

# The Journal

## Nature Notes

Summertime is the best time of year to see butterflies and on sunny days they are to be seen in most gardens. Following a decline in numbers over several years, the heatwave that we enjoyed



last summer has resulted in an increase in populations of most of our butterfly species. One butterfly that used to be something of a rarity locally, but that is now being seen in increasing numbers is the Marbled White. Although rarely seen in gardens, it has been recorded this summer in large numbers on Croft Hill and at Bagworth Heath. One of the main ways in which butterfly numbers are monitored from year to year is via the Big Butterfly Count that is taking place now and continuing until August 11th. It would be wonderful if as many people as possible would contribute to this survey. All you have to do is find a sunny spot and spend 15 minutes counting the numbers of different butterflies that you see, then send in the results; you can repeat this as many times as you like. Full details and a free identification chart can be obtained from [www.butterflycount.org](http://www.butterflycount.org)

Amongst the birds, not many of our summer visitors are to be seen in the garden, but a stroll out along our local footpaths will give you a chance to see some of them. A walk along a footpath out of Thurlaston through agricultural land gave me a chance to see a bird that I've not seen locally for many years - the Yellow Wagtail. This small yellow and green bird migrates to Africa in the winter after spending the summer here, usually on arable farmland where it feeds on insects. It is easily distinguished from the Grey Wagtail, which has a grey back and head.





If you have a pond in your garden or a source of water nearby then you may be visited by those most dashing of insects, the dragonflies. One of our largest is the Southern Hawker that breeds in the dense vegetation of our garden pond. It feeds on flying insects, which it catches on the wing, and often feeds well away from water. They are inquisitive and often fly very close to investigate observers, but don't worry as they are completely harmless.

These and many other equally attractive animals can be seen at no cost in and around our villages and with very little effort we are able to enjoy our own local mini safari. It seems a shame to spend the summer cooped up indoors watching the television or fiddling on the mobile phone when you could be outdoors enjoying the fresh air, the open countryside and all the local wildlife that is on offer.