

Country Notes for August 2022

Two days ago I was thrilled to see a hummingbird hawk moth in my garden. These amazing moths look to all intents and purposes like a real hummingbird and they favour high nectar plants such as the valerian that mine was feeding on. It stayed for some time and I was entranced as it hovered from flower to flower, sometimes flying off into the rest of the garden and then returning when it found nothing better! I know that at least one other was seen in Hollingbourne that same evening, so there must have been a migration of them from the continent that day.

Sadly, the excitement of the hummingbird hawk moth has been tempered by the lack of other butterflies and moths up until now. There have been some exceptions though. There have been more small tortoiseshells than in previous years, and earlier in the year there were good numbers of brimstones and peacocks. However, although most butterflies that one would expect to see in the garden and surrounding woods and fields, have been seen, the numbers at the time of writing seem down on previous years.

The buddleia in my garden, which is in full flower, has to my knowledge, not yet had a single butterfly or moth on it – and the lavender has had very few of the usual white butterflies. Last year my buddleia, which is fairly large, was teeming with peacocks, red admirals, commas, whites and even, on one occasion, a silver washed fritillary.

In the Meadows there have been the usual meadow browns, ringlets, marbled whites and, just recently, the first gatekeepers, but they have all been few and far between. In the nearby woods, where I regularly see white admirals, there have so far been none. Maybe the long spell of dry weather has had something to do with it.

Let's hope that this is not a trend and that numbers pick up as we move through the rest of the summer. For me, at least, it is not summer without butterflies in the garden and in the surrounding countryside.

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