

Species List for field trip to Moorend Spout with Tony Smith

on 18th June 2016

17 people attended from Weston Natural History & Archaeology Group, Bristol Naturalists, Friends of Trendlewood Park, Backwell Environment Trust and Trustees & Friends of NEWT

It was an overcast morning after a bright sunny start to the day. Temperature 16 degrees

INSECTS

Red and Black Froghopper - *Cercopis vulnerata*. This is a sap feeding insect and produces the familiar cuckoo spit where it deposits its offspring! It has the capability to leap more than 5 foot!

Shield Bug - *Troilus luridus*. There are 44 different species of Shield Bug recorded in this country - a subject for study in its own right!

Thick Kneed Beetle - *Oedemera nobilis* The male, as in most *Oedemera* species, possesses the hind femora very swollen, whereas in female the femora are thin. It is bright green, frequently with a golden or coppery shine; (Wikipedia)

Garden chafer - *Phyllophthera horticola* A strong flying Beetle with chestnut coloured wing casings. It feeds on the leaves of trees, bushes and shrubs as well as garden plants.

Long-winged Conehead - *Conocephalus discolor*. A small member of the Bush Cricket family which was once rare but is now expanding its range. Found amongst coarse vegetation. The name comes from the angled shape of its head.

Common Blue Damselfly - *Enallagma cyathigerum*. Usually present in large numbers near to lakes and ponds.

Broad Bodied Chaser (female) - *Libellula depressa*. Regular visitors to our ponds..

Nursery Web Spider - *Pisaura mirabilis*

The Nursery Web Spider is a common spider of grassland and scrub, and is often seen sunbathing amongst Brambles and Stinging Nettles. The adults are active hunters and don't spin a web to catch food, instead using a quick sprint to capture flies and other insects. The female carries her large, round egg-sac in her fangs. When the young are about to hatch, she builds a silk sheet among the vegetation to act as a tent, sheltering them until they are old enough to leave on their own. (Text from Wildlife Trusts)

SNAILS

Kentish Snail - *Monacha cantiana* This species has a pinkish rim.

Amber Snail - *Succinea putris* This one is widespread on the reserve

White lipped Snail /Banded Snail - There are many colour and pattern variations of this species so difficult to specify. Again, widespread on the reserve.

BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS

Find of the day - **Elephant Hawkmoth** - *Dielephila elpenor* Large and very beautiful moth with pink and olive green colouration on wings and body. The Caterpillars feed on the Willowherb and can be sometimes found in gardens on Fuchsia plants. Our specimen was found on Sorrel. The caterpillars look rather fearsome with large eyespots and likeness to the trunk of an elephant!

It is also known as the Snake Moth.

Small Skipper - *Thymelicus sylvestris*

Large Skipper - *Ochlodes venatus*

Small Copper - *Lycaena phlaeas* Not confirmed

Meadow Brown - *Maniola jurtina*

MISCELLANEOUS

Signal Crayfish - *Pacifastacus leniusculus*, is a [North American](#) species of [crayfish](#). It was introduced to Europe in the 1960s to supplement the [Scandinavian](#) *Astacus astacus* fisheries, which were being damaged by [crayfish plague](#), but the imports turned out to be a carrier of that disease. The signal crayfish is now considered an [invasive species](#) across Europe and Japan, ousting native species there. (Text from Wikipedia)

Seen by nearly all the group in the Land Yeo from the bridge.

OTTER SPRAINT - Found by Gill Brown underneath the Spout bridge. This Otter, clearly, had been eating Crayfish!!

BIRDS

Blackcap and Greenfinch seen singing at the top of a tall tree on the other side of the Land Yeo. The **Blackcap** is a very musically accomplished bird with a melodious song of great depth and variety. It usually likes to stay near the ground hidden in brambles and undergrowth.

Sedge Warbler heard in the sedgy area at Land Yeo end of boardwalk.

Chiff Chaff, Whitethroat and Song Thrush heard all morning.

Swifts were seen flying over the reserve. Swifts are in sharp decline thought to be due to lack of insect food which they take on the wing, never coming to ground to feed.

GRASSES

Rough Stalked Meadowgrass - *Poa trivialis*

Smooth Stalked Meadowgrass - *Poa pratensis*

Meadow Foxtail - *Alopecurus pratensis* An early flowering grass . Flower head forms a soft, compact cylindrical spike up to 9cm long. purple or orange anthers drooping from the flower head indicate it is flowering. (text from Wildlife Trusts).

Crested Dog's-tail - *Cynosurus cristatus* Characterised by seed head which is flat on one side

Meadow Barley - *Hordeum secalinum?*

Yorkshire Fog - *Holcus lanatus* has velvety grey-green leaves. The stems are round. The bases of the stems are white with pink stripes or veins; this character has been called the "stripy pyjamas"

Creeping Bent Grass - *Agrostis stolonifera* So called because it bends at the nodes

Perennial Rye Grass *Lolium perenne* A very common grass on the reserve

Floating Sweet-grass - *Glyceria fluitans*. As the name suggests - found in wet areas such as ditches, ponds and riverbanks, particularly in the South West of England. Noted in the boggy area north side of the carr.

Sweet Vernal Grass - *Anthoxanthum odoratum* Sweet Vernal-grass is a common perennial of grasslands and meadows that flowers between April and July. Its dense clusters of flowers form cylindrical flower spikes that sit atop stiff stems. It is the foodplant for the larvae of brown and skipper butterflies. Aromatic when dried, Sweet Vernal-grass was once a favourite chewing grass for many people as it provides a sweet, vanilla-like taste. (Text from Wildlife Trusts) It contains Coumarin (a chemical compound which is used in such things as fabric conditioner!) which give it the characteristic sweet smell of mown hay. It also gives the brown haze to meadows at this time of year.

False Oat-grass - *Arrhenatherum elatius*

False Oat-grass is a tall, fluffy-looking perennial of grasslands, roadside verges and disturbed grounds. Perhaps one of the most common grasses of these often overlooked places, it may well be familiar as the grass that so many of us catch in our hands and absent-mindedly strip of its seeds as we walk along. In fact, it can play an important role in stabilising dunes and cliffs. (Text from Wildlife Trusts)

Ribwort Plantain - *Plantago lanceolata* - a plant rather than a grass, but worth noting because if ground up it is known to take swelling and stings out of horsefly bites!

The short, oval flower heads of Ribwort Plantain appear as if balanced on the top of their thin, wiry stems. Ribwort Plantain is a plant of grasslands, field edges and cultivated ground and tracks, and regularly pops up in lawns as a 'weed'. It flowers between April and October, but its seed heads remain for most of the winter providing food for Goldfinches and other seed-eating birds. (Text from Wildlife Trusts)

18th June

The above species list was compiled today with the help of Tony Smith. A very interesting morning and dry weather was enjoyed by all who attended.

I will just mention here the ones which aroused the most excitement and share photographs!

Among the INSECTS were the Thick Kneed Beetle, the Nursery Web Spider, the Elephant Hawkmoth, the Long-winged Conehead and the Broad-bodied Chaser.



Find of the day (by Gill Gray) - **Elephant Hawkmoth** - *Dielephila elpenor* Large and very beautiful moth with pink and olive green colouration on wings and body. The Caterpillars feed on the Willowherb and can be sometimes found in gardens on Fuchsia plants. Our specimen was found on Sorrel. The caterpillars look rather fearsome with large eyespots and

likeness to the trunk of an elephant!

It is also sometimes known as the Snake Moth. (Moth photo by Hilary West/ Caterpillar photo by Hilary but taken in my garden!)



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(photo by Carrie Riches)

Long-winged Conehead - *Conocephalus discolor*. A small member of the Bush Cricket family which was once rare but is now expanding its range. Found among coarse vegetation. The name comes from the angled shape of its head. (photo by Rosemary Dennis)



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The BUTTERFLIES included the Small Skipper, the Large Skipper, Small Copper and Meadow Brown.

The Broad-bodied Chaser was one of the first Dragonfly species to arrive when our first pond was dug and is now a regular visitor. This one is the female, the male is a powder blue colour. (photo by Gill Brown)



BIRDS which we heard included Chiff Chaff, Whitethroat and Blackcap -

The **Blackcap** is a very musically accomplished warbler with a melodious song of great depth and variety. It usually likes to stay near the ground hidden in brambles and undergrowth. This one was singing from the top of a tall tree!

Towards the end of the visit everyone was looking at the Land Yeo river when a **Crayfish** (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*) was spotted in the water. It only lives in freshwater/river habitats. This is the Signal Crayfish which is not a native species, it was introduced from North America and has proved deadly to our native White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pillipes*). It caused great interest here! Efforts are being made by the Wildlife Trusts to re-establish the white-clawed populations.



Photo by Rosemary Dennis



Photo by Hilary West

Interestingly on the walk back across the boardwalk Gill Brown spotted some fresh **Otter** spraint by the Spout bridge and this Otter had clearly been dining on Crayfish - so it does have some redeeming features! (photo by Rosemary Dennis) This was a marvellous ending to a very successful species hunt. **All photographs taken on the day unless otherwise stated.**



30th JUNE

Today I am back at Moorend Spout with Tony Smith for a survey of the plants and grasses which NEWT has to do for Avon Wildlife Trust as part of its commitment to the Coronation Meadows Project.

The day is cloudy and breezy from the west but thankfully dry after a week of rain. Temperature around 17 degrees.

Pat Gilbert from Friends of Trendlewood Park has been roped in to help me!

We were following instructions from AWT and marked out 3 transects of the meadow (each 14 metres wide) where the hay from Netcotts Meadow had been strewn and then placed a metre square quadrat on the sward at regular intervals within these transects. Thus, we achieved a semi- scientific survey and the resulting data will be written up for AWT.

In short, we found an amazing number of different grasses, which in itself shows great diversity. Plant species were of course not so numerous, but we all agreed that those we did find were in much greater number than last year (basic survey done by Hilary). There were some lovely patches of **Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil** (*Lotus pedunculatus*), **Lesser Trefoil** (*Trifolium dubium*) and **Self-heal** (*Prunella vulgaris*) where the grasses were less vigorous.

Prunella vulgaris is a common herb in Britain and is especially visible on lawns that have not been treated with weedkiller. The plant has a long history of medicinal use, and traditionally the leaves are applied to wounds to promote healing. It is also fantastic for Bees!



Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*) occurs in most parts of the meadow. (has yellow 5 petalled flowers)

Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and **Common Knapweed** (*Centaurea nigra*) were also present. Standing tall were a few **Marsh Thistle** (*Cirsium palustre*) and one interesting specimen which was showing the more unusual white flowered form. (photo Hilary West)

Pat and I noted that all the while we were working, the reserve was alive with birdsong, but we could not spare our concentration on the plants to do any identification!

We were, however, able to observe a **Kestrel** hovering over the meadow and hunting for food. It would fly up to the telephone wires to rest and then start again. I was not able to see whether it was successful. I hope this is the same Kestrel that I observed several times during the earlier part of the year.

We came across some lovely insects in the course of our work. By the pond we saw the beautiful golden female **Broad-bodied Chaser** (*Libellula depressa*) and the **Common Darter** (*Sympetrum striolatum*) Dragonflies. Three species of Damselfly were seen - the **Azure Damselfly** (*Coenagrion pyella*), the **Common Blue Damselfly** (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) and of course, lots of the **Banded Demoiselles** (*Calopteryx splendens*)

As the morning warmed up, so did the Butterflies and I was able to record at least 6 species.

Small Skipper ((*Thymelicus sylvestris*) **Ringlet** (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

Common Blue (female) (*Polyommatus icarus*) **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*)

“Common” is a descriptive term which may no longer be accurate for certain species eg. Common Blue Butterfly. This little butterfly used to be a common sight in meadows and gardens but in the last 10 years it has declined dramatically, due in part to successive wet spring/early summers. Numbers will not be helped this year!

Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) **Small White** (*Pieris rapae*)

Meadow Browns (*Maniola jurtina*) were abundant. It is often difficult to know whether you are looking at a Meadow Brown or a Gatekeeper, they look remarkably similar with their wings folded. However, I do not think we saw any Gatekeepers today.



As we were finishing up our survey, Pat was delighted to note masses of black caterpillars happily munching on some nettles in the banks of the Land Yeo. She was able to positively identify these as the offspring of the **Peacock** (*Inachis io*) Butterfly, so we can expect to see large numbers of them on the reserve.

In the drier parts of the meadow we also noted several quite large mounds of fresh earth which contained armies of black ants and their grubs, but further identification was beyond our scope!

(photo by Hilary West)

These results we have gathered today are well worth the effort and show that our reserve is thriving and there are a large number of different species present.

