

WOODWALTON FEN

August 2026

My plan for the group's next trip was to join a Butterfly Conservation public event. This did not come to anything. I checked the events that the two local groups close to our area are running this year and there were no such events. I can remember them from a few years back and thought they would be good. I will keep an eye open again next year, just in case they come back. With the incredibly hot weather we have had recently I decided not to plan anything too arduous, and I eventually decided on a morning trip to Woodwalton Fen near Ramsey would be suitable. There is shade close to the trees and it is a good reserve for butterflies, dragonflies and wild flowers.

We crossed the bridge from the parking area and headed straight down the grassy path ahead of us, looking at the various insects and flowers we came across. Of course we were keeping one eye open for birds! We looped around in a big circle.

Our first subject of interest was the ruddy darter. This is a medium sized, red dragonfly, identified by the tail shape. In fact the tail should be called the abdomen. In the ruddy darter the abdomen is narrow in the middle with an enlarged bulge at the rear. They also like to perch up, which makes a good photo opportunity.



Ruddy Darter – Graham Cole



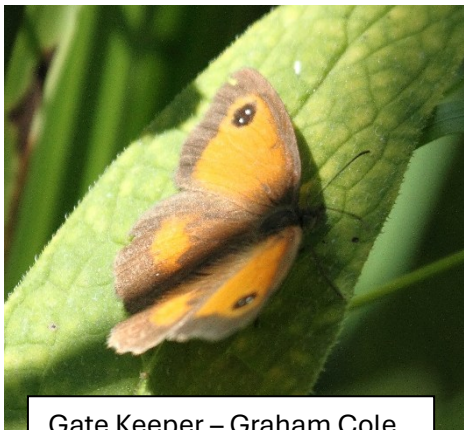
Blue-tailed Damselfly – Graham Cole

Next we spotted a blue-tailed damselfly that was perched on the same branch as a ruddy darter. They are much smaller and we may not have seen it if the darter had chosen to land elsewhere. Damselflies are notoriously difficult to identify as there are several species, mostly blue and the differences between them are quite subtle. Here we have a black abdomen with a blue band on segment 8, bi-colour spots on the wing and the eyes are not red!

Next up was a willow emerald damselfly. This species was not found in the UK until about 10 years ago. Since then it has established a population that has spread rapidly. Global warming is thought to be behind this. The overall green colour and the gold wing spots are the key identification features. We also had some brown hawker dragonflies patrolling over the vegetation, but they never landed for their photo to be taken! We also spotted a spider that was happy walking over the small lilly leaves below one of the many bridges. It ran under the bridge, so we weren't able to get a good photo of it. Typing in a description at home suggests a raft spider, but I can't be 100% sure. I can remember white on the rear parts, but I thought it was a single blob rather than two stripes.



Willow Emerald – Graham Cole



Gate Keeper – Graham Cole

Our first butterfly photographed was a gatekeeper. This species has two white spots in the black wing markings



Emerald Damselfly – Graham Cole

Another damselfly seen was the emerald damselfly. Different eye colour from the willow emerald!

A family of mute swans posed for a picture after we had passed them in the ditch



Mute Swan – Graham Cole

We also spotted a couple of species of day flying moths and a tiny small white insect on a reed. This appears to be a small china mark. One of the many micro moths.

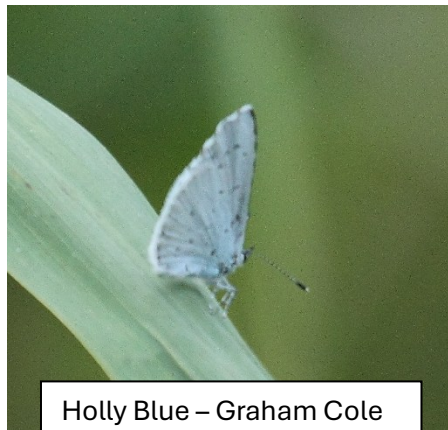


China Mark – Brian Windsor

We also saw red admiral, meadow brown, common blue and holly blue butterflies.



Common Blue – Graham Cole



Holly Blue – Graham Cole



Hemp Agrimony – Graham Cole

The only flower I photographed was the hemp agrimony.