

## SFPT September report for Orchid Glade

### September song

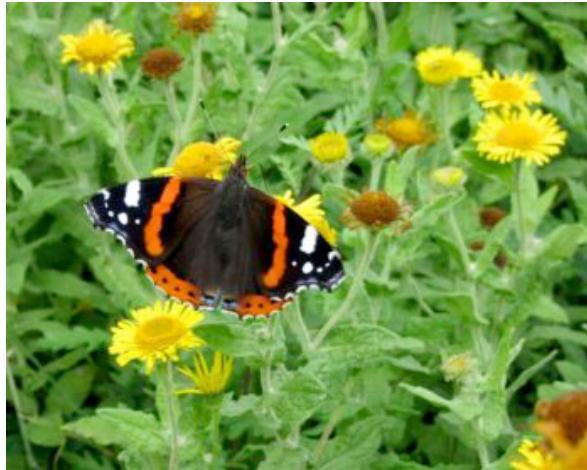
Ninth September at Orchid Glade, and it is warm and dry. The flood of flowering is on the wane, and late summer is merging with early Autumn. Even so, the reserve is still very flowery indeed, with fleabane, hoary ragwort, centaury, red bartsia and corn mint set to flower for weeks yet. Near the gate I come across a single scarlet pimpernel, and I am pleased to re-find the blue fleabane plants I found last year. The water in the pond is evaporating fast, and the draw-down zone is exposed: the flat shelf of mud is vivid green with moss, and its clay edges are cut by sharp deer slots that look fresh, and could have been made last night.



Apples have replaced the blossom on young fruit trees I photographed in the spring, and seed heads have formed on a score of wild flower species. Blackberries are beginning to look luscious, and rosehips and hawthorn berries are reddening. Dog rose is not common in the reserve, but two I have seen today have bedeguar galls — or robin's pincushions — which will soon be a rosy red. They are caused by the small gall wasp *Diplolepis rosacea*, after it has laid eggs in the tissue of the rose. Each pincushion is the home of many wasp larvae, each in its own cell.



Great willowherb is in flower beside the pond, and a nearby creeping buttercup has just one flower: it is 'double' — something I have not seen before. I have just photographed a red admiral feeding on fleabane, and a speckled wood is jinking among the leaves of ivy dangling from a tree. Otherwise, the dearth of butterflies on this warm day and in these nectar-rich surroundings is frightening. The usual buzzard has just sailed overhead.



Many young trees were felled here last year, but most have since regrown as lusty young bushes several feet high. In effect, dense thickets have replaced trees, which is a serious blow to the meadow flora. Our Trust is aware of the problem. On the positive side, I photographed today swathes of invasive ash saplings dead on their feet, either from the effects of chronic overcrowding, or from *Chalara*, the ash dieback disease.



***Laurie Forsyth***