

**Affpuddle & Turnerspuddle
Parish Wildlife Newsletter
No 2022/48 4 Aug 2022**



ID Question:

Kate Gainsford: this is on the wall of our conservatory....
Not moving one millimetre. About 25mm (1 inch).

Ian Cross: It's the chrysalis of a Large White butterfly.

Kate Gainsford: Of course. I should have noticed more of them. We have noticed lots of Large Whites about but I didn't connect the two because the caterpillar looks as though it would produce something more exotic. Should I put it in the garden?



Ian Cross: it would be difficult to detach without damaging it. It might emerge in the conservatory in a few days, or it might try to overwinter. I agree, the caterpillars (below) do look a bit too exotic for the butterflies.

Large White chrysalis
Photo: Kate Gainsford



Strawberry Seed Beetle

Adrian Middleton: In mid-July I found a certain ground beetle drawn to a light in my garden. There were not just one or two but about a thousand individuals - handfuls in fact. It was one of those very warm overcast evenings. The event appeared to be a "one-off". Hamish Murray identified the beetle as the very common Strawberry Seed Beetle (*Harpalus rufipes*). It is omnivorous including eating seeds and is common in arable areas especially where it is dry. With strawberries still on the menu I should not have been surprised to find it!



Strawberry Seed Beetle (*Harpalus rufipes*) Photo by Adrian Middleton

Wildlife under stress

Ian Cross: It's not unusual to find a dead shrew lying in the middle of a track, apparently in perfect condition, with no sign of a violent death, yet totally lifeless. I find them from time to time, perhaps on a few occasions each year and, apart from a moment's musing on what may have caused its death, it's not a particularly noteworthy event.

However, on a recent morning walk through Piddle Wood and Kite Hill Plantation – a length of no more than 700 metres – I came across four of these forlorn corpses. They were scattered separately and constituted one Pygmy Shrew, two Common Shrews and a Mole.

Now, this was something out of the ordinary. What could have caused this mass extermination? As I pondered, two things struck me. Firstly, these weren't the only ones – I had been finding dead shrews quite frequently on morning walks in the previous week or so. Secondly, there was something that linked this unfortunate quartet and all the other recent deaths.

They were all small mammals – obviously – but they were also all insectivores: mammals that made a living hunting small invertebrates of all kinds. This perhaps was their undoing. During this long dry spell all sorts of terrestrial creepy-crawlies will have been less active. At risk of desiccation, they will have 'hunkered-down' and reduced their activity in distance and duration, making them much harder to find.

Insectivorous mammals live their lives on the edge at the best of times. All sorts of figures are given for how much and how constantly shrews need to eat just to keep their metabolism ticking over. Perhaps this drought has been the straw that broke the camel's back and tipped them over into starvation. Just a theory really, but I would be interested to hear if anyone else has noticed more dead shrews than usual.

Perfectly Coiled Poo!

Helen Lilley: We spotted this perfectly coiled bird poo on a balustrade!



Bird poo photos by Helen Frost

Many thanks to: Ian Cross, Wildlife Advisor,
Campbell De Burgh, Briantspuddle Community Website
Margaret Cheetham, Editor

Please send your contributions to macheetham@hotmail.co.uk.
I will confirm receipt. If you don't hear from me it means I haven't received
your email, so please make contact through
Briantspuddle Community Website and we'll sort out a Plan B.