

2024 Butterfly and Bird watching walk

Denbies Hillside Tuesday 20th August

Once again we were a small select group but with the benefit of Geoff's tremendous butterfly knowledge. There were few birds today but as we set off there was a Kestrel hovering in the distance. It appeared again several times during our walk. The only other birds we saw were Carrion Crows, Wood Pigeons and a Red Kite was spotted soaring in the distance.

The weather was not promising for spotting many butterflies as it was quite cloudy with a very strong wind. However, when the sun came out several appeared. We began to count the Chalkhill and Common Blue butterflies hoping to reach 30, but as the day progressed there were certainly well over 30.

It was interesting to see the brown colour of the female Chalkhill butterfly and the ragged appearance of some older ones, sadly probably at the end of their short life. We were very pleased then to see the vivid blue colour of the Adonis amidst the paler Chalkhills. Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Brown Hairstreak butterflies were flitting around. There was lots of excitement when Gaynor spotted the very tiny Skipper. We also saw several very pale white, three tiered moths with their darker markings.

The fields were covered with a wide variety of wild flowers – marjoram, scabious, thistles, ragwort, wild carrot, vetch, columbine to name but a few. The common name for wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) is Queen Anne's lace. Gaynor told me the origin of this name. If you look carefully at the centre of the flower head there is a tiny red flower as if someone had pricked their finger and a drop of blood had fallen on the lace. Legend has it that poor Queen Anne (1702-1714) was fated with the terrible loss of 17 children. She sewed to comfort herself and this drop signifies her pain.



Male Chalkhill Blue



Female Chalkhill Blue

Lovely photos taken with Gaynor's phone