



Bristol Naturalists' Society

Registered Charity No. 235494

Wildlife News: Week 14 – April 07th 2008

Weather

A week of sharp contrast- from a maximum of 17C on 3^d to 7C on 6th. The end of the week was dominated by a huge anti-cyclone stretching down from northern Greenland to Spain, and bringing cold northerly winds in its train. The average was 11.6C, a little below average for the week, and the fifth week in a row below the recent average. The year to date is 9.8C, below both 2007 and the second warmest recent spring, 2003. The last twelve months is 14.45C, almost a degree colder than this time last year. Last year this week was the start of the wonderful hot April.

Rainfall, including snowfall, was 9mm only, bringing the annual total to 333mm, over 100 mm above average, and the last twelve months to 1115mm.

Onset of Spring.

The warm weather early in the week saw many plants coming into flower including Field Maple, Common Vetch, Red Clover, Corn Salad, Broom and Lords and Ladies. So far I have recorded 105 species that have come into flower this year. Last year by the same date I had recorded 83 species. However the more accurate comparison is with the species in flower on the Downs. There were 43 species this week, just 4 species up on last week, and below the total of 53 in 2007. Comparing the dates when 82 species have come into flower this year the average date is day 57, which is just three days earlier than the same species last year, and ten days earlier than the average for the past decade. Essentially this year was warmer in January than 2007 but colder in March, so that the onrush of spring events is slowing down.

To look out for this week.

Black Medick, Garlic mustard, Horse Chestnut, Lilac, Sycamore, Ribwort Plantain, Wayfaring Tree. Hawthorn. Spring Cinquefoil, Bugle, Dames Violet, Meadow Buttercup, and perhaps Beech.

Migrants.

Large numbers of Chiffchaffs are singing, a few Blackcap, and a few Willow Warbler. Swallows and Martins have been reported in small numbers, but will be checked by the cold weather, as will Wheatears. A Reed Warbler has been reported at Chew. Keep an eye out for the last Redwing and Fieldfare- they can often be seen deep into April.

Garden birds

The collapse in bird use of feeders has been very abrupt in the past week. My Blackcaps went on March 31st, and Greenfinch and Chaffinch have also vanished, though Goldfinch are still an occasional visitor. Starlings were regular, but no longer.

Swift Survey this summer..

It is a little early to talk about Swifts- but we are planning a survey of low-level screaming Swift parties. This is always exciting to witness, and is always closely linked to a nest colony, as Swifts like to nest in close proximity to one another. They are also faithful to nest sites they have used before. As it is very difficult to spot Swift nests, recording carefully where low-level screaming parties are heard and seen will help to establish where the colonies are. We want everyone in the society to participate to get as good an idea of the nesting population as possible.

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