

Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 7/9/25.

The breezy and showery conditions through most of the week were not conducive to wildlife observation, but the weekend was very pleasant and the Society's visit to Woolmer Pond yielded plenty of interest. A Hobby flew over the car park, and probably the same bird was seen later on the ground by the pond. There were only a few hirundines present, so its prey items here would probably be dragonflies. On the coast in the Selsey area this week, there were reports of thousands of migrating hirundines (mostly Barn Swallows and House Martins), accompanied by the occasional lone Hobby. Spotted Flycatchers were seen in many places, including Woolmer Pond, as was the occasional Whinchat. Green Sandpipers and Woodlarks were also seen at the Pond.

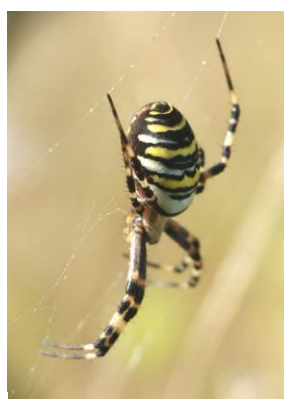
Common Blue and Emerald Damselflies may be found around ponds at this time of year, and Common, Ruddy and Black Darters. These may still be seen mating and egg-laying. The flowering of our heathlands is accompanied by an abundance of a bee that resembles a Honeybee but is smaller and with a strikingly barred abdomen: these are Heather Bees (a.k.a. Girdled Colletes, *Colletes succinctus*).

The botanical highlight of the week was the discovery at Woolmer Pond of a large patch of Coral-necklace (*Illecebrum verticillatum*), a unique and fairly rare plant that sprawls across damp sandy places. In our area it seems to be associated with places disturbed by military training. Also found there was the uncommon Marsh Clubmoss.

After a period of surprising absence, nymphalid butterflies returned in good numbers: Peacocks, Commas and Red Admirals. A migrant Clouded Yellow was seen at Woolmer Pond (reports say that they are more numerous towards the coast) along with Small Heaths and Small Coppers. Cool and/or breezy nights made it very poor for moths, but the curiously-shaped *Acleris emargana* was a nice uncommon species. It may be a mimic of the colour and cello-like shape of the Dock Bug, which is noxious to predators.

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

Photos (all by A. Swan except where indicated): Hobby; Spotted Flycatcher (by M. Tomsett); Wasp Spider; Coral-necklace (2 photos); Heather Bee; Emerald Damselfly; Cross-leaved Heath; Peacock butterfly; the micro-moth *Acleris emargana*; Marsh Clubmoss.



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 14/9/25.

In very autumnal conditions, there was an eruption of fungi in grassland, with Parasol Mushrooms (*Macrolepiota procera*) especially abundant and conspicuous in some fields and roadsides. Fungal activity on the ground in woods was still modest, however. It now feels appropriate that Autumn Crocuses (*Crocus nudiflorus*) are showing in some roadsides and churchyards, but closer inspection may reveal that some are in fact Bieberstein's Crocus (*Crocus speciosus*), which has blue-er flowers with dark markings on the outside of the petals. Neither are native species; they are "garden escapes" that have spread and can persist indefinitely in patches of short grass. Moth enthusiasts are also very aware of the changing seasons: in a poor week, the Autumnal Rustic was possibly the highlight.

There was a report of a flock of 100 House Martins at Frensham, pausing briefly on their way south. At the same place, after a summer of quiet, several Cetti's Warblers resumed their loud song. Likewise, a group of Mandarin Ducks appeared on a local pond after a low-profile summer: they nest secretively in holes in trees close to water. This Chinese species has been established in the Wey catchment since 1981, and prior to that in Witley Park. They are shy and behave like fully wild birds.

A Speckled Bush-cricket photographed in a local garden was an exception in a summer when this familiar species had been strangely scarce. Despite the windy weather, more diversity of leafhopper bugs was noted than at any time through the summer, including the attractive *Mocydia crocea* and *Eupteryx decemnotata*. A close look at some really tiny insects (1.5-2.5mm) on a window revealed that most were wasps in the "Parasitica" group, in the superfamily Chalcidoidea. The larvae of these consume eggs and larvae of other insects (especially flies and moth) and eggs of spiders. About 10 species were distinguished in a quick survey this week, but identifying to species level is a highly specialised task. Some members of one group (the Encyrtidae) have an amazing ability: an embryo in one egg can clone itself so that one egg produces large numbers of larvae, which can collectively consume a much larger caterpillar! A surprising variety of insects find their way to south-facing windows of sheds, conservatories, greenhouses and summerhouses if a door is left open.

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Photos (all by A. Swan except where indicated): Mandarin Ducks; Bieberstein's Crocus; Autumnal Rustic moth (by T. Hardy); Speckled Bush-cricket (by N. Ham); Parasol Mushroom (by M. Tomsett); the leafhopper bug *Mocydia crocea*; the leafhopper bug *Eupteryx decemnotata*; an Encyrtid micro-wasp possibly in the genus *Copidosoma*; an Encyrtid micro-wasp; the leafhopper bug *Balclutha punctata*; a micro-wasp probably in the genus *Pteromalus*; a micro-wasp probably in the genus *Basalys*.



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 21/9/25.

The notion that wild mushrooms don't like windy weather gained some support this week: as soon as the gusty wind eased off, the woodland mycorrhizal fungi sprouted up in quantity, headed by the Fly Agaric, one of the icons of autumn. Boletes showed in good numbers, including the colour-changing Scarletina Bolete, as did some large milk-caps (*Lactarius*). The striking web-cap *Cortinarius triumphans* appeared in several places: it shows on its stem the dark bands where the web-like veil ("cortina") that protects the gills was attached prior to the cap expanding. The first waxcap of the season was found: the conical Blackening Waxcap – orange when young but soon turning black. Another trick with colour is shown by the remarkable "Jack-o'-Lantern" fungus (*Omphalotus illudens*), which is luminous at night: it was reported from two local sites. Possibly the most puzzling fungus this week, though, was a strange growth on a pear leaf, which looked like it could have been a type of insect-induced gall, but it was in fact the Pear Leaf Rust fungus (*Gymnosporangium sabinae*).

The unusually warm days brought out insects in good numbers, including another sighting of the migrant Clouded Yellow butterfly. The southerly winds also assisted the migrant Four-spotted Footman moth, a normally infrequent species which showed up in unprecedented numbers. The best of the other moths was possibly the uncommon Heath Rustic. Two interesting but very different beetles were noticed: 1) The rove beetle *Staphylinus dimidiaticornis* was found, apparently for the first time in our area. Rove beetles have elytra (wing cases) that don't cover the abdomen and so may not be immediately recognised as beetles; there are more than a thousand UK species, most of which are small. 2) The bristly beetle *Hyzobius lophanthae*, a non-native species originating from Australia that feeds on the aphids known as scale insects.

There was a Black Tern reported at Frensham, but notable bird records this week were about numbers rather than rarity. 450 House Martins were reported in one day over Frensham Great Pond. Around 7000 Barn Swallows were reported in one day heading south-west over Tweseldown (north of Farnham) and similar numbers were reported heading east at Selsey. The small flocks of Meadow Pipits that pass through our area gather at the coast to form the hundreds-strong flocks that were also reported near Selsey.

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Photos: Fly Agaric (by G. House); Blackening Waxcaps (by G. House); blood bee (*Sphecodes* sp.) (by A. Swan); Heath Rustic moth (by A. Swan); Four-spotted Footman: two females and a male (by M. Tomsett); *Cortinarius triumphans* (by A. Swan); Pear Rust fungus (by F. Line); the rove beetle *Staphylinus dimidiaticornis* (by M. Tomsett); the leafhopper *Alebra albostrigella* (by A. Swan); Scarletina Bolete (flesh changes from yellow to blue on exposure) (by A. Swan); the beetle *Hyzobius lophanthae* (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 28/9/25.

The Fly Agarics noted last week turned out to be just the vanguard for a prodigious showing this week. Wherever there were birches there were displays of tens or even hundreds, although many were regrettably soon discoloured through drying out in the nagging north wind. Other species of *Amanita* were also frequent: False Death Cap (*A. citrina*), Grey Amanita (*A. excelsa*) and The Blusher (*A. rubescens*) in particular, plus the rare Gilded Amanita (*A. franchetii*) reported from near Midhurst. There have so far been no reports of the Death Cap (*A. phalloides*), which was quite common last year.

Other typical sights and sounds of autumn – hedgerows red with haws and hips, the cascade of acorns with each gust of wind, ladybirds looking for hibernation nooks – are all accentuated this year.

Lepidoptera had a poor week: butterflies were sparse and moths were mainly very common seasonal species, and not in much quantity, except for the Lunar Underwing. Possibly the highlights were the attractive Barred Sallow and the uncommon migrant L-album Wainscot, clearly showing the basis of its name.

There was a surprise on the warmest day when a ruby-tailed wasp turned up in a garden: these had previously only been found here in April, May and June. They parasitise the nests of mason wasps, and so tie-in with the life cycle of these hosts. The tiny furry flies that often find their way indoors at this time of year are called owl midges, moth flies or drain flies (as some can breed in the slimy coatings of drainpipes!). One photographed this week was among the most attractive: *Clytocerus ?ocellaris*, although the competition for this accolade is modest! Other insects found included the nicely mottled leafhopper *Allygus mixtus* and a really tiny chalcidoid “micro-wasp”, with a body less than 0.5mm long and with feathery wings, belonging to the family Mymaridae (called “fairyflies”, despite being in the wasp family). The smallest UK insect is a fairyfly, as is the world’s smallest insect – they are triumphs of miniaturisation. The larvae of many fairyflies feed on individual leafhopper eggs.

Following the huge count of Barn Swallows at Tweseldown last week, 2900 House Martins were reported by the same fastidious observers this week! In addition to migrating hirundines, Woodlarks, Crossbills and Lesser Redpolls were reported at Woolmer Pond.

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Photos: L-album Wainscot moth (by A. Swan); *Amanita excelsa* (by M. Tomsett); ruby-tailed wasp (by A. Swan); Lunar Underwing moth (dark variant) (by T. Hardy); Lunar Underwing (pale variant) (by A. Swan); the leafhopper *Allygus mixtus* (by A. Swan); Black Rustic moth (by T. Hardy); September Thorn moth (by T. Hardy); Barred Sallow moth (by M. Tomsett); the owl midge *Clytocerus ?ocellaris* (by A. Swan); “fairyfly” micro-wasp (<0.5mm) (by A. Swan); unidentified chalcidoid micro-wasp (2.5mm) (by A. Swan).

