

Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group

Newsletter no.9 August 2012

What have we been doing?

The answer is 'not as much as we planned'. The weather caused many summer events, large and small, to be cancelled and HDBAG's were also affected.

The Moth Morning planned for May was cancelled, moths not appreciating the rain and cold any more than we do. There were thoughts of trying again but as you probably noticed butterfly and moth sightings were rare.

The walk around Ripon's Quarry Moor Reserve and High Batts did take place and proved to be most interesting.

The event in June cancelled due to the rain was the proposed visit to Studfold to view their Sundew plants. They like boggy ground but it would have been too wet to reach them safely.

As part of the biennial National Insect Week 2012 our planned 'Bug Hunt' in Valley Gardens did go ahead. Many thanks go to Robert and Teresa Marshall who hosted the event.



Heavy rain meant we were not able to do the sweeps for insects. However, Teresa is the Harrogate contact for the Hedgehog Preservation Society and had two baby hedgehogs with her that needed an afternoon feed, so we all gathered under the gazebo while it poured outside to watch and learn about these fascinating mammals.

We were honoured with a surprise visited by Dr. Luke Tilley who is the National Insect Week Coordinator. For more information on insects and what happened all over the country go to www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk.

Comments and contributions welcomed.

Please contact Pamela Millen:-

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Dorothy and Ian Griffin were our hosts at their Moor End Farm, Staveley, for a July walk through their wildflower meadow on a butterfly count. The few Large Whites, Ringlets and Meadow Browns seen did not take much filling in on the 'Big Butterfly Count' form... To see what was around throughout the country log on to www.bigbutterflycount.org.

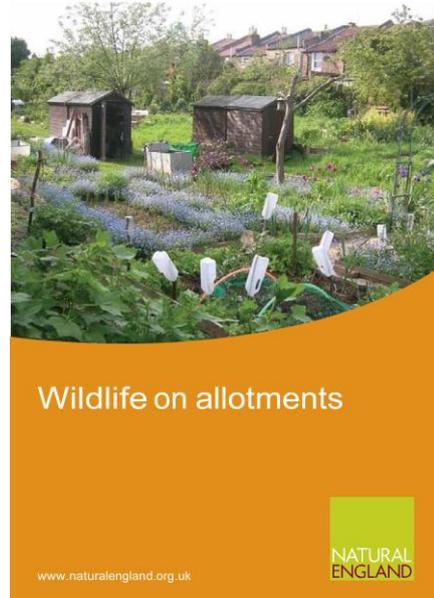
Fortunately the rain held off until we were enjoying a superb tea after the walk.

And so, it's over to you for August. We have produced a leaflet called 'Walk on the Wild Side - Suggested Summer Walks'. We have visited websites such as Yorkshire Water and Nidderdale AONB and noted their free guides that will help you get out and enjoy the sights and sounds of our beautiful local countryside. We would love to hear and receive emails and photos from you about what you see.

For those wet days, why not sit and work out the answers to our 'Wildlife Olympics' Quiz. Correct answers will be put into a prize draw to be held at the Nidderdale Show on 24th September 2012.

Anyone who attended the Allotment Show in Valley Gardens on Sunday 19th August may remember how torrential the rain was in the afternoon. Fortunately we met many people before then and were able to give out copies of the walks and quiz.

We have printed the Natural England booklet called 'Wildlife on Allotments' and will be giving a copy to each of the allotment groups throughout Harrogate district.



This booklet has useful information for those who grow vegetables in gardens as well as on allotments. For your own copy please send your request, name, address and cheque for £2.50 to HDBAG, c/- 30 Lindrick Way, Harrogate, HG3 2SU.

Rossett Nature Reserve

Jennifer Hall is the very busy warden of Rossett Nature Reserve. She visits daily to check on the area, does a bit of litter picking and deals with any vandalism. The reserve is an amazing haven for wildlife right in the middle of local school grounds and housing areas.

Jennifer has obtained approval to extend the wildlife areas and visitors this year will have noticed a more relaxed mowing regime beside the footpath. 'Ragged Robin' seedlings, kindly donated by RHS Harlow Carr, were planted by members of HDBAG in the spring have flowered and hopefully have seeded to make an even better show next year. These flowers love the boggy ground that exists alongside the path.

Harrogate Soroptomists funded and planted trees in the Jubilee Spinney next to the path.



The discovery of Great Crested Newts in the ponds saved the area from being one more housing estate. Wildlife abounds at Rossett. Whilst digging a hole to plant an oak which had been donated by Keith Wilkinson of Bilton Conservation Group, the recent tree planting ceremony was stopped for a while to admire the froglets and newt that were underfoot. Gatekeeper butterflies were present and whereas they would have been a rare sight ten to fifteen years ago they are now a common occurrence.



HDBAG is pleased to be involved with this fantastic haven for wildlife.

Valley Gardens

Harrogate District Council gave HDBAG permission to make the area in Valley Gardens from the Ebor Rise entrance up to the Memorial more wildlife friendly. Harrogate is famous for its gardens and bedding and whilst colourful bedding will always have a place, on close inspection the plants themselves can often be seen to be the single, more open variety. More gardens and areas are being planted with wildlife friendly plants and managed with wildlife in mind.

HDBAG members made a plan of our allotted area and visit regularly to see what is already present. Your sightings and comments are most welcome and will help extend our records of the area.

This year Himalayan Balsam was pulled up to make space for a variety of less invasive plants that have been grown by us from seed. These include ox-eye daisy, teasel, honesty, purple loosestrife, red campion and foxglove.

If you would like to help plant on Saturday 1st September, meet us at the Ebor Rise entrance at 10.30 but remember to bring your own gardening gloves and a trowel.

It would help planning if you could email us on biodiversityaction@gmail.com to say you intend to come along.



Ripon Workhouse Museum and Gardens

During the summer last year HDBAG was very pleased to present the Ripon Workhouse Museum Gardens with a Gold Wildlife Friendly Garden Award. The volunteers who were there to receive the award were also busy stripping turf from a large area of the gardens in preparation for making a wildflower meadow. What a transformation in just one year. They now have a glorious meadow full of colourful flowers and the hum of happy bees. You can meet the volunteers on Tuesday and Saturday mornings and buy the produce from the gardens at the Workhouse Museum Shop.

There will be a 'Heritage Open Day in the Workhouse Garden' on Saturday 8th September from 10 - 3.



**Musings of a wildlife gardener
(a personal view)
Help for garden heroes**

Since becoming involved with HDBAG we have been far more aware of what is happening in our garden and have made greater efforts to identify its visitors and residents. We joined the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, and can often be seen clutching our bumblebee identification sheet trying to sort out our different pollinators - it has to be said, not always with a great deal of success. However recently we had a visitor that even I could instantly tell was different from our other bees.

I found it in our shed one morning, exhausted, probably from trying to get out of the window since dawn. What to do to help? I remembered that a friend had told me of reviving a bee with honey, and here was my chance to try it. It was fascinating to watch the bee edge towards the honey and take just the tiniest bit, its little tongue emerging from its proboscis. Within seconds it was obviously feeling better and soon flew off to a nearby *Rosa rugosa* flower to find more sustenance. But not before I had managed to get a photo to check if my hunch was correct.



A visit to the Natural History Museum website confirmed that we had just helped out our first tree bumblebee (*bombus hypnorum*). We were able to record it on the Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) countrywide map, noting that there was a blank space for our area and for many parts northwards in the Pennine spine of the country.

Incidentally, if you haven't come across the OPAL website it is a very interesting one to explore:
www.opalexplornature.org



Tree bumblebees are the first new bee arrivals to this country for 150 years, having been found in the New Forest in 2001. Whereas so many bees are struggling, tree bumbles are a success story; progressing rapidly northwards they have now reached lowland areas of Scotland, but are still largely concentrated further south. However, it would seem that even this summer's wet weather has not deterred them from reaching our altitude of 740 feet. The information on the OPAL website says that they are not thought to be a threat to our native bees, simply another badly needed pollinator. They prefer shallower cup shaped flowers (e.g. *Rosa rugosa*) and like to nest in holes in trees - hence the name. However they will also choose bird boxes.

Janice Scott

Bumblebee Conservation Trust

At www.bumblebeeconservation.org you can find some fascinating facts about bumblebees:-

Only bumblebees are capable of 'Buzz Pollination' where the bee grabs the flower and then produces a high pitched buzz. This releases pollen which would otherwise stay trapped inside. Tomatoes are pollinated in this way.

Bumblebee nests only last one year unlike honeybee hives.

Bumblebees rarely nest in the same place two years in a row.

There are 24 species of bumblebee in the U.K. but only 8 are commonly found.

Bumblebees do not swarm and are not aggressive.

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