

At this time of year I'm often asked "What's that butterfly with the orange tips on the end of its wings called?" "Well," I reply "its scientific name is Anthocharis meaning 'flower grace'; probably because this beautiful butterfly lends a certain grace to the flowers it frequents. In the 18th century it was 'The Lady of the Woods' – a seductive title well deserved by the best-looking butterfly of the spring. The Germans celebrate its beauty in the name Aurotafalter; the sunrise butterfly. The French honour it with the poetic title L'Auroré - the rising sun." "So what do the British call it?" "Well, we call it the Orange-tip – because it has orange tips on the end of its wings."



Orange-tip Male c Bob Eade
Sussex Wildlife Trust

Whoever gave this exquisite insect such an unimaginative name should be ashamed. It's more than just a pair of orange tips. Forget your Bluebells and Skylarks, the emergence of the Orange-tip is nature's confirmation that spring has officially sprung.

Only the male Orange-tip has those road cone orange wing-tips that visually scream "Look at me! Look at me!" as he cruises the countryside's hedges and edges. You'd think this flamboyant display would land him on the menu for any passing bird - but he has an unsavoury secret. He tastes absolutely disgusting. His orange tips make birds recoil when they recall last eating something that colour. To predators he is a flying pot of lime pickle; if you've eaten it once, you'll never eat it again.

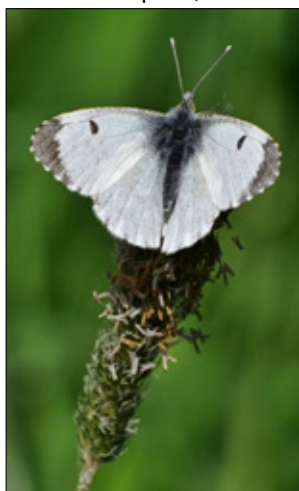
The grey-tipped females are more secretive. Once mated they search the hedgerows for their food plants; Cuckooflower and

Garlic Mustard. They tap-dance on the plants and identify them with taste buds in their feet. Once their six soles are satisfied they lay a single, tiny, orange, rugby ball shaped egg. The egg's shell emits a pheromone which deters other females from laying here because the cute little caterpillar, which hatches out a week or so later, is a cannibal.

This caterpillar gets to work eating the flower's seed pods, and it eats so many that it starts to look like one (my Mum once warned me a similar phenomenon would happen with me and Monster Munch crisps). Disguised as its diet, it merrily munches throughout May and the plant toxins it ingests will help to flavour the bitter butterfly it will become. In July, the caterpillar constructs a curious chrysalis, a bizarre bit of angular architecture attached to a stem by a single string. Inside this post-modern pupa the caterpillar melts into a cellular soup. And then the natural world's greatest regeneration takes place. This biological broth builds a butterfly and the April sunshine encourages the Orange-tip to emerge; that simple flash of orange signalling that an even greater regeneration has finally taken place. Winter has turned to spring.



Orange-tip Female
c Bob Eade
Sussex Wildlife Trust



Orange-tip Female
c Roger Wilmshurst
Sussex Wildlife Trust

Sussex Wildlife Trust is an independent charity caring for wildlife and habitats throughout Sussex. Founded in 1961, we have worked with local people for over half a century to make Sussex richer in wildlife.

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www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk



RSPB Events

Due to the current situation all RSPB events, whether indoor or outdoor, are cancelled. For further information, please visit their website

Chichester Conservancy Volunteers

CANCELLATION OF VOLUNTEERING TASKS

As a result of the current Coronavirus situation the current CCV programme of volunteering activity will have be curtailed. The remaining tasks until the end of April can no longer take place as planned.

In addition our normal summer programme cannot start until the present government restrictions are lifted.

Keep checking the website for news of the resumption of our Sunday volunteering tasks.

SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST

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When did you last hear a cuckoo?

I remember as a child growing up, hearing the cuckoo's call emanating around my hometown. Sadly, this is now just a memory for me and many of my generation. Like much of our birds and other wildlife, it has declined rapidly and now this most symbolic of calls has been lost widely across the country. What is more frightening is that it's likely, that there are now more people in the UK that have never heard a cuckoo before, than those that have. However, you can still hear, and see, these celebrated birds around our beautiful reserves of RSPB Pagham Harbour and RSPB Medmerry each spring. Repeating their name over and over, seeming near, then far, the very sound lifts the soul as they herald in the spring.



Cuckoo
c Ben Andrew

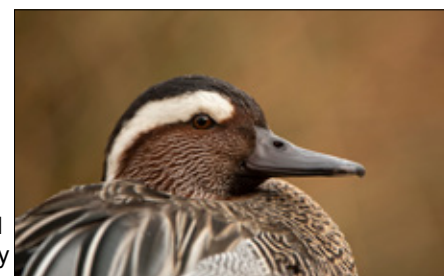
Often when we talk about spring and summer migrants, we automatically think of warblers, larks and other celebrated songbirds, that fill the air with their vocalisations, or swallows, martins and swifts, that wheel high above against blue skies. However, there are many others that arrive or pass through our reserves at this time of year.



One of these, is one of my favourite waders, the common sandpiper. This neat little wader, with grey-brown upperparts and breast, has white

underparts that lead up in front of the wing as a distinctive white shoulder. Although non-descript in appearance, it has an endearing habit of bobbing up and down on it's short green legs known as 'teetering'. Look out for them around pools or channels where they can be seen feeding at the edges.

The UK also has one summer migrant duck, the garganey. The male has a brown head with broad white stripes over its eyes that curve down and meet at the back of the neck. It has a mottled brown breast, barred grey flanks and drooping black and white feathers on it's back. The female looks like a female mallard but with a white throat patch.



Garganey
c Ben Andrew

Situated on the Manhood Peninsula, our reserves of Pagham Harbour & Medmerry are migration hotspots on this stretch of the south coast. They are alive and bursting with life at this time of year, with birds arriving back and passing through.

For more information on the latest wildlife sightings and events pop into our Visitor Centre on the B2145 south of Chichester or check out our website www.rspb.org.uk/paghamharbour

RSPB Pagham Harbour & Medmerry Visitor Centre, Selsey Road, Sidlesham PO20 7NE
Email: pagham.harbour@rspb.org.uk Tel: 01243 641508

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Let's give nature a home



RSPB Pagham Harbour & Medmerry

Due to the current Coronavirus situation we are cancelling all of the April events

Our Visitor Centre is also now closed but the reserves and access to them remain open.

My son Luke loves it that we named our children after Star Wars characters as we are such great fans of it. However, his sister Chewbacca and his younger brother Bobba Fett are less amused.



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