



The Cam Valley Wildlife Group Newsletter



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SPRING 2023

Nature Notes Spring 2022

Each day I make a nature note. Here are some favourites from spring last year.

10th March 2022



There were lots of Lesser Celandines flowering on the road verges. I noticed that some flowers seemed to have more petals than others, so started counting. The plant I photographed had 11 petals, but others had 8, 9 or 10 petals. Wood anemones also have variable petal numbers.

22nd March 2022

Wild Daffodils were once common in the English and Welsh countryside, but declined mysteriously in the mid-nineteenth century. So, I feel so lucky to find them in the local hedgerows and woods. These days the biggest threat to them is hybridising with garden daffodils, which have been planted in the countryside. This could leave us with much larger and rather ungainly hybrids.



19th April 2022

I don't often see Herb Paris, but today I found a large patch growing in a wood which I've walked through many times before. Called Paris *quadrifolia*, almost everything comes in fours, 4 leaves, 4 petals, 4 sepals, 4 chambers to the fruit, but 8 anthers. However like the Celandine there are variations, so you may be able to spot plants with 5 leaves or 6 petals, which are extremely narrow and green.

30th April 2022

There were more Green-winged Orchids flowering in Edford Meadows this morning. I realised that the paler the flower, the greener the 'wings' are. The scientific name for Green-winged Orchid is *Anacamptis morio*. Morio means 'clown'. The flowers, with their spots and stripes, were thought to look like a clown's clothing.



13th May 2022



May is definitely a good time to go to Ham Wall and Shapwick Heath. As well as the Marsh Harriers, Black-tailed Godwits and plenty of Hobbies, there were many Damselflies and Dragonflies to photograph. The Four-spot Chasers particularly caught my eye.

23rd May 2022

We were up in Cumbria, staying between the Lake District and Morecombe Bay. One of the highlights of the holiday was going to Roudsea Wood and Moss, at the head of the Leven Estuary. This National Nature Reserve has 'one of Britain's most important woodland sites' and includes a large area of bog as well. My list of sightings included Osprey and Tree Pipit, Argent and Sable Moth and Green Hairstreak Butterfly, Wild Service Tree and Small-leaved Lime.



Veryan Conn

British Dragonfly Society Exhibition

We are pleased to tell you that the British Dragonfly Society will be curating an Exhibition at Radstock Museum this summer from 16th May – 20th August. It will cover topics such as the History of Dragonflies, their evolution and fossils; the amazing ways that Dragonflies have adapted for survival; Dragonflies vs Damselflies; their life cycle and their current state in the UK; Dragonflies in Somerset and how to take action for them.



There will be lots of colourful information on posters and in display cabinets and leaflets to take away. We will also incorporate some activities for children to spark their interest in Dragonflies and Damselflies.

Normal entry charges will apply – see www.radstockmuseum.co.uk. Apart from a few exceptions, all entrance tickets are valid for free re-entry for a year. We look forward to seeing you at the museum.



Banded Demoiselle – male by Dennis Swaby



Black Darter – female by Iain Leach



Broad-Bodied Chaser – male by David Kitching



Emperor Dragonfly – female by Gordon Gray



Ruddy Darter – male by David Kitching



Southern Migrant Hawker by David Smallshire

Jenny Newbury

Trustee and Exhibition Team Leader at Radstock Museum

Members' photos

Ivy, *Hedera helix*, in fruit - Maggie Edwards

Maggie's photo of ivy shows a lovely crop of luscious berries. Her last photo of ivy, sent in two years ago, showed the plant in flower. Flowering occurs from September through November, followed by the ripening of its fruits from November to January. There are two native subspecies of ivy in the British Isles, ssp. *helix* and ssp. *Hibernica*. The subspecies *hibernica* does not climb but spreads across the ground. Ivy has been given a bad name in the past as a species that damages trees. Although it has long been established that this is not the case, the myth hangs on. The Woodland Trust advises '...it doesn't harm the tree at all...', but provides no such assurance for walls!

Ivy flowers provide an important late pollen and nectar source for *Colletes hederæ*, the Ivy Bee and for a host of insects preparing for winter *diapause* (like hibernation), which in turn provide an opportune food source for birds and bats! It is not unusual for insects to carry twice their normal amount of fats on going into diapause. In winter, the fat-rich berries are gobbled up by blackbirds, thrushes, starlings, woodpigeons and blackcaps, the leaves are eaten by Woodpigeon, and the leaves and plant stems provide shelter for birds and over-wintering spots for bats and invertebrates, including predatory insects. A number of birds nest in ivy. These include robins, blackbirds, dunnocks in the tangle of ivy around the roots of trees, and wrens in ivy-covered stumps. It also provides a good screen to hide



the nests of tits in holes in walls. The Biological Records Centre's database lists ivy as a host to over 100 species of insect. This includes caterpillars of the summer generation of Holly Blue.

***Clematis Vitalba*, known as Traveller's Joy or Old Man's Beard - Maggie Edwards**

It's a food plant for bees, hoverflies (its primary pollinators) and at least 27 moths, including two southern moths, the Small Emerald *Hemistola chrysoprasaria* and the less common Pretty Chalk Carpet *Melanthia procellata*. Small Emerald caterpillars feed on this plant in September and October when it is brown, matching the dead clematis stems, before going into diapause in November. In April they start to feed again, but this time as a green caterpillar to match the live Clematis. The Biological Records Centre's database lists it as a host to 37 species of insect and the seeds heads provide food for seed-eating birds such as the Goldfinch.

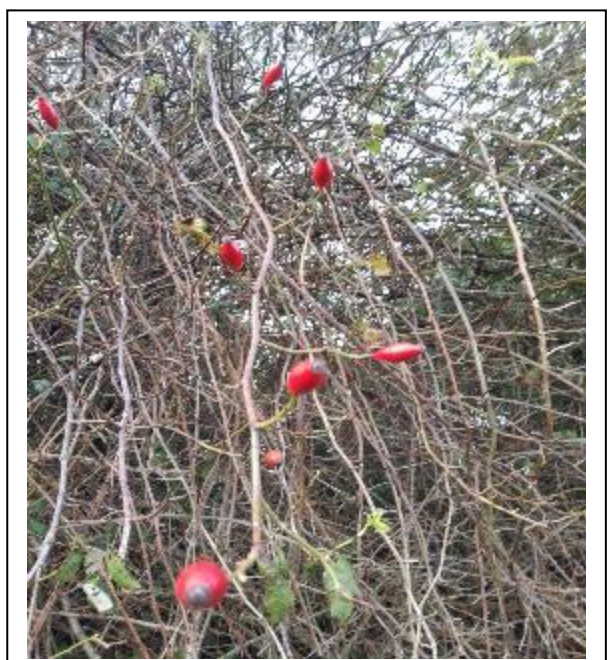


It's considered invasive (outside its native range) and has been widely introduced and naturalised spread throughout England and into Scotland, but was native to Southern Britain on mainly chalky soils. Charles Darwin's fascination with climbing plants prompted him to study Clematis species and to conclude that they were 'leaf climbers', i.e. plants that use the stalks of the leaves or the leaflets to climb.

Of its many names, a number refer to the practice of smoking the stems, which draw well and don't burst into flame! They include Smoking Cane, Poor Man's Friend and Gypsy's Bacca. The stems were also used to make baskets. Today it is used a lot in Christmas flower decorations.

Wild rose hips in winter – Maggie Edwards

Rose hips are eaten by fruit-eating birds in winter, such as Blackbirds and the various thrushes, that then distribute the seed in their droppings. These birds are reputed to feed especially on the hips of *Rosa canina*, the Dog Rose (wild rose), and the shrub rose, *Rosa rugosa*. The hips of the Dog Rose are oval in shape and can also be more elongated, such as those in Maggie's photo, but are usually in small clusters. Those in Maggie's photo are more widely spaced, suggesting that this is one of the many species of wild rose that the Dog Rose can be confused with. The Dog Rose has sharp, stout, curving thorns which are considered by some to be the inspiration for the name.



Deborah Porter

Insect Events for 2023

Members will see that we have a few events pencilled in so far for 2023, and any non-members reading this can check out our Events Programme on our website -

(<https://cvwg.org.uk/cam-valley-wildlife-group-events/events-programme/>).

We have tended not to have many insect events planned in advance, not least because we find that planned events are too often affected negatively by the weather on the day, which is a shame. So, I am thinking that perhaps there is a better way!

With that in mind, I would be very pleased if anyone with an interest in taking part in surveys, or just coming along for the walk, would contact me if they are interested in doing this in one or more of the places listed below. We could then sort out between us what would be the best days for going.



Large Red Damselflies by Deborah Porter

If you have any further suggestions, I would love to hear from you. If it is a private location, we would need to know who the landowner is so that we can get their permission.

And finally, if you would like to be notified of upcoming insect events, be sure to contact me! You can reach me through camvalleywildlife@gmail.com or on 01761 435563.

The Radstock Linear Park, Radstock to Wellow,

The Greenway,

National Cycle Network Route 24 from Radstock centre going south-east,

NCN 24, Radstock to Paglynych Farm and bridleway (ST70554-705554),

Waterside Valley,

Mells Yard (former railway sidings),

Kilmersdon Cutting,

Haydon Batch,

Midsomer Norton Town Park,

Silver Street Local Nature Reserve,

Paulton Pools,

Limestone Link,

Stoney Littleton Long Barrow.

Deborah Porter

Cam Valley Wildlife Group on Tour!

The Events Team has a new gazebo and are looking for venues and members to help promote the group in and around the Cam Valley Wildlife Group area from April to September. They are looking for help to set up and take down the stall; or to assist with the stall during the day.

If your village is holding an event the team would like to know of it so please get in touch with any contact details for the occasion. Should you be available to help, you would not need to stay for the whole day, any help is welcomed.

The Events Team would be very pleased to hear from you; please contact Diana Walker by email: dianawalker4@gmail.com.

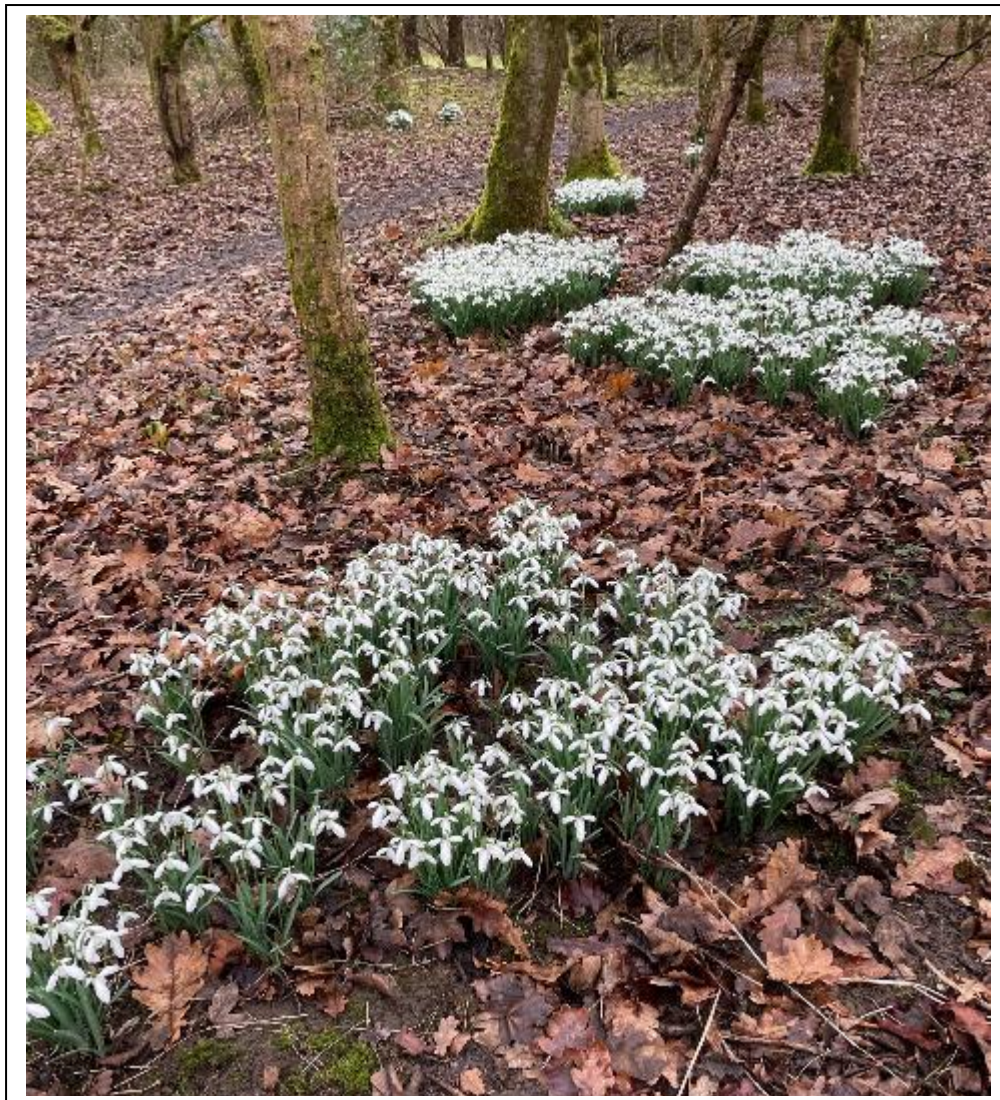
Diana Walker



Next Coordinating Team meeting dates

The next meetings are on Tuesday 21st March and Tuesday 6th June. All members are welcome to attend. Please ring Judy on 07460 278311 for details.

Deborah Porter



Snowdrops – by Phil Gait

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Next Newsletter: The final copy date for the next Newsletter is **15th May 2023**

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.

To contribute articles, or provide feedback on previous articles, contact the Editor:

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