



Ed's Nature Notes

October 2011

E Urquhart



Brent Goose

Birds

The first of the **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** have arrived back in the harbour. Currently there are just a few hundred, but this should build to nearly 10,000 by December. Around 5% of the world population come here, making Chichester Harbour internationally important for the species. It has been an exciting Autumn for birders with rarities such as **Wryneck**, **Spoonbill**, **Sabine's Gull** and **Grey Phalarope**, all sighted around the harbour.

In response to apparent declines in some wader species in the Solent, bird researchers have commenced projects to better understand how these birds use this area. Ornithologist from the Farlington Ringing Group undertook successful catches of two of the target species. 92 **Ringed Plover** and 103 **Sanderling** were colour ringed. These birds can now be individually identified so we can increase our knowledge of their movements.



Spoonbill

Mammals

As the nights start to get colder many mammal species will be preparing for winter. Some, such as **Fox**, **Stoat** and **Roe Deer** do this by growing a thicker winter coat. Deer also change colour from a russet red summer pelage into a grey winter coat. Others like **Water Vole** and **Grey Squirrel** will be stocking up on food to get them through the winter. **Bats** and **Hedgehogs** will start preparing to go into hibernation. They need to find a suitable balance of fat reserves in relation to the length of hibernation.



Stoat

Insects

The un-seasonally warm weather has enabled many butterfly species to extend their flying season. A walk will generally result in sighting **Speckled Wood**, **Small White**, **Red Admiral**, **Peacock** and perhaps **Small Copper**. There were also a few migrant **Clouded Yellow** butterflies seen in the last week. The succession of moth species is continuing with **Flounced Rustic**, **Lunar Underwing** and **Brindled Green** all making an appearance in my garden over the last few days.

Dragonflies are still flying with **Migrant Hawker**, **Common Darter** and **Emporer** seen over the last week.



Brindled Green

Plants

A few plants such as **Sea Aster** are still flowering. However, Autumn colours are starting to take over as the various deciduous trees take on their characteristic colours prior to shedding their leaves. Look for the resulting riot of colours - the yellow of **Field Maple**, red of **Guelder Rose** and bronze of **Oak**.

Other colours are formed by the fruits and berries. These include the red berries of **Hawthorn** and **Guelder Rose**, the dusty blue sloes on **Blackthorn** and the shocking pink flower and orange fruit of **Spindle**.



Spindle

Sightings

Please report any interesting sightings to the Harbour Office, particularly of colour-ringed birds and Water Voles. www.conservancy.co.uk 01243 512301