

## Wildlife News

### Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 3/8/25.

Hedgerow fruits are in abundance this year, and they are early. The quantity of sloes has been noted by several observers and the first blackberries are ripe: keeping to the old custom of blackberrying on August Bank Holiday would be leaving it far too late! Following the boom during the mid-July heat wave and this week's torrential rain, the butterfly season seems to be past its peak, but there may be more warm weather before the end of Butterfly Conservation's "Big Butterfly Count" (finishes 10<sup>th</sup> August).

Crossbills continue to be reported in good numbers, for example on Black Down, although flocks in the canopy of pines may be heard but not seen. A small group was reported at Grayswood. Swallows have been busy feeding on insects emerging over the larger local ponds, and Sand Martins at Woolmer Pond. A Green Sandpiper and Redstarts were also seen at this latter site. At Burton Mill, a Great Crested Grebe was seen sitting on a nest in which eggs may have been ruined by rising waters. This is the time of year when crows and other birds may be seen hunting tiny froglets and toadlets that leave ponds en masse to explore new terrain, looking at first sight like insects.

Bracket fungi on trees can be "annual" or "perennial": the former are soft and rot down after a few weeks, whilst the latter are woody and their structures persist for years. The most conspicuous of the "annuals" is Chicken-of-the-Woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*), which can form huge yellow masses, especially in late summer.

Insect activity has reduced in accordance with the weather, but there have been some good finds. The glamorous Light Crimson Underwing is still putting in an occasional appearance, and the uncommon Mocha has been widespread. The formerly rare micro-moth *Ethmia quadrillella* has been frequent, and its proposed new English name – Comfrey Ermine – is being increasingly used (although such names can be misleading: there are many black-and-white moths with names including the word "ermine", and they belong to a wide range of unrelated groups). The micro-moth *Musotima nitidalis* looks and is a bit exotic: it is native to New Zealand and evidently arrived in the UK in about 2008 with imported ferns, and it becomes more frequent each year. A cluster of bright white blisters on oak leaves were tentatively identified as leaf mines made by the larvae of the uncommon micro-moth *Acrocercops brongniardella*. Striking flies found nectaring on umbellifers included *Phasia hemiptera* (with uniquely shaped wings), *Graphomya maculata* (boldly marked) and *Eurithia anthophila* (very bristly and all black except for yellow feet!).

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

Photos: Great Crested Grebe on nest (by M. Tomsett); froglets (by M. Tomsett); Common Blue butterfly (by M. Tomsett); Light Crimson Underwing (by T. Hardy); Mocha (by A. Swan); Comfrey Ermine moth (by T. Hardy); the micro-moth *Musotima nitidalis* (by A. Swan); Ringlet (by A. Swan); Chicken-of-the-Woods (by M. Tomsett); Median Wasp (by J. Godden); the fly *Phasia hemiptera* (by M. Tomsett); the fly *Graphomya maculata* (by A. Swan); the fly *Eurithia anthophila* (by A. Swan); sloes (by M. Tomsett).



## Wildlife News

### Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 10/8/25.

Our best result from 15 minutes of garden observation for Butterfly Conservation's survey was 26 butterflies of 6 species: much better than last year, where counts were sometimes zero! Gatekeepers dominated everywhere, but there was a lapse in the numbers of the familiar nymphalids: Red Admirals, Peacocks and Commas. These were frequent a few weeks earlier and will no doubt re-appear in a new generation in early autumn. Small Tortoiseshells have been seen, but they remain uncommon. Clouded Yellows have been reported on the coast, and we are likely to see them locally when the wind turns around to southerly.

The Society's visit to Graffham Common yielded a good sighting of a Spotted Flycatcher: these have been seen in many local sites, including a report of four at Puttenham, but return migration hasn't yet peaked. Crossbills were heard but, as is often the case, not properly seen. Two species of sundew were found growing in the same boggy patch: Round-leaved Sundew and Oblong-leaved Sundew. Both had dined well on small flies! Possibly the best observation of the day was a Woodland Grasshopper, which is not at all common away from its stronghold in the New Forest. It is a very dark species with, in the male, a vivid red abdomen.

Elsewhere, a Hobby was reported at Woolmer Pond, plus 24 Lapwings, 29 Crossbills and a group of Willow Warblers that were probably on return migration. Several species of warbler have begun concentrating on the coast, and the departure of one of the earliest return migrants was evidenced by a report of 450 Sand Martins at Selsey. There was another report of a Honey Buzzard, this time at Pulborough: it seems that these cruise around and may turn up anywhere.

Two interesting, large and uncommon wasps were noticed this week: the ichneumon *Colpotrochia cincta* and the ichneumon-like *Ibalia leucospoides*. The *Colpotrochia* lays eggs on micro-moth larvae, but the *Ibalia* has a particularly interesting host. It is a parasitoid of the giant sawflies known as wood wasps or horntails. These sawflies lay eggs in wood, and the eggs are accompanied by a piece of fungal culture. The fungus attacks the wood and the sawfly larvae eat the fungus. The *Ibalia* wasp lays its eggs on the sawfly larvae, which it detects by smelling the presence of the fungus!

Cool nights meant that it wasn't a great week for moths, but the Canary-shouldered Thorn is always good to see at this time of year. There have been a few local Jersey Tigers, but in parts of Surrey closer to London, moth enthusiasts have reported more than a hundred attracted to light at one time!

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Photos (by A. Swan except where indicated): Canary-shouldered Thorn; Woodland Grasshopper; Oblong-leaved Sundew; Round-leaved Sundew; Star Sedge; the ichneumon *Colpotrochia cincta*; the wasp *Ibalia leucospoides*; Oak Hook-tip moth (by M. Tomsett); Barred Hook-tip moth; Six-striped Rustic moth; Least Yellow Underwing moth (by M. Tomsett); Dock Bugs (by J. Godden).





## Wildlife News

### Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 17/8/25.

The bouts of heavy rain in previous weeks did eventually encourage the emergence of a good set of bolete fungi. *Boletus reticulatus* was possibly the most conspicuous on suburban roadsides, including in the centre of the town, growing to about 20cm diameter (but becoming distorted and messy at this size). On banks in woods near beeches the colourful *Caloboletus calopus* appeared, plus clusters of the large orangeish *Suillellus luridus*. Further afield, the “Devil’s Bolete” *Rubroboletus satanas* was reported on the downs near Duncton: a spectacular species with a white cap with scarlet underside, and colours grading to a rich vermillion on the swollen stem. *Amanita rubescens* (“The Blusher”) was common in woods everywhere, plus a scattering of *Russula* and *Lactarius* species. Wood-rotters were represented by the huge *Meripilus giganteus* and the unique “Cauliflower Fungus” *Sparassis crispa*.

Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) is now in peak flower, usually accompanied by yellow splashes of Dwarf Gorse. Also characteristic of late summer are mint flowers: Water Mint is now everywhere on water edges, Corn Mint may be found on dry paths, and a confusing host of garden varieties and hybrids occur on waste ground.

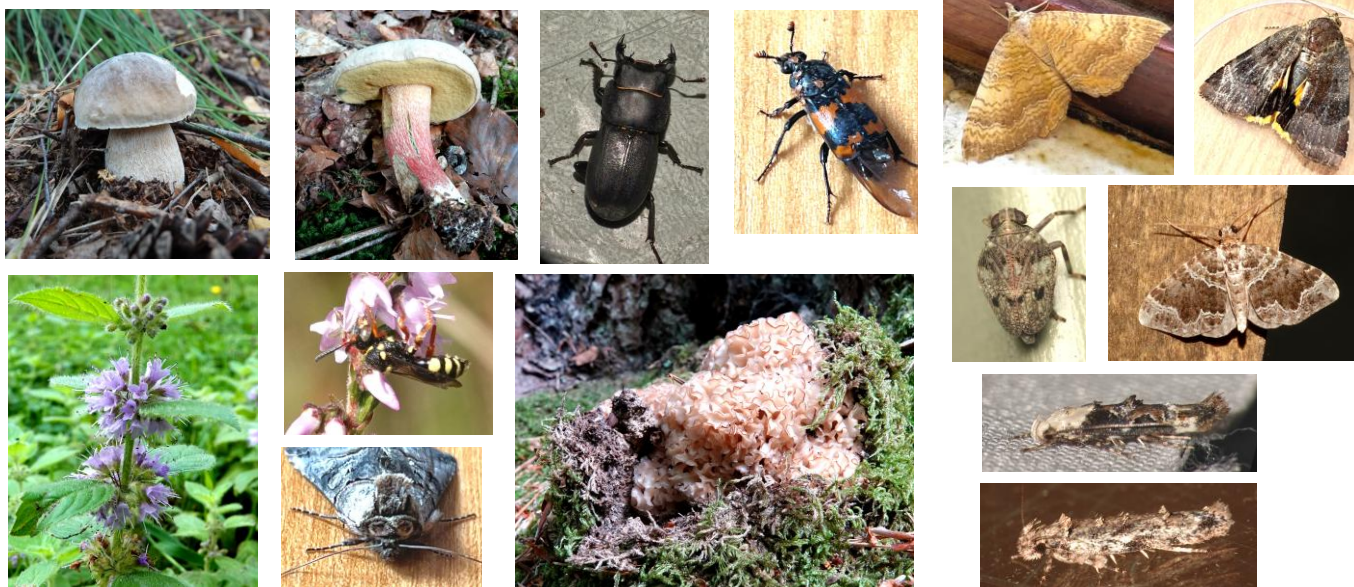
A new generation of Small Copper butterflies has appeared, and they suddenly became frequent this week. Possibly the most significant moth was the second Devon Carpet in our area, demonstrating that this species is now breeding locally, having spread, as the name suggests, from strongholds in the west country. Also noteworthy was an uncommon Langmaid’s Yellow Underwing: a challenge to identify, as crucial characters are on the hidden hind wing. Two micro-moths with tufts of long wing scales were recorded: the rare but drab *Psoricoptera gibbosella* and the more colourful but merely uncommon *Mompha propinquella*.

In a season that hasn’t produced an abundance of beetles, it was good to see this week the uncommon Lesser Stag Beetle and a sexton beetle (*Necrophorus investigator*), the latter as usual carrying a number of mites. The nomad bees are most noticeable in the early summer, but the flowering of the heaths brings out the Black-horned Nomad (*Nomada rufipes*), which is not common and found at a new local site this week. Other interesting insects were the unusual bug *Issus coleoptratus* (the only UK representative of its family) and a very uncommon sawfly with fanned antennae belonging to the genus *Diprion* (probably *D. pini*).

In a quiet week for birds, the exception was a Black Tern reported from Frensham. Hobbies were reported at Woolmer Pond and a few other places, always where there are dragonflies or swallows for them to chase.

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Photos (by A. Swan except where indicated): *Boletus reticulatus*; *Caloboletus calopus*; Lesser Stag Beetle; the sexton beetle *Necrophorus investigator* (by T. Hardy); Yellow Shell moth (by M. Tomsett); Langmaid’s Yellow Underwing moth (by T. Hardy); Corn Mint; the nomad bee *Nomada rufipes*; Spectacle moth (by T. Hardy); Cauliflower Fungus; the bug *Issus coleoptratus*; Devon Carpet moth; the micro-moth *Mompha propinquella*; the micro-moth *Psoricoptera gibbosella*.



## Wildlife News

### Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 24/8/25.

Although it wasn't a prolific week for moths, we did see the first Clifden Nonpareil of the season, a huge and spectacular moth that has increased in recent years from zero to merely uncommon. The pretty Peach Blossom and uncommon Pale Eggar were other highlights. Following the good numbers of Buff-tips and Elephant Hawkmoths this season, it wasn't too surprising to find their caterpillars this week: they are feeding-up in preparation for winter dormancy. The Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillar has a strategy to startle potential predators: it impersonates a 4-eyed snake! – but the one found this week didn't show that performance.

A bizarre phenomenon was witnessed this week: it was noticed that a fly was encumbered by something alive clinging to its leg, and a closer examination revealed two pseudoscorpions! Pseudoscorpions are relatives of scorpions; they lack a long tail with a sting but are otherwise similar in shape, including having a pair of grasping claws. The bulbous parts seen in the photograph are forelimb segments and they are holding on with their "pincers". They are not parasites on the fly: like most of the mites on bees and beetles, the relationship is phoretic, i.e. they are just hitching a ride! Being wingless, this is the typical way that many pseudoscorpions disperse. They have been provisionally identified as belonging to the species *Pselaphochernes scorpioides*.

Attractive insects found this week were the tachinid fly *Ectophasia crassipennis*, the increasingly common Rhododendron Leafhopper, the uncommon Willow Flea Beetle and the large hornet-mimicking hoverfly *Volucella zonaria* (found buzzing around a light at night, just as hornets do). A less appealing but curious insect was *Coranus woodroffe*, a bug found on a local heath. This is one of few UK species belonging to the family Reduviidae, which are known as assassin bugs. They are aggressive predators and may bite people if handled.

Spotted Flycatchers are being seen in many places as they pause on their return migration. In addition, two Pied Flycatchers were reported from the Punchbowl; a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at Hankley Common; and Whinchat, Redstarts and Wheatears near Brook. There was also a report of an Osprey over Thursley Common.

The return to dry conditions has inhibited any further eruptions of ground fungi, but some spectacularly large clusters of bracket fungi have been found: Chicken-of-the-Woods, Giant Polypore and Dryad's Saddle. In one local site, the rare non-native St. Dabeoc's Heath is showing its over-sized flowers: white on most plants, but magenta on others. It is thought that this plant was brought in to army camp gardens and has survived untended since these were finally abandoned in the 1960s.

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Photos: Clifden Nonpareil moth (by M. Tomsett); fly leg with phoretic pseudoscorpions (by A. Swan); Rhododendron Leafhopper (by A. Swan); St. Dabeoc's Heath (by A. Swan); Peach Blossom moth (by M. Tomsett); Pale Eggar moth (by M. Tomsett); the fly *Ectophasia crassipennis* (by A. Swan); the bug *Coranus woodroffe* (by M. Tomsett); the hoverfly *Volucella zonaria* (by A. Swan); Willow Flea Beetle (by A. Swan); caterpillar of Elephant Hawkmoth (by A. Swan); Chicken-of-the-Woods (by J. Godden); Dryad's Saddle (by V. McClure); Giant Polypore – top view (by V. McClure).





## Wildlife News

### Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 31/8/25.

Good news: Water Voles have been released along the upper Wey, as part of a re-introduction programme led by the local National Trust team. These delightful rodents had previously been present here but were eliminated by American Mink. This stretch of the river has now been free of mink for some time, so the Water Voles should be able to re-establish themselves.

This week there were several reminders that our fauna is changing along with a warming climate: 1) Most spectacularly, three huge caterpillars of the Death's-head Hawkmoth were reported from a garden potato patch in Liss. This moth is not thought able to survive our winters (they are rare cross-channel migrants) but there seems to be an increase in reports of the caterpillars, which are yellow with dark oblique stripes. 2) The transparent-winged moth *Palpita vitrealis* made its first appearance of the year much earlier than usual: it is not thought to breed in the UK, but it is becoming increasingly frequent as a migrant. Further south, its main food plant is Olive, but it can also use Privet, so breeding here is a possibility. 3) The fly *Stomorphina lunata* was recorded locally for the first time this week. It appears dull until viewed closely, when its grey striping, including across its eyes, can be appreciated. It is known as the "Locust Blowfly" as its larvae are parasitoids on locust egg cases. As locusts are absent from the UK, it has been thought to be just a seasonal migrant, but there have been so many records this year, including in Scotland, that it is now suspected as using a UK native grasshopper or bush cricket as a host, but there is as yet no proof. 4) Finally, the Willow Emerald Damselfly was found for the second consecutive year in a local garden, so it is probably breeding nearby. It is not thought to have bred in the UK before 2009: another species extending its range northwards.

The Society's annual bat evening was adversely affected by wind and rain, but Common Pipistrelles and Soprano Pipistrelles were detected (using bat detectors) and seen. The site was Frensham Little Pond, where visitors may notice pairs of nesting boxes on trees. Bat nesting boxes (donated by our Society) were set up first, but some were occupied by birds. The solution was to place bird nesting boxes on the same trees: both birds and bats are now content! However, one bird box was found to be taken over by hornets, which were active even in those conditions.

Although there have been good showings of white butterflies (including the Green-veined White), Holly Blues and Small Coppers, there have been very few nymphalids on the wing: late summer is normally a good time for them. There was a modest selection of moths this week, with Frosted Orange possibly the most attractive and the micro-moth *Morophaga choragella*, which has bracket fungi as a larval food plant, the least common. The Square-spot Rustic is frequent at this time of the year, and sometimes their wing markings appear to read "OK"! Another amusing marking is on the leafhopper *Lamprotettix nitidulus*: a cartoon-style sad frog face!

The wet weather will no doubt induce a fresh flush of ground fungi, but this may have to wait until next week. Bracket fungi continue to impress, including the striking *Phaeolus schweinitzii*, a parasite of pines. Bird reports have been unexceptional this week, with continuing sightings of Spotted Flycatchers, plus Common and Green Sandpipers in wet places. Chaffinches and Willow Warblers have been heard singing whilst pausing on their southward migration.

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Photos: The fly *Stomorphina lunata* (by A. Swan); Willow Emerald Damselfly (by A. Swan); Frosted Orange (by M. Tomsett); Square-spot Rustic (by M. Tomsett); *Morophaga choragella* (by T. Hardy); Purple Bar (by M. Tomsett); *Lamprotettix nitidulus* (by A. Swan); *Palpita vitrealis* (by T. Hardy); Hornets (by A. Swan); *Phaeolus schweinitzii* (by T. Hardy).

