

# Maria Himsworth's Chillenden Blog

## August 2021

A Pollinating Buzz in my Rural Garden - A monthly look at how my rural garden is enjoyed by pollinating insects



I am usually quite relaxed about the challenges that the weather brings and accept that occasionally when a gale blows or it doesn't rain for weeks it can have a less than favourable impact on the garden. I am normally more concerned with the fact that our changing climate and the more turbulent weather it brings upsets the natural environment and the wildlife in my garden. This year though,

opening my garden with Kent Wildlife trust to invite people to come and discuss how they can make their gardens more wildlife friendly has meant that I have been a little more preoccupied with the look of my garden. Wanting the garden to be at its best on the day in question has meant I have definitely spent more time than normal tidying my flower beds with extra feeding, watering and staking when the wind blows!

I feed my plants in summer with homemade Comfrey mix. I grow Comfrey not only for this purpose but also because the bees love the flowers. Harvesting the leaves throughout the summer and sealing them in a container with rain water soon turns it into a smelly mix of green slime that is great for



flowering plants and vegetables.

The bees don't care if my *Rudbeckia laciniata* *Herbstsonne* that grow seven feet tall are windblown and bent in all directions and normally neither do I, but this year I have staked and tied them, climbing in between rose thorns to get at them and when the wind from the north blows again I am out there trying to keep them straight and all because I want them to look good on the day. But I should not have worried for the day was a great success. Helped by the wonderful volunteers from Kent Wildlife Trust and support from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and the Bat Conservation. Visitors all went away with ideas of how they could help pollinators and other wildlife in their gardens.



If you live in Kent there is still an opportunity to visit a wildlife garden, Kent Wildlife Trust have open gardens in Great Chart on the 26<sup>th</sup> September, you can book [here](#), and at East Farleigh on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October you can book [here](#)

### What was buzzing in August

At last this month I have seen Leafcutter Bees in the garden. They love the Cosmos, Tithonia and Dahlias and are lovely to photograph on these colourful flowers. It might be that these later flowering plants are what have attracted them into my garden. I now just need to tempt them to nest in my Bee hotels, they never have and I'm not sure why. It is easy to decipher the difference between the Mason Bees nests and the Leafcutters in your hotels as the Leafcutter Bees cut off discs of leaves to develop their nest arranging the nest cells and creating a terminal plug.

The bee hotel has been busy with little Resin Bees, *Heriades truncorum* and the Orange-vented Mason Bee *Osmia leaiana*. Also hanging around was a Ruby wasp this *Chrysidid* wasp was looking for the nests of Mason Bees. These Cuckoo wasps will lay their eggs in the nest of the host where their own larvae can consume the eggs or the larvae of the host bee. Another parasitic wasp the *Monodontomerus* wasp was seen on more than one occasion. Although some of the nests may be parasitised as this is the natural cycle of life it is a good idea to take some preventive measures to keep the build up of parasites and pests to a minimum. You can store the tubes that have been used in a garage over winter discarding any unused or predated ones and bringing them back out the following spring.



This will also give you the opportunity to clean out and replace your Bee hotel tubes.



This month I discovered a new interesting pollinator in my garden. One of Kent Wildlife Trust's volunteers at my open garden noticed a different wasp at my Bee hotel that turned out to be the Mournful Wasp, (named for it's all black colour) *Pemphredon lugubris*. This wasp will use dead wood to nest in so not sure if it was choosing to use the wood in the hotel or was just resting there. What a great wasp to have in your garden though, it turns out that it provisions its young with a supply of paralysed aphids, laying an egg and capping it off with mud. It can place as many as 40 in each cell, what a great natural pesticide!

I had a new butterfly in the garden this month the White-letter Hairstreak, *Satyrrium w-album*. Not sure why this elm-dependent butterfly was in my garden but it was enjoying the nectar of a late Allium flower, very unusual behaviour. As well as many other species on sunny days such as the Peacock, Common Blue, Meadow Brown, Comma, Red Admiral, Small tortoiseshell and of course the Large and Small White. My White *Buddleja* seems to be the favourite for most of these species.

Bumblebees have been busy and on cloudy days (there have been more than a few!) they certainly are the Bee that braves the cold to continue to forage. In particular the Common Carder Bee *Bombus pascuorum* seems particularly hardy. It is the time of the year when there are also many more males about and the Red Tailed Bumblebee, *Bombus lapidarius* males have been particularly numerous in the garden this month. You may remember me mentioning in a previous blog that when male bumblebees leave the nest they are not allowed to return. With the temperatures unseasonably low and the North wind blowing strong, on many days this month I found many a tired and listless male bees in the garden early in the morning, looking as if it was fighting hard to face another day!



August and September are great months to get out and about walking beyond our gardens to spot wildlife in your local area. Here in Kent we have 22 of the 24 Bumblebee species and 160 of the 270 wild bee species. Kent's Plan Bee have a blog telling you where to spot some of our wild bees in Kent.



<https://explorekent.org/blog/2021/08/24/kent-a-hotspot-for-wild-bees/>

Have a look at the Bumblebee Conservation Trusts species guide and get out there bee spotting!

Maria Himsworth - Follow my sightings on Twitter @HimsworthM