

I-Spy on Hocombe Mead in June 2017



Yellow Iris or Flag

Iris pseudacorus

This is a plant of wetlands as it can put up with being underwater and soils with low oxygen in them. It is able to spread quickly by both underground stems called rhizomes and seeds. Although it is mainly an aquatic plant (one that lives in water) the rhizomes can tolerate long dry periods.

Why do you think soils that are covered in water and are water logged don't have much oxygen in them?



Ragged-Robin

Lychnis flos-cuculi

This is a plant of damp meadows or woodland paths. The nectar of the flowers is popular with butterflies, honey bees and bumble bees. It is a plant whose numbers have decreased due to modern farming methods and drainage of wetlands.

Can you think of a farming method that might discourage Ragged Robin from growing?



Guelder Rose

Viburnum opulus

This plant lives best on damp rich soils. The flowers in the outer ring of larger flowers are not able to produce seeds but the inner, smaller, flowers can. Bees and some beetles pollinate the smaller flowers and bright red globular fruit are produced later in the year.

Look carefully at the outer ring of flowers; do they have stamens and stigmas (parts that are needed to make seeds)? Do the inner flowers have these parts?



Banded Demoiselle

Calopteryx splendens

This is a large damselfly that can be found near slow flowing streams. The males have translucent wings with a blue-black spot and a metallic bluish green body. The female has a metallic green body and wings without a spot. They are usually found flying over streamside vegetation.

If you are lucky enough to see one of these damselflies could you tell whether it was male or female?



Red Clover

Trifolium pratense

This plant will grow in both wet and dry grassland and it is often planted in fields to provide fodder (food) for cattle. Its nectar provides a food source for many insects and is particularly liked by bees. The plant also helps to improve the soil in which it grows by fixing nitrogen in it to make it more fertile.

What do bees make from some of the nectar they take from the clover?



Herb Robert

Geranium robertianum

Herb Robert grows in a very wide variety of places such as woodland, hedgerows, heathland, rocky areas, exposed areas, by the coast and gardens. It has a quite distinctive smell when its leaves are touched. Some people say it smells earthy, some say like mice and others like burning tyres!

In which of the places listed above have you found Herb Robert?



Woody Nightshade

Solanum dulcamara

Many of the parts of the plant contain poisons so it is best not to touch it. It grows in many places such as hedgerows, gardens, at roadsides, in clearings in woodland, along streams and on sea shores. It is able to grow a new plant from small pieces that are left in the ground.

If this plant is weeded out of the garden why is it a good idea to make sure that all of the plant is removed from the soil and disposed of carefully?



Speckled Wood Butterfly

Pararge aegeria

The Speckled Wood Butterfly is well named as it can be found on woodland edges and along woodland paths. It enjoys the dappled sunlight found in these areas where it is well camouflaged. The butterfly feeds on honeydew which is a secretion produced by aphids. Caterpillars of the butterfly eat various grasses.

Why do you think the butterfly is well camouflaged when it is in dappled sunlight?