

As we move into another period of lockdown, we hope that you are all well, keeping safe and enjoying the lovely spring weather. Many of you will have been enjoying a daily walk and spending time in your garden. We would love to hear about the wildlife you have discovered so far. This newsletter will share some of our members' discoveries, and highlight some of the things that people have been doing to fill their time during this frustrating period.

Some of our enterprising youngsters have made use of things they had at home and have come up with some novel ideas.



Amy and Jessica have sent us a photo of their amazing bug house, made from stuff left over from a recent extension to their home.

Aowyn has designed and wet-felted these beautiful bird houses. Will the birds like them? We'll have to wait and see.



Dave and Sue have put out three old black trays to act as refugia for reptiles to warm up under. So far they have had just one Slow Worm that appears each day.



Slow Worm





Early Purple Orchid

The area below the A38 at Harcombe Cross is now being managed for its orchids by Highways England and when restrictions are lifted, Chudleigh Wild volunteers will do several counts and record the numbers and species. Early Purple Orchids are already in flower, but the locally famous Greater Butterfly Orchids flower in about a month's time. Last year there were also a few Bee Orchids as well.

Dave Smallshire has been doing regular bird counts around Chudleigh for a month now. He has found 57 species to date, including the first Swallows and House Martins. We are still waiting for our beloved Swifts to arrive in town, but the first in Devon arrived at Berry Head on 19 April, so we hope they will be around soon.

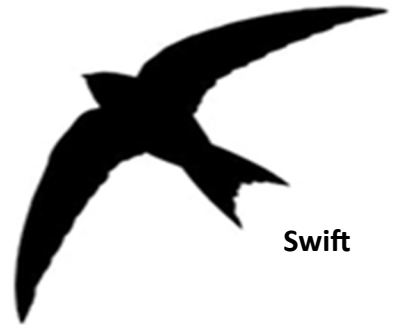
Swallows, House Martins and Swifts can be difficult to identify in the air. You may find these silhouettes useful - they're shown to scale.



Swallow



House Martin



Swift

The lock-down has spurred us on to do many of the jobs that we have been putting off for years. One of these was to go through our mountain of books and begrudgingly part with some of them to make room for all the new ones we have bought recently. This, of course, is a slow job, as you just have to read things as you go! However, you turn things up that you have long forgotten and this snippet of historical interest is just one of them. Did you know that in 1969 a pair of Himalayan Porcupines escaped near Okehampton? Despite



attempts to recapture them, within two years they had bred and animals were found up to 10 miles away. In 1973, the then Ministry of Agriculture embarked upon a survey and trapping campaign in a triangular area between Torrington, Northlew and Gidleigh and the last Porcupine was caught in 1979. The success of this campaign was considered of benefit to agriculture and forestry, in addition to preventing long term damage to the indigenous wildlife in the area.

Sue Smallshire



Apart from the butterflies that have over-wintered and emerge in early spring (Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Red Admiral) we are now seeing Orange-tip, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue and Large and Small White butterflies on our walks and in our gardens.

Orange-tip



The male Orange-tip is easily identified by its bright orange-tipped wings, but the female is easily confused with the other white butterflies. However, when perched, it is readily identified by the beautiful green mottling of the underside of the hindwing. She can be seen egg-laying on the Lady's Smock (Cuckoo Flower) in the fields around town.

A small blue butterfly, seen in April flying around Holly and other bushes, is almost certainly a Holly Blue, but confusion is possible later in the year when Common Blues are on the wing. If you can see the underside of the wings, the Holly Blue is pale blue spotted with black and silver, but with no orange spotting as in the Common Blue.

Holly Blue



Common Blue



Beetles are lovely animals too and here are two particularly smart ones, the Bloody-nosed Beetle, a species posted on our Facebook page, and the Violet Oil Beetle, seen several times in fields by the River Teign. Scarlet Tiger moth caterpillars were found in Twindle Beer, as was this bright yellow Flower Crab Spider.

Bloody-nosed Beetle



Violet Oil Beetle



Scarlet Tiger



Flower Crab Spider



If you have sightings to report, or would like things you have seen identified, just post them on our Facebook page, or email them directly to suesmallshire@gmail.com

