

FOTEB May- August 2014 Sightings & News update

Two thirds of the way into the year, and this is FOTEB update to the end of August 2014: For more detailed month listings please visit the relevant listings on the Archive page on the website. The weather information is supplied by Bernard Burton. Bernard Burton has been recording the weather alongside the Emm Brook since 1976. His weather station originally situated at Emmbrook Secondary School till 1996 and now at Emmbrook Junior School daily monitors the weather. For a more detailed analysis of the monthly weather visit his website www.woksat.info.

Weather

MAY 2014

Genera Summary: Mild and Wet with Below Average Sunshine

Temperature: This May's mean was just above the current 30 year average, and in this millennium 9 Mays have been warmer and 5 colder.

Fortunately for gardeners, the 3rd was an isolated frosty night, and there were only 7 other nights this month with a minimum below normal.

Rainfall: This has been quite a wet May, with the total highest since 2008, and there were 5 more wet days than average. Rainfall duration is also 15.6 hours above average and highest since 2007. Despite this, there was a 6 day dry spell ending on the 19th, and only 0.4 mm of rain fell in the 8 days to the 20th. Rainfall on some days was showery in nature, with some brief heavy falls, especially on the 1st, 10th, 12th and 22nd, with the month's highest rainfall rate of 55 mm/hr during a thunderstorm on the 22nd, and small hail fell on the 12th.

Sunshine: This month's total is lowest since 2007, yet there was a notable sunny period from the 14th to the 19th giving a total of 71.4 hours, an average of 11.9 hours per day. Overall there were 14 days with less than 3 hours, 14 with more than 6 hours, 9 with more than 9 hours and 6 with more than 12 hours.

Wind: The mean wind speed this month is just below average, but the month's highest gust of 46 mph on the 10th is second highest after 1996 for May in the past 27 years. The period 7th to the 11th saw fresh or strong winds every day, but speeds were light or moderate for the rest of the month

JUNE 2014

General Summary: Warm with Above Average Sunshine and Long Dry Episodes but Above Average Rainfall

Temperature: The mean this June is firmly in the warm category, being 0.9° above the long-term median. Daily maxima were near or below normal from the 1st to the 5th, and 15th to 20th, and again from the 25th onwards. It is the first June since 1991 where the temperature has failed to reach 25°.

Rainfall: Although much of the month was dry the total rainfall is 30 % above average, entirely due to the torrential downpour on the 13th/14th, when a prolonged thunderstorm produced 38.2 mm, or 78 % of an average June's total in just under 6 hours. Had this fall not occurred, the total for the month would have been only close to half the average. There was local flooding and reports of lightning damage to property. This daily fall is highest for June since 1994, and ranks 6th highest for the month in the past 111 years. Up to the 7th rainfall was about average, there was then a prolonged dry spell to the 25th punctuated only by the event on the 13th. Two showery days towards the end of the month added another 12.5 mm to the total. Rainfall duration is 67 % of average. There were two dry spells, one of 5 days ended on the 12th and another of 12 days started on the 14th.

Sunshine: This has been quite a sunny June, with the highest total since 2010, and before that 2006. After a rather dull start sunshine accumulation was above average from the 5th to the 14th, then near average to the 20th, above again to the 25th, then below for a rather dull end to the month. Overall there were 4 days with less than 3 hours, 19 with more than 6 hours, 12 with more than 9 hours and 5 with more than 12 hours.

Wind: This has been a quiet month windwise. The mean speed on the windiest day and the month's highest gust are both lowest for June in the past 27 years.

JULY 2014

General Summary: Very warm, Dry, and Sunny.

Temperature: The mean temperature this month is lower than last year's, but higher than any other July back to 2006, which holds the long-term record for the hottest July.

Rainfall: This month's rainfall, while around 2/3 of average, is 2nd lowest after 2013 since 1998. The highest daily fall is also on the low side at 7.5 mm below average, and is also lowest since 1998. As befits a summer month, much of the rain was showery in nature and as a result large variations in daily and monthly rainfall in places relatively close together is to be expected.

Thunder was more frequent than average, and occurred on the 8th, 18th, 25th and 28th, the storm overnight on the 18th giving a spectacular lightning display. Rain rates reached 88 mm/hr in that storm, and a similar 90 mm/hr in the storm on the 25th, with small hail also. Although there was plenty of dry weather, with 2 more dry days than average, and 76% of the month's total fell on just 4 days, the 4th, 17th, 18th and 25th, but there was only one dry spell, of 5 days ending on the 3rd..

Sunshine: This has been a sunny month overall, with 59 hours more sunshine than the July average since 2000. Although the month got off to a good start, with the first 4 days all having over 60 % of the maximum. the following 9 days had below normal sunshine, but after the 13th sunshine accumulation was near or above normal, with over 10 hours sunshine on the 17th, 18th, 22nd to 24th, 29th and 30th. Overall there was 1 day with less than 3 hours, 20 with more than 6 hours, 13 with more than 9 hours, 5 with more than 12 hours, and 1 with more than 15 hours.

AUGUST 2014

General Summary: Wet and Rather Dull with Temperatures Well Below Average

Temperature: In terms of the overall mean, this has been the coldest August since 1993, although the mean maximum is only lowest since 2010. It is also the first month since November last with a below average temperature. The mean minimum is also lowest since 1993, but 2007, 2005 and 1998 were only 0.1° higher than this August. Daily temperatures were near normal up to the 13th, and again after the 27th, but were below normal otherwise.

Worthy of note, a slight ground frost occurred on the 20th, 21st and 24th The 20th of August is the earliest date for a ground frost since before 1981, and is 37 days earlier than average. In the past 35 years, only 2012 also had a ground frost in August.

Rainfall: This has been a wet August overall, with the 4th highest August total in the past 39 years. The driest weather was between the 15th and 24th and again after the 26th. During the first 7 days rainfall accumulation was near average, but a wet period over the following week resulted in a surplus of 35 mm by the 14th. There were sizable 2 day totals of 23 mm on the 8th/9th, and 22 mm on the 25th/26th. The number of days with 5 mm or more is equal highest in the past 39 years. Thunder was more frequent than average with storms on the 10th, 11th, 12th and 14th, and with small hail on the 11th and large, 6 mm diameter, hail on the 14th.

Sunshine: Compared with average, sunshine this month fell short of expectations. Overall there were 8 days with less than 3 hours, 12 with more than 6 hours, 4 with more than 9 hours and 2 with more than 12 hours.

Wildlife Sightings

MAY 2014

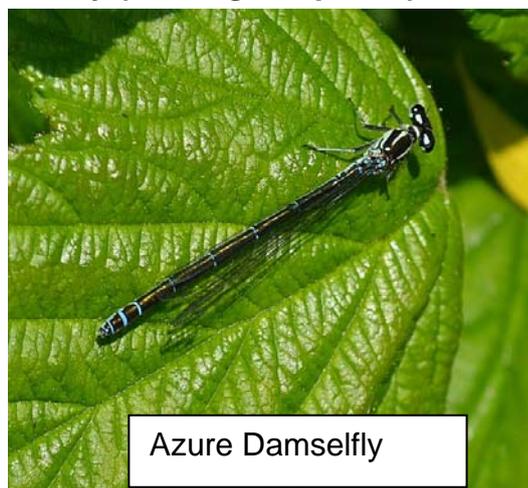
Birds

Another good breeding season along the Emm with successful breeding (Juveniles seen) for **Blackcap, Starling, Whitethroat, Blue Tit**(using Nest Boxes 13,15 and 42 in Area 5) , **Great Tit, Wood Pigeon** and **Great spotted Woodpecker** seen feeding young at the nest. In Area 1 Gorrick Woods **Nightjar** were heard churring and a roding **Woodcock** was seen by Paul Bright Thomas. The **Kingfisher** was seen all month and **Canada Geese** were using the flooded Smiths Walk Balancing Pond. Towards the end of the month a Coal Tit became a regular visitor to my Area 5 garden feeders and probably bred.



Insects & Spiders

Dragonflies and Damselflies started to emerge with the first **Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*)**, seen in Area 10 Dinton Pastures on the 3rd , a **Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagana cyathigerum*)** was seen in Area 5 on the 17th and an **Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*)** on the 18th with a **Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagana cyathigerum*)**. On the 25th a Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*) was also seen in Area 5. Butterflies this month were **Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*)**, **Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*)** , **Holly Blue(*Celastrina argiolus*)**, **Orange tip (*Anthocharis cardamines*)**, **Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)**, **Peacock (*Inachis io*)** and **Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)**. Day flying moths included **Cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*)**, **Clouded Border (*Lomaspilis margineta*)** and **Nettle Tap (*Anthoplia fabriciana*)**. It's that time of the year and the **Shield Bug (*Coreus marinator*)** becomes very visible on riverside Docks. A bit of a bug hunt in the riverside vegetation mid month revealed the, **Red-and-black Froghopper (*Cercopis vulnnerztaa*)** , **Spotted Cranefly (*Nephrotma addendiculata*)**, **7 Spot Ladybird (*Coccinella 7 punctata*)** , **Red-and-black Froghopper**



(*Malachius bipustulatus*) and a **Nettle Weevil** (*Phylloobius pomaceus*). A **May fly** (*Ephemera dancia*) was also seen. Attracted to the streetlights in Area 5 on the 16th was a **May bug** (*Melolontha melolontha*). A **Stag Beetle** (*Lucanus cervus*) was also seen in my neighbours garden.

Mammals

On the 30th a Wood Mouse was seen in Area 5. **Common Pipistrelle** (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) bat were seen in Area 5 on the 30th and 2nd and in Area 1 on the 17th.

Plants/Trees

Comfrey (*Symphyllum officinale*) was seen in flower in both its purple and white forms all along the Emm. The white flowers of the umbellifer **Cow Parsley** (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) sprung into life and the Wildflower meadow still has **Cowslips**, **Cuckoo flower** and **Meadow Buttercup**.

JUNE 2014

Birds

A FOTEB walk around Area 1 (Heath lake and Gorrick Woods) on the 21st was very productive, a total of 25 birds were heard and seen. Highlights were



Grey Heron flying from the island, a **Grey Wagtail** feeding in the outlet from the pond.

Mute Swan with cygnets. **Buzzard** and **Green Woodpecker** heard in Gorrick Woods. In Area 10, **Swallows** successfully bred with juveniles seen at the Lavells Lake car park field, alighting on the telegraph wires by Fraser Cottington.

Swift numbers peaked

at 20+over Area 5 on the 18th. On the 6th 2 **Nightjar**, but probably 3 were heard churring by Peter Kendall in Gorrick Wood Plantation (Area 1) on the 2nd a fly over **Oystercatcher** heading NW was seen over Area 5. I was alerted to its presence by its distinctive loud peep-ing call. 2 **Common Tern** was also seen heading SE over Paul Bright Thomas's Area 4 garden.

Insects & Spiders

A walk around Area 4 & 5 on the 29th produced an unexpected feast of Lepidoptera. In Area 4 by the balancing pond several **Meadow Browns** (*Maniola jurtina*), were in the longer grass, along with the years first **Ringlet** (*Aphantopus hyperantus*). Alongside the Emm in Area 5, **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*) were seen. The Wildflower meadow produced another

first with an **Essex Skipper (*Thymelicus lineola*)**. Near Dragon fly bridge, on the Nettles was the day flying micro moth ***Esperia oliviella***

A FOTEB walk around Heathlake in Area 1 on the 21st produced a good assortment of Dragon and Damselflies. Seen were **Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*)**, **Beautiful Demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*)**, **Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*)**, **Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)**, **Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)** and what must have been a **Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*)**. On the 12th a **Four-spotted Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)** and **Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*)** at the flooded Smiths Walk Balancing pond. On the 7th in Area 5 Damselflies were everywhere, seen were male and female **Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*)**, **Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)** and a **Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*)**



Four-spotted Chaser

Butterflies this month included the first **Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)** of the year in Area 5 on the 1st a **Speckled Wood**, several **Meadow Brown** *Maniola jurtina*, **Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*)** and the first **Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)** butterfly of the year. Day flying moths were out with large numbers of the tiny **Nettle Tap (*Anthophila fabriciana*)**. A **Silver Y (*Autographa gamma*)** was disturbed from the grass. In my garden a ***Celypha lacunona*** flew from the shrubbery and a **Light Emerald (*Campasa margaritata*)** was observed on my kitchen ceiling. In the Wildflower Meadow in Area 5 were seen also the grass moth ***Crambus pasculla*** The moth **Yellow Shell (*Camptogramma bilineata*)** was on a roadside tree in Area 10 and at the Sandford Lane Car Park field. The day flying moth **Burnet Companion (*Euclidia glyphica*)** was also seen. In Area 8 off Old Forest Road a first for the FOTEB list was the Longhorn Beetle, **Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn (*Agapanthia villosoviridescens*)**.

Mammals

More than usual mammal activity this month with

On the 21st a young **Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*)** was seen crossing the path in Area 1 (Gorrick Wood) before disappearing into the woods. On the



1st in Area 8 off Old Forest Road a male and female **Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*)** were seen at 06:45

On the 18th Chas and Fran Sticklers Area 5 garden had a tatty **Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)** wandering around it. On the 5th at 21:45 in Area 5 by Arthur Road a **Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)** bat was seen flying around the street lights.

Plants/Trees

The edible nuts of **Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)** started emerging and on the banks of the Emm were **Hedge Woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*)**. This is a common, perhaps unremarkable, plant with one defining feature - its unpleasant and astringent smell. This smell is particularly apparent when the plant is crushed. Magenta flowers appear between June and October and are pollinated by bees.

JULY 2014

Birds

As appears to be the norm the **Kingfisher** was again fairly visible all month at various locations. On the 30th a **Hobby** was over Area 4 in Paul Bright Thomas's garden. A **Kestrel** was in Area 10. The warm weather earlier in the month produced plenty of sightings of **Red Kite** and **Buzzard** riding the thermals. On the 12th approx 30-40 **Gulls** appeared in the skies over Area 5 feeding on what I believe to be a flying ant eruption.

On the 24th an early morning visit to Area 1 (Heathlake) and a scan of the lake, produced positive signs of breeding with **Coot**, **Moorhen** and **Mute Swan** all with young. The usual assortment of **Mallards** was also in evidence with **Great crested grebe** and a male **Tufted duck**. A solitary **Black headed gull** and a Grey Heron were on the island with a Grey Wagtail feeding on the sandy beach area. Also visited was Area 2 behind Tesco's, highlights here were 5 **Swallows** flying over the fields. Several **Red kite** were also enjoying the thermals. Over Area 4 Paul Bright Thomas saw an adult **Common Gull** flew over heading S and 7 **Swift** were circling overhead.

On the 23rd a **Whitethroat** was moving through the trees in my area 5 garden. Paul Bright-Thomas's garden watching paid dividends again this month with a **Ring-necked Parakeet** fly over his garden and a juvenile **Goldcrest** calling loudly from a Blackthorn bush in his garden.

Insects & Spiders

Grasshoppers appear more this month with In Area 9 on the 15th at



Dark bush Cricket

Blackberry Gardens a **Short-winged Conehead (*Conocephalus dorsalis*)**.

A **Dark Bush Cricket (*Pholidoptera grisoaptera*)** on the 11th in Area 10 and on the 10th a **Roesel's bush-cricket (*Metrioptera roeseliand*)** and Meadow Grasshopper (***Chorthippus parallelus***).

Butterflies seen this month included on the 14th in Area 8 **Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)** and **Marbled White (*Melanargia galathea*)**. **Meadow Brown**

(***Maniola jurtina***), **Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*)** and **Small Skipper (*Pyronia tithonus*)** seen on the 20th. Earlier in the month seen in the Wildflower Meadow were Ringlet (***Aphantopus hyperantus***) and Meadow Brown (***Maniola jurtina***). Alongside the river **Comma (*Polygonia c-album*)**,

Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*) and the first **Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*)** of the year was seen on the 5th. Dragonflies included a **Female Ruddy Darter** in Area 9 at Blackberry Gardens on the 23rd. A new species for me, and the FOTEB list.. A male **Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)** was hawking for insects near Ripplestream Bridge in Area 4 on the 22nd. and an Immature female **Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)** was seen to the rear of Morrisons on the 9th. Numerous male and female **Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*)** were also seen.

Plants/Trees

In Area 8 off Forest Road **Common Yellow Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*)** was in full bloom.. One of its common names is Butter and Eggs, it has "snap dragon" like flowers. Along the Emm several forms of Willowherb, could be seen this month. The 2 most common forms are **Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*)** and **Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*)**. One of my favourites **Meadow Sweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*)** comes out this month . Meadowsweet is a member of the rose family that favours wet habitats such as ditches, damp meadows and riverbanks. Its leaves are sometimes covered with a bright orange rust fungus. Meadowsweet flowers from June to September, its sprays of tiny creamy-white flowers standing atop tall stems.



Fungi

A **Pleated Inkcap (*Parasola plicatilis*)**. was seen in Area 5.

Mammals

2 **Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*)** were seen in Area 2, behind Tesco's this morning by Pat Taylor on the 27th.

Fish

On the 6th whilst pulling Balsam in Area 7 by Emmbrook School, 2 large fish were seen to swim up the Emm, by Sue Farrington and Fran Stickler. One at least was believed to be a **Pike (*Esox lucius*)**.

AUGUST 2014

Birds

With migration in full swing the last **Swift** reported was 1 over Area 4 (Woosehill) seen by Paul Bright Thomas on the 29th. On the 30th in Area 10 Lavells Lake Car Park field a juvenile **Redstart** was found by Brian Bennett and Fraser Cottington had 6 **Yellow Wagtail** fly over. **Hobby** sightings have been down on previous years. I'm not sure why. The **Kingfisher** was seen all along the Emm this month from the A321 by Tesco's to Dinton Pastures. I can only assume there is more than 1 bird involved. With the balancing pond



at Smiths Walk still flooded it has proved a good opportunity for water birds to breed. **Mallard, Moorhen and Coot** has all successfully bred. On the 9th a **Little Grebe** was also making use of this new facility. A first for me on my Emmbrook list. Other returning migrants **Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Swallow, Sand Martin** and **House Martin** trickled through all month heading south.

Insects

The first and only **Hornet** seen this month was to the rear of the Clifton Rd shops in Area 6 on the 31st. August is always a good time to see Galls. A Gall is an abnormal growth produced by a plant or other host under the influence of another organism. It involves enlargement and/or proliferation of host cells, and provides both shelter and food or nutrients for the invading organism. On the 23rd on a single Oak tree near Ripplestream Bridge to the rear of Morrisons, were **Silk-button Gall (*Neuroterus numismalis*)**, **Spangled Gall (*Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*)**, **Smooth-spangled Gall (*Neuroterus alpibes*)** and the **Oak Artichoke Gall (*Andricus fecundator*)**. All these

Galls are caused by Wasps or Sawflies. In my Area 5 garden on the 22nd the Goldenrod proved to be a magnet for Hoverflies. Hoverflies are a fascinating group of insects. They belong to the family Syrphidae, a family within the order Diptera (true flies). As they are often brightly coloured and very common in gardens many people will be familiar with them. Many have black and yellow markings and so are often confused with bees and wasps. Seen



were Pellucid Hoverfly (***Volucella pellucens***), Long Hoverfly (***Sphaerophoria scripta***), Dead Head Hoverfly (***Myathropa florum***), ***Dasysyrphus albostrigatus***, ***Eristalis arbustorum*** and ***Eristalis interruptus***. Butterflies seen this month included **Peacock (*Inachis io*)**, **Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)**, **Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*)**, **Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*)**, **Small White (*Pieris rapae*)**, **Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*)**, **Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)**, **Comma (*Polygonia c-album*)** and a **Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*)**. Highlight of the month however was a **Silver Washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*)** seen and photographed by Fraser Cottington this Silver Washed Fritillary was in the Area 10 Lavells Lake Car Park field off Sandford Lane. This brings this year FOTEB Butterfly count to 19 species. Dragonflies seen included **Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)** and **Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*)** found in the Area 5 Wildflower Meadow. Another first for the FOTEB list.

Mammals

2 Pipistrelle bats were seen in Area 5 at 06:10 on the

Crustaceans

On the 24th during the Balsam pulling in Area 4 a **Crayfish** species was seen as Chas Stickler and Malcolm Dunmore were walking in the river near Kingfisher Bridge. It is believed to be a **Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*)** Signal crayfish are from North America; they were introduced to Sweden and Finland in 1960s and then distributed throughout Europe (including Britain). They are the most abundant of the introduced crayfish in the UK and now occur in many rivers in England, Wales and Scotland and are spreading along rivers, streams and canals, becoming very abundant. Signal crayfish carry crayfish plague and compete with the UK native White-clawed crayfish for shelter. They have a ferocious appetite and a considerable impact on other freshwater animals as well as damaging our river banks through burrowing. Male Signal crayfish are usually up to 16cm in body length (females up to 12cm) and they have smooth with generally bluish-brown to reddish-brown body colour or light- to dark-brown. The best way to recognise them is their distinctive smooth claws with a white-turquoise patch on top of their claws at the joint between the two fingers of the claw, which they open wide to “signal” to other crayfish. The underside of their claws is brick red.

Plants/Trees

A good month for Blackberry pickers, along the Emm, as Blackberry (***Pieris brassicae***) seem to have provided a bumper crop. Other Autumn fruits visible were **Sloes** the fruit of **Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)** **Elder berries** the fruit of the **Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)**, The red berries of **Common Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)** and the berries of the **Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)** The nuts of the **Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)** proved a feast for the Squirrels.

For all the latest sightings visit www.foteb.org.uk

Don't forget anything that you see along the Emm no matter how insignificant can be emailed to me at foteb@hotmail.co.uk.

Thank you
Eddie Napper



