

## What to look out for in August

*Although meteorological summer draws to a close in August, nature still has much to offer. We should start to see birds begin their autumn migration, offering sightings of waders coming back from the Arctic. Wildflowers may be less numerous, but those that remain continue to offer beauty and colour. There should still be a good variety of insects to see, including increasingly bored male wasps!*

### BIRDS

Like July, August, or at least most of August, is not a good month in which to see birds. Most wildfowl will be moulting, and hiding to escape predators. Most birds will be focusing on raising their young while the time is right, and hiding from predators. Birdsong will be largely absent and – sadly – one of summer’s star birds, **Swifts**, will be gone by the middle of the month.

The month’s outlook is not all gloom though: you may still be able to see growing youngsters, and in the first early signs of autumn migration, places such as Holme Pierrepont will start to attract failed breeding waders such as **Green** and **Wood Sandpipers** on their way back south from the Arctic Circle.

Keep an eye out for the flash of a **Kingfisher** (*right*), and look out for and listen for the mewling call of **Common Buzzards**. You may be lucky enough to see **Red Kites**, as they extend their range into Nottinghamshire.



### TREES AND FLOWERS

Although we are now well past the peak flowering season, there is still plenty to see.



You may already have seen **Eyebright** (*left*), a small plant, in bloom in June, but there are so many varieties that in some locations they will only be seen in August. The books describe Eyebright as one of the most difficult groups to separate out, although straightforward to pin down in general terms; the differences are minute. The flower is small but has an intricate pattern on it. Although it has leaves, and photosynthesises, it is also semi-parasitic, tapping into grass roots to steal nutrients. Its name derives from the practice of using tinctures to brighten ladies’ eyes. Other names include bird's eye, fairy flax and pewweets.



**Yarrow** (*right*) is already flowering, and will continue to flower into winter, sometimes into the new year in a mild winter. It can be found everywhere: in wildflower meadows, in corners and in the odd road verge. It has an umbellifer- like multiple small flower head - usually white, but sometimes pink - on a single stem with thick feathery leaves.



**Yellow and Ribbed (White) Melliot** (*left*). I have no idea why they aren't called White and Yellow Melliot, as I always have to check which way round it is. Similar in characteristics, they are tall plants with multiple flower spikes, with individual flowers shaped like long "trumpets" and typically found on bare ground, although being an opportunistic plant, it may pop up anywhere.

**Chicory** (*right*) is a member of the daisy family, much loved by bees, who can be seen covered from head to toe in its white pollen grains. It can be found on waste ground and in field margins. Its delicate blue flowers are best seen before midday, as they fade in colour after then. It is surprisingly versatile: its roasted roots make a coffee substitute, and the plant has medical value as a diuretic and laxative.



Look out for the aptly-named **Robin's Pincushion** (*left*), a red, round, hairy growth that can be seen on wild roses. It is caused by the larvae of a tiny gall wasp that feed on the host plant, but cause little damage.

## **INSECTS**

Although we are now well past the peak flowering season, quite a lot of plants will continue to flower into the autumn, which is probably as well, as insects remain plentiful, in both variety and



quantity. Insects at this time of year also benefit greatly from garden plants such as *Buddleia* and *Echinops*.

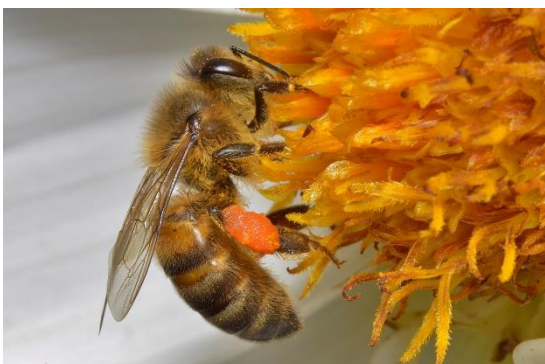


Butterflies in August include **Ringlet**, **Meadow Brown** and **Gatekeeper** representing the 'brown' species, and you may be able to see a **Small Heath** (*left feeding on Wild Carrot*).



'White' butterflies will include **Green-veined White** (*left, feeding on Field Bindweed*), **Large White** and **Small White**. More colour will be provided by **Comma**, **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Red Admiral**, and possibly **Painted Lady**.

**Bumblebees** will gradually reduce in number as the newly-fertilised queens will look for somewhere to overwinter, and the rest of the females and workers will die off, their jobs having been done. **Honeybees** (*below left*) will still be seen, looking for pollen and nectar to take back to the hive. August and September are good months to find **Ivy Bees** (*below right*), a relative newcomer to the county which is similar to, but more striking than, the Honeybee. Go to Skylarks Nature Reserve to look for them, often along with several different species of bees, wasps and hoverflies.





**Hoverflies** will still be about in August, albeit in decreasing numbers, so keep looking and you may be lucky enough to see one of our more striking hovers, *Xanthogramma pedisequum* (left).

Several of the large Hawker **Dragonflies** are on the wing this month, including **Southern Hawker**, **Brown Hawker** and **Migrant Hawker**.

**Southern Hawkers** (right) began to emerge from ponds and lakes last month and will be on the wing until September. They leave the water body where they emerged and forage along woodland glades and hedgerows while they mature and develop their full adult colouration. The yellow markings on the individual pictured will deepen to apple green, and males will develop blue bands near the tip of the abdomen and along their sides. Southern Hawkers can be distinguished from other hawkers by the two spots on the thorax behind their enormous eyes.



**Brown Hawkers**, the only large dragonflies with brown tinted wings, often forage over grassland and other more open habitats, hedgerows and woodland edge. **Migrant Hawkers**, as their name suggests, are very mobile and may be seen almost anywhere. Noticeably smaller than Brown and Southern Hawkers, males are predominantly blue and black, whilst females are brown and yellow; both sexes have yellow stripes on the side of the thorax.



**Six-spot Burnets** (left) are striking day flying moths on the wing in July and August. Like Cinnabar moths earlier in the summer, their red and black colouration warns potential predators that they are poisonous: Six-spot Burnet caterpillars are able to metabolise hydrogen cyanide from their food plant, Birdsfoot Trefoil. They often settle on flowerheads and if you approach slowly, you can get quite close. When they fly, their wings become red blurs with a furry black body suspended in between them.



Other moths on the wing this month include several species of **Underwings**, **Rustics**, **Wainscots**, and **Thorns** that are attracted to artificial light in the evening. You may also disturb **Large Yellow Underwings** when gardening and glimpse their yellow hindwings; these are thought to startle potential predators.



And finally, as we go through August, we start to see more and more **Wasps**, making their own idiosyncratic contributions to our time in the great outdoors ... and we still haven't mentioned **Spiders**.

*Enjoy August's wildlife!*

*Credits: Text by Neil Glenn, Gordon Dyne Keith Wakerley and Chris Overton*

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