

Country Notes for August 2017

I have just returned from a walk with Bracken, my spaniel puppy, in the Meadows Trust, where I was treated to a great display of nature in the raw. As I wandered along the pathway I heard above me the sound of a kestrel, and looking up I saw not just a kestrel but also a sparrowhawk mercilessly mobbing a very elegant buzzard. The kestrel soon decided that it had met its match and flew away but the sparrow hawk persisted and persisted until both birds drifted off into the distance. The graceful gliding of the buzzard was simply no match for the sparrowhawk which kept rising above it and swooping on it much as in days gone by a spitfire might have harried an enemy bomber. All very dramatic!

However I digress, as this was not the subject which I really sat down to write about, for I am pleased to say that my fears of a butterfly-less summer which I lamented in last month's Country Notes have not come to fruition. In the last few weeks the number of butterflies has swelled by the day, perhaps spurred on by the persistent summer weather. How wonderful to be proved so wrong!

Just a few days ago I witnessed what must have been an invasion of red admirals flying north from Europe, as they seemed to be everywhere. In our fields and meadows the number of butterflies has also risen considerably. On the Meadows Trust there are meadow browns, gatekeepers and ringlets everywhere and flying around the thistle flowers are good numbers of large and small skippers. These are dumpy little butterflies, with essentially orange forewings and darker underwings. I have also seen far more small tortoiseshells than I feared, although the number of 'blue' butterflies still appears to be down. I shall watch and wait with fingers crossed!

If summer continues in its glory through August we may start to feel the effects of drought in our gardens, but I think we may eventually have a summer of butterflies to look back on this winter!

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