

Welcome young naturalists!

Issue: Spring into Summer 2023



## Orange Tipped Butterflies

Text by Trish MacDuff ABNA  
Photographs by Steven Rutherford FBNA

One of the first butterflies to emerge in spring is the Orange Tipped Butterfly. With a white body and bright orange wing tips, it is an easy butterfly to identify. You can see them in gardens and hedges, and meadows and the edges of woodlands.

- The male is white with bright orange tips on its wings, the female doesn't have the orange markings, so can be confused with the small white or green veined white butterfly. When the wings are closed the undersides are a mottled green which acts as a camouflage against a plant to keep them safe. The bright orange colour is a warning that if eaten, they will not taste good.
- You can see the adults flying between April and June, and they live for only a few weeks in this adult form.
- Their caterpillars can be seen from May to June. They are blue green, with a white line down each side, and blend in well with the host plant, making them difficult to spot. They will eat the plant where the eggs were laid, and will also eat any remaining eggs it finds.
- The butterflies only lay their eggs on certain plants. You can see little clumps of these orange eggs under the leaves. They prefer plants such as the cuckoo flower (ladies' smock) garlic mustard, hedge mustard, and the garden plants honesty and sweet rocket. It is really important that we look after these flowers, if the plant dies out, then the butterfly will have no food supply and will also die out.



## Brown Hares

Text by Trish MacDuff ABNA  
Photographs by Steven Rutherford FBNA

Brown hares, also known as European hares, can often be seen around the British countryside in open fields or on the edges of woodland. They are larger than rabbits, and have much longer ears with a black tip, and unlike rabbits, they keep their tails held down when running.

- They feed on grasses and cereals or shrubs or the bark of young trees
- Although they are active at dusk and dawn, they can often be seen in daylight hours.
- They make a shelter by making a shallow depression in the ground, called a form.
- If disturbed, you can see them take off at great speed, often travelling in a zig zag pattern. They have very powerful legs, so that they can reach up to speeds of 75kph.
- They can have about three litters of young a year, a young hare is called a leveret. The leverets take about eight months to reach their adult weight.
- Their droppings are larger and flatter than those of a rabbit, often a yellowy brown colour.





# Brown Isn't Always Drab

By Di Farrar MBNA

Many people think that brown is dull, drab or boring but there is nothing boring about these three small brown birds that are seen in our gardens.

## Wren

- If you happen to see a small bird scurrying about on the ground, it will probably be a wren. They dart around quickly, a bit like mice, searching for food such as insects, seeds, spiders & larvae amongst fallen leaves.
- Wrens are Britain's second smallest bird next to the Goldcrest but they probably have one of the loudest songs.
- They are quite dumpy in appearance, have long thin bills and large feet. The chestnut-coloured tail is almost always cocked upwards.
- Upperparts of the body are reddish-brown, undersides are pale with dark barring and they have a pale stripe above the eye.
- Males and females are very similar to each other.



## Dunnock

- Dunnocks are quite shy birds and spend most of their foraging time under hedges (they are also known as the hedge sparrow). You might spot them pecking around the edges of lawns looking for spiders, beetles and ants.
- When on the ground, they appear to be nervous, flicking their wings and tail as they move quickly around.
- Their head and breasts are grey, with the head having brown patches around the eyes and top of the head. The wings are streaked with various shades of brown. They have a thin, pointed bill and pinkish coloured legs.
- Young Dunnocks have brown eyes but change to a beautiful red colour as they get older.
- Males and females are very similar to each other.



Continued on page 4.....

## House Sparrow (Continued from page 3)

- At one time House Sparrows were Britain's most common bird but their numbers have declined in recent years. As their name suggests, they like to be close to houses and other buildings and can be seen just about anywhere, in towns, farmyards, parks and gardens.
- These are social birds often nesting in colonies and spending time together in flocks. They can be heard chirping and chattering but don't really sing.
- Their bills are short and quite chunky, perfect for cracking open seeds. Chicks are fed on a variety of insects and caterpillars.
- Male and female birds have different plumage. Males have a grey cap, streaky brown back and chestnut wings which have a small white wing bar. They also have a black bib and pale grey underside. Females are mostly brown with streaked backs, pale underside and cheeks and have a pale line above and behind the eye.



## How to make your garden more wildlife friendly by Uncle Willow. Here are some ideas;

- \* Sometimes seeds are 'planted' by the birds and tree shoots may appear. Dig them up and pot them to re-plant in a more suitable place, or pass them on to a landowner who might be able to give them a home. The best time to replant trees is between October and March.
- \* Make a hanging basket just for insects and butterflies - see how many nectar bearing plants you can find in your garden centre. Or create a bee friendly border.
- \* Make a stick pile in an undisturbed corner of your garden and watch to see what happens. What insects and other animals take up residence? Weasels are very fond of stick piles and you may have your own fungi and lichen garden here too. Help it along by putting a small amount of sour milk just on the branches / logs.
- \* Look out for nest boxes and insect boxes you can erect in your garden. Face insect boxes south and face nest boxes between north and east to avoid strong sunlight. Birds require a clear flight path to the nest box.
- \* Leave out nesting material for birds during the breeding season.
- \* If parents are removing old tired shrubs, encourage them to replace them with bird or bee friendly shrubs. For example rosemary, lavender and hebes are wonderful for bees and cotoneaster, holly, privet and berberis are wonderful for berries for birds. There are of course many other examples.....
- \* Make a pond. Even a small one will do and see what sort of wildlife comes along to occupy it. Above all, have fun!



# The Young Naturalists' Hub News



**Congratulations** to Archie and Aerin Ansell pictured above with their BNA Young Naturalist badges and certificates. They have also achieved their BNA Wildlife Reporter badges. Double whammy!



**Congratulations** to Freddie Scoble who achieved his BNA Wildlife Reporters badge.



**Congratulations** to Arthur Tweed who has achieved his BNA Young Naturalist badge and certificate.



**Congratulations** to Rose Scoble who achieved her BNA Wildlife Reporters badge.

Well done to you all and keep up the good work!

# Red Kites

by BNA Young Naturalist Arthur Tweed

Red Kites are very agile birds. The Red Kite's bill is not strong enough to get through tough skin, so they are unable to take any large prey. They mainly eat carrion and worms, but sometimes will take small mammals.

Once hunting drove them almost to extinction in Britain. Luckily they are now specially protected. Their feather colours are black, brown, cream, grey, orange, red and white. The wings have distinct white patches underneath, with black-tipped feathers.

They grow to 60-66cms in length and their wingspan is a huge 175cms - 195cms. They weigh between 800g - 1300g.

Red kites are amazing birds so we had better look after them!





## Young Naturalists' Weather Recordings by Our Honorary Chairman Steven Rutherford FBNA

Twelve of our Young Nats have been running recordings of their local weather using a maximum/minimum thermometer and a rain gauge in their gardens as part of a recording scheme for the BNA. Here I will be looking at the first three months data that has been collected.

The weather will have a direct impact on the local nature as the year passes, and so, it is important that we have this data so that we can learn how plants, insects and other animals are coping with the changing climate. The Young Nats are mainly recording across England, with two, Freddy and Rose, in the Republic of Ireland. Across England, Leah is the most Northerly in Durham, while brother and sister, Archie and Aerin live in Hampshire along with another of our recorders, Noah, who are our most southerly recorders. We also have Pippa, Ethan and Arthur who live reasonably close to each other in Wimbledon, Middlesex and Hertfordshire, while Isla is in Bedfordshire, James lives in Derbyshire and Beatrix is near Sheffield in South Yorkshire. With this spread over a great area, we can look to see if spring and autumn arrive at different times depending on where we live; if rainfall is heavier in some parts of the country; where the hottest and the coldest places are in our survey range; and if some months are dry and some are wet.

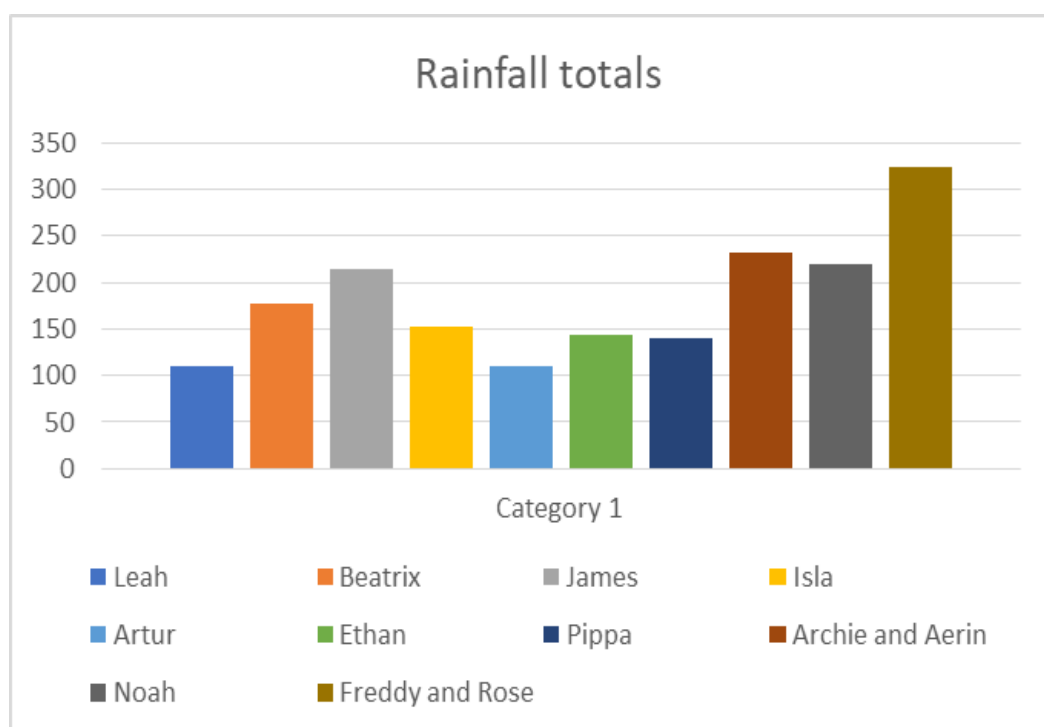
The recording started on the week ending Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2023, and became our week 1 with weekly records taken when we were able each Sunday after and below are some of the interesting finds from the first 12 weeks.

### Rain –

Freddy and Rose recorded the highest rainfall in week 2 of 91mm, while the highest mainland record for that week was from Aerin and Archie reading 72mm. The lowest reading for week 2 was from our most northerly recorder, Leah in Durham, with 8mm that week.

Week 3 shows how the rain can be heavy in some areas, yet we have very little in others. Beatrix, Isla and James all record under 4mm of rain this week while Noah and Aerin and Archie record 20mm+, all other records are in double figures for week 3.

February was a dry month with all records showing very little rain for weeks 4,5,6,7,8 and 9. With Noah recording only 4.8mm and both Isla and Arthur giving records of 5.5mm compared to James and Pippa recording 12.5 from their weather stations on these weeks.

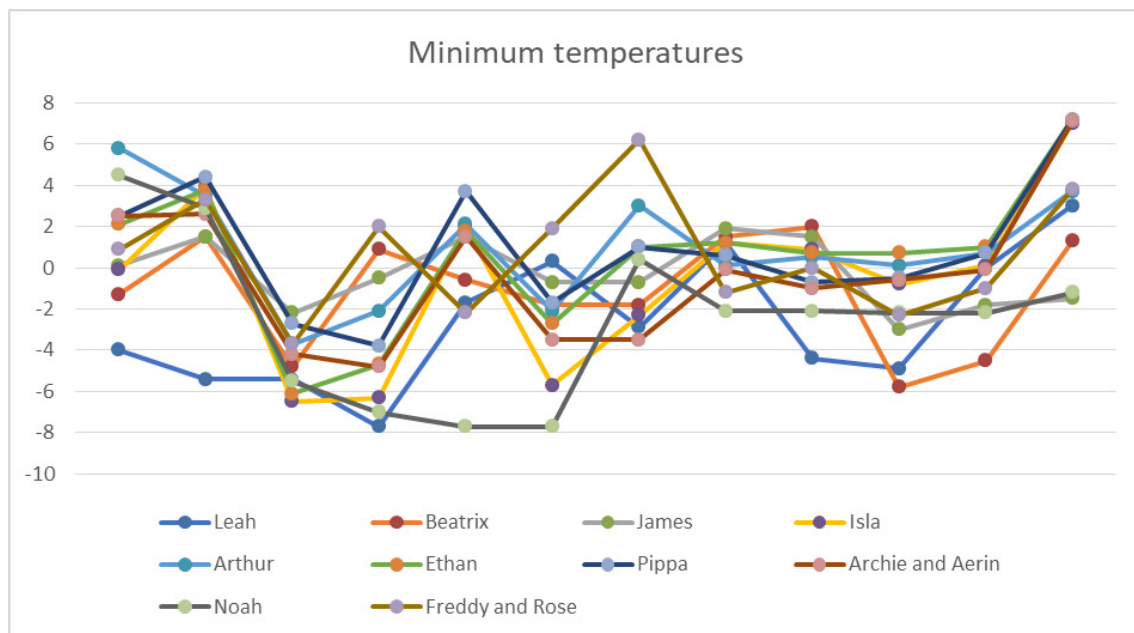


Rainfall totals in millimetres from most northerly (Leah) to the most southerly (Noah) with Freddy and Rose in Ireland

## Minimum temperatures –

All of the recorders showed temperatures below freezing on at least six weeks except Ethan on three weeks and Pippa on five weeks. Noah had the coldest weeks of  $-7.7$  on weeks 5 and 6, while Isla recorded  $-6.5$  and  $-6.3$  on weeks 3 and 4.

The chart below is following each recorder week by week to show how varied the temperature can be depending on where you live in the country. Week three shows a dramatic drop in temperatures across all of our recorded sites, with a big increase across the board on week 12.



The lines on the above graph show the variations of temperatures week by week experienced by our recorders



The red stars on the map above shows the approximate locations of our weather recorders.



# Animal Antics!



## Sootie Soots says.....

Life upside down is interesting. I find I listen more to the things going on around me and just recently I have started to learn the language of birds - bird song.

Many birds have more than one type of call and some can have many different calls. There are alarm calls to warn of impending danger, calls to attract a mate which are often melodious, and out side of the breeding season bird calls are different again.

Just for fun, see if you can complete the quiz below. Draw a line from the bird species, to the correct song / call and then to the correct picture to identify the bird. Have fun! Answers will be in the next newsletter.

**The Coal Tit**

The male of this species calls it's name repeatedly during the breeding season



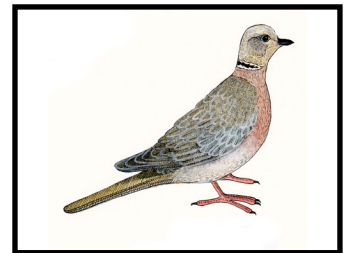
**The Cuckoo**

This small bird calls 'whee-tu, whee-tu' repeatedly.



**The Robin**

This bird has a short sharp alarm call 'tic-tic-tic-tic' when danger is near.



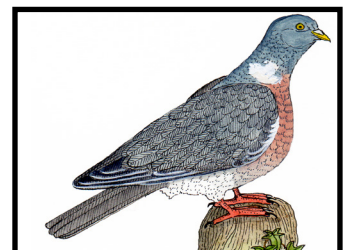
**The Collared Dove**

This bird's call is 'da-dah-dah-da-dah.'



**The Woodpigeon**

This bird calls 'da-da-dah.'



## Animal Antics!



Spuggie Sparrow and Hal Heron are listening to bird song.

Spuggie Sparrow can hear a greater spotted woodpecker drumming on a dead tree, but it isn't chipping out a nesting whole.

Spuggie wants to know why it is drumming. Hal Heron tells Spuggie that the woodpecker is declaring it's territory.



### Uncle Willow's Fact File

Hi, I'm Uncle Willow the border collie dog. So Hal the Heron is teaching Spuggie Sparrow how to recognise bird sounds. This is something you can learn to recognise with practice.

When learning to be a good young naturalist we are taught to be patient and observant, but we also need to be good at listening. Spuggie heard a woodpecker drumming. As green woodpeckers are not known for their drumming, this rules the species down to either the greater spotted woodpecker, or the smaller and less frequently seen, lesser spotted woodpecker. Following the sound, a greater spotted woodpecker was observed.

So why was it drumming? We know that both the male and the female greater spotted woodpeckers drum. Perhaps at first to make contact with each other, but later on during the breeding season, it is most certainly to declare territory. They will drum on dead trees, telegraph poles, metal poles and similar, simply to communicate their message that this territory is spoken for.

Both the male and the female woodpecker will excavate the nest hole and they will share the duty of incubating the eggs. If you see a greater spotted woodpecker with a red cap, this is a juvenile. It will lose the red cap once it has moulted and re-grown adult plumage. However there is a way to tell the male from the female. The male has a red patch at the back of its neck which the female does not have.

As well as drumming, the greater spotted woodpecker has a call which is something like 'pip, pip, pip' and may finish with a rattling twitter. When you are out and about nature watching, close your eyes for a moment and tune in to the sounds around you. Rustling leaves, birds, bees and other insects, the weather.... See how much you can recognise. Are the leaves rustling because they are turning over? Sometimes this speaks of rain to come....

Happy nature watching and listening.....





## *Animal Antics!*



**Louie Dewey says;**

I've been looking for projects to do. Now is the time when people are more likely to visit coastal areas for holidays. Many plants are named after their habitats. Here are some belonging to the sea. There are many more. Just for fun, see how many plants you can find named 'Sea'.....

Here are some examples. Record them in your nature journal, with the date, location and whether the plant was in flower for future reference. Have fun!



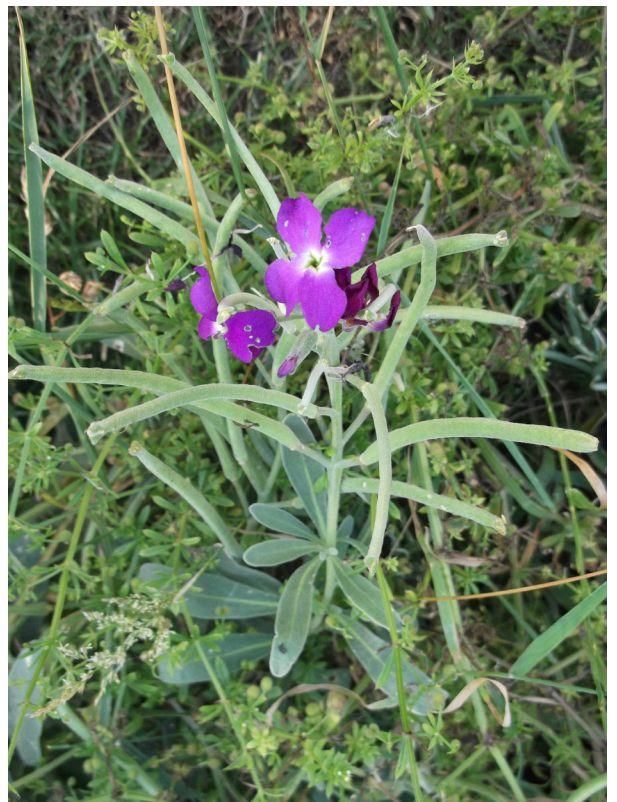
Sea Bindweed



Sea Holly



Sea Plantain



Sea Stock



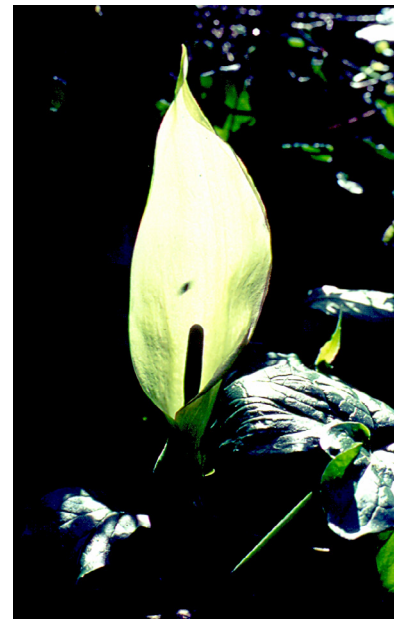
## Animal Antics!



### Picklette says.....

I have been watching wild arum growing in the hedgebank. I've been watching all the different stages and photographing each one, from leaves to the lily-like shoot, then the open plant revealing the green hood or 'spathe' and the dark spike or 'spadix' inside. This gave rise to an old country name 'Parson in the Pulpit'. Small insects are attracted to it and crawl down the spathe to become trapped by backward pointing hairs on the spadix. They are trapped. They become covered in pollen and if they can escape they will pollinate other plants.

Later the berries appear. They are green at first but soon turn yellow, orange and eventually red. When we were young we were taught that the berries were 'snake's food'. Of course it isn't, but it warned us youngsters that the berries were poisonous to eat and should not be touched by us. Not everything is for our use afterall. However, we can still appreciate and respect this rather strange plant all the same.



Do you have a query?  
email: [info@bna-naturalists.org](mailto:info@bna-naturalists.org)  
write: Youth Officer, British Naturalists' Association,  
27 Old Gloucester Street, London, England WC1N 3AX