Friends of Newenden Meadow

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2024

We had a lovely Summer in the meadow with the sun shining and the flowers blooming. There weren't as many people like but there was still a lot to see. However, on the day of our Summer celebration in the field, the heavens opened. It did dampen our spirits though and a small group of us met on the meadow and enjoyed some light refreshments, including a lovely cake made especially for the occasion by Jillian. The rain held off for a couple of hours in the afternoon and we even managed a walk round the meadow with a variety of flowers and insects to brighten our day.

Flowers into Autumn

Taking a closer look...

We have had a good year of flowers in the meadow, which started with snakes-head fritillaries, green wing orchids, (only two, but wonderful all the same), many yellow rattle plants and lots lovely pink cerise flowers. Next came a sea of buttercups and later there were large clumps of meadow vetchling and birds foot trefoil, also, some ladies bedstraw, musk mallow, field scabious, tufted vetch (more plants than last year!) and meadow cranesbill. The marsh-mallow plants that we planted two years ago did very well and we planted forty more plants in May, and hope they will be established by next year. Marsh- mallow has been planted as habitat in the hope of one day attracting the very scarce marshmallow moth which is present only in very few places in this corner of the south east. The meadow continued to flower into September and we held off cutting the grass to enable them to seed.

The show continues

After the flowers have finished, nature puts on its Autumn clothes and delights us with beautiful shades of brown, terracotta, red and yellows, as it put all its efforts into sowing the seeds of the next generation for next year.

This seasonal show is also a smorgasbord for the wildlife to help it survive through the winter.

Bee Friendly…

It was very pleasing to see so many flowers in the field, but there were disappointingly few bumblebees feeding from them or collecting pollen. In the spring there were a few Early Bumblebees, some Garden bumblebees and Buff Tails, but none of these in any numbers and virtually no Common Carders. In the second cycle of the year, when the first nest has died out and new Queens start their nests, there were more and also Common Carders in larger numbers. But, bumblebees have had a very bad year, most likely because of the cold wet weather in the spring. We are hoping this is a glitch because of the weather and not a downward trend.

Teeming with life - The wonder of "creepy crawlies" and other mini-beasts

The meadow contains an amazing amount of wildlife, but it's very easy to walk the meadow and not see anything at all. Take the time to pause a while and look closer because the variety of mini-beasts is astounding. You might not like spiders or slugs, but all these creatures have their place and the biodiversity in such a relatively small space is vast. All the photographs in this newsletter were taken in the meadow.

Natures Challenges

Because there were so many plants still flowering and setting seed in early September, we delayed cutting the grass to disastrous effect when it poured with rain for days, before we could bale the hay and remove it from the field. Since then, volunteers have periodically joined us in the field to rake up rotting hay to save the plants underneath. We have managed to clear quite a large area and can see small seedlings beginning to grow. We have also strimmed areas of grass and sown yellow rattle seed which will germinate in March next year.