



As I approached the 'Wildlife Area' it was clear that Autumn was now really here. The Birches and Cherry were showing lovely colours, the flowers in the tall wet grassland area were over and the reeds were beginning to show signs of dying back



Swallows had gone and apart from Collared Doves and Jackdaws there was little or no bird song, but October is a good month for fungi so I kept an eye open for anything new. The Field Caps on the wood chips, seen last month, had all died back but there were a number of clumps of Sulphur Tuft beside the footpaths. Other fungi were quite small and hard to find, but I was rewarded with two new species, *Plicatura crispa* and an 'Oysterling' (*Crepidotus* sp.) one of a number of small Oysterling species that all look very similar. My thanks to Sara for identifying these for me.



Sulphur Tuft



*Plicatura crispa*



*Crepidotus* sp. An 'Oysterling'



I checked to see if there were any animals beneath the corrugated iron that I had previously put down and disturbed a family of Short-tailed Voles.



On a short visit earlier in the week I had been lucky to see a female Sparrowhawk fly down the 'valley' and out over the reed bed towards the houses beyond the 'Greyhound'



I was not surprised therefore when I came across a pile of feathers - probably the remains of a Sparrowhawk kill. With the aid of local naturalist Frank Mawby we decided that this was what was left of a Starling.



(Late insert: I followed up reports of a 'mini-murmuration' of Starlings assembling in the Large Ash Tree west of the Village Green before diving down into the reed bed to roost. It will be worth watching to see if numbers increase over coming weeks)

Other birds that I noticed included Blackbirds, a Chaffinch, a couple of Carrion Crows, Common Gulls (feeding on the playing field). There was a Wren a Great Tit and a Blue Tit in the reed bed and a Moorhen on the pond. There were fresh Molehills throughout the area but apart from the voles I'd seen under the tin sheeting I saw no signs of any other mammals. I saw no butterflies, bumblebees or other larger flying insects although I did find one or two 'old friends' from previous months, in particular on the large Ivy bush in the North West corner.



Large, flowering Ivy bush



Eristalis pertinax



Helophilus pendulus



Common Wasp



The two hoverflies (Eristalis and Helophilus) are very common on the Village Green as is the wasp. I am aware that there are more than one species of wasp that we might see in the area, so I decided to catch one to check if what I am seeing is Vespa vulgaris (the Common Wasp). One of the key features is an 'anchor' mark on the face which, on this specimen shows quite clearly.



Other 'old friends' included a Seven-spot Ladybird and the common orb-web spider (Araneus diadematus) . I thought however that it might be worth looking to see if I could find any insects belonging to other groups.



Forficula auricularia

Not terribly exciting, but I don't think I'd ever looked closely at Earwigs before. According to my book there's really only one species we're likely to find here, a shiny chestnut brown earwig with yellow legs , here feeding on the remains of an Oxe-eye daisy. A further 'Order' (Dermaptera) for our database !

Another 'Family' division of the true Bugs is the Veliidae or Water Crickets. It was sunny and the light was good when I glanced down at a relatively clear section of the Beck where some small insects were buzzing around on the surface of the water. My photographs are a bit blurry—taken at a distance using the telephoto, but when I got home I was pleased to see that they were indeed Water Crickets (Velia caprai).





Purple Loosestrife



Hedge Parsley



Lesser Stitchwort



Red Deadnettle



Great Burnet

There were still a few flowers 'hanging on' but most species were now bearing seeds



Yellow Flag Iris seed pods



Bird's-foot Trefoil



Branched Bur-reed



Soft Rush



Common Rush

These are the fruiting (seed) heads of two of the common Rush species growing on the Village Green. Looking closely I noticed a number of white 'cylinders'. These are the pupae of one of the many small 'Rush Moths' (*Coleophora* sp.)

Most insects spend the winter as either larvae (caterpillars) or pupae. I came across this Garden Tiger Moth caterpillar (a 'Woolly Bear') possibly looking for somewhere to pupate.



Management is always going to be difficult without adequate funds and volunteer labour. Whenever possible the footpaths are mown and are inviting. This month extra effort has been put into mowing a wide strip through the 'dry' grassland area where many different 'plugs' were planted in the summer of 2009. The aim is to give flowering plants hitherto lying smothered beneath a blanket of coarse vegetation a chance to grow, and perhaps to allow dormant seeds to germinate. It will be interesting to see what happens here.