



# Bristol Naturalists' Society

Registered Charity No. 235494

## Wildlife News: Week 37-38 – September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008

I have been on holiday in Northumbria, so you get two weeks for the price of one.

### Weather.

Week 37 was cold and wet, week 38 average and dry. Week 37 had an average temp of 17.9C, two degrees below the recent average for the week, and the seventh successive week below normal. The year to date figure rose to 14.8C and the previous twelve months fell to 14.08C. 37 mm of rain fell, bringing the total so far this year to 913 mm, 300 mm above average for the date. September has already had 50% more rain than normal. The last twelve months has seen 1180mm fall.

Week 38 saw high pressure develop over the UK, winds swing to an Easterly direction, and temperatures rise to 21C by the end. Farmers were at last able to get out into their fields again, and in Bristol no rain fell. The year to date reached 14.9C and the last twelve months rose to 14.1C. We have almost certainly had the last day with a temperature of 20C or above for the year. Over the last six years we have had, on average 83 days each year over 20C, this year we have had just 42.

### Plants.

One result of a cool wet summer is to extend the flowering period, and on Sunday there were 81 species in flower compared with an average of 58 over the previous five years and compared with 64 last year. At the same time autumn is gathering pace fast- Holly, Privet and Briony are all ripe, more tree species are starting to turn colour, and some, including Silver Birch, Purple Plum and Whitebeam are almost bare.

Another result has been second flowering- I saw Elder in flower in Northumberland and a single Dog Rose in flower on the Downs.

There is more evidence that it will be a hard winter for birds- There are almost no hazel nuts, and Sycamore seeds, which seemed to be ripening, have all abruptly dropped. There seem to be very few conkers. However Yew berries, which have been slowly ripening over several weeks, are now starting to appear in some numbers.

### Birds.

There has been much excitement over the appearance of at least two Wrynecks in the region in the past two weeks- they are related to woodpeckers, and used to be commoner in Britain, but are now only seen on migration.

Large Gull numbers have fallen as juvenile Lesser black-backed Gulls have gone off to Spain, and juvenile Herring Gulls have dispersed across the country. A few adults stay around guarding nest sites. Their new neck feathers are black tipped so that they seem to acquire dirty necks and heads at this time of year. The tips slowly wear off so that by next breeding season they are a brilliant white. This happens at different speeds on different individuals. Black-headed Gulls are drifting through the region.

In gardens this time of year tends to see the number of birds using garden feeders at a minimum. There are three winter garden bird surveys that plot the numbers of birds- one is Bristol Birdwatch run by the Avon Wildlife Trust, one is my own survey, and the BTO runs a year round survey. Anyone who is interested in keeping a regular record of the birds using their garden feeder should contact me

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