



Bristol Naturalists' Society

Registered Charity No. 235494

Wildlife News: Week 39 – September 29th 2008

Weather.

September. A most unusual month, cold and wet for the first two weeks, warmer and totally dry for the second, when high pressure from the Baltic took control. Overall mean maximum temperature 17.2C, below the long term average of 18C. It was the coldest since 1988. The warmest September since 1881 was 1929, 22.0C, and the coldest 1912, at 14.5C. The recent warmest was 2006, 21.2C and the recent coldest 1995 at 15.7C. In climate terms, ie the 30-year average, the figure is now 18.3C. The peak since 1881 was 1961 at 18.5C, and the minimum was 1994 at 17.8C.

Total Rainfall, 121mm, all in the first two weeks, was the 16th wettest since 1853. It was 50% above the average of 80mm. The wettest September since 1853 was 1896 with 195mm and the driest 1940 with 5mm. The average of the past 30 years is 78mm. The 30 year average has run in cycles, peaking at 95mm in 1931 and 1971, with a minimum of 73 in 1995.

This week. Temperature.

Slightly below average at 16.9C. The year to date is 14.96C, the lowest for the date in recent years. It looks as if it may not climb above 15C at all, as usually the year to date declines from here on. The last twelve months has gone up slightly to 14.13C. It looks at present as if this year will be the coldest since 2001.

Rainfall zero. We have had no rain for 15 days, which is exactly what farmers needed, though one day less than the April drought. However we are still 270 mm above average for the date, and the figure for the past twelve months is 1182mm, which is exceptionally wet, but similar to the situation this time last year.

Autumn.

The dry weather has encouraged trees to start turning colour, and most species now show some change. Leaves are also starting to fall from most species, well before the total colour change, and specimens of Hawthorn, *Prunus pisardii* and Silver Birch are now bare, which is unusual, as Whitebeam are usually the first, and I have yet to see a bare Whitebeam.

Most species have ripened now, and on average the dates are three dates later than the recent average.

Flowers.

here was a steep fall in the number of species in flower on the Downs, to 67 from 83, but this is still well above the average of the past five years of 53 and above last year's total of 65. Remarkably I found flowers open on a Holly tree, and I had found similar early flowering in the late autumn of 2005, when flowers remained open though January and into February.

I have been told that Yellow Horned Poppy plants have been found at Sand Bay, where mechanical shore cleaning has been ended in favour of litter picks. The plants have appeared at the very top of the spring tide level, and must have been brought in on the tide. They are likely to flower next year.

Bristol City Museum.

A substantial series of changes to the City's museums, which will include the loss of a number of existing posts, as well as the creation of the new Museum of Bristol are being proposed. It is not clear what the impact on the Natural History and Geology sections of the museum will be, but it looks as if they are under threat. While I welcome changes which will increase the overall impact of the Museum service to all the citizens of Bristol, I would regret any loss to the traditional conservation and interpretation of the biodiversity of the region in which the Museum has always been a leading light.

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