

July 2007 Insect Sightings - Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory

Despite the indifferent weather, Small Coppers remain conspicuous, with at least 29 on the Estate on the 3rd, which also featured 30 Red Admirals and the summer's first **Gatekeeper**. The summer's first Brown Argus was seen on the 6th, at least 30 Peacocks were in the area by the 11th and a freshly-emerged Holly Blue was seen on the 12th. Despite several torrential downpours in mid month, numbers continued to increase and a total of 484 butterflies on the transect walk on the 16th demonstrated how resilient they can be, including no fewer than 168 Small/Essex Skippers, 107 Meadow Browns and 32 Peacocks. Peacocks increased to at least 120 on the Estate and New Downs on the 19th, which also featured the find of the year, a **Dark Green Fritillary**. It was initially discovered nectaring on *buddleia* beside the Observatory and later along Worth track; only the second time this species has been seen in the Observatory's recording area since 1952. Mercifully, the weather was reasonable for the Observatory's inaugural butterfly course on the 21st, when participants were treated to a fresh emergence of Common Blues, and despite prolonged overnight rain the transect walk on the 24th produced 338 butterflies. Although numbers of Small Coppers, Small/Essex Skippers, Marbled Whites and, to some extent, Meadow Brown had declined significantly, Peacocks and Gatekeepers were still plentiful. Although a further fall in numbers was evident on the 30th, when 240 butterflies were recorded on the transect walk, a good variety of species remained on the wing. Most notable observations were an increase in numbers of Speckled Woods, of which there were small numbers in several localities on the Estate, and 17 Peacocks and 2 Small Tortoiseshells in a shelter that is used for hibernation. They were still present as the day warmed up, probably intending to stay until next spring, all being well. The following day brought the first fresh Painted Ladies of summer, increasing in numbers as the first warm day for ages went by,

The 4th produced a **Hummingbird Hawk Moth** on the beach and an impressive **Emperor Moth** caterpillar feeding on rose along the Ancient Highway, while **Eyed, Poplar** and **Elephant Hawk Moths** were trapped over the weekend on the 7th/8th. A **Puss Moth** caterpillar was found in the observatory garden pond on the 15th and a **Scarce Chocolate Tip** was extracted from the moth trap on the 19th.



Small numbers of Red-veined Darters were still evident in early July and an imposing **Southern Hawker** was seen in the Elms on the 5th, with the first **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** of the season on New Downs on the 7th. Another Southern Hawker was in the Cellars and the summer's first **Brown Hawker** in the Haven on the 8th and both **Four-spotted Chaser** and **Emerald Damselfly** were flying along the North Stream on the 9th. At least 22 Small Red-eyed Damselflies and a Four-spotted Chaser were on New Downs New Pool on the 10th, Small Red-eyed Damselfly was recorded in the dyke bordering Backsand Scrape on the 12th and both Small Red-eyed and Red-eyed Damselfly were seen together on Middle Field pond on the 13th, while at least 12 Red-veined Darters and 11 Black-tailed Skimmers were taking advantage of some welcome sunshine on Restharrow Scrape. At least 50 Small Red-eyed Damselflies were drifting about over the Scrape on the 19th and Emperor Dragonflies and Brown Hawkers increased in frequency, with 4 of the latter on the Middle Field and 3 along the North Stream on the 24th, which also brought the first **Migrant Hawker** of the summer. Numbers of these steadily increased over the next few days and by the 30th at least 17 were in the area, with at least 30 Small Red-eyed Damselflies at a pool on Worth marshes, 16 Black-tailed Skimmers and 9 Brown Hawkers.