

Warwick Natural History Society

Snippets

No. 115

19 September 2024

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70TH ANNIVERSARY – A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY!

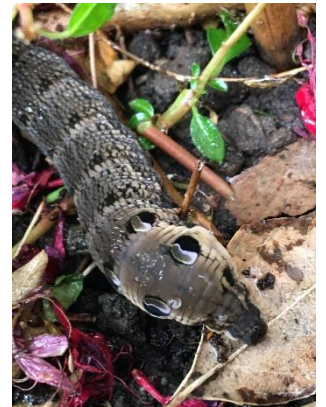
Our visit to Brandon Reserve is arranged for **FRIDAY 18TH OCTOBER.**

We will be meeting at 11.00 am in the courtyard and tickets will be £5 each to include a sandwich lunch and refreshments in the Barn, followed by a talk. Tickets will be available at all meetings prior to the 18th October. There will be no charge for access to the Reserve for all those joining us for lunch.

We would like to see as many members as possible coming along to celebrate this Anniversary, so please contact either Barbara (barbaracuttell@gmail.com) or myself (wesandlinda@btinternet.com) in order that we can have accurate numbers of those attending.

On 1st September '24 I saw this Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillar. It was below a fuchsia bush. I think maybe it was ready to pupate in the ground.

1st September JM

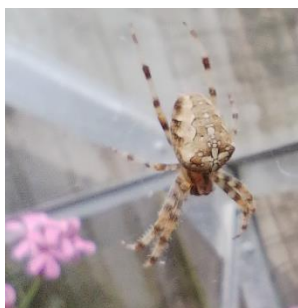


We had an enjoyable walk on the 29th August around Hampton Wood reserve whilst cycling to Hampton Lucy for lunch.

Speckled wood were seen, together with Small white and a Migrant hawkler dragonfly handily posing on the reeds.

The reed growth in the meadows was spectacular and the reserve was as lovely as ever. Well worth a visit at any time of the year.

2nd September LW



This attractive large spider was spinning its web in the greenhouse this morning – any clues on i/d please?

2nd September LW

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Can I encourage those of you who are still "on the fence" regarding the efficacy of the badger cull which continues and will lead to thousands more badgers being slaughtered, to watch Brian May: The Badgers and Me which was aired on BBC2 at 9 pm on Friday 23rd August (now available on iplayer).

Brian May makes a very compassionate, calm and intelligent presenter and what he has to say as a result of his extensive scientific research is yet more ammunition to stop this slaughter of badgers for no/very marginal purpose.

2nd September BC

In my trap this week, a Red Underwing. It is large, and the drab colouring of the upper wings camouflages it well during the day resting on trees. When disturbed it shows vivid red underwings to deter predation. It obviously saw me as its predator!



Joining the Red Underwing was an 'Old Lady'. Another large moth aptly named for its appearance of an old lady wearing a shawl.
5th September LD



Walking in the Cotswolds recently we came across Chalkhill Blue butterflies feeding on the blue scabious. They are one of the blue butterfly species, the caterpillars of which, have an intimate relationship with ants. They exude a type of energy-giving honeydew milked by the ants and in return are given protection in underground chambers until pupation and adulthood.

5th September LD



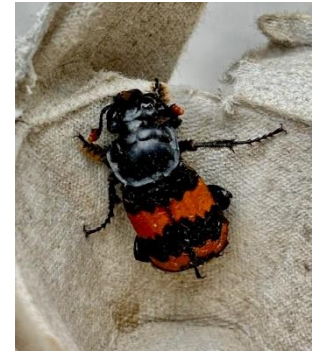
A pioneering new project known as 'Psyche' undertaken by an evolutionary biologist at the Wellcome Sanger Institute near Cambridge aims to sequence the genomes of all the moths and butterflies in Europe. It is hoped to reveal how climate change and habitat loss are affecting them.

As part of the project they have discovered, depending on location, the cells of the Chalkhill Blue have different numbers of chromosomes, the DNA that contains their genetic blueprint. In southern Europe they have 87 chromosomes and then one more is added at a time as they have spread north until their northern limit is reached, where they have a total of 90.

This is a surprising observation as it was thought that a given species can only have a given number of chromosomes. The biologists think the newly discovered phenomena may be the result of evolution whereby two species split from a single originator a million or so years ago. We are seeing now two species in the act of being created from one. The DNA technology has made it clear butterflies are essentially a sub-group of moths so the process of being able to alter numbers of chromosomes is an important evolutionary step in creating new species evidenced by this new research. Butterflies may have originally been moths!

(The Guardian newspaper) 5th September LD

Our granddaughter Rose has borrowed my actinic moth trap during the summer holidays and this large colourful red and black beetle was bumbling its way around at the bottom.



Rose tells me it is a *Nicophorus investigator*, one of the burying beetles which is quite common. Breeding occurs from July. Adults meet at carrion, the host material where mating takes place. They then prepare the carrion by removing feathers etc and secrete over it a preserving fluid. It is then worked into a ball-shape before being buried from underneath, to a depth of up to 60cm. The female then lays her eggs in the ground close by, and the larvae move to the buried carrion where they are fed by the adults before pupating in the soil to emerge the following year.

5th September LD

Found at Leam Valley. Not too sure but it may be a spider's egg cocoon. About the size of a 5 pence piece, the bright yellow/lemon colour is derived from the presence of the accumulation of carotenoids in the silk cocoon.

8th September LD



For those on my WNHS walk at Leam Valley recently, you may remember the wasp nest in the meadow field which at the time was a hub of activity. It is now practically deserted with the last few wasps milling about the entrance.

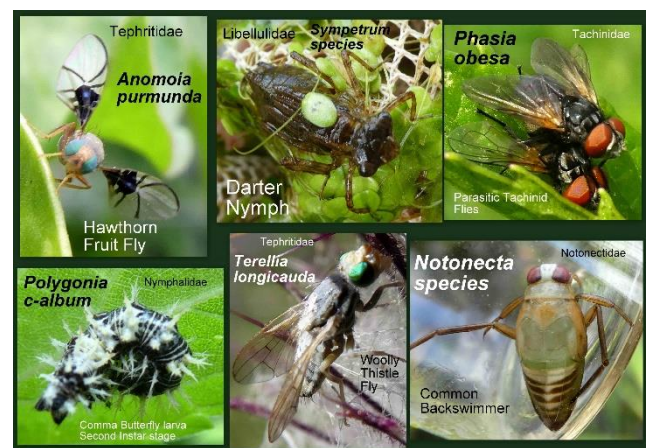
8th September LD

On a visit to Stanton in the Cotswolds last week we parked our car in the village hall car park. On our return we were surprised to find that a large number of wasps, (50+), were busying themselves on our car. No other cars were affected. They appeared to be eating something and we realised that their attention was drawn to the honeydew secreted by aphids in the Lime tree outside our house. The wasps weren't interested in us and when they had had their fill they departed.

9th September RD

New finds in different habitats: At Odibourne Allotments, a Hawthorn Fruit fly with striking wings and *Phasia obesa* Tachinid flies mating; at Tricia Scott's small pond in Hampton in Arden (thanks to her pond netting skills) a Darter nymph (at this stage difficult to get to species) and a *Notonecta* species of Backswimmer; at Brandon Marsh a very unusual view of a Comma Butterfly in the second larval stage of its development and a Woolly Thistle fly which appears to be uncommon across much of the UK.

11th September SG





Plenty of dragonflies appeared during the warm spell in September. At the pools in St. Nicholas Park - southern hawker, migrant hawker, brown hawker and this female ruddy darter who decided our wicker chair was the perfect place to sunbathe.

17th September RT

Snippets to Linda please at: wesandlinda@btinternet.com

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