

## Country Notes for September 2024

At the time of writing in mid August this has not been a good year for butterflies, which is a shame after a fairly good showing last summer. Sadly, the prolonged cold and wet weather of the earlier part of this year seems to have had a major impact on their numbers. I have had sightings of most of the usual butterflies that I expect to see, but all of their numbers have been low. Even my buddleia which usual hosts good numbers of butterflies, rarely had more than one butterfly at a time. This was extremely disappointing, to say the least.

However there have been some interesting sightings of day flying moths. I had quite a number of sightings of the bright red and black cinnabar moth in my garden. The caterpillars of these moths feed on ragwort, a plant which is not welcome in many places as it is poisonous to many grazing animals and is therefore routinely pulled by many farmers and smallholders. Hummingbird Hawk Moths, which seem to have increased in number in recent years, have now started appearing this year, my first being in a local garden yesterday.

However my favourite moth sighting so far has been the astonishing orange, black and cream Jersey Tiger Moth which has appeared for the second year running in my garden. This large and breathtakingly colourful moth was until recently very seldom seen anywhere north of the Channel Islands. However, a few years ago they moved into some parts of the West Country, albeit in small numbers, and they have now spread southeast so that, although they are not by any means common, they can be seen from time to time in our villages. Milder winters have probably played their part, in that their larvae have been able to survive through to the following year.

Do look out for these beautiful moths this month. In flight they look like an exceptionally busy and brightly coloured butterfly. They will certainly grab your attention if you do see one!

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