

Plumpton's wildflower meadows



Wildflower Meadows: survivors from a golden age by Margaret Pilkington (Papadakis, 2012) is a celebration of hay meadows with their wonderful profusion of wild flowers, butterflies and bees. These meadows have disappeared from most of our landscape and, as a result, populations of bees, butterflies and other insects have declined too. Stunning photographs accompany the informative text and there is also a practical guide to the conservation of the remaining fragments of this Biodiversity Action Plan habitat. I can recommend the book highly.

Plumpton has a few fragments of these meadows. The one at the Plough has been a spectacular success this year – full of flowers and butterflies and attracting lots of positive comments. We are pleased to report that Nicole, who has recently taken on the pub, wants it to continue.

Another fragment at the King George V playing field was also a lovely sight in its first year under the management agreed with the Parish Council and the Playing Fields Trustees as a lasting way to celebrate the Jubilee. The visitors to our stall at the village fair said how much they enjoyed walking along the winding path and many of them sponsored our planting of wild orchids in the meadow at the close of the fair.

Jacqui Hutson

Wildlife in November

As winter in this part of the country really begins this month, wildlife activity slows down. The entire food chain responds to the falling temperatures and decreasing energy output from a weaker winter sun. Some species flee the oncoming winter. An estimated 40–50% of our breeding bird species migrate to warmer climes, as do some butterfly, moth and dragonflies.

Invertebrate numbers crash from their late summer peaks with the first hard frosts. Those that survive scabble to find suitable places to spend the coming months. Reptiles tuck themselves away for the winter, usually underground. Amphibians also find somewhere frost-free to spend the winter, often in log piles, compost heaps or walls. Toads are known to sometimes spend the

winter with newts, lizards and even snakes in suitable sites. Some male frogs do things a bit differently by spending the winter on the bottom of ponds, absorbing oxygen from the water through their skins.

We mammals respond in different ways: dormice, hedgehogs and bats hibernate; mice, voles and squirrels cache food but remain more or less active. Deer, stoats, weasels and foxes also remain active through the winter. We humans, of course, employ a combination of strategies. Some of us eat more, some cache food (chocolate!), some of us are affected by SAD with the changing light levels – and a lucky few migrate!

Jonathan Wood
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