

BATH CITY FARM

September Nature Trail

Wildlife observations & text by Mike Williams

Follow the nature trail from by the pig pens and into the wood to discover what minibeasts are living on the Farm in September. We've put out four signs for you to find – one by the pigs, two in the field beyond the pigs and one in the woods beyond that. See how many you can find, and learn more about them.

LOCATION 2 : GRASSLAND



Common Earwig (Forficula auricularia) – If you look closely down in the grass you might find these harmless insects. They eat a variety of plants and smaller insects, and one of their favourite foods is white clover, which is common in the meadow. The mother earwigs are famously very protective of their young, which she raises underground. Their name is thought to come from the resemblance of their wings to ears – they are very rarely found in human ears (as in popular folklore) although there have been several cases throughout history when they have! They like dark crevices hence why they might have occasionally curled up in an ear.



Small Tortoiseshell (Aglais urticae) – These common butterflies are often found into the autumn until the weather begins to cool and they will then hibernate. The caterpillars are frequently found feeding on the nettles on the farm in the summer. They feed on the nectar from many species of flower found in the field and hedgerows.



Peacock (Aglais io) – Like the Small Tortoiseshell, the caterpillars feed on the nettles on the farm, and they can often be found in great numbers, and they too hibernate. The patterns on the wings resemble large eyes, and fool potential predators into thinking that they are much larger animals than they really are. In contrast to the bright upperside, the underside of the wings is almost black, and with its wings closed it is camouflaged, resembling a dead leaf. They can also make a (hissing) sound when threatened, fooling birds into thinking they are a snake!



Red Admiral (Vanessa atalanta) – Red admirals are highly migratory butterflies and ride on air currents to travel long distances. Like the Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock the caterpillars also feed on nettles, but they rarely breed in Britain – they arrive in early summer from southern Europe and make their way northwards, and then fly back down south in the autumn, with some hanging around to hibernate in southern Britain.



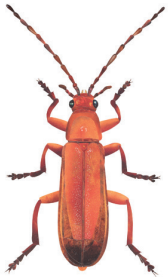
Dor Beetle (*Geotrupes stercorarius*) – The farm animals leave a lot of dung lying around and something needs to clean it up! There are many species of dung beetle found on the farm, but this the largest. They dig deep burrows with their legs and fill them with animal dung for their young to feed on. They can sometimes be found flying over the meadows in the evening, but they are very clumsy.



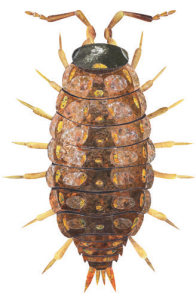
Red-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*) – This species is frequently found in the meadow gathering pollen and nectar, often on the clover and bird's-foot trefoil flowers.



Weevil (*Ischnoptera pion loti*) – This small weevil feeds on the seeds of the yellow-flowered bird's-foot trefoil and can often be found around the plants in the meadow. Weevils are a kind of beetle that usually feeds on plants and often have a very long 'nose' called a rostrum. There are hundreds of species of weevil in Britain and many of them – including large and small species – are present on the farm.



Common Soldier Beetle (*Rhaonycha fulva*) – This beetle is very helpful. It eats garden pests such as aphids, slugs and snails. It also is thought to pollinate some flowers. It can be found commonly on open flowers such as daisies, cow parsley and hogweed.



Common Striped Woodlouse (*Philoscia muscorum*) – This species has an obvious dark stripe on its back. Instead of rolling into a ball, it tends to run very fast when in danger. It is often found in the grass and also in the wood.



Pill Woodlouse (*Armadillidium vulgare*) – This species rolls into a ball when threatened. There are several other species that do this in Bath, but this is the most common. It can be found by looking carefully through the grass.