

Mill Road Cemetery in July 2010

Trust me to pick the only wet hour on an otherwise fine Tuesday! So apologies and thanks to those three intrepid and hardy souls that sheltered with me under the bushes from the heavy rain. It did brighten-up a bit, so we did actually see a couple of Small Whites and a Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and a Speckled Wood when the sun shone, briefly.



Small White



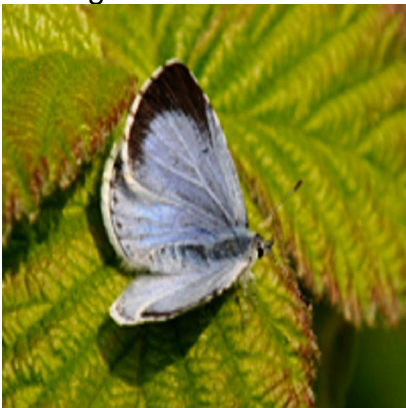
Meadow Brown



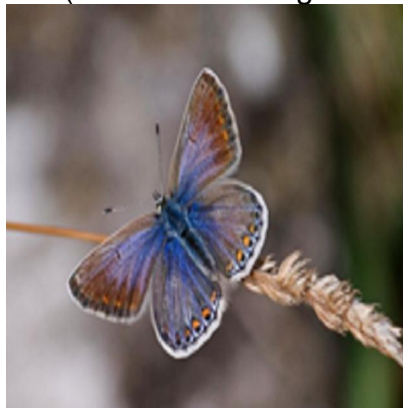
Speckled Wood

I hope I managed to show our guests how it is possible for a small area (c 10 acres) in the City Centre to support a variety of species; 20 so far have been identified within the cemetery walls. Not only is the cemetery a haven, so are the gardens that surround it, providing a very diverse set of habitats that feed into and off, the cemetery itself.

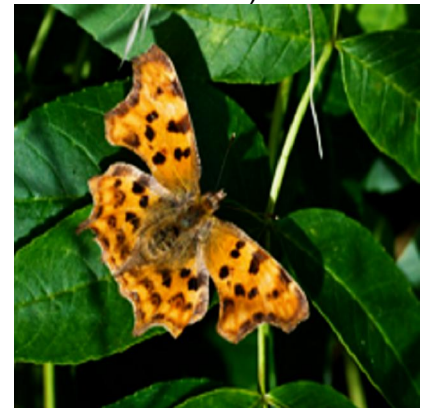
Our second Walk on Thursday provided ideal conditions to see this, as our band of five visitors were presented with a good number of Holly Blue, some nectaring on the brambles, one of the most successful species in the cemetery; not surprising with so much holly and ivy around. Large, Small and Green Veined Whites were also present throughout the tour, as were the odd Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood and Meadow Brown and a single male Common Blue in the uncut grass to the north of the site. (I later saw a single Red Admiral and Comma).



Holly Blue



Common Blue



Comma

Trustees and Friends of Mill Road Cemetery, balances the responsibilities it has to maintain the cemetery as an active place of remembrance with the need to protect the wildlife and flora that have made it their home. It already supports urban foxes and European edible dormice in small numbers in and around the gardens surrounding it, together with weasels, hedgehogs, various small rodents, including shrews, and bats, and a surprising number of birds - a friend heard a Willow Warbler singing in the Cemetery the other day - bringing the number of species seen or heard in there to over 35. And this is not to mention the over 110 species of wild plants that exist there; indicators of uncultivated neutral/calcareous grassland species include Clary, Hoary Plantain and Scabious. So it is also an important example of preserved grassland, of which there are few in Cambridgeshire; It qualifies for this as a City Wildlife Site.

Working together, we hope to encourage more members of the public to visit this unique and charming example of a mature Victorian cemetery, hidden away just off the City Centre, and witness for themselves the potential the area provides for wildlife to thrive. For more information visit:

www.millroadcemetery.org.uk

Thanks once again to all who attended; I hope to run some more Walks, so keep an eye out if you are interested.

Nick Ballard

Friends of Mill Road Cemetery

in association with Butterfly Conservation

(Images and text by Nick Ballard)