



# Bristol Naturalists' Society

Registered Charity No. 235494

## Wildlife News: Week 17 – April 29<sup>th</sup> 2010

### Weather in April

The average temperature of the month was 14.2C, above the long term average of 12.8 C, and warmer than last year. April temperatures have an extraordinary range, from a minimum of 9.5 in 1886 to a maximum of 17.9 in 1893. There have been 24 Aprils since 1853 with a temperature of over 14.0C. The April climate, the thirty year average, has changed a lot in the past century, falling from 13.3C in 1880 to 12.0C in 1932, rising to 13.4C by 1965, then falling to 12.4C in 1995. Since then, assisted by the extraordinary temperature of 2007, it has risen back to 12.9C today.

It was a month dominated by high pressure, light northerly winds, and a great deal of sunshine. This average 6.9 hours a day, compared with an average of 5.4C, though both 1997 and 2007 were sunnier.

It was also a very dry month with 24mm of rain, the 16th driest April since 1853, just 40% of normal rainfall. As a result we have had some 60mm less rain than normal since the New Year, which is a month's supply. However in the last twelve months we have had 940mm, close to the annual average.

### Weather this week

Temperature averaged 17.0C just above the average for the week, and the first time this year a week has been significantly above average, caused by a switch from the northerly winds that had dominated the earlier part of the month to southerlies. The temperature reached 20C on 28th. Year-to-date reached 8.6C, and the last twelve months is still 13.4C. On the 29th came 6mm of rain, the first since April 4th. Rain to date is 198mm.

### Onset of spring

An analysis of 84 spring events that have occurred had an average date of day 90, sixteen days later than the average for these events since 2003, and 21 days later than the same events in 2007, the earliest recent spring.

On the Downs new species in flower were Beech, Holly, Cow Parsley, Honesty, Rock Rose, and Snow-in-Summer, which grows on some of the rocks in the Gorge. The Honesty was three weeks later than normal-the Holly three days early.

### The Volcano.

The grey ash from the Icelandic volcano covered the windows of my car, and the silent contrail-free sky was wonderful to see. There is an interesting issue as to whether aircraft, by creating far more high-level cloud than would naturally occur, is helping to cool the planet, by causing its reflectivity to increase, or to warm it by preventing heat absorbed in the day from escaping at night. I rather suspect the two effects balance one another out. However there was an interesting article about three years ago about global

dimming- the fact that the amount of sunlight reaching the surface is significantly less now than it was fifty years ago. Pictures from China never show any shadows, and probably they didn't in London or Manchester before the 1955 Clean Air Act was passed. Of course Volcanic dust also reflects solar radiation, and major past volcanic eruptions have cooled the planet significantly for a year or more. Moral. The factors affecting the climate are hugely complex, and everything we do, or don't do, has an impact on everything else.

### **Swifts are back**

We will be running the same survey as last year June 15-July 15th when Swifts are most active feeding young, and displaying in wild low-level screaming parties close to nest sites. But if you know you have a Swift nest site please let me know.

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