

Confined to the Garden – July

I am no longer confined to the garden. Work is getting busier again and I've been out and about quite a lot. I've still found time to keep an eye on the garden though. I haven't completed any more projects, but all my new plants are growing well, some of them are starting to provide pollen and nectar for those all-important pollinators.

There's been an explosion of Mint in my mini kitchen garden.



The chives, rosemary and strawberries are doing well too, but you can hardly see them for mint!

The new Buddleia has begun flowering, it seems quite happy growing out of the deadwood feature I created for Stag Beetles, and is already attracting butterflies (mostly Small Whites).



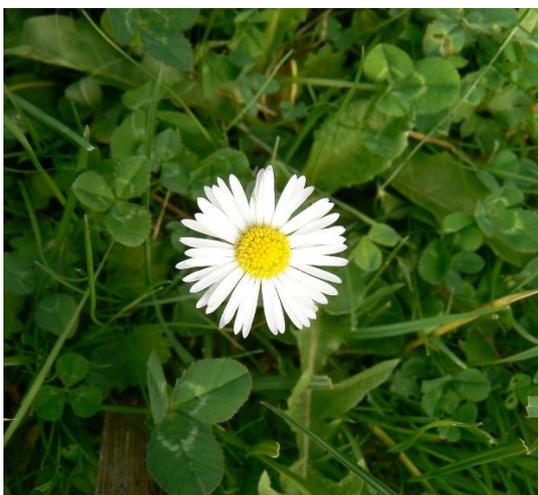
Flowering Buddleia

At the start of the lockdown, I used wildflower seed mix to create mini-meadows in containers. Some have done better than others, but they have all produced some flowers, increasing the nectar and pollen available to pollinators, and making my garden a bit prettier.



Wildflowers in containers

I used plug plants to create a flowering lawn. As I watered it regularly for the first few weeks, this part of the lawn is much greener than the rest. Only the ragged Robin and Daisies have flowered so far, apart from the buttercups and clover that were already there.



Daisy



Ragged Robin

Although most of my new plants need to mature a bit before they really start to benefit pollinators, more established plants are already working hard to provide pollen and nectar:



Mallow



Scabious



Fuchsia

I've put up some more bee hotels. I've got quite a collection now.



Homes for bees

I was hoping that the new ones would provide homes for leafcutter bees, but I've not seen any sign of them. However, there are now tiny Scissor Bees using the smallest holes. Apparently, the males sleep inside flowers.



Scissor Bee

Identify the residents of your own bee hotels:

<https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2019/07/Bee-hotel-v.2.pdf>

My cameras are still watching out for nocturnal visitors. On rainy nights, I've seen a large frog hopping around the garden. I have even seen a bat, which is a first for my garden. The mice are still busy stealing as much food as they can get, while trying to stay out of the way of the foxes and cats. They have to be fast, but they still get caught on camera every now and then.



Wood Mouse

Hedgehog activity in the garden this month has been pretty low. They seem to have finished their breeding season and gone back to practising mutual avoidance. I still get a few hogs coming and going to the feeding station most nights, but no more courtship behaviour and sadly, no hoglets. There have even been some nights without a single spiky visitor.



Hedgehog arriving



Hedgehog scratching

Click below for a cute clip of an itchy hog having a good scratch:

<https://youtu.be/bF1w3cu1e-Y>

Most of the mammal activity in the garden this month has been down to the foxes. This year's cubs are now so grown-up, they're almost indistinguishable from adults. They seem to be enjoying the leftover Hedgehog food I've been leaving out for them. This Hedgehog arrived to find the dish already nearly empty after two of the cubs had got there first.



To see a video of this, click the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVT7VSs0sg0>

They find natural food here too, this one found a large earthworm on the patio on a wet night.



Click the link for a video of this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D9Mps8YOek>

Click the link below to learn about the diet of an urban fox:

<http://www.thefoxwebsite.net/urbanfoxes/urbandiet>

At the start of this month some of the cubs were still able to wriggle inside the Hedgehog feeding station for a free meal. This one squeezed inside to find it already occupied by a hungry hog.



Click here to see a video of this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5hvk2K51Jc>

At least one of them has grown too big for the entrance and started trying to dismantle it, but still couldn't get inside. I haven't seen any of them get inside for weeks now. It looks like the Hedgehogs' food is safe again. At least until the next generation of cubs arrives!



Click here for video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YHUAhmWrL0>

The young fox with the eye injury is doing really well. I've been calling her 1Eye. Within a week it looked a lot better and no longer appeared to be uncomfortable. At first, there was no reflection at all from that eye, but over the last few weeks, the shine seems to be gradually returning. It's more obvious from some angles than others, but there is definite improvement. I hope this means the eye is starting to function again. I don't know whether this means she can see normally, but it doesn't

seem to cause any problems finding food. You can see the progress of healing in the sequence of pictures below:



At the end of June



A week later



No light reflected



Slight improvement



Much better



Still not perfect

Click below to find out why some animals' eyes shine:

<https://www.scienceabc.com/nature/animals/why-do-certain-animals-eyes-glow-in-the-dark.html>

I enjoyed watching 1Eye trying out her pouncing skills on a Hedgehog. The hog didn't seem too bothered. As soon as 1Eye left the garden, it made its way back into the feeding station for a second helping.

To see a video of this pounce, click the link:

<https://youtu.be/BVyXcovP5IY>

To see a video of 1Eye and another of the cubs 'playing' in the garden, click the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGMb8A44jiM>

I love seeing new or unusual behaviour, so I was delighted, if a little baffled, when one young fox was caught on camera dragging blanket weed out of the pond. I can't really explain exactly why, but I suppose it saves me a job!



To see a short video of this behaviour, click the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8vSclnj35E>

It's always interesting to see animals interacting with each other too. I was pleased to see that, when a squabble broke out over the food dish, 1Eye was able to hold her own, even if she didn't win in the end.



To see a video of this squabble, click the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX_sxFVvzek

3Paws is still around, but I haven't seen her many times this month. However, on one visit she was tolerating the presence of one of this year's cubs which gives me confirmation, at last, that they are hers, or at least very closely related to her.



To see a video of this visit, click the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVuyhhd-sg>

And finally, one of the young foxes treated me to a daylight visit early one morning, it's always nice to see them in full colour.



For a video of this daytime visit, click the link below:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= RWT4gjGhbs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWT4gjGhbs)

So far, summer has been a very different season to spring. When I started writing, back in March, Spring was just beginning. Now the frenzy of breeding has settled down, I'm enjoying watching the year's youngsters grow up. All of them, from fledglings to fox cubs will soon be independent adults preparing for their first winter. To see how they fare over the rest of the summer, come back next time. I'll be back at the end of August, with another update on what has been happening in my garden.