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This month I made a number of short visits to the Wildlife Area to take advantage of sunny spells in an otherwise cool, grey often wet and windy July. The approach through the Orchard alongside the beck gave a hint of what to expect further on. The white 'froth' of Umbellifers that I commented on in May had disappeared and most of the Foxgloves and Willow-herbs had been replaced with tall nettles and flowering thistles. There was little or no water flowing in the beck.



Many of the fruit trees are now beginning to bear fruit (mainly apples) but I got the impression that overall they might benefit from careful specialist attention.

My overall impression of the Wildlife Area from near the gate was one of luxuriant growth - the whole site looked full of vegetation. The mown path provided access between banks and walls of flowering plants, rushes, reeds and sedges. The bank on the left of the path down to the bridge was colourful mosaic of plants favouring slightly drier conditions than the rest of the site.



Perforate St.



John's Wort



Greater Birds-foot Trefoil



Lady's Bedstraw



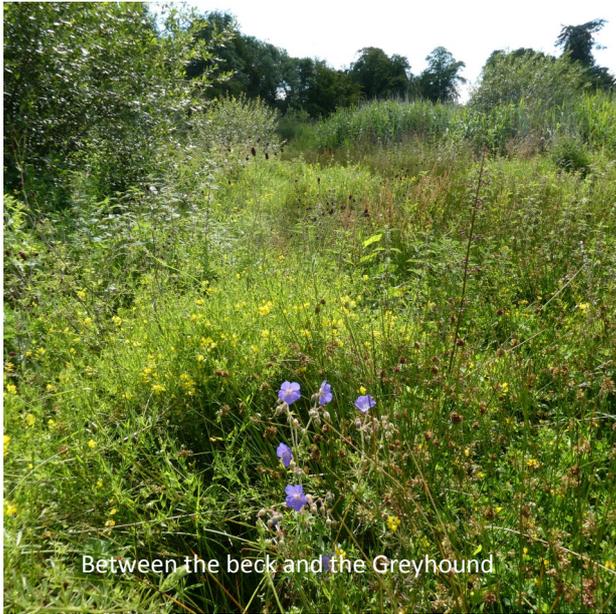
Hedge Bedstraw



Meadowsweet

After pausing a while on the bridge looking (in vain) for signs of dragonflies or damselflies in the dense vegetation of the beck I moved on into the area between the beck and the 'Greyhound' at the eastern end of the Wildlife Area. Here, many taller plants were flowering, many like this Creeping Thistle providing a nectar source for butterflies - such as this Small Tortoiseshell, and other insects.





Between the beck and the Greyhound



Meadow Vetchling and Knapweed



Meadow Cranesbill



Knapweed



Great Burnet



Marsh Willowherb



Great Willowherb



Rosebay Willowherb



Water Figwort



Creeping Thistle



Spear Thistle



The surface of the pond is blanketed with Duckweed and the surrounding vegetation is fast encroaching and reducing the area of open water, in particular Reeds (Phragmites), Bur reed (Sparganium) and Purple Loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria). Reedmace (Typha angustifolia) is appearing in the pond along with Flowering Rush (Butomus umbellatus and Bulrush (Schoenoplectus lacustris) - the latter growing over two metres high. Many plants were introduced into the area when it was being developed and it is interesting to see which are becoming dominant.

Thought will have to be given to clearing/digging out a section of pond if open water is to be maintained for aquatic animals. Perhaps one third or half of the pond every two or three years would be ideal?



The pond viewed from the dipping platform



Vegetation encroaching into pond



Bulrush (Schoenoplectus)



I commented in my last note (June 2020) on the lack of dragonflies and damselflies this year and so I went back through my notes checking which of the eight species so far recorded in the wildlife area had been seen in which year that I visited. Not surprisingly most were seen during the early years, 2017 was a very dry year since when I made no regular recording visits until this year.

Recorded sightings of Dragonflies and Damselflies

| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2012 | 2013 | 2017 | 2020 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Emerald Damselfly | | | | | X | | |
| Black Darter | | | | X | X | | |
| Common Hawker | | X | | | | X? | |
| Common Darter | | X | X | | | X | |
| Four-spotted Chaser | | | | | | | |
| Azure Damselfly | | X | X | | | | X |
| Blue-tailed Damselfly | | X | | | X | | |
| Large Red Damselfly | X | X | X | | X | | X |

Note: I didn't make 'recording' visits to the Village Green Wildlife area in 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018 or 2019

Bird song had declined as parent birds were busy feeding youngsters. They were able to find insects, spiders and other invertebrates that I found difficult to see. Apart from a Magpie in a nearby hedge I didn't add anything to last months list of birds. The butterfly fauna had moved on too, I saw 2 or 3 rather worn Meadow Browns and 1 Ringlet. These 'brown' butterflies had been replaced by Large and Small Whites of which there were a few flying. I also saw a freshly emerged Small Copper which I have only recorded once before, in 2013 and a Small Skipper



On Sunday 12th I took advantage of a fine afternoon and spent an hour or so with my 'sweep net'. The magazine 'British Wildlife' published in its June edition a short article on British Froghoppers—a small group of (even smaller !) insects which I've never looked at before—I determined to see if I could find (and identify) any froghoppers along with the expected bugs beetles and spiders. I certainly found two species, possibly three and a common, but very beautiful common 'Leafhopper' called 'Cicadella viridis'. Although I photographed this insect in the Wildlife Area I have included a picture of the same species which I took a few days before on Bowness Common (better photograph).

Froghoppers



Philaenus spumarius side and ventral views

Atrophora major (or alni ?).

Leafhopper



Cicadella viridis

Small, grass-dwelling spiders were beginning to appear, and I found a variety of bugs and beetles (all very small) - some of which I'd seen before— but most of which, 'though common, were new to me .

Spiders



Araneus diadematus
(Garden spider)

Xysticus cristatus (A common Crab spider)

Metellina mengei

Bugs—there are many species each of which can be variable, and then there are the nymphal stages !



Stenopus binotatus

Another S.binotatus ?

Unidentified Bug nymphs

Beetles

I didn't find or record many beetles though there were many red 'Soldier' beetles feeding on the heads of flowering Umbellifers. I did pick up a 14-Spot Ladybird, it is interesting to note the difference of the 'spot' pattern when compared with the specimen I picked up in May this year. (Nice project ?)



July

May

Not to be confused with the 22-Spot also found on July visit !

I made my way around the pond and, using the footpath through the area that was planted up as 'dry grassland' in 2009, returning to the main footpath near the pond. The reeds are now so dense that it would have been difficult (and unnecessary) to force my way through to continue on my previous 'standard route'. The vegetation between the pond and the boundary to the north is now quite thick, particularly against the walls of the domestic gardens where bramble is thriving. There were some fine flowers of Hedge Bindweed scrambling over the surface into the sunshine.



I had intended to put my moth trap out by the pond one night later in July, but the weather was not ideal so I abandoned the idea and instead put out half a dozen small 'pitfall' traps to see if I could pick up any different beetles or other invertebrates. I should have left the out more than one night but again the weather was not ideal. All I caught was a harvestman which I have yet to identify (a group I know nothing about), and a Common Toad. Although not a surprise the toad was in fact the first I have actually found in the Wildlife Area - a new record !



Unidentified harvestman



I made a very short, late visit after the heavy rain we had on the 27th July when parts of the footpath were flooded as they had been in the winter. This made me think again about the desirability of providing a few short sections of boardwalk if funds or grant aid were ever available.

On my way back towards the gate I noticed this plant of 'Hoary Plantain' (*Plantago media*) growing beneath the Birch trees. I can't remember seeing it here before and my Flora * doesn't record it for this area. It likes a calcareous soil but, I suppose, may have been included with the range of plants originally introduced, unfortunately the list of these plants is not currently available. (Lost or mislaid)



Hoary Plantain flower spike



Leaves of Hoary Plantain

Overall, July visits have been great and these few notes show just how much there is to see if you look.

*Flora of Cumbria — Halliday 1997