



Bristol Naturalists' Society

Registered Charity No. 235494

Wildlife News: Week 21 – May 26th 2008

Weather

Unusually the week was dominated by high pressure over Iceland, and low pressure at first in the SW Atlantic, and then moving very slowly north and east over France. This brought winds from the east, which strengthened through the week. Normally the centers of depressions lie to the north of us, and we get two successive belts of rain associated with the passage of fronts between warm and cold air. This weekend, with the center to the south of us, we had thick cloud and rain, and an unpleasant fall in temperature. Overall the week was just warmer than week 20, and spot on the average of 16.9C. Year to date average is 11.7C, last twelve months more or less unchanged at 14.2C.

There was 46mm of rain, making it the fourth wettest week of the year, 39mm on bank holiday Sunday and Monday, making them the 3rd and 4th wettest days of the year so far. Year to date 448mm, 83mm above average for the time of year; for the last twelve months 1067mm.

Spring events.

On the Downs this weekend 83 species were in flower compared with the average of the previous five years of 72. There were a number of new species including Privet, Dogwood, Bloody Cranesbill and Broad-leaved Willowherb, but several more had ceased flowering so that the total fell for the second week in a row.

Plants that may come into flower this week.

Ragwort, Caper Spurge, Musk Mallow, Silverweed, Carrot, Knapweed, Crosswort, White Stonecrop, Purple Toadflax, Thyme, Common Figwort, Ground Elder, Creeping Thistle, Foxglove, Self heal, Hedge Woundwort. These predictions are based on last year's dates. Each week I take the previous week's list, delete those plants I have found in flower, and add from last year's dates. It does help to know what to look for.

Bird Atlas.

I have at last been able to summarise the surveys that took place between November and February. 240 tetrads were surveyed twice, 882 hours spent, 233,339 birds counted at a rate of 265 birds an hour. The most frequent species was Starling (32,000) followed by Wood Pigeon and Black-headed gull, at 18,000 each. Most widespread were Crow, Robin, Blackbird, Magpie. In The breeding season survey 134 tetrads of the 200 odd being done electronically have so far been entered for the first count.

It is hoped to complete the survey of all tetrads in two years, and publish the results, comparing this survey with that in 1992 for breeding birds, and 1982 for wintering ones.

Swifts

Swifts are back in their old nest sites, and have probably laid their eggs. The best indication of nesting is a low-level screaming party. We are running a survey this year into these events, and want the following details of every one you observe- The date, time of day, site (road, address, postcode or grid reference) and the number of birds in the party. This is part of a wider attempt to find an effective way of monitoring swift populations. Please send me details of any swift nests you find, and any Swift screaming parties you observe.

Richard Bland
richardbland@blueyonder.co.uk