visitor. Apart from severe spells in winter, this is the busiest time for garden bird feeders, as birds incubating eggs benefit from quick snacks of high-energy food: a Marsh Tit made an appearance for the first time since the autumn in one garden, and Greenfinches and Bullfinches became welcome regulars.

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Photos: Orange-tip butterfly (by M. Tomsett); Bluebells and Greater Stitchwort (by V. Carter); Swallow Prominent (by M. Tomsett); Pebble Prominent (by T. Hardy); American Skunk-cabbage (by A. Swan); Greenfinch (by A. Swan); Sloe Carpet (by M. Tomsett); the fly *Bibio lanigerus* (by A. Swan); Foxglove Pug (By A. Swan); Scarce Prominent (by M. Tomsett); Chocolate Mining Bee (by A. Swan); Wild Garlic (by A. Swan); Early Purple Orchid (by C. Lemka).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 27/4/25.

Birdsong has been wonderful this season and, with expert help, our members were able to identify many species from sound alone during a visit to Ebernoe. Nightingales were present in good numbers, with some being unusually visible. Redstarts also seem to be doing well this year and should be looked – and listened – for along woodland edges: sightings have been reliable in at least one location. In bushy places, the uncommon Garden Warbler may be heard, whilst probably remaining hidden. Many people are now enjoying the use of the Merlin smartphone app for birdsong identification: it is recommended, but doesn't seem to be completely reliable unless the song is prolonged. Other notable sightings this week were a Hobby at Woolmer Pond and an Arctic Tern at Frensham Great Pond. Barn Swallows appeared near the town, and reports from nearer the coast suggest that Swifts aren't far behind.

The Earth Day event at the Museum was a great success: it was good to see so many people who were concerned about the environment and enthusiastic about wildlife. The new "Sensory Garden" was officially opened, and it was almost immediately adorned with a Speckled Wood butterfly. There was a lot of interest in the moth trap that had been left in the Museum garden overnight, the most glamorous moth on show being a White Ermine. Elsewhere, a set of highly distinctive and attractive moths appeared this week: Mocha, Pebble Hook-tip, Scorched Wing and the remarkable and uncommon Puss Moth. It is now the season for the "longhorn" micro-moths, named from the length of their antennae, the most extreme being *Nematopogon swammerdamella*.

There were national alerts for hayfever sufferers, as tree pollen was very high on several days. A look at our local oaks showed them to be coloured yellow-green, not by leaves but by thousands of tufts of catkins, each bearing many pollen-scattering flowers.

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Photos: Redstart (by A. Swan); Nightingale (by A. Anderson); Puss Moth (by T. Hardy); Scorched Wing moth (by M. Tomsett); Mocha moth (by M. Tomsett); White Ermine moth (by A. Swan); Speckled Wood (by A. Swan); oak catkins (by M. Tomsett); Stonechat (by A. Swan); Pebble Hook-tip moth (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Nematopogon swammerdamella* (by A. Swan).

