

As June arrives, we begin to enter the most diverse time of the year for wildlife at Sandwich Bay. Spring migration slows down early in the month as the last migrants pass through and many of the earlier migrants are now well underway with breeding. As a result, the amount of birdsong also reduces as they no longer need to attract mates or establish their territory. The first two weeks of June, however, are still a good time for rare migrants with species such as Bee-eater, Red-footed Falcon and Marsh Warbler all recorded in previous years. It is also a good time for Honey-buzzards, this distinctive, scare raptor is only a passing visitor but is annually recorded soaring over on migration. Over at Pegwell Bay and Worth Marshes, Arctic-bound Ringed Plovers, Dunlins and Sanderlings are still recorded in the first week of the month before their migration ceases.

In the bushes around the area, the sound of young fledglings is commonplace, notably the pale-lemon yellow of freshly fledged Blue and Great Tits which squeak together as they flit through the vegetation in family parties. Long-tailed Tits also become very conspicuous as family parties combine into some very large flocks, almost always communicating with each other. On the scrape, the speckled Black-headed Gulls chicks become increasingly evident whilst other species such as Lapwings and Oystercatchers also have their young. Tufted Ducks are quite late breeders, but their black ducklings may suddenly become a familiar sight on trips to Restharrow Scrape.

On the insect-front, everything explodes into life with butterfly species such as Brown Argus, Common Blue, Large Skipper, Meadow Brown and Marbled White emerging in the grassland habitats. Moths are also reaching their peak, with the daily moth-trap containing a smorgasbord of species, some of them very rare species restricted to the Sandwich Bay area, others being migrants from Continental Europe. In the dunes, the rare Bright Wave moth can be observed in the day, this species being restricted to small patches of the East Kent Coast. Similarly, the Restharrow Moth is also worth keeping an eye out for.

Dragonflies and Damselflies also hit their peak. The rare Dainty Damselfly is on the wing during June, the population stronghold being found here at Sandwich Bay, where we have recently created some new pools to hopefully benefit this vital population. On RSPB Worth Marshes, the impressive green eyes of the large and rare Norfolk Hawker may be spotted as it zips past over the various waterways. Other species include Scarce Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer, Emperor and Broad-bodied Chaser. In recent years, the rare, distinctive Lesser Emperor can be found hawking over Restharrow Scrape, the distinctive powder-blue saddle catching the eye as it flies past.

On the beachfront, in areas of bare sand, the ferocious-looking Southern Dune Tiger Beetle can be found. This species scuttles at great speed across the terrain, catching other small invertebrates, the only Kent population is found here at Sandwich Bay.

Flora also reaches its peak. On the beachfront, thousands of Lizard Orchids grow, these impressive, large flowers an obvious feature of the landscape. The equally bizarre and rare Bedstraw Broomrape is also in flower. Meanwhile, in wetter areas, the Southern Marsh Orchids flower and in the grasslands, the pink Pyramidal Orchid also grows. In some areas, the bizarre flower of the Bee Orchid can also be found, this beautiful flower mimicking insect pollinators. On the Golf Courses, the tiny, rare Sand Catchfly grows, this species restricted to the sandy, ancient dunes here at the Bay. The beachfront also explodes into flower with plants such as Yellow-horned Poppy, Sea Kale, Sea Spurge, Sea Aster, Sea Bindweed and Restharrow all flowering. In the grasslands, the pink jewel-like flowers of Grass Vetchling stick out like a sore thumb amongst the long grasses.

Towards the end of the month, the very first signs of autumn bird migration can be observed. Grey Herons build-up in number, particularly juveniles that were hatched in the late winter and early spring.

Lapwings also become apparent in small, loose flocks and the first Teals can be seen on the marshes. At Pegwell Bay, failed breeders that can no longer take advantage of the plentiful Arctic summer may also be spotted with species such as Dunlin and Greenshank possible.



Dunlin- L. Sole



Grey Heron- S. Ray



Southern Dune Tiger Beetle- G. Lee

Dainty Damselfly- L. Sole





Norfolk Hawker- S. Reynaert



Lizard Orchid- S. Reynaert



Bright Wave- N. Harris



Tufted Duck with young- S. Ray