

Confined to the garden- week 11

We are now allowed to have guests in our gardens and meet with up to six people from other households, so long as we stay outdoors and keep at least 2m apart. Some children have even gone back to school. Some people are saying its too soon to ease the lockdown. Only time will tell, I suppose.

I was pleased to see a new species of bird visiting my garden this week. I wasn't fast enough to get a picture, but a Goldfinch briefly landed on a feeder while I was having my lunch and brightened up my day.

For advice on how to attract birds to your garden, click the link below:

<https://community.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/b/notesonnature/posts/how-to-attract-birds-to-your-garden-ten-top-tips>

I've been making improvements for pollinators in my garden. I've been planting bee-friendly flowers and putting up bee hotels. I don't want to forget about other pollinators though, especially butterflies. One plant well-known for attracting butterflies is Buddleia. I've been growing some Buddleia from seed but I'm impatient. I want to start attracting butterflies. Driving home from a site visit for work last week, I noticed that one of my local nurseries had re-opened. I couldn't resist the temptation to speed things up and came home with this:



My new Buddleia

I'm developing a habit of reallocating all my unspent petrol money to pollinator friendly plants. I also bought a small Lemon Balm plant because I just love the smell. Although I have no idea where I'm

going to put it. I have a spot in mind for the Buddleia though. I want a fast-growing bush to provide screening in front of an inadequate fence and this one should do the job while also providing nectar for butterflies. If you have butterflies already visiting your garden and you'd like to identify them, try using the guide on the Butterfly Conservation website.

To identify butterflies, click the link below:

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/identify-a-butterfly>

One of my mini meadows is really taking off. I scattered mixed wildflower seed into this container a couple of months ago. I hope to see flowers this year. I recognise some of them already, but others are a mystery. I'll have to wait for them to flower to find out what they are.



Mini meadow

If you have found a wildflower, in your garden or on a walk, and you don't know what to call it, you could try this online identification guide.

To identify wildflowers, click the link below:

<http://mywildflowers.com/identify.asp>

There are some more flowers starting to bloom in the garden now that we're into June. Here are a few of them.



Weigela and Honeysuckle



Two varieties of Lavender



Rose Campion

I hope that next year I will be able to offer a wider range of flowers for pollinators to visit.

Of course, not all my visitors are pollinators. 3Paws keeps coming back and trying to get some of the food I'm leaving out for her, but she is often too late. One night this week, she came early enough to

find food in the bowl but unfortunately there was also a Hedgehog in the bowl and poor 3Paws couldn't get to the contents.



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

[https://youtu.be/QAhlzB\\_p9V0](https://youtu.be/QAhlzB_p9V0)

My cameras also caught a first brief glimpse of what I can only assume is one of 3Paws' cubs. She wasn't with it and it didn't stay long, but I hope to see it again.



To see a video of the cub's brief visit, click the link below:

<https://youtu.be/R6L3TsyQ7W8>

Hedgehogs are supposed to travel up to 2 miles each night in their search for food and mates. One of the female hogs visiting my garden seems to have given up roaming and is spending long periods here, often not venturing far from the food bowl. This is the same hog 3Paws found blocking her

access to the food. One night this week, she spent a record-breaking six hours here. She arrived just before 10pm. She spent most of her time at the bowl, eating and being courted by a male hog. He gave up after a while but she stayed put, drinking from the pond every so often and having an occasional snuffle round the lawn, then she left just after 4am as it was starting to get light. She clearly hasn't read the book that says Hedgehogs travel miles each night. I'm not sure whether I should be concerned about this seemingly unusual behaviour.



Occupying the bowl

Early on during her occupation of the food bowl on the patio, a drama was unfolding over by the feeding station. The cast of this mini soap opera was another female, her over-zealous suitor and a smaller male with an injured leg who was trying his best to leave without being noticed. As is fairly standard for my garden now, the smaller male ended up in the pond, but it didn't stop there. The larger male repeatedly pushed his rival back into the water as he tried to escape. The female didn't seem impressed by this aggressive behaviour and left pretty quickly. Her suitor was so preoccupied that he didn't even notice she had gone. The female in the food bowl wasn't interested in his advances either and he eventually left via the hole under the back gate, presumably in search of his lady-friend. The injured male followed after a while but the female in the food bowl just carried on eating.



To see the whole dramatic episode, click the link below:

<https://youtu.be/tY11onB1WFg>

I am now looking out for the little male with the injured leg. It's hard to tell from some angles but as he left the garden one of the trail cameras captured a clear view. His back-left leg is very swollen, it looks broken and/or badly infected. I will try to catch him and take him to a Hedgehog rescue charity for treatment. As he is a male, I don't need to worry about removing him from any dependant hoglets. However, waiting up late enough for him and telling him apart from the others in the dark is not as easy as you might think!

For advice on when a Hedgehog might need your help, click the link below:

<http://www.hedgehog-rescue.org.uk/leavealone.php>

Perhaps the most helpful thing anyone can do for garden wildlife at the moment is to provide water. This has been the driest spring on record and it's not just Hedgehogs that are getting thirsty. Water is essential to all wildlife from bumblebees to blackbirds, and it's likely to be hard to find for the rest of the summer. If you want to do more than just put out a dish, you could dig a pond. If you don't have the space for a pond, you might have room for a mini-wetland at the bottom of your drainpipe. I love this idea, but my drainpipe feeds into a water butt.



Drainpipe wetland (picture from WWT website below)

To see how to create a drainpipe wetland, click the link below:

<https://www.wwt.org.uk/discover-wetlands/gardening-for-wetlands/how-to-build-a-mini-drainpipe-wetland/>

The pair of hogs in my final clip spill almost all the water out of one of the bowls, trying to get out of the way when they are charged by a second male. Water bowls are frequently knocked flying by enthusiastic courtship or fighting. It's a good job they can't knock the pond over, so they've always got water available.



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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bUJN7Dlwxs>

Keep checking back here for more updates on my garden. They may have to become less frequent as lockdown restrictions are gradually lifted, but I will be writing again next week and news about the lives of my nocturnal visitors will still be available on my YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCg7gSnXpjeo85XqoY35hTwg>