



## WILDLIFE REPORT No. 26

January 2019 – April 2019



**TOP – EARLY THORN MOTH**  
**BOTTOM – SECOND YEAR HAZEL TREES**

**Introduction** This is the first report of 2019 so it is good time to review what was seen on the site during 2018. Especially the five elements we monitor closely which are birds, butterflies, moths, bees and orchids.

## Orchids 2018

Orchids are an unusual choice and were chosen because there are a lot of plants on the site of five different species. The orchids are Spotted Orchid which is by far the most frequent and is in three distinct areas of the nursery. There were about thirty flowering spikes last year of this species. There is one plant in particular that always produces a huge flowering spike on a stem over 70cm tall. The second common sort is the pyramidal orchid with four colonies all quite close together producing about 18 flowering spikes. During 2018 two new plants appeared in flower for the first time; this effectively doubled the number of colonies, but only added two more flowering spikes. The remaining three species; Southern Marsh Orchid, Early Purple Orchid and Bee Orchid exist as just one or two plants. Most of them live behind a mesh guard to keep the rabbits off them and protect them from getting lost.



## Moths 2018

The moth survey was done every two weeks for the whole year



using a

light trap. Last year nothing was caught in January February and December though in some years a few moths are found in these months. The peak of moth numbers was in June, July and August, with the biggest catch being ninety two in July. A total of 455 moths were caught this year from 87 species. This year has not overall been a great year for moths coming to the light trap. It seemed that whenever the trap was out that the weather conditions were poor. That said there were some notable insects in the trap. The most memorable being ten of the beautifully coloured Elephant

Hawk Moth on one night in July.

## Butterflies 2018

In contrast to the moths; butterflies had a good year in 2018. This was the best year since 2015. The butterflies are surveyed every two weeks through the months of April to September. In 2018 there were 17 species recorded and 702 individual insects. It was particularly good to see the large skipper again. This species had not been seen for two years and should be a regular sight. A total of twenty one species have been seen on the site since regular surveying commenced but there has never been a year when they have all been seen. The best recent year was 2015 when 19 species were recorded and over 1000 insects. There is still the possibility that new species will occur. A likely candidate is the Holly Blue. All that is needed to encourage this butterfly to come here is more holly. At the moment there are almost no holly on the nursery. This will be rectified this year as sixteen seedlings collected from outside the generator room will be planted out. At present they are growing on in pots between two of the glasshouses.





## Bees

Bees are definitely the most difficult insects to get identified properly. The bumble bees are not too hard to sort out. There were at least six species living around the site and sometimes there were large numbers of them. Sorting out the solitary bees I find really difficult so there are big gaps in our knowledge of what exactly lives on the nursery. We do know that our bee hotels are very popular with the Red Mason Bee (*Osmia bicornis*); for a solitary bee this one is fairly distinctive. There is one hotel that the bees really like which is the one on the reservoir pump hut. In season the bees are swarming around this hotel. One hotel attracted a small number of leaf cutter bees; probably Willughby's Leafcutter which regularly chooses to use man made bee hotels. During 2019 the bee hotels will be replaced with new ones as the originals are looking very battered.



## Birds

The species list for the nursery moved up to 57 in 2018 with the addition of Red Kite. Three of these birds were seen together in the autumn low over the fields by glasshouse 10-13. The number of species seen in 2018 was 47. This is about the usual number of species seen per year. The best bird moment had to be this Sparrowhawk taking a bath one Sunday morning in February. As it was during the survey period for the Annual Farm land Bird Survey it got on to that list as well. It was very fortunate that the bird should be in view during that 30 minute window. The saddest discovery was that a woodpecker had broken open two nest boxes and taken the nestlings inside. The replacement boxes will have to incorporate woodpecker defences as once a bird has learnt about how to open a box it will do it to every box in its territory.



## JAN 2019- APRIL 2019

### Moths

12.01.2019		23.02.2019		23.03.2019		06.04.2019		18.04.2019		Moth trap data for January to April 2019
_____	_____	Common Quaker	2	Common Quaker	10	Common Quaker	4	Brindled Beauty	2	
_____	_____			Clouded Drab	4	Hebrew Character	3	hebrew Character	2	
_____	_____			Hebrew Character	2	Early Grey	1	Lunar M. Brown	1	
_____	_____			Small Quaker	2	L. Marbled Brown	1			
_____	_____			Early Grey	2	Common Pug	1			
_____	_____			Early Thorn	1			05.05.2019		
_____	_____			Grey S. Knot	1			Iron Prominent	1	
								Flame Shoulder	1	

The early months of this year have been very quiet for moths. On four occasions the trap caught nothing at all. This is not all that unexpected; there are few species on the wing in these months. If anything is to be found in the trap it will likely be because the trap was set on a warm still night. This did not happen very often as the trapping is done on a regularly fortnightly basis choosing either Friday or Saturday regardless of the weather. The 23rd march was a good night for the trap with both the Early Thorn moth and the Hebrew Character being found. The early Thorn is pictured on the front of this report. This is a large moth which unusually for moths folds its wing like a butterfly. The Hebrew Character moth pictured to the right has a distinctive black mark on the wing. This is deemed to look like one of the letters from the Hebrew alphabet, hence its name. The most important moth seen in this period is the Brindled Beauty; two were in the trap in mid April. This is the only moth we found that is a BAP species so far this year. We will be expecting the numbers of moths in the trap to increase as Spring moves into Summer.



## Birds

On the next page is the bird survey data with the first months of 2019 included. There is nothing new or unusual in the data collected for this year. Overall the expected species are being seen. Those species that are usually spotted are still here. The unexpected bird was the Red Kite. This is only the second time this bird has been seen here. The first time this species was seen was last autumn so it is possible that this species will become quite regular visitor to the site. This winter all the bird boxes were emptied out ready for the nesting season. Two boxes that were pecked open by woodpeckers have had to be replaced; they were beyond repair. The picture shows the damage to one of the boxes. When the woodpecker realises that the original hole is protected by a metal plate it makes a new hole to break in. Unfortunately if an individual woodpecker has learned how to get into a nest box it will repeat this on all the boxes in its home range. One of the methods of deterring woodpeckers from preying on nest boxes is to cover them with chicken wire. This is what we have done to



the replaced boxes. As a result they don't look very pretty but hopefully this will deter the woodpeckers. **The Big Farmland Bird Count. (organised by GWCT)** The nursery has participated in this survey for six years. LEAF encourages its members to engage with this survey. It is a count lasting for half an hour in mid February. We have always done the count on a weekend morning with most of the time being spent in the vicinity of the bird feeding station. This year was not a good year for either species or numbers. In fact the second poorest outcome since the scheme began. We will be looking for an improvement next year or we will need to question if there is something amiss in our environmental management.

FARMLAND BIRD SURVEY						
SPECIES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
BLACK BIRD	2	2	3	3	1	2
BLACK HEADED GULL	0	5	0	2	0	0
BLUE TIT	0	1	3	1	1	1
CARRION CROW	3	0	2	3	0	1
CHAFFINCH	0	6	6	10	8	3
CHIFF CHAFF	0	2	0	0	0	0
COLLARED DOVE	0	0	1	0	0	0
DUNNOCK	1	3	3	2	2	1
GOLD FINCH	0	5	8	9	3	4
GREAT TIT	1	1	2	1	2	2
GREEN FINCH	0	3	3	3	2	3
GREEN WOODPECKER	1	0	0	0	1	0
GREY WAGTAIL	1	4	0	2	0	0
HERRING GULL	1	4	0	2	2	0
HOUSE SPARROW	0	0	1	3	2	1
JAY	0	1	0	0	0	0
LONG TAILED TIT	0	2	1	0	2	1
MAGPIE	1	0	0	3	2	4
PIED WAGTAIL	1	0	0	0	0	0
ROBIN	1	2	2	1	2	2
SISKIN	0	0	1	0	0	0
SONG THRUSH	1	2	0	0	0	0
SPARROWHAWK	0	0	0	0	1	0
WOOD PIGEON	5	5	3	3	6	2
WREN	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL SPECIES</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>TOTAL INDIVIDUALS</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>27</b>





## BIRD SURVEY 2015-18

SPECIES	JAN MAR 2016	APR JUNE 2016	JULY SEPT 2016	OCT DEC 2016	JAN MAR 2017	APR JUNE 2017	JULY SEPT 2017	OCT DEC 2017	JAN MAR 2018	APR JUNE 2018	JULY SEPT 2018	OCT DEC 2018	JAN MAR 2019
BLACKBIRD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BLACK CAP	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
BLACK HEADED GULL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BLUE TIT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BULLFINCH	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x
BUZZARD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
CANADA GOOSE	x	x	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x
CARRION CROW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHAFFINCH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHIFFCHAFF	x	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x
COLLARED DOVE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
COMMON GULL	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x
COMMON PARTRIDGE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
COMMON SANDPIPER	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
COOT	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CORMORANT	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x
DUNNOCK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GREAT TIT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GREEN FINCH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GREEN WOODPECKER	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GREY HERON	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GREY WAGTAIL	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
GOLDCREST	x	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	✓
GOLDFINCH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HERRING GULL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HOBBY	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x
HOUSE SPARROW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
JAY	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
KESTREL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x
LINNET	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LITTLE EGRET	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x
LITTLE GREBE	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LONG TAILED TIT	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MAGPIE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MALLARD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MOORHEN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MUTE SWAN	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PHEASANT	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
PIED WAGTAIL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RED KITE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	✓
ROBIN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ROOK	x	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓
SHELDACK	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
SHOVELER	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
SISKIN	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
STARLING	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SWALLOW	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	x
SWIFT	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	x
SONG THRUSH	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SPARROW HAWK	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TUFTED DUCK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓
WHITETHROAT	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	x
WOOD PIGEON	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
YELLOWHAMMER	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
WREN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>SPECIES COUNT THIS PERIOD</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>SPECIES COUNT THIS YEAR</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>SPECIES COUNT 2012 ONWARDS</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>57</b>

## Butterflies

The 2019 butterfly surveying programme is now underway. The first two surveys have been done. As is normal there is not much activity in April. Only the Peacock and Red Admiral have been seen during surveying. A total of just nine butterflies is disappointing but in 2018 the total for April was only eight. 2018 then went on to be a good year for butterflies so it is too early in the season for pessimism.

## To finish

Reptiles very rarely get a mention in the wildlife report. They are usually ignored as they are just a little bit too secretive. We know that there are grass snakes and adders here. They are very occasionally glimpsed. The lizards are spotted rather more often; but it's frequently just a tail disappearing from view. This one though was a bit more obliging and stayed still enough for a photo. It is probably time we invested in some sheets of metal that the reptiles could use to shelter beneath. We could then start to monitor how many reptiles we were finding under the metal sheets.

