

Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 7/6/26.

The sunny spells between the downpours were good for spotting insects as they basked on the increasingly lush vegetation. Best of all was the spectacular and uncommon Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle, which has been seen at several local sites. The first Silver-studded Blue butterflies emerged in impressive quantities: it was possible to stand in one spot and count ten within a few metres, which is remarkable for a species that is typically spread quite thinly over tracts of heathland. The first Meadow Browns were also on the wing. Interesting flies included firsts of the season of the very neat *Ectophasia crassipennis*, the robberfly *Dioctria hyalipennis* and the hoverfly *Xylota sylvorum*, which looks from a distance more like an ichneumon (such as *Amblyteles*) than a typical hoverfly, and has a very ichneumon-like fidgety manner as it skips between leaves. Some of the overcast nights were as good for nocturnal insects as the warm but moonlit nights of the heatwave. The first Elephant Hawkmoths of the season were very welcome, as were Blotched Emeralds and the large and uncommon Great Oak Beauty.

The season has been damp enough to trigger a strong showing of orchids: Common Spotted-orchids in particular have appeared in good numbers in their usual meadows, commons and woodland rides. One plant found had a curious aberration: the flowers were all in the wrong orientation, 90 degrees out from normal. This becomes less surprising when we realise that it is a defining feature of orchids that their flowers are all normally upside-down - each flower stalk has a 180 degree twist! In the ancestral lilies, the whorl of three petals had the centrally-positioned petal at the top, but in the orchids this petal is rotated around to form the large labellum at the bottom, which functions as the "landing pad" for visiting insects.

The rain produced a modest showing of fungi, with the first Blusher (*Amanita rubescens*) in woods, and golf-ball-like puffballs in grassland. This isn't unusual for early summer, and Russulas or even boletes may appear soon.

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

Photos: Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle (by A. Swan); Elephant Hawkmoth (by T. Hardy); Silver-studded Blue (by A. Swan); Great Oak Beauty (by T. Hardy); *Ectophasia crassipennis* (by J. Godden); Yellow-legged Mining Bee (by J. Godden); *Dioctria hyalipennis* with prey (by J. Godden); crab spider with prey (by J. Godden); Spectacle (by T. Hardy); *Rivellia syngenesiae* (by A. Swan); *Xylota sylvorum* (by A. Swan); *Amblyteles armatorius* (by J. Godden); White Plume Moth (by M. Tomsett); aberrant Common Spotted-orchid (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 14/6/26.

The Peacock was voted the UK's favourite butterfly this week, but it wasn't possible to see them fluttering around in gardens: the adults that over-wintered here have gone, but they laid eggs on nettles, and now their black, spiny caterpillars are nearly full-grown. A new generation of adults will emerge from chrysalises next month. Noticed on the wing this week were good numbers of Large Skippers and an occasional Painted Lady heading north.

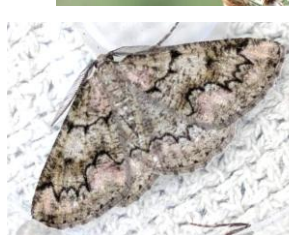
In mostly poor conditions for moths, the most striking feature was the abundance of Heart & Darts, Large Yellow Underwings and the micro-moth Variegated Golden Tortrix. Less common were the Beautiful Golden Y and the Brussels Lace, the latter owing its name, along with many others, to the curious fact that a pioneering group of moth enthusiasts in London in the 18th century included a large percentage of professionals from the textile industry! Other interesting insects were the Golden-ringed Dragonfly, the nymphs of which need fast-flowing streams; the impressively ugly tachinid fly *Nowickia ferox*; and the deerfly *Chrysops relictus*, photographed while painfully biting the photographer!

The birding highlight was probably a Turtle Dove at Thursley Common, although this species is normally a little more frequent in woodland edges to the south. Stonechats have been busy (and noisy) on our heathlands, collecting prey for their nestlings. They catch invertebrates at ground level by dropping down from perches on bushes. When they are feeding their young, and not immediately swallowing their prey, there is an opportunity to see prey items in their beaks: one photographed seemed to have caught a spider-hunting wasp, which do indeed spend most of their time at ground level.

The rain brought out more fungi, mainly The Blusher (*Amanita rubescens*) and Tawny Grisette (*A. fulva*) – typical summer species. A bonfire site yielded the uncommon ink-cap *Coprinopsis gonophylla* (subject to confirmation) and *Bonomyces sinopicus* was noted from two places: both of these species are bonfire site specialists.

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Photos: Caterpillar of Peacock butterfly (by A. Swan); *Rutpela maculata* (by J. Godden); Stonechat with prey (by A. Swan); *Chrysops relictus* (by M. Tomsett); Beautiful Golden Y moth (by M. Tomsett); the ink-cap *Coprinopsis gonophylla* (by A. Swan); Variegated Golden Tortrix (by M. Tomsett); *Nowickia ferox* (by J. Godden); Brussels Lace (by M. Tomsett); *Lozotaeniodes formosana* (by M. Tomsett); Golden-ringed Dragonfly (by J. Godden).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 21/6/26.

The Society's visit to a nature reserve near Bentley was intended to focus on the site's butterflies, but the rich flora grabbed our attention, with masses of Hairy St. John's-wort and Meadow Vetchling among the tall grasses. A surprise was a patch of Herb Paris: one of the most distinctive plants in the UK flora, with just four leaves arranged in a single horizontal whorl and a single upward-facing flower with four green petals, at this time of year surrounding a sinister-looking berry. It is characteristic of damp areas at the foot of wooded slopes on the chalk, but in this case it is on clay. Also an ancient woodland indicator was Betony, with intense red-purple flower spikes. The butterflies were a spectacle, included many freshly-emerged Marbled Whites and Ringlets, plus Large and Small Skippers – all of these also to be found in sites closer to Haslemere (where the increasingly uncommon Small Tortoiseshell was spotted this week). It was just a little too early to find Silver-washed Fritillaries. The site also had an abundance of grasshoppers and bush-crickets, but all at immature stages. The previous week's rain had brought out a patch of highly distinctive "fibrecap" fungi (genus *Inocybe*), the surface of which indeed look like sheets of radiating fibres that have been pulled apart as the cap expanded. It was probably *Inocybe rimosa*, which is dangerously poisonous.

As the temperature cranked up, there were increasing amounts of nocturnal insect life. Moth highlights included the first of the season for the spectacular Swallowtail Moth, Light Crimson Underwing, Leopard Moth, Four-spotted Footman and Dwarf Cream Wave: all very distinctive and illustrative of the amazing variety of colour and form of our moths. A Yellow Larch Tortrix (with the cumbersome scientific name *Ptycholomoides aeriferana*) was an uncommon find, and produced a surprise: while awaiting identification, it laid eggs, and these hatched into caterpillars within just a few hours!

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Photos: Swallowtail Moth (by T. Hardy); berry of Herb Paris (by A. Swan); Elephant Hawkmoths (by M. Tomsett); Yellow Toadflax (by A. Swan); Dwarf Cream Wave (by M. Tomsett); Betony (by A. Swan); Small Tortoiseshell (by M. Tomsett); Light Crimson Underwing (by M. Tomsett); Double Square-spot (by M. Tomsett); Marbled White (by M. Tomsett); *Inocybe ?rimosa* (by A. Swan); Hairy St. John's-wort (by A. Swan); immature Roesel's Bush-cricket (by A. Swan); Ringlet (by C. Lemka); Four-spotted Footman (by M. Tomsett); Leopard Moth (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 28/6/26.

The heatwave was too much for most wildlife: it was difficult to find anything moving during the hottest days. Butterflies normally spread their wings to absorb warmth from the sun when feeding, but they were more likely to be found with wings folded together. Nevertheless, Silver-washed Fritillaries, Painted Ladies, Large Skippers, Meadow Browns were all numerous, and a single White Admiral was seen in a garden.

There were a couple of very warm nights (classified as “tropical” by the forecasters) when insects massed around lights: mostly gnat-type flies and caddisflies, but also plenty of moths, including some special species. The Scarlet Tiger stood out, but this is becoming quite regular. More interesting were the rare Red-necked Footman and the even rarer Clay Fan-foot. The latter, found in Grayshott, was only the 7th ever recorded in Hampshire. The 5th in the county was also in Grayshott in 2011, and the 6th was in Bordon, recorded by a member of our Society in 2012! This is more evidence of the regional significance of our local habitats. Other noteworthy finds were the unique Scallop Shell, the boldly-marked micro-moth *Aethes cnicana* and an extraordinary double find of nationally scarce clearwing moths: the Red-belted Clearwing and the Yellow-legged Clearwing: both turned up in outbuildings in separate locations on consecutive days. The latter is clearly a wasp mimic. Other interesting insects were two sightings of the Four-banded Longhorn Beetle and a colourful and apparently very rare picture-wing fly: *Rhagoletis meigenii*. A sand wasp was observed finishing off a burrow (in which it will have laid an egg on a paralysed caterpillar) by carrying a “boulder” to block and disguise the entrance.

The previous week’s rain was enough to bring up some boletes, including some large specimens that could be noticed on roadsides. Darker specimens were deep red underneath: the Scarletina Bolete; paler specimens were mostly yellow underneath: these would be Yellow-cracking Bolete (or one of its confusingly similar relatives). Some of our commons and drier grasslands had spectacular displays of Agrimony, with long, elegantly curved flower spikes. Meadow Cranesbill was found in a restored meadow; this is a plant that is surprisingly scarce locally, and has possibly always been less common than to the west and north. It may be re-appearing due to the use of wildflower seed mixtures. In a quiet week for bird sightings, the report of a large flock of Lapwing at Woolmer Pond was notable.

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Photos (by A. Swan except where indicated): Scarlet Tiger; Yellow-legged Clearwing; Red-belted Clearwing (by J. Godden); Clay Fan-foot (by T. Hardy); Meadow Cranesbill; Scallop Shell (by T. Hardy); the picture-wing fly *Rhagoletis meigenii*; Four-banded Longhorn Beetle; the micro-moth *Argyresthia goedartella* (by T. Hardy); Red-necked Footman; Painted Lady; Scarletina Bolete; the micro-moth *Aethes cnicana* (by M. Tomsett); Agrimony; sand wasp carrying a “boulder” to its nest burrow.

