



## Late Summer Snippets

**I thought it might be fun to set out a few snippets of info about some of our native wildlife, as we go into the late summer season.**

The close up image here was taken by David Maitland, in his hen house. It shows a native Queen Tree Wasp, brooding her eggs in the first few cells she makes in the 'starter' nest, made of fine layers of chewed wood. Later, the newly hatched female wasps will continue to build the nest into a much bigger structure, capable of housing up to 5,000 wasps. That's a huge amount of chewed wood..... all laid down to make a strong, and very beautiful nest, just for that year.

Honey bees collect tree resins, which they make into propolis. This is a sticky substance used to repair and seal any gaps in the nest walls, which protects the colony from drafts and any wasps who may want to enter the hive to raid their stores of honey.

The Purple Emperor is our largest native butterfly, and whilst it was a rare sighting above oak tree canopies, in the last 50 years it has become more widespread, probably due to warmer weather from climate change. One of the very few benefits of the temperature rise.

Rising sea temperatures are also encouraging more jellyfish to appear on our shores. An abundant, rather lovely and totally harmless species is the moon jelly, so called due to its transparent bell. It feeds on plankton, and it can develop into huge, dense swarms on our shoreline in summer.

Seahorses have a narrow, elongated snout, with big cheeks on each side, which make the shape of their head hydrodynamic – perfect for slipping through water with almost no ripples to alert their prey. Once near their prey, they use a technique called pivot feeding. This means they can rapidly flick their snout upwards, like a catapult, sucking in the small crustacean in under a millisecond, by puffing out their big cheeks.

Some female moths have evolved to be flightless, like the female Vapour Moth. She is evident in tree tops from July to September, and has only vestigial, tiny wings. She stays on the trees, emitting chemical pheromones to attract the flying males who will then mate with her. This adaptive behaviour saves all the energy used in flight, and instead she uses it on the vital business of reproduction.

**Pigeons are very noisy in flight. This is because they have very stiff flight feathers that produce a mechanical, purposeful sound on every downstroke. It is also used as a way of signalling danger to the rest of the flock, as pigeons don't use alarm calls like many birds do. Male nightjars and short eared owls also use mechanical sound - they both clap their wings during aerial displays, showing their strength.**