

## Summer Weather

As I write this the sun has come out at last.

But the weather this summer has really been awful – notable for both lack of sun and amount of rain. Although the main effect on humans (well, me anyway!) is no worse than attacks of irritation and depression, I have been wondering what effect the weather is having on our wildlife.

Wet weather is usually thought to have a bad effect on breeding birds – the baby birds tend to get chilled in the nest and it is more difficult for the adults to find food. However, there does not seem to be much evidence that this is the case this year. Many familiar birds seem to have done well (plenty of young Blue and Great Tits around) and the breeding season seems quite extended – I saw a Pied Wagtail on Dale Beach recently finding insects in the seaweed and flying off with beakfuls to feed youngsters. Many of us watched Greenfinches, Reed Buntings and Reed Warblers, who all have open nests, successfully fledge young on BBC Springwatch, through some remarkable downpours. Our swallows have fledged two sets of young, though on some days it must have been impossible for the adults to find any food. So perhaps they are tougher than we think! And of course, Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, Rooks and Jackdaws can easily find worms and suchlike in the damp soil.

But what of butterflies, moths, grasshoppers and dragonflies?? All typically denizens of balmy summer weather. I suspect that butterflies will have had difficulty finding mates as they only fly in dry warm weather, and although there were plenty of dragonflies earlier in the summer there were very few around in August. Whenever we have an odd sunny afternoon, a few butterflies appear on the buddleias and the Great Green Bush Crickets drill away in the hedges but I can't believe they are finding it easy. And there seem to be remarkably few moths. But it is hard to tell - we will really only be able to tell how bad a season it has been when we see what the insect populations are like next year.

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