



The Cam Valley Wildlife Group Newsletter

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Ringed = Dead?

I always believed that ringing a tree quickly killed it.

As the first photo shows these two sycamores were well and truly ringed by someone in April 2018. The second photo, taken at the end of June, shows them alive and apparently doing very well. Is it an old wives tale that ringing a tree kills it? Or are sycamores one of the few trees can survive being ringed?



Phil Gait

Hedgehogs in the garden

It's still busy in the garden with visiting hedgehogs. We've had drama as I've had to take two to a local hedgehog rescue centre. I saw a hedgehog walking across the lawn at night and thought it looked like it had lost a left eye. I picked it up and waited for an hour for it to uncurl (this was at 11pm) and saw its eye area was badly infected. I put it into a cat carrier with food, water and hay and took it to the rescue the following day. The first thing the rescue lady said was in future just cover an injured hedgehog with a towel rather than hay as the bits of hay get all stuck in wounds making cleaning difficult.

I was concerned about whether I done the correct thing to catch the hedgehog but the rescue said most definitely as with the weather getting warmer the wound would have been exposed to Fly Strike. It's a nasty and often fatal condition where flies lay their eggs in the wounds of animals and the maggots then hatch and eat their 'hosts'.

Sadly, the wounds were too bad and despite care the hedgehog died. The rescue thought it was probably a strimmer injury. Not from our garden I need to add but a reminder to always check areas when you are strimming as instead of running away hedgehogs will just curl into a ball. The second emergency was a little hedgehog I found just a few days ago lying in the sun on our lawn in the afternoon. The rescue said the poor hog was severely dehydrated and she thought it probably had worms. I wish I'd thought to take a photo because its bottom was so thin and not fat and round like a healthy hog should be. So far though, he's doing ok and hopefully will be released back into our garden when fully recovered. Please leave a shallow bowl of water in the garden for all the wildlife, especially in this hot weather and if you see a hedgehog out in the day it is more than likely it is unwell.

I've recently bought a night wildlife camera. Here's a few of the photos and a video link:



The hedgehogs are practically drinking the water all night



There's lots of entering and exiting the feeding stations interspersed with a drink.



We were amazed to see a fox. We live in a relatively built up area so it was a real surprise.



Not our cat but it looks cute. I've had to make two entrances to the feeders smaller to stop it getting in.

Video link:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/mobile/folders/1pLTpfXpfe-djm1A;0jbW2dL1WXqKrR0k?usp=sharing>

Zoe Nicholls

Owls at Otterbourne

Whilst on holiday on an overcast day with a few rain showers I had booked a photographic workshop with Natures Images to visit Pete Whieldon's Natural History photographic facilities at Otterbourne in Hampshire. They are a dedicated group of natural history photographers and falconers who have built hides and natural looking settings to place these hand reared native owls.

I am hoping to visit again next year and take photographs from their hides of wild animals that visit their five acre site. This day finished off a week's holiday in May in my motorhome with my seven month old kitten Timothy, taking photographs of wild and captive wildlife.



Barn Owl



Little Owl with young



Long-Eared Owl



Tawny Owl

Diana Walker

The Giant returns

The Ecuador government has reported that on one of its Galapagos Islands a Giant Tortoise of a species thought to have been extinct since 1904 has been found. The hunt is now on to find any close relatives in the hope that restoration by breeding can be achieved. *Source: BBC World Service, May 2021.*

(A giant tortoise can measure 25ft over its dome – front to back. Galapago is Spanish for tortoise.)

Fergus Callander

On trail cams

I first got a trail cam, or wildlife cam, a camera that will take photos or shoot videos automatically when it detects movement in its field of vision, when our fabulous cat ran off and lived (quite successfully it seemed) in the nearby woods for a year. In the end, using the camera and a homemade trap, I caught him, and he has been happily and freely at home ever since. I think it was a teenager thing. But that is another story. So, I ended up with a camera and started to deploy it for wildlife filming. As with most things, it was a bit of a learning process; where to put it, when, for how long, on what setting, how to offload and edit any interesting film? And so on. The original camera I had died when the rechargeable battery wore out and turned out not to be replaceable or mendable (a lesson for future purposes).

I now have two of these things. Both are, in effect, small water-proof boxes with lens and sensors on the front, which open to reveal the relatively simple controls inside. They can be strapped to any post or tree etc., but this is a bit of a palaver. I have mine on mini tripods, (the ones with twisty legs) so they can just stand on the ground or be wound around branches, railings or whatever. They shoot colour footage, with sound, in the day, and black and white footage, using infrared light, in the night. They can be set to shoot still photos or video. The length of video clip can be changed but is usually 20 – 30 seconds. I have had great fun with mine, and filmed various deer, hare, foxes, bats, badgers, hedgehogs in our garden, herons (including hunting at night), even a glimpse of an otter (hurray) and a mink on Conygre Brook. It can be as simple and easy as just deploying the camera in your garden to see what is around, or out further afield in woods, old barns and hedges.

I have learnt to leave them in one place for a number of days and check each day. (There is always a very slight risk of them being spotted and stolen). But one thing I have learnt is that animals tend to hang out where people don't! So finding isolated, 'secret' spots is good! Obviously care needs to be taken not to disturb species such as bats. In the end, trying to second guess what animals might be where has its limitations, so just quite random, speculative, selections of where to put the camera can throw up surprises.



They record results onto a standard SD card that can then be swapped into a pc to study. Looking at film on the small screens the cameras have can be tricky so I tend to just have spare SD cards and swap them daily to see what has been filmed on a pc. There are some challenges. The cameras will

be triggered by leaf movement in the wind so you might end up with a 100 clips of nothing much, but which should be checked. It is important to be patient and keep trying. I have had times where one good clip was buried in a folder of 100 useless ones. Often a camera will pick up many clips of pheasants, squirrels and other less 'charismatic' fauna. In cold weather condensation might fog the lens. Rain will affect image quality too. Another issue is that the response time of the cameras is not superfast. If an animal runs across the field of vision, it will be out of shot before the video capture starts. Finding tracks and pointing the camera so animals walk towards or away from the lens is one way of getting decent clips. Yet another issue is video file compatibility with Macs, but with a bit of software juggling, or file conversion, it is overcome-able. I have posted resulting film clips, often edited slightly, on YouTube and on my Facebook page. Friends and people in our local community (Priston) certainly see them, like and make comments. Both cameras are powered by a rack of AA batteries (8 in camera 1; and 12 in camera 2). They will run a long time on these. Rechargeable ones can be used.

So which one to get? These are the kind of things of which there are many options on eBay and Amazon etc.. All seemingly much of a muchness and made in the far east of course. The first of my



Fox at night



Heron at night

new ones was £50 and was a Victure Mini Wildlife camera 16mp 1080p. The second, a Bushnell, was more or less twice the price and supposed to be a leading brand which is fulsomely endorsed in a YouTube video by BBC Wildlife cameraman and presenter Simon King. But I can't see the results from the latter are that much better than the cheaper one. The Bushnell does have a close-up lens which can be added, and more settings and voluminous instructions. Both take good images if the light is quite good. At night footage can be quite grainy. But it is possible to see what is what. The cameras will time and date stamp all the clips. A bit of online research may throw up a more definitive answer.

I have gathered some charming pictures, including of animals actually checking out the camera. And, through lockdown, and more generally, it has been a good reason to leave the house and get out into the countryside. Some film clips are mysterious – just a blur or a shadow on the move. One clip I put on Facebook has caused a bit of discussion as it's quite a



Young hare

clear shot of an animal, but which? It looks like it could be a fox with no tail? Or is it some small deer. Opinions differ. It is lovely to get all the night shots and think of the nocturnal dramas that play out around us. I think I have filmed most of what one might expect around here. But it would be exciting to get water voles, stoats, weasels, and, of course... a big cat!

Owain Jones

Puss moth

Very excited to report that the white poplar saplings I planted in the winter are flourishing, but far more importantly they have a number of tiny Puss moth larvae emerging from tan eggs on the upper leaves... which leaves me with a bit of a problem: as my saplings will barely support the larvae as they grow and certainly won't have sufficient trunk and bark to support pupation! I will monitor their progress and probably move the growing larvae to some mature willows nearby.

I haven't seen a Puss moth in 40 years, so I was very pleased. When I went down to photograph them I found a couple from an older egg laying, so we have been blessed with two lots of ova laying - one is a day old and the other one possibly a week old. They will be magnificent in three weeks or so, possibly the most magnificent of all UK moth larvae.



Gordon Morse

Members' photos

We have received quite a crop of photos and some have been challenging.

Redpoll - Rob Ladd has sent in a photo of something you don't see every day – Redpoll at his bird feeder.

Until fairly recently, there were just Redpolls, and then they were divided into two – the Common Redpoll and the Lesser Redpoll. The Common (or Mealy) Redpoll is a small finch, but is larger and paler than the Lesser Redpoll and is described as streaky brown above and white-ish below with



black streaks and looking 'colder' than the Lesser Redpoll. The Lesser Redpoll has 'back, flanks, wing-bars and cheeks range from cream to light cinnamon brown'; the Common Redpoll's base-colour is 'whiter'. The Common Redpoll doesn't breed in the UK, but is a passage migrant and winter visitor and you are most likely to see it on the east coast. The Lesser Redpoll breeds in Scotland, Northern and Eastern England and Wales and occurs in South-West England in winter. It visits gardens and the BTO Garden Birdwatch Survey reports a 15-fold increase in the use of gardens by Lesser Redpolls during early spring over the past five years.

My money is on the Lesser Redpoll at the bird feeder, but perhaps there is a member out there with some expertise who could let us know!

Rose Chafer

Maggie Edwards has sent in a photo of a Rose Chafer, *Cetonia aurata*. The adult beetles become active in May and feed on the pollen and nectar of a wide range of flowers and are particularly keen on rose and elder. On the continent, they are pests of soft fruits. You are most likely to see them in the afternoon and evening into July. Eggs are laid in compost or decaying trees, after which the female dies. The larvae feed on the compost or decaying wood for two years, helping with breaking these down before pupating at about 3.5cm in June to August. The adults then usually remain in the pupal cell until the following spring, emerging when the temperature reaches 15°C. You might see the larvae in compost in plant pots, but they do not feed on roots like some other chafer and do not seem to harm the plants. They are C-shaped with a firm and soft body, small head and large hind body and tiny legs. The pink head and legs and transverse rows of reddish hairs along the body distinguish them from other UK chafer larvae.



22-spot ladybird

Maggie has also sent a photo of a very attractive lemon-yellow species of ladybird, the 22-spot ladybird, *Psyllobora 22-punctata*. The lemon-yellow colour, the 20 – 22 spots and the pattern of 5 spots on the pronotum (area between the wing cases and the head) are features to look out for. It is the only ladybird whose colours remain the same during the larval, pupal and adult stages. The larva is often confused with that of the Orange Ladybird. However, the 22-spot larva feeds on mildew on the upper surfaces of leaves while the Orange larva feeds on the mildew on the undersides. Other species of yellow or yellow-ish adult ladybirds include the 14-spot and the 16-spot.



The 14-spot has quite square spots on a background that can vary from off-white through to distinctly yellow, causing some confusion when the spots are distinct. Its spots are fortunately often fused into a pattern said to resemble a clown face or anchor and it has a black line along the join of the wing-cases that the 22-spot lacks. The 16-spot is a small ladybird (2.5 to 3 mm long) usually found in grassland, often in large numbers. It has a background colour often described as cream, along with black inside edges to the wing cases producing an even black line along the join of the wing-cases.

Cocoon

Maggie's Burnet moth cocoon could be from one of three species, the Six-spot, the Five-spot or the Narrow-bordered Five-spot. It is most likely to be the Six-spot, which is by far the most common of the three. The Five-spot Burnet is a locally distributed species in South-West England and has been declining in our area. The least likely is the Narrow-bordered Five-spot. The larvae of all three will feed on Birds-foot trefoil, which Maggie has also photographed.



Coprinoid fungus?

Maggie has sent some really good photos of what looks like a coprinoid fungus, from the side and from above, which have proved to be rather challenging! Coprinoid fungi are the Ink caps, so named after a common, but not universal, characteristic – they auto-digest (deliquesce) progressively as the spores ripen from the edge inwards and some of these mushrooms have caps that curl upwards as they do. Deliquescence is very easy to see in the Shaggy Ink Cap or Lawyer's Wig, *Coprinus comatus*. It can be seen dripping a black inky liquid, which used to be used as a good black drawing ink by boiling it with water and cloves. It is a tall species considered to be good eating when the gills are still white.

Identifying fungi can be tricky – many are very difficult or impossible to identify from photos. Spore prints are necessary in many cases and examining the fungal spores under a microscope is often required. Having said that, the species in Maggie's photo looks very like *Coprinopsis lacopus*, the Hare's-foot Ink Cap which is sometimes found growing on compost or woodchips in addition to in woods and sometimes fields. Maggie's was in a pot with mint. There are photographs on the website *Nature Spot* that are very similar to Maggie's. *But...* Maggie photographed it in May and it is generally flagged up as being found from early autumn to mid-winter and the height of the mushroom she reported (2 inches) is on the small side.

There are reports that they are sometimes smaller than expected and Roger Phillips, a well-known specialist in mushrooms, has them down as occurring from summer to autumn in his 1981 book,

Mushrooms and other fungi of Great Britain and Europe. There are various references elsewhere to it being found as early as May in the UK and Maggie photographed it in a very warm spell. Add to this the wide international distribution of this mushroom and its apparent occurrence in Spring elsewhere in the world, coupled with the hot early spell we had this year, it seems feasible that this is the one, although this is only a tentative stab at species identification! *Coprinopsis lacopides* is similar, but seems to have a proportionally wider stem in general. There may be other candidates.

Any thoughts from anyone reading this with some fungal expertise would be more than welcome!



Lesser Stag beetle

Venturing into the garden on the evening of 9th June, Stephen and I were pleased to spot two Lesser Stag beetles, *Dorcus parallelipedus* - one male, one female. This is an easily identified large beetle with a broad head and large mandibles belonging to the family *Lucanidae*. The two other members of the family in Britain include the Stag beetle and the Rhinoceros beetle. It can be confused with a female Stag beetle, which is similarly small-jawed in comparison with the magnificent male Stag beetle, but the all-black wing-cases coupled with the habitat confirm its identity as a Lesser Stag beetle.

The eggs are laid in rotting wood, where the larvae develop. They feed on very soft decaying wood of broadleaved trees, especially ash, common beech and apple. They are found in woodland and also in gardens, especially where there are large trees or orchards. The adults can sometimes be seen coming to outside lights as they fly about at night.



Mistle-thrush chick mystery

Phil Gait has sent in a photo of a large Mistle Thrush chick in its nest in the fork of a tree along with four unhatched eggs. This is a bit of a mystery. The female Mistle Thrush starts to incubate her eggs once they are all laid so that they develop together, so it looks like four out of the five eggs were infertile. Mistle thrushes are monogamous, unlike some birds, so it is possible that the male bird's fertility is not up to scratch for some reason or other. Perhaps it is old age, or maybe something else. Is this just the way it is, or perhaps part of a more sombre trend? Can anyone shed any light on this?

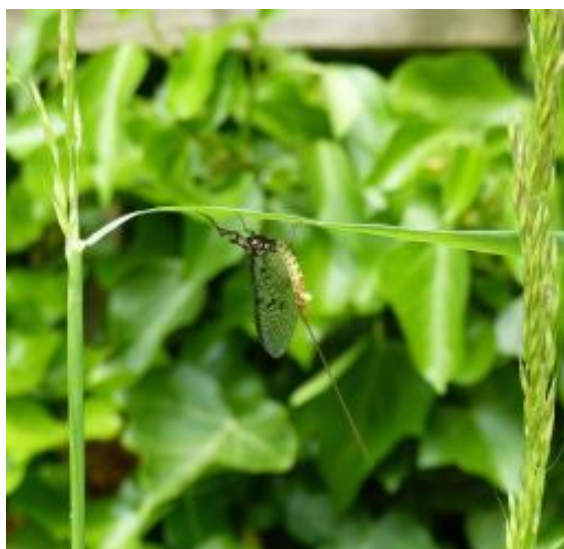


Mayfly, *Ephemera* sp. – Green Drake?

Frank Loughran has sent in a photo of a fully adult female mayfly taken in Hallatrow. It fits the description of species in the genus *Ephemera*... but which one?

Diagnostic features that lead to a determination of the particular species rely on the diagnostic markings and colour of the *upper* surface of the abdomen. Unfortunately, the photo does not show the upper surface, but the insect appears to be either *E. danica* or *E. vulgata*. *E. danica* is the most commonly seen mayfly in the UK, but *E. vulgata* is widespread. Their flight times overlap and both are seen in June when the photo was taken. *E. vulgata* uses lakes, ponds, canals and slow-moving water; *E. danica* uses fast-flowing rivers and streams, which we have in our area, *but* also uses lakes. *E. lineata* is rare and associated with large rivers.

Ephemera danica, is known as the Green Drake or Common mayfly. It is the species that is said to give mayflies their name, as its main emergence is in May when the Mayflowers (Hawthorn) are out, although it is seen from April to September. It is a large mayfly with three dark (usually almost black) tails, a pale cream coloured top-surface of the abdomen and a characteristic pattern of dark brown marks on the upper abdomen. It is also said to have creamy-olive legs.



Ephemera vulgata is known as the Drake Mackerel Mayfly. It is a summer species. It is said to have three brown tails and has a yellow-ish abdomen top-surface with different markings than the Green Drake.

It is difficult to estimate the size of insects in photographs and although *E. danica* can be larger than other contenders, there is size overlap anyhow. It looks to be most likely a Green Drake. The Green Drake completes its life-cycle in a year, but otherwise takes two years. Mayflies have an interesting life-cycle – the aquatic larva, followed by a winged form with dull wings, the Dun, then after a final moult the full adult, the Spinner. The Green Drake Dun has yellow-

green wings, said to be the source of its name. Its larva feeds on plants and algae and is a good food source for various fish, especially obvious during the Dun phase as they snatch them from the water's surface.

Puss moth caterpillar, *Cerura vinula*

Gordon Morse is extremely pleased to report seeing Puss moth caterpillars for the first time in 40 years on white poplar saplings he planted in the winter. He reports that his saplings will barely support the larvae as they grow and will not have sufficient trunk and bark to support pupation, so he is monitoring their progress and may opt for moving the growing larvae to mature willows nearby. He has sent in photos of a tiny 1st instar caterpillar and a (probably) 3rd instar caterpillar. They wave about whip-like appendages from their tails to help deter predators, and if that doesn't work, it can squirt formic acid from its thorax! Puss moths are gorgeous moths with beautiful black and grey marbled markings. Their bodies are covered in soft cat-like fur, giving the moth its name. The caterpillars eat poplar, aspen and willow.

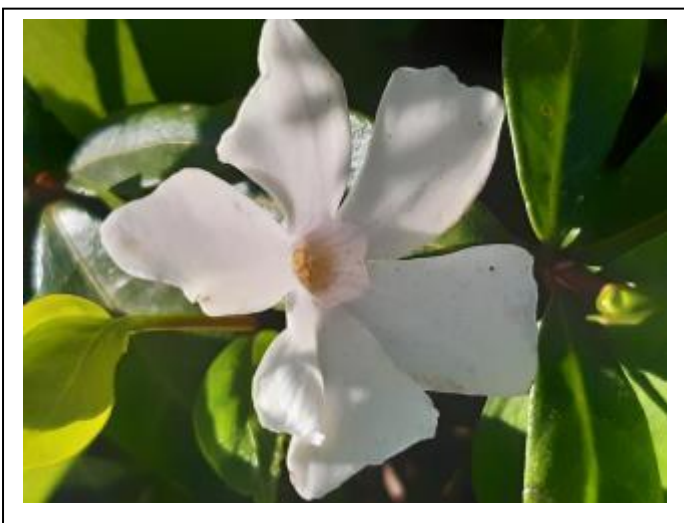
Black and Yellow Longhorn Beetle, *Rutpela maculata*.

This Longhorn beetle's markings can be variable, but the one in my garden taken on 11th June is typical. This 13-20mm beetle can be seen visiting flowers, especially umbellifers. The larvae feed on the damp rotting wood of pine or various broadleaved trees, especially birch, so is often seen in woods. They can be attracted to gardens with good supplies of rotting wood. I have also seen them at Haydon Batch and Goosard Reserve.



Deborah Porter

Members' photos continued...



Periwinkle - Maggie Edwards



Periwinkle - Maggie Edwards



Periwinkles – Maggie Edwards



Three-cornered leek – Maggie Edwards



Japanese roof iris – Maggie Edwards



Narcissus – Maggie Edwards



Buttercup – Maggie Edwards



Yellow vetch – Maggie Edwards



White flowering Rosemary – Maggie Edwards



Granny's bonnet columbine – Maggie Edwards



Hebe – Maggie Edwards



Dutch iris – Maggie Edwards



Forget-me-knot - Maggie Edwards



Bugle – Maggie Edwards



Speedwell – Maggie Edwards



Pea – Maggie Edwards



Granny's bonnet – Maggie Edwards



Granny's bonnet – Maggie Edwards

More from my Nature Notes August – October 2020

Each day I make a nature note, something I have seen or heard. It could be new to me or unusual, a list of plants spotted somewhere, another attempt to get my head around mosses...

I live in Lower Coleford, but as the lockdown restrictions eased, I ventured further afield, including a few days in North Wales.

8th August 2020

I found the very large green caterpillar pictured here. It was on my very small olive tree in a pot by the back door. Why is a Privet Hawkmoth, eating my olive tree? This caterpillar is not as fussy as its name suggests. It eats other plants from the Oleaceae (lilac and olives) and Caprifoliaceae family (honeysuckle).



20th August 2020

The theme for today was Devilsbit Scabious. How many places could I walk to where it was flowering? Going from Lower Coleford to Cockles Fields at Nettlebridge and back, I found six places. Most were steep slopes with some low-key grazing. On one slope with no grazing, bramble encroachment meant less Devilsbit Scabious than previously, but most seemed to be doing well.

1st September 2020



Round-leaved Wintergreen is not a plant that I expected to find in a disused East Mendip quarry, especially when it turns out to be the subspecies that I first came across in dune slacks in an Anglesey nature reserve. In the nearby woods, there was nettle-leaved Bellflower and Meadow Saffron as well.

12th September 2020

A few years ago, someone found a dead 'bat with very large ears' in our part of the village. I had not picked up any Brown Long-eared bats on my bat detector, but then they have a very quiet call. Today my husband found a dead one in our garden. I'm wondering if this species of bat is particularly vulnerable or if there are plenty of them quietly flying around unnoticed.

28th September 2020

Whilst staying with family, we went to Marl Hall Woods Nature Reserve, near Deganwy. As well as woodland there are limestone cliffs, with Spiked Speedwell, as well as Viper's Bugloss and Dropwort. The latter still had some flowers.



7th October 2020

I found a Field grasshopper in the garden today and wondered what grasshoppers did in the winter.

Apparently adult grasshoppers do not survive. The rest of their life cycle involves eggs that hatch into nymphs that go through 4 or 5 moults. These parts of the cycle can be suspended for weeks or months if conditions become unfavourable, thus providing grasshoppers for future years.



25th October 2020

We did a short detour from a walk along part of the Stour Valley Way so we could see Wyndham's Oak at Silton. This oak tree has a girth of 9.79 metres and could be 1,000 years old. Judge Wyndham used to sit under the tree to contemplate and relax. He served under Charles I, Cromwell and Charles II. Several people can stand inside the trunk and there is a story of a cow getting stuck in it.

Veryan Conn

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Next Newsletter: The copy date for the next Newsletter is **15th September 2021**

This Newsletter is published four times a year by Cam Valley Wildlife Group, an independent, volunteer-run wildlife group, covering Midsomer Norton, Radstock and surrounding villages.

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