

## SFPT Orchid Glade report for August 2016

### Summer is heating up

7<sup>th</sup> August, and the sun is hot at our Orchid Glade reserve, with a stiff breeze to cool things down a bit. As usual, this morning I have the Reserve all to myself, but it shouldn't be like this — where is everybody? The penny drops — the Open Day is this afternoon. There is an instant bonus for being stupid: just a few yards into the Reserve I see two female fallow deer with small fawns. One of the mothers is dressed in that classic Bambi garb — brown with white spots. As is usual with deer encounters, I am far too slow with my camera. You rarely get a second chance — they're here, and then they're not



This summer may turn out to be very good — for us, and for the wildlife in our nature reserves. Butterflies have noticeably increased since August arrived, and many are flitting among the flowering fleabane, thistles, knapweed and St John's worts. My first is a real surprise — a male brimstone sipping nectar from fleabane. I have never seen one here before, and this may be a new record for the reserve. The Orchid Glade is a drop-in café for insects in August, and among the swathes of flowers I see several peacocks, meadow browns, gatekeepers, small (or Essex?) skippers, and small whites.



All that rain and waterlogging of parts of the reserve in the winter and early spring has produced dividends among the flora. The southern marsh orchids and marsh thistles have been very good this year, but now I can also see that marsh woundwort numbers have increased several-fold, and that sedges are spreading fast. Red bartsia is having a good year, and so is great willowherb. I have just photographed the pond, with a fringe of fleabane. The water level is falling fast, and fallen leaves from the willows are floating around the pond like little boats, driven by the breeze.



Common ragwort — just a plant here and there — is in full flower. When it begins to set seed, hoary ragwort will be at its peak. This species is abundant in the reserve, and I have just photographed both for the blogspot to show them as a comparison. The slender yellow spikes of agrimony are rapidly seeding: hairy St John's wort has also ceased flowering, but there are a few flowering plants of square-stemmed St John's wort.



The prize for the largest yellow flower — in a reserve dominated by them, in several species — goes to the handsome corn sowthistle, with its 40mm sunbursts sitting on top of long, slender stalks coated with sticky yellow hairs. My last photograph of the visit captures a female scorpion fly, with attractively marked wings.



**Laurie Forsyth**