

The weather has not been particularly cooperative this month and opportunities to visit the Village Green in sunshine have been limited. Nevertheless I managed two lovely cloudless days and a dry 'overnight' for the moth trap. The whole site was wet and some sections of footpath were unuseable.

Fruit in the communal orchard was ripening although some had clearly suffered from the poor weather.



It was interesting to see how much the vegetation alongside and in the beck had changed in the short period between my two August visits, from thistles and flowering Willowherb to a dense strip of nettles. A 'garden escape' addition to the beckside flora was this flowering bush of Spirea



Entering the Wildlife Site the first impression was of a sea of Purple Loosestrife and Reeds, the access path had just been mown and closer inspection of the 'verges' revealed a number of later flowering plants. In particular Angelica, another white Umbellifer to add to the Cow Parsley, Hogweed and Pignut I'd seen in previous months



Alongside the pond extensive patches of sweet scented Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) were flowering, large seed pods of Yellow Flag Irises were forming and tall plants of Figwort stood out.



I stood and watched the Figwort for some time. It was being visited by wasps. No other insects appeared to be feeding on it, yet, it was surrounded by masses of flowering Purple loosestrife which in turn was buzzing with bees, hoverflies and other insects - but no wasps ! Clearly the wasps prefer the Figwort - maybe other insects steer clear of the wasps ?

August should be a good month for insects, particularly on a good sunny day. A highlight for me this month was seeing a Speckled Wood (actually I saw two) - the first I've seen on the Village Green since first visiting twelve years ago. Whilst not a rare butterfly, the Speckled Wood is a relative newcomer to this part of Cumbria having only been recorded regularly, in small numbers, over the last ten years or so slowly colonising from further south. It is good to welcome it to the Village Green.



It was pleasing to record a lovely fresh specimen of a Small Copper early in the month along with good numbers of some of the more colourful butterflies flying at this time of year. Wall Brown and Small White were also present as well as those illustrated here.



Small Copper



Large White



Small Tortoiseshell



Peacock



Red Admiral

Bees too were busy gathering nectar and pollen from the abundant flowers. Difficult to photograph (they keep flying off) and sometimes even more difficult to identify ! I eventually managed to gather together photographs of a few of the more commonly occurring species in the Wildlife Area.



Red-tailed Bumblebee



Buff-tailed Bumblebee



Common Carder Bee



A Cuckoo Bee (awaiting identification)

This handsome insect (to the right) is not a bee at all, it is a Hoverfly (*Eristalis intricarius*) mimicking the appearance of a bumblebee. (Note the big eyes typical of flies)



As expected, August was turning out to be very much a month of small animals, mostly insects. In addition to the butterflies, bees and hoverflies there were a few 'day-flying' moths including Silver -Y's and Silver-ground Carpets.

I have often noted and commented on small spiders sitting in sunny spaces and scurrying off when approached, I've always referred to these as 'wolf spiders'. This time I determined to approach them more cautiously and I managed to get a couple of photographs which, with the help of Dave Blackledge, a local Cumbrian spider enthusiast, have been tentatively identified as two of our commoner wolf spiders Pardosa pullata (with the egg sac) and Pardosa amentata with the stripy legs. Spiders are another group that can be difficult to identify with 100% certainty from photographs, often requiring examination under a microscope,



Pardosa pullata



Pardosa amentata

The night of 13th August promised to be dry, there was no wind and it was quite warm and muggy so I decided to set out my moth trap, this time on the dipping platform at the edge of the pond area, hoping for more success than my June attempt when I had only recorded one species ! This time I was more lucky recording eighteen species amongst the 60 or 70 moths that I caught overnight. These were:.



- Flame Carpet
- Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet
- Common Carpet
- Common Marbled Carpet
- July Highflyer
- Swallow Prominent
- Common Footman
- Large Yellow Underwing
- Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing

- Small Square-spot
- Square-spot Rustic
- Smoky Wainscot
- Marbled Beauty
- Dark Arches
- Light Arches
- Common Rustic
- Rosy Rustic
- Gold Spot



Common Rustic - a variable species



Rosy Rustic



Dark Arches





Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet



Flame Carpet



Common Carpet



July Highflyer



Gold Spot



Swallow Prominent



Marbled Beauty



Common Burying Beetle



Figwort Sawfly larva

The red and black Burying beetle (*Necrophorus vespilla*) turned up in the moth trap. The sawfly larva (*Tenthredo scrophulariae*) was sitting on a Figwort plant at the pondside. I shall have to keep an eye open for the adult fly, which from pictures I've seen looks a handsome black and yellow beast.

August has provided a good range of insects and, as I was leaving the site on the 24th, a large (unidentified) 'Hawker' dragonfly flew overhead and away. This started me thinking again about the lack of dragonflies and what might, in ideal circumstances, be done to improve the site for wildlife and enhancement of opportunities for visitors to see and enjoy the plants and animals. I think my three main suggestions for priorities would be :-

1. Maintaining the footpath system, perhaps providing boardwalks over the wetter sections.
2. Retrieving some of the 'open water' element of the pond, by mechanical digging out and removal of a section of reeds on say a 2 or 3 year rotation.
3. The cutting/clearing of e.g. a 5 metre strip through the 'dry grassland area', to encourage germination and growth of a more diverse flora— many of the hundreds of 'plug' plants introduced in 2009 are now overgrown with coarse grasses.



Footpath



Overgrown pond

However the site may progress and alter, we are lucky to have such an area so accessible within our village.