

Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 5/10/25.

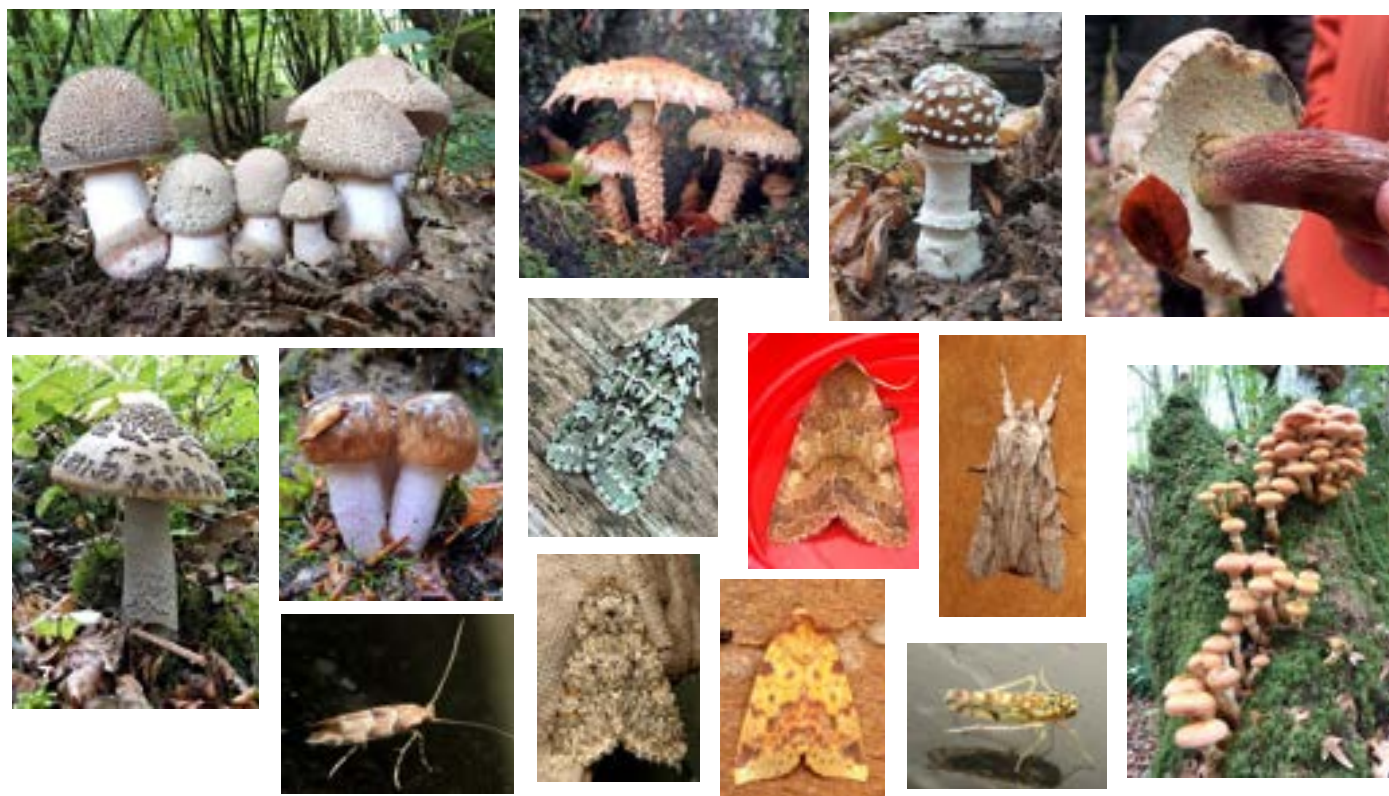
A phenomenal quantity of fungi was encountered during the Society's annual foray at a local site. Perhaps the highlights among more than 60 species found were the textures and colours of *Cortinarius pseudosalor* ("Purple Stocking Webcap"), *Caloboletus calopus* ("Bitter Beech Bolete") and the uncommon *Pholiota squarrosa* ("Shaggy Scalycap"), but in terms of sheer numbers, Honey Fungus (*Armillaria*) stood out. This tree parasite is often found in dense clusters on stumps, but there were also huge amounts of it on the ground, apparently above infected tree roots. At a different site east of the town, a foray in a Hornbeam wood revealed abundant *Amanita ceciliae* ("Snakeskin Grisette"), a normally scarce species, with the notorious *Amanita phalloides* (Death Cap) and *A. pantherina* (Panther Cap) also contributing to a remarkable eight species of this charismatic genus at the site. There were also some species known to be specialist mycorrhizals with Hornbeam: *Leccinum carpini*, *Hygrophorus carpini*, *Tricholoma sejunctum* and *Lactarius circellatus*.

It was a good week for moths, with the rare Flounced Chestnut and uncommon Large Ranunculus (with nice gold spangles) the highlights. There was also the first of the season of the attractive Merveille du Jour and Pink-barred Sallow. The best micro-moth was the dusky pink *Phyllonorycter trifasciella*, which is seldom found as an adult, but is more often recorded as larval leaf mines in honeysuckle. A moth with a local connection was Blair's Shoulder-knot, named after Kenneth Blair, who was President of the Royal Entomological Society in 1940/1 and was the first to find the species in the UK. His daughter lived locally and was a member and benefactor of our Society.

Most of the migrant birds have now passed through, with no repeat of the remarkable counts of hirundines that were reported in previous weeks. Setting the scene for winter, a flock of Lesser Redpolls was seen at Woolmer Pond - a species that was less frequent than normal last year. Worryingly, butterflies were very scarce, despite benign conditions through much of the week. We should expect to see nymphalids such as Commas and Red Admirals taking nectar from late-flowering plants in gardens on warm days in October.

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

Photos (by A. Swan except where indicated): The Blusher; Shaggy Scalycap; Panther Cap; Bitter Beech Bolete (by C. Lemka); Snakeskin Grisette; Purple Stocking Webcap; Merveille du Jour (by T. Hardy); Flounced Chestnut (by T. Hardy); Blair's Shoulder-knot; the micro-moth *Phyllonorycter trifasciella*; Large Ranunculus; Pink-barred Sallow; the leafhopper *Eupteryx florida*; Honey Fungus.



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 12/10/25.

There had been several reports from heathy woodlands around the area of large flocks of Lesser Redpolls (up to 80) and smaller flocks of Crossbills (up to 30), and that is what we encountered during the Society's visit to Black Down. Dartford Warblers, Marsh Tits, some late House Martins were among a good set of species totalling 26. There have been a few Ring Ouzels in the wider area, but there was just an unconfirmed hint of a call from one at Black Down. Glossy Ibises are having an exceptional year in the UK, with large numbers in SW England and a few spreading further east, including eight reported over Leith Hill this week. Birders at Frensham should be on the look-out: one of these tropical-looking birds turned up there in 2014.

In recent years it has been noted that spring-flowering species are flowering again in the autumn, especially violets. Flowers of the attractive stream-side plant Tutsan were found this week, normally an early summer flowerer. This confusion of the seasons has been attributed to the plants interpreting dry conditions as a "false winter", triggering a subsequent false spring, but perhaps they are just making up for a poor, drought-affected attempt at flowering earlier in the year. Ivy was found in flower: possibly the only local species for which this is the specific normal flowering time. Ivy blossoms are important nectar sources for late-season insects.

More seasonal confusion is affecting moths, with the typical mid-summer Treble Brown Spot being a surprise this week, but this species can have a second generation in warm years. More redolent of autumn is the splendid Merveille du Jour, which has evolved to be well camouflaged amongst tree lichen, where it rests during the day. A notable find was the fly *Chrysopilus laetus* ("Tree Snipefly"), which is quite a rarity, and is supposed to be on the wing May to July. Butterflies continue to be alarmingly absent, even on warm days.

After the previous week's fungal boom, the return to dry conditions dramatically reduced the finds of fresh specimens.

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Photos: Merveille du Jour moths on lichen (by M. Tomsett); Tutsan (by A. Swan); Ivy flower and flower buds (by A. Swan); Tree Snipefly (by A. Swan); Treble Brown Spot moth (by T. Hardy); Porcelain Fungus (by T. Hardy); Green-brindled Crescent moth (by T. Hardy); Chestnut moth (by M. Tomsett); Crossbill (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 19/10/25.

A Great Grey Shrike at Woolmer Forest was the highlight of a busy week for birders. It was first seen from distance by one of our Members on Saturday, but was reported as closer and in the pond area on Sunday. Early in 2024, one of these charismatic birds was present for several weeks at Black Down; it will be interesting to see if the Woolmer bird will stay for a while.

Our winter residents arrived in good numbers this week: Fieldfares, Redwings and Bramblings were each reported in several places. There may have been more Bramblings seen locally this week than in the whole of last winter. The stragglers of the southbound emigration included some small flocks of Meadow Pipits. Hawfinches and a Goshawk were reported at Northchapel.

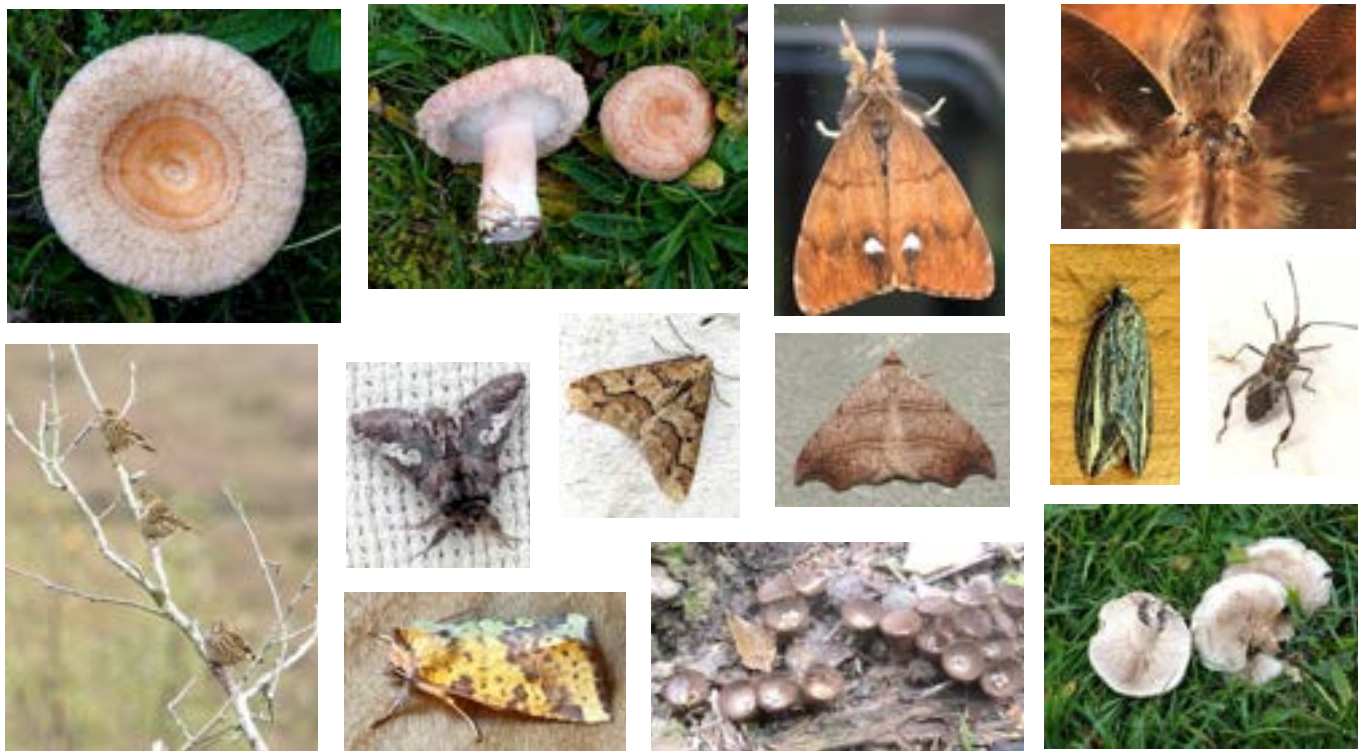
Despite forecasts of zero rain in the first part of the week, there was frequent drizzle: enough to dampen grass but not woodland floors. Hence there was a fresh flush of fungi in open places, but little in the woods. A few species of waxcap appeared (especially Parrot Waxcap and Snowy Waxcap) plus the uncommon *Lepista panaeolus*, which is very much like the well-known Field Blewit, but without the bluish colours. The delightful Woolly Milk-cap (*Lactarius torminosus*) was conspicuous around isolated birches in grassy places. On one foray a patch of Bird's-nest Fungus was found: these package spores into egg-like capsules that are projected out of cup-like structures when hit by raindrops.

It was a good week for nocturnal moths, with the Streak and Figure of Eight showing: both are uncommon and declining. Three of our local moth recorders all found Vapourer moths on the same day – something must have triggered the emergence of a late generation. Confusingly, the Mottled Umber, which peaks in November to January, appeared at the same time as the Beautiful Hook-tip, which peaks in June and July! A Hummingbird Hawkmoth was seen visiting Abelia flowers in a garden on a drizzly, overcast day.

We received just one report of a butterfly: a Peacock. Other insects noted included an egg-laying Southern Hawker dragonfly and a Western Conifer Seed Bug.

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Photos: Woolly Milk-cap (2 photos) (by A. Swan); Vapourer (by T. Hardy); close-up of Vapourer (by A. Swan); Meadow Pipits (by A. Swan); Figure of Eight (by M. Tomsett); Mottled Umber (by M. Tomsett); Beautiful Hook-tip (by A. Swan); Streak (by T. Hardy); Western Conifer Seed Bug (by M. Tomsett); Pink-barred Sallow (by T. Hardy); Bird's-nest Fungus (by G. House); *Lepista panaeolus* (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 26/10/25.

In good time for Halloween, the bizarre fungus *Clathrus archeri* ("Devil's Fingers") has appeared again in a location close to the town. It has the appearance and smell of carrion, and hence is visited by insects that disperse the spores. It is widely distributed around the globe, but it is not a native species in the UK. There was a good variety of other fungi in woods and grassland. During the Society's visit to woodland near Petworth, the highlights were the uncommon *Rhodotus palmatus* ("Wrinkled Peach") and *Coprinopsis picacea* ("Magpie Inkcap"). It was interesting to see an example of woodland which is managed both for commercial gain and for wildlife, with a diverse patchwork of trees in an open structure, and protection afforded to species such as the uncommon Wild Service Tree, plus habitat suitable for Nightingales.

The Great Grey Shrike reported last week at Woolmer Forest disappeared from that location, but then there began to be sightings from Ockley Common (Thursley) that may have been the same bird. There is a spot on Thursley Common called "Shrike Hill" by birders, as it was a haunt of Great Grey Shrikes in the winter for many years, but these super birds are no longer regular there. At this site and elsewhere Crossbills continued to be seen this week. Gadwall have arrived on our lakes, having migrated from Scandinavia to spend the winter in more moderate climes. These ducks look quite drab from a distance, but they have attractively intricate plumage when seen closely enough.

A Clouded Yellow seen at Woolmer Forest was probably the last of the year of this intensely-coloured migrant. Red Admirals, Peacocks and Brimstones were seen in the warmest spells. Amongst a good set of standard seasonal moths, December Moths made their first appearance. Possibly the most unusual moth this week was a Brindled Plume. The T-shaped plume moths are quite familiar visitors inside houses, with the plain Common Plume being the most common, followed by the Beautiful Plume. The Brindled is quite rare, and differs from the Beautiful in some pale speckling and in details of the long scales on the trailing edge of the hindwing. Other interesting insects noticed were a Minotaur Beetle, which we see more often in winter months, and a larva of a Glow-worm (which is of course a type of beetle).

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

Photos: Devil's Fingers fungus (by T. Hardy); Clouded Yellow (by M. Lawn); Butter Waxcap (by M. Tomsett); Magpie Inkcap (by A. Swan); Hedgehog Mushroom (by A. Swan); leaves of Wild Service Tree (by A. Swan); Gadwall males (by A. Swan); Minotaur Beetle (by M. Tomsett); Green-brindled Crescent (by M. Tomsett); December Moth (by M. Tomsett); larva of Glow-worm (by M. Tomsett); the coral fungus *Ramaria stricta* (by A. Swan); Brindled Plume (with wing detail) (by A. Swan); Yellow Stagshorn fungus (by A. Swan); *Rhodotus palmatus* (by A. Swan).

