

2013 Summer Solstice Lower Tamar Lake to Virworthy – 23rd June

Two days after the Summer Solstice I had opportunity to walk in the footsteps of a Country Lady (Sue Field). But summerlike it was not – high winds, low temperatures and a threat of rain coupled with verdant growth and fledging time kept many birds out of sight.

Nevertheless, I was welcomed into the car park by a very vocal singing Robin and hundreds of hirundines hawking over the lower lake. Swifts, Swallows and House Martins were all taking advantage of the metamorphosis of aquatic invertebrate larvae into adult insects; picking them off as they emerged from their pupae. Two Mute Swans and a Mallard were dabbling in the shallows as two Cormorants came into land.



Water Horsetail – *Equisetum fluviatile*

Along the top of the dam, summer flowers were blooming prolifically; Cuckoo Flower, Marsh Valerian, Red and White Clovers, Buttercups, Common and Ox-eye Daisies, Herb Robert, Silverweed, Red Campion and Ground Ivy as well as Water Horsetail, Water Forget-me-not, Hemlock Water Dropwort and Yellow Iris along the damp stretches of the aqueduct. In the wooded areas were Wood Avenas.

Birds were visually elusive but very audible; Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Chaffinch and Crows were all voluble as well as many chirping juvenile Tits calling their parents

demanding to be fed.

At Virworthy Wharf – the first open stretch of water since Lower Tamar Lake - I was rewarded by sight of a Common Blue Damselfly and a Moorhen with three fluffy black chicks with their red foreheads amongst the Water Plantain and rushes. All along the tow path were late Bluebells, Tufted Vetch and Meadowsweet, not yet in flower but promising to burst forth imminently

As the path became more sheltered, I was able to record butterflies where the sunlight provided warm glades – three Speckled Wood butterflies and a Meadow Brown butterfly as well as a single Scorpion Fly. Foxgloves were beginning to flower and small woodland plants such as Germander Speedwell and on a wall by a gate, Ivy-leaved Toadflax and Wall Rue.

More juvenile birds became visible amongst the trees and I recognised young Great Tits, Blue Tits and Wren all begging for food. Reaching the area of Wooda Farm and the bridge, a female Roe Deer broke cover giving a rare sight.

I didn't think I would better that sighting so retraced my steps back to the car park.



Scorpion Fly – *Panorpa communis*