

# Scarcroft & district allotments

## NATURE NOTES



#2

Since the last nature notes we have had sightings of lots of butterflies, Peacock, Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Orange tip, and Holly Blue. The clue is in the name with Holly Blue, the caterpillars eat holly but also ivy and some other plants.

There are also some Small White butterflies about and look out for Green Veined White and Large White too.

Here are some great recent butterfly pictures from the allotments and the gardens of Wentworth Rd, and pictures of Holly Blue so you know what to look for.

Do keep your pictures and stories of wildlife on allotments coming in to [sararobin@phonecoop.coop](mailto:sararobin@phonecoop.coop)



A Peacock having a rest on a labradoodle! Photo Libby Crossley



A Comma butterfly. The caterpillars feed on nettles Photo Libby Crossley



Female Holly blue. Photo Butterfly conservation



Male Holly blue. Photo Butterfly conservation



Female sparrows, the males have a grey cap and a black bib. Photo RSPB.

### Birds on allotments

Allotments are great for sparrows. Research by the British Trust for Ornithology led to a study in 2011 which concluded 'This study is, to our knowledge, the first of its kind to demonstrate the importance of allotments to House Sparrows within urbanized environments' [www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/publications/papers/house-sparrows/btorr599](http://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/publications/papers/house-sparrows/btorr599).

Although we think of house sparrows as common and found everywhere, nationally there have been big declines in population numbers, 60% declines in urban gardens in the UK for example. Sparrows are now red listed in the UK as numbers have declined so quickly. There are many possible reasons for fewer sparrows being around. One that we can do something about on the allotments is to make sure that there are lots of insects and other invertebrates on our plots as these are vital food for baby birds. Apparently aphids are a delicacy for sparrow chicks so don't panic if you see some on your plants just wait until the sparrows tidy them up!

Send in your sightings to Sara Robin, [sararobin@phonecoop.coop](mailto:sararobin@phonecoop.coop)

# Scarcroft & district allotments

## NATURE NOTES



#2

### Summer bird visitors on allotments

I spend a lot of time pondering the birdsong I hear on my allotment and wishing I had an expert birder around to tell me exactly which little brown bird I was listening to. I'm fine with the common ones but not the ones you hear less frequently. I know I've heard a Chiff Chaff many times on Scarcroft and I'm pretty sure I have heard a willow warbler as well and they will definitely be about on other allotment sites in York. Another summer visitor is the Lesser Whitethroat which has been heard on Scarcroft in the fairly recent past.

All these species migrate from the Mediterranean or Africa to breed in the UK, and then go south in the autumn. The Willow Warbler spends the winter in southern Africa and breeds as far north as Siberia. These are extraordinary journeys for small birds. There are probably suitable nest sites on some allotments for these migrants. Nests are likely to be in the base or low down in scrub or brambles, so make sure to leave some scruffy corners if you hear their calls. Or just leave some scruffy corners anyway as they are good for all sorts of wildlife!

The RSPB has some good information on birds, you can search for a particular species at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/>.

If you are not sure what bird you have seen this is useful <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/identify-a-bird/> and if you want to listen to the songs of hundreds of species of birds, this website is amazing [www.xeno-canto.org](http://www.xeno-canto.org)

The British Trust for Ornithology run a scheme called Garden Birdwatch, if you regularly watch garden or allotment birds you get access to lots of information and research free offer to join at [www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/join-gbw?dm\\_i=IG4,6TC8W,39GXV6,RAFDT,1](http://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/join-gbw?dm_i=IG4,6TC8W,39GXV6,RAFDT,1)



### Interesting wildlife related resources for stay at home wildlife watching and activities.

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust have an amazing range of home based activities at [www.ywt.org.uk](http://www.ywt.org.uk)

I'll do a nature notes about invertebrates soon, but to get you going there are some interesting videos at [https://aphidsrus.wordpress.com/a-z-of-entomology/?mc\\_cid=b4a0bd0109&mc\\_eid=f5710bbbcd](https://aphidsrus.wordpress.com/a-z-of-entomology/?mc_cid=b4a0bd0109&mc_eid=f5710bbbcd) and I've just watched the one on aphids which is fascinating <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liBt59teaGQ> with lots of reasons why you don't need to panic if you see one!

Plantlife have some great downloadable wildflower ID sheets. Many of the common ones are found on the allotments and in gardens so see how many you can find <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/wildflowerhunt/>

Looking forward to getting stories and pictures [sararobin@phonecoop.coop](mailto:sararobin@phonecoop.coop)



Send in your sightings to Sara Robin, [sararobin@phonecoop.coop](mailto:sararobin@phonecoop.coop)