

What a difference a few weeks makes. The overall appearance of the orchard had changed, the mown area was bounded by tall grasses, the flowering Umbellifers were moving towards seed and the most striking flowers were those of the Elder tree and tall Foxgloves alongside the banks of the rapidly drying out beck. The day was hot and sunny.



Walking through the orchard I was reminded of the news from David Harrison, on whose adjacent land nest boxes had been erected earlier in the year, that at least one box had been occupied by Blue tits. By the gate into the wildlife area a Song thrush seeking food had been using a patch of stony ground to break up snail shells. I regularly see one, or sometimes two Pied Wagtails searching in the beck by the gate and feel sure that they must be breeding near by.



On entering the wildlife area the overall impression was of a whole new range of flowers which had appeared since last month.



The warm, sunny weather and the abundance of flowers meant that there was a variety of insects feeding on nectar and pollen. Butterflies are always nice to see and those that I saw were all freshly emerged .



Red Admiral



Small Tortoiseshell



Small Tortoiseshell –underside



Ringlet



Large Skipper



Large Skippers mating

Both Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells lay their eggs on nettles . Large Skippers, Ringlets and Meadow Browns scatter their eggs amongst blades of grass upon which the caterpillars will feed. Whilst walking around the wildlife area I counted 8 or 9 each of the Ringlets and Meadow Browns. This contrasts with a walk I did through the village green area in June 2008 before the pond and the playing field were built, when I counted over 100 Ringlets, and a week or so later when I recorded 38 Meadow Browns in a short space of time !.



Meadow Brown

Moths are more difficult to see. There were a number of ‘day-flying’ moths such as the Chimney Sweeper and the Silver Ground Carpet which I managed to photograph. I was looking forward to leaving my moth trap out overnight. However, I made the mistake of placing the trap in too secluded a spot, near the reed bed and my morning ‘catch’ was very disappointing and largely restricted to Large Yellow Underwings.



Chimney Sweeper



Silver Ground Carpet



Large Yellow Underwing

In order to widen the scope of seeing what was present in the wildlife area in June, I decided to make a separate visit equipped with a ‘sweep net’ to see what smaller animals might be present hidden in the grass and taller vegetation.

I quickly picked up the Common Candy-striped spider (*Endoplognatha ovata*) and the Nurseryweb spider (*Pisaura mirabilis*). I later saw *Pisaura* scurrying through the grass with her egg sac.



Candy-striped spider



Nurseryweb spider



There were many small beetles, including two 'new' ladybirds for the wildlife area, the tiny 24-spot Ladybird (our only 'hairy' species) and the Cream-spot Ladybird. Also a rather fine weevil (*Phyllobius sp.*)



24-spot Ladybird



Cream-spot Ladybird



Weevil (*Phyllobius sp.*) ?

I was pleased to come across a few grasshoppers. These insects are scarce in our area, we have only three species in the village. This one—the Common Green Grasshopper is the easiest to find. The Lacewing (*Chrysopa perla*) is quite common. True Bugs (Hemiptera) are a difficult group with over 1,800 species in the UK and Ireland.



Common Green Grasshopper



Lacewing



An unidentified Plant Bug



*Stenoderma calcarata*



*Capsis ater*



Features used to identify bugs can be quite small and detailed. *Stenoderma calcarata* for instance has two spines on the inside of its hind leg, whilst the swollen antennal joint of *Capsis ater* is a key feature. All these animals turned up in my sweep net in the wildlife area of the Village Green.



The Tree Bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*) is a newcomer to the UK (first seen here in 2001) and has only been in North Cumbria for 10 or so years. The hoverfly (*Helophilus pendula*) is common every year on the village green. This peculiar growth is a fungus—the Nettle rust . If you find it and look closely you will see beautiful, tiny flower-shaped 'cluster cups' from which spores are released.



Something that has concerned me about the Wildlife Area is the current lack of Damselflies and Dragonflies. In 2009 when the pond and the beck were first incorporated into the development of the area, we regularly saw numbers of Large Red, Azure, Blue-tailed Damselflies and even Common Darter Dragonflies. This year on my 'monitoring visit' I saw only 2 Large Red and one Azure Damselfly . Almost certainly this is due to high levels of nutrients in the water entering from surrounding farmland and other sources. This has encouraged the growth of Duckweed which in turn cuts out light in what is quite a shallow pond. The drying out of the pond also interferes with the lives of aquatic creatures. Much thought and work would be needed if this problem were to be tackled. (*Thanks to David Clarke, a locally based national Dragonfly expert for his comment on this issue*).

Many other flowers were now appearing.

