

## Thorndon Birdlife, July and August 2019

The summer is the time when insects are at their most abundant and on 5th June, the eve of the 75th anniversary of D-Day, two hummingbird hawk moths were seen at Stanwell Green, feeding on red valerian (but ignoring the native, white valerian). The date is significant because on D-Day itself, 6th June 1944, a 'swarm' of hummingbird hawk moths was seen flying north over the Channel, heading for England. On 6th June this year, another was seen at the same place in our village.

Hummingbird hawk moths are not only wonderful looking insects, they are remarkable migrants; the ones we see here in the summer have flown all the way from the Mediterranean and North Africa. On 7th June I saw one in my garden, also feeding on red valerian. I saw another on 9th June along with single red admiral, holly blue and large white butterflies.

I saw further hummingbird hawk moths in my garden on 14th, 15th and 17th June and I received a report of another one in a garden elsewhere on The Street, so we've obviously had quite an influx of them.

Having seen a bullfinch along the Thwaite Road at the beginning of May, I was very pleased to receive a report of a pair together in a garden along the Thwaite Road, so there's every chance they're nesting nearby. At the same site a pair of goldcrests with young was a delightful sight.

Last month I asked for any sightings of turtle dove and I am pleased to report that the lovely purring song of one was heard along the Clint Road on 12th June. The same day a spotted flycatcher was seen in a garden along the High Street and another was seen in a garden near the Church on 22nd June.

Another migrant insect that comes here all the way from North Africa and the Middle East is the painted lady butterfly and I saw one in my garden on 15th June and then three together on 22nd June (also feeding on red valerian).

Most bird song is coming to an end now, but a wren was singing its loud, powerful song along The Street on the summer solstice, 21st June. The next day there was also a goldfinch singing and I was struck by how its song has the same urgency as that of the wren, but is much gentler and more tinkling.

We may be in for a significant number of ladybirds later in the summer as there have been a lot of larvae about since 18th June. These narrow-bodied black creatures, with a tapering abdomen, have orange spots along the sides of their backs, the number and position of which gives a clue to which adult they will become.

On 22nd June I saw single meadow brown and small tortoiseshell butterflies in my garden and I hope there will be many more when the Buddleia comes into flower.

I was pleased to receive a report of a little owl near the Church, but the most remarkable record was of a cuckoo singing from The Fen on 25th and 26th June. The reason this is remarkable is that most male cuckoos are on their way south, to their wintering grounds by the end of June. I did see one heading south over The Street, purposefully, on 1st July 2000. The tagging of cuckoos with geo-locators is unravelling much new information about their natural history and we now know that once the males have mated they don't waste any time before they head back to Africa for the winter.

Having seen my first fallow deer in Thorndon, back in February, I was pleased to receive a report of two between Thorndon and the A140 in June. It seems they are about and will, perhaps, become a more regular sighting in the village.

As I say every year, during July, do take time to enjoy the swifts flying around the village, especially in the evenings, as they will be off to their wintering grounds at the beginning of August and we won't see them again until next May.

I am always pleased to receive reports of birds and other wildlife of interest in Thorndon, Rishangles, Hestley Green and Braiseworth.

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