

# Ewelme Watercress Beds and Local Nature Reserve

Update on results of wildlife surveys for 2019



## Introduction

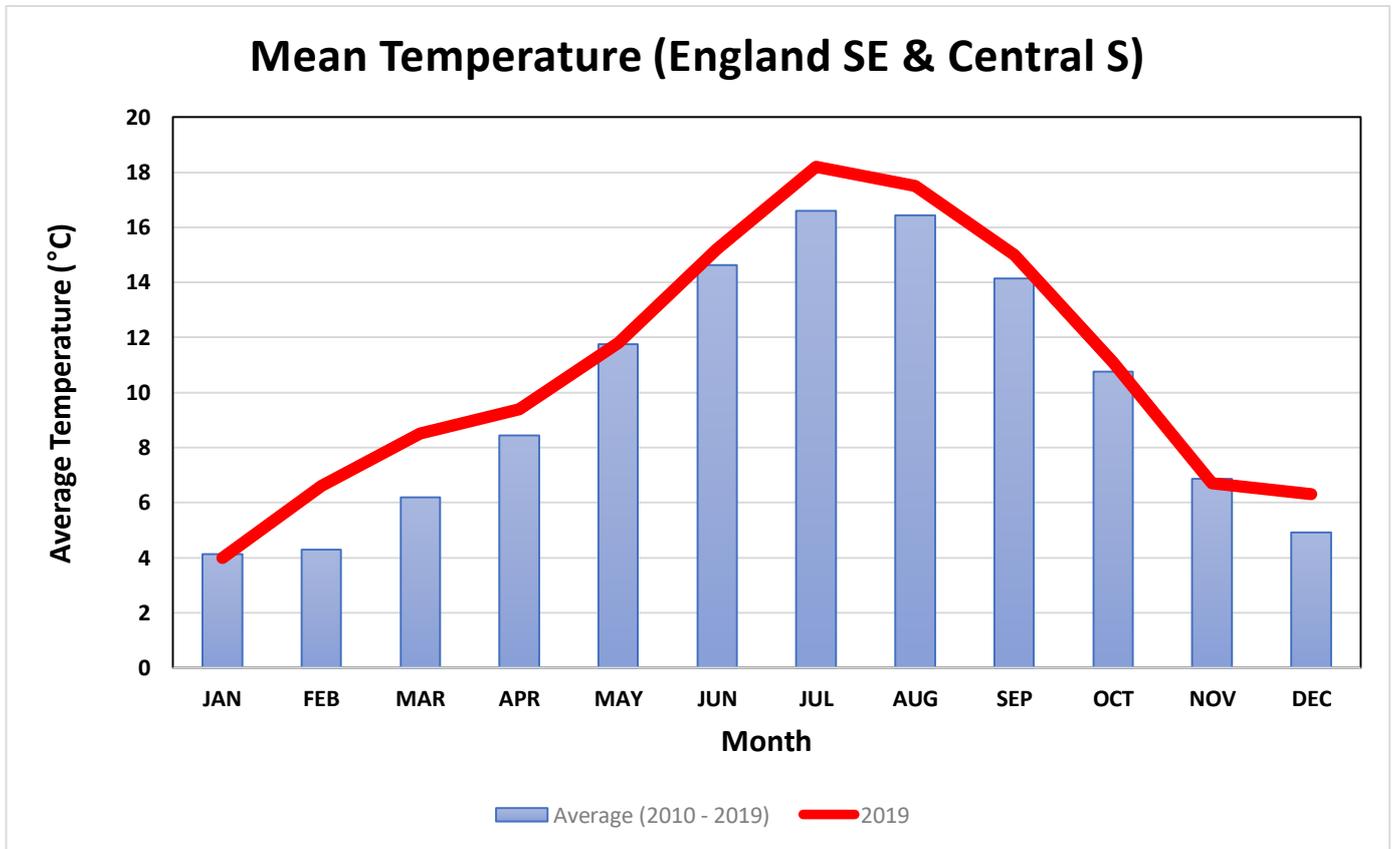
Regular, carefully designed and undertaken surveys are vital to understanding long term trends and consequences of site management strategies. Ideally it would be good to survey a wide range of flora and fauna but with only volunteer staff being available there is a limit to what can be achieved. It is also important that surveys are carried out over a long period as short term effects of temperature, floods, droughts etc can significantly influence short term results.

# Weather



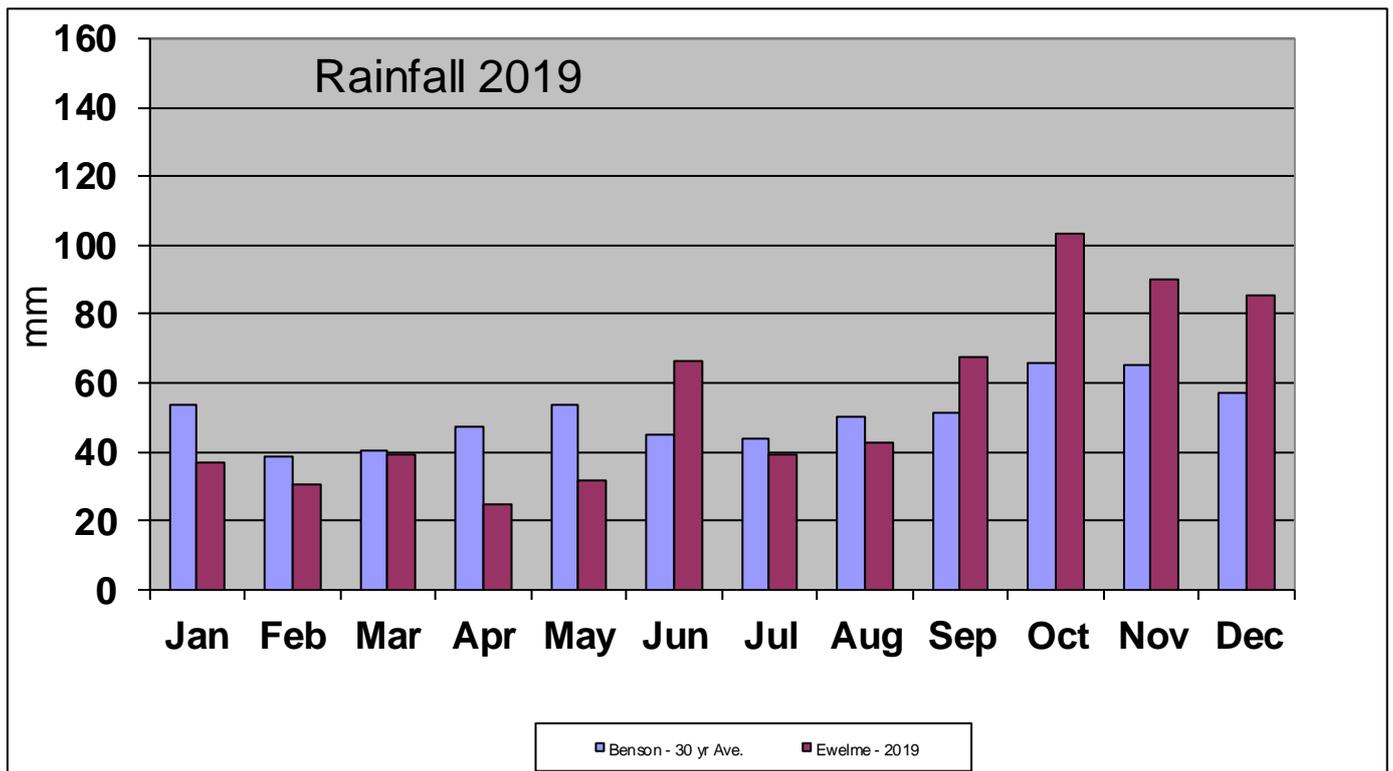
## Temperatures – courtesy of the meteorological office

These temperatures relate to south-east and central south of the country as I was unable to source suitable local records. It is clear that, compared to the long-term average, 2019 was very warm, the only months not exhibiting above average temperatures being January, May and November.



## Rainfall – measured in Benson garden

Although the rainfall in 2019 was very close to the thirty year average the distribution was extremely uneven with the first part of the year being very dry. The flow down the brook reduced to barely a trickle but never actually stopped.



## Volunteering

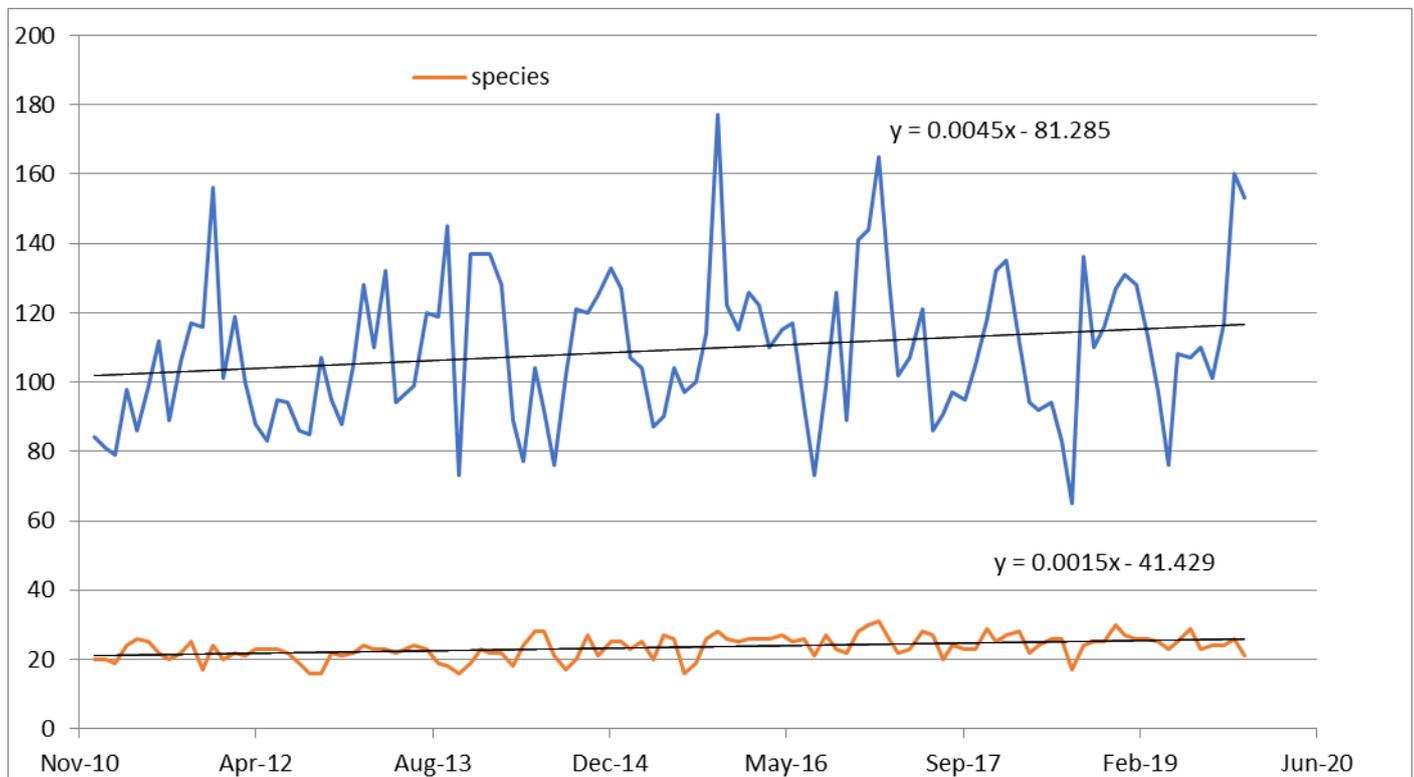
- Total in 2019 – 2845 hours
- Sonning Common GG – 279 hours
- Wallingford GG – 129 hours
- Wallingford School, CS trustees, EA & SODC – 237 hours

## Birds



Bird species, on the beds, have been recorded since October 2002 but only casual observations during walks through the site were recorded during the early years. These are not presented. The following results were obtained during monthly bird counts which commenced in 2010. The whole site was walked and every bird seen or heard noted.

The straight line shows the trend based on least squares linear regression.



Over the period from December 2010 to date numbers, both of individual birds and of numbers of species, have shown a small rise.

During 2019 70 species were recorded, just higher than the average over the previous 10 years. No new species for the site were recorded during 2019. Water rails continue to spend their winters with us and the little egret/s are becoming ever more regular during the winter months.



The following table shows the percentage of visits each of the top 20 birds (long term) were seen both in 2019 and “all time” The numbers in red illustrate changes of more than 5%. Three species showed a lower percentage in 2018 and three a higher.

SPECIES		
	2019	ALL
Blackbird	99.2	98.7
Mallard	98.5	98.4
Woodpigeon	97.7	98.3
Moorhen	93.1	97.1
Rook	93.1	96.7
Robin	94.6	95.0
Great Tit	94.6	92.2
Blue Tit	93.1	91.7
Red Kite	96.2	91.1
Jackdaw	89.2	88.1
Dunnock	86.2	86.6
Chaffinch	56.9	83.0
Wren	82.3	85.4
House Sparrow	76.2	80.2
Carrion Crow	86.2	75.0
Grey Wagtail	83.8	72.2
Starling	74.6	69.5
Goldfinch	63.1	61.2
Feral Pigeon	46.2	56.0
Magpie	42.3	54.2

## Riverflies

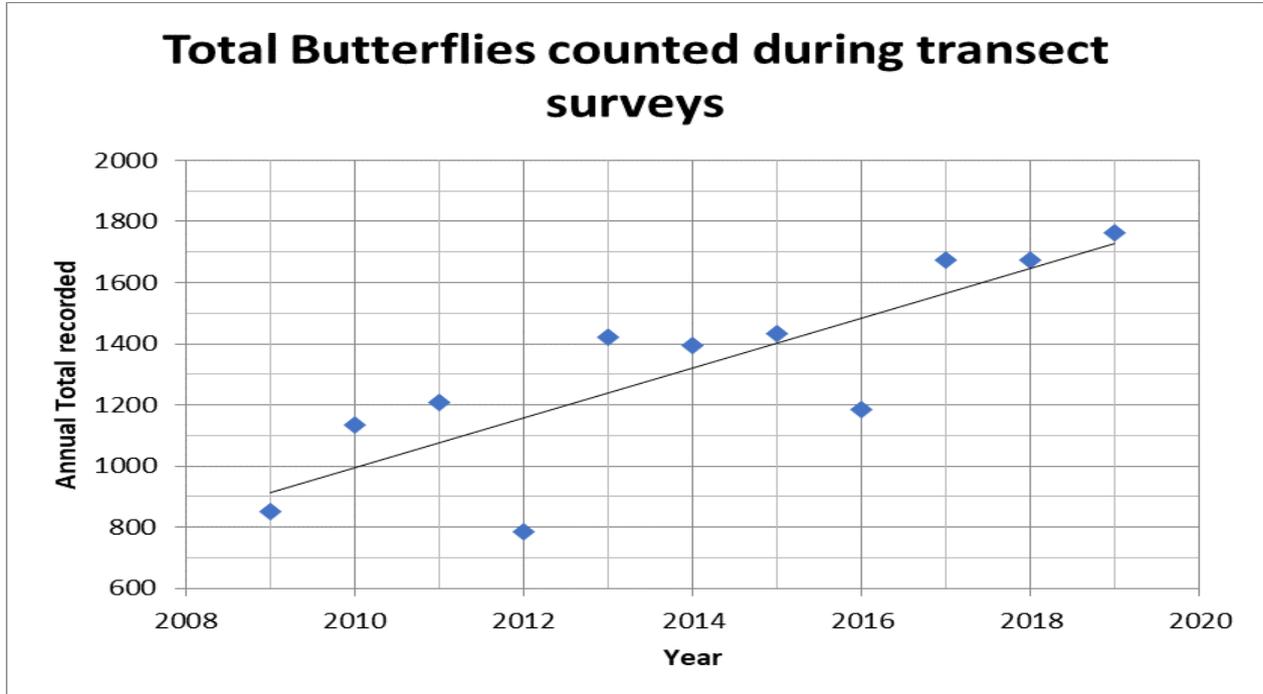




# Butterflies



Butterflies have been recorded since 2009 using The UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). This involves walking a route round the site under carefully proscribed temperature and sunshine conditions recording all butterflies within 2.5 metres of your person. This is carried out weekly during the summer months.



In total 23 species were recorded during 2019, one up on 2018. The above graph shows the total number of butterflies counted during the surveys and illustrates an upward trend over the 11 years of surveying. Numbers in 2019 were the highest ever recorded and almost 100 higher than 2018, the previous highest. Numbers are affected by the weather and we were again blessed with a warm and dry summer. Five species “broke site records” with best ever counts for Orange Tip, Marbled White, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Small Heath.

## Mammals



Unlike the survey results presented above the following list is simply based on casual observations and can only be considered evidence that the species has been seen on the site but not necessarily in 2019. Disappointingly the Water Vole survey again proved negative.

<b>Wood mouse</b>	<b>House mouse</b>	<b>Bank vole</b>
<b>Field vole</b>	<b>Water vole</b>	<b>Harvest mouse</b>
<b>Brown/Common rat</b>	<b>Grey squirrel</b>	<b>Common shrew</b>
<b>Water shrew</b>	<b>Mole, European</b>	<b>Hedgehog, Eurasian</b>
<b>Rabbit</b>	<b>Fox</b>	<b>Badger</b>
<b>Polecat</b>	<b>Stoat</b>	<b>Weasel</b>
<b>Daubenton's bat</b>	<b>Pipistrelle, Common</b>	<b>Pipistrelle, Soprano</b>
<b>Roe deer</b>	<b>Muntjak Deer</b>	<b>Pygmy Shrew</b>

## Dragonflies

10 species were recorded in 2018 which is about average for the 11 years. The pond on the lower site is the favoured area though, this year, with the very low stream flow, dragonflies have appeared more widespread.



## Pond

The pond goes from strength to strength with large populations of Toads and Common Newts recorded during 2019 as well as large numbers of other invertebrates and insects. In April Benson Nature Group organised a well-attended amphibian safari when strong torches were used to observe newts swimming about in the pond at twilight. Enjoyed by adults and children alike.

## Orchids

				
<b>Pyramidal</b>	<b>Green Winged</b>	<b>Southern Marsh</b>	<b>Bee</b>	<b>Common Spotted</b>

### In 2019

Common Spotted	33
Southern marsh	30
Green winged	23
Pyramidal	7
Bee	1

The dramatic rise in the number of orchids present in the flower meadow has been sustained with 94 of 5 species counted during 2019. This was slightly down on the previous year but we were pleased to record Bee Orchid after a blank 2018. Just a single addition (Common centaury) to the list of flowering plants on the site bringing the total to 177.

## Moths



Seven new moth species were recorded during the year during limited trapping. The total number of species for the site now stands at 335.

A full list of species recorded on the Ewelme Watercress Beds Local Nature Reserve can be seen at

<http://www.ewelmewatercressbeds.org/>