

Country Notes for July 2018

One of the glories of late spring and early summer is the appearance of the first of the blue butterflies. In a good year there will have been some butterflies to be seen from late winter onwards, but it is the appearance of blue butterflies which particularly seems to gladden the soul.

The first of the year is nearly always the holly blue. These are the most likely to be seen in our gardens and they are possibly the easiest to identify with their powder blue forewings and steely grey underwings, covered with just a few tiny black dots. As their name suggests they are searching for holly bushes, which are frequently to be found in our gardens. The rest of the blue family are more likely to be seen in our meadows and on the downs.

Within our parishes perhaps the commonest is the aptly named common blue. The males are a mid-blue and the females are brown with orange spots at the edge of each wing. At the time of writing in mid-June they are just starting to appear and should hopefully be visible in good numbers by July. Their underwings contain delicate orange, black and white spotting.

On our downs chalkhill blues may sometimes be found. These are significantly larger and the males are pale blue with black edging to each wing. The females are mainly brown and the underwings of both contain spots of orange, black and white and are generally really quite heavily spotted. These are particularly beautiful and are guaranteed to grab your attention should you see one.

Just recently I found an adonis blue in our parishes. This is a really vibrant blue, almost painful to the eyes. It is however very rare so I will keep the location to myself and hope that more appear soon!

The last of the blues likely to be seen in our area is the brown argus. As their name suggests they have essentially brown forewings with orange spots at the edges. In fact they look fairly similar to the female common blues, although they are substantially smaller.

There are many other blues which may be seen in our country and hopefully one day I may be able to report even more species of blue butterflies living within our parish boundaries!

How wonderful though that we are able to see such delicate and beautiful butterflies so close to home!

Andrew Snowdon