



# NATURE GAZETTE

The Newsletter for Young Naturalists  
November 2023



## IN THIS ISSUE;

Bird Feeders - The Woodpigeon Nesting in Pictures - Wasps and Mimics -  
Spiders - Waxcaps - Young Naturalists' Weather Report  
Young Naturalists' Hub - and more.





## Bird Feeders by Trish MacDuff ABNA

As autumn and winter approaches, insects disappear and other food sources become harder to find. This is when the birds start looking for other places to find food and we see them coming back to our gardens.

Our garden feeders are a really useful food source, and will help them survive over winter. Birds get sick too, just like humans, and it is essential to keep bird feeders and tables and birdbaths clean. Many birds sharing one space will leave droppings that can spread germs. Old damp food will go mouldy and the fungi that grows on this can make the birds ill.

At least once a month, more often if you can, on a dry day take a bucket of soapy water into the garden. Throw away all old food, immerse all the feeders into the water and scrub them thoroughly, making sure to get into all the little spaces where food can get lodged. Rinse well with clean cold water, and place feeders to dry thoroughly. Don't refill until it is perfectly dry, as damp food can easily go mouldy.

Many bird species are struggling to survive. Giving them extra food in winter helps them enormously, but it is really important to make sure that we keep the places where they gather to feed as clean and hygienic as possible to stop them getting ill.

Photographs clockwise from top:

1. Birds feeding by Di Farrar
2. Male House Sparrow feeding by Steve Rutherford
3. Nuthatch feeding by Steve Rutherford





# Waxcaps.

Waxcaps come in all manner of shapes and colours. Our National Chairman, Steven Rutherford, has provided us with a fantastic collection of waxcap photographs to illustrate this and to help you recognise them in the field.

However, waxcaps are in decline and Plantlife have initiated Waxcap Watch. If you want to participate in Waxcap Watch 2023 check out the Plantlife website:

**[www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk)** - download the app, visit a site and let them know what you see.

So why are waxcaps so important? According to Plantlife, waxcaps are an indicator of rare species rich grasslands. Finding waxcaps helps us to recognise and pinpoint ancient grasslands and in turn, to protect the habitat for the future.

Did you know that species rich grassland can store up to a third more carbon than grassland that is species poor. We need to protect our biodiversity. So if you're looking for your next project.... check this out and take part. Have fun and don't forget to keep us in the loop with what you find! Happy waxcap hunting!



*Hygrocybe chlorophana* Golden Waxcap



*Hygrocybe conica* Blackening Waxcap



Yellow spindle fungi *Clavulinopsis fusiformis*



*Hygrocybe psittacina* Parrot Waxcap



Meadow Coral Wax Cap



Hairy Earthtongue  
*Trichoglossum hirsutum*



*Hygrocybe punicea* Crimson Waxcap





## Woodpigeon Nesting - in Pictures

### Di Farrar MBNA

Woodpigeons are common in Britain, seen just about everywhere including our own gardens. They are grey in colour with white patches at the side of the neck, pinkish chest and have white bands on the wing. Their cooing sound is fairly loud containing just five notes.

If you have woodpigeons in your garden, you may see them nest building, flying to and fro with twigs of different shapes and sizes in their beaks.

They prefer to nest in trees or other dense foliage, perhaps in hedges or climbing plants against a wall but will also use buildings, ledges or even gutters. The nest takes around a week to build using twigs, and is more of a flat platform shape than a cosy nest.

Eggs hatch out after around 17 days and the baby birds, which are known as Squabs, grow very fast. They are fed on 'crop milk'. This is porridge-like liquid, high in protein, made of partly digested food in the parent's crop.

The young birds leave the nest after around another month but are still fed by the adults, so if you see one in the garden just leave it alone, as the parents will be caring for it.

*Continued on page 5.....*



Woodpigeon Nest



Woodpigeon 6 days old



Woodpigeon 10 days old



## Woodpigeon Nesting - in Pictures

### Di Farrar MBNA *continued.....*

Juvenile woodpigeons look similar to adults but do not develop the white patches on the neck until they are around 16 weeks old.

Although woodpigeons are considered to be a pest to farmers and gardeners, feeding on crops and seeds, it is fun to watch their behaviour and see them raising their families.



Woodpigeon a young fledgeling



Woodpigeon almost adult





Wasp by Steve Rutherford

## Wasps by Trish MacDuff ABNA

It seems everybody loves a bumble bee. Yet no one seems to appreciate wasps! You mention the word wasps, and most people will straight away think of wasps making nuisances of themselves at picnics or annoying you in the garden.

Wasps are very clever creatures. They play an important part in pollinating plants. They build wonderful complex nests for their queen, in the ground or on a tree. The queen will start to build the nest from wood she has chewed and mixed with saliva. As worker wasps emerge from the first eggs she lays, they take over the nest building and maintenance.

After about 30 days, the first worker wasps emerge. They forage for food, and look after the nest. The next larvae to hatch will be carnivorous and the workers bring insects back to the nest to feed them. Over the next few months, the colony could grow to up to a thousand wasps. The next brood leave the nest and they will need somewhere to hibernate over winter. The nest is no longer used, but the workers are still alive with no brood to feed, and at this stage is where they become more noticeable and start to become a nuisance.

They tend to annoy humans the most towards the end of summer. Because there are no larvae left to feed, and the queens begin to hibernate, the workers look for sugar and nectar for themselves. At the end of summer and the beginning of autumn is when you might find them making a beeline ( a wasp line?) for your sweet can of drink, your ice cream, the apple you are eating. Wasps will not sting you unless they are provoked, if left alone they will eventually fly off.

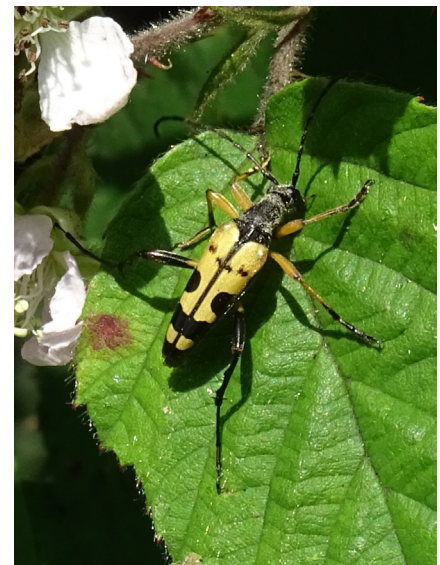
The newly mated queen wasp will hibernate in her nest and emerge in spring, some workers will remain to feed her. The male wasps die off in autumn. An old nest will never be used again, although the wasps may come back to the same area, they will build a new nest for the cycle to start over again.



Wasp mimic - hoverfly by D Farrar



Wasp mimic - longhorn beetle by D Farrar



Wasp mimic - longhorn beetle by D Farrar

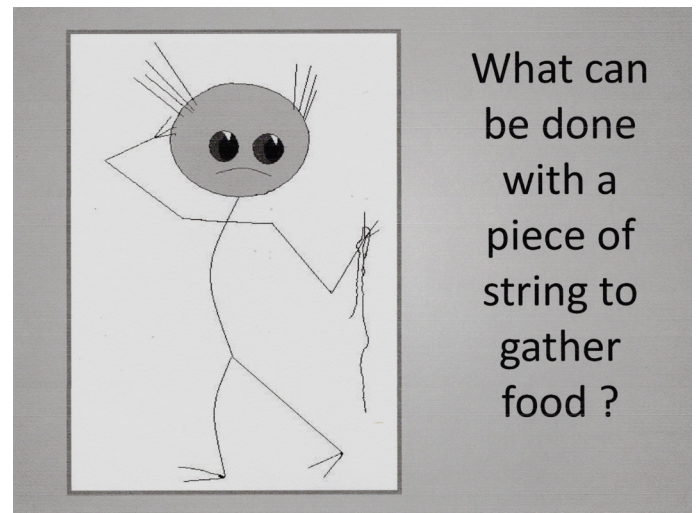


Common wasp and nest  
by K Hinchcliffe

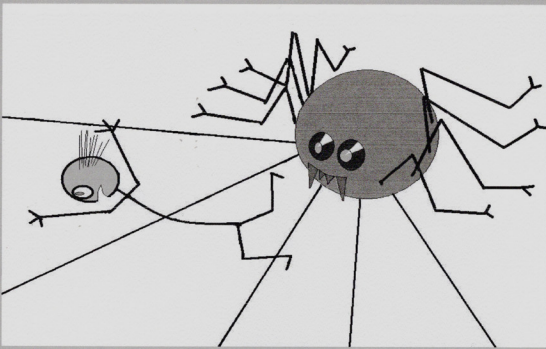


## Spiders

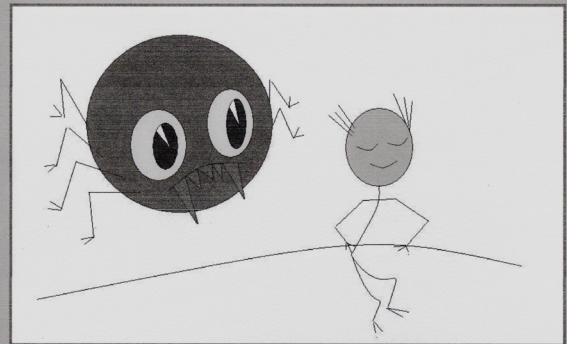
Spiders are genius creatures at trapping, hunting and eating other insects. They help to keep pest populations in check thus minimising the spread of disease. There are many different species of spider and no-one knows more about them than our BNA expert Tom Thomas, who has very kindly produced some rather entertaining cartoons of how spiders catch their prey. His garden in London is the most recorded garden for arachnids. Tom has also given us permission to publish one of his reports, which will follow after the cartoons! Our thanks to Tom.



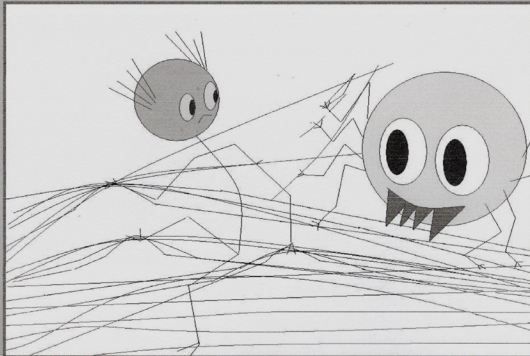
Trip wire...



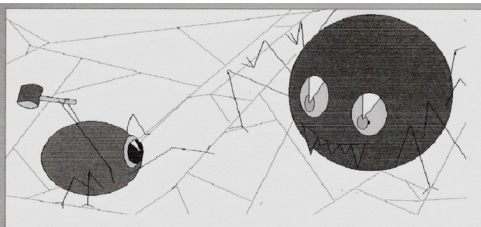
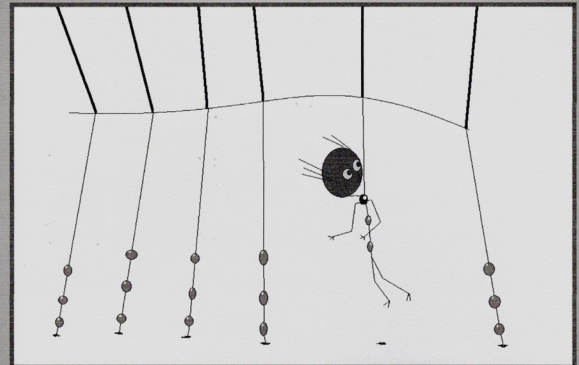
...Adding scent to the thread...



...laying down enough threads to form a blanket of wires...

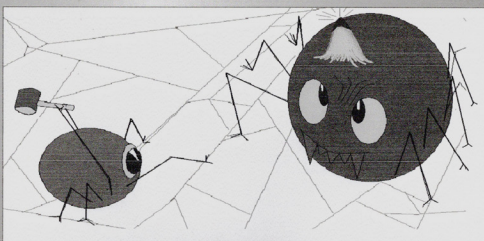


...sticky threads in flying or tangle webs...

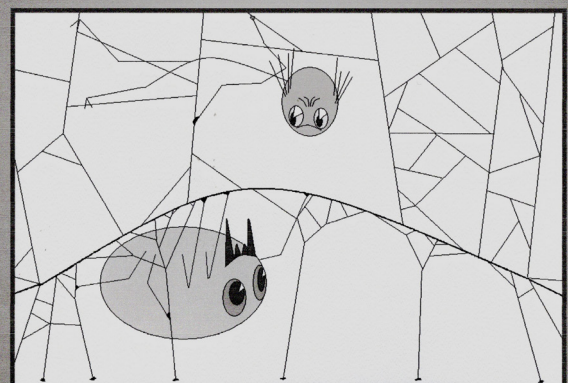


...tangle webs can become traps for the owners...

...when Pirate spiders attack..

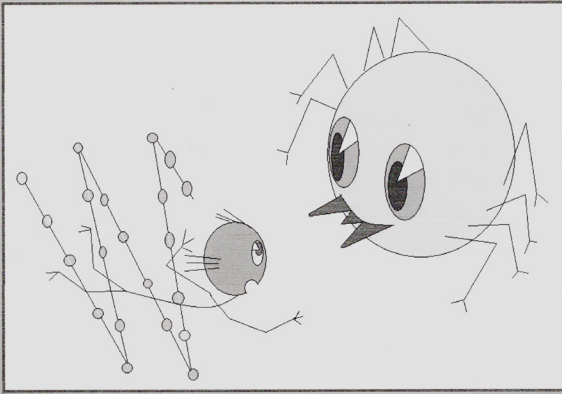


...then there is the "Hangman's Drop"...

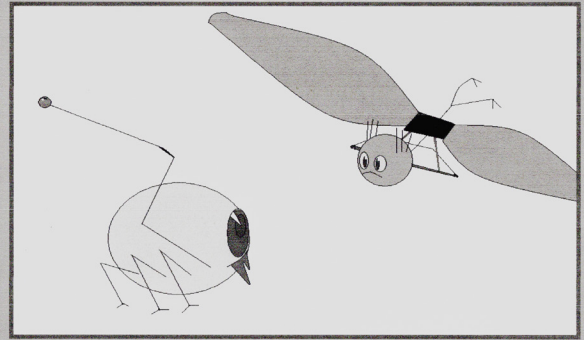




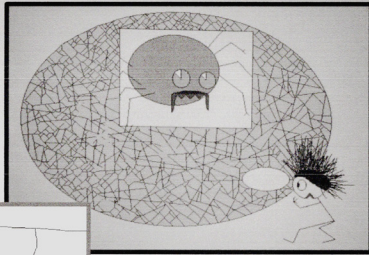
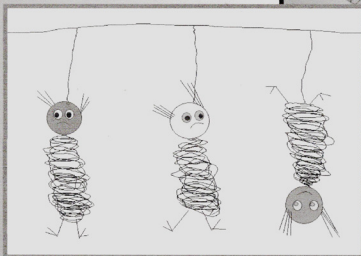
...trapping by stalking then spraying sticky threads...



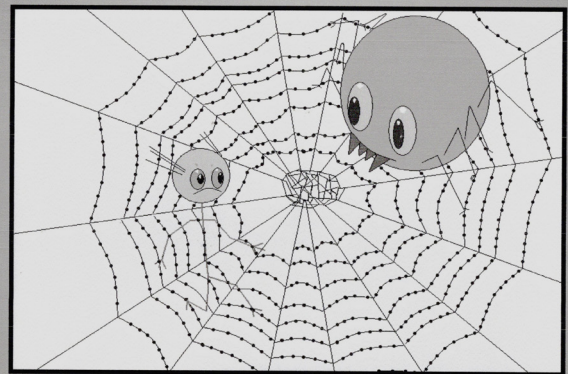
...then there is always fly-fishing...



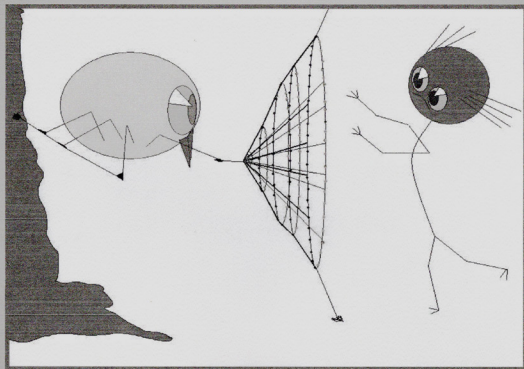
...sometimes the prey is kept for later...



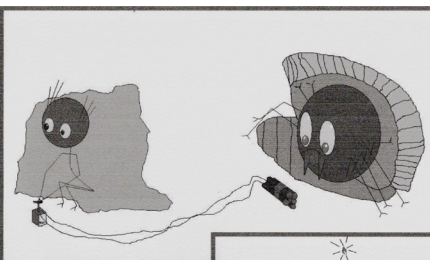
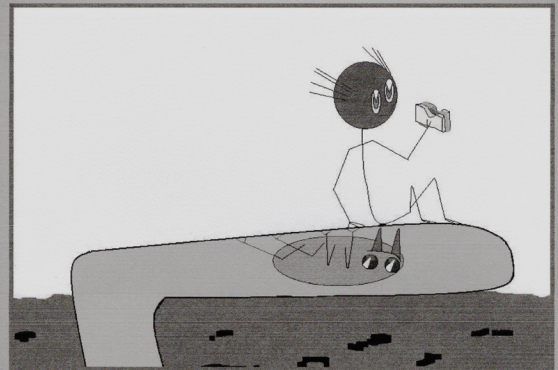
...the ultimate is the Orb-web...



...an unusual way with the orb-web...

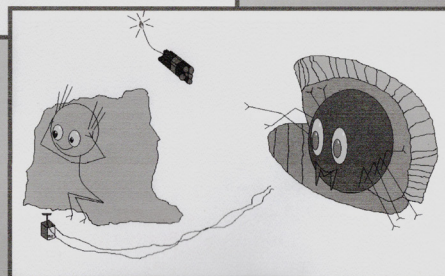


...the hidden purse web...



...some are difficult to find..

...and capture...





# The Spiders of the Wildlife Garden, Natural History Museum, London

## By Tom Thomas FBNA

Since late 2015 there has been regular searching for spiders in the Wildlife Garden, at least one day per week throughout the year. A variety of collecting methods were used: active methods such as sweeping and beating, sorting leaf litter, brushing and hand searching; some passive procedures included corrugated cardboard wrapped around tree trunks simulating loose bark and pitfall traps. The latter were “sheltered” in being capped with lids perforated with a series of small holes to reduce the chances of young amphibians getting into the traps and drowning.

The following species are further additions to those published in previous editions of The London Naturalist. It is worth noting that two species were found by visitors during a Wildlife Garden event showing the worth of having public involvement. Two other spiders found but not claimed were immatures of *Nuctenea* and *Zoropsis*: so far no matures for definitive identification have been found. Another species, *Anyphaena accentuata*, may be in doubt as none have been found since 2015, possibly having been confused with *A. sabina*, a recent addition to the British fauna regularly found in the garden. If *A. accentuata* is removed from the list then 100 species have been recorded in the Wildlife Garden.

With respect to the Harvestmen, of which only four species have been recorded, apart from the very occasional *Dicranopalpus ramosus*, no other species have been found.

**Family:** Theridiidae  
*Steatoda bipunctata*

**Family:** Linyphiidae  
*Monocephalus fuscipes*  
*Diplocephalus latifrons*  
*Diplocephalus picinus*

**Family:** Araneidae  
*Araniella cucurbitina*  
*Mangora acalypha*

**Family:** Lycosidae  
*Alopecosa pulverulenta*

**Family:** Philodromidae  
*Tibellus oblongus*

**Family:** Thomisidae  
*Diaea dorsata*  
*Xysticus acerbus*

**Family:** Salticidae  
*Macroeris nidicolens*

### Spiders come in all shapes and sizes.....



A Cross Orb Weaver Spider  
by Endymion Beer



A harvestman Spider  
by Endymion Beer



## Young Nats weather records By National Chairman Steven Rutherford



We are showing, with our records, that the weather will need to be recorded over a long-time scale, and how this is affecting the amphibians and reptiles and the birds, bees, butterflies and flowers with their abilities to cope and change with the climate. On the BNA website, on the Wild News page is a report from Butterfly Conservation Trust showing the results of this year's Big Butterfly Count. The results are that there has been an increase in butterfly numbers recorded this year between the 14th July till 6th August.

What we can do now is look at our records over that period of time and see what the weather was doing. We can then check to see the records for the months of May and June, as this will be when the food plants of the butterfly caterpillars would have been growing. We will then have an idea of what the butterflies need throughout their life cycle to produce this bumper crop. The caterpillars are a vital food for the birds that we see in our gardens as the bird's time their breeding so that the chicks are at their most hungry when the caterpillars are at their most abundant. So, a good year for butterflies means a good year for blue tits.

Just to show how the weather can be so different across the UK, on week 36 Leah recorded her rain gauge was overflowing with a rain storm at her home in Durham. While Freddy and Rose, who live in probably the wettest part of the area that we cover, Ireland, recorded only 2mm for the same week. It was, as Leah has told me, a huge rain storm that filled the guage!

### A Rare and Special Fungi!

Elizabeth Fowler of the Taw and Exmoor (Devon) Branch of the BNA messaged on 21st August 2023 to say;


*"I saw this crazy mushroom yesterday and am trying to find out how common it is around here.... "*

There began an investigation. Pauline Rutherford said the fungi was originally thought of as Bleeding Tooth, Roy Stewart said he thought it was Oak Bracket. Elizabeth later returned to it with John Willatts from the Devon Branch who said it's more likely to be the Blushing Rosette.

Nice find!



The fungi in question photographed by Elizabeth Fowler



Photographer: Malcolm Storey

**Abortiporus biennis: Brief Summary**

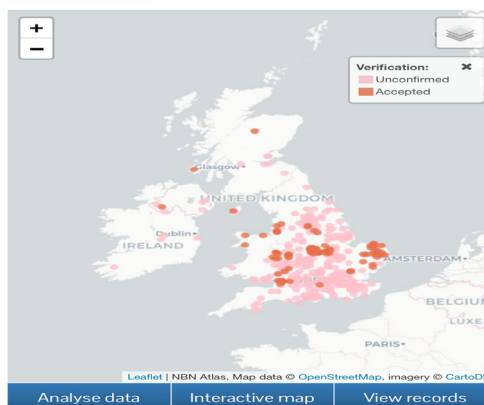
Abortiporus biennis is a species of **fungus** belonging to the family **Meruliaceae**.

Synonyms:  
Boletus biennis Bull. 1790 (= **basionym**)

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Abortiporus\\_biennis&oldid=1019203161](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Abortiporus_biennis&oldid=1019203161)  
Rights holder: Wikipedia authors and editors  
Provided by: Encyclopedia of Life

800 records (800 in total)

This map contains both point- and grid-based occurrences at different resolutions



Distribution Map of the Blushing Rosette source: NBN Atlas species.nbnatlas.org



## Young Naturalist Report by Pippa Woodley Brandon Marsh Wildlife Weekend – July 2023

In July, I went to the British Naturalist weekend in Brandon Marsh. When I arrived, I was led to a courtyard where I and many other people from the association gathered to have a briefing about the day's activities. The first activity was moth catching. At the beginning, we talked about the different types of moths and how easily they can be identified; for example, we learnt about the micro-moths.

After the discussion we went to look at the moth trap that had been set up overnight. Within the trap, there were lots and lots of micro-moths but as well, we came across a handful of hawkmoths! I was allowed to hold an elephant hawkmoth and it tickled my hand as it stepped on. The elephant hawkmoth had such beautiful colours – a vibrant magenta-pink and a khaki-like green. I learnt that if the colours of the moth are slightly faded and not as vibrant, it means that the moth is more likely to be older. As well as being able to hold an elephant hawkmoth, I also held a poplar hawkmoth! For some reason, it enjoyed staying on my hand and didn't want to fly away so I gently eased it off my hand and onto a large leaf on a nearby tree.

After looking at the moths, our leaders brought back some that they had stored in jars. Using the moths that had been caught in the jars, we looked carefully at them and used a book to help identify what type of moth it was (don't worry, the moths were set free afterwards!).

After an eventful morning, we took part in a hoverfly-catching session. At the beginning of the session, we learnt the key features of a hoverfly – here are a few: hoverflies only have 1 set of wings unlike wasps and bees who have 2, they hover mid-air and fly in an upward motion (this is how we managed to catch them later!) and they mimic the patterns of wasps and bees. As well as learning the key features, we learnt how to tell apart a male and female -the female hoverflies have a gap in between their eyes, unlike the males who don't.

After learning about hoverflies, we began to start catching them! To catch the hoverflies, you would hold the open container above the hoverfly and then hold the lid of the container beneath it. Usually hoverflies fly upwards, so the hoverfly would fly straight into the open container and then you could trap it inside. Once the hoverfly was caught, we would then take it to the leader so that we could spend time identifying it.

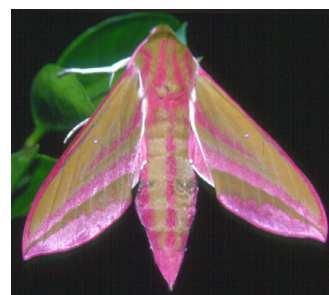
Towards the end of the day, we went on a wildflower walk and we learnt all about the identification of different flowers and plants. For the final session of the day, we went on a bat walk. To find the bats, we used a bat detector that turned the bat calls into sounds we could hear. During the bat walk, we only saw a couple of bats, but we managed to hear lots! Throughout the whole walk, my bat detector kept buzzing and making loud sounds, so bats were definitely nearby!



Pippa Woodley



Hoverfly pupae



Elephant Hawkmoth



Vipers Bugloss





## The Young Naturalists' Hub **NEWS** continued...

**Chris Page ITV Weather Presenter has sent a message for our Young Naturalists. He has taken a special interest in their weather reports. So keep up the good work young naturalists! Our heartfelt thanks to Chris Page.**

I hope you had a great summer break and made the most of any warm sunshine that we were lucky to see. It's been an interesting summer season this year with the highest temperature of the summer being reported in June (32.2C) and then both July and August experiencing wetter than average months of rainfall. I know this will have impacts for any gardeners and growers among us. I was informed by a number of viewers how tomatoes took a long time to ripen outside this year, and reports of fewer apples than normal.

Interestingly, the first week of September - what we class as the start of meteorological autumn - has seen the hottest day of the year with 33.2C being reported at Kew Gardens, London. In fact it's the first time since records began in 1884 that seven consecutive days have recorded 30C or more in September - that last burst of the summer heat!

We now move away from summer months and into autumn. Daylight gradually fades as we lose around 30 minutes of sunlight a week and the nights grow longer. The trees start to sense this reduction in sunlight and we begin to see the autumn colour pallet show its hand. It's also the time of year, the jet stream shifts southwards bringing low pressure systems heading our way causing bouts of strong wind and heavy rain, sometimes incorporated with ex-tropical cyclones. No doubt you'll notice how the fauna and flora changes over the coming weeks, adapting to the shift in season. Although it's not my favourite time of year, it brings plenty of colour before we head into the depths of winter.

Keep up the weather reports

All the best

Chris  
Meteorologist and ITV Weather Presenter



Congratulations to Leah Reid who has earned her Young Naturalist certificate and badge. Welcome to the team Leah!



C	I	R	R	O	S	T	R	A	T	U	S	S
I	C	U	M	U	L	U	S	A	I	R	A	T
R	F	L	U	F	F	Y	C	L	O	U	L	R
R	O	C	O	N	T	R	A	I	L	N	T	A
O	L	U	N	D	E	R	N	E	A	C	O	T
C	U	M	U	L	O	N	I	M	B	U	S	O
U	P	U	Y	I	N	A	M	F	C	M	T	C
M	W	H	I	T	E	F	B	Y	A	W	R	U
U	C	L	O	U	D	S	O	O	M	L	A	M
L	I	C	I	R	R	U	S	A	U	U	T	U
U	L	I	G	H	T	N	T	T	L	S	U	L
S	T	R	A	T	U	S	R	Y	O	P	S	U
W	A	T	E	R	O	V	A	P	O	U	R	S
C	O	N	D	E	N	S	T	Y	N	P	M	O
S	T	R	A	T	O	C	U	M	U	L	U	S
P	L	C	I	R	R	U	S	T	R	A	T	E

**OOPS!**

In the last newsletter, I accidentally uploaded a draft wordsearch. The correct version is on the left if you want to have a go.

**The answers are:**

#### WORDSEARCH

You are looking for types of clouds. There will be other words to mislead you. Can you find the following?

STRATUS  
CUMULUS  
CIRRUS  
CIRROCUMULUS  
ALTOCUMULUS  
CUMULONIMBUS  
CIRROSTRATUS  
NIMBOSTRATUS  
ALTOSTRATUS  
STRATOCUMULUS  
CONTRAIL

The two cloud types that are mentioned twice are:

Cirrus and Stratocumulus

The missing cloud type is:

Alto cumulus.

Well done if you guessed correctly!

Two types of clouds are mentioned twice. Which ones?  
Which cloud listed above isn't there?

**Just for fun,** see if you can answer the questions below. The answers will form a continuous clockwise spiral, with the last letter of the first answer, giving you the first correct letter to the next answer and so on. Have fun!

1				
		4		
	6		5	
		3		2



1. The insect Order of butterflies and moths is called (11)
2. Lichens are often an indicator of clean what? (3)
3. What kind of honey is made from queen bees? (5,5)
4. An evergreen tree with red berries (3)
5. A small water loving mammal with a rounded face (5,4)
6. A species of moth. An Oak \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (5)



## SNIPPETS

*By Endymion Beer MBNA*



Trees naturally regenerated in my garden and put to good use.

October to March is the perfect time for tree planting. I had a request from an amazingly independent, tenacious gentleman who lives with a disability and spends a lot of his time either in his wheelchair or cycling. He was very keen to get involved in gorilla tree planting with a friend but had no trees to plant. So he put a request out for saplings which reached me through Glen the same week I had mentioned that I needed help to find homes for my many saplings dug up from my garden, all potted and ready to go. Great!

We delivered ash, oak (English and Turkey) holly, dog wood, willow and wild cherry and all were very graciously accepted. I love the thought of the guys going out on their bikes and secretly planting a tree here and there. What rebels. We could do with more rebels like that!

When we delivered the flower pots we also discovered 2 caterpillars hiding. A buff ermine and a large yellow underwing. We left them on their chosen hiding places.

So what are the caterpillars up to now? The buff ermine caterpillars are seen from July to October and will overwinter in debris. They like herbaceous plants, common nettle and honeysuckle all of which I have in the garden.

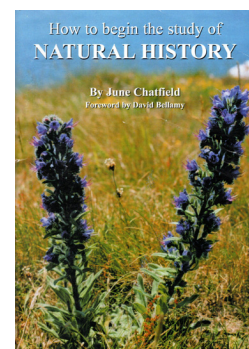
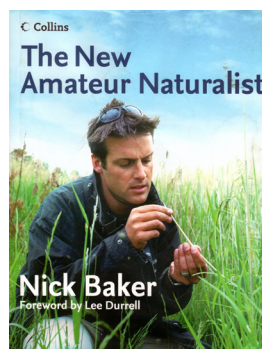
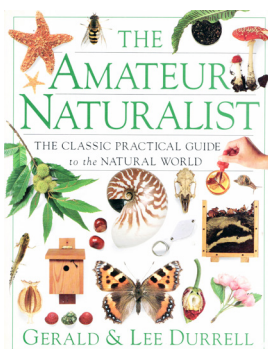
The large yellow underwing caterpillars have a slightly different, life cycle, they will be seen from August to spring. They will feed at night on herbaceous plants, grasses and docks, marigolds and foxgloves. They tend to hide away, underground if they can, by day.



Large yellow underwing caterpillar



Buff ermine underwing caterpillar



### Ideal Books for Young Naturalists to Collect

Above are 3 books that I wish I had had access to when I was starting out as a young naturalist. They cover a broad cross section of subject matter on natural history and they all provide a brilliant insight. How to Begin the Study of Natural History is still available from the BNAs online bookshop, the other two you may find on Amazon or in a good second hand book shop. Real treasures. Do look out for them.



## SNIPPETS Continued.....



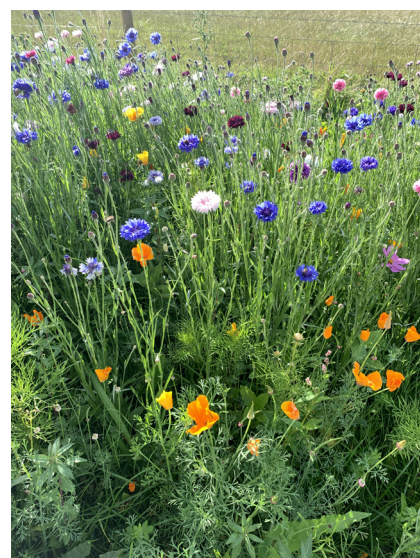
Aware of the lack of butterflies over the last few years, I've started planting more butterfly food-plants and nectar plants in the garden. Last year I tried growing nasturtiums and this year I let them spread about naturally. I love the colour of the flowers - they look pretty in a salad too. It is amazing how you can just start growing something and the right species will suddenly find it and make good use of it. See Large White butterfly picture on the right. The middle picture is the evidence of the caterpillars - just goes to show that they were never that far away in the first place!



House Martin's nest on a house close to mine in North Devon this July. Not as many nests as in the previous year, but still good to observe.



Odd weed from mum's garden turned out to be *Erigeron bonariensis* - flaxleaf fleabane. A new find - but becoming more common in the area.



New wildflower meadow at a new development AnchorWood View in North Devon. A plus for insect life! More of this please and how pretty!



Common Mullet swimming in figures of eight beneath the stern of a boat in the River Torridge on the 12th October.

**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**

**Please note that your membership renewals will be sent to you from [bna.zoom.talks@gmail.com](mailto:bna.zoom.talks@gmail.com)**