

JULY 2026 BULLETIN

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WELCOME TO OUR JULY BULLETIN!

July is always a busy time in the BioBank calendar as not only do our recorders get active with the wealth of wildlife that is out this time of year, but it's also BioBlitz season, so BioBanks have been getting out our nets and tubes and braving the summer heat to show off to family first-hand how much "local natural capital" is on our doorsteps. Find out more in this month's bulletin, as well as an update from Elina and what she's been up to on her maternity leave, and our regular updates from Phil Smith, EL and our very own moth Connoisseur Paul Round. With the last couple of months of summer now approaching, be sure to look over August's upcoming events.

1: An Update from Elina's Maternity Leave

01

Article by Elina-Marielle Doss

A big hello from the mega baby bubble!

I never really understood the term 'baby bubble' until now... It's been nearly 3 months and I can't believe how quickly the time has been zooming past. Being a parent isn't for the faint-hearted, it's a full-time job - but one I absolutely love! And even though it's been exhausting, it's been so much fun seeing our little Ewyn grow.

Although I'm on maternity leave, anybody who knows me, knows that this isn't just any kind of job. Wildlife recording is a way of life that comes with an amazingly passionate community. And of course it's important to pass that passion on to future generations - and I've been doing exactly that with little Ewie. Gotta start them early! I've been teaching him all about the wildlife in our garden and in nearby greenspaces - from birds and their songs, to butterflies and bees, plants, the frogs that live in our garden and the foxes that come to visit. Sometimes he listens curiously, other times he dozes off - it's a hard life being a baby!

I've quickly noticed that there are not many records in the greenspaces near me so I've made it my mission to change this. Also, on one of my walks, I noticed someone standing in a meadow with a hi-vis vest on inspecting plants. Obviously, I had to go and speak to him. He was indeed recording the plants but only noting these down in a notebook. I've told him all about LERCs and how valuable these records can be. He told me that he is part of a Friends of Group and that they would like to protect their park. I signposted him to the LWS guidelines on the Greater Manchester Local Environmental Records Centre website and offered to help them achieve designation - once Ewie's major growth spurts have passed.



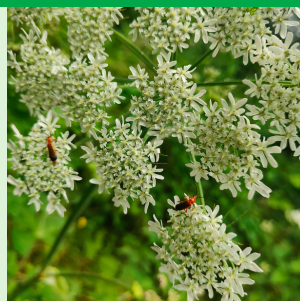
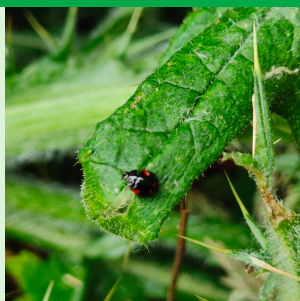
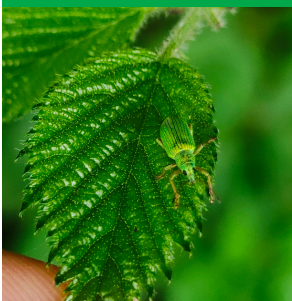
Nettle weevil
Phyllobius pomaceus

Pine ladybird
Exochomus quadripustulatus

Common red soldier beetle
Rhagonycha fulva

Riband wave
Idaea aversata

Buff-tailed bumblebee
Bombus terrestris



Article by David Hopkins

On 21st and 23rd BioBank, alongside the Mersey River Trust and Liverpool and Knowsley councils, held two Bioblitzes in Mab Lane Park in the Croxteth area and Millbrook Park Millennium Green in Kirby. Both events were put on not just to generate interest in local biodiversity and the value of species recording, but also to celebrate the work the Mersey River Trust has done in re-naturalising parts of the rivers across the Merseyside area.

Re-naturalising rivers by unstraitening their courses, introducing “leak dams” made of wood and mud, and adding floodplain meadows and wooded areas is an important new approach to mitigate flood risks. This is because naturalised rivers not only allow water to run more slowly, but they also temporarily absorb and store water in periods of high rainfall. Such interventions can dramatically reduce the incidence of floods that can cause thousands to millions in pounds in damage and significantly disrupt people’s lives.

However, most importantly, from the perspective of the biobank, naturalised rivers also create huge biodiversity gains as new habitats are created for many species of plants, fungi and animals. And this was easily demonstrated during our nature walks, where, in a 5-minute stroll and a few quick sweeps of a net, I was able to show dozens of invertebrate species busying themselves in the trees, riverbanks, and long grassy areas.

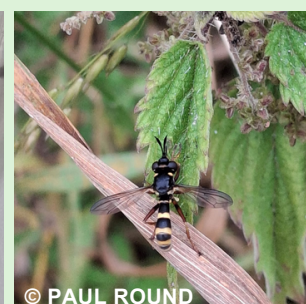
At the same time, Mersey River Trust brought some water kick samples up from the river, showing off the dizzying amount of life that can exist in a tiny patch of a healthy stream

It is always fun to watch parents' and children's faces light up at the realisation of how much life is around them, and the many beautiful and unusual species that can thrive if a park is managed well for both people and nature. Though after two days of kids having a go at chaotically bashing my net through the grass, I now need a new net. A worthy cause I think!

A big shout-out of thanks to our Volunteer Jo and intern Matt for helping us with the events on their day, and to the Mersey River Trust and council staff for organising the events.



© PAUL ROUND



© PAUL ROUND

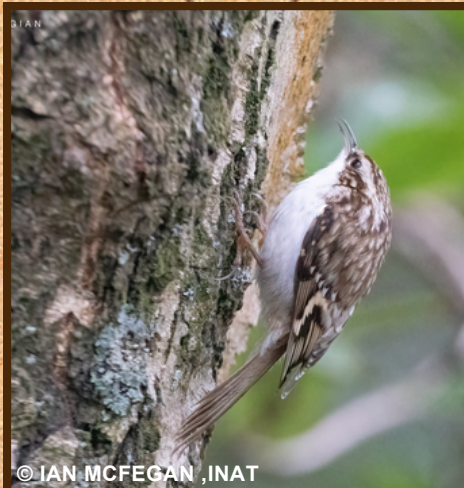
3: BIOBANK BOUNTY

THE BIOBANK TEAM HAS SPOTTED A RANGE OF LIFE HERE AT COURT HEY PARK THIS MONTH. THE HIGHLIGHTS SPOTTED ENJOYING THE HOT WEATHER INCLUDE:



©PAUL ROUND

2-SPOT LADYBIRD
ADALIA BIPUNCTATA



© IAN MCFEGAN, INAT

TREECREEPER
CERTHIA FAMILIARIS



©GABRIEL DIXON, INAT

CHICKEN OF THE WOODS
LAETIPORUS SULPHUREUS



© BARRY WALTER, INAT

WILLOW MASON WASP
SYMMORPHUS BIFASCIATUS



© SANDGROUNDER, INAT

PELLUCID FLY
VOLUCELLA PELLUCENS



© DAVID HOPKINS, NAT

LIME HAWK-MOTH
MIMAS TILIAE

AS ALWAYS, IF YOU DO SPOT ANY OF THESE SPECIES PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU SUBMIT YOUR RECORDS TO US HERE AT MERSEYSIDE BIOBANK, SO WE CAN INCLUDE THEM IN OUR DATABASE.

Article by David Hopkins

Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

As August's warmth brings a buzz of insect activity, dragonflies begin to increase in number as well. One of the most common in our area is the tough little Common Darter. Adult Common Darters can be difficult, as they can change colour as they age, but August is a good time for the males darting about in their brilliant shades of orange-red. **Identification tips:** 38-43mm, Pale stripes on legs. ♀ has an ochre abdomen; ♂ has two orange-red to yellow patches on the thorax, separated by a red-brown panel. Easily confused with Ruddy Darter, but Ruddy has black legs while ♂ has a 'waisted' abdomen without a panel. **Habitat:** Found in most habitats and disperses widely from its breeding water sources. Likes to bask in bare ground. Active late into Autumn



© ROY LOWRY, INAT



© STEVE MCWILLIAMS, INAT

Red Bartsia (*Odontites vernus*)

Especially this year, many of the field flowers are already seeding and drying out by August, but Red Bartsia has a relatively long flowering season and keeps its distinctive flower spike even as it dries. Red Bartsia is a semi-parasitic plant, attaching to the roots of nearby grasses and other plants to sap their nutrients, which helps it survive in nutrient-poor grasslands and meadows.

Identification tips: Small reddish-pink tubular flowers grow on a narrow spike, with opposite narrow leaves and a tough reddish stem. **Habitat:** Found in dry grasslands, meadows, field margins, and coastal grassland in sunny, low-nutrient soils.

Common Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*)

Heathland is an incredibly biodiverse but fragile habitat, and the heathers are plants that shape it. Locally, the most abundant heather is Common Heather, supporting many rare insects and animals that depend on it for food and shelter, while August brings a spectacular display of pink-purple flowers. There are few places in Merseyside where good examples of heathland remain, but Freshfield Dune Heath NNR is the best in the region. Smaller patches also survive at Rimrose Valley, Colliers Moss, NT Speke Hall, and Pex Hill, with some sites currently undergoing restoration. **Identification tips:** Low-growing shrub with tiny scale-like leaves, and spikes of purple-pink flowers, that unlike other common heathers has a flower with divided pettles and open flower. **Habitat:** Heathland, moorland, bogs, and other acidic, nutrient-poor soils.



© NICOLA BAINES, INAT



© BADGER83, INAT

Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*)

Many insects breed in a short enough time that two populations can spike. One great example is the speckled wood, which will be among the first to emerge in early March- April, complete its full lifecycle in time for August, and give the next generation time to store reserves to overwinter as caterpillars at the base of plants. Hibernating caterpillars are one important reason to leave some natural spaces undisturbed until the spring when they re-emerge.

Identification tips: Brown wings marked by creamy-yellow patches and distinctive dark eyespots. ♂ are darker and commonly seen defending territories in patches of sunlight. **Habitat:** Likes dappled shade where grasses grow beneath trees and shrubs in woodlands, parks, hedgerows and gardens.

5: iNaturalist Review: July

05

Article by Paul Round

Observations: 4,278

Species: 1,275



This last month saw a slight drop in both observations and records on iNaturalist across Merseyside, from 6,228 to 4,278 observations and from 1,524 to 1,275 records. The extreme and prolonged heat and temperature across July may well have put some people off from being out and about as much as usual. There was quite a bit of change across most categories with *Lepidoptera* taking all 5 spots for insects this month.

Check out the other stats below.

Top 5 Plant Species

1	Ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>	25
2	Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	16
3	Great Willowherb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	15
4	Rosebay Willowherb	<i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i>	15
5	Purple Loostrike	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	14

Top 5 Bird Species

1	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	16
2	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	12
3	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	9
4	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	9
5	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	9

Top 5 Insect Species

1	Box Tree Moth	<i>Cydalima perspectalis</i>	71
2	Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>	69
3	Cinnabar Moth	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	49
4	Riband Wave	<i>Idaea aversata</i>	46
5	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	42

Top 5 Other Invertebrate Species

1	Garden Spider	<i>Araneus diadematus</i>	12
2	Canestrini's harvestman	<i>Opilio canestrinii</i>	11
3	Common Candy-striped Spider	<i>Enoplognatha ovata</i>	10
4	Zebra Jumping Spider	<i>Salticus scenicus</i>	5
5	Noble False Widow Spider	<i>Steatoda nobilis</i>	5

Top 5 Other Vertebrate Species

1	Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	15
2	Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	5
3	European Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	4
4	European Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	4
5	Smooth Newt	<i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i>	4

Top 5 Fungi Species

1	Chicken of the Woods	<i>Laetiporus sulphureus</i>	3
2	Anthracoidea arenariae	<i>Anthracoidea arenariae</i>	3
3	Dryad's Saddle	<i>Polyporus squamosus</i>	2
4	Podosphaera senecionis	<i>Podosphaera senecionis</i>	2
5	Artist's Bracket	<i>Ganoderma applanatum</i>	1

Article by Dr. Phil Smith

The Met. Office described June as “A month of two halves.” Like May, it was cool and unsettled at first and then we had the mother of all heatwaves. Overall, it was England’s warmest June on record (going back to 1884). On 26th, a new record high temperature for June – 37.7°C was set in Norfolk. The infamous 1976 heatwave lasted longer but, 50 years on, June this year had more intense bursts of heat and, of course, there could be more to come. Rainfall nationally was about average but Rachael Parks recorded only 48.7 mm in her garden; about 40% lower than usual for June in Formby, probably because we didn’t get many heavy showers or thunderstorms. As expected, the sand-dune water-table, measured at the lowest point of the Devil’s Hole, dropped by about 16 cm...



© PHIL SMITH

Broad-banded Smoothtail
Epistrophe grossulariae Ravenmeols



© PHIL SMITH

Red-veined Darter
Sympetrum fonscolombii male



© PHIL SMITH

Southern Marsh-orchid
Dactylorhiza praetermissa

[To continue reading, please follow this link](#)

7: Urban Nature Notes

Article by Eleanor Reece

Plants, ponderings, and pathways

This month has been exceptionally hot, and many of our wild spaces have suffered as a result. The prolonged dry weather has had a significant impact on habitats, particularly grasslands, woodlands and wetlands. Water sources have dried up, leaving many birds, mammals, and insects struggling to find drinking water, sometimes with devastating consequences. Although temperatures have started to cool slightly, more hot weather is forecast over the coming weeks, so I encourage anyone who can to leave shallow dishes of water outside in gardens or green spaces.

I firmly believe that nature is usually best left to regulate itself, but during periods of extreme weather we have an opportunity to provide simple intervention that can make a real difference.

© Eleanor Reece



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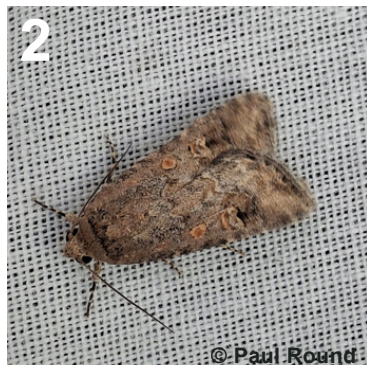
Article by Paul Round

This month has proved extremely fruitful for moth trapping in my Cheshire garden with the heatwave allowing for regular trapping sessions. Four of the five moths below are species I have never seen before, and the only one I have previously recorded, Dark Spectacle *Abrostola triplasia* (3) is only my third ever record.

There are only 76 previous Cheshire records of Small Mottled Willow *Spodoptera exigua* (2), 64 for Marsh Oblique-barred *Hypenodes humidalis* (1) and only 21 for Cypress Carpet *Hypenodes humidalis* (5), which is this month's spotlight species.



© Paul Round
Marsh Oblique-barred
Hypenodes humidalis



© Paul Round
Small Mottled Willow
Spodoptera exigua



© Paul Round
Dark Spectacle
Abrostola triplasia



© Paul Round
Orange Pine Tortrix
Lozotaeniodes formosana

Spotlight Species

Cypress Carpet *Thera cupressata*

As stated above the Cypress Carpet was only the 22nd record historically for Cheshire, so it was a great find for me.

First found in West Sussex in 1984, this species has now become established in parts of southern England, such as the Isle of Wight, Hampshire and Dorset but is gradually making itself more north.

The caterpillar feeds on Monterey cypress *Cupressus macrocarpa* and Leyland cypress *Cupressocyparis leylandii*.

The moths fly in May and June, with a second generation in August and September.



© Paul Round
Cypress Carpet
Thera cupressata

Article by Paul Round

Local Finds

This month we have seen two impressive wildlife records of two species rarely recorded. The Dark Crimson Moth *Catocala sponza* (1) has very few records in the region and was found by Steve McWilliam in his Merseyside garden and the Oriental Hornet *Vespa orientalis* (2) has next to no records in the UK and was discovered by Pete Kinsella in Crosby on the sand dunes.



Regional Finds

There have been some cracking records in July over the border in Cheshire, with Paul Brewster finding two superb insect rarities at a private site. The first was the Cheshire Horsefly *Atylotus plebeius* (1), one of the rarest flies in the UK, listed as nationally rare, internationally endangered and red-data listed. Then later on in July, he also discovered a species of Jewel Wasp believed to be Noble Jewel Wasp *Hedychrum nobile* (2), which was first seen in the UK in 1998 and has been spreading up from the SE since, but is still very rare. There is one submitted Cheshire Record in 2024, but that is still pending, so if accepted, it would be the first accepted Cheshire & Wirral record. Another great find was by myself in my living room of all places: Common Spitting Spider *Scytodes thoracica* (3), with not many records for Cheshire. And then, last but not least, a Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (4) was seen at Marbury Country Park on Budworth Mere.



MBB's Twilight Sessions

Meeting point: MBB Office

Upcoming Sessions:

Hoverflies | Tuesday 4th August | 6:30pm

[Click Here](#)

Spiders | Tuesday 1st September | 6:30pm

[Click Here](#)

Fungi | Tuesday 6th October | 6:30pm

[More information here](#)

Liverpool Biological Society

Upcoming Sessions:

Leasowe Wirral | Saturday 8th August | 10:30am | Meet at Leasowe Lighthouse Car Park, Lingham Lane, CH46 4TA

Maghull & Leeds Liverpool Canal | Saturday 22nd August | 10:30am | Meet at Maghull Station, L31 3D

[More information here](#)

Mersey Naturalist's Association

Upcoming Sessions:

Old Moor RSPB Reserve | Saturday 22nd August | Coach trip | £25

Hilbre Island | Thursday 27th August | 11:30am | Meet Dee Lane Slipway, West Kirby

[More information here](#)

Ento Live - look at this

Upcoming Online Sessions:

The Search for German Hairy Snails | Thursday 17th September | 6:30pm

Discoveries After Dark: How Insects Connect Us to Nature | Thursday 24th September | 1pm

[More information here](#)

Tanyptera Trust

Upcoming Sessions:

Grimsargh Wetlands | Friday 7th August | 10am

Crag Bank | Friday 14th August | 10am

Errwood & Fernilee Reservoirs | Friday 21st August | 10am

[More information here](#)

Kindling Farm

Upcoming Sessions:

Reading in the Wild with Hugh Warwick | Saturday 15th August | 2pm

A Feast from the Fields | Friday 21st August | 6:30pm

Lots of volunteering opportunities

[More information here](#)

Who we are

Merseyside BioBank is the Local Environmental Records Centre for North Merseyside. We collect, manage and share vital information about the wildlife and habitats in our area.

By bringing together records from volunteers, community groups, researchers and professionals, we provide a trusted evidence base that supports conservation, planning and environmental decision-making.

We also help strengthen local recording through training, volunteer opportunities and projects that encourage people to get involved in understanding and protecting North Merseyside's natural environment.

Want to keep in touch?

Follow us on social media, and sign up to receive our monthly bulletin



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Volunteering with us:

Step 1: Express your interest

Contact us directly at info@merseysidebiobank.org.uk, on social media, or by our online platform

Step 2: Attend an induction session

These sessions are held regularly, allows you to meet MBB staff and learn more about what we do and why it is important, as well as discuss your opportunities

Step 3: Sign up to our volunteer portal

The portal allows you to book into our office rota and log hours

Step 4: Start volunteering

We have a range of different opportunities including; collating records, writing articles, outreach events, collecting data etc.

To see our volunteer opportunities, or to register for the volunteer platform, please scan the QR code or click [here](#)

