

Nature's Calendar

Summer



Summer is a great time to explore the South Hams, the hedgerows are verdant, the birds and mammals are busy feeding their young and there are plenty of butterflies on the wing on sunny days.

June

Buzzards are seen all year round but in the summer they are more visible sitting on fence posts and telegraph poles or soaring on the thermals. The summer months are the best time to spot a hobby; these small agile falcons prey on swallows and dragonflies! Watch the swallows, house martins and swifts as they reel around the sky feeding on insects. Pennywort is displaying its spike of cream-green flowers, look for it on damp banks and stonewalls and along the verges look for the ox-eye daisy.

July

Bracken and ferns begin to dominate the hedgerow giving them a vivid green hue. A common hedgerow bird is the yellow hammer with its yellow and black plumage, listen out for its call 'a little bit of bread and no cheeze'. Ragwort is flowering, look out for the black and yellow caterpillars of the cinnabar moth, which feed on its leaves. Butterflies are in their plenty; gatekeeper, speckled wood, comma and meadow brown can all be seen easily in the hedgerows.

If you are visiting the coast, listen out for the high pitch chattering of the sandwich terns, which can be seen diving onto bait fish such as sand eel, driven to the surface by shoals of mackerel.

Left - fox; southern hawker dragonfly;
From top - yellowhammer; pennywort;
Far top right - comma butterfly





whitethroat

August

The hedgerow vegetation is beginning to scorch in the high-summer sun but there is still plenty to see: honeysuckle, with its aromatic scent which is strongest in the evenings, is visited by moths which drink nectar from its trumpet-shaped flowers using their long tongues. A day flying moth to look out for is the humming bird hawk moth, it is easy to recognise with its pinkish body as it hovers, flittering from flower to flower. Birds seen perching on top of the hedgerows include whitethroats, stonechats and linnets.

On a balmy summers evening watch the bats as they fly energetically around catching moths and other insects.

High summer brings more visitors from the south, basking sharks move into our waters to feed on plankton.

From left - common blue damselfly; fragrant orchid; speckled wood butterfly; ox-eye daisies

Photos by Jon Morris, Clare Morris, David Hackford and Alex Marr

Wildlife Hot Spots for summer

Hot Spots

Slapton Ley OS SX 827 443

The ley is a good place to visit for an all-round summer experience, reed and sedge warblers chattering in the reed bed, great crested grebes with their young on the open water and a plethora of dragon and damselflies.

Andrew's Wood OS SX 713 520

August is the best time to see the flowering heath lobelia as well as plenty of butterflies including purple hairstreak and silver washed fritillary.

Wembury Marine Conservation Area OS SX 518 484

Go for a rock pool ramble and discover the marine life.

Dartington Hall OS SX 796 627

There are both formal and wild garden areas to look at. In the rough grassland both marsh and fragrant orchids can be seen.

