

Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 5/1/25.

A night-time walk on a local common revealed a flurry of activity among Winter Moths. These may be most familiar as the moths illuminated by car headlights on country lanes. The flying ones are males and the females are wingless, and the males seen flying are seeking tree trunks or fences where females are spreading pheromones to attract mates. Once mated, the ability of the female to distribute eggs is limited, so concentrations of females in favourable sites are to be expected. Another seasonal speciality, the neatly marked Common Quaker made its first appearance this week.

The cold weather prompted an overhaul of a log pile, and a cluster of stipples was noticed on a damp apple log. On closer inspection, it was found to be a tight group of fungal structures, each about 1.5mm in diameter and consisting of a bowl-shaped smooth spore-producing surface surrounded by a shaggy raised rim. This is a common configuration for cup fungi, and it looked like the cup fungus *Lasiobelonium variegatum*. There are two main and fundamentally separate groups of fungi: the ascomycetes, in which spores are arranged inside sausage-shaped sacs (asci), and the basidiomycetes, where spores are generated externally on club-shaped structures (basidia). After microscopic examination the identification had to be reviewed: it appears instead to be *Merismodes anomala*, very much a look-alike of the cup fungus. This belongs to a group known as the cyphelloids: these are related to familiar gill-bearing mushroom-shaped fungi, but the "mushroom" has been reduced to such a size that there is no room for gills! Also very small (2mm diameter) was *Mycena clavularis*, which has become a regular in the middle of damp winters on a rough-barked garden tree.

Two unusual lichens were noticed. Wrinkled pale grey sheets with prickly undersurfaces found occasionally on heathland were *Peltigera membranacea*, which belong to a group known as the dog lichens. There are many species of *Cladonia* that have antler, club or goblet shaped structures. Some of these sprout bright red spore producing surfaces, and the one found this week is provisionally identified as *Cladonia diversa*.

A report of a single Brambling in the town is hopefully the first of many of this colourful winter visitor. Further afield, a remarkable seven Water Rails were reported at Unstead (Godalming).

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

Photos: The fungus *Merismodes anomala* (2 photos) (by A. Swan); Winter Moth pair mating (by C. Adsett); the lichen *Peltigera membranacea* (by G. House); Common Quaker moth (by M. Tomsett); the fungus *Mycena clavularis* (by A. Swan); the lichen *Cladonia ?diversa* (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 12/1/25.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers began drumming this week: this was reported as commencing on the same day (Friday) by several observers in different places. Although not exactly a sign of spring (it can happen pre-Christmas), this territorial behaviour does show that the birds are preparing for the new season. The much rarer Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was reported from RSPB Farnham Heath late in the week. The highlight of the week, though, was a Hen Harrier seen on two days at Woolmer Forest. It had a band on the tail (referred to as a "ringtail") which indicates a juvenile or female. Also at this site was an unusually large flock of Meadow Pipits (14), but this was dwarfed by the flock of 100 Linnets reported late in the week at Milford.

It was a difficult week for water birds: most of our ponds and lakes developed an inch-thick coating of ice. Ponds that are directly fed by springs, though, were a little warmer and were packed with ducks, gulls, Moorhens and Coots.

Several members of the Society undertook the annual search for plants flowering in the first 7 days of the year (plants tended in gardens excluded). The total was 19: Hairy Bittercress, Primrose, Common Gorse, Petty Spurge, Herb Robert, Ivy, Hazel, Holly, Great Periwinkle, Ivy-leaved Toadflax, Common Field Speedwell, Hogweed, Daisy, Buttercup, Dandelion, Smooth Sow-thistle, Ragwort, Groundsel, Annual Meadow Grass. This was down on the 27 last year, and many of this year's flowers were only barely open. The lack of sun in late December resulted in the soil staying cool, and the frost and snow certainly didn't help! Common Gorse is probably the only plant on the list for which mid-winter flowering in the wild is normal – indeed, blossoms were luxuriant in places.

(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): Common Gorse; Black-headed Gulls; the moss *Orthotrichum affine* (with stalked spore capsules); the lichen *Xanthoria polycarpa* (with abundant apothecia).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 19/1/25.

For a couple of days the cold and gloom were interrupted by some relatively balmy weather. This triggered an enthusiastic dawn and dusk chorus, and there was some revival of insect life. Two uncommon nocturnal moths were found attracted to light: the Dark Chestnut and the micro-moth *Agonopterix arenella*. It is extraordinary that among the very few active insects this week there was also one of the UK's most exotic-looking beetles: the Minotaur Beetle. We have noticed in recent years that this species is liable to emerge from heathland burrows on mild nights throughout the winter. Only the males have the characteristic bull-like horns. Structures such as these in insects are typically used for tournaments between rival males.

The first singing Woodlark of the season was heard at Woolmer Pond, and there was also a lot of noise from Tawny Owls in wooded areas. A Barn Owl was glimpsed in a garden to the east of the town, where a Sparrowhawk was also noted. Further afield, a Cattle Egret was reported at Waverley Abbey. Bird-watchers on the Sussex coast (near Seaford) have been distracted this week by a Humpback Whale!

Now that the vegetation killed by the frosts has shrunk away, the tiny plants that soon get shaded-out in spring have come to the fore. It is still too early for most of the mosses and liverworts to produce spore capsules, and identification using just leaves is a challenge. The distinctive two-pronged leaves of the liverwort *Lophocolea bidentata* are an exception, and this common species can be found now on stones and wet logs near ground level.

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

Photos: Minotaur Beetle – male (by A. Swan); same, with appendages retracted (by A. Swan); Minotaur Beetle – female (by A. Swan); the micromoth *Agonopterix arenella* (by M. Tomsett); Dark Chestnut moth (by M. Tomsett); the liverwort *Lophocolea bidentata* (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 26/1/25.

The RSPB's national "Big Garden Birdwatch" took place over the weekend. For anyone who attempted the count on Sunday, numbers will have been dramatically affected by the weather. On Saturday one garden yielded 10 species: Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Nuthatch, House Sparrow, Goldfinch and Bullfinch, of which only Nuthatch and Bullfinch may not be among the most-recorded species nationally.

Needless to say, birds were much more abundant and diverse during the Society's visit to RSPB Pulborough Brooks. Among the range of duck species, the large number of Wigeon was particularly striking, and the Pintails were very handsome. A good number of Snipe were seen, and there was a distant sighting of the White-tailed Eagles, for which the reserve has become renowned.

Elsewhere, the best bird report was a Bearded Tit at Shalford Water Meadows – not the first one in that area this season. A Woodcock was seen at Woolmer Pond and a Red Kite just to the east of the town. Following the rapid spread of Red Kites in the last 20 years, it might have been expected that they would become more frequent hereabouts. There is a strong colony to the west of our area, but sightings near the town and eastwards are still not common.

Despite generally unfavourable conditions, there was a first Spring Usher moth of the season. Also giving grounds for optimism were the distinctively blotched emerging leaves of Early Purple Orchids.

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

Photos: Early Purple Orchid leaves (by M. Tomsett); Spring Usher moth (by M. Tomsett); Red Kite (by M. Tomsett); Jay (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 2/2/25.

A Bittern was reported at Frensham Little Pond. This iconic reedbed species seemed to be becoming more frequent at this site in 2023, but apparently didn't visit so much last year. Birds seen here may be visitors from Fleet Ponds to the north, where they are more regular. A second rarity was a Marsh Harrier reported from Thursley Common. Woodlarks were seen at Thursley and at Woolmer Forest, with five singing males at the latter site, where there were also 16 Reed Buntings counted. In a good week for birds, there was also more activity from commoner species, with Greenfinch, Coal Tits and Song Thrushes noted amongst the lively songsters at Milford Common. One or two Bramblings continue to be seen in gardens in the town. Five Ravens were seen simultaneously in the western suburbs: a remarkable number for a species that is normally seen in ones and twos. Ravens seem to be continuing to succeed in our area – we can recall that they were completely absent here in the 1990s and were regarded as northern/western upland birds. They are most readily detected by their distinctive deep, hollow croaking call, usually transcribed as “cronk”.

Snowdrops can now be found flowering in untended places. They are certainly not a native species in the UK: once, their occurrence away from houses was taken to indicate the historical existence of cottages, but now roadside Snowdrops are more likely to have derived from casual dumps of garden material.

Close inspection of patches of *Lophocolea* liverworts on damp logs may now reveal spore capsules. These emerge from a structure called the perianth, which is the site of fertilisation of female gametes by mobile male gametes. This results in the production of the sporophyte, which can be regarded as a separate organism with the sole function of dispersing spores.

There were a few milder spells when insects were about, including bumblebees and hoverflies. There was a reasonable set of seasonal moths on the wing, including the relatively uncommon micro-moth *Ypsolopha ustella*. This is a variable species but has some distinctive forms, including one with a dark streak along the wing.

Our local beaver is reported to be doing well and is very busy in its secure site. She has increased the area of marshy ground in her territory, which is expected to give biodiversity a boost and also hold more water in the “uplands”, hence reducing flood risk downstream.

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Photos: Robin with Snowdrops (by M. Tomsett); Raven (2 photos) (by A. Swan); Beaver traces (by M. Phillis); the micro-moth *Ypsolopha ustella* (by A. Swan); sporophyte of *Lophocolea* liverwort inside transparent perianth (by A. Swan); same, emerging from perianth (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 9/2/25.

Only one report has reached us of frog spawn in our area so far this year. It has been normal in the last 10 years or so for frogs to spawn here in the second week of February: this is earlier than typical dates in the last century, but the timing seems to be quite stable now. Spawning is earlier closer to the coast and further to the south-west, where it can be in the autumn. The intention seems to be to spawn as soon as thick ice is unlikely. A very swollen female was a sign that there should be more local activity very soon.

There were one or two nights this week when there was an unusual combination for February of mild temperatures and little rain, and this brought forth a good range of winter-flying moths: there were 24 individuals of 7 species in one local garden. Highlights were the uncommon Small Brindled Beauty (which showed its yellowish antennae, which are usually tucked away), a well-marked Chestnut, an early March Moth and the well-named Dotted Border. Not all English moth names are obvious: a Beautiful Plume was found hibernating in a summerhouse, and it is not clear that this species deserves its epithet, even compared to others among the rather spindly T-shaped plume moths.

The first female flowers on Hazel were seen in several places this week: these are tiny vivid red tufts protruding from a swollen bud – they could hardly be more different from the male flowers on the familiar long catkins.

The observations on Ravens and Red Kites reported in recent weeks have been reinforced this week – both species are becoming more common, and Ravens have been seen doing spectacular aerobatic displays near the town. Siskins have been reported in gardens, and there are continuing sightings of a Brambling in the town – there may be just the one.

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Photos: Frog, swollen with spawn (by J. Godden); Small Brindled Beauty moth (by M. Tomsett); Beautiful Plume moth (by A. Swan); Dotted Border moth (by M. Tomsett); Chestnut moth (by A. Swan); March Moth (by A. Swan); Satellite moth (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 16/2/25.

The courtship of Great Crested Grebes is an intriguing spectacle, and it was appropriate that it was observed in a week that is also known for courtship in humans! The grebe pairs have an extensive repertoire of dances and poses, all of which are thought to allow the birds to advertise their suitability. The commonest ritual is “head shaking”, but some of the other displays are bizarre, such as “ghostly penguin”, when the male emerges from the water in front of the female in a vertical position with head drooping, and “weed-dance” where one or both birds dive to find scraps of plants, which they ritualistically offer to each other. There is always a chance of witnessing these spectacular performances on local lakes around now: they start early in the year and may continue until egg-laying, which is usually in late March or early April.

Reports of unusual birds have been sparse this week. Blackcaps have been heard singing: these will be overwintering birds, rather than fresh migrants. Some gardens have had Blackcaps through the winter, and this is generally becoming more common. Small flocks of Redwings have been seen in woods, but this was a reminder that this species has been far less numerous than last year. They were seen gleaning morsels from leaf litter, the modest crop of berries having been long exhausted.

Two seasonal fungi were found. The Scarlet Elf Cup is the most vividly-coloured of the UK cup fungi, and appears in late winter, growing on rotted logs at ground level in very wet places. It should be looked for along streamsides. Velvet Shanks (*Flammulina velutipes*) is another winter species and can keep growing regardless of frost: it has a form of anti-freeze that protects it from the formation of ice crystals that destroy most other fungi.

The continuing flat-lining cold temperatures and lack of sun have prevented the spring flora from developing. A search for flowers in the carpets of Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage along the banks of the Wey revealed just tightly-closed flower buds.

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Photos (all by A. Swan): Great Crested Grebe pair performing courtship ritual (2 photos); Velvet Shanks; Scarlet Elf Cup (2 photos); flower buds of Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage.



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 23/2/25.

We were able to enjoy the first spring-like weather of the year: one of our observers noted “Warm sunshine, many frogs burbling happily in the pond, a woodpecker drumming, a couple of bumblebees, swathes of crocus and Snowdrops”. Just a few plant species began flowering in the wild: Lesser Celandines, Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage, Primrose and Lungwort. Although Lungwort (*Pulmonaria officinalis*) is not native to the UK, it is a natural component of the flora in nearby mainland Europe and it is thoroughly naturalised here. Its name derives from the leaf shape, and this fancied resemblance was enough for it to be used to treat lung diseases in the days of “sympathetic magic” in herbal medicine.

Right at the end of the week there was news of a real rarity at Lindford: a Black-throated Thrush. This is a Siberian species that typically just has a few UK records per year (there may be more news on this next week). Other unusual bird reports were a Brent Goose on Frensham Great Pond, a Water Rail at Deadwater Valley and five Mandarin ducks at Oakhanger (also one on Heath Pond, Petersfield). This species was brought into the UK for its highly ornamental attributes, and it began breeding in the Wey Valley west of Haslemere in the 1980s. Further afield, there was some astonishment at the size of Hawfinch flocks – many hundreds – at both Kingley Vale and Mickleham (near Dorking), in both cases apparently attracted to yew berries. It has been a good winter for Hawfinches, but unfortunately they seem not to have been seen very close to the town.

Frogspawn has been reported on just a few ponds so far. A couple of Smooth Newts were rescued from a garden swimming pool: many newts spend the winter in deep leaf litter, and they will now be returning to ponds.

The Oak Beauty became the first moth of the year named a “beauty” that actually lives up to its name; it was accompanied by the uncommon Grey Shoulder-knot. A curious association found on a Hazel bush was several clusters of the "Lapidary Snail" (*Helicigona lapicida*), each apparently feeding on a blob of a jelly fungus (probably *Exidea glandulosa*).

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Photos: Lungwort (by A. Swan); Smooth Newts (by M. Tomsett); bumblebee on crocus (by M. Tomsett); Oak Beauty moth (by M. Tomsett); sleeping Mandarin duck (by A. Swan); Grey Shoulder-knot moth (by M. Tomsett); Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage (by A. Swan); Lapidary Snails feeding on jelly fungus (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 2/3/25.

The Society's visit to RSPB Medmerry (Selsey) was chiefly intended to view coastal birds, but although Avocets, Ringed Plovers, Golden Plovers, Mediterranean Gulls and other wetland birds were among the 42 species seen, the highlight was probably an unusually large flock of Yellowhammers. This is a species that we associate with hedges in chalk country, but a few do breed in heathy commons in the Haslemere area. In the winter they head south to the coast or across the Channel; the flock of more than 30 at Medmerry seems to have consisted of the over-wintering birds supplemented by some early migrants.

The Black-throated Thrush reported last week at Lindford remained in the Bordon area for the whole of this week. A look at previous records of this Siberian species shows that, typically, only one bird is seen per year in the whole of the UK, and these sightings are more often in Scotland, so it is a big event for the local birding community.

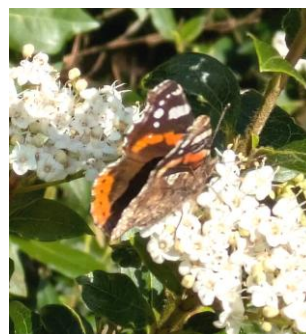
Other bird reports this week included the rare Ring-necked Duck on a pond near Alford (possibly a stray bird from its native North America, but perhaps an escape from a wildfowl collection); a Woodcock at Linchmere Common "roding" (a territorial flight); and at Thursley Common a Barn Owl patrolling regularly during daylight hours, plus a single Hawfinch passing through.

The sunny days brought out large numbers of Honeybees on to winter-flowering heathers in gardens, plus a few bumblebees (Buff-tailed), Drone Flies and scattered reports of Red Admiral butterflies out of hibernation. The most interesting insect of the week, though, was a Cinnamon Bug (*Corizus hyoscyami*), which is one of many insect species that were formerly only coastal, but are now spreading northwards.

Several plants of Colt's-foot found at Medmerry were a reminder that this attractive plant has declined hugely in recent years, except at coastal sites. Its flowers have scaly stems and it appears at this stage to be leafless: no leaves appear until after the flowers wither, and they are large and horseshoe shaped. Its favoured inland habitat is between roads and roadside ditches, perhaps thriving on mud dug from the ditch. Does it still grow in the Haslemere area?

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Photos: Yellowhammer at Medmerry (by A. Swan); Reed Bunting at Medmerry (by A. Swan); Cinnamon Bug (by M. Tomsett); Colt's-foot at Medmerry (by A. Swan); the ground beetle *Carabus nemoralis* (by M. Tomsett); Honeybee (by A. Swan); Red Admiral (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 9/3/25.

A long-awaited warm spell immediately triggered the awakening from hibernation of good numbers of Brimstone butterflies – this was noted on the same day in many places across our area. There were also a few Commas and Peacocks, also out of hibernation, but we are still looking out for the first butterflies of spring that are fresh adults (i.e. just out of their chrysalises), which will be Orange-tips.

There was a parallel boom in numbers and diversity of nocturnal moths, with the uncommon Yellow Horned possibly the best, but also Oak Beauty, Oak Nycteoline, Hebrew Character, Common Quaker and Small Quaker. The best micro-moth was the uncommon *Acleris cristana*, which is readily identified by the large tufts of greatly lengthened scales on each wing. It is just as well that they have this key feature, as there is little consistency in colour pattern, with more than 100 forms recognised. Some Victorian collectors specialised in accumulating the full range!

The beginning of “ornithological spring” could be defined by the first singing Chiffchaff, and indeed that event did occur this week in Woolmer Forest, although it hasn’t yet been heard in most places. One of our members visited Kingley Vale (north of Chichester) to see the exceptional Hawfinch gathering, and estimated that he saw 100 of these spectacular birds in the Yew woods. Otherwise, it was a quiet week for birds locally, although there was a report of a Ruddy Shelduck at Milford: probably an “escape” rather than a vagrant.

Frogs have now spawned in their favoured ponds. Other freshwater activity included “whirligig” beetles swimming in circles on the surface, and Common Backswimmer bugs, which will prey on tadpoles when they emerge. The progress of spring among the local flora included Sweet Violets: generally the first of the *Viola* species to flower, and distinguished from others by their more rounded leaves as well as by their scent.

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Photos: Comma butterfly (by M. Tomsett); Yellow Horned moth (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Acleris cristana*: 3 views (by A. Swan); Oak Beauty moth (by A. Swan); Tree Bumblebee (by M. Tomsett); Buff-tailed Bumblebee (by M. Tomsett); Common Backswimmer bug (by A. Swan); Hebrew Character moth (by A. Swan); Oak Nycteoline moth (by M. Tomsett); Yew woods at Kingley Vale (by P. Nevett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 16/3/25.

We had just one extra day of the previous week's warm weather, and that yielded more butterflies, moths and beetles. The most significant were: a Shoulder Stripe moth, a species that has been declining steadily for the last 15 years; the micro-moth *Acleris umbrana*, categorised as Nationally Scarce, but quite regular in our area; and a Black Sexton Beetle, usually the first of this carrion-burying group to appear in the spring.

A northerly air stream then returned to stall the development of the season, with frosty mornings and very cold air by day. Some colour in woodlands and hedgerows was provided by the blossom of Cherry Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), a non-native "garden escape" which can appear in quite wild settings: it is very effectively "bird-sown". Primroses and Wild Daffodils made slow progress towards full bloom.

There has been little bird news, with the anticipated incoming migrants no doubt held up on the other side of the Channel by the head wind. The first hirundines of spring are usually Sand Martins, and there was an isolated report of a few of these as close as Hinton Ampner. Barn Swallows have been reported from the westerly parts of the country, which escaped the worst of the plume of cold air.

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Photos: Thawing hoar frost on blossoms of *Prunus cerasifera* (Cherry Plum) (by A. Swan); Black Sexton beetle (by M. Tomsett); Comma butterfly (by A. Swan); Red Admiral butterfly (by A. Swan); Shoulder Stripe moth (by M. Tomsett); Yellow Horned moth (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 23/3/25.

A few Chiffchaffs could be heard singing, rather half-heartedly, on Tuesday, but by Thursday there were good numbers of them in full voice everywhere, thanks to the return of warm weather. Migrant Sand Martins were seen at Woolmer Pond, and it won't be long before we have other hirundines and Willow Warblers. There was a report of a Hawfinch just to the west of the town and another at Thursley, so the remarkable year for this species continues. The excellent set of records from Tice's Meadow (Farnham) was supplemented this week by a pair of Spoonbills – these amazing birds are increasing in the UK, but usually just along the coasts.

Butterflies also enjoyed the weather, with several reports of Peacocks, in particular. An attractive and uncommon picture-winged fly, *Tephritis formosa*, was found, which was a reminder of what an exceptional year 2024 was for unusual flies locally. Moths were abundant through the mild nights, with 132 individuals of 13 species counted in one moth trap! The more attractive included Brindled Beauty, Engrailed and Early Thorn, whilst the most curious was the micro-moth *Pammene giganteana* (small, despite its name!). This seems to be the first record of the species in S W Surrey for many years, and it has a very unusual life history: larvae feed in the galls on oak trees that are induced by gall wasps for their own larvae, but the moth larvae do not apparently damage their hosts!

Botanical highlights included the first Cuckooflowers and, in open areas on commons to the west of the town, possibly the peak of the Wild Daffodil display.

The Society's visit to a stretch of the River Rother focussed on the attempts to restore the river ecosystem, for the benefit of fish, anglers and wildlife in general. Samples from the river bed were rich in freshwater snails, small fish and invertebrate larvae, including large numbers of "flat-bodied stone-clingers", which were larvae of the mayfly *Heptagenia sulphurea* (the "Yellow May Dun" of anglers).

Sadly, the condition of the Wey stream between Shottermill and Camelsdale was not so happy on Sunday, following a pollution incident which created huge masses of foam and killed large numbers of fish – possibly everything in the river in that stretch. Environment Agency officers were rapidly on the case, and it is hoped that prosecutions will result from this environmental vandalism, whether deliberate or negligent.

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Photos: Cuckooflower (by A. Swan); Peacock butterfly (by A. Swan); Wild Daffodils (by A. Swan); Brindled Beauty moth (by M. Tomsett); the micro-moth *Pammene giganteana* (by M. Tomsett); Engrailed moth (by M. Tomsett); the fly *Tephritis formosa* (by A. Swan); the "flat-bodied stone-clinger" larva of the mayfly *Heptagenia sulphurea* (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 30/3/25.

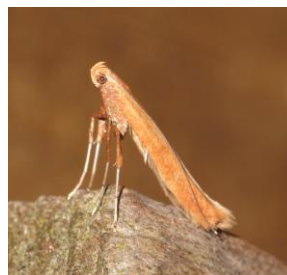
The weather settled into a pattern of morning mists followed by sunshine: a spring reminiscent of the “lockdown” season of 2020. Lesser Celandines have been glaringly bright on waysides and Primroses are in full flower. Cowslips may be found in a few places, but these are more characteristic of the chalk country, so in our area they indicate unusually limey soils (sometimes due to soil disturbance) or artificial sowing. In places along the banks of the Wey, some weird white and purple growths are stirring: the flower buds of Purple Toothwort. This is a leafless and stemless parasite on the roots of trees (especially willows). Also by the Wey, a liverwort found on tree bark proved to be *Radula complanata* (“Even Scalewort”), which seems to be uncommon in our area. As with many lichen species, it disappeared during the years of high atmospheric sulphur dioxide, but is now recovering.

The first local Barn Swallows of the season were seen at Woolmer Pond, but a more exciting sighting at the same place was an Osprey, on its way northwards. On the basis of a description from a non-birder, a bird seen in the Punchbowl area must surely have been a Ring Ouzel; a few have been reported in England this week, and we should expect more to be seen on our local hills soon.

The warmest evenings produced an abundance of moths. Joining the large numbers of common species (especially Common Quakers and Small Quakers) were some rarities: the White-marked and Blossom Underwing being particularly notable. Micro-moths included *Acleris literana*, *Acleris cristana* (the third different colour form this season) and a smart *Caloptilia* that would require microscopy for definitive identification (either *C. betulicolor* or *C. elongella*). Butterflies, particularly Brimstones, were on the wing, although not in huge numbers, and the first bee-flies of the season were visiting garden flowers.

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Photos: Cowslip (by A. Swan); Streamer moth (by M. Tomsett); flower buds of Purple Toothwort (by A. Swan); Lesser Celandines (by V. Carter); the micro-moth *Caloptilia* sp. (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Acleris literana* (by M. Tomsett); the micro-moth *Acleris cristana* (by A. Swan); White-marked moth (by M. Tomsett); Blossom Underwing moth (by M. Tomsett); the liverwort *Radula complanata* (by A. Swan).



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 overwintering 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.

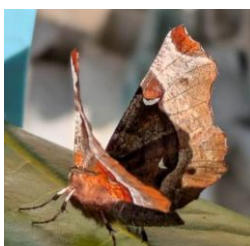
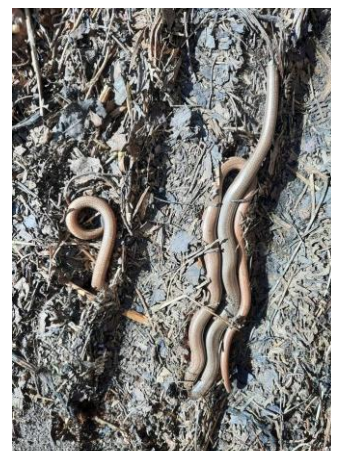
Sheets of corrugated iron lying flat on the ground in heathland are often a sign that reptiles are being monitored: they enjoy the protection and warmth under the sheet, and this helps to reveal their presence. A concentration of Slow-worms was found in a survey this week, plus Common Lizards.

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.

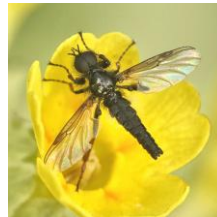
This must be the peak time for spring flowers. Bluebells are looking particularly good this year, especially when seen against a backdrop of white Greater Stitchwort, and Early Purple Orchids may be found in woods on clay in the Weald and in grassy places on the chalk downs. Along the Wey near the town, 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.

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

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.

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

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).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 4/5/25.

The outstanding find this week was of national significance: a group of Fir Carpet moths in Grayshott. There are only about six previous UK records, and all these were of individuals at coastal locations that were probably migrants. Finding more than one at this distance from the coast means that this is the first evidence of breeding in the UK for this central/southern European species. Our warming climate is allowing many insect species from the south to begin breeding in the UK, but the number of species that are declining is greater. Other interesting moths this week included Fox Moth, Orange Footman, Lime Hawkmoth, Poplar Hawkmoth and a set of uncommon species associated with Alder: the Alder Moth, Alder Kitten and the micromoth *Phyllonorycter stettinensis*.

Following the pollution incident in the Wey at Shottermill in March, there was some good news: a Beautiful Demoiselle (a large, blue-winged damselfly) was found on the wing at Hammer. This species has larvae that live in fast-flowing streams, so this one must have been in the stream when the incident happened. Whether anything survived nearer to Shottermill, where the concentration of the pollutants must have been higher, remains to be seen.

May is a good month for beetles: this week a Pine Weevil and a Lesser Thorn-tipped Longhorn Beetle were found, neither very common. Bees have been busy, including solitary bees that occupy burrows in soil and holes in wood, along with an unusually large number of their parasitoids: the wasp-mimic nomad bees. Anyone with a "bug hotel" in their garden may find the holes recently blocked up by bees that have secured their eggs in compartments. Fresh butterflies this week included Dingy Skippers and a report of the very special Pearl-bordered Fritillary from its local site.

In the warm weather, the aroma from Common Gorse flowers – exactly like coconut – filled the air in our heathy places, and the vividly-coloured Sand Lizard could be found. The piercingly loud bursts of song from Cetti's Warblers were heard around a local lake, whilst the strange mating behaviour of Moorhens was witnessed. The first of the local Swifts arrived and took up residence in some of their usual haunts, leaving just one migrant bird species still to arrive – the Nightjar.

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

Photos: Fir Carpet moth (by T. Hardy); Beautiful Demoiselle (by A. Swan); Sand Lizard (by A. Swan); Orange Footman moth (by A. Swan); Poplar Hawkmoth (by M. Tomsett); Pine Weevil (by A. Swan); Fox Moth (by T. Hardy); the micro-moth *Phyllonorycter stettinensis* (by A. Swan); Lesser Thorn-tipped Longhorn Beetle (by A. Swan); Alder Kitten moth (by M. Tomsett); Alder Moth (by A. Swan); Moorhen pair in pre-mating ritual (by A. Swan); "bug hotel" being used by solitary bees (by F. Line).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 11/5/25.

Last year the boardwalk at Thursley Common was voted the favourite walk in the country, and it can be particularly appreciated by wildlife enthusiasts: it allows comfortable access to a very wet boggy landscape that has many special species. Currently, the unique flowers of Bogbean can be examined, with their extraordinary fringed petals. It is not a “bean” – the name derives from the three-lobed leaves, a little like those of garden beans. The boardwalk is particularly popular among dragonfly enthusiasts, as this is one of the best sites for these in the UK, and the season is now just starting. At Thursley and other heathy areas with scattered trees, the distinctive song and courtship display of Tree Pipits can be enjoyed: they flutter and “parachute” to the ground from tree tops.

The week was characterised by sunny days that were offset by chilly north-east winds and clear, almost frosty, nights. These conditions were not ideal for insects, but Common Blue butterflies made their appearance and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries could be found. Two common metallic beetles started to become numerous in meadows and gardens: the Malachite beetle and the “Swollen-thighed” beetle *Oedemera nobilis*. Unusual curiosities were the Horned Treehopper, one of only two UK species from a largely tropical group of bugs, and the very spiky larva of the sawfly *Periclista albida*.

A caterpillar found this week was identified by experts as a Light Crimson Underwing moth, and probably the first caterpillar of this species ever found in the county. This is proof of breeding, but is hardly a surprise considering the rapidly increased frequency with which adults of these have been found in recent years. Prior to this decade, it was only a casual migrant, and it is good to see this glamorous species doing so well. Other good moth finds were the Peach Blossom, Rustic Shoulder-knot, Grey/Dark Dagger and the uncommon Barred Umber. Micro-moths included the rare *Hysterophora maculosana*, which feeds on bluebell seed capsules, and *Phyllonorycter lautella*, which is often observed as a larval leaf-mine but rarely seen as an adult.

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

Photos: Bogbean (by A. Swan); Broad-bodied Chaser (by A. Swan); caterpillar of Light Crimson Underwing moth (by M. Tomsett); larva of the sawfly *Periclista albida* (by M. Tomsett); Pearl-bordered Fritillary (by A. Swan); Tree Pipit (by A. Swan); Barred Umber moth (by M. Tomsett); Peach Blossom moth (by M. Tomsett); Grey/Dark Dagger moth (identification uncertain) (by M. Tomsett); the micro-moth *Phyllonorycter lautella* (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Hysterophora maculosana* (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 18/5/25.

Spotted Flycatchers were seen and heard locally, and Nightjars have arrived on our heathlands, so this completes the set of incoming migrants that will breed here this summer. Spotted Flycatchers are observed much more in early autumn on their return journey – we see few reports of them during the breeding season as they are very secretive. Hopefully, Nightjars will do well this year, as there are good numbers of Cockchafer beetles and large moths around for their crepuscular hunting flights. In general, it looks like the migrant species are quite strong this year, especially Nightingales and Garden, Willow and Reed Warblers.

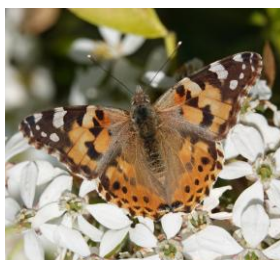
Also migrating from the south are Painted Lady butterflies: some more sightings this week amounted to perhaps more than the whole of last year already. The most significant butterfly sighting, though was a Wood White. Chiddingfold Forest is of national significance for this delicate and rare species, but this week there was a repeat sighting in a garden much closer to Haslemere. The Small Heath butterfly, which has the conservation status “Vulnerable”, seems to be having a good year. The damage caused by a heath fire at the end of the previous week at Chapel Common was reviewed, and it appears that it is mainly a patch of gorse that burnt, rather than heather or grass. Hopefully the important populations of butterflies (including Small Heath and Silver-studded Blue) won't be greatly affected, although some bird nests must have been lost: it is a site for Dartford Warblers.

Giving points for rarity and beauty, the stand-out moth this week was the unique Orange Moth. Distinctive micro-moths included the day-flying *Dichrorampha petiverella* and the formerly very rare but now regular *Ethmia quadrillemma*. There was a report of the rare Drab Looper in Chiddingfold Forest. Other interesting insect reports were the rare Heath Tiger Beetle at Hankley Common, the much commoner Green Tiger Beetle laying eggs in sand (their larvae ambush passing insects from burrows) and a nest of Tree Bumblebees in a bird box. Also noticed were several flies in the genus *Empis*: these look very ordinary from above, but a side view reveals their extraordinary elongated “beak” – they are predators and use this organ to pierce their insect prey.

It has been too dry to hope to find spring fungi, but some wood-rotting species can appear even in these conditions: a fresh bracket of Dryad's Saddle (*Polyporus squamosus*) appeared this week.

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

Photos: Orange Moth (by M. Tomsett); Painted Lady (by A. Swan); Dryad's Saddle (by F. Line); Reed Warbler (by A. Swan); Wood White (by M. Tomsett); Heath Tiger Beetle (by G. House); Green Tiger Beetle laying eggs (by A. Swan); Lime Hawkmoth (by M. Tomsett); Small Heath (by M. Tomsett); the fly *Empis nigriceps* (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Dichrorampha petiverella* (by J. Godden); the micro-moth *Ethmia quadrillemma* (by A. Swan); nest of Tree Bumblebees (by T. Hardy).



Wildlife News

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

Our area has some important populations of Silver-studded Blue butterflies, and late this week the first of the season was seen just emerging: an exceptionally early date. In a bizarre relationship, their larvae are tended underground by ants, and ants were seen accompanying the freshly emerged adult on a local heath. The larvae feed above ground at night but by day they are protected in ants' nests; the ants are rewarded with a sugary secretion.

During the Society's visit to RSPB Farnham Heath a chorus of Field Crickets was enjoyed. This species nearly became extinct in the UK but re-introductions and conservation measures have been successful, and there are now more than 300 "singing" males at this site. The male crickets attempt to attract females to their burrows by stridulating (rubbing wings together) – there is a "plectrum" on one wing that is moved over a washboard-like panel on another. There were also good sights and sounds of Woodlarks and Stonechats, and an unusual bug was found (*Pithanus maekelii*) that was convincingly mimicked an ant in shape and behaviour until viewed closely. This is apparently the first record of this insect in the area.

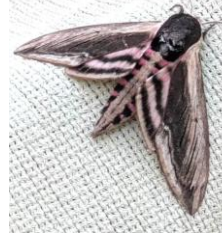
This is the time of year when wildlife photographers find ruby-tailed wasps irresistible. These are parasitoids of solitary bees, and may be found on old timber structures as they look for crevices where bees may be nesting. Two found this week were the small *Pseudomalus auratus* and a larger one from the *Chrysis ignita* group. Also attractively metallic are the demoiselles: Beautiful Demoiselles in fast-running streams and Banded Demoiselles in sluggish lowland rivers. The Wey at Frensham must be transitional, as both were seen.

In a reasonable week for moths the highlights were the firsts of the season of the pink Elephant Hawkmoth and the huge Privet Hawkmoth. It is a good time to look for caterpillars: the spectacular Vapourer Moth caterpillar was found. A chrysalis found in a greenhouse hatched out as the uncommon Light Brocade moth.

Although there were few notable bird reports, birdwatching at Thursley Common was exciting, with Curlews calling and flying, and Hobbies hunting for the increasingly abundant dragonflies.

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

Photos: Ruby-tailed wasp *Chrysis ignita* (agg.) (by A. Swan); Elephant Hawkmoth (by M. Tomsett); Privet Hawkmoth (by M. Tomsett); Banded Demoiselle (by A. Swan); freshly-emerged Silver-studded Blue butterfly, accompanied by protective ants (by G. House); same, with wings unfurled (by G. House); caterpillar of Vapourer moth (by M. Tomsett); The Shears moth (by T. Hardy); the ruby-tailed wasp *Pseudomalus auratus* (by A. Swan); chrysalis of Light Brocade moth (by T. Hardy); Light Brocade moth (by T. Hardy); the ant-mimic bug *Pithanus maekelii* (by A. Swan); Pale Tussock moth (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 1/6/25.

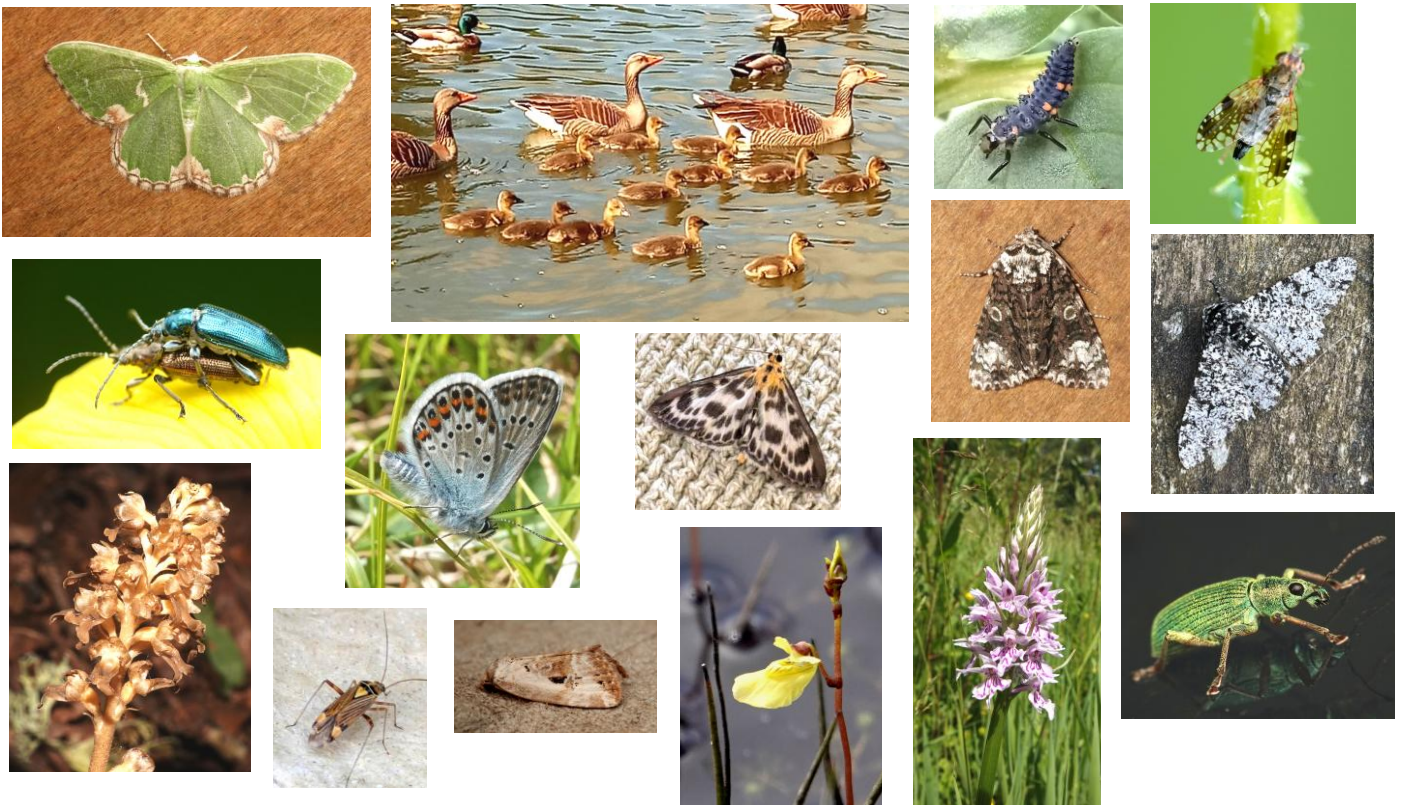
The main orchid season has now started, with Common Spotted-orchids flowering in damp meadows and woodland rides – although not so much in the latter habitat this year due to the dry spring. Also suffering from the dry weather is the Bird's-nest Orchid in its local site in the Hammer area: it has produced just two flowering stems this year. This entirely brown plant derives nutrients in a fungus-like manner, and has no chlorophyll. Another aberrant plant flowering now is the Lesser Bladderwort in the bogs at Thursley, which captures invertebrate prey in underwater bubble-like traps. Interesting botanical finds this week also included the rare white variety of Common Lousewort.

The first Meadow Brown butterflies emerged, and we expect to see these throughout the summer. Silver-studded Blues, a species with "Vulnerable" conservation status, seem to be in good numbers in several local sites. It was a good week for a wide variety of insects, including a surprising number of mating pairs of the leaf beetle *Plateumaris sericea* on pondside Yellow Flag flowers: the male and female have different colours, but both metallic. This species doesn't appear to have been recorded locally before. The moth assemblage developed more of a summer aspect, with Blotched Emerald, Peppered Moth, Coronet and Small Magpie being among the most striking. The uncommon and diminutive Rosy Marbled made an appearance, and there was a new site for the uncommon and declining Small Yellow Underwing.

Nightjars were heard in several heathlands, including in one site where it is absent in most years. It was noted that their "churring" didn't start until 10.00pm during one heathland survey, but one was heard continuing well past dawn at 8.30am. People looking for Nightjars at dawn or dusk might also encounter Woodcocks, which were seen in at least two places. The current priority in many bird species now is fledging their young, and bedraggled parent birds accompanied by many needy youngsters is a common sight! Ducklings, goslings and young Coots make an endearing picture along watersides.

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

Photos: Blotched Emerald (by A. Swan); Greylag goslings (by V. McClure); larva of 7-spot Ladybird (by J. Godden); the picture-wing fly *Tephritis neesii* (by A. Swan); *Plateumaris sericea* pair (by A. Swan); Silver-studded Blue (by A. Swan); Small Magpie (by M. Tomsett); Coronet (by A. Swan); Peppered Moth (by M. Tomsett); Bird's-nest Orchid (by A. Swan); Striped Oak Bug (by M. Tomsett); Rosy Marbled (by A. Swan); Lesser Bladderwort (by A. Swan); Common Spotted-orchid (by A. Swan); the weevil *Polydrusus formosus* (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 8/6/25.

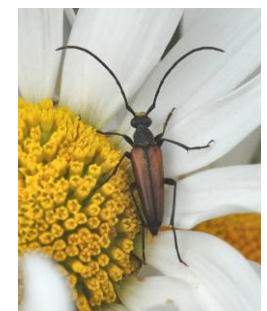
One of our members had a tantalising glimpse that was - probably - of an almost mythical bird behaviour: a Woodcock flying away while carrying its young between its feet! This behaviour has often been reported, but it is so fleeting that photography is near impossible. Consequently, it isn't universally accepted by ornithologists, who suggest that a lowered tail might create a misleading impression. A much more easily observed and equally endearing example of parental care is Great Crested Grebes carrying their young on their back, and this was photographed on a local lake this week. Other interesting bird reports were sparse, but there was a Little Ringed Plover at Enton and reports of Spotted Flycatchers heard, but not seen, in gardens.

A wildlife-friendly garden near Billingshurst that the Society visited was impressive not just for the range of wildflowers (including the uncommon Grass Vetchling) but for the abundance of insects, despite the blustery conditions. Beetles visiting flowers included the longhorn *Stenurella melanura*; there was a fresh (new generation) Small Tortoiseshell butterfly; and a very colourful caterpillar proved to be of a Yellow-tail moth. Meadow Browns had suddenly become very numerous there, as they have elsewhere.

In a week when wet and blustery conditions were not ideal for nocturnal moths, the highlights were the very large and uncommon Great Oak Beauty, a Barred Yellow, the uncommon barred form (f. *conversaria*) of the Mottled Beauty and the first Beautiful Hook-tip of the season. A curiosity was a very geometrical mating pair of Common Plumes! Sunshine after rain proved to be good conditions to photograph day-flying moths, including the very flighty and butterfly-like Speckled Yellow and the longhorn micro-moth *Nemophora degeerella*. The male of this latter species has extraordinary antennae that, at 4 times body length, must surely be proportionately the longest of any UK moth, or indeed any insect.

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

Photos: Small Tortoiseshell (by C. Lemka); Great Crested Grebe with two chicks: one riding on back with just head visible (by A. Swan); the longhorn micro-moth *Nemophora degeerella* (by A. Swan); Speckled Yellow (by A. Swan); Beautiful Hook-tip (by M. Tomsett); Great Oak Beauty (by A. Swan); Mottled Beauty, form *conversaria* (by T. Hardy); the longhorn beetle *Stenurella melanura* (by A. Swan); caterpillar of Yellow-tail moth (by A. Swan); Barred Yellow (by M. Tomsett); mating pair of Common Plume moths (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 15/6/25.

The return of warmer weather triggered a flurry of interesting insect reports. Firsts of the season among butterflies were Silver-washed Fritillaries and Marbled Whites, both two or three weeks earlier than usual, plus Large and Essex Skippers. Brambles are now in full bloom: there had been concern that earlier flowering of brambles resulted in them being faded before the appearance of butterflies that depended on them for nectar, but perhaps the insects are catching up. Silver-studded Blues continue to be seen in good numbers.

By coincidence, insects with numerical names kept cropping up: the rare micro-moth *Telechrysis tripuncta* (recently given the English name "Treble-spot"); the 4-spotted Chaser dragonfly; the day-flying 5-spot Burnet moth (a couple of weeks earlier than the commoner 6-spot Burnet); the 14-spot Ladybird (with the Latin word for 14 in its scientific name *Propylea quatuordecimpunctata*!); and the Figure of 80 moth (this time an interpretation of a wing mark, rather than a count of spots!). A 4-spotted Chaser photographed had unusually large dark patches (form *praenubila*), making it resemble tropical dragonflies, which often have strongly-marked wings.

Sawflies are abundant currently: these are relatives of bees and wasps, and can usually be recognised by strong dark veins on the leading edge of the forewings. Many of these have larvae which specialise in particular plants, and some are regarded as garden pests. The impressive Giant Birch Sawfly was found: it has curious yellow clubbed antennae. Other interesting insects found this week include the caterpillar of a Vapourer moth (which highly complex arrangements of bristles), an Eyed Hawkmoth and Narcissus Bulb Flies (a bee-mimic that is a type of hoverfly). Grassy places now have adult grasshoppers, recognised by having wings longer than the abdomen.

Good sized flocks of Swifts have been noticed, perhaps gathering to take advantage of flying ant emergences, but notable bird records were few. Slowworms and an Adder were found during a heathland reptile survey.

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

Photos: Marbled White (by A. Swan); Silver-washed Fritillary (by G. House); Giant Birch Sawfly (by A. Swan); Swollen-thighed Flower Beetle (by J. Godden); 5-spot Burnet moth (by A. Swan); 4-spotted Chaser dragonfly (by J. Godden); caterpillar of Vapourer moth (by A. Swan); Figure of 80 moth (by M. Tomsett); the micro-moth *Telechrysis tripuncta* (by A. Swan); Eyed Hawkmoth (by T. Hardy); Essex Skipper (by J. Godden); female Silver-studded Blue (by A. Swan); mating pair of Silver-studded Blue (by A. Swan); Narcissus Bulb Fly (by J. Godden); Common Green Grasshopper (by J. Godden).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 22/6/25.

The Society's visit to Noar Hill (Selborne) on the hottest day of the year so far was rewarded by a spectacular display of wild flowers. It is regarded as one of the best sites for wild orchids in the UK, and there was an abundance of Common Spotted, Pyramidal and Fragrant Orchids, plus a smaller number of the rare and diminutive Musk Orchid. Particularly striking were the rusty-brown flower spikes of Knapweed Broomrape, a leafless parasite on the roots of Greater Knapweed, which was always found growing alongside.

An observer in Petworth reckoned that the 40-50 Swifts seen was the highest count in recent years there, and there were similar opinions from the Guildford area. Around Haslemere, though, it seems that numbers are at a typical level. Turtle Doves, a rare but recovering species, were heard at Ebernoe, but the season for Nightingale song is almost over.

Anyone near an outside light in the muggy conditions of Saturday night would have witnessed a massive gathering of miscellaneous insects, including flying ants, caddisflies and gnats. Fortunately, the mosquitos attracted to light seem to be males (recognisable from their feathery antennae) which don't feed on blood. Among these confused masses were many micro-moths (the nicest of which were the White Plume and *Argyresthia brockeella*), and a smaller number of large moths. The pick of the latter this week were Swallowtail Moth, Scarlet Tiger, Leopard Moth, Burnished Brass, Common Emerald and Rosy Footman: a wonderful assortment of colours. The top rarity, though, was an Olive Crescent, which is a Red Data Book species that may be just beginning to breed in the UK.

The Spotted Longhorn Beetle (*Rutpela maculata*) is possibly the commonest longhorn locally, and made its first appearance of the year this week. It is most often found on the umbels of Hogweed, which is not yet fully flowering in most places. Also notable was a Lesser Stag Beetle, which lack the "antlers" of the huge Stag Beetle. This was a reminder that Stag Beetles are rare in our area: it is curious that this species is infrequent in the extensive woodlands of the New Forest but is very common in some London suburbs.

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

Photos: Musk Orchid (by A. Swan); Spotted Longhorn Beetle (by J. Godden); Swallowtail Moth (by T. Hardy); Scarlet Tiger (by A. Swan); Pyramidal Orchid (by C. Lemka); Leopard Moth (by A. Swan); Rosy Footman (by A. Swan); Fragrant Orchid, white variety (by A. Swan); Knapweed Broomrape (by A. Swan); Knapweed Broomrape with its host Greater Knapweed (by A. Swan); White Plume (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Argyresthia brockeella* (by A. Swan); Burnished Brass (by M. Tomsett); Olive Crescent (by T. Hardy); Lesser Stag Beetle (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 29/6/25.

The first Purple Emperors of the season have been seen at Ebernoe and Witley Common, plus an exceptionally early Grayling at Hankley Common. Silver-washed Fritillaries are in good numbers in open woodland where they can feed on bramble nectar, and Commas are unusually frequent both in gardens and wilder places.

A garden just to the east of Haslemere produced an exceptional rarity: the day-flying micro-moth *Dasycera oliviella* ("Cream-spot Bark Moth"), which has been found in Surrey just four times previously, and only once before in the last 100 years! It is a striking species and is unlikely to have been overlooked. Following the one found last week, a second Olive Crescent must surely be proof of this species breeding locally: it has in the past been regarded as a migrant from the south. This is the case with an increasing number of species, and is attributable to our warming climate. Other uncommon moths this week included the Beautiful Snout, Brown Scallop and *Ethmia dodecea* ("Gromwell Ermine"), whilst Peach Blossom and Blood-vein were among the most attractive. There have been exceptionally large numbers of the dotted white Bird-cherry Ermine.

The single outstanding bird report was, right at the end of the week, a Serin at Thursley Common, reckoned to be only the 5th in Surrey. A single bird was sighted several times in the Selsey area in mid-June, so perhaps this is the same bird, or part of a diffuse influx from the south.

There were plenty of insect curiosities. The long-winged form of Roesel's Bush-cricket was found: this is only developed during warm summers. A Common Scorpionfly found was a female (only the males have scorpion-like tails) and evidently gravid. Close inspection showed that its "beak" isn't a piercing organ but has mandibles at the tip for demolishing its insect prey. These aren't true flies – they are more closely related to fleas. A small metallic insect with a pointed tail turned out to be the chalcid wasp *Ormyrus nitidulus*, which, remarkably, is a parasitoid of gall wasps – eggs are laid on the plant gall induced by the gall wasp, and the chalcid's larvae consume the gall wasp larvae that the gall is intended to protect and nourish. The large horse-fly *Tabanus bromius* was identified from the distinctive band across its eye. Finally, eleven Glow-worms were counted during a Nightjar walk on heathland at dusk.

Botanical finds included the rather orchid-like Marsh Woundwort (much less common than the darker-flowered Hedge Woundwort) and one of the micro-species of the hawkweeds: *Hieracium sabaudum*. Perhaps surprisingly, there were a few *Russula* fungi in woods, but there was more fungal activity on rotting wood than on the ground, with the uncommon *Polyporus tuberaster* and species of oyster fungus showing.

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

Photos: *Dasycera oliviella* (by M. Tomsett); Blood-vein moth (by A. Swan); Silver-washed Fritillary (by A. Swan); juvenile male Stonechat (by A. Swan); Marsh Woundwort (by V. Carter); the chalcid wasp *Ormyrus nitidulus* (by A. Swan); *Ethmia dodecea* (by A. Swan); Bird-cherry Ermine (by A. Swan); Common Scorpionfly (by A. Swan); *Polyporus tuberaster* (by M. Tomsett); Comma (by J. Godden); Beautiful Snout (by T. Hardy); Roesel's Bush-cricket (by M. Tomsett); eye of *Tabanus bromius* (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 6/7/25.

A good week for moths yielded some beauties and some rarities. The striking Garden Tiger has undergone a general historical decline, plus an additional drop in the last 10 years, so is always good to see. Contrasting in colour and pattern were the Large Emerald and 4-spotted Footman, the latter apparently an increasing species. Other moths this week included Light Arches, Buff Arches, Grey Arches, Dark Arches and Black Arches! – although these are not all closely related to each other. Satin Beauty and Waved Carpet were among the rarities, both found just across the county boundary in Hampshire, where the Waved Carpet found last year and the two found this week were the 19th, 20th and 21st ever found in the county! A former resident of Marley advised that they are a little more frequent in the Sussex part of our area, where they breed in Sweet Chestnut coppices. One of the most distinctive and peculiar caterpillars is that of the Alder Moth, which has long spoon-shaped hairs sprouting from its black-and-yellow body. One was found this week on Black Down, apparently far removed from its food plant. Further afield, a Hummingbird Hawkmoth was photographed in Hinton Ampner Garden.

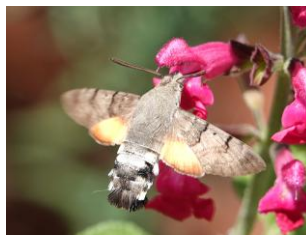
There was a possible sighting of a White-tailed Eagle just to the east of Haslemere. These huge birds are now regularly seen at Pulborough Brooks. Reports from Tice's Meadow (Farnham) included Black-tailed Godwits, Little Ringed Plovers, Common Sandpipers and Green Sandpipers. By the end of the week, a count of 13 Little Ringed Plovers, including some juveniles, was reported: remarkable for this uncommon species, and further evidence of the importance of this site.

Dark Mullein is now flowering in a few local places: it is much commoner on waysides on the chalk, and finding it growing in our area is usually an indication of imported chalk/limestone, or broken-up concrete or mortar. It can be found on the old A3 route at the Punchbowl. The conspicuous purple centre of its flowers is entirely due to the hairs on the stamen filaments. The few ground fungi emerging included a the rather smelly *Russula foetans* (a provisional identification).

People who dislike wasps may like to see that one was caught by a crab spider when visiting a flower! These ambush predators are coloured white or pink so that they are inconspicuous as they wait for prey.

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

Photos: Garden Tiger moth (by T. Hardy); caterpillar of Alder Moth (by M. Tomsett); Large Emerald moth (by T. Hardy); Dark Mullein, with close-up (by A. Swan); crab spider with wasp prey (by J. Godden); Hummingbird Hawkmoth (by A. Swan); *Russula ?foetans* (by A. Swan); Buff Arches moth (by A. Swan); Waved Carpet moth (by A. Swan); Satin Beauty moth (by T. Hardy); Four-spotted Footman moth (by M. Tomsett); Black Arches moths, with close-up (by T. Hardy).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 13/7/25.

There are winners and losers in the hot and dry weather. Butterflies are having an exceptional season (in contrast to last year): a surveyor for Butterfly Conservation recorded 21 species in one transect across a local common, including the locally rare Dark Green Fritillary, and reports from gardens included Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral, Ringlet and unprecedented numbers of Commas and Gatekeepers. Many plants, however, are faring poorly, with some regular species being difficult to find, especially in sandy places. A search for the orchid Broad-leaved Helleborine in a local site that has, in a good year, 15 flowering plants, yielded just 3 plants, with only one flowering. Thanks to their partnership with soil fungi, these orchids are able to survive unfavourable conditions without showing above ground.

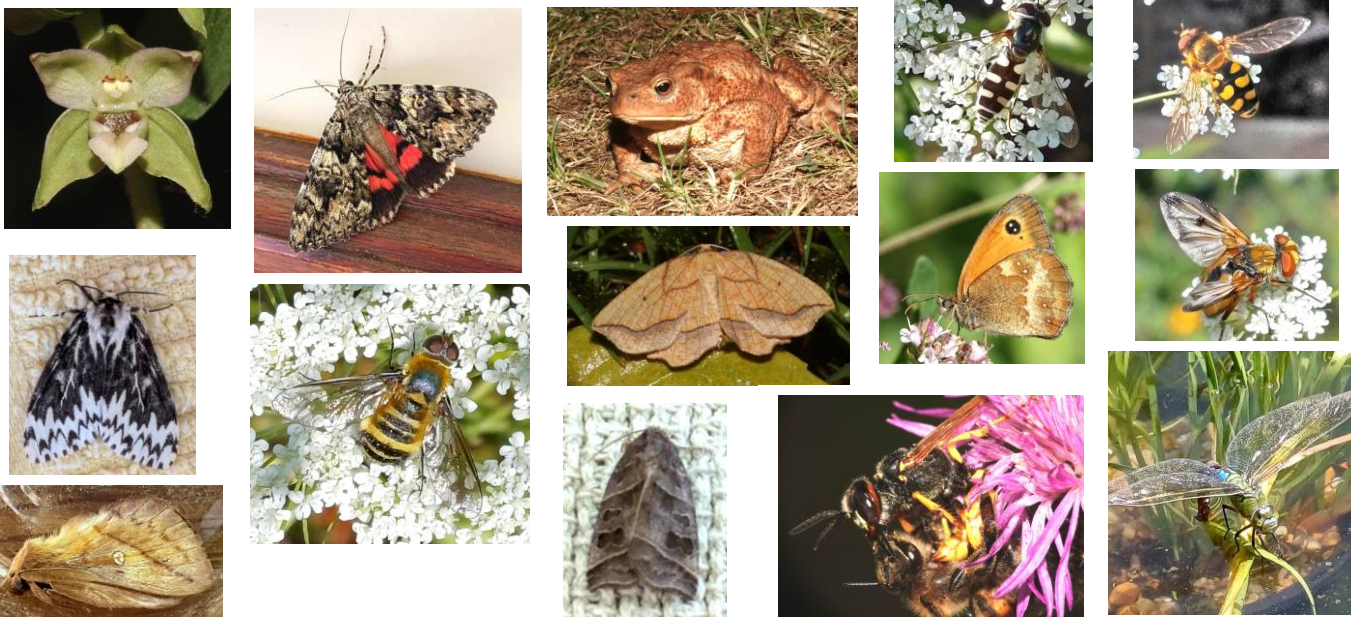
We noticed that 2024 was a good year for a variety of Diptera (true flies), but hoverflies were an exception. In parallel with the butterflies, these colourful insects have bounced back this year in terms of numbers and variety, with *Melangyna umbellatarum*, *Eupeodes luniger*, *Chrysotoxum bicinctum*, *Scaeva pyrastris* and *Cheilosia illustrata* among the species identified this week. Last year, the peculiar Tachinid fly *Ectophasis crassipennis* was noted as new to our area, and it has been seen again. The most remarkable insect seen this week, though, was *Villa cingulata*, a relative of the bee-flies that was until recently restricted to a few sites in the Chilterns. A dramatic event captured in a photograph was the ambushing of a Honeybee by a "Bee-wolf" (the digger wasp *Philanthus triangulum*), which paralysed the bee by stinging it in the neck before carrying it away to provide food for its larvae.

Low water levels may be responsible for relatively low numbers of dragonflies, but an Emperor was photographed egg-laying in a garden pond. Among moths, the uncommon Double Kidney was a good record, and it was pleasing to see the Light Crimson Underwing continuing its recent success.

There was another heath fire, this time at Hankley Common, but we have no information yet on its impact on wildlife. Happier news was the rejection of the planning application for a fast-food outlet on the Tice's Meadow nature reserve near Farnham, an increasingly remarkable source of bird sightings. The stand-out bird report this week was a remarkable 30 Crossbills at RSPB Farnham Heath: there has been an influx of these super birds, with scattered reports of smaller numbers in the wider local area.

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

Photos: Broad-leaved Helleborine orchid (by A. Swan); Light Crimson Underwing moth (by M. Tomsett); Common Toad (by A. Swan); the hoverfly *Melangyna umbellatarum* (by J. Godden); the hoverfly *Eupeodes luniger* (by J. Godden); Black Arches moth (female) (by M. Tomsett); the fly *Villa cingulata* (by J. Godden); Bordered Beauty moth (by A. Swan); Gatekeeper butterfly (by A. Swan); the fly *Ectophasis crassipennis* (by J. Godden), Drinker moth (by T. Hardy); Double Kidney moth (by M. Tomsett); Bee-wolf capturing and stinging a Honeybee (by A. Swan); Emperor dragonfly egg-laying (by J. Godden).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 20/7/25.

Even experienced mycologists confess to being unable to predict the “fruiting” of fungi, but there is a general opinion that rain after a heatwave is likely to bring out good showings of mycorrhizals. These are fungi that have a symbiotic relationship with plants via attachments to roots, and include the large, impressive boletes of summer and early autumn. The first of these appeared this week: the weirdly white-and-yellow *Caloboletus radicans* (“Rooting Bolete”), which may now become conspicuous on banks around oaks on waysides.

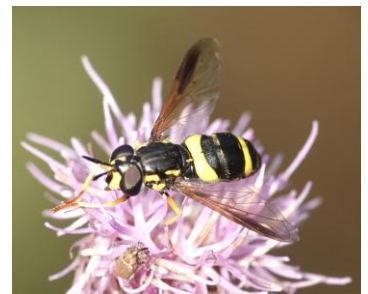
Hogweed, Wild Carrot and other umbellifers are now in full flower and presenting platters of nectar to visiting insects. Several species of tachinid fly that were uncommon but are apparently increasing in southern England were found for the second year running: *Nowickia ferox*, *Ectophasia crassipennis*, *Cistogaster globosa* and *Gymnosoma rotundatum*, the males and females of each of which are very distinct. Interesting Hymenoptera (bees and wasps) found this week included the uncommon *Dasypoda hirtipes* (“Pantaloone Bee”) and the ruby-tailed wasp *Chrysis terminata*, distinguished from several similar species by a row of bumps on its brow.

The Society’s moth event on Saturday morning was adversely affected by rain, but there were excellent conditions for moths in the first part of the night and a scrutiny of the light traps yielded 76 species. The variety was impressive, in terms of colour, shape and size. The smallest (*Bucculatrix ulmella*) was only about 3.5mm long, whilst the largest (Poplar Hawkmoth) had a wingspan of about 80mm. Possibly the least common was the micro-moth *Dichomeris alacella*, which has curious markings on the wings that give the appearance of bumps casting shadows, but this is illusory. One of the most attractive moths this week was another micro: *Acleris forsskaleana*, whilst the rarest was *Aplota palpella*, found on a garden daisy, which has very few records in the county and had to be identified by an expert.

Tice’s Meadow continues to produce fantastic bird records: this week a Black-necked Grebe was reported. There were also a good set of birds at Woolmer Forest: Crossbills, Spotted Flycatcher, Tree Pipit and Redstart. Red Kites are now seen fairly frequently, especially to the west of the town, generally gliding and circling overhead and not settling, but one was photographed in a tree to the east of the town this week.

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

Photos: Red Kite (by M. Tomsett); *Caloboletus radicans* (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Acleris forsskaleana* (by A. Swan); the hoverfly *Chrysotoxum bicinctum* (by A. Swan); the fly *Gymnosoma rotundata* (by J. Godden); the fly *Cistogaster globosa*, male (by A. Swan); same, female (by A. Swan); the fly *Nowickia ferox* (by J. Godden); the ruby-tailed wasp *Chrysis terminata* (by A. Swan); the fly *Ectophasia crassipennis*, female (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Dichomeris alacella* (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Aplota palpella* (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 27/7/25.

It is already clear that our oaks will be dropping large quantities of acorns this autumn – conditions were evidently good for pollination in the spring. The normal acorns have only just started swelling, but acorns and buds that have been infected by gall wasps are fully formed. The well-named “artichoke galls” (caused by the gall wasp *Andricus foecundatrix*) are especially abundant this year, and the knobby-ridged “knopper galls” (caused by the gall wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*) are also frequent. The complex life cycle of the latter wasp requires a second generation that needs to use catkins of Turkey Oak, which is a non-native species that has become numerous in a few of our local woodlands. One small sprig of oak was found that had four types of gall: in addition to knopper and artichoke, an adjoining single leaf had “spangle” and “silk button” galls, induced by two other gall wasp species.

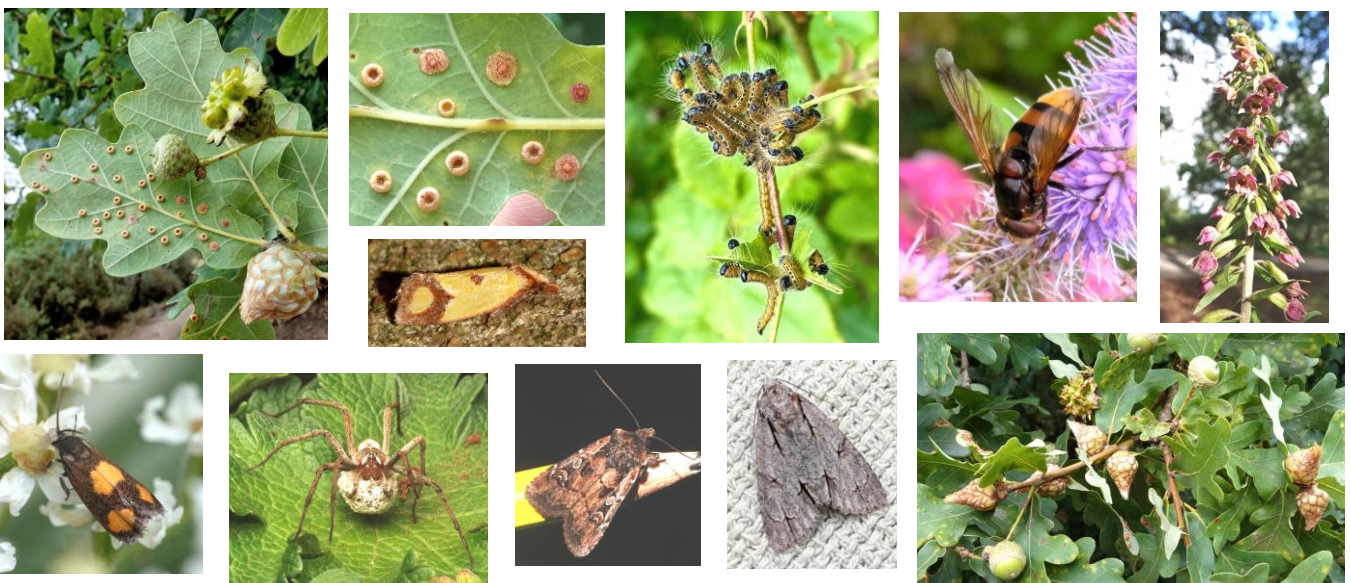
There was a big community moth morning in Haslemere on Wednesday, with the public invited to view the contents of four light traps that had been set up overnight in the Swan Barn/allotments/museum area. Conditions were good, and the traps produced around 40-60 species each. Many large and attractive species were found (such as the Elephant Hawkmoth, Poplar Hawkmoth, Light Crimson Underwing, Buff-tip and Black Arches, all of which have featured in previous reports this year), plus some curiosities. A White-line Dart was the first that many of us had seen; although historically common, its population has collapsed by more than 90% in the last few decades, and it is now largely a coastal species. Buff-tips are having an outstanding year, at possibly 5-10 times typical numbers, and a large cluster of their caterpillars was found this week. The attractive and uncommon day-flying moth *Pammene aurana* was another good find: it is very distinctive and should be sought on Hogweed flowers, which are currently loaded with a huge variety of insects on warm days. The largest UK hoverfly, the hornet-mimic *Volucella zonaria*, was seen in a garden.

Woolbeding produced the best bird reports this week: Honey Buzzard, Hawfinch and a flock of Crossbills. At the end of the week a Great Egret and, exceptionally, a Little Ringed Plover were reported from Frensham.

A group of Broad-leaved Helleborine orchids was found to include one richly-coloured plant, but no local Violet Helleborines have been reported this year – these have apple-green flowers and violet-tinted leaves. Last week’s hint that the rain might bring forth a flush of woodland fungi proved to be over-optimistic: there was just a modest showing, mostly of wood-rotting species.

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

Photos: Knopper, artichoke, spangle and silk button galls on oak (by A. Swan); silk button and spangle galls (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Agapeta zoegana* (by A. Swan); caterpillars of Buff-tip moth (by M. Tomsett); the giant hoverfly *Volucella zonaria* (by M. Tomsett); Broad-leaved Helleborine orchid (by A. Swan); the micro-moth *Pammene aurana* (by A. Swan); Nursery-web Spider carrying egg case (by A. Swan); White-line Dart moth (by A. Swan); Grey/Dark Dagger moth (By M. Tomsett); artichoke galls (by A. Swan).



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 10th August).

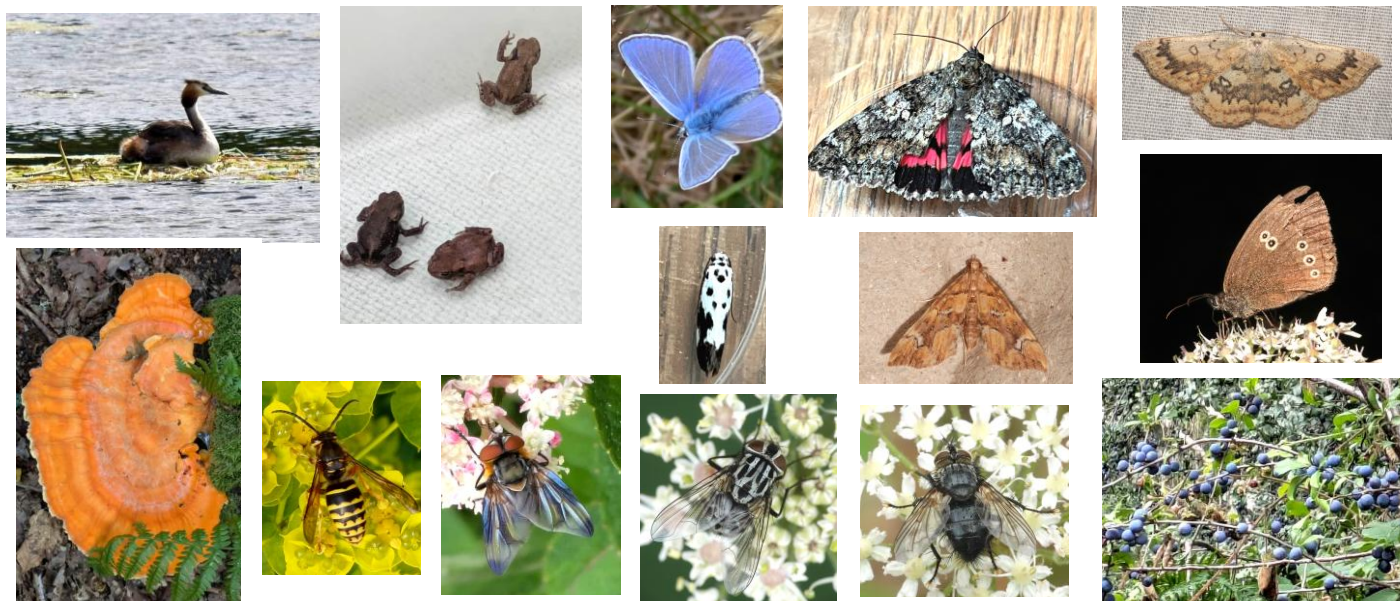
Crossbills continue to be reported in good numbers, for example on Black Down, although flocks in the canopy of pines may be heard but not seen. A small group was reported at Grayswood. Swallows have been busy feeding on insects emerging over the larger local ponds, and Sand Martins at Woolmer Pond. 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!

(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): 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 vermilion 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.

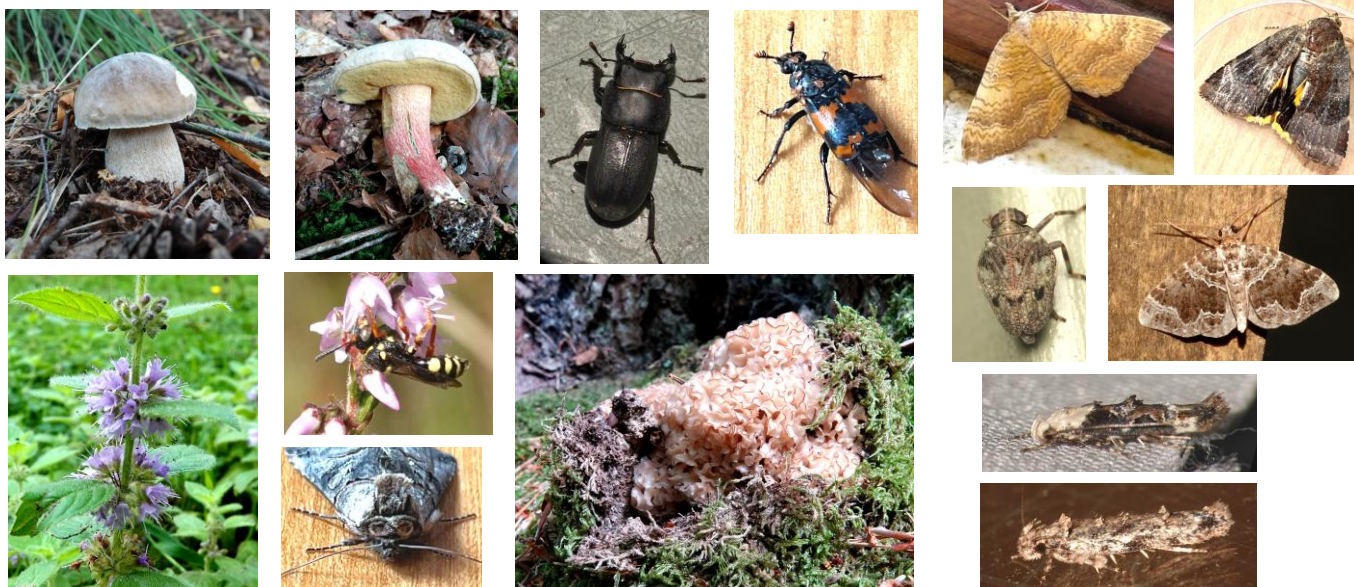
A new generation of Small Copper butterflies has appeared, and they suddenly became frequent this week. Possibly the most significant moth was the second Devon Carpet in our area, demonstrating that this species is now breeding locally, having spread, as the name suggests, from strongholds in the west 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.

(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): *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*.

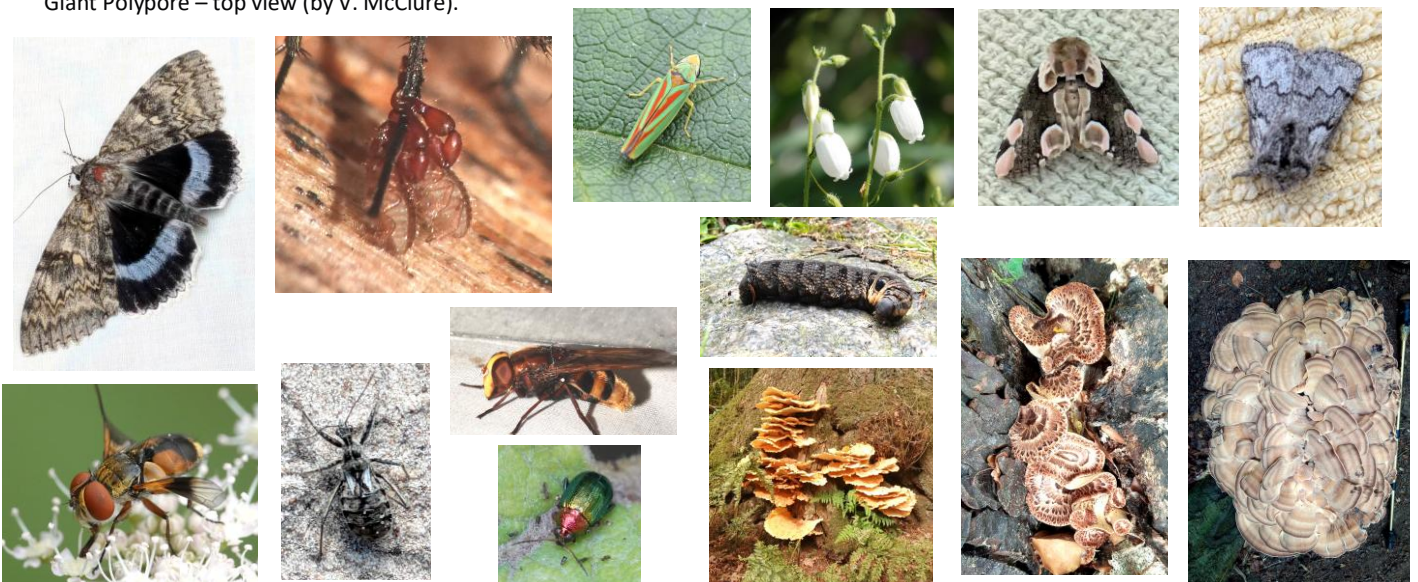
Attractive insects found this week were the tachinid fly *Ectophasia crassipennis*, the increasingly common Rhododendron Leafhopper, the uncommon Willow Flea Beetle and the large hornet-mimicking hoverfly *Volucella zonaria* (found buzzing around a light at night, just as hornets do). A less appealing but curious insect was *Coranus woodroffeii*, 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.

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

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 woodroffeii* (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 *Stomorhina 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.

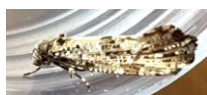
The Society's annual bat evening was adversely affected by wind and rain, but Common Pipistrelles and Soprano Pipistrelles were detected (using bat detectors) and seen. The site was Frensham Little Pond, where visitors may notice pairs of nesting boxes on trees. Bat nesting boxes (donated by our Society) 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.

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

Photos: The fly *Stomorhina 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).



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.

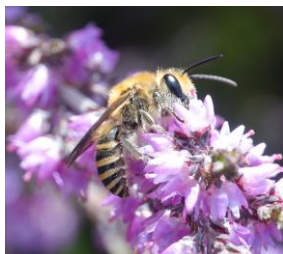
Common Blue and Emerald Damselflies may be found around ponds at this time of year, and Common, Ruddy and Black Darters. These may still be seen mating and egg-laying. The flowering of our heathlands is accompanied by an abundance of a bee that resembles a Honeybee but is smaller and with a strikingly 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 *Mocycdia 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.

(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): 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 *Mocycdia 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.

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

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 albostriella* (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.

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

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).



Wildlife News

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

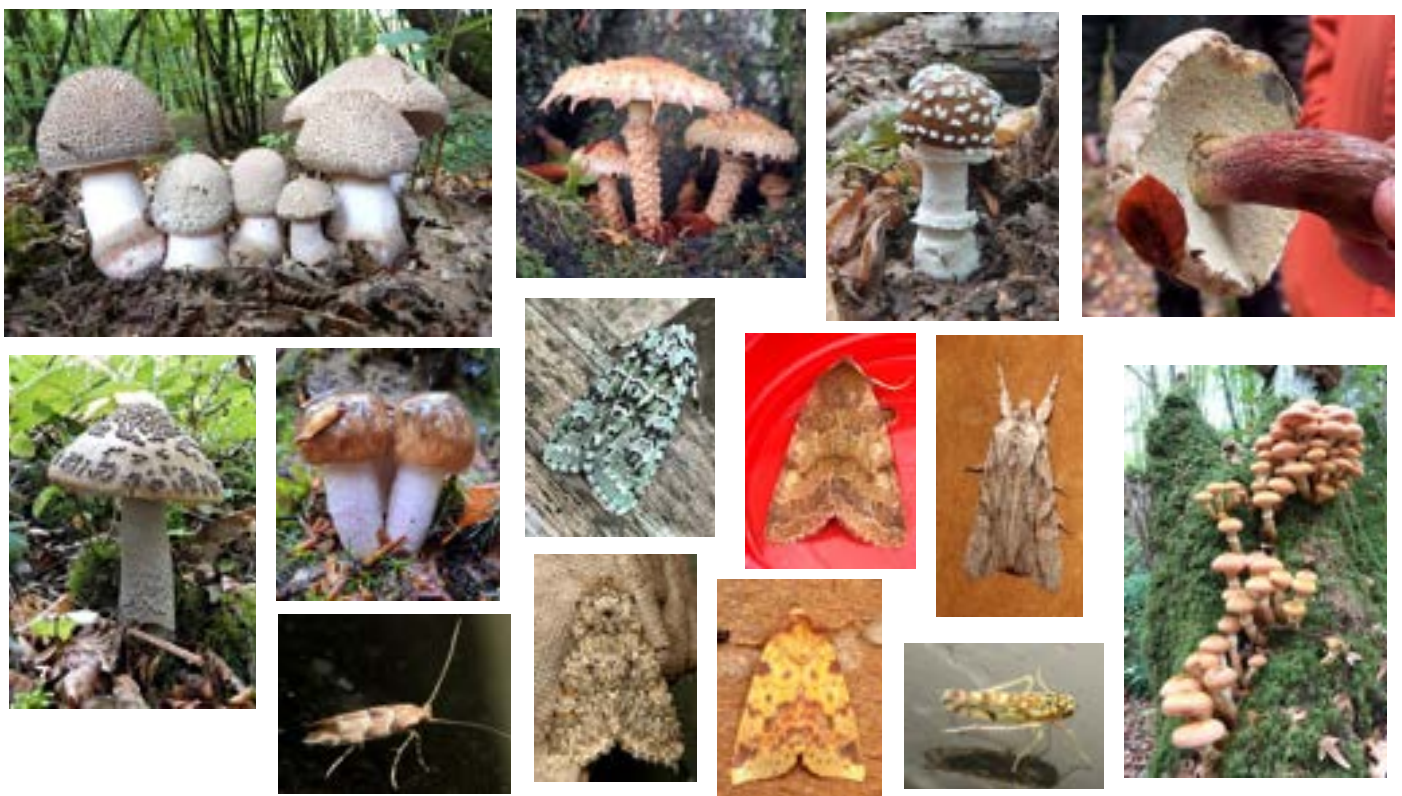
A phenomenal quantity of fungi was encountered during the Society's annual foray at a local site. Perhaps the highlights among more than 60 species found were the textures and colours of *Cortinarius pseudosalor* ("Purple Stocking Webcap"), *Caloboletus calopus* ("Bitter Beech Bolete") and the uncommon *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.

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

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.

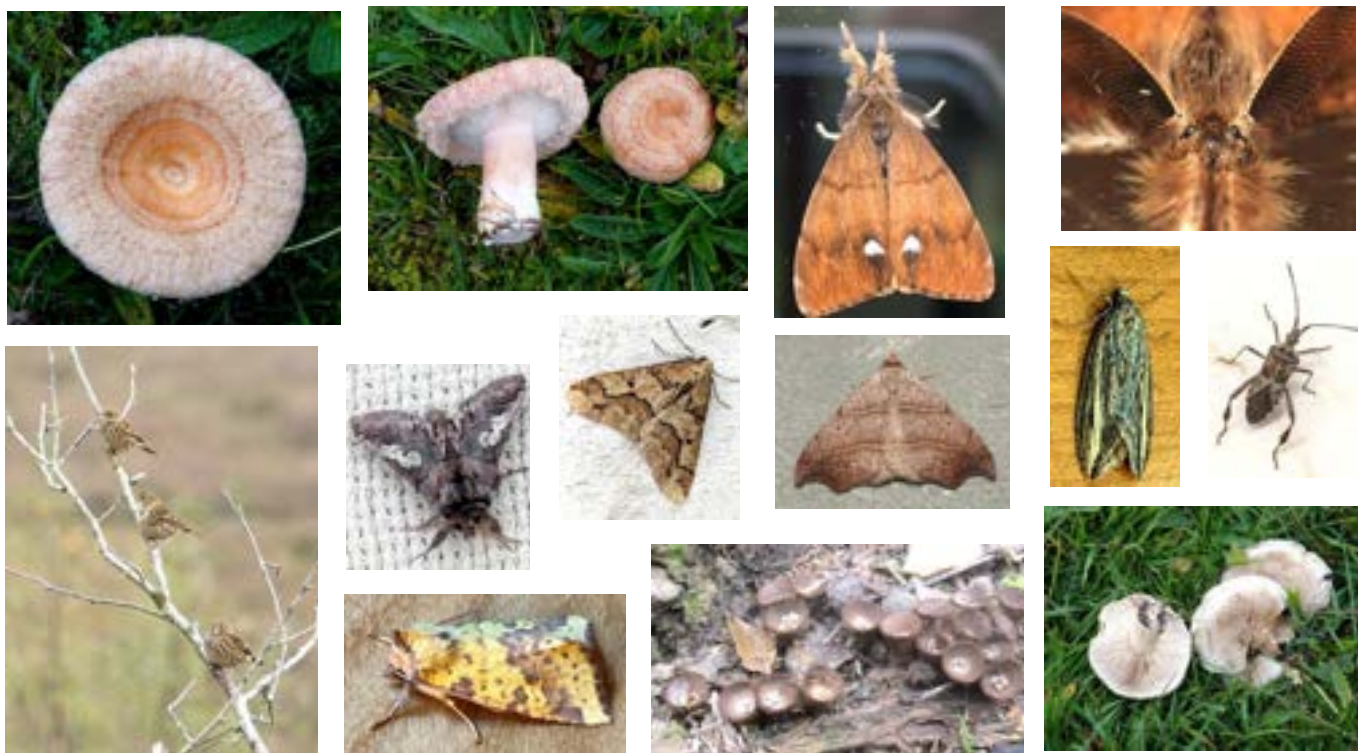
Despite forecasts of zero rain in the first part of the week, there was frequent drizzle: enough to dampen grass but not woodland floors. Hence there was a fresh flush of fungi in open places, but little in the woods. A few species of waxcap appeared (especially Parrot Waxcap and Snowy Waxcap) plus the 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.

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

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 (b 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).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 2/11/25.

A dominantly windy and wet week didn't favour wildlife observation, but it was mild, and there were sunny spells sufficiently pleasant for Red Admirals to show. In the lack of other nectar sources at this time of year, ivy flowers are magnets for insect life: it was possible to find around 20 species in one flower cluster. Most conspicuous of the nectar feeders were the familiar wasps, but there were also flies such as *Simulium* blackflies (males only: the females are blood feeders), the fruitfly-like *Asteia amoena* and the uncommon *Paloptera scutellata*. Accompanying the nectar feeders, like lions around an African water hole, were predatory flies: "tiger flies" (*Coenosia* sp.) and Yellow Dung Flies. Both of these have raptorial (grasping) front legs with which they grab prey, rather like mantises. Yellow Dung Flies are more often noticed swarming around cow pats, but they aren't interested in the dung itself, but in preying on the dung-feeders!

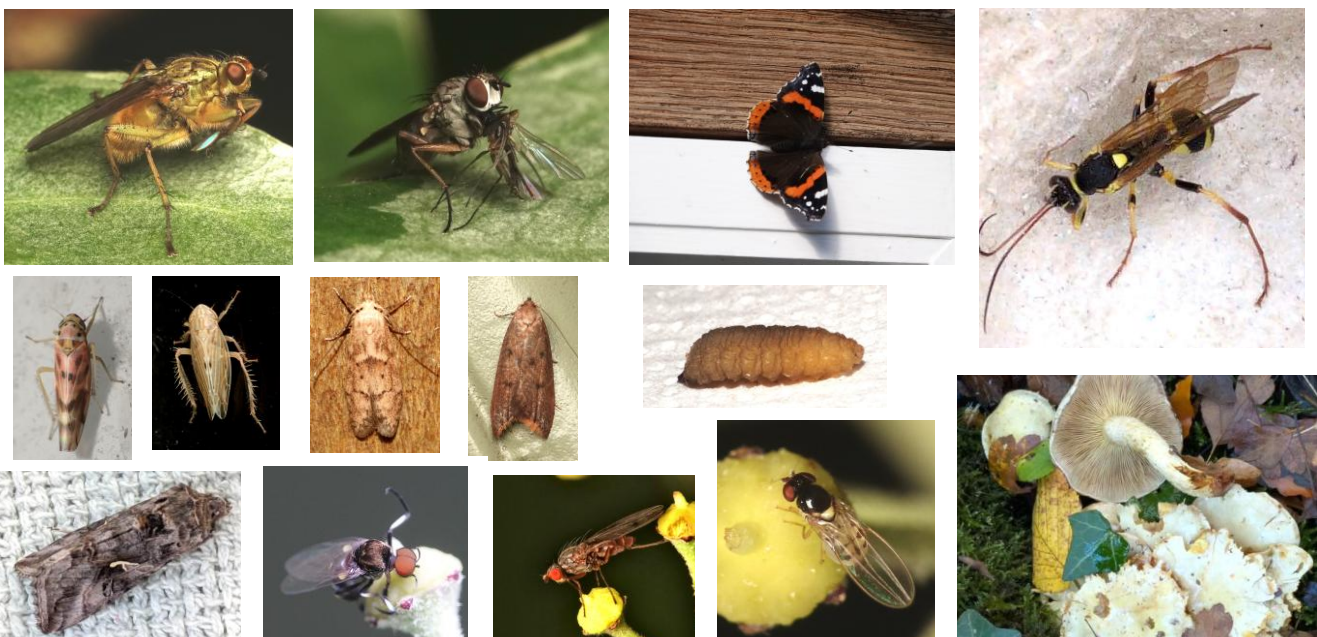
After the find of a rather rare Figure of Eight moth a couple of weeks ago, it was even more surprising that five were attracted to light in one evening this week. Also notable was a Silver Y, a probable migrant that has been less common than usual this year. The only two micro-moths found have similar UK histories: *Tachystola acroxantha* and *Blastobasis lacticolella* are both non-natives that have increased from near zero to very common in the last 20 years; the former originates from Australia and the latter, mysteriously, from Madeira. There was a greater variety of leafhoppers around this week than in the summer, with the pink *Linnavuoriana decempunctata* the highlight. Other interesting insects included the large ichneumon *Amblyteles armatorius*, whose larvae are parasitoids on moth larvae. A large flattish maggot that appeared indoors was identified as the larva of the hoverfly *Volucella inanis*. These feed in wasp nests on debris, food stores and even wasp larvae; it must have found its way down from a wasp nest in the loft.

There were few fresh fungi, with the end-of-season Clouded Funnel being most conspicuous. A curiosity was a *Pholiota* found on the soil, whilst all members of this genus grow on wood. This was *Pholiota gummosa*, which characteristically infests buried wood but appears on the ground above.

In a poor week for birds, the highlight was a Great White Egret that has become regular at Chingford Pond (Burton Mill). The Great Grey Shrike that was previously at Woolmer Forest and Ockley Common disappeared, and there soon began to be sightings of this species in the New Forest – possibly the same bird.

(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) : Yellow Dung Fly with prey; tiger fly with prey; Red Admiral; the ichneumon *Amblyteles armatorius* (by M. Tomsett); the leafhopper *Linnavuoriana decempunctata*; the leafhopper *Mocycia crocea*; the micro-moth *Blastobasis lacticolella*; the micro-moth *Tachystola acroxantha*; larva of the hoverfly *Volucella inanis*; Silver Y moth (by M. Tomsett); *Simulium* blackfly; the fly *Paloptera scutellata*; the fly *Asteia amoena* on ivy flower; *Pholiota gummosa* (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 9/11/25.

A Merlin at Woolmer Forest was probably the stand-out bird sighting this week: this small bird of prey is present in southern England in the winter, having migrated from northern Britain, Scandinavia or even Iceland, but is not often seen away from the coast. Also on the move at this time of year, and making a significant spectacle, are Woodpigeons, which move within the UK from the north (supplemented by birds from parts of Europe to the east) to the south west, with some crossing to France. Flocks of hundreds have been seen in our area, with counts into tens of thousands elsewhere. Meanwhile, the Great White Egret remained at Chingford Pond. The winter assemblages of birds reported this week included Fieldfares, Redwings, Bramblings and Siskins. Crossbills continue to be reported in several sites, and were seen during the Society's visit to Frensham Great Pond, during which the group saw or heard 40 bird species, with Kingfisher, Redwing, Water Rail and Cetti's Warbler among the other highlights.

Thanks to the mild weather, dragonflies were still on the wing, with several pairs of Common Darter seen mating and egg-laying at Frensham. Despite the prolonged period of southerly winds, the uncommon Pearly Underwing was the only notable migrant moth from across the channel. The uncommon Sprawler moth is home-grown, and has a very short flight season at this time of year: several were found this week. Other interesting insects were the blood-sucking Deer Ked fly (*Lipoptena cervi*), which sheds its wings when it finds a suitable host, and extraordinary leaf mines in burdock made by larvae of the fly *Phytomyza lappae*, which seems not to have been recorded locally before.

In most areas the fungal season seemed to be largely over – waxcaps are having a poor year – but there has been a fresh flush in some pine woodlands, where boletes in the genus *Suillus* were abundant. There have been yet more fresh Fly Agarics in some places. The distinctive Magpie Inkcap are supposedly chiefly found in beechwoods on chalk, but they have been reported in a wide range of other habitats this year.

(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): Magpie Inkcap, Crossbill (female); Sprawler moth (by M. Tomsett); Deer Ked fly; fruits of Woody Nightshade; Fly Agaric; Pearly Underwing moth (by T. Hardy); Hawthorn Shield Bug (by M. Tomsett); *Suillus bovinus*; Common Darter; leaf mines in burdock made by larvae of the fly *Phytomyza lappae*; Great White Egret with Grey Heron.



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 16/11/25.

This was probably the last week in the year that could be described as warm, with distinctly balmy conditions during some afternoons and mild nights. It was consequently quite a good week for insects, including a good set of seasonal moths. Mottled Umber, Feathered Thorn, December Moth and Northern Winter moths were all noted, but the Scarce Umber stood out. This attractive species increased in frequency in the first decade of this century, but it then declined quite dramatically, so it was good to see more than one or two of them, and in several sites. Much less seasonal was a Scalloped Hook-tip, which normally has two generations peaking in May/June and July/August: this week's moth must represent a third generation. It is known that in warmer climates some insects can complete extra generations before over-wintering; there are many species that have two generations per year in the south of the UK and one in the north.

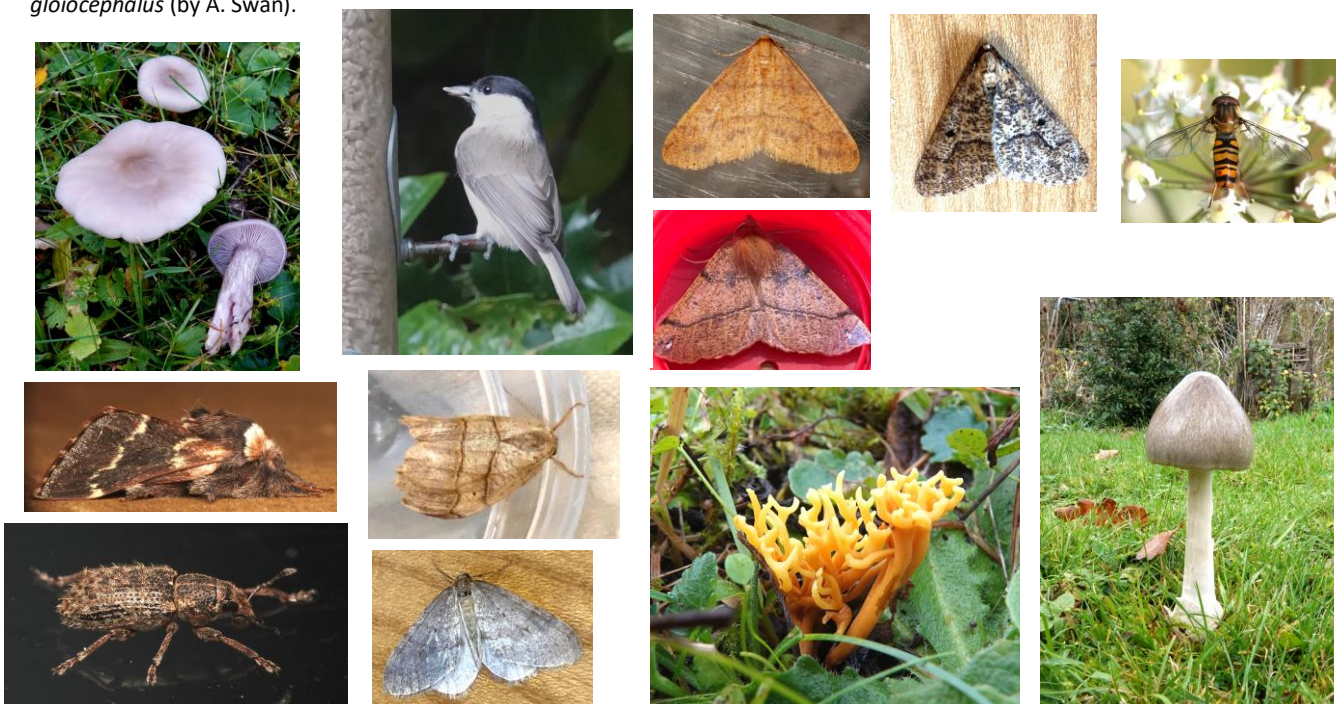
Other insects this week included a Marmalade Hoverfly – surely the last for a while – nectaring on a late-flowering Hogweed; and a Clover Weevil – unusually bristly for this group of beetles. There were clouds of midges around outside lights, and bats were feeding!

Fungi have been sparse in woods, but, although it has continued to be a poor year for waxcaps, there was some mycological interest on lawns and patches of short grass on commons. A ring of purple mushrooms that looked exactly like small Wood Blewits (*Lepista nuda*) turned out to be the closely related *Lepista sordida*, and these were accompanied by the tall *Volvopluteus* (formerly *Volvariella*) *gloiocephalus*. This latter species belongs to a group that resemble the genus *Amanita* in that the young mushroom is enclosed in an egg-shaped bag, which it bursts open as it grows, leaving an irregular cup at the base. Unlike the white-spored Amanitas, though, it has pink spores. *V. gloiocephalus* is one of the few fungi that can be found on arable fields, growing on old stubble.

There were few notable bird reports this week, although Crossbills continue to be seen in many places. Birds are starting to visit garden feeders more, and it already seems that Coal Tits are more frequent than last winter. In our area we are fortunate that the uncommon Marsh Tit may also be seen in gardens, if there is woodland nearby.

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

Photos: *Lepista sordida* (by A. Swan); Marsh Tit (by A. Swan); Scarce Umber moth (by A. Swan); Mottled Umber moth (by T. Hardy); Marmalade Hoverfly (by A. Swan); Feathered Thorn moth (by T. Hardy); December Moth (by A. Swan); Scalloped Hook-tip moth (by M. Tomsett); Clover Weevil (by A. Swan); Northern Winter moth (by T. Hardy); *Clavulinopsis corniculata* (by A. Swan); *Volvopluteus gloiocephalus* (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 23/11/25.

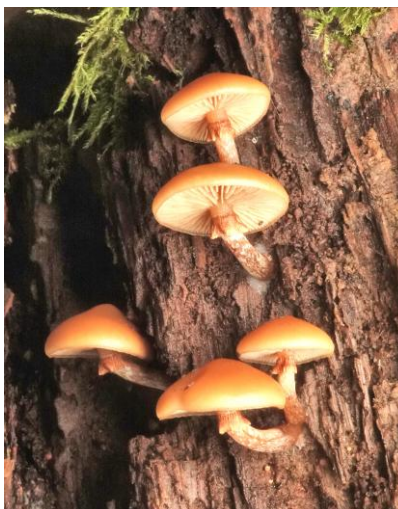
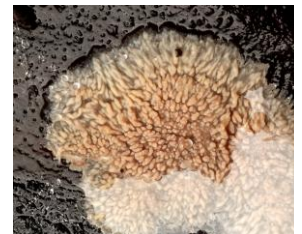
Despite the freezing weather, there was plenty of life to find in old log piles. Wood-rotting fungi such as *Kuehneromyces mutabilis* (which grew despite exposure to the cold), the curiously textured *Phlebia radiata* and a variety of cup fungi were accompanied by snails such as the tiny *Discus rotundatus*, looking a bit like a miniature ammonite! Woodland floors were devoid of fresh fungi (but weird-looking old Blackening Russulas were noticed), but there were a few things on stumps, including the rubbery *Simocybe centunculus*. Now that the leaves are down, the light reaching tree trunks encourages a close look at lichens, which are now re-hydrated and may show apothecia (spore bearing structures).

When the frost gave way to persistent rain, among the waterbirds oblivious to the soaking were Grey Wagtails, apparently gleaning dead insects from wet mud. Other bird reports included a Little Egret surprising locals on the village green in Chiddingfold, a flock of 25 Siskins at Bordon and, best of all, a Merlin at Woolmer Forest – probably the same bird as was found there a couple of weeks earlier.

During the sunny spells on milder days, garden Mahonias hosted honeybees and a few bumblebees. The best moth reported in an unsuitable week was a Rusty-dot Pearl, which is a migrant from the south. Just before the freeze, two species of micro-wasps (a shiny black one belonging to the family Eulophidae and a brassy member of the Encyrtidae) were found on a shed window: this seemed surprising for November, but one of them was still present after three days of frost! More than 30 species of micro-wasp (<2.5mm) have been distinguished at the same location since September.

(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 snail *Discus rotundatus*; Grey Wagtail; Rusty-dot Pearl moth (by M. Tomsett); *Phlebia radiata*; *Kuehneromyces mutabilis*; Blackening Russula (by T. Hardy); Encyrtid micro-wasp (2mm); a cup fungus on rotting wood, possibly *Mollisia* sp.; *Simocybe centunculus*; lichens on tree trunk - *Lecanora varia* (left, with pale brown apothecia) and *Pertusaria pertusa* (volcano-shaped structures containing apothecia on right).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 30/11/25.

There were some very mild nights during which moths were active in large numbers: they could be found around lights but also by searching with a torch on fences and tree trunks. December Moths, Mottled Umbers and Winter Moths were all numerous, but the best finds were The Brick and several Scarce Umbers, both of which have declined in recent years. (Explanations of the name “The Brick” are not convincing, but some darker examples could be regarded as brick coloured!)

Hibernating moths were found hidden inside a garage: the unique Herald and the common Twenty-plume Moth (with “plumes” pressed together rather than splayed-out, as is more usual). In the same garage was a Brown Long-eared Bat, which experts think was not hibernating alone, but just resting between night-time hunts – some nights have been mild enough for bats and there was plenty of prey on the wing.

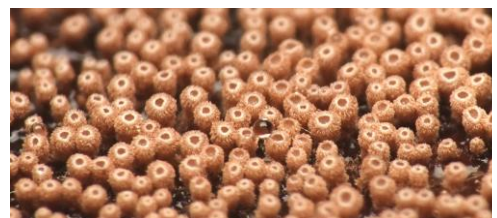
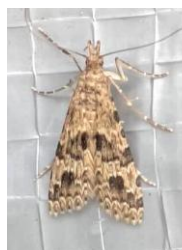
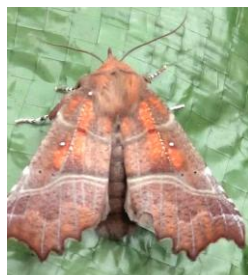
Other insects found included a Common Darter dragonfly still active in sunny spells, and a fly with a disproportionately small abdomen that turned out to be one of the Anthomyiidae, the plant damaging “root maggot” flies.

Unusual fungi this week included the “Fenugreek Stalkball” (*Phleogena faginea*), growing in crevices in Ash bark, which smells of fenugreek when old and dry; and *Merismodes anomala*, showing thousands of 0.5mm flask-shaped spore-bearing structures on rotting apple logs.

In an uneventful week for birds, the highlight was a Black Redstart reported at Hankley Common – this species occurs in small numbers along the south coast in winter, but seldom inland. Goosanders were reported to have arrived for the winter at Cutt Mill Ponds, and the least common of the winter ducks now at Frensham were Pochards.

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

Photos: Brown Long-eared Bat (head down!) (by M. Tomsett); Scarce UMBER moth (by A. Swan); Pochard pair (by A. Swan); Herald moth (by M. Tomsett); Twenty-plume Moth (by M. Tomsett); *Merismodes anomala* (by A. Swan); anthomyiid fly (by A. Swan); Fenugreek Stalkball (2 photos) (by M. Tomsett).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 7/12/25.

Despite the gloomy conditions this week, one animal was conspicuous enough: an albino Grey Squirrel was seen near Bordon. It had pink eyes, which showed that it was a true albino – having no pigment at all. This genetic variant is reckoned to have a frequency of about 1 in 100,000, which means that there may be about 20 albino squirrels in the UK!

The best bird report was a Hen Harrier in the remarkable Tice's Meadow reserve (Farnham), but miserable weather may be the reason for the sparseness of other reports, although small flocks of Redwings were seen occasionally.

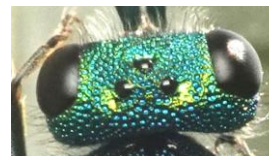
The rain was borne on winds with a southerly component, and this held temperatures up to the extent that the minimum temperature in the last night of the week was much warmer than the average daytime temperature for the time of year. This brought out a good set of insects on a dry night, including the standard set of seasonal moths. A fresh Red-green Carpet was not a great surprise, as this species has a long season, comprising two generations, and this week is just towards the end of the second. It has enjoyed an increasing trend this century, and has been exceptionally frequent this year.

Many tiny bugs were found around windows, including *Ectopsocus briggsi*, which is a tiny (3mm) psocopteran bug. This group of bugs include the "booklice" indoors and "barklice", like this one, outdoors. It was interesting to note that it has three ocelli (simple eyes) on top of its head, supplementing the compound eyes. This arrangement of three ocelli is widespread, but not ubiquitous, among insects: diverse groups such as damselflies and wasps also have it. This suggests that it was a feature of their common ancestor, which lived early in the history of the insects – probably in the Carboniferous period, more than 300 million years ago. It is thought that these extra eyes have a function related to orientation in flight. *Simulium* blackflies also showed up, with both males (big eyes) and females (small eyes) that were probably of the same species, despite their differences. Perhaps the final micro-wasp of the year was found, a red-eyed black species that on-line experts think may belong to the genus *Tetrastichus*.

Lawns and other areas of short grass continued to support Snowy Waxcaps in large numbers, an exception in an otherwise poor year for this group of fungi. A grassy place under pines produced Milk-white Brittlegills (*Russula delica*), which, despite the name, are typically discoloured.

(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): albino squirrel (by M. Lawn); the bug *Ectopsocus briggsi*; enlargement of same showing ocelli; ocelli of ruby-tailed wasp for comparison; Milk-white Brittlegill (by M. Tomsett); Red-green Carpet moth; *Simulium* blackfly (male); *Simulium* blackfly (female); ?*Tetrastichus* micro-wasp.



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 14/12/25.

Tawny Owls have been noticeably vociferous recently: if the frequency of their calls is a good indicator, they seem to be more numerous than usual this season. Siskins, Redwings, Lesser Redpolls and Crossbills continue to be seen, usually in small flocks, in a variety of sites. The best birds this week, though, were a Peregrine and a Common Merganser at Thursley Common.

Added to the usual list of seasonal moths were Pale Brindled Beauty and Common Quaker, both of which were about a month earlier than expected. The very mild weather also permitted bumblebee activity around winter blossoms. The range of other active insects included Minotaur Beetles (whose freshly excavated burrows can now be found on heaths), leafhopper bugs, and the curious tiny psyllid bug *Trioza urticae*, which emerge from blister-like galls on nettles that are their larval home. The springtails aren't insects, but they are closely related: they belong to the class Collembola within the subphylum Hexapoda, which also includes the class Insecta. All insects are descended from a winged ancestor, but springtails never evolved flight, relying instead on a spring-loaded tail appendage to jump. Most are dull, but the striped and rather globular *Dicyrtomina saundersi* was found this week.

There are still a few fungi to be found on lawns and on wood, but a strange white structure that appeared on gravel this week was not fungus but a slime mould. Although unusual in form, being quite foliose, it was probably *Mucilago crustacea*, which has the new English name "Dog Vomit Slime Mould"! These structures are produced when previously mobile cells accumulate together for sexual reproduction and spore generation.

At this time of year, visitors to Petworth Park will find that the Fallow Deer have segregated themselves, with separate groups of stags and does. They graze at dawn and dusk, so they are likely to be found just dozing!

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

Photos: Fallow Deer (by A. Swan); Minotaur Beetle (by M. Tomsett); the springtail *Dicyrtomina saundersi* (by A. Swan); Common Quaker moth (by M. Tomsett); Pale Brindled Beauty moth (by A. Swan); "Dog Vomit Slime Mould" (by M. Tomsett); the leafhopper bug *Zygina angusta* (by A. Swan); the bug *Trioza urticae* (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 21/12/25.

There was a first report this week of one of the sounds evocative of early spring: the drumming of a Great Spotted Woodpecker. This is territorial behaviour, with the new breeding season in mind. There was a good set of birds reported by our correspondent at Woolmer Pond: Teal, Gadwall, Woodlark, Crossbill, Reed Bunting and Dartford Warbler, but nothing exceptional.

It is easy to understand how Robins have become associated with this season: during a country walk in poor winter weather, it is possible to see many of them by the wayside, but virtually no other birds. The tameness of Robins around gardeners is thought likely to have developed in association with Wild Boar rooting in ancient forests, long before humans began turning soil over!

Sadly, one of the White-tailed Eagles that was part of the historic Sussex clutch is suspected to have been killed: it has just been revealed that its tag was found in September just east of Petersfield, having been cut off. The police have appealed for information.

The springtail noted last week turned out to be one of many that could be found on the frames of outdoor windows, presumably grazing on algae. With the goblinesque *Dicyrtomina saundersi*, there was also the longer but similarly coloured *Entomobrya intermedia*.

The mild, damp weather was suitable for fungi. In addition to a modest variety of small things on lawns and logs, a large patch of Orange Peel Fungus was found under a hedge. Cup fungi, of which this is one, continue to be occasional right through into the spring. At the end of the week was the winter solstice, so we can now look out for the re-awakening of plants. Catkins can be seen on Hazels, but they currently tightly closed with stamens well hidden.

(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): Robin; Orange Peel Fungus; Mottled Umber moth; the springtail *Dicyrtomina saundersi*; the springtail *Entomobrya intermedia*; Robin.



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 28/12/25.

The north-easterly wind that started blowing in mid-week brought with it large numbers of grey geese: mainly Russian White-fronted Geese but with smaller numbers of Tundra Bean Geese. These have been reported in estuaries all along the coast in southern England, plus a few suitable inland sites, including Pulborough Brooks. Redwings can now be found wherever there are berries: there are a few Holly trees along hedgerows and woodland edges with plenty remaining. A flock of 85 at Valewood may be the biggest locally this season. There have been reports of an impressive Starling murmuration at dusk at Frensham Little Pond, the birds using the reed beds for roosting.

Prior to the drying effects of the north-easterly, the autumnal mild and wet conditions engendered a reasonable showing of fungi. Especially notable was Collared Earthstar (*Geastrum triplex*), found in two places close to the town. Earthstars are like puffballs, except that they have a thick extra external layer that splits and peels back to form a star shape. Also more characteristic of mid-autumn were Butter Cap (*Rhodocollybia butyracea*), Meadow Waxcap (*Cuphophyllus pratensis*) and Wrinkled Club (*Clavulina rugosa*). More usual in December was the tiny *Mycena clavularis*, found annually at this time of year on the bark of a garden tree.

There were a couple of nights early in the week that were excellent for moths, with the distinctively marked Satellite and large numbers of Mottled Umber turning up. The frequency of the latter this season has demonstrated the full range of its variation of wing pattern.

The first flowering of the season of a wild Primrose was observed this week, but further progress of spring will probably need to await another change of wind direction.

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

Photos: Satellite moth (by M. Tomsett); *Mycena clavularis* (by A. Swan); Hazel catkins (unripe) (by T. Hardy); Collared Earthstar (by A. Swan); variation in Mottled Umber moths (all this season, by T. Hardy, A. Swan and M. Tomsett); Butter Cap (by M. Tomsett); Wrinkled Club (by M. Tomsett); group of Collared Earthstars (by A. Swan).

