



NEWSLETTER



Welcome young naturalists! Issue: Autumn/Winter 2021

Owls by Di Farrar MBNA

There are six species of owls' native to the UK – Little Owl, Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl and Snowy Owl. The three you are most likely to see are Little, Tawny and Barn. Owls eject pellets of undigested parts of the food they have eaten, this includes fur and bones.

Little Owl

- They are 21-23cm tall
- Colour – brown and buff on the head, back and breast with a white rump
- Eat worms, beetles and small mammals



Tawny Owl

- They are 37-39cms tall
- Colour – mottled brown and cream with a paler breast
- Eat small mammals, small birds, insects and worms



Barn Owl

- They are 33-39cm tall
- Colour – pale brown, cream and grey on the back, head and wings, with a creamy breast
- They eat voles, mice, shrews and small birds



If you find an owl pellet like this one, take it home. Carefully break it open and take out the bones and see if you can identify the animal they came from.

Visit this website for information and a downloadable identification chart:

<https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-facts/barn-owl-pellet-analysis/>



Pauline says: look for signs of Autumn!

Find some Fungi.

Fungi comes in lots of colours and shapes but it's best not to touch them as some species are poisonous. Here are some common ones to look for all year round....



Candlesnuff – found in leaf litter or on dead wood

Scarlet Elf Cup – found growing on dead twigs and branches on the woodland floor

Orange Peel – found along woodland paths

Fly Agaric – grows in groups in woodlands

Parasol – grows in open grassy areas

Shaggy Inkcap – tall and white with black around the base found in groups in grassland areas or woodlands

Find some Plant Galls

In autumn most trees lose their leaves, this is a good time to look for plant galls. Turn over the leaves on the trees to find them.

What is a plant gall?

These are abnormal growths on a leaf, twig, root or flower of many plants and trees. They are often the result of the larvae of tiny insects causing an irritation to the plant when it hatches from an egg.

Here are some common plant galls to look for.....

Birds Notes: The golden plover is generally observed as a winter visitor - certainly in the South West of England. It is a wader and a ground nesting bird of moorlands, and is protected by The Countryside Act 1981.

Now, they will flock together in large numbers to spend winter on Dartmoor, estuaries, wetlands and especially on lowland farmland.

It is a little bit smaller than the lapwing and the grey plover and has a wonderfully golden plumage which shimmers in the sunlight. The black belly of the summer plumage has been lost after the moult, leaving paler underparts. The wingspan is about 67-76 cm.

It is useful to note that in flight the species has sharply pointed wings and pale feathers especially at the wing base underneath.



Golden Plover Illustration by Endymion Beer



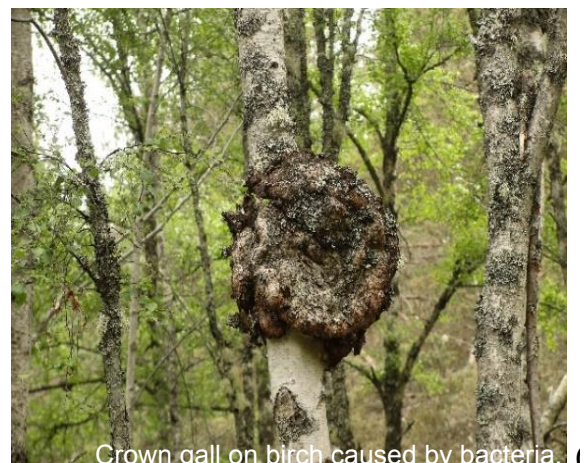
Silky Button and Spangle Galls on an Oak leaf.



Red Bean-shape gall on a Willow leaf.



Knopper gall, caused by a tiny wasp which burrows into acorns.



Crown gall on birch caused by bacteria.

Autumn Butterflies

By Di Farrar MBNA

Butterflies are, I think, are some of the most beautiful insects we have in this country with almost 60 species. They can be found in places where flowers grow to provide them with nectar, in places like meadows, woodland edges and parks. Around 22 species of butterfly have been known to visit gardens in this country so you do not have to travel far to find one.

On warm, spring and summer days they can be seen fluttering around flowers searching for nectar which gives them the energy they need, but some species can also be seen during the autumn months. These are some of the more commonly seen butterflies I have spotted during autumn so take advantage of any warmer days and see how many you can find.

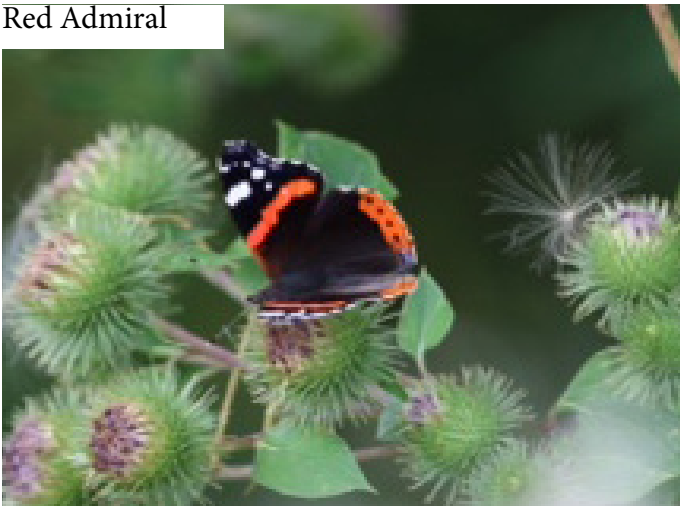
Comma



Common Blue



Red Admiral



Small Copper



Small Tortoiseshell



Speckled Wood





Rose hips from dog rose.

Hips and Haws

Trish MacDuff ABNA

At the end of summer the colourful wild flowers start to fade and disappear, but autumn soon makes up for this with its beautiful display of hips and haws in the hedgerows. What are hips, haws? Haws are the red berries that appear on hawthorn trees. Rose hips, sometimes called heps, are the orange-red berries on rose trees - in hedgerows, more often it will be the fruit of the dog rose.

- Hawthorn is often used in hedges, as it is dense and its spikey thorns make a good barrier. In spring, it is covered with white or pink flowers which provide nectar for pollinating insects. It provides shelter for birds and mammals.
- The bright red berries provide food for birds such as thrushes and waxwings. Inside each berry are one to five seed like structures, which the birds disperse in their droppings.
- Rose hips the dog rose is a prickly climber often found weaving through hedges, its white pink flowers having a lovely delicate perfume. The fruit is formed when the flower dies back. The berry is oval shaped, and inside are many hairy seeds.
- Rose hips can stay on the branches until late winter, so they can be enjoyed by birds like thrushes, fieldfare and blackbirds.
- During the Second World War children were paid to collect rose hips to make into syrup, as they contain a lot of Vitamin C. (Please don't try this, the seeds inside can be a stomach irritant - you need to know exactly what you're doing!) Rose hips are said to contain twenty times the amount of vitamin C than an orange.



Haws of Hawthorn



Rowan or Mountain Ash berries



Rose hips of wild rose



Rose hips eaten by birds

Helicopters!

By Trish MacDuff ABNA

We have four trees in this country which produce “helicopter” seeds. Hold them up high, and let them go, and they will spiral down to the ground like a helicopter rotor. Inside the papery covering you will find a seed that can germinate to produce another tree, it flies away from the parent tree so that it does not have to compete for light and nutrients. The scientific botanical term for these helicopters is samaras.

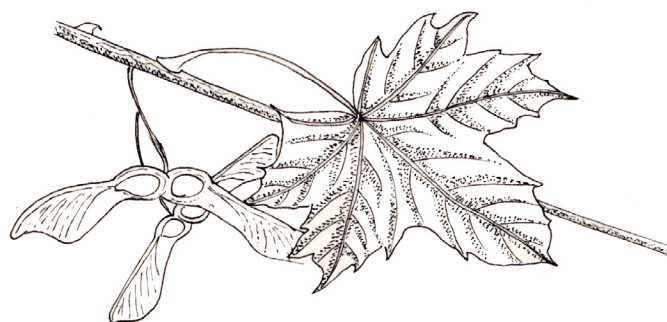
- Sycamore is non-native, the helicopters have V shaped wings, rounded ends, which are 5 - 10 mm in diameter. Their V shape is narrower than a field maple or Norway maple. The seeds turn brown and fall to the ground in autumn.



- Ash is a native tree found in woods and hedgerows. Seeds have only one wing about 25-45mm long and hang like keys in a bunch. It is the third most common tree in UK but is currently under threat by ash die back disease.



- Norway Maple this is also non-native, but can often be found in parks and gardens. They produce larger seeds than the others, 30mm - 50mm long.



- Field Maple is another native, often found in woodland, gardens and farms. Their seeds grow in pairs on a horizontal line. They are green with the occasional pink tinge.



COLOUR ME!

Pauline's Page

Hibernation and Winter Inactivity

All these animals either hibernate or become less active over winter.

Hibernation means the animal goes into a deep sleep by slowing down their body (including their heart rate, body temperature and breathing) this is called "Topor".

- Bumble bees, burrow deep into the ground
- Amphibians and reptiles spend the winter under a pile of logs or stones
- Some insects will shelter at the base of grass and plant stems
- Butterflies and moths create a cocoon around them

Can you name these species?

Bank Vole

Bumble Bee

Common Toad

Lizard

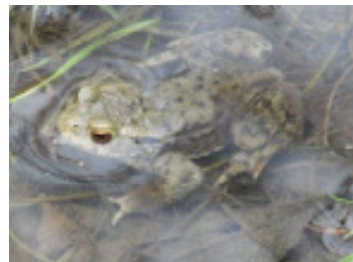
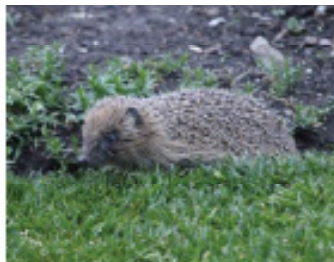
Hedgehog

Pipistrelle Bat

Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly

Six-spot Burnet Moth

Ruby Tiger Caterpillar



The Colourful Jay

By Di Farrar MBNA

Jays are members of the crow family, otherwise known as corvids and there are eight species in the British Isles. Most of these birds are black in colour but each have their own differences in size, shape of beak and sound and are quite easy to tell apart with the help of a bird guidebook.

Carrion Crows are probably the most likely you will see, with a black beak and all black plumage and usually seen on their own. Rooks have a slender grey bill with greyish skin at its base. They build nests at the tops of trees in groups called rookeries and are seldom seen on their own. Another common member of this family is the Jackdaw, smaller than Carrion Crows and Rooks, mainly black with a grey patch at the back of its head and has beautiful pale blue eyes.

Jays are common woodland birds but are shy and secretive so are not seen so often although you may be lucky enough to find one on your garden bird table. Their plumage is the most colourful of all the crows with a dark pink body, white throat and a black 'moustache'. The top of the head is streaked black and white. They have stunning blue, black and white wing feathers and a white rump which shows really well when in flight.

- They eat beetles, caterpillars, fruit and seeds but in the autumn months they feast on acorns, which they love.
- Jays are intelligent birds and have a habit of hoarding and burying acorns to keep for the winter (called caching). Research has shown that they can collect and bury up to 3,000 acorns a month.
- They have a loud screeching call which can be heard when flying from tree to tree.
- Jays are clever mimics and are able to copy songs and calls of other birds, as well as a variety of other sounds they have heard like lawn mowers, babies crying or water dropping from a tap.



New Young Naturalists Badge Scheme

Work towards gaining recognition for your skills as a naturalist.

BNA Young Naturalist

- To gain this badge you have to be a member of the British Naturalists Association (BNA) for one year
- You will receive it on renewal of your membership
- It comes with a certificate too!

BNA Nature Reporter

- To gain this badge, you have to write three nature reports and send them to Chairman Steve
- They can be things you have seen or things you have done to help wildlife



Start today on your journey to become a Young Naturalist!
More Badge Recognition to follow.

The Young Naturalists' Hub

We love to hear from you so do keep those letters and articles coming, and thank you for your wonderful contributions so far! Here's what some of our young naturalists' had to say.....

Portland, Dorset. By Beatrix Womersley August 2021



In my summer holiday I went to see my Nanny who lives on Portland. We stayed on Portland for 2 weeks and visited lots of different places. At Church Ope we walked down through the Pirates Graveyard to the beach and then along the bottom of cliffs at East Weares. In the grass along the side of the path were grasshoppers and lots of butterflies. We saw an Angle Shades moth resting on a Sloe bush. At the viewpoint we saw about twenty Common Lizards basking in the sun.

On a breezy night we went to see if we could find a glow worm. We found a female glowing in the dark. The flightless females glow to attract a mate.

At Tout and Kingbarrow Quarries we saw a Hummingbird Hawk Moth feeding on Honeysuckle. My mum found four Slow Worms under huge rocks.

We walked down to the Bird Observatory at Portland Bill. Martin showed us a Willow Warbler and a Black Cap from the field nets. I was able to hold the Willow Warbler in my cupped hand and when I opened it the bird flew off. There was a lot of butterflies and dragonflies in the Bird Observatory garden. Inside the Observatory I found a large black coloured Bush Cricket.



Butterflies seen:

Red Admiral
Speckled Wood
Common Blue
Gatekeeper
Tortoise Shell
Small Copper
Painted Lady
Wall Brown
Adonis Blue
Small and Large Whites





Hedgehog thinks he and his family have found a safe place in which to hibernate snuggled up side a bonfire heap!

Spuggie Sparrow & friends are terrified at the tremors and bangs that light the sky. "What's happening?" he tweets.

Hal the heron says; "Don't panic or flee away in fright. That's how you get lost. Tuck down and stay safe. It's the 5th of November and Humans are having Guy Fawkes night."

Uncle Willow's Fact File



Hi, I'm Uncle Willow the border collie dog. So Spuggie and Hal have been talking about the fireworks and a possible bonfire on Guy Fawkes night. Well, first of all I can tell you that hedgehog and his family were safe because they were in a garden owned by Young Naturalists. The bonfire was never lit and hedgehog and family will stay safe all winter.

Let's think about how to stay safe on Guy Fawkes night and how we can protect wildlife at the same time. Here are some ideas.

1. Keep your pets safely indoors.
2. Check bonfires! Hedgehogs will not run out if they are inside. They will be hibernating.
3. The safest way to have a bonfire is to collect the wood but NOT to build the bonfire in a fresh location until the actual night, giving creatures no chance of taking refuge.
4. Build alternative stick piles with mounds of leaf litter for wildlife. Lots of creatures like a nice stick pile such as small mammals, weasels and hedgehogs (hedgehogs should now be in hibernation but sometimes they are disturbed and have to relocate.) You might even find moss, fungi and lichen growing on the wood. To encourage the growth of lichen on your stick pile, dab some sour milk on some of the logs and see what happens.
5. Do not handle fireworks - they are dangerous. The most you can handle safely is a sparkler under the supervision of an adult.
6. The after shock of loud explosives can kill birds and other animals. If you are choosing to have fireworks, try to be considerate or go to a public display where it will happen just once a year instead of lots of times in different gardens, lessening the impact.
7. Above all, do keep safe! Terrible accidents have happened with fireworks and we don't want anything like that happening to our lovely young naturalists.

Stay safe, enjoy wildlife watching and do tell us all about your adventures!



Ginger-Tigger the Cat & Friends.



Louie Dewey says.....

Winter is always busy for me, for a start socks are different. There seems to be thicker socks that need pulling out of the washing basket - they don't like it in there.

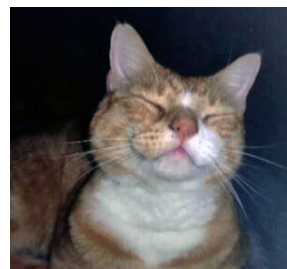
I do a lot of bird watching now because lots of birds choose to flock together to feed. Safety in numbers.

Geese and swans will be seen together in groups frequently at this time of year grazing or sitting together on grassy banks near estuaries and wetlands.

We are likely to see the golden plover and other winter visitors. Golden plovers come in from Scandinavia and Iceland to overwinter here, gathering in large flocks, you may notice their golden plumage shimmering in the sunlight.

Birds of a feather flock together in winter and not just waders but also redwings, fieldfares and other thrushes. They will be gathering in flocks to finish off the hawberries and such - they come to Britain for our mild winters and are truly a splendid sight to see feeding together in the hedgerows. They will overwinter here.

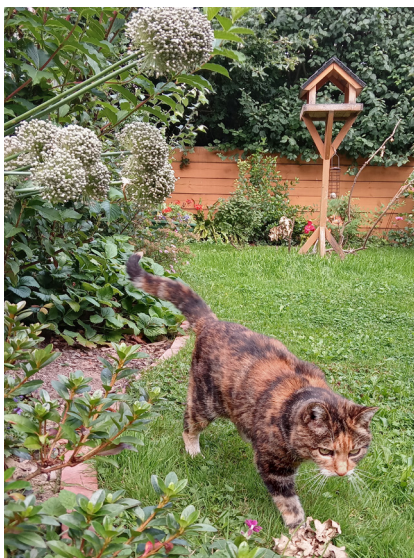
We can also enjoy watching finches and other small birds feeding on the bird tables. After the breeding season birds go quiet and hide away while they moult, but once this is over and they have acquired their winter feathers, back they come! Winter birdwatching can be really interesting.



Ginger-Tigger says.....

Winter wildlife generally becomes quieter, and yet, in some respects also busier! While many creatures such as hedgehogs, reptiles, amphibians and the majority of insects will be hibernating, there are other animals which adapt themselves to the change in environment differently. Squirrels and badgers and most other animals which do not hibernate, become less active in order to conserve energy. They will hunker down in sheltered places hidden to us, yet safe from the elements. Squirrels, mice and voles will have built caches of food which they can draw on when winter becomes too barren and cold for them to find anything suitable to eat.

With the rutting season well over now for red deer, they will probably choose to move down from moorlands which are high up and exposed to the elements, to find lower lying woodlands and lowlands where groups of hinds and calves in particular, will take shelter together from the harsher elements. Everything revolves around finding enough food and shelter – survival.



Picklette says....

At 16 years old, I like my garden whatever the season and I like to sleep a lot.

There are lots of different habitats where you can go wildlife watching and it is a good idea to make notes in a nature journal of the species you find. Include the date, location and weather for interest.

Do you have a query?

email: info@bna-naturalists.org

write: Youth Officer, British Naturalists' Association,
27 Old Gloucester Street, London, England WC1N 3AX