

Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 5/7/26.

A White Stork was seen flying high over Haslemere early in the week. This would be more surprising if it wasn't for the activity of this species in the Guildford area: they have been seen many times at Burpham water meadows and they have recently been practising nest construction at Slyfield Industrial Estate! The bird seen over Haslemere could also be one based at the Knepp re-introduction site.

As reported previously, Thursley Common is thought to be the only site for breeding Teal in Surrey, and two large sets of ducklings were out and about near the boardwalk there this week. Another breeding success has been the Barn Owls in a garden to the east of the town: three youngsters have shown themselves, and they are nearly full-grown and ready to fledge. Viewers of Springwatch will be well aware that this represents a great success for the parents: a grim outcome faces some 3rd or even 2nd Barn Owl nestlings if parents fail to secure a regular supply of food!

The Haslemere Bioblitz commenced activities on Saturday with a walk to Swan Barn Farm that produced a list of 96 species of plant and 13 species of butterfly. At Sturt Farm SANG a moth trap yielded 38 species plus a huge Tanner Beetle (a local speciality), and Slow-worms and Wood Mice were also detected.

Our heathlands are now turning purple with the flowering of Bell Heather: this nectar source will underpin a new phase of activity. The first Grayling butterfly was seen at Thursley. Meanwhile, a few Purple Emperors have been seen in woodland clearings and edges, but they are elusive.

A Garden Tiger was the most spectacular moth of the week: it is a declining species, in contrast to the Scarlet Tiger found last week, which appear to becoming more frequent. The first Black Arches moths were reported – always a welcome sight – whilst the least common species may have been a Lunar-spotted Pinion. An interesting find on the bioblitz was a Long-winged Conehead nymph – this species is a type of bush-cricket and was restricted to the south coast until around 30 years ago, when the warming climate allowed its range to expand northwards by around 5km per year. When mature, the females have a spectacular scythe-like appendage on the tip of their abdomens. Horseflies have been troublesome in the warm weather, but when seen closely they are remarkably patterned, including zig-zags on their eyes.

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

Photos: The horsefly *Haematopota pluvialis* (2 photos) (by A. Swan); Teal family – ducklings ducking! (by A. Swan); Garden Tiger moth (by A. Swan); Black Arches moth (by M. Tomsett); Lunar-spotted Pinion moth (by M. Tomsett); Rosy Footman moth (by A. Swan); Long-winged Conehead nymph (by A. Swan); Bell Heather (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 12/7/26.

Haslemere Bioblitz Week produced a couple of real rarities. Firstly, a striking red and black beetle in a garden on the west edge of the bioblitz area turned out to be *Trichodes aparius*, which is thought to have become extinct as a UK native species in about 1830, and there are only four UK records in modern times. Rather than being cross-Channel natural migrants, it is thought that these records may be of rare accidental imports. It lays eggs in the nests of bees (it has the English name "Bee-eating Beetle"), and these nests may be in holes and crevices in imported items such as "bee hotels" and garden furniture. It will be interesting to see if this species ever becomes re-established. Secondly, a bluish leafhopper bug that arrived at the moth-trapping event at Swan Barn Farm was identified as *Erotettix cyane*, the Pondweed Leafhopper, which has been described as "incredibly rare", with just a few UK sites. Attempts will be made to locate the pond where it breeds.

The compilation of data from the bioblitz events is still ongoing, but the list looks to be notable for the variety of beetles, flies, bugs and moths. The abundance of nocturnal insect life was no doubt appreciated by the bats that were detected near the town: seven species, including the Serotine, Western Barbastelle and a probable Natterer's Bat, in addition to the commoner Brown Long-eared Bat, Noctule and the two pipistrelle species.

Moths were abundant but with few stand-out species. The seven Leopard Moths attracted to a moth trap at the Museum was remarkable, and the Nationally Scarce *Pediasia contaminella* was noted. A careful examination of the hind wings of a cooled (not fatally!) moth showed that it was the uncommon Langmaid's Yellow Underwing, rather than the usual Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing. The notable bird report of the week was a Black-tailed Godwit at Thursley Common: very unusual there, and indeed anywhere inland.

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Photos: Bee-eating Beetle (by A. Swan); Pondweed Leafhopper (by A. Swan); the leafhopper *Cicadella viridis* (by A. Swan); Common Dor Beetle (by A. Swan); the sexton beetle *Nicrophorus vespillo* (by M. Tomsett); Summer Chafer (by M. Tomsett); Single-dotted Wave (by T. Hardy); the micro-moth *Pediasia contaminella* (by A. Swan); the leafhopper *Eurhadina pulchella* (by A. Swan); the leafhopper *Aguriahana stellulata* (by A. Swan); Hollyhock Weevil (by A. Swan); The Miller (by T. Hardy); the tachinid fly *Gymnosoma rotundatum* (by J. Godden); the picture-wing fly *Urophora quadrifasciata* (by A. Swan); the distinctive hind wing of Langmaid's Yellow Underwing (by T. Hardy).



Wildlife News

Observations in the Haslemere area - week ending 19/7/26.

The drought has begun to bite, with grass now straw-like on our commons and heaths. The colour of Bell Heather, though, is still rich, and Harebells are a welcome sight along dry waysides: this delightful plant is widely distributed but seldom in much quantity. A surprise find was a fresh growth of the fungus *Polyporus squamosus* ("Dryad's Saddle"), which uses the water in the decaying host tree.

Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count has started and continues until August 9th. It is sure to confirm a good year for Gatekeepers, which are booming in the current conditions. There have been several sitings of the migrant Clouded Yellow, which have crossed the Channel along with larger numbers of Painted Ladies.

The Society's annual moth morning allowed a close look at some of the insects that had been attracted to UV lights overnight, prior to their release. The amazing variety of shapes and colours of moths was amply demonstrated, with the Alder Kitten and Light Crimson Underwing among the highlights. Perhaps the least attractive moth was also the rarest: a finely speckled brown moth turned out to be *Aplota palpellus*, and only the second ever recorded in Surrey! Other nocturnal insects attracted to light include caddisflies, mayflies and beetles – especially the sexton beetles, such as the Shore Sexton Beetle that was noted this week. The reasons for their attraction to light along with moths is a mystery. A search for the breeding site of the rare Pondweed Leafhopper (reported last week) was unsuccessful, but it did reveal another specialist on Broad-leaved Pondweed: the metallic leaf beetle *Donacia versicolore*. The uncommon rove beetle *Platydracus stercorarius* was another good find.

Fifteen Little Egrets were reported from Woolmer Pond: just one of these now familiar birds would have been noteworthy only twenty years ago; they are now more frequent here than Grey Herons. Otherwise, the stand-out bird report was another Little Ringed Plover at Thursley Common.

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Photos: Dryad's Saddle (by A. Swan); Alder Kitten (by C. Lemka); Elephant Hawkmoth (by C. Lemka); Gatekeeper (by A. Swan); the rare micro-moth *Aplota palpellus* (by A. Swan); Harebell (by A. Swan); Scarce Footman (by C. Lemka); Shore Sexton Beetle (by T. Hardy); the rove beetle *Platydracus stercorarius* (by M. Tomsett); the leaf beetle *Donacia versicolore* (by A. Swan); Light Crimson Underwing (by A. Swan); Clouded Yellow (by A. Swan); Lime-speck Pug (by A. Swan).



Wildlife News

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

Although May/June-flowering orchids did quite well this year, late season orchids have been hit by the drought: a search for Broad-leaved Helleborines on one of our commons yielded just one flower spike, where there would have been more than thirty in a good year. This species has flowers that are similar to the *Cymbidium* orchids of the tropics, but smaller and more modestly coloured. Flowering in much greater profusion in rough grassland and along waysides is Hogweed: this is a statuesque plant but hardly a beauty. It is worth a closer look, though, as it provides platters of nectar for a huge variety of insects, which this week included the large digger wasp *Crabro cribrarius* and the bristly tachinid flies *Tachina fera* and *Ectophasia crassipennis* – the latter is remarkable in being first recorded in the UK in 2019, but is now fairly common in our area.

Another new arrival is the Jersey Mocha moth – first recorded on mainland UK in 2003, and still very uncommon – found alongside the more familiar and nicely marked Mocha. Other attractive species were Large Emerald and the quaintly-named True Lover's Knot, but the hot weather has not really yielded a bonanza. Also attracted to light were the huge Tanner Beetle and the slightly smaller *Arhopalis* sp., whilst the uncommon dung beetle *Onthophagus similis* was a good daytime find.

A careful scrutiny of insects scurrying around on windows of greenhouses and summerhouses produced some interesting and seldom recorded chalcidoid micro-wasps, which needed identification by experts. The most peculiar was *Cheiloneurus claviger* (3mm), which has a spike on its scutellum and has striking antennae. It is a hyper-parasitoid, as it parasitises the eggs or larvae of other chalcidoids which themselves parasitise bug eggs. The chalcidoids are a large group of wasp families named after the family Chalcididae, wasps in which family are usually characterised by strong and curved hind legs, and a large (6mm) example found this week turned out to be *Haltichella rufipes*. At the other end of the size range is the barely visible *Trichogramma*: 0.3mm long.

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Photos: Broad-leaved Helleborine orchid (by A. Swan); Large Emerald (by T. Hardy); the tachinid fly *Tachina fera* (by A. Swan); the tachinid fly *Ectophasia crassipennis* (by A. Swan); Mocha (by A. Swan); Jersey Mocha (by M. Tomsett); True Lover's Knot (by T. Hardy); the beetle *Arhopalis* sp. (by M. Tomsett); the dung beetle *Onthophagus similis* (by A. Swan); the digger wasp *Crabro cribrarius* (by A. Swan); the chalcidoid wasp *Haltichella rufipes* (6mm) (by A. Swan); the chalcidoid wasp *Trichogramma* sp. (0.3mm) (by A. Swan); the chalcidoid wasp *Cheiloneurus claviger* (3mm) (2 photos) (by A. Swan).

