

Warwick Natural History Society

Snippets

No. 116

3 October 2024

The Society is now on X (formerly Twitter) Follow us on [@WarwickNatHist](https://twitter.com/WarwickNatHist)

70TH ANNIVERSARY – LAST CHANCE TO PUT YOUR NAME DOWN

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

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.

Boddington Reservoir

Boddington reservoir was beautiful in sunshine. We saw Chicory on the dam but not many other flowers.



Egrets and Herons were feeding in the shallows and we saw a beautiful Robin Pincushion near the dam too.

There was a fishing competition in progress and we saw one big Carp being landed - it was put back in the water so hope it survived.



23rd September FW

Fungi Foray – Hampton Wood 23rd September

12 hardy souls ventured to Hampton Wood to search for fungi and had the benefit of Dave Champion's expertise (and that of Fran) in explaining what they all were. We huddled under umbrellas struggling to hear over the noise of the thunder nearby but had another a fascinating adventure into the secret world of fungi.



Earthstar

We explored the Reserve and plenty of exhibits were found including Verdigris agaric and Earthstar before we even left the car park, Brittle gill, Coral fungus, Collared Parachute, King Alfred's Cakes (under Ash trees), Jelly ear (under Elder trees) and Blackening polypor.

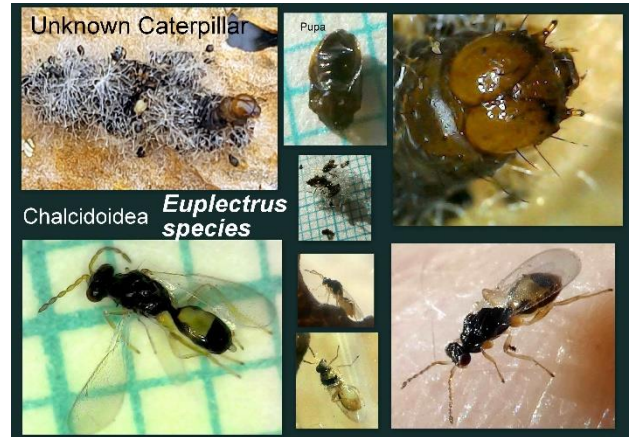
When the rain started again in earnest and hands were turning blue, we headed back to the cars where coffee appeared in some cars and the heating was turned up!

27th September LW



Verdigris Agaric

On September 9th my son found a 15mm caterpillar in his Northampton garden covered in what looked like fungus. I put it into a small pot with a breathable top. Five days later the first of over twenty, 3mm Euplectrus species of parasitoid wasps emerged. I learned that the female Euplectrus injects the caterpillar with a venom that stops it going through the normal process of moulting and shedding its cuticle (skin). This allows the eggs and larvae to stay firmly attached while feeding on the caterpillar which feeds and remains active. When the larvae are ready to pupate they spin the random cocoon webbing which looked to us like a fungus. By this time the caterpillar is depleted and dies.



I find this succinct explanation of the difference between 'parasitoids' and 'parasites' very helpful.

"Parasitoids are small insects whose immature stages develop either within or attached to the outside of other insects, referred to as hosts. Parasitoids eventually kill the host they feed on, as opposed to parasites like fleas and ticks, which typically feed upon hosts without killing them."

University of Maryland.

28th September SG

RSPB Big Garden Watch 2024 Survey Results

9.7m UK birds were counted and 610,000 people took part.

Top 10 birds in UK:

1. House Sparrow 1,442, 300
2. Bluetit 10,094, 401
3. Starling 879,006
4. Wood pigeon 835,408
5. Blackbird 768,004
6. Robin 539,820
7. Great tit 523,638
8. Goldfinch 478,740
9. Magpie 446,678
10. Long tailed tit 383,166

Top 10 birds in Warwickshire:

1. House Sparrow
2. Blue tit
3. Wood pigeon
4. Starling
5. Blackbird
6. Robin
7. Goldfinch
8. Great tit
9. Magpie
10. Long tailed tit

29th September FW [RSPB source]



We walked around Bilberry Hill recently, part of the Lickey Hills, not far from Birmingham. An interesting area not only for the distant views over the City and wider Warwickshire but also for the presence of heathland.



Heathlands have few trees and characterised by low growing plants such as heather, bilberry and gorse. As the Lickey's are less than 250m above sea level it is classed here as Lowland Heath. This is quite a rare habitat in Britain which needs careful management to preserve not only the flora but also the fauna that depend on it. The rangers are currently searching on the bilberry for the ultimate prize, the scarce Bilberry Bee.

In the attached photo of Bilberry Hill, the heather can be seen in the forefront and the bilberry in the centre.

29th September LD

Nature Friendly Farming

The RSPB has a petition calling on the Government to invest in nature and climate friendly farming so our farmers, our wildlife and all of us can reap the rewards in the future. Many incredible farmers are already showing you can farm productively and profitably and make space for nature.

If you wish, you can sign the petition on the RSPB website:

[Sign the nature friendly farming petition now - The RSPB](#)

MP



Snippets to Linda please at: wesandlinda@btinternet.com

www.wnhs.info