

Dawlish Warren Recording Group Wildlife Review 2018

Birds

A total of 186 species were recorded on site this year with 33 species confirmed breeding including **Water Rail**, **Little Grebe** and at least two pairs of **Cirl Bunting**.

Although 2018 wasn't without its highlights this tally is below average being exceeded in eight of the last ten years. The most significant weather events came in March with two unseasonal cold weather movements and November when the continual beach erosion through the year was hastened by an overnight storm that finally washed away the Dune Path.

New site maxima were recorded for **Great-crested Grebe** (132 in Jan), **Lapwing** (9180 in Mar), **Golden Plover** (3154 in Mar), **Mediterranean Gull** (96 in Jul), **House Sparrow** (162 in Sep), **Jackdaw** (1304 in Oct) and **Pheasant** (14 in Oct - an unwanted sign of increased local releases).

Unfortunately counts of many other species are going in the opposite direction with many migrants having a bad year and numbers of wintering birds in continuing decline. The second winter period especially saw low numbers of wildfowl and waders.

2018 was also the first ever blank year for wintering Slavonian Grebe, a qualifying species for the Exe Estuary Special Protection Area. Herbert, now in its 12th year of residence, was the only **Slavonian Grebe** recorded this year.



Herbert June 2009 - James Packer

Migrants were in low numbers with just three **Cuckoo**, 34 **Sand Martin**, eight **Garden Warbler**, six **Tree Pipit**, five **Spotted Flycatcher** and no Lesser Whitethroat. Other omissions from the year list included Coot, Greylag Goose, Jack Snipe, Red-necked Grebe, Dartford Warbler and Spotted Redshank.

Rarities included the 2nd & 3rd records of **Cattle Egret**, 4th record of **Red-crested Pochard**, 4th & 5th records of **Caspian Gull**, 8-15th **Great White Egret**, 8th **Rose-coloured Starling** and 9th **Barred & Cetti's Warbler**. The regular wintering **Bonaparte's Gull** was present at the start of the year but failed to return for its 6th winter.



Bonaparte's Gull Oct 2014 - Simon Thurgood

January

A total of 73 species were recorded on the 1st, the highlights being a single **Pomarine Skua** in wet & windy conditions and the wintering **Long-tailed Duck**. Also offshore during the month average numbers of **Red & Great Northern Diver**, very few **Common Scoter** but good numbers of **Great-crested Grebe** with a site record count peaking at 132, other grebes were however noticeable by their absence. The wintering **Cetti's Warbler** reappeared early in the month with a couple of **Firecrest** moving between the Warren and mainland gardens.

The first rarity of the year was a German ringed first winter **Caspian Gull** on 17th, the fourth Warren record. This was the first of a good run of larids with immature **Iceland & Glaucous Gull** on consecutive days and the first appearance of the **Bonaparte's Gull** on site since November.



Long-tailed Duck - Alan Keatley



Late in the month a **Ruff** was the first winter record since 2002 and a flock of 42 **Golden Plover** in the Bight was similarly unusual.

February

The highlight of the month was a successful **Oystercatcher** ringing session. More information [here](#), by the end of the year the colour ringed birds had a recovery rate around 95%. A second **Caspian Gull** was seen midmonth and the wintering **Long-tailed Duck**, **Cetti's Warbler** and **Firecrest** remained throughout.



Oystercatcher (V8) - Lee Collins
More information on the project can be found [here](#)

March

The month was characterised by two cold weather events. The Beast from the East on the 1st saw record movements overhead but also a lot of visible casualties.

A sad total of 109 **Lapwing**, 34 **Golden Plover** & single **Redshank**, **Little Egret** and **Avocet** were found dead onsite.

Overhead there were site record counts of 9180 **Lapwing** and 3154 **Golden Plover**, amazingly twice as many Golden Plover flew west in one afternoon than the combined total of all previous records for the Warren.

Other cold weather refugees included two **Avocet** on the Main Pond, four-fig counts of **Redwing** & **Fieldfare**, six **Woodcock**, the first since 2013, and three **Woodlark**, the first since 2014.



Greenland Lake 01/03/2018



Lapwing



Woodlark - Luke Harman

Before mid month two more **Iceland** and **Glaucous Gull** were recorded and the first **Sandwich Tern**, **Wheatear**, **Sand Martin** and **Swallow** arrived. However Spring was put on hold on the 18th when more snow arrived and brought another big **Golden Plover** movement overhead along with **Fieldfare** & **Redwing**, two **Woodlark** and a **Yellowhammer**.

Later in the month the earliest ever **Little Ringed Plover** arrived on 21st along with the only **Spoonbill** of the year, the eighth **Great White Egret** for the Warren flew upriver on 24th and the 25th saw over 1100 **Chaffinch** and **Brambling** head NE, a more typical autumn movement. The month closed with new **Iceland** and **Glaucous Gulls**.



Glaucous Gull - Dave Jewell



Iceland Gull - Lee Collins

April

Migration remained slow to get going, but there was a steady arrival through the month. The majority of expected summer species put in an appearance with a lingering **Osprey**, a **Red Kite**, two **Hobby**, two **Grasshopper Warbler**, appearing in the middle of their expected narrow window on 20th, two **Redstart** and a **Whinchat**. Other migrants included a **Puffin** on 15th, **Merlin**, **Purple Sandpiper** and **Ruff** on 17th and two pulses of **Pale-bellied Brent Geese**, peaking at 230 on 27th. The only rarity during the month was a drake **Garganey** on the Main Pond on 12th.



Garganey - Lee Collins

May

The 2nd saw a brief **Black Guillemot** offshore, the 11th site record and the first since 2013. Other highlights on the sea included a **Balearic Shearwater** on 2nd and a **Black-throated Diver** on 11th. However it was otherwise a quiet month offshore with paragliders often outnumbering **Sandwich Tern**, the monthly peak of 30 was the lowest ever. A handful of **Arctic** and **Little Tern** were recorded but it was another blank Spring for Roseate Tern. These low numbers presumably influenced the poor Skua showing with just single **Pomarine** and six **Arctic Skua**.

The highlight was unexpected due to the lack of migrants, a male **Red-backed Shrike** on the 8th. Only the third record in the last 20 years and the first male since 1989.

Other notable records included a **Sedge Warbler** holding territory for the first time since 1990, 10 **Red Kite** on 13th, the only Spring **Spotted Flycatcher** on 26th and a **Rose-coloured Starling** on 31st, the eighth site record but the first in Spring.



Red-backed Shrike - Lee Collins



Rose-coloured Starling - Simon Thurgood

June

A quiet month with a few late migrants including a **Willow Warbler** on the 3rd and an **Osprey** on the 14th; a **Cuckoo** on the same date was however probably already heading south along with a **Siskin** on 17th and the first returning **Willow Warbler** on 30th.



Stonechat - Alan Keatley

Other records included a summer plumaged **Great Northern Diver** mid-month, two summering **Eider** and the resident **Slavonian Grebe**.

July

The start of the month saw more autumn migrants in the shape of a **Green Sandpiper** and **Little Ringed Plover** on the 4th with the overdue first **Roseate Tern** of the year the next day. In a poor year for this species the only other record was on the 21st. Numbers of gulls, terns and waders increased through the month with the first of six juvenile **Yellow-legged Gull** on 9th and a record passage of **Mediterranean Gull** later in the month peaking at a minimum of 96 on 28th. Ringing recoveries showed many of these came from breeding colonies in the Solent.



Mediterranean Gull - Dave Jewell

Other records included the first **Garden Warbler** of the year on the 19th, a **Nuthatch** on 26-27th, an **Osprey** on 28th and 10 **Storm Petrel** and a **Sooty Shearwater**, both firsts for the year, next day.

August

The first **Marsh Harrier** of the year, a juvenile, passed through on the 3rd, an elusive **Pied Flycatcher** arrived the next day and become the first ever to remain overnight. The only **Treecreeper** of the year arrived the same day, remaining for three weeks.

Wader passage included three adult **Curlew Sandpiper**, a **Little Stint**, at least three **Little Ringed Plover** and two **Ruff**, with at least five **Yellow-legged Gull**, nine **Little** and two **Black Tern** during the month.



Little Tern - Alan Keatley



Black Tern - Lee Collins

Passage offshore included a **Sooty Shearwater** on the 12th, the same day as four large shearwater sp and the peak count of 19 **Balearic Shearwater**. Skua numbers remained low with just 13 **Arctic** and four **Pomarine** during the month.

The month's highlight was seen from Exmouth when a flock of seven **Cattle Egret** flew over early morning on the 19th, only the second site record. Other notable records included a **Great White Egret** that flew east distantly offshore on the 9th, later seen at several sites in Dorset, an unseasonal **Velvet Scoter** flew through the bay on the 26th and the first returning group of seven **Wigeon** were in the estuary the next day. A Citrine Wagtail was briefly in the Bight on the 23rd, potentially the first for the Warren, but remained as 'one that got away'.

September

The highlight was an elusive **Wryneck** on 8-16th but it was generally a quiet month for migrants. Numbers included a good total of nine **Whinchat** with four **Spotted Flycatcher**, two **Garden Warbler**, two **Redstart** and a **Grasshopper Warbler**.



Whinchat - Alan Keatley

Other records included a **Short-eared Owl** on the 27th, a juvenile **Marsh Harrier** the next day and totals of 18 **Balearic Shearwater**, a flock of 11 **Avocet**, three **Curlew Sandpiper**, three **Little Gull**, just two **Arctic Skua**, two **Storm Petrel** and two **Black Tern**.



Spotted Flycatcher - Simon Thurgood

October

Due to climate change, many of the month's highlights may turn out to be regular visitors in future. The fourth site record of **Red-crested Pochard** was in the estuary with **Wigeon** on the 9th, it was followed by the ninth site record of **Cetti's Warbler** on the 17th, six **Great White Egret** over on the 18th, five of which had been tracked west through Dorset, and the third site record of **Cattle Egret**, a flock of at least four the next day. A juvenile **Barred Warbler** on the 18th was the ninth site record, but is a species getting rarer, this was the first since 2011.

Other scarcities included two **Black-throated Diver** early in the month, only one **Yellow-browed Warbler** on the 17th, a **White-fronted Goose** over next day, the only **Black-necked Grebe** of the year on 29th and four **Barnacle Geese** on 30th

Visible migration highlights included a new site record of 1304 **Jackdaw** west on 20th, a **Crossbill** on 22nd and a **Yellowhammer** on 18th with two the next day. A **Merlin** lingered for a few days late month and a total of four **Short-eared Owl** were recorded.



Barred Warbler - Luke Harman



Merlin - Lee Collins

Peak vis mig counts included 11,560 **Wood Pigeon** west on 27th, 315 **Skylark** on 18th, 225 **Goldfinch** on the same day, just 80 **Chaffinch** on 31st, 63 **Greenfinch** on 23rd and 28 **Siskin** on the 3rd. Monthly tallies included 18 **Redpoll** and just four **Brambling**.

November

The main news was the loss of the path along the Dune Ridge following storms overnight on the 6-7th, this has reduced access to the hide and Warren Point and remains a continuing issue.



Although often considered one of the best periods of the year, the early autumn seemed to reduce the amount of passage during the month. The only **Black Redstart** of the year on the 5th was the highlight, with two **Firecrest** on 23-24th the only autumn record.

Other sightings included a new site record of 12 **Cirl Bunting**, a **Black-throated Diver** on the 1st, two **Pomarine Skua** on the 7th, a **Purple Sandpiper** on the 8th, two **Woodcock** on 24th and the **Cetti's Warbler** on a couple of occasions.

Overhead a very late **Swift** on the 17th was the stand out record, but also moving mid-month peaks of 802 **Redwing**, 148 **Chaffinch** and 115 **Fieldfare**; also overhead there were four **Mistle Thrush**, four **Brambling** and a **Swallow**.



Purple Sandpiper - Lee Collins

December

The year ended quietly with five **Avocet** on the 15th, the elusive **Cetti's Warbler**, two **Firecrest**, a long-staying pair of **Coal Tit** and the resident **Slavonian Grebe**.



Mammals

It was another quiet year for cetaceans with a **Common Dolphin** on 1st January continuing from 2017 and up to two **Harbour Porpoise** in April & May turning out to be the only records. A second **Common Dolphin** was stranded in late December. Distant pods in August could not be assigned to a species resulting in no positive sightings of Bottle-nosed Dolphin this year. This may be linked to a poor year for **Bass** offshore.



Common Dolphin - Alan Keatley

Seals fared better with regular reports of one or two **Common** and **Grey Seal** throughout the year.

Despite there being at least two dens on site **Foxes** can be elusive during the daytime, however regularly seen tracks on the Dune Ridge do betray their nocturnal wanderings. Even more elusive are **Stoat** and **Weasel**, both rarely seen, but again tracks on sand give away their continued presence.



Fox - Alan Keatley

Rabbit are also ever present but numbers do fluctuate during the year and from year to year with disease being an influential factor. Despite the low numbers it was a significant improvement on recent years

An exciting find was a **Water Vole** on the Main Pond on 1st September, the first record since 2014 (coincidentally the 2014 sighting was at the beginning of September) and probably represents a wandering non-territorial male from a nearby off site colony.

Fish

A **Basking Shark**, only the second for the Recording Area, was off the seawall on 18th August.

Reptiles and Amphibians

The elements were against **Common** and **Sand Lizard** populations this year with the very cold weather in early March delaying emergence from hibernation. Any early risers would have literally been caught out by the cold. It wasn't until late March/April that any lizards were seen out and about and it wasn't until mid-May they were in good numbers.

However the very hot summer weather curtailed activity as they retreated to their burrows during the hottest part of the day. Another and more permanent threat caused by weather this year was the lost of habitat and breeding areas, with hundreds of yards of sand dune sheared away by Autumn storms.



Sand Lizard - Simon Thurgood

The only **Slow-worm** sighting was a late adult predated by a **Blackbird** in Dead Dolphin Wood in early October. This is close to previous sightings and was no doubt attached to the temporary creation of ideal hibernating conditions around the fire site.

Worryingly amphibians are also becoming increasingly rare on site with only the occasional sighting of wandering **Common Frog** and **Common Toad** in the Meadows. This year did however see a welcome increase in toadlets emerging from the Main Pond.

Bees

Winter active **Buff-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus terrestris* saw several queens foraging on **Hebe** plants by the seawall through January and February, but no workers made it into the New Year and the exceptionally cold weather at the beginning of March halted sightings until the end of the month.

However as the year progressed several more species began to appear with mining bees to the fore, especially on flowering willows. There were new site records of **Ashy Andrena** *Andrena cineraria* and **Red-girdled Mining Bee** *A. labiata* along with varying numbers of **Buffish** *A. nigroaenea*, **Chocolate** *A. scotica*, **Grey-patched** *A. nitida*, **Gwynne's** *A. bicolor*, **Orange-tailed** *A. haemorrhoa*, **Sandpit** *A. barbilabris* and **Yellow-legged Mining Bee** *A. flavipes*.



Ashy Mining Bee - Alan Keatley



With the Yellow-legged Mining Bees there were several of its cleptoparasite, the **Painted Nomad-bee** *Nomada fucata*. A second cuckoo species - **Gooden's Nomad-bee** *N. goodeniana*, found in the Buffer Zone, was a new site record.

Both **Coastal** *Megachile maritima* and **Silvery Leaf-cutter** *Megachile leachella* were active along the Dune Ridge, the latter with its cleptoparasite - **Large Sharp-tailed Bee** *Coelioxys conoidea*, and **Furry-claspered Furrow-bee** *Lasioglossum lativentre* were numerous on umbellifers.

Totally unexpected, and one of the wildlife highlights of the year, was a male **Long-horned Bee** *Eucera longicornis* found in the Back Meadow on 7th June, this nationally declining species was another new species for site. Further searches however drew a blank, so this may have sadly just been a vagrant.



Long-horned Bee - Alan Keatley

By mid-summer seven species of bumblebees added to the mix with **Heath Bumblebee** *B. jonellus* in the more open areas and **Common Carder** *B. pascorum*, **Early** *B. pratorum*, **Red-tailed** *B. lapidarius*, **Tree** *B. hypnorum* and **White-tailed** *B. leucorum* in the meadows and bramble scrub. Other species on the wing were **Pantaloön Bee** *Dasypoda hirtipes* and many **Green-eyed Flower-bee** *Anthophora bimaculata*.

By the end of September, as other species started to dwindle the first **Ivy Bee** *Colletes hederæ* appeared, becoming increasingly numerous into October. By then only late **Honey bees** *Apis mellifera* and **Buff-tailed, Common Carder, Red-tailed Bumblebees** were still on the wing.

The year ended as it started with queen **Buff-tailed Bumblebees** around on ornamental Hebes.



Heath Bumblebee - Alan Keatley



Ivy Bee - Alan Keatley

Wasps

The first **Common Wasp** *Vespula vulgaris* queen appeared out of hibernation to start their season at the end of April. This year there were several nests spread throughout the site and both **Common** and **German Wasp** *V. germanica* were numerous and active during the long hot Summer and into the Autumn. Numbers gradually reduced and finally ended with the last flowering ivy in mid December. In contrast **Hornet** *V. crabro* remains uncommon on site with but there were again a couple of records.

The ichneumon wasp ***Pimpla rufipes*** were seen in good numbers and was the most frequently recorded ichneumon from June onwards.



Pimpla rufipes - Alan Keatley

The sand wasp ***Ammophila sabulosa*** were noticeable in bare areas of sand along with the less obvious **Common Spiny Digger wasp** *Oxybelus uniglumis*, **Four-banded Digger wasp** *Gorytes quadrifasciatus* and **Field Digger wasp** *Argogorytes mystaceus*.

Red-legged Spider wasp *Episyron rufipes* could be seen actively hunting spiders and dragging them back to their nest, but the Honey bee hunting **Beewolf** *Philanthus triangulum* were less common this year.

The most remarkable record though was of a **Heath Potter wasp** *Eumenes coarctatus* seen on Warren Point on 18th August, a totally unexpected occurrence. This species is usually very local to clay soil areas on heathland habitats, to see it on site was a great surprise to say the least.



Heath Potter Wasp - Alan Keatley

Butterflies

The first two records of the year were both **Peacock** with the first on 28th January, however this was an isolated sighting with the next one not appearing until 21st March. The exceptionally cold and wet start of the year meant the usual Spring species were at least three weeks late compared with 2017. It wasn't until early April that the first few **Comma**, **Red Admiral** and **Speckled Wood** appeared. Other early species were almost non-existent with just a single **Brimstone** and sadly the only **Small Tortoiseshell** of the year.

In contrast late Spring and early Summer species such as **Green-veined White**, **Common Blue**, **Small Copper**, **Brown Argus** and **Meadow Brown** were recorded in good numbers, whilst **Holly Blue** was confirmed breeding on site for the first time, however **Orange-tip** remain scarce.

A couple of **Green Hairstreak** sightings, the first for several years, were a pleasant surprise and encouragingly a **Wall Brown** on 10th May, coupled with further sightings later on in the year, proved that this declining species still has a foothold on site.



Holly Blue - Alan Keatley



Green Hairstreak - Alan Keatley

As Summer progressed, heat-wave conditions saw record numbers of **Ringlet** with a good showing of **Gatekeeper**, **Large** and **Small Skipper** but low numbers of the migrant **Painted Lady**. The same hot weather raised concerns about available food for many larvae, hopefully a second spell of vegetation growth later in the Summer will have eased these concerns.

Rarer occurrences included the second record of **Purple Hairstreak**, the third record of **Large Tortoiseshell** and the third and fourth site records of **Silver-washed Fritillary**. A **Marbled White** on 21st June turned out to be the only one of the year.



Large Tortoiseshell - Dave Cawthraw

There was a steady but unexceptional flow of migrant **Red Admiral** and **Large White** through September and October, with only a few **Painted Lady** and a late flurry of **Clouded Yellow**. A late **Wall Brown** on 18th October was evidence of a third generation. The last report of the year was a **Red Admiral** on 1st December.

Moths

There was no light trapping on site this year, so records were limited to day flying species, individuals found at rest and larval signs.

It wasn't until May that moths were noted in any numbers and variety. The most obvious were groups of **Green Longhorn** *Adela reaumurella* lekking around mature **Oaks** and **Sycamore** but **Yellow Belle**, **Pebble Hooktip** and **Buff-tip** were also recorded. The first migrant arrival were **Silver Y** on the 19th, the first **Hummingbird Hawkmoth** all on 24th May and the first **Diamond-back Moth** on 30th.

Three of Devon's rarer moths both remain on site despite differing threats. Work around the car park removed most of the breeding sites for *Phyllocnistis xenia* but a few occupied mines were eventually located. Along the strandline good populations of *Acroclita subsequana* and *Gymnancyla canella* were found on **Sea Spurge** and **Prickly Saltwort** respectively, but much of this habitat has since been lost to the sea.



Pebble Hooktip - Alan Keatley



Phyllocnistis xenia

As summer progressed **Six-spot Burnet** were on the wing in good numbers but the Tiger moths had another poor year with just a single **Cream-spot** and only a few **Jersey Tiger**. **Silver Y** continued to arrive along with a couple more **Hummingbird Hawkmoth**.

By August **Mint Moth** *Pyrausta aurata* had joined the numerous **Silver Y** nectaring on meadow flowers with a few **Rush Veneer** and **Rusty Dot Pearl**.



Mint Moth - Alan Keatley

Dragonflies

The first species to appear was an **Azure Damselfly** on the 13th May, the same date as 2017. The next species was on 16th May, a female **Beautiful Demoiselle**, much more unexpected as it was the first on site since 2010.

Towards the end of May **Blue-tailed Damselfly** started to out-number **Azure** as the commonest damselfly. The first dragonfly of the year was an **Emperor** on 28th May; unfortunately no sightings of Hairy Dragonfly were reported this year.

A **Broad-bodied Chaser** on 3rd June was welcomed after none last year. The first of a good series of **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** was on 14th June, vying and chasing off Emperors from its territory. The first **Common Darter** was on the wing in early June, but sightings remained infrequent until later in the year.



Beautiful Demoiselle - Alan Keatley



Golden-ringed Dragonfly - Alan Keatley

July started well with a male **Banded Demoiselle** at the Main Pond, the fifth site record, but the highlight was the confirmed breeding of **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** after several years apparent absence. By mid-August **Migrant Hawker** started to appear in increasing numbers, regularly reaching double figures by the end of the month. A few **Southern Hawker** were on site by early September, but are never as numerous, **Common Darter** numbers continued to build.



Migrant Hawker - Alan Keatley

October records included the third site record of **Vagrant Emperor** on 18th, part of a national influx of this African species, a very late (second generation?) **Blue-tailed Damselfly** on 10th and a late **Southern Hawker** on 19th.

Both **Common Darter** and **Migrant Hawker** were still present in good numbers in late October but there were no November reports.

Flies

Nearly 580 true flies (Diptera) have been found within the Dawlish Warren Recording Area, but as proved this year there are still many more overlooked species to be found.

Spring saw three new species **Bibio lanigerus**, a St. Marks Fly, nectaring on **Gorse** blossom, **Celery Fly** *Euleria heraclei* a picture-winged fly with mines recorded in **Hogweed** later in the year, and at the end of May **Empis stercorea**, a brightly coloured Dagger Fly.

In July a further three new species were found; the **Band-eyed Brown Horsefly** *Tabanus bromius* and two tachinid flies, *Dexiosoma caninum* and *Thelaira nigripes*.



Empis stercorea - Alan Keatley

The last two new species of the year were found and identified in September. One the aptly named **Ivy Waspgrabber** *Leopoldius signatus* can be readily identified, the other was a green bottle, *Lucilia caesar*, a common blowfly but difficult to identify without close examination.

Although not new for the Warren, the continued presence of the nationally scarce soldier fly **Ornate Brigadier** *Odontomyia ornata* was good news but conversely there was no sign of the very rare and threatened crane fly, *Geranomyia bezzii*. Much of the habitat for this species was lost during the beach recharge, hopefully searches next year will be more successful.

More familiar species recorded included several **Dark-edged Beefly** *Bombylius major* in Spring, with the soldier fly **Broad Centurion** *Chloromya formosa* and the crane flies - *Tipula fascipennis* and *Tipula lateralis* present in good numbers. Also out in numbers the dune specialists **Coastal Silver-stillete** *Acrosathe annulata* and **Dune Robberfly** *Philonicus albiceps*. Later in Autumn both **Noon Fly** *Mesembrina meridiana* and **Yellow Dung Fly** *Scathophaga stercoraria* were numerous on flowering Ivy, providing a useful food source for migrant warblers.

As with other groups migrants do occur, the pick of which was the third site record of **Locust Blowfly** *Stomorhina lunata*. This is a rare visitor from North Africa, and its appearance coincided with a large influx of migrant hoverflies.



Coastal Silver-stiletto - Alan Kealtley

Hoverflies

The first hoverfly of the year was **Striped-eyed Dronefly** *Eristalis tenax* fresh out of hibernation on 17th February, but the exceptionally cold weather of over the next few weeks curtailed activity until Mid March. By then **Marmalade Hoverfly** *Episyrphus balteatus* had started to appear on flowering willows and were joined by a new site record the **Great Spring Cheilosia** *Cheilosia grossa*.

By the start of April there were plenty of **Tapered Dronefly** *Eristalis pertinax* on the wing with several **Furry Dronefly** *E. intricaria* - a bumblebee mimic. The common **Tiger Hoverfly** *Helophilus pendulus* appeared at the end of April and remained in good numbers until mid October.

Other Spring species recorded included **Bumblebee Hoverfly** *Volucella bombylans*, **Common Dainty Hoverfly** *Baccha elongata*, **Humming Syrphus** *Syrphus ribesii*, **Superb Ant-hill Hoverfly** *Xanthogramma pedissequum*, **Thick-legged Hoverfly** *Syrpitta pipiens* and **Epistrophe eligans**, a new site record.

Large numbers of **Long Hoverfly** *Sphaerophia scripta* were on the wing in mid Summer, many of which were migrants, Other arrivals included **Eupeodes luniger**, **Migrant Hoverfly** *E. corollae*, **Pied Hoverfly** *Scaeva pyrastris* and more **Marmalade Hoverfly**.



Cheilosia grossa - Alan Keatley

As summer progressed numerous **Hogweed Cheilosia** *Cheilosia illustrata* were feeding in the meadows with **Large Tiger Hoverfly** *Helophilus trivittatus* and **Marsh Tiger Hoverfly** *H. hybridus*, also present another overlooked new species for the Recording Area, **Small Spotty-eyed Dronefly** *Eristalinus sepulchralis*. In the more sheltered areas **Batman Hoverfly** *Myrathropa florea* and the territorial **Large Pied Hoverfly** *Volucella pellucens* were regularly recorded but there were only a few **Hornet Hoverfly** *V. zonaria* sightings.

Late summer and into autumn saw both **Striped-faced Dronefly** *Eristalis nemorum* and **Striped-winged Dronefly** *E. horticola* on the wing, with ***Dasysyrphus albostratus*** a further new species for the site.

With warm weather conditions continuing until end of October there were still several migrant species to be seen, joining the resident Dronefly species on late flowering **Ivy**.



Eristalinus sepulchralis - Alan Keatley

Grasshoppers and Crickets

The unexpected highlight was the first site record of **Roesel's Bush-cricket** on 6th July. This individual, a long-winged male, was in the Back Meadow for almost two weeks and was only third Devon record. The species is expanding its range westwards into Dorset and Somerset so will no doubt become established in the county and perhaps on site in the near future.

Common Groundhopper, as to be expected, was the first species recorded this year, with several **Speckled** and **Dark Bush-cricket** nymphs seen through the Spring. The first adult **Great Green Bush-cricket** of the year was calling on 30th June and the grasslands held vocal **Long-winged Conehead**, **Common Green**, **Field** and **Meadow Grasshopper** from early July.

As Summer progressed **Field Grasshopper** became very numerous and included some pink individuals. In September **Grey** and **Dark Bush-cricket** joined the chorus.

Great Green Bush-cricket and **Field Grasshopper** were still active into October with the latter remaining vocal until at least the third week.



Roesel's Bush-cricket - Debs Rylands



Grey Bush-cricket - Alan Keatley

Beetles & Bugs

During the summer a single **Hornet Beetle** *Leptura aurulenta* in the Back Meadow, only the second record for the Warren. This species is a dead wood specialist with larvae developing in decaying wood stumps.



Hornet Beetle - Stephen Fuller

The plentiful **Red Soldier Beetle** *Rhagonycha fulva* and **Thick-legged Flower Beetle** *Oedemera nobilis* are the most frequent species found on **Hogweed** and its relatives, but other species recorded included the **Red-headed Cardinal Beetle** *Pyrochroa serraticornis*, **Wasp Beetle** *Clytus arietis*, **Black and Yellow Longhorn** *Rutpela maculata*.

On the negative side native ladybirds were again in short supply, a combination of the increasing numbers of the invasive alien **Harlequin Ladybird** and ironically the removal of the invasive alien **Tree Lupin**. This species hosts large numbers of the North American aphid **Macrosiphum albifrons** which is popular with ladybirds. This aphid was introduced to Dawlish Warren to control Tree Lupin but is now widely distributed and is also considered an invasive pest species over much of Europe.

Another non native aphid recorded this year was **Crypturaphis grassi**, this only occurs on **Italian Alder**.

Other bugs seen included commoner species like **Dock Bug**, **Gorse** and **Green Shieldbug**, as well as the strikingly coloured **Cinnamon Bug** *Corzcius hyoscyami*.



Red-headed Cardinal Beetle - Alan Keatley



Corzium hyoscyami - Alan Keatley

Spiders

The **Dune Jumper** *Marpissa nivoyi*, a nationally scarce coastal dune species remains on Warren Point despite erosion over winter. But numbers of the spectacular **Wasp Spider** continued on a downward trend with webs becoming increasingly difficult to find.

Both **Nursery Web** *Pisaura mirabilis* and **Garden Orb-weaver** *Araneus diadematus* were numerous in tall vegetation and **Gorse Orb-weaver** *Agelenatea redii* was recorded for the first time since 1982.



Pisaura mirabilis - Alan Keatley

Plants

As has become customary the year started with the annual [BSBI New Year plant hunt](#), this year a record 43 plants were found in flower on 1st January. This compares with 25 in 2017.

This good start to the year didn't last as very cold and wet weather set in. This delayed the appearance of **Sand Crocus**. The first of which wasn't in flower until 5th April, nearly three weeks later than in 2017.

As the weather warmed up **Upright Chickweed** and **Shepherd's Cress** could be found in the short dune grassland with three **Snake's-head Fritillary** in Greenland Lake and a patch of **Mossy Stonecrop** near the amusements were good discoveries. The latter doubled the site population, one of only two in Devon.



Sand Crocus - Alan Keatley

The first orchid of the year to flower was the Warren's only **Green-winged Orchid** on 4th May. By the end of May numbers of **Southern Marsh Orchid** started to come into flower, followed by seven **Bee Orchid** near the Dune Pond and 13 **Pyramidal Orchid** on Warren Point. Both these species are steadily increasing in number.

As summer progressed great swathes of **Marsh Helleborine** were in flower by the visitor centre and Greenland Lake producing a spectacular display. In August the late flowering **Autumn Lady's-tresses** added to mix, including first record from Warren Point. Both the latter species were also in flower at the same time for the first year ever.

As the hot weather conditions continued, the heat loving **Sea Daffodil** flowered on Warren Point. Dawlish Warren is only one of three sites nationwide where this rare flower is found. Another dune specialist, **Sea Holly** could be found at the very end of Warren Point, but in smaller numbers than last year. A large patch was washed away in the previous autumn storms. Unfortunately this area has suffered again in recent bad weather.

As the food plant of **Brimstone** butterfly the discovery of **Alder Buckthorn** on site was doubly welcomed, the only other new species added this year was also native, **Amphibious Bistort**. A single **Tomato** plant (that produced fruit) and **Black Bindweed**, both rare on site, were found growing on the dune ridge, probably pumped ashore as part of the Beach recharge.



Bee Orchid - Alan Keatley



Sea Daffodil

Fungi

The highlight was the discovery of several **Fly Agaric** in October, the first site record since 1955.

Also to be found were the large but less colourful **Parasol** and **Horse Mushroom**. Less noticeable, but new for the site were the fungi *Melampsora lini* - a rust on **Fairy Flax** and *Microbotryum violaceum*, the appealingly named **Sea Campion Anther Smut**.



Fly Agaric - Alan Keatley



Parasol Mushroom - Alan Keatley